The Perceived Right to Violate Women: Dress as a Case Study

by
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“I hereby declare that the dissertation submitted for the degree M Tech: Textile Design and Technology, at the Faculty of Arts, Tshwane University of Technology, is my original work and has not been previously submitted to any other tertiary institution. All work quoted is indicated as quotation and is acknowledged by means of a comprehensive list of references.”

Sindiswa Mmabakwena Catherine Kwenaithe

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Thanks to my sister Hlengiwe Sehlapelo who always helped me with her insight and assistance accessing databases, which greatly enriched this study.
Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the perceived right to violate women, specifically when female dress choice is used as justification for violation. This research explores the high statistics of sexual violence in South Africa which form the context in which the problem is investigated. Female dress is used as a case study through which the high prevalence of gender violence in South Africa is explored.

This research focuses on dress as a causal factor regarding female violation. Male perceptions of dress are explored as well as the factors that influence these perceptions. The perspectives of social cognition and the social psychology of dress as well as the theories of inference, attribution and modesty are used to gain insight into the process of creating perceptions and how these perceptions lead to certain types of behaviour towards women dressed in a certain way.

The above theories and perspectives are used to analyse three South African case studies. These case studies were gathered from media reports on three prominent incidents which occurred in South Africa in which dress was used as justification for female violation.
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Chapter One

Introduction to study

The perceived right to violate women is a perception that suggests that a woman deserves to be violated if she has provoked the perpetrator to do so. This study investigates the issues of female violation and how female dress seems to influence violent male behaviour toward women. The study uses multidisciplinary qualitative research.

The researcher has used terms that, although well known, have been defined below so that they may be understood in the context of this study.

1.1 Background and Motivation

Like language in this sense, dress functions as a kind of ‘syntax’, according to a set of rules…These rules allow a garment, and body coverings in general, to acquire meaning (Colefato, 2004:5).

Syntax is described in the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1992:925) as the grammatical arrangement of words and rules or analysis of this. In the *Macmillan English Dictionary* (2007:1519) it is described as “... the rules about how words are arranged and connected to make phrases and sentences”.

In the same way clothing is believed to convey certain messages. These messages act as a somewhat unspoken language between the wearer and the perceiver. The ‘syntax’ is the structure of these messages, hence the way in which this apparel is presented on the body. The type of message the perceiver obtains is based on his/her own perspectives.
Thus it seems there is much for one to consider when one decides on what to clothe oneself in, as one’s apparel choice is susceptible to scrutiny by the perceiver. This is especially important for women and the apparel choices they make. The message the perceiver receives from a woman dressed in a certain way may lead to that woman being vulnerable to violence.

In modern South African society the number of sexual crimes perpetrated against women is increasing (Buhlun
gu et al, 2007:429). Statistics published by Statistics South Africa (SSA) in 2003 show that the number of rape and attempted rape cases reported in 2002 was 52 107. According to the 2007 *The State of the Nation*, it was believed that the number had increased to 55 000 countrywide but as this is based on the number of reported rapes, the actual number could well have been between 110 000 and 490 000, based on presumed unreported rape cases of 2004 and 2005.¹ In 2008/9 this number had increased to 71 500. The provinces with the highest number of rape and attempted rape cases reported were Gauteng with 19 106 cases reported out of a general provincial population of 10 531 300, with 5 266 100 being female; KwaZulu-Natal with 13,239 out of a general provincial population of 10 449 300 with 5 471 300 being female; the Eastern Cape with 9 463 out of a population of 6 648 600 with 3 460 600 being female and the Western Cape with 8 682 cases reported out of a general provincial population 5 356 900 with 2 803 900 being female. The number of rape cases reported in 2012 decreased by 6.7% however the highest number of reported rape cases occur in Gauteng Province (SAPS, 2012).

¹ South African police services release these statistics annually.
In studies done concerning certain apparel choices which resulted in violent consequences (Terry & Doerge, 1979:903-906), it has been suggested that perceivers assume that a woman who enters into the public domain dressed in so-called provocative attire, who is not presenting any aggressive posture, is vulnerable to rape. Some suggest that a woman who dresses in alluring attire cannot be surprised when she is attacked by “passionate” men (Ribeiro, 2003: 157).

South Africa has had a volatile history which includes colonialism and apartheid. Within this volatile history there has been a great deal of political conflict which drives the perspectives of the people of that country. An investigation into these perspectives will be pertinent to this study, because it is believed that these perspectives, when acted upon, may lead to violent consequences. Furthermore it is regarded as necessary to investigate what these perspectives entail for women and the apparel choices they make.

Arthur (1999:6) makes the assertion that the greatest influence on African cultures has been that of Christian missionaries in South Africa, with their Western perspectives, cultures and sense of appropriate and inappropriate dress. Arthur continues that (1999:6) the Christian missionaries influenced how nudity or limited textile body covering on African girls was perceived in the past and is still perceived today. It is through exploring these concepts that the theory of modesty becomes evident. Modesty in appearance is simply the avoidance of sexual attention (Rubenstein, 1999: 55). For example

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2 To expand further on the concept of modesty it is essential to note that from the nineteenth century there were codes put in place for appropriate body behaviour which were comprised of an assortment of acts of restraint (Craik, 1994: 12). Contemporary European dress was characterised by Judeo-Christian attitudes, which were concerned with averting inappropriate sexual desire and attention to the body (Craik, 1994:12).
in European culture modesty, as it is described above, would include not seeing a woman’s breasts, whereas in many African cultures it was often the norm for women to expose their breasts. In modern day South Africa the legacy of influence that European perceptions have had on some African perceptions seems to persist. And the question arises then whether the violation of a woman who exposes sexually charged parts of the body, in her dress choice, is justified, when using codes of modesty.

Clearly, appearance perceptions can be linked to serious social issues, and there is a need for further research to identify these linkages, so as to foster an awareness of the ramifications of gender based power relations (Kaiser, 1997:335).

The question arises whether the way women dress could possibly be a contributing factor to so-called social ills, including violence against women (Calefato, 2004:19). The way women present themselves through dress is essential to understanding the cause of the violation of women.

**Literature Review**

It is important to understand the nature of violence in order to analyse the violation of women because of their dress choice. Thus the researcher investigates violence against women as discussed by Bunch (1992).

The role that dress plays in societal gender roles (Craik, 1994) and how the presentation of the body contributes to gendered violence will be investigated. This research will also explore whether modern modes of dress encourage sexual attention (Heider, 1958).

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3 Sexually charged with regard to this study means sexual or sensual bodily features (Craik, 1994: 56). In other words parts of the body that supposedly attract sexual attention.
This study looks into the messages expressed in clothing (Lurie, 1981); how men behave toward women who are dressed in certain ways. Furthermore the researcher will investigate what the consequences of such behaviour are for women. These concepts of messages expressed in clothing are embedded in the social psychology of apparel which is a form of inquiry based in social cognition. The concept of social cognition operates collectively with the theories of inference and attribution. These theories address the processes that happen at a cognitive level concerning the perceiving of people and the creation of ‘person perceptions’. Social psychology of dress explores aspects such as: appearance and appearance perception; cognitive perspectives; cultural perspectives; relationships between the sexes; misrepresentation of self; the social implications of clothing and perceiver variables, which all lead to the perception of the dressed body and the consequences of these perceptions (Kaiser, 1997).

According to Eicher (2000:92) culture influences the way one dresses as well as other elements of one’s behaviour because human beings do not exist in isolation. Eicher (1999:43) further states that women’s dress is often interpreted as an indicator of her sexual respectability. In contrast to this a woman is compelled to make herself attractive and this process is influenced largely by cultural beliefs concerning modes of dress (Eicher, 1999:43). Dressing the body and perceiving the dressed body involve psychological processes which include cultural codes (Eicher, 2000:40).
For the purposes of this study it is essential to investigate the theories of inference, attribution and modesty, and how they relate to a South African context.

The researcher will examine statistics and articles that will allow her to ascertain what the current situation of male initiated violence against women is in South Africa.

There are three events, which have been reported extensively in the media\(^4\), which will function as case studies. These are namely, a rape trial involving Jacob Zuma, a sexual assault incident which took place at the Zulu reed dance and a sexual assault incident which took place at Noord Street taxi rank.

1.2 Research Problem

Some men have the perception that they have a right to violate women due to the apparel choices that women make.

1.2.1 Sub Problems

- In South Africa, the violation of a woman, who reveals ‘sexually charged’ parts of her body in her dress choice, is justified.
- Cultures offer conflicting messages about what is appropriate for women to wear.

\(^4\) Several media sources have been used as sources for this study.
1.3 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate the perceived right to violate a woman as a consequence of female apparel choices.

1.3.1 Sub-aims:

— To investigate the perceived right to violate women, using theories and concepts that will explore the link between female dress and violent behaviour toward women.

— To explore the perceived right to violate women in a South African context through analysing case studies.

1.4 Research Methods and theories

This study is considered to be a descriptive research model. Descriptive research describes situations and events (Babbie, 2004:89). The focus of this kind of research model is to investigate the causal aspects of a particular social issue (Fouché & De vos, 2005: 106). Furthermore this research model includes an intensive scrutiny of incidents and their deeper meaning and this is done using case studies. A descriptive research design is used for this study as it is an in-depth examination of why women are violated by men and whether this violation is justified by a woman’s dress choice.

A qualitative research methodology will be used in this study. According to Delport and Fouché (2005:351) qualitative research methodology allows for the accumulation of information-rich research. With regards to this study the aspects of a qualitative research approach will lead to the formulation of
insights into whether dress contributes to violence against women. These aspects are unquantifiable, thus a qualitative research approach will be suited to this study.

This study makes use of a basic research design. “Basic scientific research investigation seeks new knowledge about social phenomena, hoping to establish general principles and theories to explain them” (Miller & Salkind, 2002: 3). This study seeks to establish whether dress and/or the perception thereof is the cause of the social phenomenon of female violation in South Africa.

The type of research design adopted in this study is non-empirical because it analyses textual sources and media reports on several sexual assault cases. These textual sources form part of a case study into the perception of female dress in South Africa and whether it has lead to female violation in some cases.

The product of this research is an in-depth description of a case or cases. The research situates this system or case within its larger context, but the focus remains on either the case or an issue that is illustrated by the case (Creswell, 1998:61).

Thus, in this study, different cases will be investigated to gain insight into the larger context of males’ perceived right to violate women based on mode of dress.

According to Cohen et al (2000: 181) case studies allow for the infiltration into a situation in ways that may be limited by numerical analysis. Furthermore, case studies establish cause and effect, which is done by observing cause and effect (Cohen et al, 2000: 181). The aim of this research is to investigate
whether dress contributes to male initiated violence against women. It is thus a case study of dress as a cause and violence or violation as an effect.

Case studies comprehensibly express the scope of a social phenomenon (Reinharz, 1992:174). The researcher will examine three well publicised incidences of male initiated violence against women in South Africa, which are believed to have been caused by the women’s apparel choice. These are considered to be instrumental case studies as these cases are used to expand on a theory or to gain understanding of a social issue (Fouché, 2005: 272). By investigating three case studies the researcher places males’ perceived right to violate based on female dress, in a South African context. With the in-depth study of these cases the researcher can gain explanatory insights into the particular social issue (Babbie, 2004: 293).

The following factors will be considered when analysing the case studies: perception, violence (sexual violence), and culture.

Social cognition\(^5\) as a perspective of inquiry has been used in the study of appearance and human behaviour (Davis & Lenon, 1988: 182). Social cognition includes such concepts as social perception, which is integral to the elucidation of how perceptions are formed (Davis & Lenon, 1988: 182). Social cognition also encompasses the theories of inference and attribution. These perceptions are subsequently applied by people to make judgements of others. The theory of inference states that:

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\(^5\) Social cognition is defined as how people make sense of other people and themselves (Damhorst, 1991 :191). This definition also includes how people perceive others, stereotype them and comprehend the reason others behave the way they do. Furthermore Social cognition is the wide-ranging study of information processing and thus how people organize and use information that has social consequences.
Individuals... use cognitive institutions to draw inferences about an object from environmental stimuli, or cues. Knowledge structures expedite such information processing tasks as labelling and categorizing objects and events, defining expectations about objects and events and suggesting appropriate responses to them (Shoa et al, 2002: 1165).

In relation to this study the researcher applies the inference theory to individuals, to establish how men in particular, using dress as a cue, make inferences about women. The study investigates whether these inferences lead to violence against women. Linked to this are the theories of attribution and modesty. The theory of attribution models how people attempt to find causes for behaviour of themselves and others (Heider, 1958). Dress and appearance are possible cues that allow perceivers to assess the source and cause of a social outcome (Kaiser, 1997: 37). In a study conducted by Workman & Freeburg (1999) participants noticed, interpreted and attributed the cause for violence to inappropriate clothing in particular. It was discovered that:

Men attributed more responsibility to the victim than women. Both men and women who viewed a photograph of the victim in a short skirt attributed more responsibility to the victim than those who viewed a photograph of the victim in a moderate or long skirt (Workman & Freeburg, 1999: 261).

In another study conducted by Cassidy and Hurrel (1995, cited in Ross et al, 2002: 91) participants who viewed a photo of the victim provocatively dressed, believed the victim was more responsible for the rape than the perpetrator. These participants alleged that the perpetrator's behaviour was justified. Similarly the case studies analysed in this study investigate whether or not the same attributions and inferences exist in South African society.
1.5. Outline of chapters

In the chapters that follow, the above theories and concepts will be discussed and used to analyse case studies. Chapter two will be a literature review in which a context for violent behaviour due to choice of dress is created through the investigation of concepts and theories concerning the perceived right to violate women. Furthermore this chapter will be the crux of this study as the theories and concepts presented in that chapter will give insight into the research problem. Chapter three introduces and examines case studies concerning the perceived right to violate women in a South African context. The theories and concepts discussed in chapter two will be used in chapter three as a bases to analyse the case studies examined in that chapter. The concluding chapter namely chapter 4, will draw all the concepts and findings from the analysis of the case studies together as well as discuss what insights were gained through this study.
Chapter Two

The nuances of female dress choice and male perceptions

2.1 Introduction

The perceived right to violate women is an issue that has plagued societies for millennia (D’Cruze & Rao, 2005; Johnson, 2004; Green, 1999). Women, as well as children and the elderly, constitute the vulnerable of society, which is one reason that the violation of women persists. This violence continues covertly as this vulnerability forces women into silence.

Violence against women is a multifaceted issue. This research concentrates on the use of dress as the justification for violence against women. This is exemplified in South Africa, where in some conservative communities women are harassed for wearing trousers or short skirts. This harassment is occasionally perpetrated or initiated by men within these communities. Consequently women find themselves being in danger through their simplest form of expression, which is the way they choose to dress.

Dress choice is governed by various factors in as much as perceptions of dress are influenced by various factors. These factors are explored in this chapter through the concepts of the social psychology of dress and the concept of social cognition. Social psychology of dress and social cognition explicate how dress conveys messages to perceivers about the wearer’s perceived character and intentions.
The perceiver in this research is male, and the subject of this male perception is female – a woman who may unknowingly be intensifying negative perceptions towards her, which may cause violent consequences, due to her choice of dress.

In this chapter a literature review will be conducted so as to define and discuss aspects of violence against women, social cognition and the social psychology of dress and these concepts are explored in a South African context. This will form a theoretical basis on which case studies will be analysed in the following chapter.

2.2 Social psychology of dress

Fashion and clothing are forms of non verbal communication; this is because fashion and clothing do not use the written or spoken word to relay messages (Barnard 1996: 26). This is reiterated by Eicher (1999:1) who states that “…dress is a coded sensory system of non verbal communication that aids human interaction in space and time”. In many cases this non verbal communication provides information about the individual (Arthur, 1999: 3).

Calefato’s view (2004: 5) that dress uses a sort of syntax according to a set of rules to give garments the ability to attain meaning, is similar to Lurie’s (in Barnard, 1996:27), who has taken this metaphor further, in both a literal and a literary sense. Lurie believes that clothing is comparable to language, which consists of words, grammar and syntax. Individual garments have pre-existing meanings and when these garments are combined together by the wearer to form an outfit, a ‘sentence’ or collective meaning is established. Thus it is
deduced that garments are a medium used by individuals to relay messages to others (Barnard, 1996: 28). The problem with Lurie’s concept of dress is that it suggests that dress choice is always premeditated, which may not be true. People dress their bodies in ways that align with a certain standard of appropriate behaviour or according to their own sense of aesthetics and beauty (Cunningham & Voso Lab, 1991: 1). Furthermore, people habitually expect others to be able to understand what is essentially being communicated through these sartorial devices. Hence people maintain certain ideas about what different types of dress mean, with an ever changing vocabulary which is never spoken but universally understood.

There are several aspects which govern how these messages are sent and received. According to Barnard (1996: 72) the meanings which garments possess are resolved in people’s own thoughts and intentions. It is clear, whether to the detriment of either party or otherwise, that the perceivers’ and wearers’ intentions differ concerning certain apparel choices (Barnard, 1996: 73). Kaiser (1997: 311) refers to intentional and unintentional communication of dress. When a sender (dressed person) unintentionally or ignorantly conveys a message that is assigned to her by the perceiver, this may be perceived as unintentional communication (Kaiser, 1997: 311). Conversely a sender aims to convey a certain message as an attempt to create a certain impression of herself to others; this is called unintentional signification (Enninger, 1985 cited in Kaiser, 1997: 311). Kaiser (1997) presents the sender’s perspective of her appearance, her intention and the reaction to her appearance (see table 2.1 on page 15. However, “[t]he appearance signifies to the perceiver but the communication is only unidirectional and involves
social cognition on the part of the perceiver without the intent of the sender” (Kaiser, 1997: 311).

Table 2.1. 
Sender's Point of View in Appearance Communication (Kaiser 1997: 312)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Appearance alone</th>
<th>Appearance and discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unintentional</strong></td>
<td>Unknowningly conveys messages to others; no feedback from these messages</td>
<td>Unknowningly conveys messages to others; obtains some feedback from these messages (either verbal or nonverbal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>signification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intentional</strong></td>
<td>Strives to convey particular message; not aware whether it is conveyed</td>
<td>Strives to convey a particular message; obtains some feedback from success and can use discourse to negotiate desired identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interpretation of the language of dress is steeped in social, cultural and political implications (Keenan, 2001: 182). Keenan (2001: 180) further states that “…bodies are impressing themselves on society through dress”. The social psychology of dress thus encompasses what appearance means and how the clothed person is perceived within society (Kaiser, 1997: 3).

The social psychology of dress is important to this study as it encompasses aspects of dress and the perception of dress, that will assist in uncovering the reasons behind men’s perceived right to violate women because of the way that women choose to dress.

There are various factors that govern the process of sending and receiving encoded messages in dress. This process in itself is referred to as appearance perception, in other words how the dressed body is perceived.
Furthermore the factors that influence appearance perception, in other words those factors that influence perceivers’ perceptions of dress, are referred to as perceiver variables. Perceiver variables differ from perceiver to perceiver. These variables are the elements which are present, in and/or influence a perceiver. These perceiver variables have a significant effect on a person’s perceptions of dress. Dress contributes to the appearance of a person, hence the perception of dress includes a concept referred to as appearance perception.

2.2.1. Appearance Perception

Appearance as described by Kaiser (1997: 4) is:

[The total, composite image created by the human body and any modification, embellishments, or coverings of the body that are visually perceived; a visual context that includes clothing as well as the body.]

Appearance perception is therefore the observing and evaluating, or the making of assumptions, about people based on how people look (Kaiser, 1997: 7).

Since clothes are considered to possess a form of communication, appearance perception of the clothed body leads to extensive interpretations (Kaiser, 1999: 8). These interpretations may also be referred to as inferences which form part of a social cognition process in human interaction. The concept of social cognition elucidates how a perceiver’s perceptions of female dress are initially formulated and how this perception evolves. Perceivers use their social cognition skills in the interpretation of the clothed body and thus social cognition is an integral part of appearance perception (Kaiser,
The concept of social cognition centres around how people make straightforward perceptions and form judgements about other people on the basis of particular cues. Dress is a cue which is used to make sense of aspects of social interaction (Kaiser, 1997:34). Furthermore the concept of social cognition encompasses how people develop impressions about each other. These impressions are further influenced by the environment in which these social interactions occur. Dress

...has no absolute or essential meaning, rather the clothes-body complex operates in ways appropriate to a particular habitus or milieu. Often clothing behaviour is determined by pragmatic criteria and situations (Craik, 1994:10). This statement suggests that clothing choices are made with practical or 'usage driven' intention. In other words within certain situations a person will choose to wear a certain item of clothing because she envisages that her dress choice suits that situation or the activity in which she will participate, thus 'pragmatic criteria'. Entwistle (2000: 15) adds that dress in everyday life is the result of social pressures and the way the dressed body appears can be symbolic of the situation in which it is found.

"Perceivers are accustomed to viewing others and drawing implicit inferences about them on the basis of appearance" (Kaiser 1997: 312). As perceivers view certain appearances they try to make sense of what message the wearer is transmitting through their choice of dress. Hence this process produces their interpretation of what they perceive, which is the person’s dress. This interpretation may be a message the perceived may intend to communicate or

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6 Craik (1994: 10) in this quote refers to dress as fashion. The researcher would prefer to refrain from using the word 'fashion' as it may create the impression that one is purely discussing the vogue of dress, which is more centred towards the aesthetic appeal of dress than the social cognition attributes of dress.
not, which in turn causes reactions or behaviour that is wanted or undesired (see table 2.1 on page 17). Appearance perception is also subject to particular elements which affect perceiver interpretation. Firstly, perceiver interpretation is influenced by situational circumstances. Situational circumstances are the particular protocols required for a specific location. Certain locations require one to be involved in certain types of social interaction. These places may be either formal, semi-casual or casual. Also, different countries have different value systems (Craik 1994: 10), which influence attitudes towards dress. Secondly, rationalizations concerning body exposure also influence perceiver interpretation of dress (Goffman, 1965:50). As perceivers, people are always trying to make sense of why other people are dressed in a certain way in certain social situations; in this case how much the body is exposed through dress. Thirdly, the perceiver may not necessarily consider which parts of the body are exposed but rather the orientational implications\(^7\) of being exposed.

The argument here is that any state of dress is proper or improper only in terms of what other evidence is available concerning the individual’s allocation of involvement and hence his orientation to the social occasion and its gatherings (Goffman 1965: 52).

One example of this is an incident involving Jacqui Smith who at the time of the incident was the United Kingdom’s home secretary. This incident is an example of how culture, which is the context of most social environments, influences appearance perception. Jacqui Smith appeared for a television review in a ‘cleavage revealing’ outfit; she was asked to button her jacket because the television programme’s headquarters were based in Tehran in

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\(^7\) To orient oneself is to “…determine how one stands in relation to one’s surroundings” (*Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English* 1996: 647). Orientational is the adjective used to describe this process. Orientational implications are thus what is implied by one’s presence and appearance in a certain situation.
Iran (Williams, 2007: 33). Iran is a predominately Muslim country. In Muslim culture women are compelled to wear modest clothing that neither reveals their chest, arms or legs and their head must always be covered with a scarf. Words like “offensive” were used to describe her appearance (Williams, 2007: 33). But if she were at an evening ball in a Western country her dress may have been considered appropriate (Goffman, 1965:50). Similarly swimming gear, which is considered appropriate for the beach, may be frowned upon when worn in a city centre (Goffman, 1965: 50). Furthermore a half dressed model in a lingerie fashion show is considered to be in situational costume, but this same model would be out of place in another environment like parliament, for example (Goffman, 1965:51).

It is thus deduced from the above that appearance perception is a complex process which involves the perceiving of the dressed body, more specifically, what messages dress is transmitting to the perceiver. How the dressed body is perceived is largely dependent on the environment in which it appears.

Appearance perception is also influenced by perceiver variables, which are discussed below.

2.2.2. Perceiver variables

Each perceiver adds a unique perspective to a social situation and it is essential to be familiar with what the characteristics are that shape perceiver understanding, when considering communication in dress (Kaiser, 1997:272). The reason for this is that the social interaction between a subject and the
perceiver cannot be predicted and thus the best way to understand social interaction is to explore the factors that influence behaviour.

Perceiver variables are any social contexts and characteristics that influence perceiver perceptions of the dressed body (Kaiser, 1997: 271). According to Kaiser (1997: 271) perceiver variables, amongst others, are: age, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality. In this study examination of these variables is deemed necessary as they form the crux of social interaction and the distinguishing attributes of an individual. Thus these variables influence the psyche and perceptions of individuals, and perceivers in particular.

2.2.2.1 Age

Socio-cultural perceptions and age are linked when it comes to structural perceptions of clothes and this is related to development factors\(^8\) (Kaiser, 1997: 280). Young children rely heavily on appearance or clothing when creating impressions of people (Kaiser, 1997: 279). As children become older they become more flexible in their judgments of people based on these people’s appearance (Kaiser, 1997:280). Beginning at age five, children can distinguish particular garment details. In other words, from this age children start to recognise certain pieces of clothing and what these mean as presented on the human body. As a child gets older, distinguishing garment detail becomes less important. They begin to interpret the meaning of a person’s appearance. As adults, there is a

\(^8\) Development factors are elements of a person that evolve as a person develops from being a child into an adult; these include maturation, growth and ageing (Meyer 1998: 3).
difference in appearance perception between young adults and mature adults (Kaiser, 1997: 283). The second perceiver variable is ethnicity.

2.2.2 Ethnicity

Kaiser (1997: 444) describes ethnicity as “…a cultural category that may be visible on the basis of such physical attributes as skin colour, eye shape, hair texture, or facial features”. Michaels (1995: 58) asserts that ethnicity is not just race but includes culture: “… ethnicity here is by no means simply biological”. It is suggested in this argument that defining ethnicity also includes: general language, common history, traditions and impulses, universal laws and religion, and shared opinions (Du Bois, 2003: 44). Kaiser (1997: 287) states that ethnicity as a variable influencing appearance perception is dependent on the context of the situation. This context is culture – when culture is part of a perceiver’s ethnic identity or when a culture is synonymous with a person’s ethnicity (Afshar & Maynard, 2000). It is the cultural influences and socialisation of people that are of greater significance to appearance perception than ethnicity (Kaiser, 1997: 287). In other words the physical ‘make-up’ of a person will not influence his/her perceptions, but rather it is his/her cultural experience which moulds his/her attitudes, and it is these attitudes which influence their perceptions. Culture is the third variable to be considered.

2.2.2.3 Culture

The concept of culture suggests that dress is not simply a means to express a message but it is constitutive of a social order (Barnard, 1996:
Thus dress as a communication is a cultural phenomena in that culture on its own exposes society’s beliefs, values, ideas and experiences and these are communicated through practices, artefacts and institutions (Barnard, 1996: 32). “Apparel is a strong and visible artefact of culture” (Kemp-Gatterson & Stewart, 2009: 35). This is apparent in the transformation of fashion, through different cultural forms (During, 2005: 7). In other words as a culture changes, dress within that culture also changes.

Ethnic groups distinguish ‘correct’ dress for men and women within cultural parameters. The question arises whether female dress is used in some cases to objectify women.

With respect to appearance and clothing, then, a key issue in stratification pertains to the meanings associated with masculinity and femininity in a culture, as well as to the culturally coded difference that leads to inequalities (Kaiser, 1997: 419).

Hence, the differences between the sexes are emphasized and femininity is seen in a negative light. There is then a relative focus on the importance of appearance, which has lead to women being objectified on modern cultural platforms (Kaiser, 1997: 419). One such cultural platform is the media.

The media is the voice of society, which is driven by supply and demand. In other words the media will expose what the majority of the public want to see. Historically the media has portrayed a limited interpretation of women’s roles, with an overemphasis on women’s appearance rather

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9 “[A] value [is] defined as an element of a shared symbolic system which serves as a criterion or standard for selection among the alternatives of orientation which are intrinsically open in a situation. Culture thus affects human action through values that direct it to some ends rather than others” (Swidler 1986: 274).
than considering the abilities of women (Kaiser, 1997: 419). The fourth perceiver variable which influences perceiver perceptions is gender.

2.2.2.4. Gender

Gender is an important variable to consider. Male and female perceivers have vastly different interpretations of dress and sexuality (Kaiser, 1997: 272). Dress is a powerful means of communication and reflects statements about the gender roles of a newborn child soon after it is born (Eicher & Roach-Higgins, 1997: 8). While newborn children’s first dress might be generally gender-neutral - in terms of markers used for gender differentiation in adult clothing - they are believed to be gender appropriate for the people of a particular culture (Eicher & Roach-Higgins, 1997: 8). After puberty, distinguishable dress for males and females becomes prominent in society (Crawley, 1965: 72).

Clothes draw attention to the sex of the wearer so that one can tell, usually at first glance, whether they are a man or a woman [...] Practices of dress evoke the sexed body, drawing attention to bodily differences between men and women that might otherwise be obscured (Entwistle, 2000: 140).

The separation of the sexes and sexuality is apparent in dress in complex ways (Craik, 1994: 56). Furthermore certain types of dress communicate gender differentiations that have consequences for the appropriate behaviour of men and women (Eicher & Roach-Higgins, 1997: 8). Distinctions between exclusively male or exclusively female dress can not be categorically defined, as these are subject to changing fads, sexual orientation and differing male and female perceptions of dress (Craik, 1994:56). According to Crawley (1965: 72) garments from this stage of
development become distinctly feminine and masculine. The fifth and final variable is sexuality.

2.2.2.5 Sexuality

Sexual characteristics are affirmed by dress; it becomes the intention of the wearer to attract the attention of the opposite sex\(^{10}\) by means of the superficial view of that person presented by dress choice (Crawley, 1965: 72).

Modern sexuality is rooted in our (sexed) body, making the things we use to decorate our bodies, potentially at least, sexually charged […] However, it would be misleading to assume that bodily adornment such as clothes […] reflect a pre-sexed and pre-sexual body […] Materials [are] commonly used simultaneously to cover and reveal the body, adding sexual meanings to the body, that would otherwise not be there (Entwistle, 2000: 181).

This statement suggests that dress on its own, removed from the human, bears no sexually charged meaning. Only when it is used to reveal and cover certain parts of the body does the meaning become apparent to the perceiver. Furthermore the sexuality of those body parts is determined by cultural values. For example, some cultures believe that the breasts are highly sexual and thus a blouse with a plunging neckline revealing a woman’s cleavage would be deemed highly provocative. Alternatively when a woman’s legs and thighs are revealed some cultures deem this to be a sexually charged appearance. Entwistle (2000: 186) states that Western culture places a great deal of sexual meaning onto the female body. Furthermore, this

\(^{10}\) Opposite sex here refers to women and men. But it is noted that when concerning sexual attraction this is not always toward the opposite sex. Same sex sexual attraction is a viable possibility but will not be discussed in this study.
has little to do with a woman’s ‘natural’ feminine identity but is rather a result of cultural associations which have a propensity to identify women more closely with sex and sexuality than men.

Girls are traditionally encouraged to place emphasis on their appearance as opposed to boys (Kaiser, 1997: 66). It is suggested that women dress primarily to please men (Craik, 1994: 56). Laver’s Seduction Principle adds to this notion in that it suggests that women’s clothes are intended to make the wearer more attractive to the opposite sex (Rouse 1989: 12). Furthermore, Rouse (1989: 12) argues that many women have garments that are meant to attract attention to their bodies. “… [W]omen are constantly linked to the idea of seduction through appearance” (Entwistle, 2000: 186). Glad (2007:83) maintains that female clothing and support garments augment sexual allure and partially expose or emphasise sexually distinctive body parts. He further states that dress is “…intended to signal her intentions”. If this is true then so is the notion that women encourage male sexual attention. A different argument suggests that women do not dress with the sole intention of appearing sexually attractive (Kaiser, 1997: 335). This argument suggests rather that males focus on sensuality in their perception of female dress. This concept is reiterated by Taylor (2006) who says “…for younger women raunch is…about fashion”. In this article, Taylor (2006) discusses the modern trend of “raunchy” dress. Raunchy is an adjective used to describe overly provocative attire. Furthermore, females dress with the intent of appearing fashionable, stylish, or similar to their peers, and men subsequently overestimate
the sexual intent of these dress choices. “Sex sells, and the circuits of sale are global, as the images which sell” (Posel, 2004:7). Global trends have become increasingly sexually explicit. These trends are supplemented with messages of how ‘cool’ they are and in turn attract young women (Posel, 2004:7).

...[D]ress and accessories have become a statement of sexual capital as much as social style. In this milieu, sexuality is boldly and openly on display. In part, this is vested in the body: assertively sexy ways of dressing and walking – for women, wearing tight clothing, short skirts, showing lots of cleavage (Posel, 2004:8).

Because female and male understanding of sexuality is different, confusion is created with regards to sexual allusions (Craik, 1994: 56). A man may interpret a female dressed in a certain way as a suggestion of sexual desire, a message the wearer may not have been aware that she was sending to perceivers.

Displays of sexuality and perceiver interpretation thereof differ within different cultures (Barnard, 1996: 56). There are extensive cultural sensibilities surrounding gender, sexuality, age and status, which converge on the dressed body, which is more heavily weighted on women’s bodies than on men (Hansen, 2004: 166). Furthermore, with cultures shifting their shame frontiers, the naked body has been redefined. In other words, cultures are continuously changing what they consider to be shameful when it comes to which parts of the body are exposed. This has lead to the attachment of sexual charge onto certain body parts. Hansen (2004: 178) describes an incident which occurred in the National Assembly in Zambia to illustrate this point. Nkandu Luo,
a professor of microbiology and pathology, in her forties, wore an outfit which consisted of a short skirt which was two inches above her knees with a slit at the back and a loose fitting floral print shirt. She was seated in the front row and her knees and legs were visible. Professor Lou was subsequently accused of provoking male members of parliament with her dress. The members of parliament asserted that she was “… trying to change this chamber into a bedroom” (Hansen, 2004: 178).

There are noticeable differences in female and male perceptions (Kaiser, 1997: 273), and it is these differences that also perpetuate situations like the one mentioned above. In studies done by Rosenwasser, Zellman and Goodchilds (Kaiser, 1997: 274), male adolescents have more interest in female dress as an indicator to them of sexual interest or sexual availability than females. Furthermore, heterosexual males consider female appearance to be more sexy and seductive than heterosexual females do (Kaiser 1997: 274). In a different study done by Adams and Tansh (1983, cited in Kaiser, 1997: 273) it was discovered that male perceivers preferred to see females in revealing dress, compared to female perceivers. This study further revealed that female perceivers were more concerned with fashion and social status of the female wearer’s dress choice, while male perceivers evaluated dress choices on the scale of attractiveness, sexiness, temptation and femininity (Kaiser, 1997: 274).
Considering these differences of perception in female and male perceivers, the question arises whether appearance accurately delineates a female wearer’s sexuality. It can be assumed that there is a high degree of possibility that there will be miscommunication between the female wearer and male perceiver, which may lead to serious consequences (Kaiser 1997: 335). According to a study by Kanekar and Kolsawalla (cited in Kaiser, 1997: 335), males attributed more responsibility to a female rape victim for the rape if her dress choice was deemed provocative.

It is apparent when interpreting these results that appearance perceptions can be linked to serious social ills and gender based power relations (Kaiser, 1997: 335). The perpetuation of these social ills can be linked to the value systems entrenched in cultures to.

In conclusion, by investigating why men violate women the aim is to understand how certain men use female dress as a justification for their behaviour towards women. This section, namely the theory of the social psychology of dress, explains the role of female dress within society. The researcher explored the concepts that influence how a male perceiver perceives a woman dressed in a particular way. The researcher also investigated how male perceivers make assumptions about a woman’s character, through his perception about her appearance. Furthermore, messages transferred through dress are interpreted by the perceiver using his own embedded perceptions — it is established that perceptions are influenced by a number of factors. Perceivers then react, which may lead to violent consequences. It is deduced that female dress seems to influence violence against women. Dress is
also used as a cue when a perceiver makes inferences about a woman. These dress cues may also influence perceivers to attribute blame to a woman for being violated. This is discussed further in the concept of social cognition.

2.3 Social Cognition

The concept of social cognition provides insight into how female dress is used as a justification for male behaviour toward women. The concept of social cognition can be characterised as a process of how people make sense of other people (Fiske & Taylor 2008: 1). Furthermore it is a phenomenon which is useful to the human condition and involves, among others, analyses of how people think. According to Wyer and Scrull (1994: 37) a social cognition perspective in research is rooted in cognitive representation and processes which are essential to comprehending all human responses to situations, objects and/or other humans. In terms of this study, a social cognition perspective will enable the researcher to investigate the link between female appearances and male responses to these appearances. Dress is considered a cue which is interpreted in social interaction. In other words dress and/or appearance create a platform for messages about the wearer to be transmitted to the perceiver about the wearer’s disposition. This is referred to by Davis and Lennon (1988) and Erickson and Krull (1999) as correspondent inference. As the above description suggests, these messages are in turn interpreted by the perceiver and whatever message the perceiver interprets will influence the perceiver and the wearer’s social interaction.
Three theories, which are embedded in social cognition and in the social psychology of dress, are relevant to this study. These theories aid in the understanding of perceiver perceptions of dress and the behavioural consequences of these perceptions. These theories are essential for the investigation of female dress and whether it influences violent behaviour toward women. They are: the theory of inference and the theory of attribution as well as the theory of modesty, which are also discussed in this subsection.

Social cognition research, generally, is an investigation into the following elements: mentalism, cross fertilisation, and the ‘real world’ (Fiske & Taylor 2008: 14). With regards to this study mentalism, also referred to as cognitive process, would involve the investigation into processes where stimuli cause social reactions. An example is how a stimulus, namely dress, influences violent behaviour toward women. Cross fertilisation in this study is achieved through the use of elements of cognitive psychology, namely the theories of attribution and inference; and social psychology, namely aspects concerning the social psychology of dress. These concepts are utilised in analysing dress as a catalyst for violence against women. An essential part of social cognition is to apply theories to the ‘real world’. The research problem for this study is embedded in a social issue that affects people in the ‘real world’ every day, whether it is the traumatic experiences of women who are violated or the communities in which these women live, the issue of the perceived right to violate women tangibly affects them all. Examining the laws concerning sexual assault in South Africa will give insight into the ‘real world’ issue of female violation.
One major aspect of social cognition is social perception. Social perception is defined by Dijksterhuis and Bargh (2001: 3) as "...the activation of perceptual representation". In other words, social perception is how people perceive an object or person, and then rationalize what they see using their understanding of what the object or person represents in society. According to Dijksterhuis and Bargh (2001: 3), social perception influences social behaviour. Social perception in turn leads to the perception of the individual – which is referred to as person perception - and this is highly influenced by pre-existing philosophies and stereotypes that the perceiver possesses.

An ubiquitous demonstration in person perception is that people's outputs (evaluations, impressions, memories) are shaped and guided by their knowledge and pre-existing beliefs about the social world. Rather than viewing individuals on the basis of their unique constellations of attributes and proclivities, perceivers prefer to instead furnish categorical (i.e. stereotype-based) conceptions of others. As such, rather than responding to the world as it really is, people's inferences and memories are embellished by schematic forces that guide information processing and its associated products in an expectancy-consistent manner (Macre & Bodenhausen, 2001: 240).

Thus when a person perceives others, his impressions, evaluations and memories of these people are guided by what he understands about the social environment. Hence a perceiver's first impression of another is not based on what that person really is, rather a perceiver makes use of categorical thinking. Categorical thinking is achieved by placing the perceived into categories also identified as stereotypes. This cushions the perceiver in that he has an expectation of how each stereotype will behave, which allows him to confidently prepare his approach or confrontation. To put it simply, perceivers perceive many people in a day and need a simple way to streamline the demands on their person perception (Macre & Bodenhausen, 2001: 240).
Dress is one of the cues used by perceivers to establish stereotypes (Kaiser, 1997: 255). Dress becomes, in a manner of speaking, a ‘social skin’ which allows perceivers to scrutinize identities that the dressed body represents (Hansen, 2004: 372). For example, when a man perceives a woman in provocative dress, he may stereotype her as being promiscuous. This cue acts as a stimulus which suggests the appropriate behavioural response toward the perceived (Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001: 4). The question arises whether a man who sees a women dressed in a certain way and stereotypes her as being promiscuous, will respond by violating this woman.

Appearance and social perception are further investigated in the theories that follow, namely the theories of inference, attribution and modesty. These theories will provide insight into how inferences are created about a wearer’s disposition and how these inferences may lead to the allocation of attribution in sexual assault cases and finally how the theory of modesty influences perceptions.

2.3.1 Theory of Inference

Social inference refers to the process of drawing conclusions about individuals or social groups based on a set of underlying premises (Beike & Sherman, 1994: 191). According to Damhorst (1991: 191) dress significantly affects people’s perceptions of others and the ways in which people behave toward each other. This is a crucial factor for this study as it investigates the link between dress and behaviour. Inferences about people may also be drawn from interpreting the behaviour of others.
(Molden et al, 2006: 738). However the main concern of this study is to investigate whether dress as an independent cue can influence male behaviour towards women which may lead to violence. Hence the correspondent inference theory applies to this study as it examines how dress is perceived.

Correspondent inference is what occurs when perceivers attribute certain dispositions to a person after observing that person (Pennington 2000: 16). Furthermore, when a perceiver recognizes an aspect of a person’s disposition, it allows him to predict how the person perceived will behave. Hence correspondent inference theory is used to investigate the cause of behaviour (Erickson & Krull, 1999: 2). Correspondent inference theory examines the attribution of clothing and appearance in social incidence as an influence on behaviour (Davis & Lennon, 1988: 183).

In almost all social situations we are required to appear dressed although what constitutes ‘dress’ varies from culture to culture and also within a culture, since what is considered appropriate dress will depend on the situation (Entwistle, 2000: 6).

Correspondent inference theory delves into the appropriateness of certain dress in certain social environments, which affects the attribution process. Essentially, correspondent inference theory explains the process by which people make inferences about others, as illustrated. When the process of inference is applied with dress as a cue, inferences about a woman’s character change as the type of dress is changed. This is illustrated in Figure 2.1 on page 36. This figure is adapted from a similar figure created by Newman and Uleman (1995: 516).
It is assumed that in Figure 2.1 below, a man perceives a woman in dress that reveals her legs and/or her chest and assumes that she is promiscuous because she is freely displaying her body. This illustrates that there is an assumption that women ‘wear’ their sexuality. This also gives insight into how such inferences may be interpreted messages from dress cues which may lead to women being unwontedly sexually solicited. There is a potential danger of violation for a woman if she were to deny such solicitation. The question arises whether or not she will be violated.

Figure 2.1

According to Livesley and Bromley (1973) when a person perceives another person there are four stages in the thought process that follows. The first stage is the selection of cues. People often view others holistically in terms of their complete appearances; they also focus on particular appearance cues, such as a particular item of dress.
The second stage is interpretative inference. This stage is when a perceiver starts inferring meaning as he interprets the appearance cues. He then uses his cognitive structures to correlate the appearance cues with central personal characteristics. For example, as depicted in Figure 2.1 (on page 34), the appearance cue of a long skirt is correlated to a central personal characteristic described as being conservative.

Following this stage is the extended inference stage. In this third stage a perceiver makes further ‘cognitive leaps’. This process may also be referred to as depending on the ‘halo effects’. This is when perceivers refer to a personal trait linked to the wearer, which they believe the perceived appearance projects. Inferences in this stage tend to be unsubstantiated. In a study done by Millard and Grant (2006: 662) dress was used as a visual cue to establish how inferences about women are made. Findings in the above study were measured with Kang’s rubric of body display. Millard & Grant (2006: 660) discovered that a woman in revealing dress was considered overtly sexual.

The final stage in the thought process is the anticipatory set. This stage comprises of the perceiver’s inclination to respond to the perceived person based on the traits he has inferred about the perceived person. Hence the social-cognitive process of appearance perception leads to inferences. In adults as opposed to children this process is implicit, meaning it happens unconsciously. Behaviour towards the perceived

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11 The rubric of body display was developed by Kang (1997) and is used as a category of coding in research involving the portrayal of women in media. This rubric uses two scales that measure two broad concepts and a scale of gender stereotyping. The first is submissiveness and the second is explicit sexuality (Millard & Grant, 2006: 662).
person is then initiated, based on what the perceiver believes the perceived person's character to be.

If the model presented in figure 2.1 (on page 34) is used to describe these stages it would have to be slightly modified (see figure 2.2 on page 37), which shows the stages in a model of logical progression in the thought process involving appearance perception and inference followed by the resulting behaviour.

This model simplifies a complex process that involves many other influencing factors. For purposes of this study the process of inference is broken down into four essential stages which focus primarily on appearance. This model cannot address all the factors that occur in the human mind during cognitive and psychological processes; by simplifying the said processes into four stages, it is simpler to identify the point at which dress as a visual cue causes inferences to be made and how these inferences influence male behaviour toward women.
The theory of inference and the theory of attribution function in tandem. Where inferences influence behaviour, attributions are used to explain behaviour. Both theories hinge on the concept of inferences. The theory of attribution also suggests that inferences are made about a person or people who are involved in a social situation, but conversely there is a process of attributing blame for the resultant behaviour in that
social situation. For example, if a woman in revealing dress is violated, blame will be attributed to her for her violation. It is for the above-mentioned reason that the theory of attribution will be investigated.

2.3.2 Theory of Attribution

The theory of attribution was developed by Fritz Heider, Harold Kelley, Edward E Jones and Lee Ross. According to Heider (1958) the theory of attribution relates to the ways in which people explain (or attribute) the behaviour of others or themselves (self attribution) with something or someone else. According to Kaiser (1997: 37) the process of assigning attribution is not completely dependent on internal influences but also includes external cues that perceivers consider when judging others. Appearance and dress form part of these cues (Kaiser, 1997: 37) that enable perceivers to assess the source or cause of a social incident. According to the attribution theory, a person will attribute blame to certain people for the occurrence of a social incident (Heider, 1989). In other words people attribute blame in order for them to make sense of why a social incident has occurred, and in their understanding or misunderstanding of this incident they deduce that it was caused by one party’s provocation of the other. Furthermore it may be assumed that people want to remove blame from themselves, thus linking it to someone else. According to Kaiser (1999:37) the physical appearance of these people provides clues as to their perceived role in the incident. Relating this theory to women and their dress choices, it may be said that if a woman is assaulted she contributes to this behaviour by
dressing in a particular way. In other words a woman influences perceptions of herself and behaviour towards her as an explicit result fuelled by her choice of dress.

Thus perceivers will determine the cause of a social incident by considering how the people involved in this incident were dressed. In so doing, perceivers provide themselves with clues as to the role of those involved in the situation.

Assigning attribution in cases of sexual assault becomes complex, because perception toward victims of sexual assault are influenced by rape and sexual assault myths (Donecker, 2006). These myths suggest that a woman is responsible for being sexually assaulted if her dress choice suggests that she was ‘looking for sex’. In a study conducted by Donecker (2006) it was discovered that women were more harshly judged if they were perceived by participants of the study to have been wearing revealing dress when they were assaulted than women who had been dressed in clothes that were not revealing. Furthermore, more male than female participants sympathised with the perpetrator and attributed blame to the victim if they perceived her to be wearing provocative dress. This difference in perception was also noted by Workman and Freeburg (1999: 261) whose research revealed that male participants considered gender and dress when attributing blame to rape victims. These men considered aspects such as how provocative the victim’s dress was. However, the female participants
did not consider gender and dress of the victim in a rape situation and were more likely to attribute blame to the perpetrator.

The reason that women choose to dress in a certain way is not always with the intention of being sexually attractive, thus attributions for female violation constructed by men may prove problematic (Kaiser, 1985: 48). The differences between male and female views on cues of sexual attraction of dress create misinterpretations that cause problems with social interaction.

The accurate imputing of the sexual attraction motive has implication for issues such as rape, where one viewpoint holds that the female is “asking for it” by dressing attractively. What role does attractiveness play in the crime of rape, which is widely regarded as a violent crime rather than a crime of lust? (Kaiser, 1985: 48).

In studies conducted by Terry and Doerge (1979) and Kanekar and Kolsawalla (1980 cited in Kanekar & Vaz, 1988) the following were discovered: firstly that dress can be used to transfer attribution for sexual assault to the victim for sexually attracting a male perpetrator. However it is important to take into account with these findings the fact that rape is a crime of violence which affects women who are not dressed in provocative attire as well (Kaiser 1985:49). Secondly, men are more prone to assign attribution to women in a rape situation.

Clearly appearance dependence favors those whose appearance connotes statuses held in high regard; with regard to crime, it favors those taken stereotypically to be no easy victims or who can manipulate appearance to suggest strength or imperviousness to assault...a woman is more likely to invite attack on the street if she is wearing tight, ‘sexy’ clothes (Gardner, 1990: 317).
This statement asserts how important appearance is in creating perceptions and attribution for social issues, especially violence against women, especially sexual assault.

The modesty theory is a theory that can be linked to the theory of attribution, especially when attribution of violation is justified through dress. This theory focuses on the belief that certain body parts should not be exposed through provocative dress. Hence if sexual assault is ostensibly attributed to provocative dress then it can be said that the wearer was immodestly dressed.

2.3.3 Theory of modesty

Etymologically linked to the Latin modestus, ‘keeping within measure’, this term originally signified moderation, as in Cicero’s ‘golden mean of living’. Gradually, modesty took on the gendered connotation of a sexual virtue particularly important for women (Douthwaite, n.d).

The theory of modesty is centred in the idea that particular parts of the body are indecent or shameful and should be covered so that they cannot be viewed. According to Barnard (1996:51) the concept of modesty began with attitudes informed by, among others, Judaeo-Christian tradition. Furthermore, modesty can be linked to the knowledge of the story of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis in the Christian Bible. This story emphasises the concept that humanity recognised its nakedness as shameful, which led to the wearing of clothes.

...[With] regard to the human body its functions and its clothing, we have obscured the simple truths of nature by a thousand extravagant notions of our own (Perkins Gilman et al, 2002: 11).
What this means is that people no longer view the body based purely on its natural state, but people have attached excessive meaning to the body, which leads to the necessity for it to be covered with clothing. Sentiments of modesty are attached to some parts of the body and not to others (Perkins Gilman et al, 2002:11). Modesty is an act of restraint which creates a conflict between the body and sexual desire (Entwistle, 2000: 12). “Dressing presumes that a code of restraint, self-control and ‘affect-transformation’ is a habit” (Entwistle, 2000: 12). In other words a person who dresses modestly will be perceived as someone who is always self controlled and positively influences others.

Standards of female modesty have undergone countless redefinitions over the years, in response to cultural, political, and economic factors [...] Concepts of modesty are determined by cultural as well as historical factors (Douthwaite, n.d.).

Concepts of shame or modesty are different in different cultures (Barnard, 1996: 52). This is based on what certain societies deem to be acceptable or sexually disturbing (Ribeiro, 2003: 12). “There’s no definition of modesty or shame that is natural or essential and therefore found in all cultures” (Barnard, 1996: 52). This suggests that the concept of modesty is not universal. On the contrary - some cultures do not even consider it to exist.

Sexual instincts of modesty and attraction feed into the concept of dress (Crawley, 1970: 47). This means that whether a person wants to be modest or attractive, dress will be used as the medium to achieve this goal. Clothing systems attempt to reconcile the spheres of modesty and exhibitionism, which may also be linked to private and public erotic
ideals (Entwistle, 2000: 187). Thus people will expose their bodies in certain ways and in certain environments because of their personal beliefs about what is appropriately sexy or ‘erotic’ for public viewing and what is suitably sexy for private purposes. The question arises whether choice of dress is inspired by sexual impulse or aesthetic quality of the attire (Perkins Gilman et al, 2002: 9). In other words a woman may make a particular dress choice not because she intends to sexually attract the perceiver but that she is merely drawn to this particular dress's aesthetic appeal.

Modesty is particularly applied to women rather than men (Perkins Gilman et al, 2002: 11). To add to this, a man may appear in public scantily clothed but if a woman is seen in such a manner she is declared to be grossly immodest.

These theories further elucidate how dress as a cue is an important aspect of appearance perception.

Because clothes are so eminently malleable, we shape them to construct our appearance. There is an experiential dimension to the power of clothing, both in its wearing and viewing. Our lived experience with clothes...hinges on how others evaluate our crafted appearances, and this experience in turn is influenced by the situation and the structure of the wider context (Hansen, 2004: 373).

Thus a person’s ‘lived experience’ is rooted in culture – ‘the structure of the wider context’. In other words the way we appear and the way we are viewed is influenced by culture. A major aspect of social cognition is culture (Fiske & Taylor, 2008: 16). Culture influences social perception, in other words people’s perceptions of others (Peng & Knowles, 2003: 1272; Chaiken & Trope, 1999: 17). The reason for this is that people’s minds are predisposed to absorbing cultures as cultures socialise them
(Fiske & Taylor, 2008: 16). In other words a person will automatically absorb a culture as he/she becomes a part of that cultural community.

2.3.4 Culture

The concept of culture has evolved and continues to evolve through time. Hence the researcher has assembled different definitions so as to capture the essence of culture in the broadest context and moreover has attempted to capture aspects of culture that are central to this study.

“Culture includes all the characteristics, activities and interests of a people” (Eliot, 1975: 298). This has not always been the description of culture. ‘Culture’ is taken from the Latin word *colere* which translated means “…to inhabit, to cultivate, to protect and to honour with worship” (Barnard, 1996: 32). The actual word ‘culture’ is derived from the past participle of the Latin *colo* which refers to tending, caring for and dwelling in a place (Shepperson, 2001: 45). People associated the word culture with tending crops and rearing livestock, but towards the sixteenth century culture was redefined as “…the process of human development” (Barnard, 1996: 32). This description was expanded in an anthropological context and culture is described as, “…the inherited, primarily non-modern and uncontested values, beliefs and practices that organise individuals’ relations to, and participation in, communities” (During, 2005: 7). Violence against women is commonplace within some cultural communities. For example in some
cultural communities, such as in Sillakoro (Côte d’Ivoire), women endure genital mutilation and in India some women are killed if her in-laws are not satisfied with her dowry (Bunch, 1997: 41).

[H]uman rights groups identify and seek to change “harmful traditional practices” rooted in custom and tradition, of which female genital mutilation is the prototype. Many who write about women’s rights to protection from violence see culture as a problem rather than as a resource (Merry, 2003: 947).

Violence seems to transcend communities, evolving into a societal issue (Johnson 2004:22). Societal values encompass culture, as culture is at the centre of shaping values and beliefs.

According to Kemp-Gatterson and Stewart (2009: 37, 38) there are seven attributes of culture, which include the cultural experience, in other words how people participate in culture. Firstly, culture is human-made. People within a society decide deliberately or unintentionally what a culture will be. Secondly, culture is learned. Culture is shared among people, either formally or informally. Thirdly, culture is prescriptive. This means that the culture will create standards or norms by which people belonging to that culture may act or do something. Fourthly, culture is a group phenomenon. Culture is shared by the populace of a society and is emphasized by group pressure. These include shared apparel norms. Fiftihly, cultures are similar but different. Similarities and differences within societies develop similarities and differences in cultures. Sixthly, culture satisfies a need. Cultures achieve this through the establishment of norms and values, and these play an important role in societies, through identifying, simplifying and
sustaining that society. Lastly, culture changes. This is because cultures adapt to the need of those who have created them. Furthermore, cultural changes happen as a result of communities and households responding to social and economic diversions that are linked to globalisation, new technologies, environmental pressures, armed conflict and development projects (Schalkwyk, 2000:1).

The value of the above-mentioned attributes of culture is that it provides an understanding of the composition of cultures and how people function within cultures, communities and society as a whole. This will provide insight into how cultures mould people’s social perceptions about issues applicable to this study, such as issues about dress protocol and violence against women.

Culture influences action not by only providing the ultimate values towards which action is orientated, but by shaping a repertoire or ‘tool kit’ of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct ‘strategies of action’ (Swidler, 1986: 273).

This relates to how essential social perceptions are; in as much as culture plays an integral role in people’s everyday lives, their social perceptions influence their behaviour. Culture is considered a major causal variable by Swidler (1986: 273). His theory suggests that people have separate identities which are activated by situational cues, driven by culture, thus becoming influential on behaviour (Burgess, 2002: 7). In other words culture is a catalyst for behaviour and ‘invests behaviour with meaning’.
“Expectations about attributes and behaviours appropriate to women or men and about the relations between women and men – in other words, gender – are shaped by culture” (Schalkwyk, 2000:1). The concept of culture is most certainly a gendered one, which emerges through the general social representation of women (Hallam & Street, 2000:3). Societies naturally differentiate between men and women (Mihindou, 2006:4). Kaiser (1997:420) poses the question: “How do cultural messages about the meaning of gendered appearances assume relevance in our everyday lives?” Whether it is done consciously or unintentionally, perceivers respond differently towards men and women and this is due to cultural messages about the value of men and women and how they are meant to appear (Kaiser, 1997:423).

Dress may serve as a symbolic metaphor of the relationship of the individual to the cultural system. As such, dress can be an extremely powerful symbolic way of expressing and reinforcing subtle values, relationships and meaning in human culture (Hamilton, 1989: 16).

Culture is also considered to be a context12 in which people manage, perceive and interpret appearances (Kaiser, 1993: 39). Understanding what culture is and how it influences perceptions will help in uncovering the importance of this context to the perceiver and the wearer and what the outcomes of their interaction are. The question arises whether cultures form part of the milieu in which violence against women is perpetrated. These questions will be explored in case studies which have been

12 “Context includes the total appearance of a wearer, the attributes of a wearer and a perceiver of dress, as well as the entire history of their relationship and the nature of the setting in which the interaction occurs” (Kaiser 1993: 39).
selected to contextualise the issue of the perception that female dress instigates female violation in South Africa.

It is essential to first explore the South African cultural context so as to have better insight when analysing the case studies which all occurred in South Africa.

2.4. **The South African context**

Africa has had a volatile history which includes the convergence of many cultures, especially European and African cultures. This history began with the colonisation and segregation of the African continent. Joubert (2008) asserts that social perceptions held by indigenous people of Africa, especially those concerning appearance, were changed by the arrival of European settlers and later Christian missionaries to Africa. According to Joubert (2008) Christianity was imposed on these African cultures, leaving the recipients in a crisis of confusion. This was further aggravated by the tendency of western Christianity to eliminate ‘heathen objects’, alter behaviour and replace African cultures with a new cultural order based on Christian principles (Joubert, 2008). This includes changes in traditional African dress. “The struggle for souls entailed dressing African bodies in European clothes to cover their nudity and manage these bodies” (Hansen, 2004: 375). The body is no longer celebrated by Africans who convert to Christianity, but rather notions of shame are attached to the naked body, creating a necessity to cover it.
It is the nudity of the female body that troubled the settlers and missionaries (Doy, 1996: 17). This attitude to the exposure of the female body seems to be perpetuated in contemporary Africa (Frenkel, 2008: 3).

As women’s mode of dress has changed, there has been the development of such styles as the hot pants, mini-skirt, skinny jeans, cleavage tops etc. These fashions have filtered into Africa from the Western world and have caused conflict in many African societies. For example, “Tensions over ‘proper dress’ arising from the popularity of the miniskirt continue...” in African societies (Hansen, 2004: 376). Africa has seen a barrage of revolutions against the mini skirt, since its onset into female African dress codes (Allman, 2004). This contradicts with believes held by most African cultures, before the advent of colonisation, proudly displayed the female body (Hughes & Hughes, 1997: 114; Pilgrim, 2002). In these revolutions against certain kinds of female dress, women have been violated as a form of punishment for going against the established status quo of conservative dress (Allman, 2004). Popular dress such as the mini-skirt has been labelled as provocative dress. Furthermore in Africa there is still an attitude that a woman who dresses provocatively, deserves to be raped (Boima, 2010).

The issue lies in the perceived eroticism of the African female body (Frenkel, 2008). The portrayal of black women as lascivious by nature is an enduring stereotype (Pilgrim, 2002). This is best exemplified by the ‘Black Venus’ stereotype, which was infamously embodied by Saartjie Bartman, named the ‘Hottentot Venus’, that reflected a specific image of racialised sexual ‘otherness’ (Frenkel, 2008:2). This is reiterated by Pattman and Bhana
(2009:22), that black women’s femininity is characterised as ‘other’. This ‘otherness’ denies black women their femininity, but rather creates a perception that these women are sexual objects. In South Africa, through the cultural history of the country, the black female body has been seen as ‘consumable’ (ripe for consumption), an image of rapture (Frenkel, 2008: 3).

In contemporary culture African women are portrayed ‘thrusting their hips’, scantily clad, in music videos (Pilgrim 2002). Lyrics such as, “hos, skeezers and bitches”, are used to describe these women (Pilgrim 2002). In South Africa, young black women want to emulate these images, which in their perceptions are images of success (Posel, 2004). Yet the social perception of a scantily clad woman is that she is sexually charged or sending the message that she desires sexual interaction (Pilgrim, 2002). This perception becomes dangerous when it solicits female violation. Social perceptions are influenced by culture and in South African urban areas are melting pots where these cultures merge as cultural migration occurs.

2.4.1 Cultural migration

Migration is described as being the process of leaving a country, region or place of residence in order to settle in another country, region or place of residence (Bhugra & Becker, 2005: 18). Migration patterns within a particular country are predominantly rural-urban migration (Bhugra & Becker, 2005: 18). According to Mabogunje (1970: 2):

> [e]ssentially, rural-urban migration represents a basic transformation of the nodal structure of a society in which people move from generally smaller, mainly agricultural communities to larger, mainly non-agricultural communities. Apart from this spatial (or horizontal) dimension of the
movement, there is also a socioeconomic (or vertical) dimension involving a permanent transformation of skills, attitudes, motivations, and behaviou[ral] patterns.

Thus, the reasons for migration to urban areas from rural areas are economic and educational in nature. Furthermore, with the migration from rural to urban areas, there is a change in skills, attitudes, motivations and behavioural patterns as migrants influence and are influenced by urban culture. According to Cornwell and Inder (2004:2), the United Nations states that in 2000 34% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa was urban, which shows an increase of 62% urbanisation in 15 years. Cornwell and Inder (2004: 2) further state that Harris and Todaro’s (Todaro, 1969, 1970, 1976 and 1986, & Harris & Todaro, 1970) model explains that such rapid movement into urban areas illustrates the aspirations of rural inhabitants to earn a higher urban wage than provided by the rural sector.

In South Africa migration patterns, especially of blacks from rural bantustans to urban cities, were governed by apartheid laws (Posel, 2004:17). However, with the abolishing of formal restrictions, from the 1980s till after the apartheid era, there was a logical increase, from 1993 to 1994, in African urbanisation caused by migrant labour (see Table 2.2 on page 52).
Table 2.2  
*The extent of temporary labour migration across households*  
*(Posel, 2004: 10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of households with at least one migrant worker</th>
<th>1993 PSLSD</th>
<th>1995 OHS</th>
<th>1997 OHS</th>
<th>1999 OHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All house households</td>
<td>1,469,300</td>
<td>803,000</td>
<td>1,610,100</td>
<td>1,779,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African households</td>
<td>1,323,300</td>
<td>753,800</td>
<td>1,557,000</td>
<td>1,722,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African rural households</td>
<td>1,170,200</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,287,500</td>
<td>1,418,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of households with at least one migrant worker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Households</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All households</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural African households</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: household weights are used in all years

This migrant work force, as described above, is predominantly male, as seen in the latest 2002 migration statistics (see Table 2.3 below). These statistics also reveal the main reasons for temporary migration and in males between age of 35 and 54, as employment.

Table 2.3  
*Causes of migration by migration type, age and sex*  
*(Kok & Collinson, 2006:11-12)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migration type and reason category</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Age: 0 – 14 years</th>
<th>Age: 15 – 34 years</th>
<th>Age: 35 – 54 years</th>
<th>Age: 55+ years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total both sexes</td>
<td>12,136</td>
<td>4,139</td>
<td>7,997</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>2,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary migration (2002)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td>12,136</td>
<td>4,139</td>
<td>7,997</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>2,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage (start/end)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving to live with another</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New dwelling for household</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for work</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/study</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child accompanies parent move</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/unknown</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Original data based on the Agricourt Demographic Surveillance System
As illustrated in the table above, there is a larger number of people who migrate temporarily and most of these migrants are men. Seventy five percent of male migrants migrate to urban areas for work. Temporary migration implies that these migrants still have links to their rural families or communities. According to Posel (2004:17) and Lehohla (2006) the migrant work force retains ties with their rural households, perhaps as a form of insurance in a volatile labour market, thus migrating to urban areas temporarily.

Alternative sources of income have gradually dried up and migration is no longer a matter of choice but has become such a bitter and absolute necessity for survival that some authors now speak of rural households as members of dislocated urban communities (Erlmann, 1990:200).

The above statement gives one a sense that migration to urban areas is forced and some migrants attempt to retain rural connections. Migration causes the loss of the familiar, including values, social structures and support networks (Bhugra & Becker, 2005:19). This loss is reflected in whether migrant workers adapt to the urban environment and successfully proletarianise (Erlmann, 1999:202). In other words, to proletarianise is when migrants perform the social process whereby they shift from being unemployed to being employed as wage labour by an employer, and occupy the lowest socioeconomic position in a society (The Free Dictionary, 2012). Zulu speaking migrants, according to Erlmann (1999:202), do not want to assimilate completely to an urban lifestyle within these heterogeneous worlds. Furthermore these migrants need a way to “reconstruct their universe in terms that they can control” (Erlmann, 1999: 202).
Culture plays an important role in the process of rural-urban migration where migrants experience cultural change (Silvey & Lawson, 1999). According to Curran and Saguy (2001:72), Anne Swidlers theorises that migration responds to and creates ‘unsettled times’; these ‘unsettled times’ are defined as “moments in time and space where competing ideas about the way society is or should be organised flourish”. The dynamics of culture are embedded in the processes of migration where migrants have to contend with changing social contexts and places, with some becoming disillusioned with their urban destinations, longing for their rural homes (Silvey & Lawson, 1999:124 -125).

In predominantly patriarchal rural traditions, gender roles and responsibilities dictate the gendered nature of migration (Silvey & Lawson, 1999: 127). According to McClintock (1991:113), women under customary law have no legal rights. Customary law is practiced predominantly in rural areas (Curran & Bonthuys, 2004). Subsequently, with rural-urban migration, these ideals and traditions migrate with the migrant, and migrants in turn try to enforce their cultural identity on their new ‘foreign’ society, which is coupled with cultural expectations about gender. The question arises whether enforcing their culture on urban dwellers may lead to violence against women if they do not comply.

The law of a country is a good reflection of a country’s culture. South African law is steeped in culture.

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13 Components which inform cultural identity are religion, rites of passage, language and beliefs.
2.4.2 South African Law

South Africa is a Constitutional Democracy which means that the Constitution of that country is the Supreme Law; above all laws (Constitution 1996:1243). The constitution of South Africa is applied vertically, thus regulating the interaction of government in relation to individuals and horizontally, thus regulating interactions between or among individuals (Barratt & Snyman, 2010). The Constitution contains the Bill of Rights which “enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom” (Constitution, 1996:1245). The Bill of Rights applies to all law (Constitutional Court of South Africa 2005) (Barratt & Snyman, 2010).

South Africa has a multicultural society, which is a society consisting of various communities – such as the Hindu, Muslim, indigenous African and broadly speaking, Western or European communities. Law is part of a community’s culture and therefore various systems of law are applied in South Africa (Van Niekerk & Wildenboer, 2009:27).

The South African legal system is made up of Indigenous African Law, also known as Customary Law, Western components, namely, Roman-Dutch Law and English Common Law, and a universal component, namely Human Rights Law (Van Niekerk & Wildenboer, 2009:150).

For South Africa to transform into an African country after its Eurocentric suppression required an “Africanness” to be reflected in the legal system, which meant incorporating certain aspects of customary law (Andrews, 1999:436).
This is detrimental for women, especially concerning violence against women. Some customary laws support violence towards women, as a part of cultural norms (Farrar, 2009). An example of this occurred in Umlazi township, outside of Durban in South Africa. In August 2007, a young black woman was physically and verbally assaulted by a group of men because she was wearing a pair of trousers; these men then advanced to burn her house down (BBC News, 2007). Women are banned from wearing trousers in this community and this ban is endorsed by the community and the local municipality (POWA, 2010:21). Furthermore, South Africa seems to have one of the most progressive constitutions and bill of rights worldwide. Yet violence still persists unabated due to perpetrators having widespread impunity, deeply rooted societal norms which condone such violence, lack of resources which hinder efforts of redress, and the attitudes that doctors, police and judges have toward victims (POWA, 2010:5). The ‘feminist jurisprudence’ model offers an analysis of the law as being society implementing its power to nullify women and their experiences of violence (Artz, 2009:171).

A large percentage of black women, in particular, are marginalised amongst the poor of South African society, which causes them to remain vulnerable to all forms of violence (POWA, 2010:7). Furthermore, these women do not have access to legal redress when rights violations occur. Discrimination, hostile legal, political and socio-cultural environments impede efforts to deal with the violation of the rights of vulnerable and marginalised communities of women (POWA, 2010:9). This is further compounded by the fact that some black women have an obligation to comply with customary law which is steeped in patriarchal tradition (Bennett, 2004:248). The state invokes African custom
and traditions to justify and continue the violation of women (POWA, 2010:20). Another issue hindering women in using legislative provisions is that court procedures are drawn out before the victim has an assurance that the perpetrator/s will be sentenced or that she has any protection from them if they are released. For example, a woman named Buyisiwe was gang raped in October 2005. She reported the incident the following day and it took the police and court systems four years before the perpetrators were sentenced (NGO Pulse, 2009).

The female body becomes the site of violation unless a woman can prove that the sexual violence against her was unwarranted (Artz, 2009:174). This is where dress plays a crucial role.

2.5 Violence

According to the *Macmillan English Dictionary* (2007:1663), violence is “…violent behaviour”. Furthermore violent is defined as, “…involving the use of physical force, causing damage to property or injury or death to people.” In other words, violence is the action used to hurt or kill people.

“Ubiquitous yet invisible, violence is an enabling condition or the ground upon which sexed vulnerabilities are staged” (D’Cruze & Rao, 2005:1). In other words, though violence is common it does not always overtly present itself within society. It is within the undercurrents of society that violence is most poignant, as people often do not acknowledge its existence amongst themselves. Furthermore, violence is used to accentuate gendered vulnerabilities and manifests as abuse and violation. D’Cruze and Roa
(2005:1) suggest that violence against women remains covert because women are muted by their vulnerability in being women in a male-dominated society. Women are vulnerable to men because women are generally less physically strong than men are. This ‘weakness’ is emphasised when women are subjected to violence.

It is clear from these assertions that violence against women is often covert in nature. Gender violence is prevalent in society and in many spheres of life: in homes, in communities and in state institutions (Johnson, 2004:22). The eradication of gender based violence is part of the effort to attain the Millennium Development Goals.  

According to Rasool (2002:27), in South Africa, violence against women is perpetuated because women do not seem to view the violence perpetrated against them as an issue, and are unlikely to seek help when it occurs. Furthermore, in focus groups,  

it was discovered that abuse was being normalised in South African society (Rasool, 2002:29). In other words abuse has become part of everyday life in South African society and it seems to be considered ‘normal’. Johnson (2004: 28) avers that violence against women is not considered as seriously by police as crimes against men or property,

14 The Millennium Development Goals were adopted by 189 governments across the world in September 2000, and endorsed by the commonwealth heads of government in the Coolum Declaration of 5 March 2002 (Johnson 2004: 22). Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals is “to promote gender equality and empower women” (United Nations 2000).

15 As part of the national survey of violence against women in South Africa, focus groups were formed to investigate the issue. The focus groups consisted of interviewers who conducted the surveys and participants who were victims of violence or who had witnessed violence against women. The aim was to ascertain the interviewers’ impressions of the survey findings and their experiences with the victims who were questioned. There was one focus group conducted in each province, with Mpumalanga having two focus groups (Rasool 2002: 21-22).
coupled by the so-called insensitivity in post-reporting ‘handling’ of a complainant and/or of her complaint by law-enforcement officers, medical officers and judicial personnel. The implication is thus that victims of violence remain silent about their plight and society thus allows violence to continue.

Dress has been used as a justification for violence against women. Violent behaviour towards women seems to take place mostly in conservative rural communities in South Africa, where women are harassed for wearing trousers or short skirts (BBC News, 2007). The government responded to these incidents through an address by Kwa-Zulu Natal Premier Ndebele (2007:1), who stated that the attackers were cultural vigilantes and were terrorising women in townships because of their dress choice. Professor Singh, a social anthropologist, explains this behaviour: “… [I]f one looks at South African societies, they are all patriarchal and it is difficult for people who assume authoritative roles in homes to adjust to women assuming their own roles and status within society” (BBC News, 2007).

Another form of violence, which could arguably be the most demeaning, is sexual abuse, assault, violence or violation which falls under sexual offences in South African Criminal Law. Women and children are particularly vulnerable and therefore susceptible to become victims of sexual violence (Criminal Law [Sexual Offences and related matters] Amendment Act, 2007:4). There is no margin in South African Law for the use of dress as a justification for the violation of women.
South Africa has of the highest levels of rape in the world (Smith, 2009:1). According to Rasool (2002:27), 62 percent of women experience sexual abuse in South Africa. The number of rapes reported in 2008/9 were 71 500 in the month of April to March of that year (South African Police Service, 2010:1). Most rapists in South Africa go unpunished as rape is one of the most underreported crimes and it has the lowest conviction rates (Richards, 2001:1).

The prevalence of the commission of sexual offences in our society is primarily a social phenomenon which is reflective of deep systemic dysfunctionality in our society and [indicates] that legal mechanisms to address this social phenomenon are...necessary (Criminal Law [Sexual Offences and related matters] Amendment Act, 2007:4).

It may seem apparent that the issue of sexual offences may be reduced through the creation and implementation of laws against such offenders. However, the laws themselves may be ambiguous.

Although most people agree that rape is bad, legislation and government action on sexual crimes are not always that clear. Indeed, rape seems to be graded on a scale from ‘unconscionable’ through ‘bad luck’ to ‘much deserved’ (Mollmann, 2008:1).

According to Artz (2009:174) violence against women is socially constructed to reflect her role in an attack against her, hence she shares the responsibility for her violation with the perpetrator. As a result, she is judged for having initiated the violence against her on the basis of, amongst other factors, her provocativeness. Furthermore, victims of sexual offences may encounter further abuse from judges if it is believed that women encourage sexual abuse or harassment towards themselves because of their dress choice or demeanour (Johnson 2004:28). A defence attorney in a sexual offence court
case argued that the victim was “advertising her desire to be raped” by her
dress choice (Cara, 2008). This illustrates the perception that women are
responsible for violence towards themselves because of the way they are
dressed. This is a perception that was challenged in protest marches which
have taken place in several countries called the ‘slutwalk’.

2.5.1 Protest against violence – The slutwalk phenomenon

A Toronto policeman in January said to a personal security class at a
university that women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be
victimised (Greer, 2011). This sparked off a series of marches around
the world called slutwalks. The first one took place in Toronto Canada
according to Greer (2011) (see figure 2.3 below).

Figure 2.3.
People marched against those who blame victims of sex crimes
(Greer, 2011)
A slutwalk website stated that the reason for the protest was to bring an end to the victimisation and the culture of blame towards rape victims (Arthurs, 2011). The slutwalk has become a movement which has launched in many countries. Garrett (2012) suggests that

> adopting, reclaiming and redefining the inflammatory label ‘slut’, the movement’s hallmark, protest marches encompass a diversity of expressive and provocative ideas, clothing and protest signs decrying sexual violence...

However, some critics have suggested that using the name ‘slut’ is provocative and unhelpful and argue that in attempting to reclaim the word it has had the opposite effect; women are seen as accepting the label (Arthurs, 2011). O’Keefe (2011) argues that the:

> SlutWalk movement is riddled with problems related to inclusivity, the tendency to universalise women’s experiences, and lacks a structural account of violence against women.

The slutwalk phenomenon also took place in Johannesburg, South Africa. It was organised by Sandi Schultz who is also a rape survivor (Ballim, 2012). This slutwalk was supported by a large number of male participants. The relevance of having the Slut walk in South Africa have been questioned, because sexual violence is widespread in that country and according to Ballim (2012) “what women wear makes no difference to their chances of being assaulted”.

According to Emily (2012) who took part in a slutwalk in Cape Town states that this phenomenon will become a campaign against street harassment and that slutwalk is a protest against persistent harassment of women in public spaces. Emily relates how there was a
negative backlash against the slutwalk when it was announced that it
would be taking place in South Africa:

Commentators on SlutWalk Cape Town’s Facebook page accused the
organisers of being irresponsible, stupid, and of contributing to –
rather than solving – the problem of victim blaming. If anything, those
remarks demonstrated the extent to which women are still held
responsible for rape. One particularly unpleasant contributor insisted
that only one per cent of all reported rapes are ‘genuine’ – the rest, he
alleged, are simply made up by women. What many of these angry
men (and they were mainly men) had in common was a fear of a
group of scantily-clad women marching together in public: a belief that
the amount of naked flesh on display would have – alas undefined –
catastrophic ramifications for the women on the march.

Figure 2.4
Protest Poster at Cape Town’s Slutwalk
(Emily, 2012)

The slutwalk has caused controversy and debate about whether dress
should be considered as a justification for violation. However the
phenomenon itself has caused controversy owing to the provocative
nature of the march.
2.6. Summary

In contemporary culture female issues have been hidden behind the façade of human rights, all-encompassing constitutions and the emancipation of women. Women grapple with several issues especially concerning female violation, but the alleviation of these issues is hindered by politics and the justice system.

The researcher has explored the link between female violation and female dress in an attempt to demystify the perceived right men possess to violate women. Men have used female dress as an excuse to violate women. Furthermore, rules are used to influence female dress choice through dress codes, which prescribe what is ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ dress. These dress codes are influenced by culture, but these cultures are perpetually changing and these changes cause clashes between rural (traditional) and urban (modern) cultures, with each cultural environment prescribing their own dress codes. The danger of violence seems apparent when these two cultural extremes converge through cultural migration. This behaviour and cultural duality perpetuate the cycle of violation. The same duality is illustrated in the laws of South Africa, which seem not to be effective in dealing with issues of female violation.

Two major concepts emerged through this exploration, namely the social psychology of dress and social cognition. Within these concepts dress comes under scrutiny, especially in investigating hidden messages within female dress, what influences male perceptions of dress and male perceivers’ reactions to women dressed in a certain way. The concepts of social cognition and the social psychology
of dress are underpinned by the theories of inference, attribution, and modesty. These theories map out the processes involved in constructing perceptions.

Having reviewed the concepts of social cognition, the social psychology of dress and the theories of inference, attribution and modesty, it follows that these concepts and theories should be applied in a South Africa context. This will be done using case studies, which follow in Chapter 3.
Chapter Three

Three South African Case Studies

3.1 Introduction

Dress has played an integral role and has been described as a catalyst for the violation of women. This chapter investigates South African perspectives concerning the violation of women by men through presenting three well published events.

Violence against women in South Africa is pervasive, which is further compounded by cultural norms and values which seem to condone and encourage abusive behaviour toward women (Kim & Motsei, 2002: 2). A stereotypical expectation seems to exist that prescribes how a woman is expected to have looked and behaved in the events preceding her rape (Suttner 2007: 9). A woman is thus scrutinized for "...the extent to which she provoked her own demise" (Edwards, 1987: 141). A radical feminist perspective asserts that there is a perception that male desire is unavoidable which creates the perception that women are the cause of their own violation (Reddy & Potgieter, 2006: 514) no matter their dress choice. Culture is expressed through dress, thus promulgating the notion that the violation of women could occur as a punishment for going against predetermined, but also unpredictable, dress codes. Thus it seems that dress is used to justify violence against women.

Oliver Tambo, an erstwhile president of the ANC, once said that traditionalist, conservative and primitive restraints are imposed on women by male-
dominated structures (Govender, 2010: 11). Tambo further stated that people should stop hiding behind ‘custom’ and ‘tradition’ to justify patriarchal practice and that people should be aware that custom must coincide with human rights. In social institutions and other structures embedded in patriarchy, rape is used by men as a tool to control women (Hearn, 1998: 43, cited in Reddy & Potgieter, 2006). Patriarchy sexualises a gendered hierarchy, which leads to violation of women, as a result men may be considered virile if they rape, sexually harass and sexually abuse women (Reddy & Potgieter, 2006: 515)

“Common to global patriarchal culture is the reduction of women’s bodies to property owned and disposed of through rape as well as through daily, banal brutalities” (Govender, 2010: 11). This notion seems to vilify men as not being able to control their sexual urges or that men are inherently violent or that patriarchy’s overarching purpose is to suppress women. Thus Govender’s (2010:11) statement cannot be considered a norm but that some men within these structures abuse women. The concept of patriarchy may not sufficiently explain the complexities of or reasons for violence against women as stated by Coles (2009:33):

... while power is certainly important in terms of understanding relations between groups of men as well as between men and women (i.e., patriarchy), hegemony is limiting as it assumes that groups act (at a structural level) to either achieve or maintain a dominant position over others that is to their own advantage, perpetuated through social institutions.

In some cases men feel justified to violate women and obscured male perceptions, influenced by culture, and politics of female dress, are revealed. Male perceptions may influence the inferences males construct about women dressed in certain attire. Furthermore, these inferences may lead to violence against women.
The first case to illustrate this view, as discussed in this chapter, is the rape trial in which a prominent political and cultural figure, Jacob Zuma, is the accused. Jacob Zuma, who professes to be an ardent (and who is possibly generally perceived as traditional) Zulu man, was implicated in a rape trial in November 2005. During the trial he argued that the complainant wore a kanga (and seemingly no undergarments) during discussions with him on the night when the incident occurred and she sat in a certain way, causing him to assume that this signified her aspiration to engage in sexual relations with him (Vetten, 2007:438). Vetten continues that the political and cultural figure based his arguments on the fact that, within his culture, his behaviour was justified. Whether or not the complainant physically said she wanted to engage in sexual relations with him, it seems that her clothing conveyed a message which he interpreted as her willingness to engage in sexual relations with him.

The second case is the Reed Dance, which is a ceremony that celebrates the “fertility of young women” and promotes abstinence by virginity testing, before marriage (Klopper 2001: 63). It was criticised in an article written by Niren Tolsi (2008) in which he says “[the ceremony] may also be used as an open-air peek-a-porno session by the ordinary males who gather”. This case shows the disparity between the pride of a culture in what it believes is the purity of a young woman - indicating that it is appropriate to reveal the female body to celebrate chastity, while on the other hand there is a perception that a revealing way of dress is offensive and suggestive. It was reported (September, 2008) that young women were sexually assaulted at this event.
The third case is the ‘Noord Street Taxi Rank Incident’, which took place in Gauteng Province. It has sparked great controversy in South Africa. *3rd Degree*, an investigative news programme on *E-TV*, investigated this controversial event\(^\text{16}\) (2008). The investigative journalist on the programme asked the taxi drivers who operated in the area questions about the incident, including: Why are women’s rights to dignity violated in the democratic South Africa? What right do men have to tell women how to dress? Most of the taxi drivers responded by saying that any woman who wears short dresses is “asking to be raped”. One taxi driver in particular said that he has a right to tell young girls what to wear, he being an older African man.

Retaliating to such views, the South African Human Rights Commission condemned the sexual assault incident at the Noord Street Taxi Rank:

> The South African Human Rights Commission has condemned the attack on four women wearing mini-skirts at the Noord Street taxi rank at the weekend. Reports in the media indicated that the four women were apparently stripped, paraded naked and sexually assaulted (Seale, 2008).

Seale (2008) further reports that the taxi drivers say that they will not tolerate women who ‘parade’ around ‘their’ taxi rank dressed in provocative attire. In their opinion, women who dress in short skirts deserve to be assaulted. They further assert that these women have no respect for the men who will see them and that these men will feel enticed into initiating sexual advances.

In each case, issues of female violation in South Africa are investigated, in the context of culture, and how culture influences perceptions of clothing in a South African context.

\(^{16}\) This was part of an investigative journalism television programme in which the presenter went into the Noord Street Taxi Rank, after the sexual assault incident, and interviewed taxi drivers.
3.2 Case Studies

The following subsection investigates and analyses three cases, namely a rape trial involving Jacob Zuma (case one), the Reed Dance (case two) and the Noord Street taxi rank sexual assault incident (case three), in which women were violated and in which dress is a catalyst to violent male behaviour toward the women concerned.

3.2.1 Case one

This case study will focus on how a prominent cultural and political figure perceives certain modes of female dress. This case study will be conducted to investigate how the female complainant’s clothing choices were used by the accused in a sexual offence case, as justification for the alleged violation of the complainant.

3.2.1.1 The trial proceedings

On 6 March 2006 a case in which charges of rape were alleged, was opened against a prominent political and cultural figure. The accused pleaded not guilty to the charges (Evans & Wolmarans, 2006). It was alleged that the accused raped a family friend on 2 November 2005 (Reddy & Potgieter, 2006: 512).

According to Evans and Wolmarans (2006) the complainant was cross examined from 6 to 10 March 2006, during which time the judge allowed her sexual history to be discussed as well as her personal memoirs.
On 29 March an application by the accused to have the rape case discharged was denied.

The accused took the stand on 3 April 2006 and testified. During the testimony it was stated that the complainant was only wearing a kanga and that she was complaining that her body ached. He allegedly responded by massaging her body during which she removed her kanga, suggesting an invitation to join her in her bed, which he subsequently did. He testified that he believed the complainant was sending him sexual signals because of her choice of dress. On 5 April 2006 the accused further testified that the complainant desired to have sexual intercourse with him.

Furthermore he asserted that he had his cows ready and was prepared to marry the complainant if she agreed. Finally the accused was acquitted of raping the complainant.

3.2.1.2 The public reaction

This rape trial received extensive media coverage and spurred passionate public outcry and debate. In investigating public commentary and debate the research will gain insight into the public perceptions of South Africans concerning sexual assault and female dress as an influencing factor for the violation of women.

From the onset of the allegation of rape against the accused, made public through the media, there were two clear sides of contention. There were the friends of the accused and the supporters of the complainant. There was a ‘face-off’ of dramatic proportions taking place (Reddy & Potgieter, 2006: 517). On the one side there were the accused’s supporters, most of whom were dressed in traditional Zulu
attire burning incense and pictures of the complainant, chanting ‘burn the bitch’ (see Figure 3.1 on page below) (Evans & Wolmaran, 2006; Dempster, 2006).

Figure 3.1
*People showing their support for Jacob Zuma (Farrell, 2006)*

On the other side were the supporters of the complainant. Dressed in *kangas* and brandishing placards inscribed with, amongst others, the words: “Solidarity with the complainant”, “Rape is always a crime” and “I am here to change the destiny of my daughters” (Johnston, 2006: 2) These placards showed dissension against violence against women (Waetjen & Maré, 2010: 53) (see Figure 3.2 below).

Figure 3.2
*The complainant’s supporters dressed in kangas (BBC News, 2006)*
Intriguingly there were multitudes of female supporters of the accused during the trial. Carton (2009) describes how *amakhosikazi* believe the accused to be justified in his actions and that the accused needed the protection of the ancestors against the charges laid by the younger single Zulu woman. These perceptions, driven by custom, reveal women, in their desire to be good women, who are willing to challenge any woman who does not submit to male domination.

Mashele, (2006: 4) a woman working as a bus cleaner in Newton, Gauteng, commented on a public forum saying: “This young girl is crazy and does not respect older people. She insulted all women in this country, even those supporting her. She’s a bitch and deserves to be jailed for dragging the accused’s name in the mud.” Essentially what this woman is saying is that, because the accused is a cultural and traditional leader, he cannot do any wrong and shame will befall any person who tries to refute his power; he is irreproachable (Waetjen & Maré, 2010; Govender, 2006: 32). Some female supporters of the accused believe that the complainant’s dress was a catalyst to her violation.

Ndwandwe (2006: 4), a twenty four year old single mother, was quoted saying: “This mama is speaking lies because she was in the accused’s room with that kanga on and he could see everything”. This statement is loaded with the perception that, if a woman is dressed in revealing attire, she wants to have sex. This is the view shared by most of the accused’s female supporters. This is an attempt at cultural correctness.
3.2.2 Case Two

A sexual assault incident, which took place at the Reed Dance, was reported in 2008. This incident that took place at the Reed Dance ceremony will function as a case study. This case study will also focus on the cultural dress which is worn during the ceremony, and the perception surrounding this dress and how these perceptions have changed after the sexual assault incident.

According to Klopper (2001: 63) the Reed Dance was established by King Goodwill Zwelethini to emulate a similar ceremony held annually in Swaziland. This was done in an effort to celebrate fertility and encourage young women to abstain from premarital sexual relations. Zulu virgins converge in their thousands every September at Enyokeni Zulu Royal Palace to celebrate Umkhosi womhlanga (Reed Dance Festival) (Sosibo & Harvey 2000). The ceremony is used as an educational opportunity for maidens to be taught how to conduct themselves in front of the king as well as educating them about the importance of staying virgins until they get married. When the ceremony begins the maidens walk to the main hut which is where the king watches the procession (Robinson et al, 2010: 2). Furthermore, virgins obtain reeds from a river and return to the palace where the king inspects these reeds. The significance of the reeds is that they commemorate “...when Zulus moved southwards they travelled in rafts isilulu made of reeds” (Eshowe, n.d.). As part of the ritual “... the young women parade before the king bare breasted and adorned in short, colourful beaded skirts” (Machirori, 2008).
3.2.2.1 Sexual assault incident

A young Zulu maiden\textsuperscript{17} was gang raped in 2008 while participating in the Reed Dance. According to police reports, the maiden was forced away from the group she was with and dragged outside of the bounds of the ceremony and gang raped.

In 2007, maidens who were participating in the Reed Dance became targets of photographers who took pictures of them and placed them onto pornography websites (\textit{iol news}, 2007). As a result these maidens, scantily dressed, performing a traditional ritual, became sex objects, which undermined the cultural practice (see figure 3.3. below).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{reed_dance_2007.png}
\caption{Man films maidens during reed dance 2007 (Ward, 2007)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{17} Though it is considered an archaic term, the word ‘maiden’ is used for the girls and women who take part in the Reed Dance as this is the term used in most of the literature that the researcher used.
Figure 3.3. shows how maidens are filmed or photographed (and occasionally without these maidens consent). The images could be circulated on the internet and, being outside of their cultural context, these pictures or videos could place the maidens at risk of being objectified. In August 2008 the current Zulu king announced that maidens who wanted to participate in the read dance had to cover their buttocks. Apparently there is a traditional cover called the umutsha to cover the buttocks (Mthethwa, 2008). Hence the maidens were encouraged to wear the umutsha or a sarong to cover their buttocks. The Zulu king is seemingly concerned that the exposure of maidens’ bodies at the Reed Dance will decrease the credibility of the ceremony and allows the maidens to be susceptible to exploitation (Machirori, 2008).

3.2.2.2 Public reaction

Many young women are forced to take part in the ceremony owing to the fact that their families would be fined if they did not take part. Those parents who could afford it would pay the large fine so as to protect their daughters from exposing their virtue. This was done in fear of sexual abuse at the event which was reported each year, or the casual encounters girls would have with the men who attend the ceremonies to observe the young women (Roy, 2005: 389).

“Amid the seemingly perpetual conflict with defending our ideals, there is confusion, division and sometimes despair” (Ngema, 2007). This statement best describes reactions to events like the Reed Dance, where culture is fiercely defended, conflicting with the protection of young women/girls from sexual predators. Traditionalists believe that ceremonies like the Reed Dance foster pride
in heritage and help to preserve indigenous cultural knowledge (Robillard, 2009: 86).

One maiden who had participated in the ceremony for six years in succession commented about the king’s proposed change of dress for maidens participating in the Reed Dance (Mthethwa, 2008). She said: “We are totally against this because when we cover up our bodies, then we’re compromising our pride derived from being pure virgins”. A news report shared a similar sentiment:

But this order to cover up is an infringement of Zulu culture, which belongs to the people and not solely to the king. His exit from the reed dance is not sufficient reason to change a practice that has been in existence for generations (Ndlovu, 2008).

According to Ndlovu (2008) the maidens:

...were sold. We believed in what our elders said, we believed in our culture and our king, we gave up our underwear and we sang and marched with freshly cut reeds, with little concern for where his eye might fall. We filed by, hoping to become his next wife.

Regardless of the above sentiment the problem of being seen as sexual objects does not fall on the king but on the many male spectators.

3.2.3 Case Three

On 17 February 2008, a woman was sexually assaulted at the Noord Street Taxi Rank in Johannesburg South Africa. She was not the first woman to be assaulted but this particular case received high media coverage. This incident will function as a case study which places the violation of women in an urban context. The cultural aspects of perceptions held by the perpetrators and the use of the victim’s dress as justification for violating her, will be investigated.
3.2.3.1 The sexual assault incident

A young woman wearing a miniskirt at the Noord Street taxi rank was sexually violated on 17 February 2008. The fact that she was wearing a miniskirt caused outrage among the taxi drivers. The taxi drivers and hawkers at the taxi rank then proceeded to tear off her clothes and underwear, spurred on by jeers from the crowd, who said she was being taught a lesson for wearing a miniskirt (Sapa, 2008). The mob attempted to parade the naked victim in the street, but she was rescued by security guards (Seale, 2008). This incident, though heinous, is not the first to occur at a Johannesburg taxi rank, as articulated by Simon Mpembe, assistant commissioner of Johannesburg Central Police Station: “Intelligence information indicates that this malpractice of victimisation of women in miniskirts has been going on for some eight years to ten years” (Willaims, 2008). After the Noord Street Taxi Rank incident was highly publicised, more women emerged who had experienced similar ordeals. One young lady relayed her story of what happened to her when she, dressed in a miniskirt, alighted a taxi at the Noord Street Taxi Rank in 2005. According to this young lady, she was harassed by a mob of men who boasted about what they would do to her in bed. They pinned her to the ground and sexually assaulted her, in front of many onlookers, in broad daylight (Seale, 2008). The young victim reflected on what happened to her three years prior to the highly published incident in 2008:

What annoys me most is that most people at the taxi rank seem to enjoy it when taxi drivers harass women. As I was running away, a woman blamed me for wearing a miniskirt (Seale, 2008).
The most recent reported victimisation occurred on 30 December 2011 when a 18 year old girl wearing a miniskirt and a 19 year old girl wearing tight fitting clothes were harassed by men at the taxi rank (Omar, 2012: 3).

Judging from the experience of these victims it follows that the perceptions, driven by culture and environment, that exist concerning certain forms of dress, need to be investigated. The context of this case is that it took place in an urban environment, unlike the previous cases. This will be done so as to explore the perceptions that the perpetrators and witnesses of the sexual assault incidents at Noord Street Taxi Rank used in justifying why these women were violated.

3.2.3.2 Public Reaction

The public reaction concerning the Noord Street taxi rank incident spilled into newspaper commentaries, radio talk shows and television debates. The country was fuelled by the arguments about women’s rights and cultural correctness. The most noticeable public outcry came in the form of a protest march led by 702 Talk Radio’s Redi Direko, when women walked down the streets of Johannesburg wearing miniskirts and carrying placards, saying amongst other things, “we love our minis” and “there are no short cuts to women’s rights” (Mhlana, 2008: 32) (see Figure 3.4 on page 80). This march was one of two marches organised by women’s groups who had been exasperated by males violating females in public spaces. Occurring during lunchtime, this march was held at the taxi rank which was subsequently brought to a standstill. Under army and police presence, the march began at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in Klein Street, with its destination
being the Noord Street Taxi Rank, where Direko addressed marchers and taxi drivers (IOL news, 2008).

Figure 3.4
*Women’s march protesting against the violation of women wearing miniskirts* (Skinner & Botes, 2008 cited in Mhlana, 2008)

A ‘mini-skirt’ march was organised by the African National Congress (ANC) Women’s League on 17 February 2012 (SAPA, 2012). This march proceeded to the High Court as a protest against sexual harassment and gender-based violence. “As women, we are proud of our miniskirts” and “It is our duty to respect human rights ... taxi drivers, taxi commuters: no one should allow violence against women and children” were some of the statements expressed at the event (SAPA, 2012).
3.3. Analysis

The three cases discussed in this chapter illustrate the concepts and theories discussed in chapter 2. In this section these case studies will be further analysed using the concepts elucidated upon in the previous chapter.

3.3.1 Cases and theory

Each case clearly illustrates the theories of attribution, inference and modesty. In case one it is clear through the media’s reports of the trial proceedings and public reaction that the complainant’s dress choice was used as a cue to infer what her disposition was. Her disposition was inferred, by the accused’s supporters, as being that of a seductress. This inference fed the perception that she had thus consented to sexual relations with the accused and that the accused was justified in his actions. In view of the fact that the accused was acquitted, perceptions of attribution are not appropriate to explore in this case. However, perceptions of attribution are apparent in case three. This case illustrates how attribution was assigned to the victims of sexual assault, by taxi drivers who asserted a rape myth that by wearing mini-skirts the victims were ‘looking for sex’. An aspect of social cognition is also manifested in this case, namely social perception. Social perception in case three occurs in the form of, among others, categorical thinking; where appearance is interpreted using categorical thinking, which in turn is formed by stereotypes. In case three the stereotypical perception was that women dressed in mini-skirts are promiscuous.
When examining case two, it is evident that the exposure of the bodies of the maidens who participated in the Reed Dance may have caused inferences of promiscuity to be made about these maidens, thus placing these maidens in danger of violation. However, in this case the cultural context and setting negate the justification for such an inference. Assigning attribution to victims of sexual assault in this case is complex because, unlike women in urban environments, maidens who ‘freely display’ their bodies at the Reed Dance do so under obligation, as part of participating in that cultural ceremony. This is a perfect example of how appearance perception is influenced by situational circumstances and rationalisations that perceivers make concerning the exposure of the body. Even though these concepts seem plausible, they still do not answer the question as to why these maidens were violated. Thus one returns to the notion suggested by Entwistle (2000: 186). “... [W]omen are constantly linked to the idea of seduction through appearance”. What appears to have occurred in case two is that the situational circumstances of the ceremony have not sufficiently addressed the cultural ideas that have influenced the perceivers and/or perpetrators, especially when perpetrators may have cultural influences outside of the culture being expressed in the ceremony. Westernisation may influence this perceiver in that in western culture body exposure, to the extent of the Reed Dance, is considered taboo, unless the situational circumstances are that of being in a ‘strip club’ or adult lounge. Thus it follows that the perpetrators may have interpreted the maidens’ appearances in a hyper-sexual light influenced by westernisation.

The theory of modesty is reflected in the perceptions of those who attributed blame to victims for their sexual assault, in each case. Interestingly though,
there is a conflict about what modesty is. In case one, the *kanga* was considered by the accused’s supporters and the accused to be a symbol of seduction. Through further investigation into Zulu cultural dress, it was discovered that the *kanga* is a symbol of modesty worn by betrothed women as well as married women to cover their bodies as an expression of modesty. However, the accused professed to be an ardent Zulu man and expressed this attribute of his character throughout the trial, yet his perception seemingly clashes with the very culture he professes to be a part of. It is also this culture, namely Zulu culture, that encourages young maidens as illustrated in case two, not to be modest, and to proudly display their young bodies. In an urban milieu as illustrated by case three the conflict between perceptions of modesty and culture dramatically ‘play out’. Generally, in this case, those who supported the perpetrators consider long skirts as an appropriate form of dress to wear when in the presence of men, especially older men. However, perceptions of what modesty is in a modern urban environment, as interpreted by young women, are different as these women feel liberated and want the choice to wear what they like, whether it be revealing dress or not.
Figure 3.5. above illustrates how the theories, discussed with reference to the three cases, interplay. The conflict between perceptions of modesty, attribution and inference converge on a dangerous sphere, which may lead to violence against women, namely sexual assault or violation.

Appearance perception is influenced by perceiver variables, one of which is culture. With regard to the three cases a conflict emerged between what the
‘correct’ dress for women was and what the women chose to wear within cultural parameters.

3.3.2 Cases and Culture

Culture is a perceiver variable (as discussed in chapter two) and a major influence on appearance and social perception. The reason is that culture is the context in which perceivers manage, perceive and interpret appearances (Kaiser, 1993: 39). In each case culture is the major thread that links it to the next case and is, in some of the cases of sexual violation, used as justification for this violation. In as much as culture influences social perception, social perception influences the perceiver’s behaviour. Hence it is important to examine each case’s cultural context as well as the cultural conflicts and influences which may have lead perceivers to behave violently or which may have caused some people to attribute blame to victims of violence.

3.3.2.1. Case One

Dress in Zulu culture is dictated to women according to their status in life. In other words dress choices are prescribed by whether a woman is a young maiden, betrothed, or married. In order to understand the significance of the complainant’s dress in this case, the kanga will be placed in this context.

In Zulu culture women wear different kinds of attire to symbolise the different stages of maturity and life (African Tribal Music, 2010). Traditional dress worn by young girls or itombazane is a beaded loindress called umutsha (Nkumane, 2001). There are several stages
from puberty to maritable age that are distinguished by dress. When a Zulu maiden or *iqhi kiza* is unmarried she is bare-chested and she wears an *isidwaba*, which is a pleated skirt made from cowhide which is often decorated with beads. This skirt is usually made from leather and is quite short (Nkumane, 2001). These *iqhi kiza* also wear beaded necklaces that should not conceal their breasts.

A *kanga* is a rectangular printed cloth usually woven from cotton yarn (Hanby & Bygott, 1984). A *kanga* is approximately the width of an adult woman’s outstretched arms, hence sufficiently wide to cover a woman’s body from above her breasts to under her knees (Motsei, 2007: 156).

According to Hanby and Bygott (1984) the *Kanga* originates from the coast of East Africa from the mid 19th century. In Zanzibar women would take printed Portuguese handkerchief fabrics which were printed in six equal squares to be sold as six pieces (Goufrani, 2009). Three pieces sewn together were known as a *leso*, which later became a *kanga*. The *kanga* was named after the guinea-fowl as the original designs resembled its spotty plumage. *Kanga* designs have evolved through time and now are adorned with many different patterns, motifs and colours.

When a Zulu woman is engaged to be married she wears a *kanga* that is draped from her neck covering her body. Her body is covered as a sign of respect to her betrothed and his family and also as a signal to other men that she is taken (see Figure 3.6 on page 87).
Married women are expected to keep their bodies completely covered and are required to wear certain coloured beads to signal to her village and any man that she is married (see Figure 3.5 below). Married women may also wear a knee length leather kilt called *isidwaba* and on top of this *isidwaba* a loindress is worn with a frontal covering resembling an apron (Nkumane, 2001: 108). Also, married women must cover their shoulders with a beaded shawl called *utschodo*.
Kangas have been worn in Sub-Sahara as a sign of female modesty and respectability (Moya, 2006). It is in this context that the question arises why the kanga in the case of the rape trial, is viewed as erotic or sexually alluring?

The accused was quoted as saying that the complainant wore a kanga which signalled to him that she was sexually aroused and that as a Zulu man he could not leave her unfulfilled.

The kanga is classified as being modest according to Zulu society. However, it is inexplicably defined by a prominent, powerful political leader as a sensual symbol. This leaves women confused and violated which is confirmed by the fact that the accused was acquitted.

The accused grew up in an area called Nkandla in the Kwa-Zulu Natal province of South Africa. His tribal birthplace is found in the rural southern fringe of what was formerly known as the Zulu Kingdom (Carton, 2009). He was brought up in traditions steeped in patriarchy, polygamy and loyalty to the chiefdom (Carton, 2009). It is in this environment where he allegedly learnt enduring moral and patriarchal respect (Carton, 2009). Throughout court proceedings the accused was described as a “hundred percent Zulu boy” by his supporters (Reddy & Potgieter, 2006: 517). During court proceedings the accused insisted on speaking in IsiZulu, which further entrenched his reputation as being a traditional man (Waetjen & Maré, 2010: 52). A picture of the accused is created, through such accounts, of a man who is actively involved with
his culture through parentage, cultural practices and language, hence the connotation of being a hundred percent Zulu boy. This point of culture was impressed as a defence tactic even in the international media (see Figure 3.6 below).

Figure 3.8
“100% Zulu Boy”
*Jacob Zuma in full Zulu traditional attire doing a traditional dance (BBC News, 2008)*

The accused’s supporters and the accused himself appear to be highly influenced by a patriarchal morality which is presumably dictated by Zulu tradition. Within this moral framework “... young women and their sexuality bear the burden of a clearly profound social anxiety” (Waetjen & Maré, 2010: 53). In other words, males determine the “morality” of young women, and because the standards by which this morality is judged is unstable women become anxious since they may not know when their behaviour may be considered immoral. Clearly then women are perceived as provoking social ills (such as inviting unwanted sex) through their sexuality. According to Waetjen and Maré (2010: 53),

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female sexuality is most vividly expressed through dress, but dress is a method of engendering women rather than their attempt to be sensual. The perceptions of dress in a cultural context are influenced further by traditionalism on one hand and modernity on the other. From a male point of view women dress to express their sexuality rather than as a way of expressing their gender (Waetjen & Maré 2010: 53). For instance women may be required to wear a dress/skirt because this is considered dress specifically made for women, but it may be said that this dress is provocative in that it may be too tight or too short, and so forth.

In the urbanity of the Johannesburg metropolis it would seem that the lines of culture and tradition represented by his (female) supporters are redrawn, and that they stand in marked contrast to other women, those on the side of the complainant, who represent modernity, change and the questioning of cultural beliefs related to consent, sex and law (Reddy & Potgieter, 2006: 517).

The above statement was illustrated in the traditionalists’ perceptions of the *kanga* worn by the complainant and the contrasting views expressed by the supporters of the complainant. Traditionalists vehemently believe that the complainant wore a *kanga* as a signal to the accused of her intensions, which is also the view that was expressed by the accused himself (Gifford & Maughan, 2006). The accused endeavoured to validate his sexual behaviour as lead by his Zulu inclinations, hence his actions should be recognized in a Zulu cultural context (Reddy & Potgieter, 2006: 517; Waetjen & Maré, 2010: 58).

Consequently the situation was then spun into a reflection on the accused as the complainant, and not the assailant.
The accused became the vulnerable; [the] alleged victim was invoked as an example of the hypersexual womanhood he had been warned about as a child, a womanhood which required fulfilment and which could draw upon the powers of retaliation, using the legal system vindictively (Waetjen & Maré, 2010: 58).

It was believed by the traditionalists that the matter should have been settled out of court through cultural paths instead of using Eurocentric jurisprudence.

It is in this non-cultural context of eurocentric jurisprudence that traditionalists perceive that male power is being lost through such westernised ideas as women’s rights activism. This activism, which threatens male power (patriarchy), has caused an increase in domestic violence in proportion to the emergence of women power through emancipation (van der Westhuizen, 2009). Apparently men cannot cope with the changes that modernity represents, especially for the emancipation of women. This clash between modernity and tradition accounts for the apparent increase in violence.

The accused represents the individuals who cannot adapt to modernity, which includes marginalised rural and urban poor who identify with him and those who are angered by the gendered shifts in traditional power relations (van der Westhuizen, 2009). This dissidence filters down into the simplest cultural expression of female dress, through inconsistent dress codes, which when defied have ominous violent consequences for women.

The conflict between cultural traditionalism and modernity rages on within the spheres of dress. Modern clothing that reveals the female
body for male pleasure is considered fashionable. However, religious and cultural rules dictate that a woman’s body should not be revealed, so that a woman’s capability to seduce a man may be neutralised.

On a website dedicated to the support of the accused, Druza (2006 cited in Waetjen & Maré, 2010: 58) commented on the rape allegation saying:

It is purely human for a man to be sexually attracted to a woman and normally, dressing is a way a woman, in the context of sex, can woo men to the most human act, of sex.

It is thus apparent from this comment that female dress is still considered a catalyst for male behaviour toward women, especially sexual harassment or assault. In the case of this rape trial it was the kanga which was in question.

In the public domain the ‘cultural’ perspective was laid bare to insolent mockery:

[t]he Art of Seduction, by JZ: If she is wearing a dress; she’s asking for it. If she crosses her legs; she’s asking for it. If she visits your house; she’s asking for it. When a woman says “no” she is asking for it. Never visit the beach or a fashion show; it will make you very tired (Brett, 2006).

Brett’s (2006) remarks reveal the nonsensical reasoning behind blaming a woman for something that is out of her control. In other words, blaming a victim for her violation by a male perpetrator because she is dressed in a certain way is unfounded especially when complex dress codes will inevitably make that dress choice offensive to someone. In the modernity of urban South Africa, most women should be living in fear of such violation as choices in dress are dictated by fashion trends which push the limits of body exposure (Motsei, 2007: 133). The cultural contention
seems to backfire as cultural codes only seem relevant according to the extremity of the situation. The danger occurs as the pendulum swings between the extremes of traditionalism and modernity.

During the court case the accused’s defence illustrated that the complainant was ‘hyper sexual’ as she had made claims of being raped many times before (Moya, 2006: 4). The complainant contested these claims and stated that the men who had raped her before had said she, “… had it coming because [her] mother allowed her to go around the house naked or half naked” (Moya, 2006: 4). Again, statements like these feed into a perception, which is seemingly shared by many South Africans, that a woman who is dressed in revealing dress is responsible for violation against her.

What is intriguing in this case is that the complainant is to have allegedly sexually lured the accused by wearing a dress in their first encounter and, more significantly, wearing a kanga on the day she was allegedly raped. A kanga is considered to be a traditional cloth worn as a display of modesty (Johnston 2006: 2). There is a clear shift in perception from those perceptions recorded as part of cultural history and of the masses of the accused’s supporters who profess to be ardent traditionalists.
3.3.2.2. Case Two

When a young Zulu maiden reaches puberty she is called a *tshishi* and she is obliged to have her breasts and hair uncovered, which demonstrates to the community that she is single (de la Harpe & de la Harpe *et al.*, 1998: 109). During the Zulu king Digane’s reign, which spanned from 1828 to 1840, young women wore only beads around their waist and a small decorative front piece (de la Harpe & de la Harpe, 1998: 109; Okoye, 1969). Furthermore, during this period, a young woman dressed in this way would seemingly be protected from harassment or abduction. The dress of young maidens as described in the introduction to this case is the traditional dress worn by young maidens participating in the Reed Dance.

Tolsi (2007:8) refers to the current Zulu king’s sister’s statement that the Reed Dance has been practiced for thousands of years. *Nguni* people were still based in central Africa and in 1879, under British colonial rule, the Reed Dance was banned. It was reintroduced by the current Zulu king in 1984 as an attempt to revive moral values. The essential part of the Reed Dance ceremony is the performing of virginity testing on all the girls who take part in the ceremony (Tolsi 2007: 8).

This ceremony highlights the desperation to preserve this culture, especially as people of this culture attempt to transcend their history of Europeanism or colonial cultural oppression (Ngema, 2007). Though the way that Zulu women dress has changed considerably, it was influenced
by westernisation and change in appearance was coupled with a change in behaviour (Nkumane, 2001: 104). This westernisation began as early as 1824 with the arrival of British traders who settled in Port Natal (Durban) and the change in behaviour was, in part, influenced by Christian missionaries (Nkumane, 2001: 106). Hence the wearing of traditional attire declined as western attire became more popular and with this change of attire came a cultural transformation. With the emergence of the African Renaissance\textsuperscript{18} there was a shift to traditional dress again, spurred on by events like the Reed Dance.

As westernisation and ethnic culture clash, events like the Reed Dance become a point of contention. Zulu maidens who take part in the Reed Dance are ‘topless’. Breasts have been sexually objectified in a western cultural context, yet, as a contradiction, images of topless ‘natives’ are not censored in these cultures (Naidu, 2009: 47). This was apparent in the participation of two white girls who wore tops in one of the Reed Dance ceremonies (Roy, 2005: 391). These conflicts perpetuate the vortex of cultural disparity between modernity and traditionalism, between which many black women are caught as they grapple with heterogeneous culture clashes from urban environments and rural areas.

Traditionally, when maidens take part in the ceremony they do not wear any form of undergarments beneath the beaded skirts, thus if these skirts vigorously move in any way their buttocks are revealed (Machirori,\textsuperscript{18} African Renaissance is essentially the reinterpretation of African history and culture in an effort to consolidate a wealth of African knowledge, explore culture, literature and folklore in Africa as well as unlock social construction around African identity (Vale & Maseko, 1998).
In August 2008, the current Zulu king announced that maidens who wanted to participate in the Reed Dance had to cover their buttocks (Mthethwa, 2008). Furthermore the Zulu king banned any female spectators from wearing pants to any traditional ceremony as he believed the ‘modern’ dress would conflict with traditional Zulu culture.

As virginity testing is conducted at these ceremonies, one virginity tester described the maidens as being “socially privileged commodities within a market economy” (Robillard, 2009: 87), which places these young women at risk as there are still myths that if a man has intercourse with a virgin he will be cured of AIDS and the enticing nature of ‘ripe’ and ‘naked’ virgins gathered in one area without protection may not help to minimise the risk.

3.3.2.3. Case three

The issue of globalization, seen as a process of intensification of relationship between societies in economic, social, political and cultural practices and ideas, is relevant because it has brought some of these cultures into close proximity resulting, in conflicts. As globalisation, by compressing time and space, creates ‘the world as a single place’, it intensifies the problem of the incommensurability of human values and cultures, a problem which cannot easily be ignored or trivialised (Khondker, 2006: 443).

The above statement asserts that globalisation intensifies the relationship between societies and, amongst other things, cultures. Furthermore this relationship is strained as cultures are forced into close proximity with each other, which results in conflict. In other words, as time and space between countries with different cultures decrease, owing to technological advancement, cultures seep into other cultures, which causes a backlash and conflict.
In contemporary South Africa, specifically in urban areas, cultural influences do not stem from only one monumental culture, but people adopt hybrid cultural identities (Rudwick, 2008: 157), fed by globalisation. African ethnicity is embracing western norms as people are becoming modernised and westernised (Rudwick, 2008: 161). In a study conducted with isiZulu speakers, dismay was expressed by participants with this state of African ethnicity (Rudwick, 2008: 161). In Zulu society there is no gender equality, which has been in the process of being established in urban areas. Men from rural areas are intimidated by urban educated women which, at times, causes conflicts which may lead to violence. This illustrates ‘unsettled times’ as discussed in chapter 2 where the culture of rural migrants and the heterogeneous nature of urban culture clash. The main concern for such traditionalists is that women have lost respect for men.

When being interviewed by the Mail and Guardian newspaper, a taxi driver at the Noord Street taxi rank said that the women in miniskirts were attacked because of respect, and a woman who dressed respectfully wore her dress over her knees (Rudwick, 2008: 162).

Whether for religious or cultural reasons, certain types of clothing evoke intense emotional responses in Africa and objections to these types of clothing are articulated through a discourse of foreign appearance (Hasen, 2004: 167 in Makoni, 2011: 343).

Women wearing tight pants, jeans and mini-skirts are described as slaves of western cultural imperialism (Vincent, 2009: 11).

Objections to modern dress, of which the mini-skirt is a part, is a protest against the influence by westernisation. In the 1970s leading
African statesmen would criticize women’s dress choices and in contemporary South Africa, it is the private citizens who have taken up this role (Vincent, 2009: 12). Furthermore, there is a perception that the infiltration of westernisation and the attrition of African culture is the reason behind the disorder with regard to violence in African society. Hence traditionalists insist on returning to African values. According to Vincent (2009: 12), it is within this background that young urban women are seen as a weak link in the preservation of Africanism, as they cause the infiltration of ‘unAfrican’ means of expression into African identity. Thus a woman who wears a miniskirt is perceived as being unAfrican and as being in opposition to traditional African culture. Furthermore traditionalists believe that such a woman needs to be taught a lesson or punished, as it is perceived that she has not properly expressed her African female identity. The irony is that men who attack women for wearing unAfrican attire are wearing western attire themselves (Vincent, 2009: 13).

One interpretation of the insistence on the part of some women [is] that they will wear mini-skirts at urban South African taxi ranks despite the public scrutiny and rancour that they know will inevitably be aroused is to suggest that, in borrowing a form of clothing that has become an acceptable and ubiquitous expression of emphasised femininity in western culture, these women are using this acceptability as a disguise for making a protest of a different kind: against restrictive gender mores in African Society (Vincent, 2009: 14).

According to Vincent (2009: 13), acceptable clothing is encoded with the need to reclaim power over women and to control female sexuality; it is thus perceived as a message of dissidence if a woman dresses herself differently to prescribed cultural standards. Thus the
explanation emerged that women who wear miniskirts are attacked so as to protect African culture.

According to Makoni (2011: 346), among poorly educated rural black women and men, the miniskirt is associated with women who are sexually promiscuous or prostitutes. However the same individuals perceive white women dressed in a miniskirt differently and they do not view them as prostitutes, as wearing miniskirts is viewed as being a part of their culture. White women would not be ‘punished’ provided that they remained in their areas of residence. The miniskirt is connected to a foreign moral system which is reinterpreted by perceivers when they consider the race of the woman wearing the miniskirt (Makoni, 2011: 346). Thus the contention is no longer about exposing flesh but the symbolic interpretation of dress.

In Case three protesters, who participated in the marches organised to protest against the sexual assault of some women at Noord Street taxi rank, voiced their opinions:

I’m a mother of two beautiful girls, who love wearing miniskirts. Drivers must be aware that we are going to dress as we please, we need to be able to say no! We are not going to be victimised by taxi drivers whose own daughters wear traditional attire that shows the body (Mhlana, 2008: 32)

We are not here to fight with our brothers. We are here to ask them not to fight us. We have a right to wear whatever we want and go wherever we want, mind your job and not women (Iol News, 2008)

Taxi drivers were displeased by both the marches that took place. Some taxi drivers vowed that they would continue to violate women who wore miniskirts, as they claimed that such dress offended their culture (Mhlana, 2008:32). Furthermore, the taxi drivers proceeded to
strip off their clothing and flashed their buttocks at the marchers, chanting: “we know how to strip like these whores”, even threatening to shoot anyone who entered the rank wearing a miniskirt. Some political groups weighed in on the debate and called the incident “barbaric” and “chauvinistic” and that it “undermined gender struggles” (Sapa, 2008). A taxi driver commented saying that men were being ‘abused’ by women who are half naked. He further blamed law makers for the ‘sad state’ of female dress, post 1994, as women claim that they have rights to do what they like (Sapa, 2008).

Within this public dissent there are some who believe that this sexual assault incident had nothing to do with the fact that the victim was wearing a mini skirt but rather that the sexual assault was about:

... [c]ulture, decency, moral values or whatever else the traditionalists have been pulling out of their hats. What happened to [the victim] was about power, and her rape was an exaggerated version of what happens to women all over the world (Goredema, 2008).

Thus women’s bodies will never exist as ‘normal’ entities of society as they are ‘marked’ by sexual harassment, and the regulation of the female form.
3.3. Summary

These three case studies illustrate the South African context of appearance perception and violence. All three cases were highly publicised and brought to the fore the violation of women in that country. Perpetrators and witnesses in these three cases blamed the violation of women on dress choice. In the ensuing public reaction, protests and criticisms were initiated against such perceptions, in other words women could be violated for their dress choice. Other public reactions in support of perpetrators encouraged the policing of women and their dress choices to protect the moral fibre of society as well as preserve African heritage. The battles between these conflicting perceptions of the freedom and rights of women played out dramatically on the media stage, hence becoming a rich source of information and insight into South African perceptions of the right to violate women because of their dress choice.

Besides dress choice another common thread that runs through each case is the notion of cultural conflict. More specifically, there seems to be an underlying conflict between modernity and traditionalism and how these influence perceptions of dress as well as violence against women. This conflict seems to stem from two distinct environments with their different cultures namely, rural and urban areas and the convergence of these cultures in urban areas with often violent consequences for women.
Chapter 4

Conclusion

Dressing one’s body is more than a frivolous ritual, but rather a powerful form of sartorial communication which may have the potential to endanger women. This chapter concludes this study describes key findings, makes recommendations and suggests further areas of research in this field.

The research problem was that some men have a perception that they have a right to violate women due to the apparel choice that women make.

This study began by probing the notion that dress can cause violent behaviour toward women. In order to better understand the problem the research had to investigate aspects that influence perception. Furthermore a link had to be investigated between a casual factor, namely dress, and the resultant behaviour, namely violence. Factors that influence the wearer to choose certain types of dress were explored as well as the factors that influence a perceiver’s perception of the dressed body. Dress is used in some cases as an excuse for violating women, but on closer inspection it emerges that this is fuelled by unstable cultural rules, modes and dress codes. Violence cannot be justified and in many cases it is used in an attempt to retain power over the weak and vulnerable, where some men still have a perception that certain forms of dress are taboo and that women who adorn themselves with these forms of dress should be violently punished. This is especially true in South Africa. Prompted by the high rape statistics of that country and three prominent cases of female violation circulated in the media this research has investigated the power of dress and the danger of its related violence.
4.1 Completion of research aim and sub-aims

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceived right to violate a woman due to the apparel choices women make. Two sub-aims were identified as a means of fulfilling this aim.

The first sub-aim was to investigate the perceived right to violate women, using theories and concepts that explore the link between female dress and violent behaviour. This study explored aspects of female dress which include how certain forms of female dress are perceived. The concept of embedded messages in dress was explored. The idea that dress has a syntax was also explored in relation to the communicative quality of dress. The syntax of dress was described as the manner in which individual garments are combined and presented on the female body. Furthermore, this syntax creates a visual language that is part of a non-verbal form of communication. Dress, therefore, conveys messages or ‘communicates’ to perceivers. This study determined that certain types of dress conveyed subliminal messages. The cognitive process of interpreting these messages is influenced by several factors which include environmental factors and perceiver variables. It emerged that perceivers seem to use a subconscious value system to evaluate the causes of female violation, when they are faced with certain forms of dress. A link was drawn between perceptions and how such perceptions influence behaviour.

The concepts of social cognition and the social psychology of dress have been used to provide a context for and descriptions of messages in dress and factors that influence the perception of dress. The word ‘social’ emphasises
human interaction with and reaction to external cues which influence behaviour. In this study the cue is dress. Dress was described as a social skin, used by individuals to introduce or impress themselves on society. Thus dress becomes a means by which ‘social perceptions’ and ‘person perceptions’ are gleaned which in turn influence social interaction.

The idea that female dress has a ‘seduction’ quality was explored. It emerged that male and female perception of seductive dress differs. Moreover, the motivation for wearing certain types of dress for women is often intended to be fashionable, which men perceive to be part of seduction or intended to seduce. However it seems that fashion has become more provocative and ‘raunch’ attire has become part of popular culture. In other words standards of modesty have been changed as the female body is exposed in more risky dress choices, as women attempt to be fashionable. However, men apparently overestimate the sexual intent of these dress choices. Dress in such instances was presented as a casual factor of violation.

Three theories were used to investigate the link between the creation of perceptions and resultant behaviour. Firstly, the theory of inference described dress as a cue, or a social stimulus used by perceivers to create inferences about women. Correspondent inference was used to explain how character attributions are drawn about a woman through observation of a woman dressed in a certain way. Interpretative inference explained how perceivers infer meaning from certain appearances and use these inferences to establish the central personal characteristics of a woman. Extended inference showed how cognitive leaps occurred in the perceiver’s mind. During this process a
Perceiver assigns certain personality traits to a woman dressed in a certain way and these inferences influence his behaviour towards that woman. What emerged through this investigation is that inferences are implicit which emphasises the idea that the interpretation of dress is subliminal or subconscious in nature.

Secondly the theory of attribution was investigated. This theory elucidate how violation is justified. The creation of attributions as well as the influence that rape myths and stereotypes have on how attributions are assigned, was explored. The theory of attribution described dress as the central, external, causal factor which enables perceivers to assess the cause of a social incident. Thus perceivers may infer that when a woman is assaulted she caused this incident to occur by dressing in a particular way.

Lastly the theory of modesty was investigated. The concept that modesty is a custom of covering the female body was explored. The use of dress as a medium by which modesty and attractiveness were achieved was discussed. What emerged was that there are cultural parameters by which modesty could be defined and that dress could be used as a means of reconciling different cultures.

In this study the researcher explored facets of dress and how dress forms have changed due to the evolution of culture. It was established that dress is an artefact of culture. In other words on way that cultures express themselves is through dress. Social perception and appearance perception were used to elucidate how perceivers perceive the dressed female body and how culture
influences such perceptions. Culture was defined and what emerged was that culture is at the centre of shaping values. Swilder's theory, which states that identities are activated by situational cues which are driven by culture, was explored. This theory suggests that situational cues ultimately influence behaviour. What emerged is that culture is gendered, as a consequence it becomes ambiguous, especially concerning dress codes. Dress codes frequently change as cultures converge through cultural migration. The convergences of cultures increases the danger of violence as cultural duality causes tension. Culture was also described as the milieu in which violence occurred. Cultural migration and the amalgamation of values in South Africa was explored together with the evolution of culture in South Africa.

It emerged that South African law is cultural because it encapsulates and represents the diversity of culture in South Africa. The effect of customary law on violence against women and how customary law perpetuates female violation was explored. It emerged that women must prove that sexual violence perpetrated against them was unwarranted, which is where dress seems to play a crucial role. This research discovered that laws are thus ineffective to deal with violence against women.

What emerged in this research is that the nature of violence against women is covert, occurring in the undercurrents of society. In some cases it is believed that women initiate violence toward themselves due to their dress choices. South Africa’s rape statistics are alarming and it is for this reason, amongst
others, that the perceived right to violate women was explored in a South African context, in the form of case studies.

The second sub-aim was to explore the perceived right to violate women in a South African context through analysing case studies. Descriptions and explanations of South African culture and law were explored in order to create a context for the case studies. Culture and how it influences perceivers was investigated. Furthermore, the diversity of cultures in South Africa and the conflict caused by differences among cultures was explored. The effect that cultural conflict had on violence against women was investigated. Violence, in some cases, was the derivative of the perception of female dress.

In the first case study, case one, dress was used as a justification for alleged violation in a sexual offence case involving a prominent political figure and a young woman. The kanga, a traditional garment in Zulu culture, was cited as the cause for the complainant’s alleged violation. Thus the cultural significance of the kanga was explored as well as cultural perceptions of the kanga. The public reaction to this case was also explored, which provided insights into perception, assignment of attribution and how inferences about women dressed in a particular way are created and exploited in a political context.

In the second case study, case two, ceremonial dress was investigated and how the exposure of the female body in a cultural context seemed not to minimise the risk of violation. The desperation of a certain cultural group to preserve its cultural heritage was explored and how the preservation of
cultural heritage was perceived in a modern context. The public reaction to the sexual assault incident which occurred at a traditional ceremony was explored so as to gain insight into the dangers of exposing the female body in rural South Africa.

In the third case study, case three, the violation of women in an urban South African context was explored. Modern dress, specifically the miniskirt, was seen as the cause for the violation of women. This case delved into how the convergence of traditionalism, modernity and eurocentrism influenced how perceivers perceived female dress. Public reaction to sexual assault incidents which occurred at a taxi rank were explored and insights were gathered concerning the tension between certain cultures and the violent consequences for women.

All three cases emphasised the shifting modes of morality, modesty and dress codes and how women struggled to conform to these or in some cases vehemently defied them. These cases brought to the fore the cultural conflict that exists in South Africa and how it materialises on the dressed female form.
4.2. Key Findings

Three key finding emerged in this study namely, the impact of culture on the perceived right to violate women, disparities in dress perception between the sexes which leads to miscommunication and thus female violation and lastly ineffective law enforcement which has hampered efforts to reduce sexual violation in South African society.

4.2.1. Impact of Culture

As this study progressed it was apparent that one major factor seemed to link all aspects of the study together, namely culture. The focus of the study was not to investigate the effect of culture on dress, yet it can be said that culture subtly seeps into each concept and theory investigated. In other words culture becomes the context in which social interactions are formed and perceptions are realised. Furthermore, as exemplified in the case studies in chapter 3, culture is used as a justification for attributions and, in some instances, violation. What also became apparent is that culture in itself is a difficult concept to define or even employ, and there is a constant overlap between culture as a whole as discussed in chapter two and ‘sub-cultures’ which emerge through the case studies. However, as an influence on perceivers, culture, whether it is of a particular cultural group or sub-culture or not, is a factor that goes beyond the minor details that are provided by ethnic variations. In other words ‘culture’ as a whole, is the main focus, as it appears to enforce danger upon women.

It is apparent through this research that the violation of women may have little to do with dress, though dress seems to be a feasible explanation for this
phenomenon because in each of the cases presented dress was used as a motive for violation.

Within certain cultural groups there is a disparity between what is considered modest and what is considered not to be modest, which causes confusion. This seems to also occur in the context of different social environments. This was clearly illustrated in the first case study where the complainant’s dress under traditional cultural standards was considered modest, but people who professed to be ardent traditionalists perceived her dress as provocative. In other words women will be violated no matter how they dress. However, the attribution – which is influenced by the victim’s dress choice – for sexual violation – shifts from the perpetrator to the victim, as illustrated by the case studies in chapter 3. Coupled with attribution are the mixed messages that women receive about what are appropriate forms of dress as cultures clash in different social environments.

The diagram below summarises all the aspects discussed above and illustrates the process of perceiving the dressed female body and the consequences thereof (see figure 4.1 on page 111).
4.2.2. Disparities in dress perception between men and women

This study revealed that a major aspect which may cause women to be a risk of violation are the disparate perceptions that men and women have of dress. The differences in perception seem to be caused by a difference in socialisation of either gender. Since perceptions are created sub-consciously one could assume that disparate perceptions, between the sexes, of the dressed female are formed at physiological level. However an investigation into whether the perceptions of the dressed female body could be inherent to the physiological attributes of the sexes or a purely due to socialisation, which causes each sex to perceive the clothed female body in different ways, has not been done. Understanding what factors cause the disparity in dress
perception between the sexes could give insight into the reason that miscommunication through dress occurs and how this leads to sexual violation.

4.2.3. Ineffective law enforcement

This study revealed that a major hindrance to the eradication of female violation in society is poor implementation and understanding of South African sexual offences legislation. Examples of poor handling of sexual offence cases were sited. South African law was also discovered to have an ambiguity that caused black women in particular to shy away from using legislative provisions. Furthermore this study noted that court procedures were often drawn out and victims were never assured that perpetrators would be sentenced.

4.3. Recommendations and fields for further research

The following recommendation and further fields of research, linked to the key findings of this study have been suggested namely: that there is a need for cultural awareness in order to minimise risk of violation, there is also an understanding required of the disparity of dress perception between the sexes in order to establish more effective solutions to reduce miscommunication which leads to violation and lastly implementation of legislation should be reviewed in order to change the perceptions victims of violation have of the justice system in South Africa.
4.3.1 Cultural Awareness

Women need to be aware of how cultural perceptions concerning dress, especially when coupled with a particular social environment, can affect women. It is unfortunate that women have to live in constant fear of the possible danger of violation but women need to be aware that there are areas of high risk where sexual assault incidents have occurred. Women also need to know why sexual assault incidents have occurred in these high risk areas so as to minimise their own risk when they are in these areas.

4.3.2. Understanding the formulation of perceptions

The formulation of perceptions of dress should be investigated neurologically especially as it seems that a large part of the process of formulating perceptions is subconscious. An experiment to gauge participants’ responses to certain stimuli (types of dress) should be conducted. A questionnaire should be administered as part of the experiment, so that biological responses, reflective responses and behaviour can be triangulated. In theory the process of perception formulations is different to how perceptions are formulated in the real world. Other factors and stimuli, which are part of the context in which the dressed body occurs, may change participants’ responses and perceptions of women dressed in a particular way. The responses captured in an experiment of this nature may provide insight into the role that dress plays in social interaction. According to Ellis (1991) there is a biological reason that men rape women (Krith & Kitzinger, 1997: 518). Ellis’s concept could be used to investigate miscommunication or misperception of
sexual suggestion. According to Krith and Kitzinger (1997: 517) men and women speak different languages which complicates communication between them. As established in this study, dress is a form of communication or ‘language’. Frith and Kitzinger (1997: 518) suggest that women miscommunicate their intentions towards men which causes men to misperceive women’s intentions towards them. Thus if dress, which is perceived differently by men and women, is a form of non-verbal communication, it may cause miscommunication and misperception between men and women. Frith and Kitzinger (1997: 518) suggest the reason some men rape is that they are more inclined than other men to perceive sexual intent. Thus some men are likely to perceive sexual intent or suggestion in certain types of dress. It was also established, in this study, that dress is a cue used in social interaction. Some men may have “a specific cue-reading impairment such that these men are unable to decode a woman’s negative cues” (Frith & Kitzinger, 1997: 518). Dress, as a cue, is perceived by some men as a tool for sexual arousal. This perception may, in some situations, hamper a man’s ability to read negative cues. Some men may be unable to correlate provocative dress with a woman’s negative response to their sexual advances. A miscommunication or misinterpretation occurs which may result in sexual assault. Hence, an experiment should be conducted to determine what miscommunications or misinterpretations of dress are, why they occur and why certain responses to dress occur in a South African context.

An experiment of this nature should be done in South Africa with a representative sample of South African men from two groups; sexual criminals
who have been sentenced and volunteers from the general public. This experiment should be done so that variables which cause perceptions of dress to lead to violence and that are indicative of the South African context, may be determined. An experiment of this nature will investigate the power that dress has to cause sexual assault. This research provides the sociological context which may guide the direction of the above mentioned experiment.

4.3.3 Review of law enforcement

According to Smallhorne (2012:1) effective criminal justice is important in order for rape to be eradicated. The government of South Africa should develop “strong legislation with good definitions of crimes” in order to prevent the violation of women in that country (Jewkes cited in Smallhorne, 2012: 1). This is due to the fact that, currently, the duality of the legal system in South Africa leaves many women without recourse when they are violated.

Female violation is an issue that has plagued society for centuries. It is human nature to attempt to find the major cause for the issue of female violation so that it may be solved. Investigating the link between violence against women and dress is one such attempt. It has facilitated a discussion, through this study, of the sartorial nature of dress as well as the multifaceted nature of violence. Human beings, in their attempt to rationalise a traumatic event such as violence, find the need to assign blame or attribution. In the context of female violation dress seems to be the scapegoat. However, dress is not sufficient to address female violation as a whole. Violation of women who do
seem to conform to the dress codes of their particular cultural groups still occurs. In other words women will make dress choices that are accepted by the cultural groups they are affiliated to, in the hope that they will not be violated. However, the threat of violence against women still exists.

“Violence against women and girls is [...] so deeply embedded in cultures around the world that it is almost invisible” (Bunch 1997: 41). This is especially true in South Africa.

Sexual violence in this country is one of the worst human rights issues women face. And despite the systematic nature of the beast ... most women must face it largely alone [as there are] ... ‘extremely high levels of secondary trauma faced by a survivor’ (Smallhorne, 2012: 1).

Violence is prevalent in South Africa (as discussed in this study, and also evident in the case studies investigated in this research). Dress is the focus of this study because it has been used by some men as a reason to violate women. Perceptions of dress have been investigated in this study and in some cases the perception of dress influenced rape myths. These rape myths cause the victims of rape to experience “secondary trauma” as they are blamed for their own violation whether it is as a result of their dress choice or their demeanour. This in turn perpetuates rape as perpetrators are hardly ever charged.

Several factors have been explored and valuable insights gained concerning the perceived right to violate women and the role that female dress plays. This research has discovered that the complexities of female violation are far reaching and that dress, though in some cases it is used as justification for violation, is not the reason that men violate women.
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