

‘Swag’: an ethnographic study of *izikhothane* fashion identity

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ABSTRACT

Skhothane is defined by ostentatious performances that involve dance, 'dissing' and flamboyant dress. The following study identifies and analyses the neo-tribe's fashion codes in order to understand more thoroughly how and why these are constructed as well as to shed light on subcultural phenomena in South African township culture. The idea of neo-tribes such as *skhothane* and hip-hop being counterculture has become challenged by the increasing influence of mass culture on the youth -especially in post-apartheid South Africa, where media dictates on lifestyle and identities are continually evolving. This qualitative research project aims at uncovering the stylistic nuances of the *Skhothane* neo-tribe. It further maps out the factors that inform how the members negotiate and express their identity using fashion. In this respect, phenomenological epistemology was appropriate as it lent itself to the deep inquiry into the culture's identity from the perspective of its members. The ethnographic research methods of observation, journaling and interview were employed on the study sample of 9 participants belonging to the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew, in order to explore the fashion identities of *Skhothanes*. The common defining feature of the *Italian Gates skhothane* fashion performances is the acquisition and pageant-like display of members' perceived wealth through colourful Italian branded clothing. In this study's sample, the practice of vandalism on consumer goods is a rarity and is understood as being an uncommon *skhothane* performance. Instead, the idea of vandalism being inherent to the culture seems to have gained notoriety through subjective media coverage. The overall findings of the study indicate that the self-reflexive identities of the *skhothane Italian Gates* group make the participants intertextual authors in their use of luxury clothes to portray the image of their desired affluence and social positions. The existence of the *skhothane* neo-tribe reaffirms the reality of a postmodern society but more so it demonstrates a shift in the identities of young black South Africans. The study has provided terminologies relevant to neo-tribal phenomena that are defined by consumerism and performance in the context of fashion.

Keywords *Skhothane*, swag, identity, neo-tribe, fashion, style-fashion-dress, South African township style, post-apartheid identity, performativity, bling culture

DECLARATION

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Where it is appropriate, other sources are acknowledged by giving explicit references - a bibliography is included subsequently. This dissertation is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Applied Arts in Fashion. This work has not been previously accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

*To my parents
Mlamuli and Princess Memela
because no words could describe all
that you are and have done for me:*

Thank You.

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CONTENTS PAGE

ABSTRACT	I
DECLARATION	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION SWAG UNRAVELLED	1
1. BACKGROUND	1
1.2 AIMS	1
1.3 RATIONALE	2
1.4 CRITICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS	3
1.5 CHAPTER OVERVIEWS	3
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	5
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: SWAG SEAMS PART ONE	7
2.1 INTRODUCTION	7
2.2 POST-SUBCULTURE THEORY	7
2.2.1 CULTURAL CAPITAL	8
2.3 FASHION AS COMMUNICATION	9
2.3.1 CLOTHING AS COMMUNICATIVE OF STATUS	10
2.4 PERSONAL IDENTITY FORMATION	11
2.4.1 'LIFESTYLE'	12
2.5 DRESS AS A PERFORMATIVE	13
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW SWAG SEAMS PART TWO	15
2.1 INTRODUCTION	15
2.2 POSTMODERN FASHION: HYPERREAL AND HYBRID CULTURES	15
2.2.1 HYPERREAL	16
2.2.2 MEANINGLESS MEANING: INTERTEXTUALITY AND BRICOLAGE	18
I. Bricolage	18
ii. Semiotics	18
iii. Intertextuality	20
2.2.3 HYBRID CULTURES: IDENTITY IN A TIME OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD	21
2.2.4 THE SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE	23
2.2.5 YOU ARE WHAT YOU WEAR: SELF-REFLEXIVE POSTMODERN IDENTITIES	24
I. The rise of new media technologies	24
ii. The dominance of consumerism in society	25
2.3 SKHOTHANE	25
2.3.1 LIFESTYLE AND BACKGROUND	25
2.3.2 LIGHTS, CAMERA, FASHION: ARTEFACTS AND RITUALS OF THE NEO-TRIBE	27
2.4 ANTI-FASHION	28
2.4.1 THE FALLACY OF ANTI-FASHION: BLURRED LINES AND THE CULT OF INDIVIDUALITY	31

2.4.2 BLURRED LINES: GLOBALIZATION AND THE CULT OF INDIVIDUALITY	32
2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF PROCURING FINE CLOTHING TO AFRICANS.	32
2.5.1 A CAUTIONARY TALE	32
2.5.2 SWAG	32
2.5.2 BLING CULTURE	33
2.6 CONCLUSION	37
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN SWAG STITCHES	39
3.1. STUDY DESIGN	39
3.1.1. FORE-STANDING, INTERROGATION AND REFLECTION	39
3.1.2 METHODOLOGY	40
3.2 ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS	40
3.2.1 DEFINING ETHNOGRAPHY	41
3.3. SAMPLE DESIGN AND SAMPLING METHODS	42
3.4. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND FIELDWORK PRACTICE	42
i. Photo elicitation	44
ii. Interview	46
iii. Reflective journal	47
IV. Research site	47
3.5. DATA ANALYSIS	48
3.6. CREDIBILITY	51
3.6.1 CONFIRMABILITY	51
3.7. CHALLENGES IN DATA GATHERING	52
3.8. ETHICS	52
3.8.1 REMUNERATION OF PARTICIPANTS	53
3.8.2 CONFIDENTIALITY	53
i. Research data storage	53
3.9 CONCLUSION	53
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS SWAG FABRIC	54
4.1 INTRODUCTION	54
4.2 HYBRID CULTURES: IDENTITY IN A TIME OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD	55
4.2.1 NO IDENTIFIABLE HIERARCHIES	56
4.2.2 FLUID RELATIONSHIPS	57
4.2.3 YOU ARE WHAT YOU WEAR: SELF-REFLEXIVE POSTMODERN IDENTITIES	59
i. Trickle-down	61
ii. Trickle up	61
iii. Trickle-across	62
4.3 INTERTEXTUAL AUTHORS: DECODING THE CLOTHING TEXTS OF SKHOTHANE	65
i. Quotation	67
ii. Pastiche	68
4.4 DEFINING <i>SKHOTHANE</i>	69

4.4.1. DEMOGRAPHICS	69
4.4.2. TERMINOLOGY	71
4.4.3. RITUALS AND PRACTICES	72
i. Burning clothes	72
ii. Bragging/dissing	75
iii. Dancing	79
4.4.4 SWAG	81
4.5 STYLE-FASHION-DRESS	84
4.6 'KHOTHING': THE IMPORTANCE OF PROCURING FINE CLOTHING TO AFRICANS	86
4.6.1. MAMA I ("WILL") MAKE IT.	86
4.6.2. SWAG: <i>SIDLUKOTINI</i>	88
4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	91
4.7.1 ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWING	91
4.7.2 EQUIPMENT	91
4.7.3 PROTECTING PARTICIPANT IDENTITY	92
i. Data storage	91
ii. Change of title and terms	91
4.8. SWAG SEAMSTRESS: PERSONAL REFLECTION	93
4.9 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS	94
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION SWAG DONNED	97
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH SWAG MANUFACTURED	103
6.1 GENERAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE	103
6.2 LIMITATIONS	103
6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	104
6.3.1 DISSEMINATION OF STUDY FINDINGS	104
REFERENCES	106
APPENDIX A – D: TRANSCRIPTS AND JOURNAL NOTES	119
APPENDIX E – LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT	120
APPENDIX F – ZULU LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT	123
APPENDIX G - PHOTOGRAPHY CONSENT/MODEL RELEASE FORM	128
APPENDIX H–ZULU PHOTOGRAPHY CONSENT/MODEL RELEASE FORM	129
APPENDIX I - E-MAIL FOR RECRUITMENT OF GATEKEEPERS	130
APPENDIX J: PROPOSED SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	131
APPENDIX K – URL LOCATION FOR RAW DATA VIDEO FILES	133
APPENDIX L – INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL	135
APPENDIX M – IMAGES OF SMARTEEZ AND PANSULA SUBCULTURE	134

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: EXAMPLE OF INTERTEXTUALITY IN MOSCHINO'S AW 2014 COLLECTION	20
FIGURE 2: <i>SKHOTHANES</i>	27
FIGURE 3: NDEBELE WOMAN AND SAPEUR	34
FIGURE 4: IMAGES USED FOR PHOTO ELICITATION	45
FIGURE 5: IMAGES OF SURROUNDING AREA OF THEMBISA PARK	47
FIGURE 6: PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS	51
FIGURE 7: OVERVIEW OF ANALYSIS APPROACH	54
FIGURE 8: TRICKLE THEORIES THAT EXPLAIN FASHION DISSEMINATION	61
FIGURE 9: TRAFFIC-CIRCLE FLOW OF ITALIAN GATES SKHOTHANE FASHION ADOPTION	63
FIGURE 10: EXAMPLE 1 - PASTOR'S TRAFFIC-CIRCLE FLOW	64
FIGURE 11: EXAMPLE 2 - DON SFARZO'S TRAFFIC-CIRCLE FLOW	65
FIGURE 12: FEMALE PRESENCE	69
FIGURE 13: <i>SKHOTHANE</i> FASHION PERFORMANCE CATEGORIES	72
FIGURE 14: TRIAD OF SKHOTHANE PERFORMATIVES	75
FIGURE 15: NOTABLE FASHION ARTEFACTS	79
FIGURE 16: <i>SKHOTHANES'</i> FLAMBOYANT SWAG	82
FIGURE 17: POSES TO SHOW CLOTHING	83
FIGURE 18: MINORITY GROUP DISIDENTIFICATION (MGD) VS COUNTERCULTURE INSULT (CI).	85
FIGURE 19: INTERVIEW SITE COMMUNITY (SOURCED FROM GOOGLE STREET VIEW)	87
TABLE 1: CLASSIC ETHNOGRAPHY AND URBAN ETHNOGRAPHY (CROWLEY-HENRY'S 2009)	41
TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS	43
TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF RAW DATA LABELLING	43
TABLE 4: CODING CATEGORIES	49
TABLE 5: CODE SYSTEM	50
TABLE 6: TRANSCRIPT LOCATION KEY	55
TABLE 7: SUBCULTURE VS NEO-TRIBE	56
TABLE 9: DEMOGRAPHICS	69
TABLE 10: MATERIAL POSSESSIONS REFERENCED BY <i>SKHOTHANES</i>	78
TABLE 11: TABULATED BREAKDOWN OF DAVIS (1992: 168-186) 6 VARIETIES OF ANTI-FASHION.	84

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

SWAG UNRAVELLED

1. BACKGROUND

Skhothane is a Johannesburg based township neo-tribe that gained media attention in 2012 (Boikanyo 2013: 29; Nxedlana 2012; 3rd Degree 2012; Bongela 2012). With a dress style characterised by brightly coloured floral and graphic printed Italian clothing, the neo-tribe became synonymous with brash displays of destroying luxury goods (Howell and Vincent 2014: 61). The luxury goods are vandalised in ostentatious performances - known as “battles” - where opposing crews try to out-brag each other on how much wealth one has (Bambalele 2012; Jones 2013: 209-210; Howell and Vincent 2014: 60-61). Destroying luxury goods can take the form of tearing clothes, trampling on food, spilling alcohol or burning money (3rd Degree 2010). Although *skhothane* culture gained notoriety through its overt vandalism during performances, *Skhothanes* are also visually identifiable through their unique style. This study explores the culture in terms of fashion, consumerism and postmodern society.

The changing landscape of South African youth culture is also explored to determine the constructs of *skhothane* fashion identities. South African youth style has seen a significant shift in the past decade. Young South Africans are no longer restricted to subscribing to what is being dictated and promoted as ‘African’ fashion by the world at large (Corrigall 2011:3). Instead there is a culture of individuality that stems from the younger generation’s acceptance that they are not one homogeneous society with the same cultural, ethnic or social background (Corrigall 2011:3). For this study, elements that form the identity of the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew are examined to attempt an articulation of the group’s neo-tribal identity as expressed through their dress. The exploration of the *Italian Gates*’ style can provide substantial and meaningful documentation of local youth society. According to Bennett (1999: 599) self-reflexive identities, as influenced by postmodernity, create restructured and fluid dynamics of belonging. Understanding the various fashion cultural capital¹ utilised by the *Italian Gates* crew gives insight into how the neo-tribal members view their sense of belonging within a South African context.

1.2 AIMS

The aim of this study is to explore and describe the *skhothane* neo-tribe and to map out the neo-tribe in terms of the specifics of its stylistic attributes and the factors that inform identity negotiation. The investigation aims to explore the ways in which *skhothane* groups express their identity through clothing and the significance of this neo-tribe in a social context. The objectives of this study are to:

- Conduct a scholarly analysis to describe and document *skhothane* dress and the various types of fashion performances that identify the neo-tribe.
- Observe and interview participants in order to explore the fashion-related ways in which they participate and perform their identities.

¹Cultural capital refers to the tangible or intangible assets that provide us with social mobility (Bourdieu 1986: 17).

- To explore the relationship between post-subculture theory and consumerism, in a South African, context, through an analysis of the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew's fashion identity.

1.3 RATIONALE

The analysis and theorising of subcultural style has been largely documented as a class struggle against hegemonic societies (McRobbie and Garber 1975; Hebdige 1979; Polhemus 1994b). However, as the world becomes more globalised with a visible increase in consumerism and shared communication via media, the influence of an imagery-saturated world cannot be ignored and global communities should now be discussed in terms of a consumer context (Baudrillard 1994; McRobbie 1994; Strinati 2005). The idea of neo-tribes, such as *skhothane* and hip-hop, being counterculture has become challenged by the increasing influence of mass culture on the youth (Pope 2005); especially in post-apartheid South Africa, where media dictates of lifestyle and identities are continually evolving and being constructed.

Regardless of the significant shift in the youth style landscape in the past decade, studies on subcultural style in South Africa have been a relatively ignored aspect of cultural identity formation (Bowen 2011). According to Corrigan (2011: 3), there is evidence of "...a growing desire among South Africa's black youths to create ensembles that were not dictated by fashion designers or retailers, who were imposing a generic one-size-fits-all ersatz African identity on consumers". However, that is not to say that neo-tribes have not been documented. The problem, according to Robin Givhan (as cited in Goldenberg 2013: 3), is that on the internet what passes for fashion documentation is largely left to blog spheres and encompasses a very small isolated section in newspapers and other media. This leads to poor quality documentation of these cultural phenomena - where the whole picture is not captured and only the facts deemed relevant and beneficial to the blog writer's agenda are represented (Goldenberg 2013: 3).

My interest in this topic stems from my experience as a fashion student - where I noticed that there was a lack of significant literature available on South African street style. This is in terms of creative inspiration as well as in terms of the repertoire of academically sound references. The reality is that the current generation of South Africans is exposed to 'global flows of music, style and fashion' (Mpolokeng 2002: 1), giving room for youth neo-tribes like the *Smarteez* and *ama-Pantsula* (see Appendix M) to add to the mix of cultural inspiration. The gap in literature confirms the need to increase the available knowledge on fashion identity and style in relation to South African youth culture.

This study is an expansion of my BTech: Fashion project on *skhothane* - where my interest in youth cultural studies was developed. Various limitations were highlighted in the BTech project - particularly that the research uncovered a construct of *skhothane* that could not be comprehensively explained by the subcultural theories' framework from the Birmingham² school of thought (Memela 2014). One of the findings of my BTech research report was that South African youth studies needed to be discussed in the context of post-modern subculture theories.

The intention of the proposed study is to map out the fashion identity of the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew. This will be categorised in terms of the specifics of their stylistic attributes and the fashion related factors that they use in articulating their identity. The *Italian Gates* crew was selected due to its notoriety within the Thembisa³ community as one of the “best” *skhothane* crews. Furthermore there was access to the *Italian Gates* group due to the comfortable rapport developed with my gatekeeper. The theoretical underpinnings of this study are rooted in post-subculture theory with the underlying themes of self-reflexivity; cultural capital and neo-tribes (Maffesoli 1995; Gelder and Thornton 1997; Bennett 1999; Muggleton 2000; Posner 2003; Barnard 2007).

1.4 CRITICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were used as a starting point for the literature consulted and research methods employed:

- How can neo-tribal fashion identity be defined?
- How does media consumption influence the formation of neo-tribes?
- What are the key features used in the construction of the fashion identity of the *Italian Gates Skhothanes*?
- How can the *Italian Gates Skhothane*'s relationship with consumerism be defined?
- What other factors motivate the *Italian Gates Skhothane* members to participate in the neo-tribe?

1.5 CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

- *Chapter Two – Literature Review: Swag Seams Part One*

Chapter Two Part One details the literature consulted in establishing the theoretical underpinnings and defines the key terminologies and literature on the study topic. This chapter further supports data interpretation.

- *Chapter Two – Literature Review: Swag Seams Part Two*

Chapter Two Part Two details the literature reviewed as guided by the critical questions and various stages of data collection. It further problematises the research questions and defines the key terminologies and studies on the study topic.

²The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University was established in 1964 (Gelder and Thornton 1997: 83). Theorists from the CCCS focused primarily on the ideas and forms embraced by youth subcultures.

³Thembisa is a South African township located in Johannesburg.

- *Chapter Three – Research Design: Swag Stitches*

The research methodology section outlines the ethnographic research plan followed. It describes the methodology and measures taken to overcome any arising issues during data collection. The data collection processes are described and related from a phenomenological perspective.

- *Chapter Four –Results: Swag Fabric*

This section presents the data analysis and discusses the findings from the data collected. Tables and diagrams are used to assist in explaining the various conclusions drawn from literature reviewed and data collected. Furthermore the section is structured according to the prevalent themes as guided by the research questions.

- *Chapter Five –Discussion: Swag Donned*

This section discusses the findings in Chapter Four along with the conclusions drawn.

- *Chapter Six – Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research: Swag Manufactured*

This final chapter reviews whether the objectives and aims aligned in Chapter One were met and summarises the findings in relation to research questions and in light of existing literature. The chapter also includes the implications of the findings of the research and recommendations with regards to future research as identified by the researcher.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This glossary has been compiled to explain the meaning of key terms in context of this study. The terms defined, in relation to *skhothane*, are either an appropriation of English words or of isiZulu words in context of slang used by the neo-tribe being studied or in context of the literature being discussed.

Neo-tribe

Until recently the discussion on neo-tribe style phenomena has revolved around 70s Marxist ideas, from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University, such as hegemony and resistance (McRobbie 1994: 23). However the evidenced breakdown of traditional hegemonic societies challenges the role of youth style cultures as an expression of resistance (Muggleton 2000: 20). There is therefore a need to redefine the term “neo-tribe” to describe the youth cultures of 21st century. Bennett’s (1999: 600) outline of neo-tribes in *Neo-tribes or neo-tribes? Rethinking the relationship between youth, style and musical taste* describes neo-tribes as “temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships”. The term neo-tribe will therefore be used in reference to the *skhothane* phenomenon.

Skhothane

Since a query addressed to the department of languages at the Durban University of Technology confirmed that “...there are no dictionaries or databases that include such slang terms...” (Email comm. 11/04/2013 to N. Madhoo-Chipps), as a fluent isiZulu speaker, who understands how to use the term in its slang context, I have attempted to provide definitions for the terms used in this proposal. *Skhothane*, when referencing a person who participates in the culture, is a proper noun, as it describes a specific type of person. In the lower case form, *skhothane*, the word refers to the neo-tribe as a whole, much like how other subcultures, such as hip-hop, punk, blues, jazz, are labelled.

Skhothane– “the one who licks⁴” is derived from the Zulu word *ukukhotha/khotha* which directly translated means to lick (Nkabinde 1985: 118). However with regards to the neo-tribe, the term ‘lick’ has very little to do with actual licking. It is an accepted township slang word used for bragging. Someone would say, for example, *sasibakhotha nge-Hennessy* - translated as “we licked them with Hennessy.” This implies that the statement makers are the ‘best’ in terms of the acquisition of the expensive brand of alcohol. This is the basis of naming the neo-tribe ‘*skhothane*’. The neo-tribe’s

⁴ As a researcher in the humanities, who relies on provided evidence to construct the most likely version of the truth, I have used the provided definition from literature and as provided by the study sample. However, as a township isiZulu speaker, there is a possibility that *skhothane* is derived from the township slang word *skhotheni*. This is expressed only in an e-mail extract from Mago (2014: 37):

“*Izikhothane* are a group of crazy kids/gangs from *Jozi* (referring to *Johannesburg*), particularly Soweto... The name *Izikhothane* doesn't exist in Zulu. In Zulu we have “*oskhotheni*” which is used particularly in KwaZulu Natal (KZN) to refer to young boys who don't attend school but hang around the neighbourhood smoking and robbing people. These boys also dress in expensive clothes but nothing that draws attention to them. They also wear your All-stars and Dickies. They would never burn their clothes like *izikhothane* do. They treasure their clothes too much, particularly since they know how dangerous and precarious it was for them to get the money to buy the clothes.”

main function seems to be bragging. The foundation of the structure of the word is *khotha*; the rest of the word make-up is a prefix and suffix e.g. **Skhothane**= [S-khotha – ne].

Skhothane [s'core-tah-nair] (proper noun), **Skhothanes** (plural) *Johannesburg township slang*

- a young male or female who makes a show of bragging.
- a group of teenagers who make a spectacle of bragging.

skhothane (noun) *Johannesburg township slang*

- (noun) a township neo-tribe characterised by the ostentatious display of wealth; started in 2005 in the East Rand of Johannesburg, with its practice of dancing as uniformed groups derived from township dance movements (Boikanyo 2013b).

ukukhotha (verb) [oo-ku-core-tah] *Johannesburg township slang*

- to make a display/spectacle of bragging.

ubukhothane [oo-boo-core-tah-nair]

- The state of being a *Skhothane*.

Khothing [core-ting]

Acquiring and utilising material goods for specific purpose of using in an overt display of wealth.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW: SWAG SEAMS
PART ONE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are rooted in post-subculture theory with the underlying themes of self-reflexivity, cultural capital and neo-tribes. Many postmodern culture research studies have contributed to my understanding of how self-concept is reflected in a mass media dominated society (Lyotard 1979; Baudrillard 1994; Berger 1998; Bennett 1999; Lyon 1999; Axford 2000; Muggleton 2000; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006; Bevan-Dye et al. 2012; Hamouda and Gharbi 2013). Post-subculture theories are relevant to the study of the fashion identities of *Skhothanes* because an individual's social environment plays a significant role in how individuals choose to perform their identity. That is, individuals often adopt consumption patterns that reflect the ideas and values of the group he or she wishes to belong to (Giddens 1991: 96). In order to contextualise observed and relevant practices within *skhothane*, prior knowledge of how a postmodern community constructs its sartorial style had to be investigated. A brief exploration of post-subculture literature – cultural studies theories that critiqued the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies - details the relationship between culture and consumption. This section outlines the various tangible and intangible products that individuals use in the construction of their identity within subcultural groups. Cultural Capital (Bourdieu 1986: 17) is then summarised as the descriptive term for the assets used by neo-tribes in their quest to gain social mobility. This is followed by a discussion of the concept of fashion as a form of communication. Understanding the clothing communication system allows the study to investigate the possible links between the coded messages of *skhothane* dress and the personal and collective identities of the study's sample.

The gap in fashion theory, in an African context, meant the study relied on western concepts to provide a framework to understand the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew's fashion identity.

2.2 POST-SUBCULTURE THEORY

Established in 1964, most discussion on subcultural fashion phenomena has adopted a Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) approach (Hodkinson 2002: 10; Gelder and Thornton 1997: 83). For CCCS advocates, the emergence of subcultures is closely linked to working-class youth seeking solutions to class related problems or as resistance to social dominance (Hebdige and ebrary Inc. 1979; Eicher et al 2000: 311; Jensen 2011: 3). Phil Cohen (1972 in Gelder 1997), in his analysis of the emergence of subcultures, after the redevelopment of East End London, proposed that when the existing culture is no longer consistent, working-class youth will form 'style tribes' (Polhemus 1994: 14). The establishment of subcultures was understood as an attempt to 'replace a lost sense of working-class community' (Gelder and Thornton 1997: 83). Dick Hebdige (Hebdige and ebrary inc 1979) also introduced semiotics to the analysis of subcultural styles. Hebdige focused on white

cultural minorities such as the Punks in his study of subcultures as a means of resistance (Hebdige and ebrary Inc 1979). The emphasis on resistance and class position became a large part of the works produced from this school because the training held its roots in the “Marxist conception of British post war capitalist society” (Jensen 2011: 3). Critiques of the CCCS school of thought included:

1. its gender prejudices - where only the perspective of young men was reflected⁵ (McRobbie and Garber 1975: 112); and
2. locating youth style in terms of political Marxism concepts— where hegemonic class struggles were reflected in the deviant styles of the youth (Muggleton 2000: 14).

One particular critique of theories that emerged from the CCCS was its lack of literature - or dismissal rather - on race and ethnic subcultures (Jensen 2011: 4). This is particularly problematic to this study as it explores the reality of black, urban *Skhothanes*. While the CCCS became a benchmark for youth cultural studies, the highlighted critiques and recognition of postmodern society demanded new frameworks to be considered (Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003: 3). The term post-subculture is the term used to describe the theories that emerged in reaction to the CCCS school of thought (Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003: 4).

From post-subculture research studies Bennett (1999) provides the term neo-tribe⁶ as the alternative term for subcultures when describing youth cultural phenomena that fall outside of mainstream culture. Bennett’s (1999) outline of neo-tribes describes these groupings as “temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships”. His viewpoint is one focused on the fluidity and hybridity that is representative of postmodern culture (Bennett 1999). Consequently the study seeks to uncover the constructs of the fluid identities and hybrid lifestyles evident in *skhothane* and the different forms those identities are expressed using fashion.

2.2.1 Cultural Capital

Furthermore, another concept stemming from post-subculture theories is that of cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) identifies the various symbolic forms that neo-tribes use to anchor themselves within a community as cultural capital. Cultural capital refers to the tangible or intangible assets that provide us with social mobility (Bourdieu 1986: 17). It describes the importance people place on value and social status and how that informs their preferences in selecting cultural assets; and how then those preferences manifest and are perceived by society (Bourdieu 1986: 17-19). Cultural capital consists of non-financial assets namely: education levels, personality, speech, skills, clothes and other artefacts⁷ - and thus it becomes difficult to measure cultural capital objectively. A phenomenological epistemology therefore becomes even more appropriate when considering cultural capital. This investigation is focused on clothing cultural capital as an aid in identity expression within the *skhothane Italian Gates* crew and as a tool for social mobility within the community – specifically the

⁵ This study’s sample too consists only of male participants.

⁶ See glossary

⁷ Artefacts, as written by Posner (2003), refer to the material products that identify a culture and the ways in which they are produced. Posner, R. 2003. Basic tasks of cultural semiotics. *Semiotics*: 307-353.

partial vandalism of tangible cultural capital as performance. As a visible sign of belonging to a social formation, dress - or particularly fashion - becomes a form of identity communication (Polhemus 1994). Given the fluid identities inherent to the postmodern condition (Bennett 1999); the style of the *Italian Gates Skhothane* could possibly be indicative of postmodern tensions in South African society.

2.3 FASHION AS COMMUNICATION

The idea that clothing is a form of communication has been widely accepted and studied (Horn 1975; Hebdige and ebrary Inc. 1979; Polhemus 1994; Barnard 1996; Entwistle 2000). In fact, Lurie (2000) goes as far as stating that clothing is a 'visual language' with its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary. Davis (1992) however, disagrees with this over-simplification of the fashion language. According to Davis (1992: 2) the language of fashion alludes to more than it denotes: thus becoming a sign more than language. Clothing can therefore be considered as being a form of non-verbal communication. Barthes (1990: 4) attests that "the units of real clothing, [they] cannot exist at the level of language." To analyse clothing, we need to first determine the actions which were catalyst to the garments' manufacture (Barthes 1990: 4).

The broad definition of communication is "the production and exchange of meanings" (Fiske 1990: 2). Subsequently we can only understand the clothing of other societies when we have learnt their "code" (Rouse and Rouse 1989: 22). Barthes provides a triumvirate for the study of the "clothing language". The first part of the clothing code is the "technological structure" which represents the physical item of clothing (Barthes 1990: 5). The second part of the clothing code is the "iconic" structure or "image-clothing" (Barthes 1990: 3 - 5) which is the photographed representation of the garment. The last element of the coding code is the "verbal" structure as the written and described garment: "a leather belt, with a rose stuck in it..." (Barthes 1990: 3-5). Like other signs, clothing signs are coded and the meaning requires "shifters" in order to transform the garment into representation (Barthes 1990: 6). For Barthes (1990: 4 - 9) the written description of clothing by fashion magazines plays a significant role in contextualising the interpretation of clothing language.

Style cultures, like *skhothane*, are a complex amalgamation of visual artefacts that can be interpreted to determine what it is that their style is communicating (Breward 2003: 222). However, according to Miller-Spillman *et al* (2012), it has become increasingly difficult to understand the meanings of dress. If the language of fashion is contextualised by fashion magazines (Barthes 1990: 4-9) – which are symbolic of mass media – the inability to distinguish or interpret the clothing message can be attributed to the continuous reproduction of images that is reflected in Baudrillard's (1994) simulacrum. In other words: the ambiguity of the clothing code is further exacerbated by rapidly changing fashion trends through the fashion magazine - as an agent of disseminating codes of clothing (Miller-Spillman *et al* 2012: 80). The dissemination of fashion media is both enhanced and exponential in the age of social media (Miller-Spillman *et al* 2012: 80). While free access to both consumption and broadcasting platforms increases the fluidity of neo-tribal identity, it also allows neo-tribal communities to reinforce and determine the boundaries of their collective fashion identity

(Woodman and Wyn 2004). So how can we begin to understand the appearance of *Skhothanes*? How do we know that what the *Skhothane* wears means one thing or the other about them?

Semiotics –the study of signs – assists in the interpretation of any cultural manifestation, such as dress, as part of a communication process (Umberto Eco 1973 cited in Barnard 2007: 146). The visible aspects of a sign (things) do not carry any meaning until they are interpreted as a sign (Morgado 2012: 27). Furthermore it is a combination of signs that become a “set of collective representations” (Barthes 1990: 10). Semiotics is further elaborated upon in Part 2 of this Literature Review.

2.3.1 Clothing as communicative of status

While clothing cannot articulate a person’s favourite food or the wearer’s date of birth, one of the multitudes of messages that can be communicated by clothing is the wearer’s social position i.e. social status (Lurie 2000:115; Welters and Lillethun 2011: 125-127). Veblen’s 1899 seminal text (as cited in Welters and Lillethun 2011: 125) on “conspicuous consumption” explicates on the use of dress to display a person’s “pecuniary” (financial) standing. Unlike other indicators of financial standing, Veblen (1899) described dress as the most effective visible mode of denoting social status as it can be identified by viewers from a distance. In his seminal writings from 1899, Veblen identified the concepts of Conspicuous Consumption, Conspicuous Waste and Conspicuous Leisure, during a period in European culture, circa 1700s, when class and social refinement were easily replicated through the acquisition of wealth (Lurie 2000: 115). To replace the weakening classist stratifications of the past, clothing then became an alternative signifier of status (Lurie 2000: 115). The most spectacular ritual observed by the study’s sample reflects practices that can be associated with Conspicuous Consumption and Conspicuous Waste simultaneously. Considering Veblen’s (as cited in Welters and Lillethun 2011: 125 - 127) definition of Conspicuous Consumption, Conspicuous Waste and Conspicuous Leisure, the identification of these concepts within the *skhothane* community would indicate that its members are performing actions that are meant to signify high social status. It is this study’s objective, then, to explore the relationship *Skhothanes* have with consumerism in the process of their identity negotiation.

One of the notable practices of *skhothane* is the acquisition of luxury Italian clothing in abundance (Bambalele 2012). Consequently, the study is particularly concerned with the aspects of conspicuous consumption that Lurie (2000: 123-133) terms Conspicuous Multiplication and Conspicuous Labelling. Conspicuous Multiplication is the process of conspicuously consuming through owning many garments, so that “you almost never wear exactly the same costume” (Lurie 2000: 123). According to Lurie (2000: 124), the multiplication of similar garments is usually evident in male dress as symbolic of dandyism or “rapidly acquired wealth”. Conspicuous Labelling on the other hand, as a reaction to the availability of fabrics and fashions that can easily replicate high-class goods, refers to the visible branding of garments to identify them as high-priced clothing (Lurie 2000: 132-133). The dress of *skhothane* contains an abundance of semiotic indicators. The data collected deconstructs the *Italian Gates Skhothane*’s style as communicative of their identity.

2.4 PERSONAL IDENTITY FORMATION

Identity is a complex network of factors that influences how individuals define themselves (Cote 1996: 420). It projects the answer to the questions: Who are you? What makes you who you are? What are your beliefs/values and what are you not? While it is a concept to do with introspection, the individual 'self' or personal identity can only be formed in a social context and with the aid of others (Kaiser 1998: 186; Wilska 2002: 195; Rouse and Rouse 1989). Furthermore, identity involves how an individual represents and expresses their "self" in a social situation using various verbal and non-verbal symbolic forms (Kaiser 1998: 186).

According to Cote and Levine (2015), the self evolves during the self-development phase between childhood and adolescence. Consequently the early analysis of this study's sample indicates that the average age for entering into the *skhothane* culture is in high school. To understand the fashion identities of the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew being studied, it is appropriate to determine how the 'self' is developed at this stage.

Kaiser (1998: 187) offers two situations for the construction of an identity: it is either assigned by society through the perpetuation of normative social codes or constructed by the individual (Kaiser 1998: 187). She states: "Culture may...assist us in assuming conventional identities, but we may break out of traditional identity kits...by rearranging, juxtaposing, and combining elements of different kits" (Kaiser 1998: 187-188). This is true even in adolescence.

In the early stages of adolescence, "self-concept" and identifications are not yet unified, marking adolescent identity precariously developed (Cote and Levine 2015: 124). For others, their identity is closely linked with that of their parents⁸ (Cote and Levine 2015: 124). So while the new post-apartheid youth identities in South Africa are no longer defined by the classification of people according to race, a hybridity of "cultural codes" and signifiers, from the past, still informs a part of the black identity (Nuttall 2004: 436). Nuttall (2004) located the sartorial styles of the post-apartheid Y Generation in Rosebank in what she labelled: "Y culture" - a condition of a cross cultural lifestyle that balanced the histories of a once segregated country and the desire to "move on" by its younger members. In this instance, we see how the identity of Nuttall's (2004) Generation Y is formed not too far apart from its parents.

In postmodern society however, the collapse of the traditional social structures within which the self is formed, creates a crisis in identity (Bennett 1999). The adolescent faces increasing insecurity as he is tasked with navigating lifestyles and identities by himself – he then addresses this insecurity by substituting the missing social structure with "secondary agencies and institutions" (Wilska 2002:

⁸One form of identity, seen in troubled youth that do not develop the relationship of trust with their parent, is negative identity (Erikson 1968: 176 as cited in Kroger, J. 2007) *Identity Development: Adolescence Through Adulthood*. SAGE Publications. For some, "it is better to be somebody totally other than what existed in childhood rather than struggle to integrate the past into a present and future having some continuity with one's previous existence".

196). Wilska (2002: 196) names mass media, economic cycles and social policy as some of the secondary agencies utilised.

Subsequently, the media plays a vital role in assigning meaning to the images that individuals choose in announcing themselves (Cote and Levine 2015). This presence of media and lack of social structure creates over-identification; in forming an identity people adopt the ideals and practices of their role models (Neff 2003: 88). The globalised and changing landscape of South African culture creates a space where the role models are people made famous through media and television – resulting in the individual's identity reflecting the celebrity's values. According to Howell (2014: 61-62), the presence of the South African black diamonds⁹ - who have rapidly acquired wealth amid a backdrop of poverty - has provided symbolic role models for the youth. Consequently, neo-tribal youth could then strive to emulate the ostentatious and glamorous fashion of their role models.

Social identities can be communicated through sartorial style and other symbolic forms (Mintler 2008). If people are active participants in the construction of their identity, then the sum of their material possessions would help in identifying their identities (Giddens 1991). Miller (1987 as cited in Wilska 2002: 196) proposes that meaning is only attached to objects when individuals appropriate them for their own personal identity creation. Seemingly, youth cultures are masterminds of identity construction. Their deviation from mass culture forces them to use existing artefacts and reassign meaning to them in order to construct their collective identity (Hebdige and ebrary Inc. 1979: 114). The collective identity describes the 'self' of a group of people and the various rituals, practices and visual representations used to express their values and beliefs. According to Hebdige (1979: 114), youth cultures selected tools that reflected the subcultural group's "central values." This not only served to express identity but it also helped to differentiate the cultures from "others" (Hebdige 1979: 114). The *Italian Gates Skhothanes* seem to demonstrate the concept of cultural tools that express an identity. The study then explores what exactly it is that is valued by the neo-tribe.

2.4.1 'Lifestyle'

Individuals can choose to take an active role in the construction of the self – Giddens (1991: 76) equates this to an autobiography of the self. A lifestyle, in that respect, refers to the set modes of practices that embody the autobiography of the self (Giddens 1991: 81). Similarly, Bennett (1999: 607) proposes the use of the term lifestyle to contextualise the construction and performance of identity as descriptive of the actively chosen "commodities and patterns of consumption" by the individual. These are routine commodities that can take the form of dress, food and the various ways we engage socially with others - speech, hand-shakes *et cetera* (Giddens 1991: 81).

This reflexivity in the construction of the identity does not imply that lifestyles are without structural issues. Instead the identity constructed through consumerism allows the individual to navigate structural issues fluidly (Cote 1996). The result is individuals adopting different modes of practice

⁹TNS Research Surveys and the UCT Unilever Institute coined the term "Black Diamonds" to describe the fast-growing and affluent black middle class in South Africa (Motlogeloa 2012).

when engaging in different lifestyles (Giddens 1991: 83). A *Skhothane* may be a *Skhothane* the previous Saturday and engage in the accepted milieu of that lifestyle, but when he goes to work he might adopt other forms of practices that relate to the workplace lifestyle. Giddens (1991: 83-84) identifies these segmented times in the individual's life as lifestyle sectors. Lifestyle sectors are characterised by the routine practices that are performed at certain times (Giddens 1991: 83).

Consumerism plays a significant role in the development and construction of lifestyles, as the identities of people are expressed through material possessions (Wilska 2002: 197). Bourdieu (1986: 18) calls these possessions that are visual representations of an individual's social identity: *habitus*.

2.5 DRESS AS A PERFORMATIVE

Making sense of performance studies relies significantly on the foundation of the slight nuances between terms such as performative and performativity – two words that seem similar but have distinctly different implications.

Performative

In her analysis of clothing that is deemed “out-of-place,” Madison (2013: 217-218) describes a performative as “...a distinct moment, punctum or rupture from the ordinary and familiar that results in a specific causal effect.” It is this study's concern to establish the phenomenon of *skhothane* as significant of out-of-place dress practices. Performative, in the noun form, indicates a word, that does something; as an adjective it describes the thing that it changes with performance-like qualities - the identity for example would be performative identity (Schechner 2013: 123).

Performativity

Performativity, similar to performative, describes the construction of identity as a process of repeated codes that have been stipulated by societal norms (Schechner 2013: 123). Madison (2013: 228) makes the distinction that performative, unlike performativity, is specifically located in the disruption of expected or naturalised behaviours. Performativity on the other hand merely refers to the repetitive processes that “stabilize, fix or naturalise identity” (Madison 2013: 228).

Clothing as communicative of identity has already been explored. The acknowledgement of dress as communication leads to the discussion of its various connoted meanings – particularly when that dress does not follow normative fashion codes (Madison 2013: 217). The *skhothane* neo-tribe is depicted through its elaborate and sometimes destructive performances to enforce their claim of wealth (Jones 2013: 209-210; Howell and Vincent 2014: 60-61). The visual production of their affirmations renders the clothing of the neo-tribe a fashion anomaly. This study explores how *skhothane* dress is imagined, produced and consumed. Fashion as a performative helps to locate the seemingly out-of-place dress practices of *Skhothanes*. As an effective agent of communicating identities that are apart from mainstream culture, fashion becomes a performative.

It is through Butler's (2011) seminal illustration and description of the performativity of gender identity that these concepts are made understandable. According to Butler (2011), no-one is born with a gender but it is through our socialisation that gender is assigned to us. When the doctor confirms with an ecstatic "It's a girl!"; the individual's society immediately begins to enforce the gender through clothing and social interactions that introduce the individual into being the "correct" gender (Salih 2007: 61). The individual then continues to reinforce their gender by performing the correct behaviour codes assigned to that gender (Salih 2007: 56). In the production and performance of a person's gender, the clothes a person wears are predetermined by the society, context, economy in which they exist (Salih 2007: 56). To oversimplify the concept: men wear pants and women wear dresses. When a man buys pants he engages in the performativity of his identity, reinforcing that he is a man. Conclusively, if gender is performed then all fashion practices, as agents of performativity, demonstrate aspects of performance.

Notably, when discussing dress as a visual cue in the performance of identity, one should not make the mistake of thinking that fashion is the performance. Instead, clothing as a visible marker of gender, race and class, becomes the identifiable signifier of the performance (Mintler 2008: 10) – that is, the identity performed by the individual is made visible and 'true' through the clothes they wear. In the process of identity communication, fashion easily distinguishes and empowers sartorial acts that are apart from normal cultural dress practices (Mintler 2008: 10).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW PART TWO

SWAG SEAMS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the literature reviewed as guided by the critical questions stated in chapter one. The critical questions provide the underlying structure of the following chapter.

- Critical questions 1 and 3 deal with the various factors that inform identity creation and the processes of performing that identity. They also seek to provide description on the *skhothane* neo-tribe and the nuances that are a part of the youth culture.
- Critical questions 2 and 4 explore the constructs of the *Skhothanes'* identity and the environment within which they exist and perform. In order to uncover the fashion identities of the community, it was essential to explore the founding principles of that community and what factors influence their evolution.

The critical questions are answered through an exploration of literature on *skhothane*; understanding postmodern fashion and society; theories of fashion as communication and understanding Africa's¹⁰ relationship with conspicuous consumption. The literature begins by setting a backdrop for the society within which my sample exists. **Postmodern fashion: hyperreal and hybrid cultures**, presents evidence of the existence of a postmodern society and maps out the role of imagery and fashion within a postmodern context. In **Meaningless meaning: intertextuality and Bricolage**, the literature further uncovers how we can then deconstruct and analyse clothing to interpret the fashion artefacts of youth cultures. The review of **Anti-fashion** outlines the different forms and instances that can be found in principles of dress, such as *skhothane*, that are not aligned to the traditional fashion system. Finally the literature explores Africa's¹¹ relationship with pageantry under: **The importance of procuring fine clothing to Africans.**

2.2 POSTMODERN FASHION: HYPERREAL AND HYBRID CULTURES

The term postmodernism would seem simply to denote a period after modernism – a statement that does nothing to explain the complex and broad term used to identify the society we now live in. Lyotard (1979: xxiv) defines postmodernism as a disbelief of metanarratives. Metanarrative is the word Lyotard uses to describe ideas that “inform the decision-making framework in society and [that] influence the rules by which society functions on a daily basis...” (Etherington-Wright and Doughty 2011: 121).

¹⁰ The inclusion of the broader African continent is necessary to contextualise South African consumption patterns within the broader African perspective as opposed to limiting the discussion to only Western concepts.

¹¹ There has been growing concern with fashion terminology that only reflects beliefs from the west and thus only addresses dress studies through the gaze of Western values. Jansen, M. A. and Craik, J. 2016. *Modern Fashion Traditions: Negotiating Tradition and Modernity through Fashion*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Lyotard (1979) contests the idea promulgated by Modernists that there is one big truth, such as religion and science, that governs society but rather that there are smaller and multiple narratives that govern small communities. The breakdown in metanarratives, which form a large part of modern theory, signals the demise of the modern era (Lyotard 1979: 7-9).

According to Strinati (2005: 211) a postmodern society is a society "...in which the mass media and popular culture are the most important and powerful institutions, [which] control and shape all other types of social relationships." Baudrillard's (1994), *Simulacra and Simulation*, has done much to highlight and deconstruct the imagery saturated world we live in. Baudrillard (1994) acknowledges that the social relationships we experience are now shaped by mass media, further questioning the existence of truths altogether. For Jean Baudrillard (1994: 4-7) the reality we perceive as "truth" is constructed purely of images and cultural signs that we are constantly bombarded with, thus becoming a simulation of reality: a simulacrum. Baudrillard (1994: 7-9) uses the example of the Tasaday tribe in the Philippines and the interference of ethnologists. The observation by Baudrillard is that ethnography wishes to study a subject as it is. Yet in studying the subject, ethnologists interfere with the original existence of the subject and change it into something else. The Tasaday tribe existed in a reality without any ethnologists and the mere exposure to study and scientific enquiry altered the reality of the tribe thus altering their authenticity, that is, they are now the Tasaday tribe that knows it is being watched, or has realised that there is a world that exists outside of their tribe. Whatever reality that the Tasaday tribe depicts to the ethnographers at that point, is merely a simulacrum of the tribe's reality.

This simulation of reality is most apparent in media consumption. As a globalised community, most of our knowledge and understanding of the world comes from media (Lyon 1999: 63). This is evidenced in the political faux pas of American president Donald Trump. In February 2017, the United States President, Donald Trump, inferred in a speech at a public rally that Sweden had been a victim of a refugee terrorist attack (McCausland 2017; Bradner 2017). Following worldwide confusion over the statement, as it became apparent that there had not been a terrorist attack on Sweden, the president then tweeted (Trump 2017) that he was referring to a Fox News insert that had been aired the night before his speech¹². Ironically, the news in itself is edited to appeal to a wider audience. As audiences watch edited news, the media's distortion of events distorts the public's perception of reality. This metaphorical point - where reality and what is 'fake' is blurred by the endless reproduction of simulacra - is referred to as the "hyperreal" (Baudrillard 1994: 1).

2.2.1 Hyperreal

The "hyper-real" - which to Baudrillard (1994) is a condition of postmodernity - describes a state where what is real is not real but rather a simulated or replicated version of the original. Reality and

¹² Post Donald Trump's speech, it was evident that there was no terrorist attack on Sweden. The news segment on refugee terrorism in Sweden was in fact an excerpt of an interview with a film director of a documentary on refugees in Sweden. McCausland, P. 2017. *Donald Trump Explains Sweden Comment that Baffled a Nation*. Available: <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/donald-trump-explains-sweden-terror-comment-baffled-nation-n723006> (Accessed 11 May 2017).

simulation become blurred to the point that people cannot tell the real from the simulation. For instance, the online act of 'catfishing' is the epitome of a Hyperreality. Catfishing – a term only added in 2014 to the Oxford English Dictionary – refers to: “Lure[ing] (someone) into a relationship by adopting a fictional online persona¹³” (Stevenson and Waite 2011). Below is an account of how a woman was catfished (Parker 2015):

I met someone on Twitter unintentionally, and we started chatting via text daily. Next thing I know, we were speaking every day all day. He started to admit feelings for me so I tried to plan for us to meet. He would lead me to believe he was coming and then bail last minute. There was always an excuse. This went on for months. Then he started telling me he was diagnosed with cancer and began to undergo treatment. I started getting suspicious and asking questions and always got very weird answers. I knew I was being lied to. I got really mad and decided to drive out to his town. When "he" found out I was there looking for him, he admitted that HE was actually a SHE. Consequently, as I was on my way out of town I drove by the gym that the man in the photos she had sent had clearly worked at (one of the many locations). I had a weird feeling and hunch and decided to go in. Sure enough, someone recognised his photo and the next thing I knew, me and the real man behind the photos were talking. I had explained to him that someone pretended to be him.

In this instance, during the exchanging of photographs and personal details whilst getting to know each other, the online persona and actual photographs presented to the catfished woman are the only reality that she understands. As a result, the simulacrum constructed by the catfisher becomes the woman's 'truth'. Her reality is a state where the image seems more real than the subject it is supposed to represent and so takes the place of the original subject as reality; thus becoming Hyperreality.

Hyperreality is especially evident in the appropriation and representation of photographic imagery in media. If we look at fashion for example, John Galliano, for the house of Dior, presented homeless chic as a theme for his Spring/Summer 2000 collection. One of the reviews from the New York Times Dowd (2000) reads:

“Dior models who starve themselves posed as the starving. They came down the runway raggedy and baggy, some swathed in newspapers, with torn linings and inside-out labels... Some posed as lunatic ballerinas in frayed tulle, others in straitjackets and white madhouse makeup. The fashion designer said he was inspired by the French homeless as well as the mentally ill in Diane Arbus photos.”

It is scenes like these that make fashion - with its “pursuit of glamour” (Wilson 2003: 63); its focus on the appropriation of cultures; its constantly changing standard of beauty and scenes of “hobo chic” without actual hobo empathy - the epitome of “hyper-reality” (Faurischou 1988: 72; Wilson 2003: 63).

¹³The term was made in reference to a 2010 documentary film *Catfish* that depicted a relationship of this nature.

With its concern for perpetual change and its obsession with appearance, fashion becomes a world of reproduced and replicated signs with no actual true meaning.

2.2.2 Meaningless meaning: Intertextuality and Bricolage

As Sawchuck (2007: 64) states: “the imaginary must be taken seriously because it has very real effects...” Therefore, the existence of Hyperreality does not then mean that the fashion sign has no meaning. The sign can be understood rather through deciphering its relation to other signs (Baudrillard 1994; Sawchuck 2007).

I. Bricolage

In order to understand the appropriation of artefacts - such as clothing - by the postmodern tribesman, Lévi-Strauss (1966: 11-12) introduced significant concepts such as bricolage to postmodern theory. Bricolage involves the continual recombination of elements – which has been discussed as a large part of fashion. The term stems from the French word *bricoleur*, which denotes a person who collects and keeps tools and materials to use later (Barnard 1996: 166). For Lévi-Strauss (1966: 12) the *bricoleur* involves himself in the process of reflection. The *bricoleur* must make use of already existing material, examine its functions and uses and then reinterpret the object to make use of it for his required purpose (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 12).

II. Semiotics

The dress style of neo-tribes helps to identify the selected “lifestyle” one wishes to portray to the public at any particular time (Bennett 1999: 607-608). Therefore, deconstructing the meanings attached to neo-tribal clothing can be used not only to understand what identity they are portraying, but also potentially as a signifier of social change in the neo-tribal cultural environment.

Culture, what we know simply as a way of life, is a construct of the complex interdependent relationships between the institutions that govern; the products and production processes we have (“artefacts”) and the principles that we aspire and prescribe to (“mentifacts”) (Posner 2003: 10-11). Kaiser (1998: 454) further elaborates that culture allows people to understand themselves and their social relationships by dividing the world into manageable segments. Neo-tribes are communities, with shared values, which use symbolic forms (dress, music, language) to construct an identity apart - however fleeting - from the dominant culture (Bennett 1999: 607-609). According to Barthes (1990) an item of clothing is utilitarian until meaning is attached to it by a social group. Determining the meanings attached to *skhothane* dress could assist in understanding the intricacies of the social group they have thrived under. Through the lens of semiotics, subcultures¹⁴ are seen as part of a system of borrowed signs and symbols that have had their meaning or function reinterpreted and reassigned to match the values of the collective’s identity (Hebdige and ebrary Inc. 1979: 103; Polhemus 1994a: 9; Posner 2003: 17).

¹⁴ The use of the term neo-tribe as opposed to subculture will be explained further in the chapter. As this involves a CCCS theory, the term subculture is used in reference to neo-tribes.

There are three main parts to the structure of semiotics. The first is the “sign” which is divided into two parts: the signifier – which refers to the “physical part of the signs” and the signified (Barnard 1996: 78). As a collective the two parts form the sign which represents the object denoted (Saussure 1974:65-67 as cited in Barnard 1996: 78).

Nguyen (2011) provides the following example of the relationship between signifier and signified:

“...one sign might be “mom jeans.” The signified would be the object itself –the actual, material thing– and the signifier is the “next” order of meaning-making. The phrase “mom jeans” is a signifier inasmuch as it mediates our understanding of the object through a word or phrase (or an image). But the signifier also includes the operations of meanings through which “mom jeans” comes to function not just as a denotative name for high-waisted, pleated, “relaxed seat” denim pants, but also as a connotative sign referring to a whole host of ideas about mothers (whether or not a person wearing them is a mother, or whether or not a particular mother wears them, why would a mother be wearing them) and their location in the fashion system.”

McRobbie (1994: 12) outlines that postmodernism transcends semiologist theory as it considers not only one but a variety of “fragmented” realities. Postmodernism acknowledges that the sign does not have one fixed interpretation but can hold multiple and varied signifiers at the same time.

While the term “mom jeans” holds the negative connotations of “a whole host of ideas about mothers”, a 23 year old female in 2015 wears the same “mom-jeans” because, not as Williamson (2015) would say in humour and to be ironic, but for entirely different reasons. “Mom-jeans” are now considered a contemporary fashion silhouette.

For Barthes (1990: 47) the clothing code can be analysed using a “pseudo-real code” made up of *equivalence* (as denoted using =) and *combination* (as denoted using •). As an example, Barthes (1990: 47) uses the written utterance: “*White accents on daytime clothes are a sign of the city...*” This pseudo code would then look like this:

Daytime clothes • accents • white = city

For Baudrillard (1994) the meaning of clothing becomes a hollow recycling of borrowed images and reproductions that render any true meaning meaningless - where the meaning of an object is determined wholly by its difference to other signs (Baudrillard 1981: 66 as cited in Barnard 1996: 152). In this way fashion as “a form of pleasure takes the place of fashion as a form of communication” (Steele 2005: 132). However it is not, as Baudrillard (1994) implies, that the unreal is mistaken for what is real but that one sign becomes the reference point for another (McRobbie 1994: 16).

III. Intertextuality

Similar to Baudrillard (1994), Sawchuck (1987) recognises that the meaning of fashion or clothing is meaningless on its own. However Sawchuck (1987) argues that to interpret fashion as a result of either “social movements” or as indicative of the “effects of capitalism” oversimplifies complex phenomena like fashion (Barnard 1996: 155). Sawchuck (1987: 63) identifies “intertextuality” (Derrida 1979) and Benjamin’s (1977) “allegory” to define the postmodern space within which fashion can be deciphered. According to Berger (1998: 201), postmodern culture is a constant exchange and reference between cultural products that assumes consumers have prior knowledge of the sign in order to recognise these references.

Moschino, for example, sent models down a runway in clothing obviously inspired by fast food giant McDonalds and the cartoon character SpongeBob SquarePants. The collection consisted of the McDonalds M turned into a Moschino heart, French fry cases and children’s cartoon character, SpongeBob, draped over models (Bumpus 2014). For the consumer to connect with the garments they would have to understand that the curved M is not merely a letter but forms part of the Moschino and McDonalds brand. Here the consumer becomes a willing participant in the reproduction of the image. Notably this cross-cultural borrowing of images references Baudrillard’s simulacrum.

Figure 1: Example of intertextuality in Moschino's AW 2014 collection



(Bumpus 2014)



(Manser 2016)

It is this cross-cultural borrowing of elements that makes it erroneous to consider fashion as a construct of simplified variables when it is instead a product of “intertextual relations” (Sawchuck 1987: 65). The meaning of fashion can be deciphered, not only through class (Hebdige 1979), gender (McRobbie and Garber 1975) or capitalism (Baudrillard 1994), but as a complex relationship between all or none of these yet always in the context of the individual’s scenario.

2.2.3 Hybrid cultures: identity in a time of information overload

There are a number of classifications for the term subculture (Hebdige and ebrary Inc. 1979; Kaiser 1998; Muggleton 2000). In its simplest form subcultures are largely understood as communities with shared values and beliefs that have formed an identity for themselves outside of mainstream society using dress, music and other symbolic forms (Polhemus 1994a; Gordon 1997). Until recently the discussion on subculture style phenomena has revolved around 70s Marxist ideas, from the Birmingham school (CCCS), such as hegemony and resistance (McRobbie 1994: 23). Contradictory to the CCCS perspective on youth culture, Muggleton (2000: 48) and Evans (1997) argue that the breakdown of traditional hegemonic societies challenges the role of style as an expression of resistance i.e. if there is no dominant culture, against whom are youth cultures rebelling?

According to Kjeldgaard and Askegaard (2006: 233) youth culture in particular "...is increasingly shaped by and constitutes global cultural flows." The proliferation of information technology and telecommunication has created an environment where traditional concepts around space and time have become increasingly blurred (Strinati 2005: 214). The influence of technology in society can no longer be denied, with Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) documenting *The Second Machine Age*. The book catalogues the many advances in technology since the industrial revolution and its effects on the way society functions. Through mediums such as the internet, experiences can be shared simultaneously around the world. The ability to exchange information cross-culturally means "people's frames of reference have broadened" (Berger 1998: 200). The postmodern world has become smaller: it is now fragmented into a pastiche of identities that includes tribal and ethnic identities.

Disregarding the use of the term subculture, the study draws upon Bennett's (1999) outline of neo-tribes in *Neo-tribes or neo-tribes? Rethinking the relationship between youth, style and musical taste*. Bennett (1999: 599), influenced by Maffesoli's (1995) *tribus*, draws attention to the fact that the use of the term subculture defines a "fixed social grouping" whereas the identities of 21st Century youth cultures are fluid and continually shifting.

Maffesoli's tribe

According to Maffesoli (1995:98), postmodernity is less concerned with individualism and traditional forms of organization. Instead cultural groupings are: "...without the rigidity of the forms of organization with which we are familiar, it refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind and is preferable to be expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and form" (Maffesoli 1995: 98). Essentially, the commonalities that keep communities glued together can be a mere shared emotion or passion.

As a result of urbanization, where old social contexts in which the identity is formed have now declined, postmodern identities are more fluid. With its proliferation of technology and abundant choice when formulating one's lifestyle, postmodernity seems to indicate a state of heightened individualism. However, while the postmodern condition has created a breakdown in the traditional

hegemonic hierarchies, there is still evidence of people forming social groupings (Cova and Cova 2001: 1). Maffesoli (1995) rejects the idea that postmodernity is the beginning of individualism and instead offers the term tribalism.

In modernist thought, the identity was institutionalised through the governing metanarratives of society and the identity formed through family, class, work and civil society (Dawes 2017). However, with the decline of these governing institutions the relationship between identity formation and society has changed and instead there are new forms of expression and socialization (Maffesoli 1995). Tribalism refers to the placement of the fragmented self in society. According to Maffesoli (1995: 16) tribes are evident when "...the collective sensibility which issues from the aesthetic form results in an ethical connection." He then further outlines how this self does not isolate but rather, the fragments become part of the bigger collective. Now, the rationality that governed modernism is replaced by an "emotion community" with transient identities (Maffesoli 1995: 18).

Anthropologically, tribes are reliant on horticultural systems and their dependency on natural territories creates localization (Schwimmer and Leinaweaver 2017). This localization is particularly maintained in the form of kinship groups integrated on a wider level by cross-cutting social groupings (Schwimmer and Leinaweaver 2017). It is these aspects of tribal life that Maffesoli uses the term tribe: localization, intergroup integration and absence of occupational specialization or political centralization. Maffesoli (1995: 18) does not use the term in the anthropological sense and instead sees it as a metaphor to describe the "cohesive aspect of the social sharing". Tribe describes the loss of individualism and the two-sided performative role a person has within their tribe (Dawes 2017). Subsequently the postmodern tribe is not a direct copy of, but rather a metaphorical description of its pre-modern counterpart. Hence the postmodern tribe becomes a new revived form of tribalism: a neo-tribe.

Cova and Cova (2001: 4) define "tribe*" as an anthropology term that characterises "societies where social order was maintained without the existence of a central power". One issue that might arise when discussing these temporal socialities is the issue of maintaining social order. According to Kahane and Rapoport (1997: 25), postmodern social formations, like neo-tribes, are characterised by a "code of informality". Maffesoli's (1995: 95 – 98) and Cova and Cova's (2001: 4) condition, of a lack of imposed governance within tribes, can be indicative of Kahane and Rapoport's (1997:25) changing form of social order itself. The "code of informality" allows a person to create his or her own social contracts and norms.

Most importantly, the postmodern tribesman's existence is not centred around "going against the norm"; on the contrary, the fluidity of postmodern identities means postmodern people at times conform to normative social codes and behaviours (Cova and Cova 2001:4). Neo-tribal members do not limit themselves to their chosen subgroup; they participate in a multitude of cross-cultural

* As a black researcher there are ethical tensions that I have with the use of the word tribe as it stems from the "19th-century rise of evolutionary and racist theories to designate alien non-white peoples as inferior or less civilised and as having not yet evolved from a simpler, primal state" (Wiley 2013).

relationships (Dholakia and Firat 2003: 144). To communicate across borders to other cultures at the mere click of a button opens communities to a plethora of customs and cultures with which they can identify. While the increase in information and communication technologies (ICT) has significantly shrunk the world, it also encourages heterogeneity (McCracken 1998). This, in the context of fashion, translates into what Mustafa (1998: 22) calls “sartorial ecumene”. Mustafa (1998: 22) defines “sartorial ecumene” as: “...the incorporation of objects and images of global origins into practices and circulations involving dress and bodily adornment.”

Although ICTs are responsible “for much traffic in images and information”, the retention of local cultures and identities within the sartorial ecumene of Africans means that the products produced are not uniform either (Lyon 1999: 63). McCracken (1998), in what he terms Plenitude, points out that previously it was possible to categorise the world, whether by class, lifestyles or generations, but now we see diversity. Teenagers experience multiple identities and exist in different cultures simultaneously and autonomously at any time (McCracken 1998). The postmodern tribesman’s nomadic existence indicates that there may be a significant identity shift in South African youth that needs to be explored.

2.2.4 The South African perspective

Africa is no longer limited to being simply an ethnically determined society (Rabine 2002: 90). The identities portrayed are a melting pot of cosmopolitan and African influence (Farber 2010: 129). Farber (2010) demonstrates the “African modern” aesthetic in the analysis of three South African designers: *Sun Goddess*, *Stoned Cherrie* and *Strangelove*. According to Farber (2010: 139), the mix of “Victorian-inspired garments [with] head wraps worn by Xhosa speakers...” incorporated by these designers into their clothing, signals a move towards a hybrid “Afropolitan” aesthetic in the trans-cultured African identity.

Similarly Klopper’s (2005) politically focused *Re-dressing the Past* paints a picture of hybridised South African identities that achieve pride in their “African” Vlisco *seshwehwe* prints and Mandela’s Indonesian inspired silk shirts. Unlike Farber (2010) whose hybrid South African merges Africa with the West, Klopper (2005) concludes that post-apartheid South Africans align their tribal identities (Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans) with that of Africa.

It must, however, be noted that Klopper (2005) and Farber’s (2010) hybridised African fashion still make reference to the traditional African influence (Sun Goddess with *seshwehwe* and Xhosa motifs). Both explore the “Africanising” of sartorial style in South Africa even though there is evidence that African fashion has transcended localities and seeks to express identities outside of traditional African motifs. For instance, the Smarteez (see Appendix M) were a group of township youth in Soweto that Stanley (2010) describes as being: “too young to really remember the struggle for apartheid...” This group of township youth have replaced political struggle ideology with values that focus on self-expression and non-conformity (Stanley 2010). The since disappeared Smarteez style culture expressed their identity through bright colourful mix and matching of clothing styles and

palettes that had no connection to “Africa” (Stanley 2010). Access to the internet and ubiquitous exposure to American culture means the identities of South Africans are no longer focused on reconstructing a locality in the traditional “pseudo African look” (Corrigall 2011: 3).

Corrigall (2011: 1) proposes that post-apartheid South African identities are no longer delineated to “blackness” and “whiteness” or the “afro-chic” aesthetic. Instead, literature indicates that the globalised youth are politically indifferent and self-reliant; style is repositioned as a reconstruction of meanings through “shared experiences”. Because of this, the performance of rituals becomes an integral part of retaining the tribe’s identity. Fashion becomes the perfect platform for displaying one’s identity because dress, according to Klopper (2005: 216), “provides unlimited possibilities for the renegotiation and performance of notions of self”. The condition of postmodernity could therefore mean that the emerging neo-tribes become part of the negotiation of “the self” through the simulated realities of consumption.

2.2.5 You are what you wear: self-reflexive postmodern identities

As discussed in Part 1: Theoretical underpinnings, the term “identity” includes the many facets of how humans define themselves (Cote 1996: 420). Identity encompasses the appearance portrayed by the individual as a representation or definition of who they (the individual) are in a social situation (Maffesoli 1996; Kaiser 1998: 186; Bennett 1999). Psychology maintains that while it is a concept to do with introspection, the individual “self” or personal identity can only be formed in a social context and with the aid of others (Kaiser 1998: 186). However, urbanization has created a decline of the old social contexts in which the identity is formed - now “the traditional community [has] been replaced by fluid sets of relationships” (Maffesoli 1995; Bennett 1999).

Todd (2011: 48) argues that in the context of consumerism, the construction of “the self” is superficial and based solely on where one fits in, in the greater society at large – consumption becomes a way of communicating one’s place within a community’s social structure. This Cote (1996: 421) identifies as an image-oriented identity where identity is a projection of images that is accepted by the individual’s social world. In this way human identity becomes a fluid entity constructed at will by the human and not only determined by social factors but rather can be manipulated by the individual at any stage to fit in wherever he/she wants.

According to Lyon (1999: 48-68) the postmodern social condition is dominated by two realities:

1. The rise of new media technologies

The proliferation of technology challenges metanarratives, that is, “how can any one perspective claim absolute Truth?” Furthermore reality is altered through images creating a world where “...the messages (attached to the imagery) provide ‘frames’ for organizing experience[ing].” The image becomes what is real; therefore the identity is constructed through a simulated reality and not a “true” reality – this is Baudrillard’s (1994) Hyperreality.

II. *The dominance of consumerism in society*

Lyon identifies two “selves” that affect our realities in the postmodern world. Firstly, the “expressive self” that seeks authenticity and giving a sense of accomplishment in the individual’s life. Secondly, the “plastic self” (our ability to buy who we are) makes identity fluid and able to occupy whatever experience that we wish to have.

Consumerism liberates us from the generic social constructs of identity and gives individuals the freedom to choose. The implication behind Lyon’s (1999) postmodern social condition is that our ability to concretely know “the self” is questionable “...we are free to construct ourselves [yet at the same time]...we really don’t know who we are at the deepest level”. Baudrillard’s (1994: 2-4) Hyper-reality demonstrates how the idea of identity becomes even more unstable in a media saturated world where simulation and reproduction are a large part of everyday life. Todd (2011: 50) describes consumerism as a tool that empowers self-reflexivity as it provides the means to manipulate identity by simulating any reality that we wish to portray to the world.

At work, the policeman expresses authority and identity by wearing a uniform. At that point, she is a protector: a law enforcer. At the same time when off duty, she may forgo the uniform for a demure floral sundress to wear at the book club meeting. Products are immersed in symbolism and, whether knowingly or unknowingly, the implication is that the clothes we buy can be indicative of who we want to be associated with. Thus the sum of our consumed materials becomes a large part of the production of identity. In a postmodern society, it just means that who we are changes at a more fleeting and rapid pace.

One of the symbolic forms that people use to portray these fleeting or stagnant identities is clothing and individual style. Fashion has come to mean anything that deals with the appearance management of the body. The use of consumption patterns and accumulated fashion artefacts of *Skhothanes* can then relate the identity of the neo-tribe.

2.3 SKHOTHANE

2.3.1 Lifestyle and Background

While online media (Nxedlana 2012) and print media (Boikanyo 2013) report that the *skhothane* neo-tribe evolved from the 1960s *Pantsula* subculture, there is no definitive documentation of the origins of *skhothane*. It is possible to fulfil the objectives of the study without in-depth discussion of its origins. Instead, the literature reviewed focuses on the constructs of the neo-tribe and the environment they exist in to formulate the most accurate reflection of the community. It must be noted that since the inception of this study there has been a significant number of published sources on the phenomenon (none of which contextualise it within fashion theory). This study has made every effort to outline the latest information as it appears.

Howell and Vincent (2014: 64) have provided a loose translation of the term based on a response from one of their participants in their study on the identities of South African youth subcultures:

The very name Skhothane – ‘licking the snake’ – points to the importance of clothing to the crew. As KB noted: “It is the term we use when we gonna battle with clothes against other crews So this guy from other crew we call him a snake so one of our crew must lick the snake. And in some instances “licking the snake” is not about battling because some shoes we wear are made of snakeskin so we specifically mean the dude must lick the shoes in order to be seen that it is a snakeskin (Interview 1 August 2013).

However the definition provided by Howell and Vincent (2014) is particularly specific to *skhothane* and excludes the use of the term as a general township term used even before the emergence of the culture. Therefore, this study uses the definition as provided below and as cited in Jones (2013) and various online articles (Brash Bling and Ghetto fabulous 2012; Nxedlana 2012; Boikanyo 2013).

The neo-tribe’s name is assigned to the *skhothane* neo-tribe because of the community’s practice of bragging about their acquisitions. The direct translation of the term *skhothane* is: “the ones who lick”¹⁵ or “the lickers”. The label is derived from the Zulu word *ukukhotha/ kotha* which directly translated means to lick (Nkabinde 1985: 118). However with regards to the neo-tribe, the term ‘lick’ has very little to do with actual licking. It is an accepted township slang word used for bragging. Someone would say for example *sasibakhotha nge-Hennessy* - translated as “we licked them with Hennessy.” This implies that the statement makers are the ‘best’ in terms of the acquisition of the expensive brand of alcohol. This is the basis of naming the culture ‘*skhothane*’ - the neo-tribe’s main function seems to be bragging.

Some media portrays the neo-tribe members as ignorant and wasteful youngsters, who spend their days burning wads of cash, wearing expensive clothing, living beyond their means and drinking and wasting their lives away¹⁶ (Nkosi 2011). This ‘wasteful’ practice of conspicuous consumption has been attributed to the ‘contemporary culture of bling’ in South African media (Brash Bling and Ghetto Fabulous 2012).

Howell (2014) importantly contextualises the phenomenon according to socio-economic factors. Citing the emergence of the neo-tribe as a result of post-apartheid South African economic imbalances - where the new-money, “Black Diamonds” have become role models for young poor black South

According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (Stevenson and Waite 2011), the word lick can also be used informally to mean: “defeat comprehensively, North American overcome (a difficulty).”¹⁶ This can be considered a moral panic reaction by the media. Moral panics refer to “an instance of public anxiety or alarm in response to a problem regarded as threatening the moral standards of society.” (Cohen(1972); Muggleton 2000; Ross 2006)

Africans. Howell further concludes that *skhothane* reflects the reality of experiencing being young and poor in South Africa. Motshegoa’s (2012) analysis of the rituals practised by the neo-tribe indicates that one of the constructs of the neo-tribe is the glorification and pursuit of fame and a moment in the

spotlight. This element of the culture requires an audience and thus *skhothane* becomes a culture rooted in performance.

2.3.2 Lights, Camera, Fashion: Artefacts and Rituals of the neo-tribe

Most of the reviewed journal articles relate *skhothane* to conspicuous consumption. This could be indicative of one of the most identifiable aspects of the neo-tribe: consumerism.

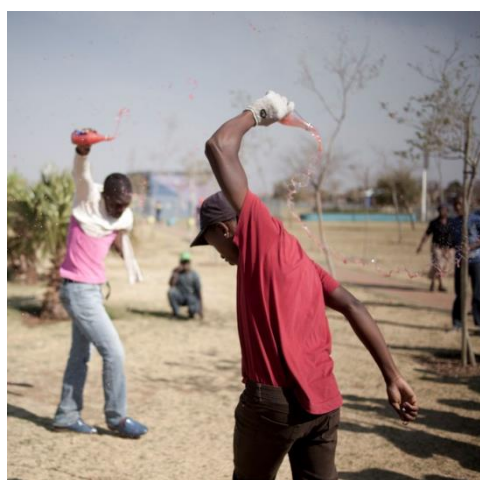
Skhothane rituals are characterised by obtaining and conspicuously consuming luxury goods, particularly Italian branded clothing. The acquired items are then heralded and destroyed in public settings staged as battles between two different ‘crews’ (Nxedlana 2012; Boikanyo 2013a; Jones 2013; Howell and Vincent 2014: 61). Battles include a range of displays that cement participants’ claim as the best, flashiest and wealthiest showman. These displays include: wearing two expensive t-shirts at the same time; the insertion of gold teeth; expensive alcohol; and stunts which include dancing, tearing of material goods (money, clothing), destroying expensive items like phones, food, shoes and spilling of foods such as Ultramel custard, Jack Daniels liquor or KFC (*3rd Degree* 2012).

In the *3rd Degree* (2012) investigative documentary, a *skhothane* is shown clearly declaring to his rival “*ngingathenga nomawakho wena*” [I can even buy your mother] and stamping his rival’s backside with his expensive shoe.

In a similar fashion: “In Pimville someone once bought a bucket of KFC chicken and stepped on it. Then he took off his Carvella shoes, set them alight and declared: *They [the shoes] have finished eating and now they are full*” (Nkosi 2011). These acts of vandalism serve to connote the performer’s wealth. They indicate that the performer can afford to behave in such a wasteful manner because there is “more where that came from” so to speak.

According to Howell (2014: 64) the idea of battle is not unique to *skhothane*. Ciphers and MC battles are evident in hip-hop rap battles – where rappers outdo each other by proving they have better lyrical content, metaphors, punchlines and flow. The difference, according to Howell (2014:64), is that the *Skhothanes* use clothing as the cultural capital of their battle.

Figure 2: Skhothanes



(Saunders 2011-2013)

In all its showmanship and performance, for *Skhothanes*, the luxury Italian clothing and overall style is the most glaring fashion anomaly. Style is used as defined by Tulloch (2010: 276): “as agency – in the construction of the self through the assemblage of garments, accessories, and beauty regimes that may, or may not be ‘in fashion’ at the time of use.” *Skhothane* style consists of luxury, branded clothing that has been assembled in a way that is not conventionally perceived as “fashionable”. Jamal Nxedlana, in the 3rd Degree documentary, paraphrases *Skhothanes* stating that they appreciate flashy artefacts because the aim for dressing is to be seen (*3rd Degree*^{3rd} Degree2012). As evidenced in Figure 2, *Skhothanes* wear: DMD and Sfarzo label floral shirts, Sfarzo and Rossimoda shoes, brightly colour-blocked t-shirts, skinny jeans and printed garments.

Authentic luxury Italian branded clothing has an established reputation for quality and classic tailoring, a reputation perpetuated by the clothing’s high prices (Okonkwo 2007: xv). As the ultimate symbol of excellence, exclusivity, glamour and affluence (Okonkwo 2007: xv; Husic and Muris 2009: 234), the acquisition of Italian branded clothing authenticates one’s claim of wealth. It is interesting to note that Howell’s (2014) sample indicates the rearrangement and personalization of clothing: “As one of the crew noted, ‘sometimes we design our clothes. I can make it myself, take it to the factory, someone will sew it there and maybe make some kind of flowers, kinda new. That’s how it is’ (Interview 19 June 2013).” This suggests that while there are rules to the types of brands favoured, how the garments are assembled is not confined to a strict code. However in the case of *skhothane*, it is essential to note the importance of the authenticity of the luxury fashion consumed. Members of the neo-tribe are specific that only genuine brands, and not ‘knock-offs,’ are valued [TMBS15012017V (18)_Dressing to impress Lines 20 – 33].

2.4 ANTI-FASHION

The interdependent relationship between fashion and anti-fashion has long been a topic of interest for cultural studies and fashion theorists (Polhemus and Proctor 1978; Hebdige 1979; Polhemus 1996b; Gelder and Thornton 1997; Gordon 1997; Wilcox 2001; Wilson 2003; Polhemus 2011). The following literature categorises anti-fashion and seeks to clarify terminology such as style, fashion and dress/clothing. In order to assist in the analysis of the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew the discussion begins with the identification of the different types of anti-fashion as detailed by Davis (1992: 168 - 186).

Davis (1992: 168 - 186) identifies six varieties of anti-fashion: Utilitarian Outrage; Health and fitness Naturalism; Feminist protest; Conservative scepticism; Minority Group Disidentification and Counterculture Insult.

1. *Utilitarian Outrage*

This is dress that views fashion as “wasteful[ness], “frivolous, impractical[ity] and [vain]”(Davis 1992: 168). Davis (1992: 168) provides religious sects as one of the earliest

examples of this form of anti-fashion (Davis 1992: 168). As an alternative, people that subscribe to utilitarian outrage wear simple clothing that only serves as functional (Davis 1992: 168 – 170).

2. *Health and fitness Naturalism*

This movement is dress that advocates for clothing that is informed by a conscious health decision (Davis 1992: 172 – 175). Davis places the 19th Century dress reform movement as the example of this form of anti-fashion (Davis 1992: 173). Loose, baggy and leisure and sportswear clothing is the alternative form (Davis 1992: 172 – 175).

3. *Feminist protest*

Feminist protest is located in gender tensions – where proponents of this movement see fashion as restrictive and sexist to women (believe the cause to be that fashion is created by men) (Davis 1992: 176 – 178). Within this antifashion Davis notes two parts: one part of the movement advocates for women to wear masculine clothing and the other advocates for a new, gender free form of clothing (Davis 1992: 176 – 178).

4. *Conservative scepticism*

This category is an objection by women that fashions are unflattering or lacking in the individual's personality (Davis 1992:178 – 180).

5. *Minority Group Disidentification and Counterculture Insult*

These styles Davis (1992: 180 – 185) discusses collectively because of their similarity. Members belonging to Minority Group Disidentification are in opposition to prevailing styles in an attempt to distinguish themselves apart from fashion (Davis 1992: 180 – 185). Members that are categorised as Counterculture Insult reject fashion and instead dress in a manner that highlights their racial identity in a positive light (Davis 1992: 180 – 185).

The issue with Davis' classifications is that they are concerned with that which goes against the norm; it does not distinguish that which embraces fashion, as in the case of the most African subcultures.

In light of this, the study looks at the two most influential works surrounding the topic: Polhemus (2011) and Polhemus and Procter (1978) *Fashion and Anti-fashion* and Wilson (2003) *Oppositional Dress*. For Polhemus (2011: 41), anti-fashion is defined by its difference to the organised fashion system. The fashion system refers to the cyclical processes and structures that are used to produce and disseminate fashion for consumption (Kawamura 2018: 68). The full supply chain of the fashion system dictates the changes within that system and is indicative of the concept that fashion entails change. According to Polhemus (2011: 41), anti-fashion is "...all styles of adornment which fall outside the organised system of fashion change". For this study, Polhemus' (2011:41) definition will be used as a broad definition of the term anti-fashion.

Wilson (2003: 183 – 184) cites the start of 'anti-fashion' with the 19th century Dandy. Seemingly, the first counterculture that consciously used fashion to demonstrate opposition, Dandyism was a style of

dress born from the idealizing of practicality against the increasingly vulgar sartorial codes of the middle class of the time (d'Hamilton 2013: 3). The Dandy's 'anti-bourgeois' values were reflected in their form fitting breeches, impeccably tied cravats, well-groomed exterior and 'haughty' conduct (Wilson 2003: 184; d'Hamilton 2013: 3).

Wilson (2003:183) calls this form of adornment constructed solely to differentiate oneself from the prevailing culture: 'oppositional fashion'. With their direct or indirect opposition of the fashion systems or institutions that fashions exist within, the dress adopted by these movements can be seen as the epitome of the term anti-fashion. According to Wilson (2003: 183), "oppositional fashions aim to express the dissent or distinctive ideas of a group, or views hostile to the conformist majority." Much like Wilson (2003) and Hebdige (1979), Davis (1992: 183) describes counterculture movements as seeking to subvert the status quo and to shock the dominant cultural groups.

In the attempt to oppose the dominant cultural group, countercultures become bricoleurs (Hebdige 1979: 103). As they break out from the dominant culture, they have to borrow and reinterpret mainstream materials – like dress - to reflect their oppositional identity. The beatniks, for instance, are one of the 60s youth movements that have become synonymous with the study of counterculture (Frank 2009; Bareiss 2010; Mishra 2015). A literary movement that was started by American writers, the beatniks were apolitical liberals who expressed 'rejection of materialism' through their dark coloured clothing, goatees, berets, leotards and long hair (Cook 1971: 1-18).

Most of the subcultures cited by Wilson (2003) focus on class struggles and politically centred opposition. It does not explain the phenomena of tribal anti-fashions, conceptual fashion nor subcultures such as Steampunk - whose popularity is a product of its proliferation over the internet and not as an expression of opposition (Pho and Goh 2012: 192).

The term anti-fashion also invokes images of Avant-Garde design such as that of Issey Miyake's minaret dress and Yohji Yamamoto's tailored deconstruction. These images are known as conceptual fashion – clothing that is designed using the fundamentals of conceptual art (Clark 2013: 67). Conceptual fashion does not focus on the traditional aspects of contemporary clothing but rather it is design which is concerned with: "ideas over appearance, self-reflection over resolution, innovation and experimentation, and statements that pose[d] questions but that rarely provide[d] clear answers." (Clark 2013: 67). A long practised art, perhaps mildly in the surrealist fashions of designers such as Elsa Schiaparelli, conceptual fashion's impact on fashion was truly recognised in the 80s in acknowledgement of the Japanese designers' works such as Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo (Clark 2013: 69). These designs transcend fashion and deviate into the realm of the arts as design that is considered not for its value of change but for the statement it makes.

Lastly, a broad and complex term, anti-fashion is the umbrella term for not only that which goes against fashion but also for that which does not follow fashion. While theorists such as Wilson (2003) and Wilcox (2001) may agree with Davis (1992: 162) that "anti-fashion themes and motifs in

dress...appear to have served the same function then [in European history] as they do now: to dissent, protest, ridicule, and outrage” – anthropologist, Polhemus (2011: 31-32) does not confine anti-fashion to the oppositional and conceptual but outlines that the distinguishing factor between anti-fashion and fashion is time.

For Polhemus (2011), permanence is reflected in the tribal sphere and folk costume. Polhemus and Proctor (1978: 13) state that the ultimate anti-fashion marker is tattooing as it places change that will never be in fashion. Sweetman (2005: 63) however, argues that while there is some legitimacy to Polhemus’ argument, in the context of tattooing, while the image of the tattoo on the skin is permanent and therefore “cannot be put on and left off by the season...” the reasons for why people get tattoos are not fixed - rendering the body modification process of tattooing as fashionable.

If one accepts the existence of anti-fashion it would be categorised into three categories: opposition, deviation and permanence. However, in light of the critiques reviewed, it is evident that there might not be a place for the exclusionist term in a post-modern society.

2.4.1 The Fallacy of Anti-fashion: blurred lines and the cult of individuality

To understand the term anti-fashion, a definition of the term fashion is required as it is the anti-thesis to fashion. The Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion (Steele 2005: 12) provides the following definitions for the term fashion:

“[1] Fashion...encompasses all forms of self-fashioning, including street styles, as well as so-called high fashion created by designers and couturiers.

[2] Fashion also alludes to the way in which things are made; to fashion something is to make it in a particular form.

[3] Most commonly, fashion is defined as the prevailing style of dress or behavior at any given time with the strong implication that fashion is characterised by change.”

Fashion has come to mean anything that deals with the appearance management of the body. Not only clothes, but shoes, hair, jewellery, all these can in some way be called fashion. Similarly, Polhemus (1996: 19) defines fashion as: “...that which has a fluctuating value over time- gaining or losing value, coming in and going out...” Using the above two definitions, if fashion is marked by change, then anti-fashion as the opposite would be marked by stability.

It must be noted however, that in the context of theorising African fashion, the existing terminology tends to exclude non-Western styles of dress because of the assumption that that which does not follow Western fashion is stagnant, unchanging and thus not fashion (Niessen 2016).

It is because of this limited definition of fashion that Tulloch (2010) proposes the use of the term ‘Style-Fashion-Dress’ to label the tensions of all that has to do with clothing the black body: particularly in the context of the African diaspora.

- Style, as agency in the construction of self through the appearance management that may or may not be in fashion.
- Fashion, as a process which has a fluctuating value over time and
- Dress, which incorporates all aspects of the subject of: clothing, fashion, style, production, consumption, textiles, and beauty regimes.

The term is used as an alternative to Fashion – which is largely associated with the west and invokes a West vs Rest dichotomy in the discussion of fashion dissemination (Allman 2004: 3; Jansen and Craik 2016).

2.4.2 Blurred lines: Globalization and the cult of individuality

For anti-fashion to fulfil its role of either opposition (Wilson 2003); deviation (Clark 2013) or permanence (Polhemus 2011) and all the way to being absorbed into the fashion system, there needs to be identifiable mainstream fashions to be opposed (Davis 1992). However if according to Polhemus (1996: 27) and Davis (1992), dress since the 60s changed from a 'singular direction' to a cult of individualism then the definitions that govern the boundaries between fashion and anti-fashion cease to exist.

In the last two decades globalization has brought fast fashion, the celebration of individuality and an abundance of choice. It has become increasingly difficult to determine what the unanimous or focused direction is. In a postmodern world what is anti-fashion is soon to become fashionable in a shorter period of time. Furthermore, Giles Lipovetsky (1994as cited by English 2011: 82) states that contemporary fashion design is concerned with displaying individualistic identities. The freedom of choice provided by the information and communication-centred society means the clearly defined line of what is 'fashion' has shifted. Hence what is fashion cannot be easily defined anymore, as the cult of individuality reigns. As Sweetman (2005: 54) states, "...if there is no dominant dress code or hegemonic standard by which one's sartorial conduct might be judged, then it arguably makes little sense to speak of subcultural or counter-cultural styles of dress." If the cult of individualism rules the fashion industry today then there is no focused direction that signifies the term fashion.

2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF PROCURING FINE CLOTHING TO AFRICANS.

This section reviews the culture of conspicuous consumption that is evident in *Skhothane* traits. The literature explores the symbolic importance of status goods in African society. It elaborates on the phenomenon of procuring fine clothing in a South African context - through an exploration of bling culture.

2.5.1 A cautionary tale

Discussing Africans' relationship to conspicuous consumption only as the result of a globalised world must be stringently cautioned upon. This continues the 'West vs Rest' dichotomy of fashion that

Jansen and Craik (2016) try to dispel - where fashion and all the tensions that surround it cannot exist without the influence of the West. The discussion should not solely be on the local being westernised but also on the western being Africanised. For example, Farber (2010) proposes that the 'Afro-look' and all its other forms - Afropolitan, Afro-chic, and Afro-whimsical- are examples of style that demonstrate clear influences of both the local and the Western. The distinguishability of the two cultures within a single style of dress indicates the presence of the Afro "voice" as an agent of fashion itself. Yet fashion theory is only considered from a Western perspective.

Historical imagery of African pageantry, in dress and adornment, can be seen in a multitude of communities. Instances can be seen in indigenous tribal traditions. Women in the *Ndebele* tribe for instance, add a gold bracelet around their necks for every year they are married - signalling their place in the hierarchy of wives (Rabine 2002: 29). African chiefs demonstrate authority through "animal-skin clothing, ornaments, and other paraphernalia of power" (Cozzika 2012: 2). Cozzika (2012) provides the example of Zulu men displaying and increasing their wealth through the acquisition of wives and large herds of cattle. In contemporary society, such practices might have been replaced by more modern displays of wealth. These are only some examples that show that conspicuous consumption has always been inherent in African culture – apart from the influence of the West. In Africa, conspicuous consumption could be seen as an inherent symbol of pride and not a product of a media-saturated, Western influenced Africa (Dickson 2012: 1). Similarly, the elements of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous waste displayed by *Skhothanes* are explored to determine the social status that the study participants occupy. The study seeks to define the concept of swag as an embodied symbol of the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew's social identity.

2.5.2 Swag

Black Africans are known for dressing well as part of complex visual markers of status, identity and class (Allman 2004: 13; Miller, ML 2010: 1). In particular, visuals of the "Black dandy" dominate mainstream media (Lewis 2015). The historical dandy's 'anti-bourgeois' values were reflected in his form fitting breeches, impeccably tied cravats, well-groomed exterior and 'haughty' conduct (Wilson 2003: 184; d'Hamilton 2013: 3). The "Black dandy" as described by Lewis (2015: 55) adopts the style-fashion-dress principles of his historical counterpart whilst incorporating the histories of his African migration. Instances of the "Black dandy" can be seen in the *Swenkas*: a community of Zulu men living in hostels that held amateur style competitions within the community (Bowen 2011). Irrespective of their lower income bracket, the *Swenkas* used dress practices that would connote wealth.

Picarelli (2016): "*In the apartheid decades, swenking preserved Zulu culture and pride. The Swenkas favoured a formal dress code inspired by jazz-age refinement. Their tailored suits came with brimmed hats and leather shoes, as well as a variety of accessories, including eyewear, gloves, braces and straw hats, and were displayed at fashion pageants that gathered fellow dandies and citizens as judges of style. On those occasions, the Swenkas*

would display their ensembles with elaborate acts and special ‘moves’ aimed at calling attention to outfit details. The winner would receive money or, more rarely, a goat.”

Unlike the *skhothane*, the purpose of being a *Swenka* was not placed on the importance of the brand name being worn but rather it was to dress well (Bowen 2011; Lewis 2015). Similarly, the *Sapeurs* (otherwise known as *la Sape*) of the Bakongo region of Congo are a style culture characterised by European tailored dress (Thomas 2003: 952). In seeking to differentiate themselves from the African economic migrants, the historical, *la Sape*, dressed in the gentlemanly European garb of their ‘masters’ (Thomas 2003: 954). The clothing became a sign of having refined taste and being a civilised and ‘evolved’ person (Thomas 2003: 954; Jennings 2015: 50).

Figure 3: Ndebele woman and Sapeur



(DeAgostini 2016)



(Tamagni and Goodwin 2009)

Examples of this emblematic practice in Africa (Eicher 1995; Fund *et al* 1998) are far and varied and cannot be comprehensively reviewed in the scope of this study. However, much like in the West, when expressing identity and status, one of the symbolic forms common to all these African cultures is the adornment of the body. In Africa, the use of dress as a signifier of status is a seemingly entrenched practice across generations that has not been properly defined due to the lack of appropriate fashion terminology - specifically, terminology that describes constructs of flamboyant dress as it relates to the black body (Jansen and Craik 2016).

Tulloch (2010: 275) proposes the term style-fashion-dress to describe all meanings and frameworks that are a part of dress studies. Tulloch’s (2015) definition relates to all conversations on the dressed black body. However there is a particular type of style-fashion-dress as it relates to the African body that needs further distinction. It is one that defines the specific practices of pageantry and posturing that is a part of African style-fashion-dress (McMillan 2016: 63). For this, the term “swag” seems more appropriate. Swag is an urban slang word from hip-hop culture, derived from the word swagger. The term refers to the style cues that identify an individual – this can include a range of signifiers from how a person walks, talks and dresses (Mose 2013: 112). According to Touslee (2014: 6), swag is a result of a calculated and informed effort to conduct oneself with an air of overbearing self-confidence. Touslee (2014: 6) further states that the defining feature of swag is that individuals authentically adopt

style codes in a manner that distinguishes them, particular to his or her own history. Therefore, in this study, 'Swag' refers to a more contemporary alternative to sartorial style, fashion, clothing, style-fashion-dress when discussing all the tensions that are performed in constructing the *Italian Gates'* fashion identity. Not only that, but the term includes all tensions that involve posturing in the demonstration of one's identity.

The concept of "swag" can be identified clearly in one of the most appropriated culture that is symbolic of black African American identity: Hip-hop. The hip-hop subculture originated in the 70s – during a time when young African American youths faced increasing institutional racism and systematic exclusion from American society. The tensions of black "ghetto" realities were expressed in style choices that reflected symbols of black issues (Arnold 2001; Mitchell 2003; Miller 2011). For example, the oversized low hanging pants and loose baseball style shirts, associated with early 1980s mainstream hip-hop culture, were appropriated from the one size fits all US prison clothes (Mitchell 2003: 8). At the time, black people were being purposely targeted by police and saw some of the highest racially profiled conviction rates against black people in America (Mitchell 2003: 41). The bricolage of such clothing in the hip-hop community assisted youngsters in reassigning the negative symbols of blackness and helped reaffirm, reimagine and reassert their identity.

Subsequently clothing associated with hip-hop has significantly shifted since the 90s. Now the dress style serves to break the stereotype of the poor black reality through conspicuous consumption and brash displays of wealth (Arnold 2001: 40-41). The clothing borrows the very symbols of western consumerism to redefine their identity. The result: a complete opposite style of dressing as seen in the dapper fashions of rapper turned businessman; Sean 'Jay Z' Carter and many more. This new style of hip-hop promotes ideas of "always being neat, clothes pressed and shoes extra clean" to do away with the image of the ghetto black identity (Bok 2005).

Conspicuous consumption marks one of the prevalent features of black fashion identity. One cannot ignore the effects of socio-economic and political institutions that govern the rules of identity formation. The increasing practice of conspicuously consuming and engaging in brash displays of excessive wealth can be attributed to the ubiquitous exposure to hip-hop culture - making the black youth a consumer of bling culture (Miller 2011).

2.5.2 Bling Culture

Bling is adopted from hip-hop culture and refers to the brash display of wealth made obvious through the adoption of gold chains, teeth and jewellery as part of the styling. The phrase "Bling" was coined by BG of popular rap group at the time, "Cash Money Millionaires" in the late 1990s. The phrase describes the imaginary sound produced when light reflects off a diamond (Bok 2005: 5-6).

According to Vazi and Martinez-Roca (2006: 1) the culture of bling or bling culture refers to the use of "ostentation and conspicuous consumption as a show of wealth". The idea and term of conspicuous consumption, as discussed in Part 1 of the literature review, was coined in the nineteenth century by Thorstein Veblen (Lurie 2000: 15). This theory attributes conspicuous consumption as a display of

status by the upper class (Kaiser 1998: 435-436). Veblen (1899 as cited in Welters and Lillethun 2011: 125 – 127) identifies dress as the most tangible evidence of one's ability to afford to spend freely on clothes.

Veblen's notion of conspicuous consumption is similar to the systems through which hierarchies of social status are established. Social status categorises individuals according to their "relative wealth, power and prestige" (Bevan-Dye *et al* 2012). It is usually measured by an individual's achievements and accomplishments such as income, occupation and education level (Bevan-Dye *et al* 2012: 5579). Similarly, conspicuous consumption has become an important identity marker for post-apartheid South Africans. However, considering the lower income reality of the majority of the country's population, South Africans' practice of conspicuously consuming is more in line with the definition of status consumption (Howell 2014: 62). Status consumption refers to consumer purchasing behaviour that is motivated by the desire for status and has nothing to do with "actual income or social class position" (Bevan-Dye *et al* 2012: 5570). Instead, status consumption manifests in the craving for status symbols (Bevan-Dye *et al* 2012: 5570). In South Africa, the manifestation of this craving for status symbols is a result of the lived reality of township dwellers and their ubiquitous exposure to the image of black diamonds in the media (Howell 2014: 62). As evidenced in *skhothane*, Howell (2014: 62) explains that: "in lieu of substantive changes in their lives post-1994, they enact their dreams of 'real' conspicuous consumption by accumulating these wardrobes." The exposure to a media-saturated (Baudrillard 1994; Strinati 2005), luxury brand focussed society (Husic and Muris 2009), has shaped a generation that seems to be more 'status consumption oriented' (Bevan-Dye *et al* 2012: 5570).

When we speak of 'bling' culture today, we tend to relate it to the desire to denote one's status through conspicuous consumption (Miller 2011). It is further noted that using bling is a practice originally associated with disadvantaged minority groups. A recent study proposes that African Americans who emphasised their identity as 'Black' placed more importance on high status goods than those 'who had lower racial identification' ('Bling culture' related to social status 2012). Those who feel they are victims of oppression wish to assert themselves through material acquisitions when they feel inferior ('Bling culture' related to social status 2012).

According to William Gumede (as cited in Jellars 2011: 58), as a community, the shared beliefs and values that comprise South African bling culture is that individual worth is measured according to whether one can afford the bling lifestyle - this new lifestyle is the "new standard of achievement: a sign that one has made it." Cozzika (2012: 2) proposes that, for South Africans, the use of material items to denote status is not because of some excessive practice but rather a case of pride. Likewise Dr. Crosswaitte (as cited in Dickson 2012: 1) notes that the traditional use of adornment as a status signifier is a large part of South African culture, which explains the country's affinity for luxury brands. South Africans are an 'emblematic' society meaning we use material objects to show "marital status, rank, gender and kinship" (Dickson 2012:1).

South Africa is no stranger to the culture of ostentatious display. The previously mentioned Pantsulas style was influenced by 1950s mafia gangsters "...they wore Florsheim, Brentwood, Pringle and other hot brands of the time.... There are stories of people who were stabbed to death in tussles that started with somebody mistakenly stepping on a 'pantsulas' expensive shoe" (*Brash Bling and Ghetto Fabulous* 2012).

Undeniably, apartheid can be cited as one of the most significant factors in the construction of South African culture as we know it today (Nutall 2004: 431). The values of inferiority inherited by the disadvantaged people means that obtaining wealth has become a priority because previously wealth was a marker of supremacy that was reserved exclusively for the white minority (Vazi and Martinez-Roca 2006).

However, government policies such as Black Economic Empowerment have also created a new bourgeoisie class that rose from poverty to affluence in less than a decade - individuals who, because of their social upbringing, can afford the finer things in life, and are happy to broadcast it (Van Loggerenberg and Herbst 2010: 115). This is what Mokgadi Seabi (as cited in Jellars 2011: 57) terms the 'Mama, I've made it' syndrome stating: "You're not going to buy something that can't be seen. Why buy a portfolio of shares? People aren't going to see your shares, but they will see your flashy car."

2.6 CONCLUSION

The world has entered a postmodern era whereby the most powerful institutions that shape social relationships are mass media and popular culture (Strinati 2005; Lyotard 1979). These institutions have in turn created what Baudrillard (1994) terms Hyperreality. Hyperreality describes the ambiguous authenticity of reality in a world defined by the endless reproduction of imagery (Baudrillard 1994). Consequently, the interpretation of meaning from symbolic forms, like clothing, becomes relative to its creators and the observer. Clothing signs need to be considered as part of a constant exchange and reference between cultural products. Furthermore, the consumer becomes an active participant in the continued exchange of the sign. For, without the consumer's prior knowledge of the sign, the consumer does not recognise the reference. In this regard, the fashion sign is deciphered as a product of intertextual relations. These intertextual relations are an amalgamation of global image references into one's individual style: sartorial ecumene. Sartorial ecumene is used in the expression of the postmodern tribesman's identity.

The consequence of the increase in individual style is the breakdown of the fashion system. Previously one could identify communities that ascribed to sartorial ecumene that fell outside of mainstream fashion within three antifashion categories: opposition, deviation and permanence. However, because there is no longer a hegemonic standard of fashion - by which one's style might be judged - it is more appropriate to term styles of dress that do not follow fashion as style-fashion-dress. Finally, in Africa, the pageantry involved in the conspicuous consumption of fashion has close links to an inherent symbol of pride in one's status. The concepts discussed set a framework to explain how

the *skhothane* neo-tribe identity is constructed. The mapping of the *Skhothane*'s fashion identity is guided by the various converging or diverging concepts that form a part of this chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

SWAG STITCHES

3.1. STUDY DESIGN

The study uses constructivist ontology¹⁷ with the assumption that there are multiple realities and that knowledge is constructed through social interactions (Constantino 2012: 2). Using the opinions provided by the *Italian Gates Skhothanes*, to contextualise observed rituals and artefacts along with the analysis of the researcher's prior knowledge, allowed the study to construct a realistic knowledge base.

The nature of constructivist ontology – that reality is understood as relative to the “observer/definer”- necessitates that truth must be interpreted for knowledge to be understood (Lincoln and Guba 2013: 38). In order to contextualise observed and relevant practices within *skhothane*, prior knowledge of the constructs of a style neo-tribe was required. The researcher's prior knowledge and subjective assumptions played a significant role in the construction of this study's data analysis (Lincoln and Guba 2013: 40). In this respect, the study is further guided by phenomenological epistemology. It is an interpretive paradigm, where the researcher takes into account his/her previous experience and role in the research or data collection stage (Merleau-Ponty 2005: xxii; Denzin and Lincoln 2011: 16). The interpretation of the *skhothane* phenomenon utilises Maggs-Rapport's (2000: 221) concept of fore-standing, interrogation and reflection to gain deeper insight.

3.1.1. Fore-standing, Interrogation and Reflection

Maggs-Rapport's (2000: 221) fore-standing refers to the prior knowledge required on the area of inquiry. This study's theoretical underpinnings section, in Chapter 2, reflects the concepts of fore-standing that guided the literature.

Interrogation refers to the data gathering and analysis of texts to identify convergent and divergent themes from collected data. Reflection deals with the researcher's bias and assumptions that have affected interpretation about the subject (Maggs-Rapport 2000: 221). These are rudimentary definitions of the processes of knowledge construction from a phenomenological perspective. Further description of the processes involved within these two terms; have been outlined in this Chapter and subsequent Chapter 5.

¹⁷ According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011: 91): “A paradigm encompasses four terms: ethics (axiology), epistemology, ontology and methodology. Ethics ask, “How will I be as a moral person in the world? Epistemology asks, “How do I know the world?” “What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?”...Ontology raises basic questions about the nature of reality and the nature of the human being in the world. Methodology focuses on the best means for gaining knowledge about the world.” Denzin, K. and Lincoln, Y. 2011. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Los Angeles: SAGE publications

3.1.2 Methodology

The study is a qualitative research project with the aim of uncovering the stylistic nuances of the *skhothane* neo-tribe. It further maps out the factors that inform how the members negotiate and express their identity using fashion. In this respect, a methodology that would lend itself to the deep inquiry into the *skhothane* member's perspective - of their individual and collective cultural identity - was needed. An ethnographic research design from a phenomenological perspective was used to explore the following themes:

- How can neo-tribal fashion identity be defined?
- How does media consumption influence the formation of neo-tribes?
- What are the key features used in the construction of the fashion identity of the *Italian Gates Skhothanes*?
- How can the *Italian Gates Skhothane's* relationship with consumerism be defined?
- What other factors motivate the *Italian Gates skhothane* members to participate in the neo-tribe?

This was achieved by using ethnographic qualitative data collection techniques. This chapter will then begin with a discussion on ethnographic research methods and instruments as used in this study. This will be followed by the methodology which describes and justifies the planning and implementation and major reflection on practice to arrive at the final results.

3.2 ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS

This chapter is written from the perspective of a phenomenological researcher. Phenomenological epistemology is guided by the principles of subjectivity and relies on personal perspective and interpretation of phenomena (Guest *et al* 2012: 10). It is an interpretive paradigm, where the researcher takes into account his/her previous experience and role in the research or data collection stage (Merleau-Ponty 2005: xxii; Denzin and Lincoln 2011: 16). This means that some parts of the chapter are purposely written in the first person.

The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to understand phenomena through the eyes of the participants and clearly outline the biases and assumptions of the researcher (Lester 1999: 1). This approach lends itself to the study as it seeks to uncover the stylistic attributes of the *skhothane* neo-tribe and how the participants express their identity and view themselves on the fashion map.

Phenomenology's concern with subjectivity means that as the researcher, while I am an outsider to the culture and have tried my best to explain the phenomena as understood by the participants, it is impossible to retain objectivity when studying cultural phenomena (Merleau-Ponty 2005: xxii). Therefore, the interpretation of data relies on my existing knowledge of concepts to uncover meaning and my positioning within the field is documented. As such, great care and emphasis was made to limit researcher bias and to improve credibility through detailed field notes and triangulation of data collected.

3.2.1 Defining ethnography

In order to uncover how the *Italian Gates Skhothanes* express their identity through clothing and the significance of the neo-tribe in a social context, ethnographic methods were used to collect data.

Ethnographic study is a field associated with anthropology where phenomena can be explained through the eyes of the culture's participants by examining the inherent symbolic artefacts and rituals that hold meaning in the culture (Maggs-Rapport 2000: 220). This was selected as the most appropriate research method as it served the purpose of the study to describe in detail the *Italian Gates* crew. According to Fetterman (2010: 18), ethnography is a "...holistic perspective; contextualization; and emic, etic and non-judgmental views of reality." Through the participants' own description of the phenomenon of *skhothane*, I was able to construct a reliable overview of the rituals and relationships of the study sample (Maggs-rapport 2000: 220). Ethnography allowed for the most accurate description of the social world of *skhothane* through methods that required the researcher's personal engagement with the community. Having been immersed and welcomed into the *Italian Gates skhothane* community, I was able to describe the *Italian Gates'* world as I saw it.

The field of anthropology can be categorised into two categories: cultural anthropology and social anthropology. The former is characterised by meaning as understood by participants (interpretive) and the latter explores meaning from social arrangements (descriptive) (Sanjek 2000). This study is located within a combination of social and cultural anthropology as the objectives of the study are both interpretive and descriptive. The study provides description of the symbolic artefacts and rituals of the *skhothane* neo-tribe in relation to their identity. This was done through ethnographic interviews and gathering field notes. The interviews and field notes were then coded and interpreted by the researcher in order to present, a comprehensive text in reference to the research questions.

Below is a summary of Classic Ethnography and Urban Ethnography as detailed by Crowley-Henry presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Classic Ethnography and Urban ethnography (Crowley-Henry 2009)

	Classic Ethnography	Urban Ethnography
Works	Mead (2001)	Chicago School (circa 1960)
Researcher involvement	Get in, Get out, report Maintains objectivity	Get in, Reflect, Get out, Reflect, report, Includes subjectivity
Samples	Primitive/foreign	Sub populations
Methods	Interviews, Observations and field notes	

My study is more in line with urban ethnography as defined by Crowley-Henry (2009: 41):

“Where classic ethnography was engaged in anthropological fieldwork, researching primitive, exotic, foreign cultures, urban ethnography was concerned with sociological fieldwork, studying sub-populations within a single country’s national culture.”

My study can then be categorised as an urban ethnography as it considered *skhothane* from a stagnant location - a community that is a part of and not apart from the population. Interviews took place in the location that was stipulated by participants and this was determined by where the participants were going to perform. The constant reflexive and subjective rigour that was involved in the study leads it more towards urban ethnography (Crowley-Henry 2009).

Lastly, while the methods are similar, the main difference between classic and urban ethnography is that the latter uses the subjective involvement of the researcher as an aid to analysis. As this aligns with the epistemological lens of this study, a reflective analysis of the researcher’s positioning in the study is provided at the end of Chapter 5.

3.3. SAMPLE DESIGN AND SAMPLING METHODS

It was difficult to apply a systematic sampling approach for this study due to accessibility of participants therefore random snowball sampling was used in order to identify participants (Patton 1990: 186). The first stage of finding my sample was an extensive search for people who displayed connections to *skhothane* culture through their social media interactions - particularly via social network site Facebook. Following the identification of individuals who seemed to participate in the culture an e-mail was sent out requesting participation in the study (See Appendix I). It is through the email responses that I met the gatekeeper Billy Gates. A gatekeeper is the bridge between the data collector and the potential respondent (Keesling 2016: 2) In the case of my study, Billy Gates, as the ‘leader’¹⁸, of the *Italian Gates* crew, was the person who I needed to communicate my intentions to in order to gain access to the other members of the group. Other e-mail responses were politely rejected due to potential participants requesting remuneration and one of the responders was too far away in Thohoyandou in Limpopo. The gatekeeper was key in referring and introducing me to the *Italian Gates* crew and other *skhothane* members. The final sample population was varied in age and ethnicity however race, and the fact that they were *skhothane*, were constant factors.

3.4. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND FIELDWORK PRACTICE

The study used multi-data collection methods where primary data was collected through observation of the *skhothane* group, *Italian Gates*, using video-recording and an unstructured ethnographic interview. Overt observation was used to study *Skhothanes* in their natural setting. Due to the performative nature of the neo-tribe, this was the most appropriate observation method as participants enjoy performing in front of the camera (Appendix D *Line 16*). Observation was

¹⁸ At a later stage of the study, the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew had internal differences and no longer recognised Billy Gates as their leader.

chosen in order to gather the richest data possible and the meanings attached to the observed practices were then extrapolated through interviews (Leedy and Ormrod 2005: 137). It was necessary for the observation to be conducted alongside unstructured questions because participants wanted to interact and give details about their lifestyle and rituals.

This multi-data collection method resulted in the collection of a high volume repository of data that needed to be organised and easily tracked. The following table provides a summary of the research instruments. Similar formats of the table were also used to manage data tools and make them easily accessible for analysis.

Table 2: Summary of research instruments

Instrument	Date, Sample	Location,	Purpose	Format of data obtained	Transcript location
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 10 2015 Thembisa Park <i>Italian Gates</i> 		Observation of the rituals and practices of <i>Skhothane</i> in their natural setting.	Transcribed video text and visual text in the form of photographic data. With field notes	Appendix B
Journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 10 2015 Thembisa Park <i>Italian Gates</i> 		Subjective reflection and objective description of observation of <i>Skhothane</i> neo-tribe.	Hardcopy text based data and field notes.	Appendix A
Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 15 2017 Thembisa PMG Italian Culture 		Clarify observed rituals; unanswered questions and to further confirm observations.	Video recording resulting in transcribed text and field notes.	Appendix D

The data was labelled using the location acronym, date of data collection, type of research instrument and finally the description of the content of data.

Table 3: Summary of raw data labelling

Element	Example	Signifies
Location	TMBS	Thembisa
Date	10102015	dd/mm/yyyy
Research Instrument	O,J,I	First letter of the type of research instrument
Description	_Introduction	Content of data

i. Video recording and photographs

There are many advantages to using video data in ethnographic study. The most notable is the use of video in the study allowed for repeated experience of the event without altering the reality (DuFon

2002: 2). The initial observation was three and a half hours on 10 October 2015. The time scheduled was an hour and half more than what was predicted in order to get the richest data possible.

The involvement of participants during observation was not anticipated. Verbal consent was given due to the chaotic environment where papers and signing of legal documentation was not feasible. Written consent was further obtained during the interview process. Overt observation was used to avoid deception and infringement of participants' privacy. Participants were duly notified of the researcher's purpose in the area and those who agreed to voluntarily participate were given an informed consent and a model release form (Appendix E - H).

The use of a camera also served an unintended purpose of bridging the gap between the participants and the researcher. This active participation was a huge advantage as participants were very enthused by the presence of a camera and were not shy to approach the researcher and ask for pictures to be taken.

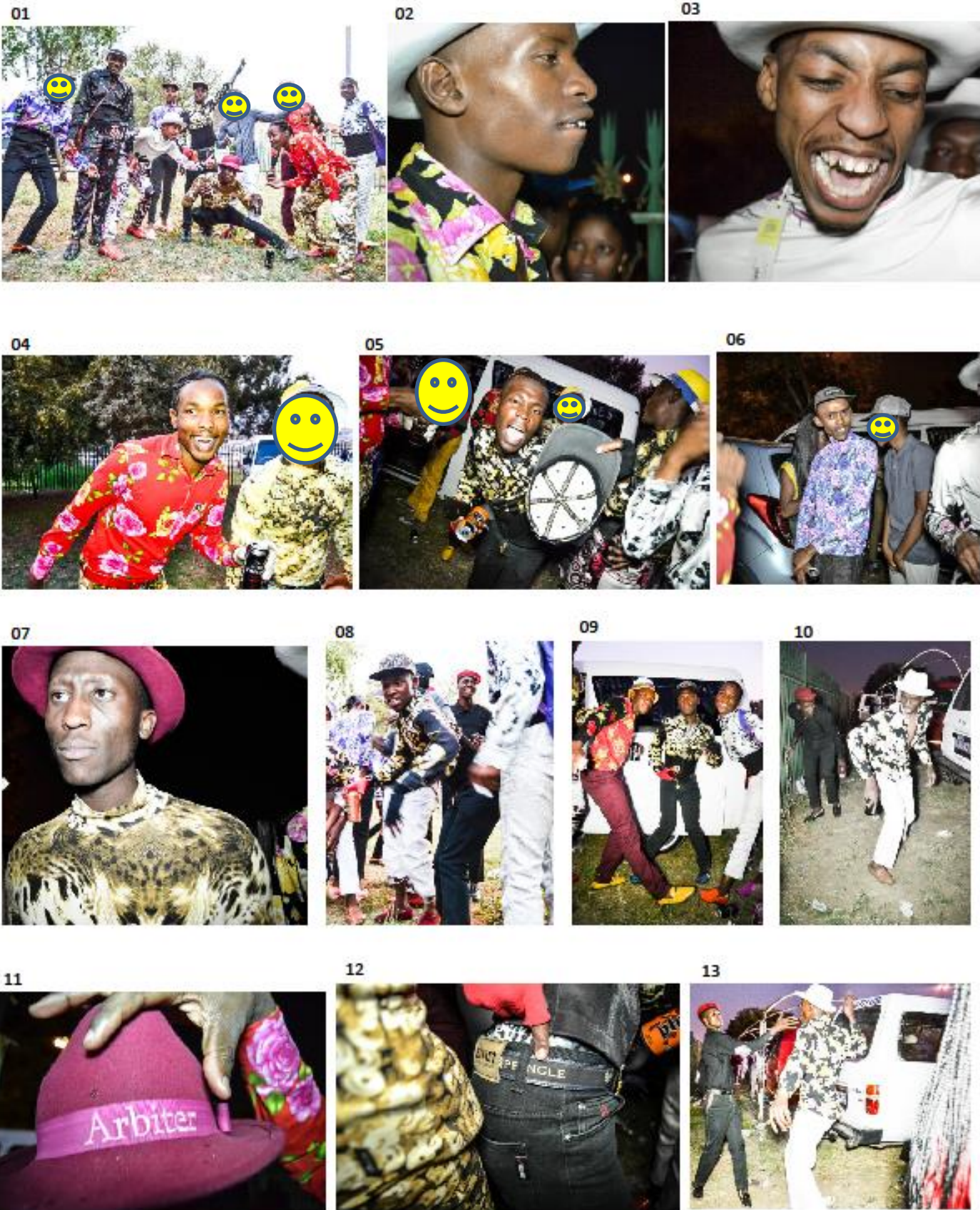
I. Photo elicitation

Photographic imagery collected during observation was used as an icebreaker for the interview stage (LeCompte and Goetz (1982: 53). The use of the collected imagery proved extremely effective as an icebreaker during the follow-up interview stage. Participants were not in the performance state of mind as they had been during observation. Some were returning from church so, while participants were familiar and friendly with the researcher, the presence of the photographs served as a welcome conversation starting point for both parties.

Images that were printed for participants were selected on the participant's visibility during observation (Figure 4). The images were also selected according to who was going to be a part of the follow up interview.

Finally photographs and edited video material were used as an exchange between researcher and participants. Because there was no monetary obligation and this was voluntary, as a gesture of good will by the researcher, it was agreed to provide participants with photographs of themselves.

Figure 4: Images used for photo elicitation



II. Interview

The informal interview conducted during observation was not anticipated; however, it was necessary as an anchor to the research in a chaotic field. It became unavoidable to engage with the participants during the initial data collection stage as members were actively seeking to be in front of the camera and were providing information that was relevant to the study. The informal interview was guided by participants and not by the researcher, hence the initial observation ran over the predicted 2 hour schedule.

The purpose of the second interview phase was to clarify observed rituals and unanswered questions and to further confirm observations, the demographics of the study and congruencies and discrepancies with literature. The formulation of interview questions used the Patton (1990) model. The following questions were formulated:

1) Behaviour or experience questions

The purpose of these questions was not to decipher meaning; instead they clarify and request more information from the interviewee (Madison 2012: 30). These questions were used as introductory questions to gain rapport, considering that they dealt with a subject familiar to the study sample (see Appendix J).

2-3) Opinion, Value and Feeling questions

These are questions concerned with how the subject views and feels about the phenomenon (Madison 2012: 30). Again these were formulated as part of both introductory and socio-economic questions.

4) Knowledge Questions

Knowledge questions request the interviewee to provide background information about the subculture (Madison 2012: 30).

5) Sensory Questions

Sensory questions request the interviewee to provide information about how they experience the phenomenon. This line of questioning was not appropriate to the study purpose and was instead replaced with "Once-upon-a-time-descriptive" questions (Madison 2012: 33). It requested the *Skhothanes* to reflect and describe their time or most memorable battles they had been a part of. Once-upon-a-time-descriptive questions were necessitated by the participants' willingness to brag and engage with the researcher.

6) Demographic Questions

During initial data analysis, the proposed interview questions were compared to the data gathered from the unstructured observation interviews. This was done to avoid the repetition of questions already addressed by the participants. As a retrospective interview on the observed practices during the initial data collection, the use of video helped to refresh the participant's memory.

III. Reflective journal

The third aspect of data collection methods was a reflective journal that provided an objective description of the field and how I interpreted what was being observed. Journaling also served the purpose of keeping record of any of my biases within the field.

Each timed transcript of the video is reflected in the journal with personal reflection on the observation.

IV. Research site

Figure 5: Images of surrounding area of Thembisa Park

001



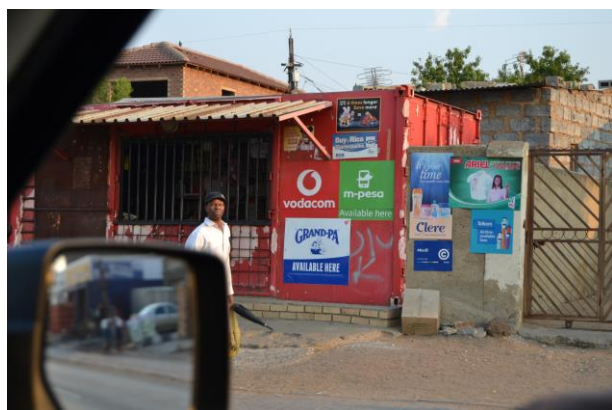
002



003



004



Initial observation was conducted at Thembisa Park, South of Johannesburg, Gauteng. It was selected based on the availability of participants who live in the area. The township was established in

1957 as a location by the apartheid government. The community is a hub of middle income and low income households (Statistics South Africa 2011).

Reaching the site was a chaotic drive around Thembisa township due to vague directions from my contact of “follow the minibuses, you’ll find us.” Upon stopping to ask for directions, we discovered that *Skhothane* were well-known in the area when we asked “where could we find the park that *Skhothanes* will be today?” we had reactions of jovial surprise as community members directed me.

The interview stage of data collection was at Kempton Park *isiKalu* road, at Thembisa Phumolong section. The interview phase was conducted at the local fast food restaurant balcony. The participants suggested the location as an alternative to interviewing them in their homes stating that the background was not “right” for an interview.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Due to the following factors, video transcription was done by the researcher:

- 1) The multilingual languages that are prevalent in the video were rejected by transcription software.
- 2) I understand the prevalent languages spoken by participants.
- 3) Financial limitations: the use of a multilingual translator and transcriber was costly.
- 4) Reliability issues of transcription: avoidance of meaning being ‘lost in translation’ was a factor.
- 5) The microphone quality of the video was poor.

Transcription of video also helps to reconnect with the fieldwork and observation as it involves the re-reading and experience of the event.

Open Coding was used to organise data into separate themes. As a method of analysis in Grounded Theory research, open-coding is used to build theories (Denzin and Lincoln 2011: 363-364). According to Khandkar (2009: 1), “Open Coding includes labelling concepts, defining and developing categories based on their properties and dimensions”.

Data collected from video recording was coded and transcribed using MAXQDA video transcription software to make data analysis more manageable. As per open-coding, statements that described the same topic or train of thought were grouped together (Denzin and Lincoln 2011: 363-364). Emerging themes were selected according to emic patterns as brought up by the participants (Angrosino 2007: 10). These were then assigned a colour code name. Where this appeared in data in other video it was assigned the same code.

Etic perspectives were then also coded in the same manner – where codes were assigned to the researcher’s reflective journal and notes (Angrosino 2007:10). Identified codes were then compared with literature reviewed. Themes were organised into three categories (see Table 4):

- 1) Basic themes – these are themes identified during initial coding and including themes categorised according to their continued appearance in conversation or observation.
- 2) Organising theme – these are themes as they have been grouped together and
- 3) Global theme – themes arising from here were extrapolated from literature reviewed.

Table 4: Coding categories

Basic Theme	Memo	Organising theme	Global theme
1. Clothing as comm 2. Intertextuality 3. Global citizens 4. Want to have influence through 5. Identity 6. Fluid relationships	1.1 The dress style of neo-tribes helps to identify the selected “lifestyle” one wishes to portray to the public at any particular time. The meaning of fashion can be deciphered in the context of the individual's scenario. 2.1. <i>Skhothane</i> are aware of other signs and imagery 6.1. Essentially, individuals exist in multiple different relationships and their identity is not fixed.	Hybrid cultures	Postmodernism
7. Organisation 8. Demographics 9. Origins 10. Evolution 11. Rituals 12. Dissing 13. Speech 14. Bragging 15. Battles 16. Aggravation/battle 17. Dressing 18. Brands 19. Saving 20. AmaTaliana 21. Environment 22. Hying	19.1. <i>Skhothanes</i> are known for spending and behaving brashly. Yet here they so clearly admit to saving their money. Is this something to be explored?. Their fashion is more of a performance rather than lifestyle. 19.1a) Some of the <i>Skhothanes</i> say they are not <i>Skhothane</i> they are now amaTaliana. Does the culture of ubukhothane still exist/ is it still an evident part of youth culture?	<i>Skhothane</i>	<i>Skhothane</i>
			Anti-Fashion
23. Global citizens 24. Want to have influence through 25. Saving 26. AmaTaliana 27. Labels not respected	24.1 The clothes are used as a symbol of affluence. In order to effect change and for people to listen you need to listen	Bling Culture	Consumerism
Attention seeking			
Observer effects			

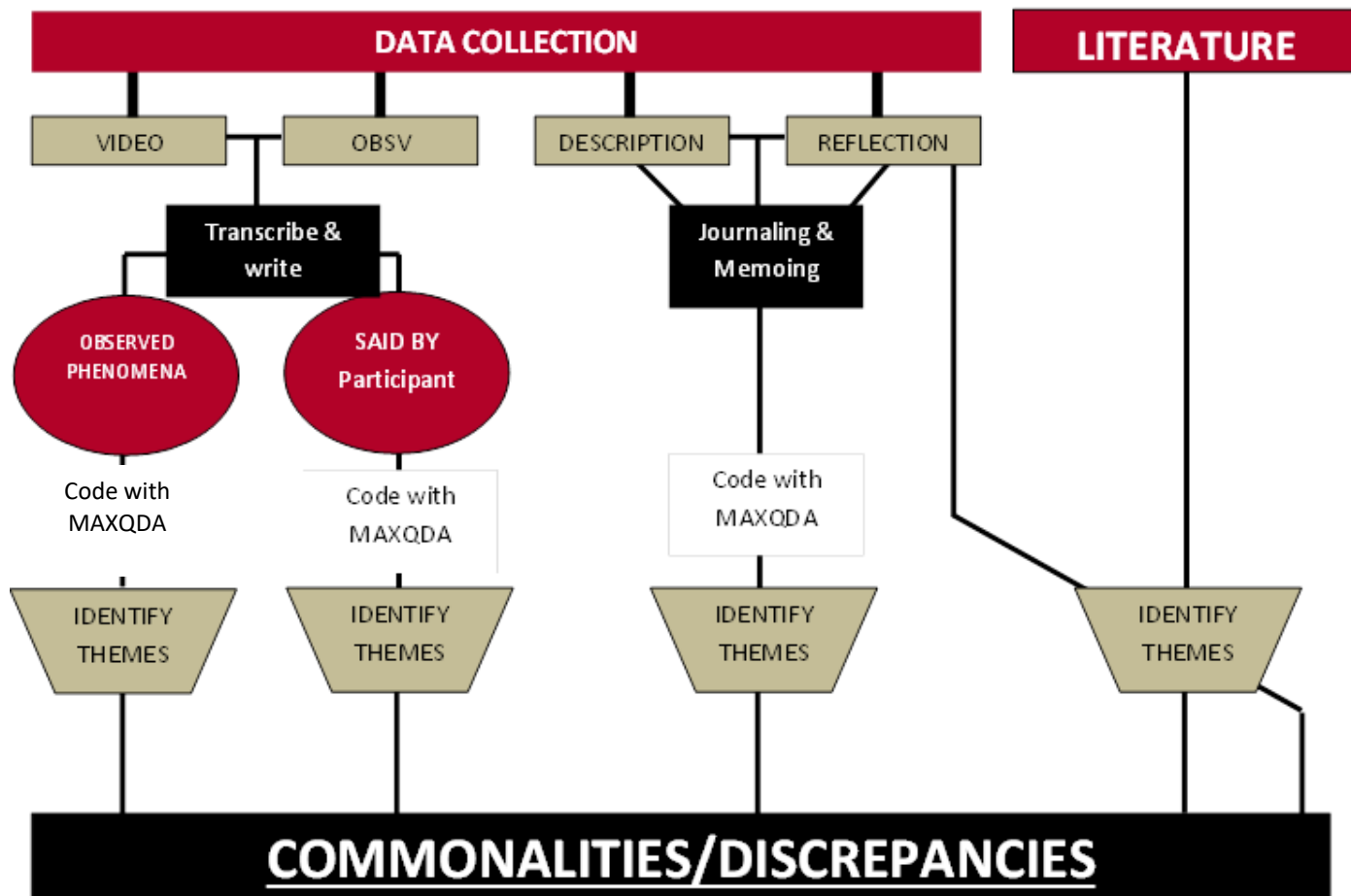
In determining the relevance and grouping of codes under the broader themes, the quantitative sum of the codes was also considered in relation to the discrepancies and congruencies in the literature review. The table below reflects the numerical value of how many times a code appeared in the data.

Table 5: Code system

Code system	No.	Code system	No.
Coded value	206		
1. Evolution	2	10. Observer effects	8
2. Rituals	10	11. Environment	5
2.1. Dissing	7	11.1. Hyping	9
2.1a. Speech	2	12. Labels not respected	9
2.2. Bragging	18	13. Reasons for joining	2
2.3. Battles	1	14. Clothing as comm	13
2.3a. Aggravation/battle	2	15. Intertextuality	1
3. Global citizens	2	16. Body language	6
4. Want to have influence through	5	17. Organisation	7
5. Dressing	22	17.1. Demographics	1
5.1. Brands	3	18. Origins	6
6. Attention seeking	2		
7. Identity	4		
8. Fluid relationships	15		
9. Saving	3		
9.1. Amataliana	3		

All data was read and re-read for identification of repeated ideas and emerging key words or phrases. Data analysis occurred over a period of four months and continued after the final interview stage. The repetitive cycle of data analysis becomes a part of the data collection process as opposed to being post data collection.

Figure 6: Process of data analysis



CMAP mind-mapping software was used to organise the large quantities of text and codes that are inherent to ethnography. The use of qualitative coding software, MAXQDA, further assisted in the organisation and transcription of data. Detailed source tables were also compiled to organise the data.

3.6. CREDIBILITY
3.6.1 Confirmability

Confirmability, unlike objectivity, assures that the findings and interpretations have been extrapolated through a process of dependable rigour (Lincoln and Guba 2013: 105). The cross-checking of disparities and congruencies in data during analysis meant there was a ‘constant credibility check’ grounded in intra-method triangulation, therefore data were analysed and ensured confirmability simultaneously (Angrosino 2007: 5; Maggs-Rapport 2000: 222).

Observational ethnography is subject to bias, because of its nature of subjective interpretations. To limit researcher bias, LeCompte and Goetz (1982: 46) and Angrosino (2007: 61) caution that participants change their behaviour because of a foreign presence - ‘observer effects’. Along with the triangulation of data collected, ‘observer effects’ were limited by establishing several relationships within the neo-tribe. This was made easier by all the participants’ willingness and being forthcoming about their lifestyle. Furthermore I have provided a retrospective analysis of my position within the

field of research. The retrospective analysis serves as an “audit” for the study (Lincoln and Guba 2013: 105). Angrosino (2007: 59) further suggests using ‘verisimilitude’.

- *Transferability*

Transferability in interpretivist paradigms replaces the external validity, or generalisability: that is, whether the findings can be applied to different contexts and subjects (Lincoln and Guba 2013: 104). Because of the context-specific interpretations of phenomenology, generalizability cannot be achieved; instead, the author who wishes to apply the findings and interpretations needs to determine the applicability of this study’s findings to their own context (Lincoln and Guba 2013: 104). In order to achieve ‘authenticity’ in the eyes of the reader, I have tried to utilise ‘rich descriptive language’ in order to immerse the reader into the environment – what Creswell and Miller (2000: 129) and Angrosino (2007: 59) term verisimilitude.

Documenting all the contextual detail was also employed to ensure transferability. Subsequently, the use of transcribed video data, detailed journal keeping and rich descriptive language resulted in a lot of text that needed to be organised and analysed. Systematic and easily retrievable data was imperative in dealing with the high number of data. The biggest challenge was also in transferring data immediately and engaging in constant analysis. The high volume of data was managed through tabling of the identified themes (Figure 4).

3.7. CHALLENGES IN DATA GATHERING

Due to financial constraints, lower range recording equipment was used for the study. However it became evident that using a camera with low microphone quality and range became counter-productive. Some audio was affected by the chaotic and noisy environment during observation. In hindsight, a better quality microphone would have been advantageous to the data collection.

Access to participants became problematic because:

1. I am not native to the Thembisa area. Meetings had to be scheduled well in advance and some *Skhothane* events occurred spontaneously in Johannesburg – where I would be kilometres away in Durban and unable to attend.
2. Participants were sometimes unreachable via phone or email. There were instances where appointments had to be remade and postponed.

3.8. ETHICS

The study explored the identity, rituals, practices and clothing choices of the *Italian Gates Skhothane*. This was investigated within the community’s natural setting, with no interference from the researcher therefore no sensitive or private topics were dealt with that could affect human, animal or the environment’s health and wellbeing. Willingness by the participants to engage with the camera assisted in generous information sharing by the participants.

During observation, due to the chaotic nature of the setting, participants were informed verbally of the voluntary nature of the study. For the interview stage, participation in the study was voluntary and participants were informed of this through a letter of consent (see Appendix E - F) which disclosed a detailed explanation of the aims and objectives of the study. These were also verbally reiterated and explained in order for participants to clarify any questions that they had. This served to authenticate the study and protect the participants.

3.8.1 Remuneration of Participants

No remuneration was given to the participants in order to avoid distorting the natural behaviour of the participants. Photographs and video generated from the study were edited and provided to the participants as per agreement between researcher and participants.

3.8.2 Confidentiality

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with participants has been disclosed with the participant's permission. Each interview candidate was issued with a letter of consent from the Durban University of Technology and a model release form by the researcher (see Appendix E-H). The model release form served to obtain permission to use digital imagery of participants in electronic publications or presentations and printed publications or materials.

1. Research data storage

As the study used visual media to document the practice great care was made to store data in a way that would protect the participant's identity. All transcribed data is saved in a WINRAR zip folder with a password and saved in my laptop - which is password protected. To prevent loss due to computer viruses data are stored in a two-step verification Dropbox account where only the researcher and the Durban University of Technology Fashion and Textiles department can access the files. Dropbox integration protects data from third party apps seeking permission to access the account.

3.9 CONCLUSION

Ethnographic research methods were selected as the most suitable and reliable methods to uncover the stories of a community according to their viewpoint. Rich descriptive text was obtained from the rigorous multi-data collection methods employed. The researcher's phenomenological viewpoint resulted in a constant credibility check that included the researcher's subjective involvement in the data collection process. Unexpected enthusiasm, fostered by the presence of a camera, assisted in the development of an open relationship between researcher and participant. The presence of video recording equipment and the researcher position within the study resulted in the acceptance of the researcher as a 'welcome outsider' – ensuring the gathering of insider information. This chapter details the processes followed to collect data for analysis. Chapter Four presents the analysis of the data and the findings and the stories that emerged from the field.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

SWAG FABRIC

4.1 INTRODUCTION

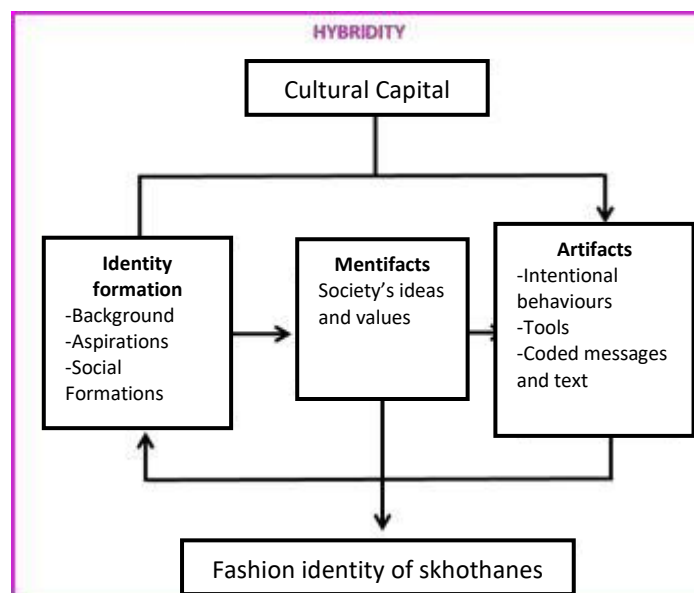
The purpose of this study was to map out the *Italian Gates skhothane* community in terms of the specifics of their stylistic attributes and the factors that help them negotiate their identity. This served not only as an exploration of the community but sought to fill a knowledge gap in the study of South African style youth cultures. In order to fulfill the purpose of the study the following was completed:

- 1) Gaining knowledge on the constructs of neo-tribes and their relationship with fashion and identity
- 2) Acquiring the opinions of the participants of the study on their community
- 3) Providing a detailed description of the sartorial practices of *skhothane*, along with the societal factors that form a large part of identity creation.

This chapter discusses the results from the data collected and organises it into the identified and emerging themes that were uncovered in the study. Participants were informed of the right to anonymity and enthusiastically wanted to be addressed by their pseudonyms. In that respect the names used are not birth names but rather the pseudonyms as provided by the participants [TMBS15012017V (12)_Introduction Lines 1, 7, 8, 9, 10]. The use of their pseudonyms also captures authenticity within the researcher's descriptive writing.

In order to determine the fashion identities of *Skhothanes*, the findings present both primary (data collected) and secondary data (literature review) as guided by the theoretical underpinnings in Chapter 2, Part 1. Furthermore, description of the study sample's fashion identity was guided by an analysis of the cultural capital that is valued within the *skhothane* community (see Figure 7). This section is structured according to the themes identified in the literature reviewed as guided by the

Figure 7: Overview of analysis approach



critical questions. The discussion begins with a reiteration of the demarcation of the term neo-tribe as used in this study.

The quotations cited in this section are a direct transcription from the raw data footage. The grammatical errors and colloquialism reflect the speech patterns of participants. Table 6 is the key for the research site details, the data collection instrument, the transcript label and the appendix location of the transcripts referred to and quoted in the following section.

Table 6: Transcript location key

Date, Sample	Location	Type	Transcript label	Appen Dix
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 10 2015 • Thembisa Park • <i>Italian Gates</i> 		Reflective Journal	TMBS10102015J	A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 10 2015 • Thembisa Park • <i>Italian Gates</i> 		Video observation with unstructured interview	TMBS10102015O TMBS10102015Legends	B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 10 2015 • Thembisa Park • <i>Italian Gates</i> 		Reflective observation template	TMBS10102015OT	C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 15 2017 • Thembisa PMG • Italian Culture 		Semi-structured interview	TMBS15012017V (12)_Introduction TMBS15012017V (12)_That thing TMBS15012017V (13)_Outtro TMBS15012017V (14)_Background TMBS15012017V (15)_Why ubukhothane TMBS15012017V (17)_Droshka TMBS15012017V (18)_Dressing to impress TMBS15012017V (19)_Dress Code TMBS15012017V (20)_amaKipKip	D

(Table adapted from Pompe van der Meerdervort 2006:139).

4.2 HYBRID CULTURES: IDENTITY IN A TIME OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD

The use of the term neo-tribe, as opposed to the term subculture, is an acknowledgement of a society characterised by media saturation and an increase in ICTs. Recognising the condition of a postmodern reality renders it erroneous to label all contemporary youth cultures as subcultures. As a result, Bennett's (1999) neo-tribe is used to classify *skhothane* as a postmodern style community.

In order to cement Bennett's (1999) label, the study locates the various traits that *Skhothanes* possess that are congruent with the definition of the term neo-tribe. The three identified characteristics of neo-tribes, as discussed in Chapter 3, are:

- i) **No identifiable hierarchies**
- ii) **Individuals have fluid relationships and identities**
- iii) **Mass media influences a large part of their self-reflexive identities.**

The exploration of the *skhothane* neo-tribe could provide possible ways for forecasters to capitalise on the common link between members of a tribe. This identified theme of **Hybrid Cultures** maps the characteristics of a postmodern youth style culture within the *skhothane* neo-tribe. In order to assess aspects of 'hybrid culture' that exist in the *skhothane* neo-tribe, the presence or lack of the three identified characteristics was analysed and triangulated with participant responses.

4.2.1 No identifiable hierarchies

According to literature reviewed, tribes are devoid of the structured hierarchies associated with groups. Instead tribes refer to a condition where communities are linked together by the presence of like-minded individuals (Bennett 1999; Cova and Cova 2001; McKerron 2003). Cova and Cova (2001):

4) define "tribe" as an anthropology term that characterises "societies where social order was maintained without the existence of a central power". The following table represents the differences between a subculture and a neo-tribe as extrapolated from the readings cited below.

- *Subculture* : McRobbie and Garber (1975), Hebdige and ebrary Inc. (1979), Gordon (1997), Hodkinson (2002), Eicher *et al* (2000)
- *Neo-tribe*: Bennett (1999), Maffesoli (1995), Cova and Cova (2001), McKerron (2003)

Table 7: Subculture vs Neo-tribe

	SUBCULTURE	NEO-TRIBE
READINGS	- Cohen (1972) - Hebdige and ebrary Inc. (1979)	- Bennett (1999) - Maffesoli (1995) - Hetherington (1998)
RELATIONSHIPS	- Rigid. - Exists outside of mainstream.	- Fluid. - Exists within and interacts with the mainstream.
COMMON THREAD AMONGST THE PEOPLE	- Distinct characteristics(values, behaviours <i>et cetera</i>). - Deviant relationship to the dominant culture.	- Communities of feeling. - Identifying with like-minded people. - Intentional community.

At first glance, the observed Italian Gate crew appears to have a structure or hierarchy within the group. When I was first introduced to the participants my gatekeeper, Billy Gates, referred to himself as the group leader. However during the second interview, where clarification of the observation was made, participants vehemently disagreed that Billy Gates was their leader. Instead, according to the Italian Culture crew, each member has a skill and has a role in the team.

- 67 Interviewer: *aphi ama competitors wenu?* [Where are your competitors?]
 68 Excellent Angel: ok no we used to compete. We used - but we no longer compete reason why
 69 Don Sfarzo: we are on the top level. They fear us.
 Excellent Angel: There's no competition for us [TMBS101020150]

- 4 Interviewer: I saw in some of the pictures, there was like Nike and Adidas. Is that a case of no Nike and Adidas is still expensive so it's okay to wear it?
 5 Pastor: Ya! Ya!
 6 Tempo: You know that for sports. It's like *ikhothane ezicalayo* [*skhothanes* that are still starting out] [TMBS15012017V (19)_Dress Code]

The above quote demonstrates that while there are no leadership hierarchal positions within the *Italian Gates* crew, there are rules that govern the production of *skhothane*. According to (Kahane and Rapoport 1997: 25), postmodern social formation, like neo-tribes, are characterised by a "code of informality". Similar to Maffesoli (1995) and Cova's (2001) suggestion that the social order of tribes is free of the influence of central powers, it is more accurate to say that the social order itself has changed, leaving people to create their own social contracts and norms. The *Italian Gates*, for example, have clearly constructed social contracts amongst themselves of acceptable norms and rules of participating within the culture. The older *skhothane* and the *Italian Gates* can choose whether or not to engage in battle because they have already proven themselves. While there are no clear structural powers put in place to oversee if groups are performing *skhothane* correctly; there is still a sense of underlying governance that maintains the authenticity of the neo-tribes members.

4.2.2 Fluid relationships

The second characteristic of a neo-tribal community is that its members exist in fluid sets of relationships. Members of a neo-tribe do not limit themselves to a fixed identity. This fluidity is a result of urbanization, where old social contexts in which the identity is formed have now declined (Maffesoli 1995; Bennett 1999).

The South African black identity has largely been discussed concurrently with racial identification and tensions because of the country's apartheid legacy. Yet literature demonstrates that post-apartheid South African identities are no longer set within the boundaries of racial aesthetics (Corrigall 2011: 1). Therefore it makes no sense to confine the *Skhothane* identity within that boundary. It must be noted however that Sweet-candy - as the only Venda speaker amongst a crew of Setswana speakers - chooses to converse in Venda throughout the interview. One can imply that the participant speaks in his home language because he is as proud of his heritage as much as he is of being a *skhothane*.

- 10 Sweet-candy: *My name is Tshimbilunie Rakhuadzi aka Sweet-candy or you can call me Candy. But namhlanje ngizosebenzisa isiVenda because I'm representing my tribe. Speaking*

Venda (this thing of ubukhothane), I started back then in 2011 so I got together with the Italian Gates. I want to represent the Venda as the best dancer. Yes, so if you can ask anyone they'll tell you who am I. [TMBS15012017V (12)_Introduction].

During our conversations, participants do not mention any classification of themselves as being particularly “black”. I do not claim that the lack of this classification indicates that participants are not aware of the legacy and socio-economic politics of South Africa. Instead my observation is that while my sample is aware of the reality of their racially segregated background, they are not defined by it.

Each individual of the Italian Culture group participates in a variety of relationships within society. For instance, Excellent Angel takes great pleasure in informing me that Tempo is also a rapper. After very little coaxing, from the cameraman and Excellent, Tempo proceeds to rap for me [TMBS15012017V (12)_That thing line 28-34]. The ease with which the participant moves from engaging in an interview about *skhothane* to dropping “a few bars” demonstrates his comfort in switching between the two identities.

At the constant mention of hip-hop culture references and to determine whether the culture was musically connected, I asked if they all listened to hip-hop music and if it was the prevalent sound for *Skhothane*.

37 *Tempo: Every music*

38 *Don Sfarzo: Every music*

39 *Excellent angel: It depends we can listen to every music but it depends.*

40 *Don Sfarzo: Asinakwali (looks at himself in the mirror)*

41 *Excellent Angel: We have favourites*

42 *Tempo: We listen to gospel, as we were saying were from church*

43 *Pastor: Gospel, house music, deep house, commercial. Prejudices [TMBS15012017V (18)_Dressing to impress]*

Perhaps this is not an example of the fluid set of relationships that *Skhothanes* exist within; however, it is a confirmation that *skhothane* is not a neo-tribe defined by its musical tastes alone. It is also an indication that members are comfortable in different music expressions.

As an outsider, the idea of *Italian Gates Skhothanes* being zealous Christians was a particularly interesting aspect of some of the participants' identity. It was interesting to note how they negotiated the brash display of wealth - that is a part of the culture - and the value of humility that is encouraged by the church. There is strong evidence that some of the *Italian Culture* crew members are devoted in their identity as Christians. Pastor, in particular, has a strong religious connection. He identifies as a Christian and gets his stage name Pastor from being a preacher.

8 *As a Christian I say ubukhothane it's a royal priesthood thing that we present ourselves because we reject and subject from poverty - so we say we choose to be kings. As we can say, we are dressing expensive clothes. We are saying to people watch us as we are here*

currently; we are giving you a hint of what we will become in future. [TMBS15012017V (12)_Introduction]

37 **Pastor:** *me, personally the name **Pastor**; I got it from people because I was, I am, a Christian. From back then. Ya, I was a Christian - I never changed.* [TMBS15012017V (15)_Why ubukhothane].

We had to wait for them to conduct the interview as they were coming from church. I asked whether they identify as a *skhothane* in all facets of their life and therefore were bound by the dress codes of the community at all times.

5 *Interviewer: Njengoba niqgoke kanje [Dressed as you are now], I'm , I'm assuming you guys do other things during the day, maningakhothi [when you are not khothing]. Do you go to work dressed like this?*

6 *Pastor: No, no, no sometimes. Like you know*

7 *Excellent angel: This is just sometimes, like we can wear like this*

8 *Interviewer: This is only for khothing? Not for ukukhotha but just...*

9 *Tempo: It's dressing*

10 *Excellent angel: It's dressed to kill*

11 *Pastor: As you can see, I'm from church with my brother*

12 *Excellent angel: we just came from church*

13 *Pastor: We dressed formal*

14 *Don Sfarzo: Special occasion*

15 *Pastor: i-Classic. So when we go to attend events, like entertainment: we must dress as Italians. But when we go to church - there's clothes for going to church.* [TMBS15012017V (18)_Dressing to impress].

Members of the culture clearly do not limit themselves to one identity. They identify with multiple roles, and are equally comfortable with any circle of society that they occupy at any given time. There is a clear identification for when they are *skhothane*, rapper, employee or even a pastor but there is no restriction to the roles one can assume. The multiple roles assumed by the *Skhothanes* can be indicative of the fluid set of relationships that identifies post-modern tribesmen. To them, the relationships they exist in, outside of *Skhothane*, are still a part of them.

4.2.3 You are what you wear: self-reflexive postmodern identities

Baudrillard's (1994: 2-4) Hyper-real demonstrates how the idea of identity becomes even more unstable in a media saturated world where simulation and reproduction are a large part of everyday life. According to Giddens (1991: 74-79), self-identity is how an individual shapes and understands their "self". Self-reflexive identity means instead of taking for granted or passively inheriting, we consciously mould and are conscious of the external inputs that form our identities (Giddens 1991: 77).

There are clear indications in the interview that the members of the neo-tribe have actively constructed and selected the identity that they wish to portray along with adopting all its symbolic forms:

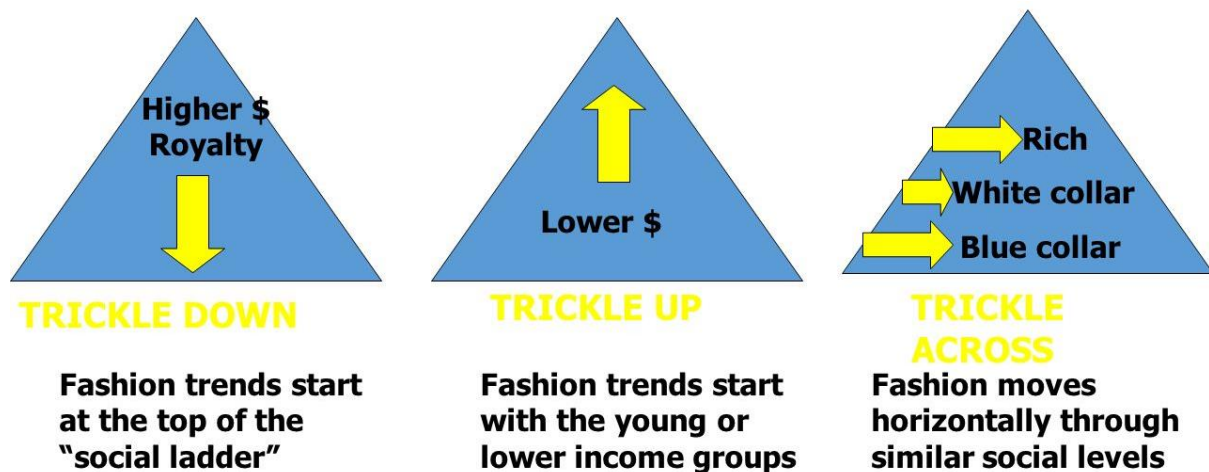
- 33 *Excellent angel*: ...Definitely, we were born from a shack also. We came from that kind of a place, but we didn't say: "oh god I'm just, I'm giving up. Let me just smoke". We came up with ideas; let me go challenge the world...
- 35 *Interviewer*: Imanike let me ask you this. The way you are thinking now, is it something you've always thought or is it just evolution of thinking?
- 36 *Excellent angel*: ...I wanted to become a motivational speaker; that's what I wanted to reach out to. So I said the more I go to school, I will hear motivational speaker say: dress where you wanna see yourself three years, ten years to come. Ok. Then I'm seeing myself in the skinny pants; so *hayi* [no] I can't stand in front of people in these kinds of skinny pants and this is the way I wanna see myself. So when I got interested in this kind of a lifestyle; that's when I say I can dress like this and definitely I can get attention from people because I'll be dressing smart looking good and speaking good.
- 37 *Pastor*: me, personally the name Pastor; I got it from people because I was, I am, a Christian. From back then. Ya, I was a Christian - I never changed. So ya, I used to preach to people. When you preach to people, they cannot come and join you or follow you. They look at what you have you see, so you give what you have. People used to say: "ah, you Christians are poor. How can I follow a person like you? Look at us; you dress like a poor person - a beggar. Look at me what's the difference? So I have no need for god. So this thing [eated] me while I was alone in my room, so I said to myself what can I do? What can I do to change this thinking of people. So I started to see that in order to attract you must have material things that are tangible things.
- 40 *Excellent Angel*: "If we are not going for those entertainment, those things those parties, when we are going to church; when we are going to work; definitely people in the work environment they are wearing Markhams. So that's what we can also wear to represent ourselves." [TMBS15012017V (19)_Dress Code].

Evidently, the *Italian Culture* crew is very much aware of the different identities that they portray through their choice of clothing. More importantly the active participation of members in the construction of their identity indicates that they can be labelled self-reflexive neo-tribesmen.

One of the agents of a self-reflexive identity is consumerism. Consumerism allows us to manipulate the various symbolic constructs of one's identity in order to fit in wherever they want to. Consumerism allows us to buy who we want to be. This is what Cote (1996: 421) terms an "image-oriented identity," in which dress is one of the symbolic forms that can be used to express ones self-reflexive identity. *Skhothane* utilise their buying power to perpetuate their claim of wealth and affluence in their community. Understanding how and when people adopt certain clothing trends could be useful in the interpretation of how neo-tribes construct their identities according to the available clothing choices.

The dissemination of fashion is usually discussed as a movement from one part of society to another (Steele 2005: 21). The three popular theories of style-fashion-dress diffusion are the trickle-down, trickle-up (bubble up) and trickle-across theories.

Figure 8: Trickle theories that explain fashion dissemination



(Lyons 2016)

i. Trickle-down

The trickle-down theory states that fashion trends are started by the elite class and then are gradually adopted by those in the lower classes (Miller-Spillman *et al* 2012: 48). It attributes the downward movement of fashion to the lower classes' desire to an elite lifestyle (Miller-Spillman *et al* 2012: 48). When the elite see their fashion replicated in the lower class, they then seek to distinguish themselves through their style-fashion-dress choices (Welters and Lillethun 2011: 117-119).

ii. Trickle up

According to the trickle-up theory innovation originates from the street from lower income groups. The adoption of these trends eventually flows upwards to upper-income groups (Welters and Lillethun 2011: 451).

I do not discount the legitimacy of these models. However, in relation to the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew, the trickle-up and trickle-down theories do not account for the varied style choices that occur within the culture that can be attributed to the neo-tribe's existence in a postmodern society. Furthermore, these theories exclude the *skhothane* neo-tribe which occupies the space of both disrupting and embracing fashion.

If, according to Lyon (1999) and Baudrillard (1994) the postmodern world is evidenced by the rise in new media technologies; the hyperreal and the production of images, then an additional segment to

the trickle theories must be considered for the fashion adoption process of the *skhothane* neo-tribe - one that includes mass media as one of the agents in the fashion adoption process.

King (1963 as cited in Kaiser 1998; Entwistle 2000; Craik 2004) proposed the trickle across theory as an alternative.

III. *Trickle-across*

The trickle-across theory states that fashion adoption travels linear across different sections of the population, in groups within similar social levels (Welters and Lillethun 2011: 118). One of the defining features of this model is that fashions are adopted more rapidly from one group to another. Akhil (2015: 39) cites increasing “mass communications, promotional efforts of manufacturers and retailers, and exposure of a look to all fashion leaders” as a reason for this.

In light of the postmodern identities demonstrated by the study sample, it is more likely that the neo-tribe follows a similar model to King’s (1963) trickle-across theory, where their pattern of fashion consumption is influenced by rapid mass communication.

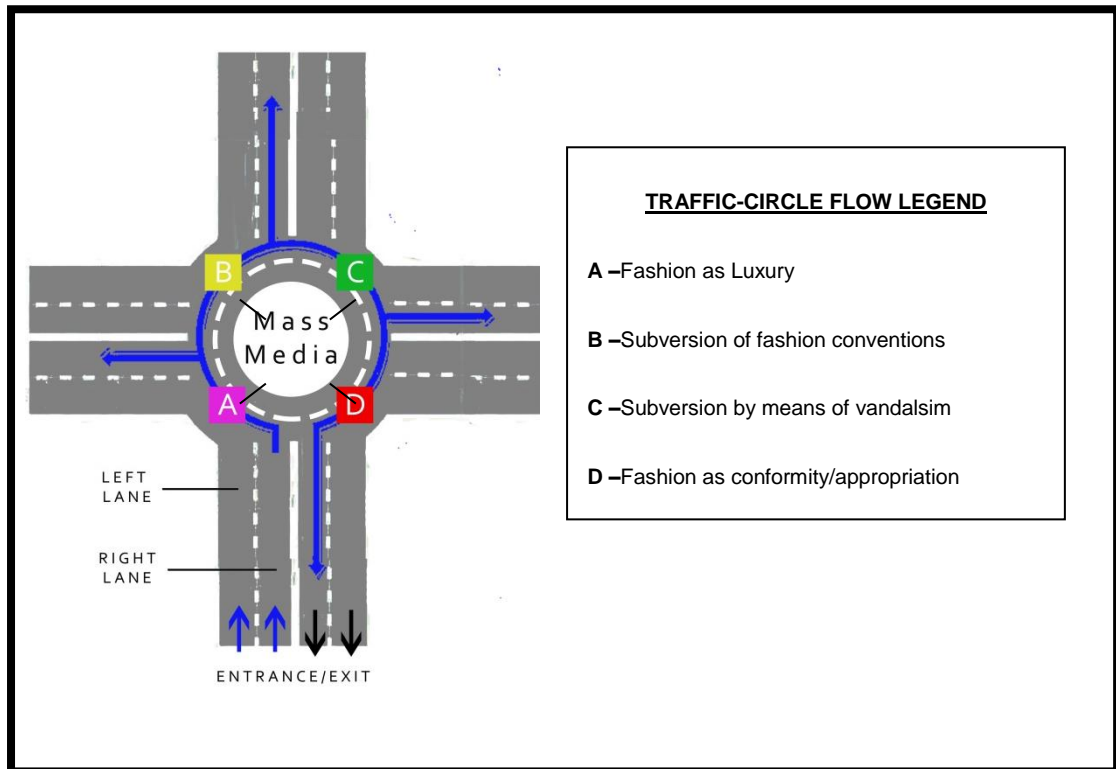
However, the trickle-across model does not consider the cultures that both subvert and embrace fashion like *skhothane*. Furthermore, the trickle-across theory relies on the rigidity of one’s identity of belonging within a particular section of society, within a particular time - whereas the postmodern identities of the *Italian Gates* exist in fluid sets of relationships.

It seems more likely that the style choices of this group of *Skhothanes* follow a model that incorporates all three theories - a model where the tenets of an image-influenced society is at the centre of the fashion adoption process. In trying to describe the complex fashion adoption processes that are evident in the *Italian Gates skhothane* group, I have derived a model that proposes the neo-tribe’s fashion adoption as following a “traffic-circle” flow.

Before, delving too deeply in the discussion of why a traffic-circle would be more appropriate, I would start with defining the use of the term “flow” as opposed to “trickle”. The definition of the word trickle is: 1] (of a liquid) flow in a small stream; 2] Come or go slowly (Stevenson and Waite 2011). If one considers the proliferation of mass communication as one of the prominent driving forces of fashion change in a postmodern world; then my models need to demonstrate the effects fast fashion systems have on the fashion adoption process. Trickle, instead is replaced by the word flow – to “move steadily and continuously in a current or stream” (Stevenson and Waite 2011).

The diagram below represents a non-linear way of fashion adoption by the *Italian Gates Skhothanes*. It demonstrates a “traffic-circle” of choice for the consumer. Media influences are conceptualised as a traffic circle at the centre of the system. The traffic circle as mass media directs the flow of “fashion traffic”, however, the individual chooses whichever process she wishes to inhabit at any given time with the ‘roads’ being open to movement to the different areas.

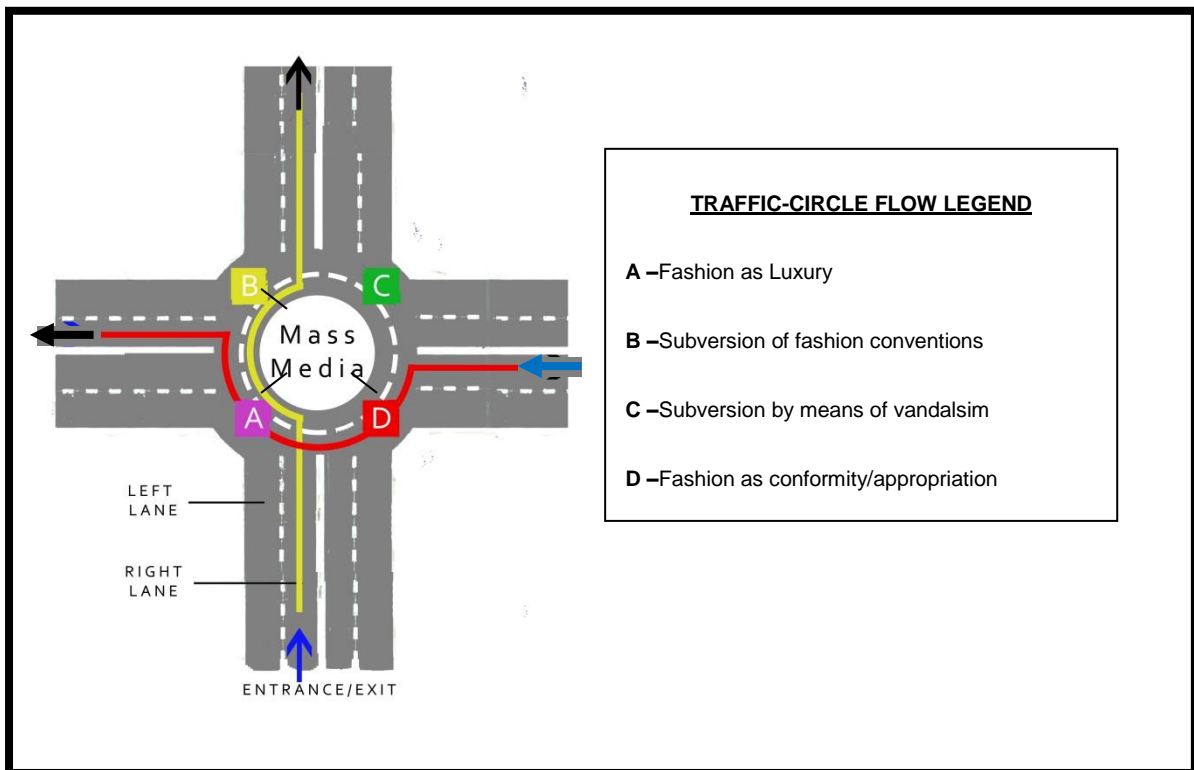
Figure 9: Traffic-circle flow of Italian Gates Skhothane fashion adoption



The traffic circle incorporates the concepts as described in the trickle theories using more appropriate terminology. First, the idea of fashion for the “elite” or upper class is represented by luxury fashion. Because of its reputation of quality, excellence, exclusivity and high prices, luxury fashion is associated with the elite and affluent (Okonkwo 2007: xv; Husic and Muris 2009: 234). However, considering that the study accepts the postmodern society perspective - where classist classifications do not apply - it is more appropriate to use the term Fashion as Luxury. Secondly, as the study acknowledges the decline of anti-fashion, parts of the trickle-up theories and trickle- across theories that relate to dress that does not follow fashion conventions have been included through subversion of fashion, by means of appropriation and by means of vandalism.

The metaphor of a traffic-circle also accounts for the various fashion trends adopted by the *Italian Gates Skhothanes* as they negotiate their reflexive identities. For instance, Pastor attends church and selects the appropriate dress code for that particular situation by wearing a “Markhams” or “Woolworths” garment [TMBS15012017V (19)_Dress Code]. These labels, as confessed by participants, are not highly regarded as they do not exemplify the claim of affluence that is a part of *skhothane* culture. Pastor’s participation at that time is from the perspective of conforming to society’s fashion codes as dictated by public opinion and mass media. The clothing choices that he selects are further influenced by luxury fashion as the connotative idea of suits draws from fashion concepts aligned with that of luxury fashion (see Red D to A). However, when Pastor performs his *Italiana skhothane* fashion identity, his fashion choices become both an appropriation of fashion as luxury and a subversion of fashion conventions (see Yellow A to B). The influences of Pastor’s fashion choices would then be illustrated in the following manner:

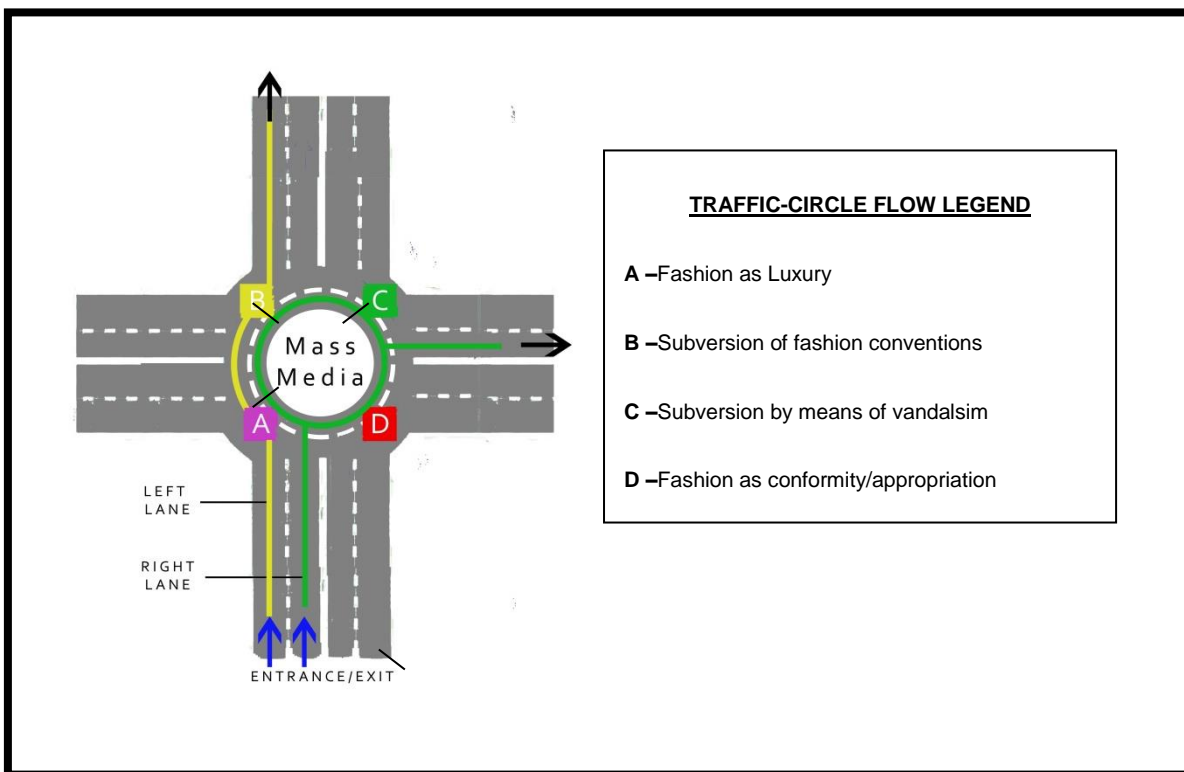
Figure 10: Example 1 - Pastor's Traffic-Circle Flow



Similarly Don Sfarzo - whose identity is deeply entrenched in *skhothane* [TMBS15012017V (18)_Dressing to impress Lines 20 – 33] - rarely deviates from the status quo of *skhothane* dress. That is, even in normative social situations, he dresses in luxury Italian-branded clothing because he knows that people are watching him and he wants to dress to impress. Luxury fashion is his preferred mode of dress at all times. Secondly, because of the notoriety he has gained and his visibility as a *skhothane* in the Thembisa community, Don Sfarzo not only dresses in luxury clothing but at times he will specifically assemble his appearance in the attention grabbing dress styles that *skhothanes* are identified with, making his fashion choices fall under the subversion of fashion conventions. Lastly, Don Sfarzo is one of the participants who engaged in the minor altercation witnessed during observation and the spilling of drinks scene. In this way Don Sfarzo subverts fashion by means of vandalism.

Don Sfarzo's fashion choices would then be illustrated in the manner:

Figure 11: Example 2 - Don Sfarzo's Traffic-Circle Flow



When the *Italian Gates* are “entertaining” and wearing top-to-toe Sfarzo and Italian-branded luxury clothing, they participate from multiple points within the traffic-circle flow. We can then conclude that as postmodern neo-tribesmen, the dissemination of clothing trends to the *Italian Gates Skhothane* depends on the individual motivations of the crew member.

4.3 INTERTEXTUAL AUTHORS: DECODING THE CLOTHING TEXTS OF SKHOTHANE

Unlike subcultures, the *skhothane* neo-tribe does not necessarily subvert the existing fashion rules. Instead the *Italian Gates Skhothanes* utilise intertextuality techniques, particularly quotation and pastiche, to convey their fashion identity. According to Berger (1998: 201), postmodern culture is a constant exchange and reference between cultural products. Consumers are able to recognise these references because they have prior knowledge of the sign. Due to this cross-cultural borrowing of elements, the style of *Skhothanes* becomes a product of “intertextual relations” (Sawchuck 1987: 65).

Intertextuality is shaping meaning of a text by using another text (Bazerman and Prior 2003: 84). Obligatory intertextuality is the deliberate association between two or more texts. In order for the reader to understand the new text, they would have to have knowledge of the previous text (Berger 1998:201).

The concept of shared meanings in culture informs the underlying principle that fashion is a language of signs used to express one’s identity (Rouse and Rouse 1989: 22; Barnard 2007: 127). Although

constructing identities involves 'playing with images', it is also the media that gives meaning to these images (Lyon 1999: 63). The individual may then choose to use these images in whatever way to announce him/herself (Cote 1996: 420). These images and symbolic forms are cloaked in meaning and unseen rules that concretise the images into tangible signs within communities (Hebdige 1979: 13). If the *Italian Gates Skhothanes* utilise intertextuality to reassert the image of wealth, how does the viewer associate these physical artefacts with mental concepts and begin to understand the message they are communicating? It is these cloaked meanings that semiotics seeks to understand and decode.

The dress style of neo-tribes helps to identify the selected "lifestyle" one wishes to portray to the public at any particular time (Bennett 1999: 607-608). However, the image alone cannot be understood by society without the previous attached meaning to it (Baudrillard 1994; Sawchuck 2007). Signs are a reproduction of images that society has assigned meaning to (Baudrillard 1994:1). In order to differentiate a *Skhothane* from any other wealthy individual, the signified (mental concept) can be inferred from the collective of signifiers that identify one as a *Skhothane*.

There are three main parts to the structure of semiotics. The first is the "sign" which is divided into two parts: the signifier – which refers to the "physical part of the signs" and the signified (Barnard 1996: 78). As a collective, the two parts form the sign which represents the object denoted, that is: signifier + signified = sign (Barthes 1990: 213). As described in Chapter 2 Part One, the meaning of dress requires all three structures of the clothing code (the technological, iconic and verbal) in order to be understood (Barthes 1990: 6). The image of the *Italian Gates Skhothane* provides the technological (physical) and the iconic (photographic) structure of the *skhothane* clothing code. For Barthes (1990: 4- 9) the written description of clothing by fashion magazines plays a significant role in contextualising the interpretation of the clothing language. The third verbal (written) structure can be obtained from the fashion description of the appropriated Italian luxury clothing that the *Italian Gates* crew wears. If the quality associated with Italian branded luxury clothing is symbolic of wealth (Okonkwo 2007: xv; Husic and Muris 2009: 234), then through the written language of fashion, the implication is that luxury Italian clothing = affluence - where • means *combination*; and = meaning *equivalence* (Barthes 1990: 47). This pseudo code is then appropriated by the *Italian Gates Skhothanes* and adds another dimension to the *Skhothane's* vestimentary code. An analysis of the *Italian Gates' clothing* provides the following pseudo-real vestimentary code:

Italian luxury branded clothing • brightly coloured graphic textiles • multiple gold teeth = attention grabbing
affluent person

Not every person with gold teeth is a *Skhothane*. Nor does every person who dresses in Italian branded clothing belong to the neo-tribe. *Skhothane* is not only evidenced in the clothing but also includes their language and the performance of their fashion identity. The various *skhothane* fashion performances, as evident in the *Italian Gates* crew, are further discussed in section 5.4 Defining *Skhothane*: Figure 12. As a collective, these signs identify one as a *Skhothane* in the public. In this regard there is another *combination* that needs to be added in order to denote a *skhothane*:

Italian luxury branded clothing • brightly coloured graphic textiles • multiple gold teeth • performing and bragging about material possessions = *Italian Gates Skhothane*

Literary techniques used in intertextuality can be applied in the same manner to interpret the complex codes of the Italian Gates *skhothane* crew's fashion identity. In order for viewers to recognise them as *Skhothane*, the neo-tribesmen must utilise well known symbols of affluence to assert their claims of wealth. This resembles the forms of quotations and pastiche in intertextuality.

I. Quotation

A quotation is the verbatim repetition of an expression from another's work. According to Bazerman and Prior (2003: 88), "although the words do not belong to the author, the second author [*Skhothane* in this case] has control over which words to quote, and the context in which it will be used."

Like the literary form of quotation, the Italian Gates repeat the stereotypical ideologies and fashion codes of Italian luxury clothing. Italian clothing is especially known for its quality, price and classic tailoring (Okonkwo 2007: xv). It is the ultimate symbol of what luxury brand items represent: excellence, exclusivity, glamour and wealth (Okonkwo 2007: xv; Husic and Muris 2009: 234). *Skhothanes* have intentionally selected luxury brand garments as they are most identifiably expensive and representative of success in their community.

The intentionality and understanding of how wearing brand names influences how they are perceived is evidenced in the following:

- 36 *Pastor*: So I started to see that in order to attract you must have eh material things that are tangible things. So I said to myself okay I will buy expensive clothes I will do my best. So I saw people following me. You know somehow somewhere it began to be in power...
- 37 *Excellent*: ...I wanted to become a motivational speaker So when I got interested in this kind of a lifestyle that's when I say I can dress like this and definitely I can get attention from people because I'll be dressing smart looking good and speaking good [TMBS15012017V (15)_Why ubukhothane lines 36 -37]
- 20 *Interviewer*: Ok, let's say you're not going as a crew and just Don Sfarzo is invited to *umshado wa-aunt wakhe* [his aunt's wedding]?
- 21 *Tempo*: Ya he can dress like that (referring to Don's *Skhothane* outfit).
- 22 *Excellent*: Ya dress to impress, he has to dress to impress.
- 23 *Pastor*: Be unique.
- 24 *Don Sfarzo*: Coz I have lots of friends out there...they want to see lots of pictures
- 25 *Pastor*: The thing is when you go to people, millions of people, be unique among the million. We cannot all of us wearing PEP¹⁹...
- 26 *Don Sfarzo*: Just look different
- 27 *Pastor*: Be alive

- 28 Excellent: If you not different definitely you won't have that influence. You must have, you must be that spot shine you know. You must be that light on the hill. You cannot be the same like everyone.
- 29 *Tempo*: People should look up to you
- 32 *Interviewer*: Even if they don't know you?
- 33 *Tempo*: Ya [TMBS15012017V (18)_Dressing to impress Lines 20 – 33]

The defining feature of Italian clothing is that it must be noticeable from afar. In answering an interlinked question of which brands are considered not important this is what participants had to say:

- 34 Excellent: No they are expensive, we do wear suits. That's where we go in there.
- 35 *Pastor*: My sister, (pause to let excellent finish sentence), let me tell the truth here Markhams those things, we don't include them because they are not like a brand that is known. We want something that is known. Like Prada, Diesel, Byblos, Tomato,
- 36 *Tempo*: Giorgi Armani
- 37 *Pastor*: Giorgio Armani
- 41 *Pastor*: My sister for example my brother is wearing Markhams, but can you recognise it when he's walking at the streets? But if this one is walking (pulls at Don Sfarzo's shirt) you can definitely say, its iSfarzo.
- 42 *Tempo and Excellent*: It's Italian. [TMBS15012017V (19)_Dress Code Lines 34 - 42] II.

Pastiche

Similarly pastiche, in art, imitates the style or character of the work of one or more other artists (Stevenson and Waite 2011). Unlike parody, pastiche celebrates rather than mocks the work it imitates (Barnard 1996:163). *Skhothanes*, even in instances of vandalism, are celebrating the mode of luxury fashion as it assists in the communication of their perceived wealth.

- 29 *Don Sfarzo*: David Tlale is someone he's like he's from South Africa, if I'm not mistaken. but we are not associated with him.
- 30 *Pastor*: We want someone from overseas. Prada, Byblos
- 32 *Interviewer*: *Nithenga ama-import kphela* [Do you only buy imports?]
- 33 *Tempo*: ama-import (in agreement) [TMBS15012017V (19)_Dress Code Lines 29 – 33].

There is evidence of a constant use of these techniques of intertextuality in the artefacts of *skhothane* culture. Their dress is a quotation and pastiche of luxury fashion ideals. In this way, members of the neo-tribe become intertextual authors.

¹⁹ PEP store is a discount store that sells goods below the average retail price. The store is known for its affordable goods and not necessarily its quality.

4.4 DEFINING SKHOTHANE

4.4.1. Demographics

As discussed in section 4.3 *Intertextual authors*, there are visual cues that can identify members of the *skhothane* neo-tribe. The socio-economic environment of the *Skhothanes* in PMG is also described, in 4.4 *Khothing*, to contextualise the influence of bling culture on the neo-tribes. The following section describes the individual and collective traits that identify the *Italian Gates Skhothanes*.

Table 8: Demographics

Participant	Age	Group name	Started
Excellent Angel	24	<i>Italian Gates</i> , Italian Culture (2017)	2009 (16)
Don Sfarzo	24	<i>Italian Gates</i> , Italian Culture (2017)	2009 (16)
Pastor <i>Marikana</i>	23	<i>Italian Gates</i> , Italian Culture (2017)	2004 (13)
Sweet-candy	26	<i>Italian Gates</i> , Italian Culture (2017)	2011 (20)
Tempo	21	<i>Italian Gates</i> , Italian Culture (2017)	2015 (18)
BK	22	<i>Italian Gates</i>	Undisclosed
Billy Gates	22	<i>Italian Gates</i>	Undisclosed
Man Gupta	23	<i>Italian Gates</i>	Undisclosed
Participant A	Undisclosed	<i>Italian Gates</i>	Undisclosed

2 *Excellent*: Okay mina I started back then in 2010. I was like around like 19 years. Ya, 19 years old, when I started back then.

3 *Don Sfarzo*: *Lento le yobkothane, entlek entlek ngiqale esgele - ngina 16 years yabo* [This thing of *skhothane*, in reality I started in school – I was 16 years old you see?].

4 *Pastor*: *Mina* [Me] specifically I started *ubukhothane*, I can say I was around boma13 years old. [TMBS15012017V (14)_Background].

The average age for entering the *skhothane* lifestyle is in high school between 16 and 18 years old. The study sample consists of male *Skhothane* from Thembisa PMG. The only female presence was the female group known as *Faders*. The females did not consider themselves *Skhothanes* but were there in support of their friends and boyfriends.

Figure 12: Female Presence



35 *Pastor*. This is not something we brag about this is something that we...pause...It came from 21st Century *yangthola* [do you get me]? It's something that, it was before it is. It's a culture, it's a culture. *So obaba bethu bayenza, okhokho bethu bayenza, so nathi safika sayenza yangthola* [So, our fathers did it, our grandfathers did it, so we also came and did it do you get me?]. Not necessary *ukuthi manje syadabula asidabuli thina* [It's not necessarily that now we tear, we don't tear]. We just wanna show people that God, the bible, says silver and gold belong to God. So that, that means as a born again Christian I have to participate in his blessings *yangthola* [do you get me]? I am the seed of Abraham, I have to brag and have all this kind of things. These things were not made for aboKhanyi Mbau aboKelly Khumalo abobani bani labo Petru Motsepe²⁰ [TMBS10102015]

The implication of the above quote is that the idea of bragging and conspicuous consumption, by *Skhothanes*, is an inherited trait from what they have witnessed in their community around them. The participant provides examples of local wealthy celebrities stating that luxury items and a lavish lifestyle should not be reserved for the "rich and famous". He uses a biblical reference to further support his point that everyone is welcome to share in the wealth. Other identifying traits of *Skhothane* can be seen in the assigned pseudonyms members give to themselves and the group. The name of an individual or group serves to identify features that a person or group brings to the culture.

- Excellent Angel, formerly known as Captain Ex, changed his name to Excellent Angel in homage to his favourite motivational speaker.
- Pastor Marikana's name is taken from his affinity for evangelising.
- Sweet-candy's name was related to his performance. According to Candy: "...whatever comes out of my mouth people must laugh and feel loved then they will enjoy until we go."
- Don Sfarzo's name is also related to his fashion identity as a *Skhothane*. His name identifies him as a master of Sfarzo clothing. The prefix is taken from the Spanish title of respect "Don" meaning lord, master.
- Tempo is a stage name used by the artist because he is musically inclined.

The collective identity of the group in 2016 was *Italian Gates*. The reasons cited for this was because members "opened up the gates of Italy". In 2017, the crew has since split for reasons undisclosed. Members that participated in the follow up interview now refer to themselves as *Italian Culture* as a sign that they are no longer a segregated group from society. Instead their style has become a culture welcome to all.

²⁰ Khanyi Mbau is a local media figure famous for being a socialite - who capitalised on the media attention surrounding her marriage to an older billionaire businessman. Ms. Mbau is unapologetic about her conspicuous consumption and its visibility in the media. Patrice Motsepe is a South African mining magnate.

4.4.2. Terminology

One of the findings from my BTech study (Memela 2014) was that the *Skhothanes* that were shown on the documentary TV program *Cutting Edge* 2012) were above the average age limit of most members. According to Participant 1: "...you won't find anyone over the age of 25 because you get tired and you can't do this forever..." (Memela 2014: 60).

34 There is a section of the crew that seem to be *Skhothanes*; they are dressed in Italian branded clothing but are not participating in the performance and spectacle. They inform me that they used to be IG Boys but now they are legends, they no longer need to do these things. [TMBS10102015J].

14 Legend: *Kahle kahle thina sistela ngiktshela iqiniso besikhothane manje اساسيزو ikhothane sesingama legend. Asakhothi...sesenzani sesyalungisa* [well in reality, with us my sister, I'll tell you the truth we used to kotha but we are no longer *Skhothanes* we are now legends. We no longer *kotha*...what are we doing? We are fixing] [TMBS10102015Legend].

As alumni to the neo-tribe, the Legends seem to be *Skhothanes* who have learned the value of money. The mental growth depicted by the "Legends" seems to imply that something is wrong with the *Skhothane* lifestyle, something that needs fixing. Seemingly, Legends are still a part of the *Skhothane* neo-tribe as they still get invited to events. Further classification of the types of *Skhothane* is given by participants.

24 Tempo: *Like kuneykhothane, kuney'chomani, nama-taliane*. [Like there are *skhothane*, *i-chomane* and the Italians].

25 Excellent: *Taliana neh* [the Italians right], most of the time you can see maybe they wearing when they come out of prison, he's been inside a prison they call themselves Italiana.

26 Don Sfarzo: Papa G²¹, you see Papa G

27 Excellent: Papa G is an Italiana.

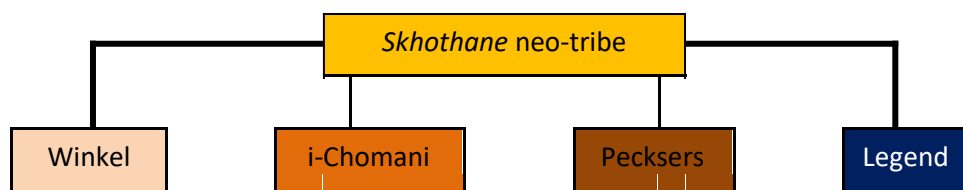
28 Pastor: So *ubukhothane* is divided into 3 categories. First its *boWinkel*, second one it's *i-chomani*, the third one its *iPeckers*. Those ones are the ones who tear clothes, tear money, burn money, burn clothes - those are *Peckers*. Then *Winkel* is linked to Italians - it's all about dressing Italian clothing and dancing it has nothing to do with tearing. It's different; but because of the clothes we seem alike all of us.

29 Excellent: It's very simple if *isi'Khothane* we can compare it to what we call as Christianity. It's not the same but yet they all call themselves Christians. At the end of the day they are not the same so it's same thing with *i'Khothane* that's why we are Italian culture with a difference. [TMBS15012017V (15)_Why ubukhothane]

²¹ Papa G is a character from local television soapie series *Isidingo* on SABC 3. Papa G is a notorious tavern owner who adorns himself in crepe de chine, Italian, graphic printed shirts with fingers coated in gold.

The above quotes classify the categories of *Skhothane*. *Winkel* and *ama-Taliana* represent the same type of *Skhothane* - one that brags; only wears Italian clothing and engages in dance to reassert their aim of wealth. *I-Chomane* is a bragger, a *Schomani* may not engage in the performance of dancing and dissing their opponents but they still participate in the wearing of fine clothing. The final type of *skhothane* is a *Peckser*. This *skhothane* resembles the image perpetuated by media of what the *skhothane* culture entails. Participants could not provide the spelling of the word *Peckser* and no reference of this was made in literature. The word as it appears above is the phonetic spelling as pronounced by Pastor.

Figure 13: *Skhothane* fashion performance categories



According to Inggs and Kemp (2016), the *Peckser* is a rarity in the *skhothane* neo-tribe. The image of vandalism in *skhothane* was disseminated by biased media representation. According to one of the participants interviewed in pop culture magazine, *Vice* (Inggs and Kemp 2016): "...it was very rare. I've never done it. It's rare for someone to see burning money," he tells me. "When the media came to these boys, they said, 'don't you want to burn something?' But that's not what we were doing. The media was asking people to pour Ultramel [custard] and do these things." (Inggs and Kemp 2016).

This raises questions on the authenticity of media coverage around the neo-tribe. It also explains the lack of *Peckser*²² seen in and around Thembisa. Instead, there seems to be more documented *Winkel* and *i-Chomane*. In this manner, the media appears to have acted through "moral panic" (Cricher 2003: 9-10) - portraying the neo-tribe in a sensationalistic way and as more deviant to the dominant society than is possibly true.

4.4.3. Rituals and practices

The following theme provides a description of practices and swag artefacts that are inherent to the *Skhothane* neo-tribe.

1. *Burning clothes*

This theme is highlighted because of its prevalence in media as the defining feature of *skhothane* culture. According to the *Italian Gates*, the practice of burning and tearing clothes is done either by the previous generation of *skhothanes* and the younger *skhothanes* who are still trying to gain a reputation within the neo-tribe.

7 Interviewer. *And then manje mese niyawu dabula lowo 5000?* [And then you guys tear that 5000]?

- 8 *Pastor* (before question is finished asking. Raises dismissive hand): *Asiyenzi. Into zabantwana lezo* [We don't do that. Those are children's things]
- 9 Legend: *Into zabantwana lezo. Mangdabula into yami engiyibudgetelile ngyasebenzela umam ami uyi sebenzela kabhlungu leyo mali.* [Those are children's things. If I tear, it's my thing that I've budgeted for, worked for, that my mother has worked so hard for that money.]
- 11 Excellent: nods in agreement.
- 14 Legend: *kahle kahle thina sistela ngiktshela iqiniso besikhothane manje asasizo ikhothane sesngama legend. Asakhothi. Pause. sesenzani sesyalungisa.* [In reality, with us my sister let me tell you the truth. We used to *khotha* but now we are legends. We no longer *khotha*. What do we do? We are fixing].
- 15 *Pastor* (interjects before end of sentence): *Ya asa-corrupti sesyalungisa* [Yes, we no longer corrupt – we fix] [TMBS10102015Legends].

Although the neo-tribe was first identified through the aspect of vandalism it is apparent that this is not the defining feature of the culture. The rituals of *skhothane* have matured with its participants. There were only two minor instances of wasteful or destructive behaviour as evidenced in the below observation.



A few seconds later I spot a commotion behind me while I was taking pictures. Things have gone wrong somewhere. I see Billy Gates throwing or spilling (as I later watch the footage to see) something on someone. The person's angry facial expression. *I don't think this was planned.* The crews gather around each other and hold the members back. "Myekele" they say "angithi abaxabani kuyadlalwa myekele" [Leave him. They are not fighting. they are playing. Leave him]. They're telling each other not to get involved. But soon the altercation escalates and I see Billy Gates chasing him with a shoe in his hand. *Unlike the friendly showmanship that I've seen on the media. This seems to be violent and he is literal hitting the other guy with the shoe as he moves away.*

[TMBS10102015J Line 20]

However, this particular scene is still not indicative of vandalism within the culture. According to participants, this was a personal matter that filtered onto the battleground.

²²This also lends itself to hyperreality – where the proliferation of the sensationalised *Peckser* image in media becomes the identifiable factor of *skhothane*, thus being practised by some members of the neo-tribe.

47 *Pastor*: Let me explain this scene. This one it happens that, you see when you are a crew, ehh like during the day, ehh during the week we opponent with other people. We

fight with other people like via media, via social media. We chat like via Facebook. So this thing it was

personal. There were some fighting for girls, there were some fighting like they were underestimating each other to say I'm not afraid of you.

49 *Tempo* interjects: I dress better than you.

50 *Pastor*: So it was like personal here. It started from ubukhothane but it went to (demonstrates more with hand signal).

51 *Interviewer*: So *kuyenzeka ukuthi* at some stage things get [So it does happen that at some stage things get...]

52 *Pastor*: Intense! It does; it's like a person who doesn't understand a boxing ring. You cannot go into boxing ring and don't expect a punch

55 *Pastor*: So it's like those who are wearing ubukhothane or Italians but they don't expect to be like challenged. So they don't have that heart to say, I cannot take this you see. They end up fighting.

56 *Pastor*: But if you understand what it is to be ubukhothane – Italian - you will like, have ehh... it's a game. We are enjoying. It's a game. [TMBS15012017V (18)_Dressing to impress].

The second instance of vandalism was a minor demonstration used to assert the wealth of participants.

42 Background sound of driver revving his minibus taxi. *Skhothanes* are distracted from the interview and start whistling, hooting and hollering. The driver revs the minibus to a staccato beat. Don Sfarzo's facial expression is one of excitement - almost as if something is about to happen. He opens his arms and shakes his body in a slight dance movement.

43 Pastor grabs his hat and bends his knees and head. He begins to move in shaky jerky movement that follows the beat of the revving.

44 The revving beat has changed – it's now a more consistent vroom with timed pauses and starts.

45 Meanwhile *Skhothanes* start to gather around the taxi and follow the same jerky movements that Pastor has been doing according to the beat.

46 Don raises his leg above the ground and twists and jiggles it to the beat also.

47 As the staccato beat slows down so do the jerky body movements. The music of the revving takes over and guides their body movements until it reaches a crescendo where excitement overflows; literally, in the form of the drinks that they carry. They shake their hands and spill liquid beverages, almost like popping champagne.

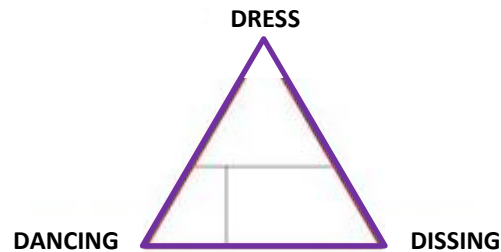
48 BK then rushes in, in front of everyone and the camera, carrying a t-shirt.

49 BK: *Bheka ngbhona ngani! bheka ngbhona ngani! ngbhona nge* Rashida [Look at what I am buffing with! Look at what I'm buffing with! I'm buffing with Rashida].

50 He then polishes his shoes and the taxi which is now coated in sugary energy drink and alcohol. [TMBS10102015_Legend]

Participants carelessly spill full cans of Play energy drink and Smirnoff extreme cider. The bottle of Hennessy is notably missing from this demonstration. One of the members also uses a R600 DMD shirt as a buffing and cleaning rag for his shoes. Initially a spectacle in dancing prowess, the display becomes a destructive performance that reasserts participants' wealth. This is the only other form of wasteful conspicuous consumption evidenced throughout the observation visit.

Figure 14: Triad of skhothane performatives



It must be noted that in my BTech (Memela 2014) project the aspects that encompassed the *skhothane* culture were assigned percentages in order of importance. The resulting triumvirate of: dressing, dancing and dissing and bragging formed the necessary aspects in completing the performance of *Skhothanes'* fashion identity (see Figure 14). Notably, vandalism was not included as one of the defining features necessary to the performance of *skhothane*. The role of *Pecksters* in the culture could have been a passing fad in the early stages of the culture; perpetuated by the media or perhaps maintained by a few who wished to scandalise and gain acclaim quicker within the culture.

II. Bragging/dissing

Bragging is a vital part of the performance and identity of *skhothane*. The definition of bragging is to: say something boastfully (Stevenson and Waite 2011). The practice assists in asserting the participant's claim of wealth. For *Skhothanes*, it serves to reinstate the idea of affluence whilst adding flair to the performance. An opponent verbally relays how much he is able to afford and what he will do with the participant. Oral performance for *Skhothanes* can be categorised in two forms: Bragging and Droshka. Droshka is a form of rap and rhyming for *Skhothanes*. It can serve as a participant's introduction when he enters into a "battle".

Pastor Marikana: *ninay thing thing niytshela ukuthi niykhotheni izwani la: nizbiza ngama attraction kantin niabomination. Kule nation zokgaya ama correction ngyanibona nifuna iattention. Ngzongaya iaction njengetermination ngzonidestroya...*

Entlek mfethu ngiqgoke malini? Wena uqgoke malini? Don't compare, myself with you ngoba mina – takes shirt off - I'm the explanation of millions, you are the explanation of poverty.

Wena ama...inaudible... aqale ukwazi ipoverity ngawe. Bayi discover - moves around arms in a dancing motion - ngiktshela ngiktshela. [You idiots, you tell yourselves that you are *skhothanes* listen here. You call yourselves attractions, when instead you are abominations. In this nation, I'll give you corrections. I can see that you want attention. I'll give you action like a termination, I'll destroy you...Actually *mfethu* how much am I wearing? How much are you wearing? Don't compare yourself

- 32 Participant A: *asikakayi kude, asikakayi kude* [We haven't even gone far, we haven't even gone far].
- 33 Points downwards.
- 34 Don: 2.8 (now pointing at Participant A's pants) *askakayi kude* [two point eight. We haven't even gone far]. [TMBS10102015Legend]
- 35 BK: *Mina ngызbona zonke.* (raises feet to show different shoes) *ngigcoka 2.5, gcoka 2.5. Gcoka 5000* [I can see all of it. (raises feet to show different coloured shoes) I'm wearing two point five, I'm wearing another two point five. I'm wearing 5000].
- 39 BK: *Bhek bhek bhek bheka 1, 2, 3* (counting and pointing at his teeth). *1, 2 – sibulele* [Look, look, look: 1, 2, 3, (counting and pointing at his teeth). 1,2 – we are killing them].
- 40 Participant A: *abakaboni niks, abaka boni niks.* [They haven't seen anything, they haven't seen anything]. [TMBS10102015Legend].
- 48 Bk then rushes in, in front of everyone and the camera carrying a t-shirt.
- 49 BK: *Bheka ngbhona ngani! bheka ngbhona ngani! ngbhona nge Rashida* [Look at what I am buffing with! Look at what I'm buffing with! I'm buffing with Rashida].
- 50 He then polishes his shoes and the taxi which is now coated in sugary energy drink and alcohol. [TMBS10102015Legend]
- 32 BK: *one point five. two point fivey. ngызdura ngthenga igrosa nasendlini* [one point five. Two point five. I'm expensive, I can even buy groceries in the house].
- 33 Participant A: *ikepisi angсakhulumi* [I won't even speak about the cap].
- 34 BK: *Yazini ngingakhumula ngibe nqunu* [Do you know what, I could even take off my clothes and be naked].
- 35 Don: *neUnderwear* [Even the underwear].
- 36 BK: *nawe uyabona sistela. 2.5, 2.5, 1.8, 2.5* [You can see for yourself sister. Two point five, two point five, one point eight, two point five].
- 37 Don: *GTI mashlangene, iGTI* [We're the price of a GTI when we're together. A GTI].
- 38 BK: *Yazini? Mangkhuluma ngamazinyo angсakhulumi - naseskalini nyakala. Soloke ngincunu yazini...* bengshoda, bengshoda ngeBlue Ice yazini eskoleni bangbiza ngoBK. [Do you know what? If I start speaking about my teeth, I won't be speaking – even on the scale I can weigh it. Even since I was young, you know what...I'm only missing Blue Ice. You know what, at school they call me BK]. [TMBS10102015O]
- 43 Interviewer: *So wimalini mawuphelele* [So how much are you in full]?
- 44 Pastor: *Ukhuluma nami? Ngiclassic ayi ungadinga icalculator. Listen. ngiggoke i2.5 iRossimoda ibrown. Emazinyweni, ngeke ngsaktshela ukuthi ngfake malini emazinyeni ngoba icalculator iyahluleka yangthola. Mara ngfake nge-medical aid yangthola eli-one its 1.3 ifull enye yu750 yangthola. La ngidonsa nga600yangthola. It's one point 2 neh. asiSfarzo mamele. Hayi iporsche yami le* [You talking to me? I'm a classic, no you would need a

calculator. Listen, I'm wearing a 2.5 Rossimoda brown. On my teeth I won't even tell you how much I have on because the calculator cannot count it, do you get me? But I put it on with medical aid do you get me? One of them is 1.3 for a full, another one is 750 do you get me? Over here, I'm pulling R600 do you get me? It's 1.2 yes. This is not Sfarzo! Listen! No, this is my Porsche].

- 45 Everyone polishes Pastor's Rossimoda shoe as he raises his leg to show it off.
- 46 Don Sfarzo: Rossimoda
- 47 BK: *ayi le uyazi, 1.8 2.5 2.5 yazini ngibulele, ngibulele. There is no need uklibele ngkhuluma kakhulu* [No this one you know it. 1.8, 2.5, 2.5. You know what, I'm killing it. There is no need for me to keep talking too much].
- 48 Don (speaking over BK): Red for danger. Red for danger. [TMBS101020150]
- 10 Billy Gates: *Yaybona uyaybona (sucks in air between teeth and grins to show them off) iphinde futhi ize la* [Do you see it? Do you see it? And then it also comes here] [TMBS101020150].

Bragging in *skhothane* is done in jest. Exclamations of how much one is wearing are injected with humorous metaphors similar to roasting, hence the inclusion of dissing within this category. *Skhothane* is a culture defined by conspicuous consumption, and the acquiring of luxury items gains them capital within the neo-tribe.

Table 9: Material possessions referenced by *Skhothanes*

	No of times referenced	Price stated	Price
Gold teeth	8	R1800 (full) R750 (L-shape)	R1200 R600 – R800
Sfarzo shirt	33	R1800	R1300 – R1800
Sfarzo pants		R1800	R1500 – R2200
Rossimoda GT shoe	11	R 2500	R1700 – R2500

The above table documents the artefacts that were used in bragging. It shows the quantified instances where participants referenced the items and content analysis of images taken at the site. The prices stated by participants on camera were then compared to retail prices to validate participant's claims.

- 30 Pastor: We want someone from overseas. Prada, Byblos
- 36 Tempo: Giorgi Armani
- 37 Pastor: Giorgio Armani [TMBS15012017V (19)_Dress Code]

The above quote demonstrates luxury brands that are respected by participants. However these were not present during observation. Perhaps this is indicative of the cultural capital that participants aspire

to acquire. Members are aware of the prices of other Italian luxury brands. Most garments are worn, even though participants claim they have been newly bought. One participant tells me off-camera that at times two crew members will swap one side of a pair of shoes, so that they each wear two different colours. This could be indicative of what Howell and Vincent (2014) call a restructuring of wealth - whereby participants have valued the price of *skhothane* cultural capital according to their income level.

- 4 **Pastor:** Mina, specifically I started *ubukhothane*, I can say I was around *boma*-13 years old. But it began, we call it before: *ubuBhujwa*. That's what we do, because it was all about dancing. So when it came to *eSpruit*, because I had a family there, when I visit I saw like a unique style in this thing. People were wearing now brands of labels, clothes so I started following up in what's happening in this thing. So back then it was all about sports, wearing like tracksuit Nike, Adidas, Puma, so I like we joined. So I was around 13 years old. It wasn't like the thing now that we see. As he said, it got growing and growing and changing prices and all this thing. [TMBS15012017V (14)_background]

The restructuring of wealth is further evidenced in the quote above of Pastor explaining his reasons for joining the community. According to the participant, the cultural capital of *skhothane* changes overtime.

Figure 15: Notable fashion artefacts



The *Italian Gates* crew uses a variety of “swag” to express and re-certify their claim of wealth. The four most notable swag artefacts used include the wearing of different pairs of shoes, the price tag left hanging out of the garments, colourful printed shirts and multiple gold teeth.

III. Dancing

- 4 Pastor: Mina specifically I started *ubukhothane*, I can say I was around *boma* 13 years old. but it began, we call it before *ubuSbhujwa* that's what we do. Coz it was all about dancing so when it came to *eSpruit*, because I had a family there, when I visit I saw like a unique style in this thing. People were wearing brands of labels clothes - so I started following up in what's happening in this thing.
- 36 Excellent: Yoh mina to be honest when it started it's because I was a *bhujwa*, when I was a *sbhujwa*, I was there for the girls I won't lie. [TMBS15012017V (14)_Background]

Forms of the *skhothane* culture relating to dance have been attributed to the *Pantsula* culture. However Participants from Italian Culture reference the township dance, *Sbhujwa*, as their gateway dance movement into *skhothane*. *Sbhujwa* is an old Sowetan dance movement that was informally named only in 2000. The dance is characterised by the quick complex foot and handwork that echoes the vibrancy of township life (Sbhujwa 2016). The word *Sbhujwa* is derived from the French word *bourgeois*²³ and means: “being stylish and trendy from the way you dance and dress.” (Sbhujwa 2016)

- 15 Pastor and Billy Gates doing a sequence of hand gestures.
- 17 Billy Gates and Pastor continue to move in a series of co-ordinated hand gestures and they dance.
- 25 Pastor as the best dancer, continues to dance as the crowd eggs him on.
- 26 IG: singing - yoh Pastor yoh. Yoh Pastor yoh. yoh Pastor yoh. yoh Pastor
- 27 Girl in background: Dankie Pastor
- 29 Sweet-candy then joins in the dancing.
- 30 Whistling can be heard.
- 31 Pastor and Candy dance a co-ordinated dance. Their facial expressions are self-assured and impressed by their own dance moves - or perhaps by the love that the crowd is showing them. [TMBS10102015O]
- 44 Interviewer: Igqom²⁴ lasethekwini niyalthanda?
- 45 Everyone: Yaaaa!
- 46 Pastor: That's what I love best. Qi qi qi gobisiqolo.
- 47 Excellent joins in the dance movement: Awu gobisiqolo
- 48 The participants become engrossed in the dance move as they continue repeating the hook of the local house song. [TMBS15012017V (18)_Dressing to impress]
- 9 *Excellent*: No but it's not like now, I can't dance. It was back then because now you can see that I'm lifting now, So, I can't remember very well the moves but I'm just gonna try some we'll see. Probably the ingredients are still within me. I'm not sure if I'm doing very well but it was with *Sortra* back then in 2009, 2010. This is the way it used to...
- 10 Participant proceeds to perform the *Sortra* dance. It is a complex series of dance moves that begins as a sideways shuffle and then proceeds to criss-cross the feet behind each other. First the left over right and then a shuffle to the left and then the right crosses behind the left. He then lifts his right leg bent as if in a mid-air lunge. His arm moves to pat and brush his leg in a chronological sequence. First the knee, then his toes, then to his knees again. The complex dance finishes off with him bending very low almost like a faux Kazotsky. [TMBS15012017V (14)_Background]

The above quotes give an indication of the role of dance in the community. One of the aspects highlighted by the crew was the dancing prowess of their two members: Sweet-candy and Pastor.

During observation, these two members were always the first to break into dance. The importance placed by participants on two of their best dancers could be an indication of the value of dance.

4.4.4 Swag

Dress is identified as the most revered aspect of *skhothane* – as depicted in the triumvirate. Swag, as the most identifiable cultural capital of *skhothane* is discussed in a section on its own. Dress holds the most value as it is the overall signifier of being a worthy *skhothane*. From the previous data and literature, dress is cited as the most visible artefact that can be used to create an image of affluence – as the most valued sign system used to determine a winner.

I then asked participants about the relevance and justification of the images showing others wearing Adidas and Nike shoes much like Sweet-candy was wearing during the interview process.

2 (awkward silence).

Don Sfarzo: Oh Nike...pauses

4 *Interviewer*: I saw in some of the pictures, there was like Nike and Adidas, is that a case of Nike and Adidas is still expensive so it's okay to wear it?

5 *Pastor*: Ya, ya...pause

6 *Tempo*: You know that's for sports. It's like *skhothane ezicalayo* [It's like *skhothane* that have just started].

7 *Don Sfarzo*: There's a sportswear neh? In a sportswear it's like sportish neh? Sportswear but also you got *ubukhothane* and Sportish (brings index fingers together to show that they go together) and even...cut off by Pastor

8 *Pastor*: Mina I can explain for my brother here (indicating Sweet-candy). What he was doing he was simply meaning like, I have it all. You want me in sports, I have it. You want me in Italy, I have. I can do the same; I can dress Sfarzo, which is Italian. I can dress...

9 Excellent (providing more examples to Pastor's statement): Arbiter shirt

10 *Pastor*: I'm trying to show you that all these things...

11 Excellent: But to be honest...(interrupted by Don Sfarzo)

12 *Don Sfarzo*: on eh sportswear we prefer Vertinum

15 *Tempo*: Like Adidas, Nike, inaudible, that's the thing [TMBS15012017V (19)_Dress Code].

²³Of or characteristic of the middle class, especially in having materialistic values or conventional attitudes.(Stevenson and Waite 2011)

²⁴*Ggom is a Durban form of house music that is characterised by "It's dark and realistic, with an array of hollow drum sounds spun into jerky rhythms using FruityLoops software, and droning synths and ghostly one-note samples creeping in over the top." (Oliver 2016)

Figure 16: *Skhothanes'* flamboyant swag



Image 1 was taken immediately as we entered the observation site. Participants flocked to the camera requesting to pose for photographs. Although there is a running theme of Italian branded clothing, the assemblage of “swag” seems to be left to the individual. Participants do wear normal clothing; however they believe that you need to be unique in order to have influence [TMBS15012017V (18)_Dressing to impress Lines 20-28]. There are other forms of dress that are in the same price range as the brands *Skhothanes* wear. However participants explain that the flamboyant dress is more recognizable from a distance – that is, viewers can see from afar that you are successful [TMBS15012017V (19)_Dress Code Line 41]. The intention of *skhothane* swag becomes a coded message of affluence.

Figure 17: Poses to show clothing



Image 2 illustrates the various poses designed to show-off *skhothane* swag. The flashy and choreographed posing assists in the communication of their bragging. When participants were asked about the origin of the posing, answers maintained it was to show off the clothing. It is the researcher's assumption that the synchronised posing became a necessary consequence to gain capital during battle.

4.5 STYLE-FASHION-DRESS

Style cultures across the globe have found creative ways to express their disdain of the fashion establishment using clothing (Polhemus and Proctor 1978; Hebdige and ebrary Inc. 1979; Polhemus 1996; Gelder and Thornton 1997; Wilcox 2001; Wilson 2003; Polhemus 2011). This rebellion, and any clothing that goes against the fashion system, have always been labelled as anti-fashion. The broad definition of anti-fashion being: "...all styles of adornment which fall outside the organised system of fashion change" (Polhemus 2011:41).

Skhothanes use fashion artefacts to assert their claim to wealth. They engage in appearance management such as: wearing two different shoes; leaving price tags visible; accessorising with multiple gold teeth and wearing brightly coloured clothes [see Figure 4]. The *Skhothanes'* appearance management goes against contemporary fashion and as such can be seen as an anomaly. Yet they also demonstrate traits of embracing fashion in their appreciation of luxury clothing. This complementary relationship *skhothane* has with fashion makes it difficult to categorise it as anti-fashion.

The following section classifies anti-fashion and maps the *skhothane* neo-tribe within the appropriate terminologies for dress that cultural identity does not follow yet at the same time embraces fashion. The departure point for this discussion contextualises the traditional use of the term anti-fashion according to Davis' (1992: 168 – 186) six varieties of anti-fashion.

Table 10: Tabulated breakdown of Davis (1992: 168-186) 6 varieties of anti-fashion.

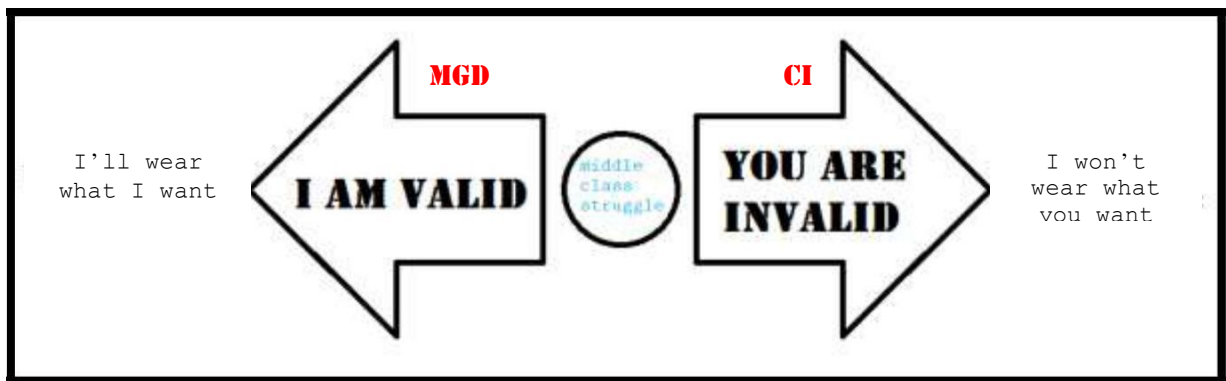
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Type	<i>Utilitarian Outrage</i>	<i>Health and fitness Naturalism</i>	<i>Feminist protest</i>	<i>Conservative scepticism</i>	<i>Minority group disidentification</i>	<i>Counterculture Insult:</i>
Opposes	The frivolous and vain nature of style-fashion-dress.	The unnatural and unhealthy adornment.	Style-fashion-dress as a patriarchal symbol that oppresses women.	Change.	Oppression by dominant segments of a society.	Society's dominant cultural groups,
Advocates For	Simple and practical dress rather than for aesthetic purposes.	Leisure dress. "Loose, baggy and under-designed...chi pants."	Androgynous style-fashion-dress to unisex clothing.	No dress alternatives except wearing the prevalent styles.	Differentiating by highlighting things that make them different from dominant culture	"Distance themselves from, diminish and even scandalize..."
Historical context	Largely associated with biblical ideologies.	Largely associated with Dress Reform Movement.	Feminist studies.	"All woman..."	Groups that seek to differentiate themselves using dress.	Largely associated with youth countercultures.

Of the six varieties of anti-fashion that Davis (1992: 168 - 186) outlines, *skhothane* can be placed within the overlapping Minority Group Disidentification and Counterculture Insult groups. The classification of these groups is similar to what Barnard (1996: 129) describes as 'clothing as resistance':

“...resistance will be explained as taking two basic forms, ‘refusal’ and ‘reversal’. Refusal is the attempt to step outside of the offending structures and reversal is the attempt to reverse the positions of power and privilege that operate within those structures.”

The difference between the two groups is that in the disenfranchisement of the members of the former, members of Minority Group Disidentification seek to reinforce pride in their identity by highlighting that which is belittled by the dominant culture. Davis (1992: 180 – 182) places emphasis on feelings of displacement, that stem from identifying as a minority, as the motivation for the clothing choices of this group. The concern for Counterculture Insult members is with the conscious separation or ridicule of the dominant culture.

Figure 18: Minority Group Disidentification (MGD) vs Counterculture Insult (CI).



Excellent Angel [TMBS10102015O Line] stated: “Why just because I come from this lifestyle does it mean I must dress poorly? I know I don’t come from a good background but that doesn’t mean I have to look like a ‘thug’.”

If one considers *skhothane* as a protest against being viewed as disadvantaged, it would align with Davis’ (1992) definition of Minority Group Disidentification. In the battle to validate oneself as not disadvantaged, not impoverished, *Skhothanes* seek to assert their imagined affluence through their clothing choice and rituals.

However, Davis’ classifications are concerned with that which goes against the norm; it does not distinguish that which embraces fashion as in the case of *skhothane*. In light of this, a wider categorisation of anti-fashion is utilised. The literature reviewed further organises the term anti-fashion into three categories: opposition, deviation and permanence.

In the context of postmodern identities it is difficult to distinguish that which is fashion and that which is not. This does not mean that Wilson’s, Clark’s or Polhemus’ definitions of antifashion should be

completely discarded, but in the case of the *Skhothanes* in Thembisa, I am reluctant to apply this label.

It seems more appropriate to term the appearance management of *Skhothanes* as style-fashion-dress as proposed by Tulloch. According to Tulloch (2010: 275), style-fashion-dress encompasses the multitude of concepts that relate to the various meanings and frameworks that are a part of dress studies. The triad includes all the tensions that exist in relation to the fashion identity of *Skhothanes*.

- Style, as agency in the construction of self through the appearance management that may or may not be in fashion – accounts for the fashion anomalies that exist within the *skhothane* neo-tribe.
- Fashion, as a process which has a fluctuating value over time – describes the intertextual use of symbols of wealth - such as luxury brands.
- Dress, incorporates all aspects of the subject of: clothing, fashion, style, production, consumption, textiles, and beauty regimes.

4.6 'KHOTHING': THE IMPORTANCE OF PROCURING FINE CLOTHING TO AFRICANS

The literature reviewed alludes to the growing culture of bling as one of the prominent constructs of the *skhothane* neo-tribe. Bling culture refers to the desire to show status through conspicuous consumption (Miller 2011). The growing culture of bling can be attributed to a variety of socio-economic factors. In South Africa, brashly displaying one's wealth can be attributed to the economic inequalities faced by lower income communities and the increasing availability of disposable income in an emerging market (Nutall 2004; Van Loggerenberg and Herbst 2010).

4.6.1. Mama I ("will") make it.

One of the constructs of bling culture is its association with feelings of inadequacy or identifying as a disadvantaged minority. While participants were not forthcoming with their family's income and means of obtaining money, the observation and interview yielded findings which give an estimated indication of the type of community in which *Skhothanes* grew up. Only one participant informed me of the source of his money.

45 *Don Sfarzo: Mina* I bring the money in a different way. *Mina*, in my place *nginam-room ayi 3*, so *kulama room ayi 3 kunemali engidlala ngayi, kunemali engi-save-ela yona yabon. Yingakho ngingena stress neymali. Ya injalo.*[Me, I bring the money in a different way. Me, in my place I have 3 rooms, so with these 3 rooms there is money that I play with; and there is money I save with you see? That's why I don't have stress with money. Yes, it's like that.] [TMBS101020150].

Participants are from the community of Thembisa PMG in Johannesburg. Thembisa is a bustling location with developing infrastructure at every corner. The local park where initial observation was conducted is a contrasting haven of greenery right opposite an informal dump site. Street sidewalks on *IsiKalu* road at Kempton Park are a mixture of newly paved and untarred walkways. Although there

are some unpainted houses, the size of the houses in the surrounding area is in contrast to their unfinished appearance. A middle-income community, every third house is a double story building housing a salon, butchery or an informal tuckshop. The interview phase is conducted at the local fast food restaurant balcony. The participants suggested the location as an alternative to interviewing them in their homes stating that the background was not “right” for an interview. Thembisa, PMG section appears to be a developing middle income community.

Figure 19: Interview site community (sourced from google street view)



During the interview, when participants were asked about their background and influences, they all described a social environment that is similar to the constructs inherent to the roots of bling culture. That is, they come from a disadvantaged community and their style-fashion-dress is influenced by their wish to succeed further on in life.

- 30 *Excellent:* We want to inspire people doesn't mean if you come from a bad background. We also come from a bad background, you know like an unsettled background.
- 32 *Pastor:* Me, personally, as I'm being an Italian dresser I'm simply saying to people do not judge me by what my parents own. The house that I'm sleeping in, is for my parents. The things that I'm eating, is from my parents. But what is for me specifically its dressing. So I'm saying to you it's a taste of what I will become. In my future I won't be limited by my parents.
- 33 *Excellent:* That's why I'm saying, it's not a matter of where you come from, whether you were born from a shack. Definitely we were born from a shack also. We came from that kind of a place, but we didn't say: Oh god I'm just I'm giving up, let me just smoke...It's not a matter of where you come from its a matter of what you believe in and what you wanna accomplish. [TMBS15012017V (15)_Why ubukhothane].

It is interesting to note that instead of the “mama I made it” syndrome, participants apply the mama I will make it mentality. The continued affirmation of wealth of *Italian Culture*, serves as a personal goal for participants, they adopt the mantra that they need to “dress to impress” and dress for what they desire to be. The dress, bragging and conspicuous waste demonstrated by participants becomes a performative in that it subverts the naturalised behaviours and ideas associated with an unsettled upbringing. This aligns with Madison’s (2013: 228) definition of a performative – which seeks to disrupt the ordinary.

4.6.2. Swag: *Sidlukotini*

The idea of dressing well in Africa is not unique to the Italian Gates *skhothane*. Black African people are known for dressing well as part of complex visual markers of status, identity and class (Allman 2004: 13; Miller 2010: 1). It is a seemingly entrenched practice across generations. Critiques of the unchanging status quo in fashion terminology leave room for the discussion of relevant fashion vocabulary, specifically, terms that describe constructs of flamboyant dress - as they relate to the black body. Perhaps a more appropriate expression that encompasses all the concepts of ostentatious clothing as a symbol of pride, by the *Italian Gates Skhothanes*, should be identified.

To begin with, a closer inspection of the township slang word *ukukhotha*, from which *Skhothanes* are named, is required. According to participants, the term *ukukhotha* is not particular to *skhothane*, but it is a known township verb meaning “to brag”. When asked what the name means this is what the Italian Cultures had to say:

2 *Pastor*: It’s a hood thing. It’s something that came out from *elokshin* [location]. It’s from us people who started it. To say we are khothing.

3 *Tempo*: It’s something that was created around (moves hand in circular motion).

4 *Don Sfarzo*: UyangKhotha. It’s about bragging

5 *Pastor*: In other words in English they translate it to say licking you see. With us, it’s about competing with an opponent - to say who’s better than the other.

8 *Tempo*: Bragging rights you know. Who has more money, who dances better than who.
[TMBS15012017V (15)_Why ubukhothane].

One of the participants implies that the word *skhothane* is a calque of the Durban food: bunny chow. *iKota*, as the bunny chow is called in the location, is a calque of the English word quarter: as a bunny chow is a quarter loaf of bread.

23 *Excellent*: So the name ubukhothane. It never came with us, it came with the community. If maybe someone is eating like a R5 *kota* maybe just go there (referring to a tuckshop), and you say: can you give me a R20 *kota* and then people say “*mmmm hayi shuthi manje wena uyaschomela uyasbraggele* [mmm, no you are showing of us for us, you are bragging for us]. Then from there the word it got translated to Khotha. *Uyangikota, uyangikhotha* [you are making me a *kota*, you are licking me] so it became familiar in the community until they started to view us as *Skhothane*.”
[TMBS15012017V (15)_Why ubukhothane line 23]

Since there are no linguistic data to verify this and not all crew members agreed to the participants’ definition of the word, the study uses the provided definition of the term *skhothane*. In this manner, the term *Skhothane* can be applied to anyone who chooses to display wealth in a brash manner.

Skhothanes distinguish between dressing for success and “dressing for entertainment”. The defining factor in both forms is that if you are a “true” *skhothane*, you must appear presentable and successful at all times – even when not dressed in Italian luxury clothing. The garments are not selected for the quality they possess or their function, but rather for their identifiable brand name within the community. Pastor makes an example of the clothes worn to church by Excellent asking: “My sister for example my brother is wearing Markhams, but can you recognise it when he's walking at the streets. But if this one is walking (pulls at Don's shirt) you can definitely say, its iSfarzo.” [TMBS15012017V (19)_Dress Code Line 41].

The ideology of “dressing to impress” is not unique to *skhothane*. As evidenced by literature, in African society dressing well is a symbol of pride and status (Eicher 1995; Fund *et al* 1998; Farber 2010; Cozzika 2012; Dickson 2012). It is a concept perhaps better explained by the participants themselves using this distorted Christian metaphor.

- 1 *Excellent Angel*: So as I was saying, we found this guy named our Jesus. Back then he was named Jesus. Back then [inaudible]. So he was a carpenter²⁵ ever since until to the age of 30. So what we discovered about that is that he will definitely like a carpentry company. So he was doing some investment so by the age of 30 he became a ministry which in his ministry it was to preach the good news.
- 2 *Excellent Angel*: So there is something, or there is a point that I'm trying to prove here. He didn't just simply go out to start to preach. He started with an investment with a company known as carpentry. He was doing that until the age of 30. So from the age of 30 he took money, he bought himself the finest linen²⁶.
- 3 *Pastor*: Eish (in agreement)
- 4 *Excellent Angel*: Definitely I prove that with which it was I believe was expensive, back then in that time (uses hand to emphasise). Why would Jesus buy something expensive? (rhetorical question) let's see we'll find out about that.
- 5 *Excellent Angel*: This Jesus he goes now starting to preach to people. He goes to Peter, he says come and I'll show you how to be a fisher of men. Peter then immediately goes. It's not like Peter was attracted by anything holy ghost [inaudible]. He saw the way he was clothed, what he was wearing.
- 6 *Pastor*: Money
- 7 *Excellent Angel*: What he was wearing it was very much expensive. We found out that definitely when Jesus died we found that soldiers they gambled for his what? (rhetorical

²⁵There is no biblical text that supports that Jesus was a carpenter. However this is an accepted concept in Christianity because in that time period, it was mandatory for Jewish sons to learn their father's trade from the age of 12. Joseph, as Jesus' adoptive father, was a carpenter (Matthew 13: 55 and Mark 6:3) – and as such the assumption is that Jesus would have learnt Joseph's trade.

²⁶While it is a good metaphor, these events as related by the participant have no biblical, academic or even online evidence to support them. It seems instead to be an example of the well-used Christian rhetoric of making things up about Jesus to prove their point.

question) for his linen. What was the reason for that? Because just to sell it - because it was expensive.

8 *Excellent Angel*: So what we are trying to say, what he was saying my brother: the way you are clothed; the way you wear your self - you attract also people. [TMBS15012017V (12)_that thing]

An appropriate summation of the concept of “dressing to impress” can be found in the local phrase “*sidlukotini*”. It is a township slang denoting the wearing of fine, expensive clothing. The lyrics to local rapper Ricky Rick’s song titled “*Sidlukotini*” are a parody of examples of how much money the rapper has and how much the other person will never be able to reach his level:

“*Sidlukotini kwedin. Cava le jean kwedin Cava le slamba boy, Sidl' ilast number boy, Wen' unamanga boy, Ngiyani bona nigqoka amafake*, [We are eating thread son. Check out this jean son. Check out this jacket boy. We are eating the last number boy. You are lying boy, I can see that you guys are wearing fakes].”

The phrase is also used by one of the participants during observation as he brags to the camera about the price of his outfit. The only definitions found of the term were from crowdsourced online sources.

- “The meaning of the song title, literally translated, is “we are eating fabric.” (Magubane 2016)
- On hashtag dictionary (Kheswa 2016), the response that received the most votes, at 27 likes stated: “*Sidlukotini* means wearing the dopest and most expensive clothes.”

The phrase *sidlukotini* directly translates to: “we eat thread” or “we eat cotton” - thread or cotton being a metaphor for good clothing. The intention behind the phrase is to imply that one wears and spends on expensive designer goods as though they were products necessary for everyday sustenance. The phrase adequately summarises the *skhothane* culture which is defined by the art of dressing well as a sign of wealth.

The study sample insists that dressing well is their culture.

41 Pastor: this is not something we brag about this is something that we...

42 It came from 21st Century yangthola. It’s something that, it was before it is. It’s a culture, it’s a culture. *So obaba bethu bayenza, okhokho bethu bayenza, so nathi safika sayenza yangthola* [So our father’s did it, our grandfather’s did it, so we too came and did it do you get me?]. [TMBS10102015O].

27 Unknown: *Yiyo ke iculture!* [This is the culture!]

28 BK: *Ngeheritage day thina sqgoka lezi* [On Heritage day this is what we wear]. [TMBS10102015Legend].

21 Tempo: Ya he can dress like that.

22 Excellent: Ya dress to impress he has to dress to impress

23 Pastor: Be unique [TMBS15012017V (18)_Dressing to impress].

For the purposes of this study *skhothane* dress can be termed as “swag” which incorporates not only all forms of agency in the construction of the individual’s identity; but also includes how the clothing is assembled. “Swag” is an urban slang word from hip-hop culture, derived from the word swagger. The term refers to the style cues that identify an individual – this can include a range of signifiers from how a person walks, talks and dresses (Mose 2013: 112). According to (Touslee 2014: 6), swag is a result of a calculated and informed effort to conduct oneself with an air of overbearing self-confidence. The braggadocio demonstrated by *Skhothanes* could be seen as an element of overbearing self-confidence. Furthermore, the calculated and informed effort is reflected in the intertextual authoring that *Skhothanes* engage in. Touslee (2014: 6) further states that the defining feature of swag is that individuals authentically adopt style codes in a manner that distinguishes them, particular to his or her own history. Therefore, in this study, ‘Swag’ refers to a more contemporary alternative to sartorial style when discussing all the tensions that are performed in constructing the *Skhothane* fashion identity.

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.7.1 Ethnographic interviewing

Organising and scheduling for an observation visit was done immediately after my Institutional Research Ethics Committee approval (Appendix L). During observation, an unstructured interview, which was guided by the participants, was conducted. The unstructured interview was necessitated by the chaotic and enthusiastic involvement of participants. Following that interview scheduling began post observation. During this stage, there was repeated cancellation of appointments and issues with access to participants. This resulted in the data collection running over schedule by a month. Interview participants were each provided with a letter of consent and information sheet. At the participants’ bemusement and questioning whether the letter of consent was a contract, further verbal explanation was given on the purpose and parameters of the study and the outline of the document being signed. The second interview was 2 hours and 40 minutes and consisted of five participants at their chosen location in Thembisa. Participants did not want to be interviewed in their homes because the background was not “right” for the video. This was an interesting occurrence for me as an outsider, to note how aware *Skhothanes* are of their environment and the backdrops to their performed identities. Everything is a well-planned stage for the participants.

4.7.2 Equipment

All observations and interviews were recorded on a Samsung Hype DIS with intelli-zoom and Nikon D3100. Note-taking was done immediately after observation. A male family member assisted in the handling of equipment. During observation, the presence of two video recorders allowed a dual angle view of the research site. The advantage of not handling the recording equipment myself and note-taking during the interview, was that I was able to fully immerse and engage with the participants.

4.7.3 Protecting participant identity

Along with the consent and information letter, a model release form was distributed and its purpose explained to all participants of the study. Some participants agreed to be a part of the study; however they declined to sign the model release form. This was circumvented through the smiley face emoji censor bar over the faces of participants who requested not to be shown.

16



We keep having to explain that this is not a tv/media documentary. *It seems Billy Gates hasn't explained to all his crew members what it is that we're doing.* After an explanation they are happy as they say but *ekugcineni bazosibhala* somewhere [but in the end they'll write about us somewhere]. However I remember after telling them that I want to observe what they do without interfering and that they don't have to perform, one of the participants says: "*phela into esyenzayo siya-performa vele yabo. If ufuna sizihlalele sithina ngeke senze lutho. Mawufuna ukbona ubukhothane shoota ke.*" [but what we do is perform you see? If you want us to sit then we won't do much. If you want to see *ubukhothane* then shoot].

[TMBS10102015J Line 16]

The above journal entry was particularly notable for me as it made me question the observer effects caused by the presence of a camera. However, upon further review of literature and engaging with the observation data, it is evident that the audience is a large part of being a *skhothane*. The performativity of *skhothane* becomes redundant without observers, female watchers or any large crowd.

I. Data storage

Video transcripts were saved on a password protected PDF with links to the raw data footage on YouTube. All video uploads will be private uploads. Each video upload is labelled with 10 of the 15 Dublin Core Metadata Elements. All raw data clips utilised for quotes in the study will be transferred onto a data CD.

II. Change of title and terms

Initially the proposed title for the research project was 'Swag': An ethnographic study of the fashion identities of the South African *izikhothane* youth subculture in Thokoza Park. However the study title had to be changed for the following reasons:

- 1) The nature of ethnographic research, which requires that I follow my study sample in their naturalistic setting for observation.
- 2) The random sampling method which meant I could not determine the location of all participants in the sample.

Skhothanes perform in public spaces in the greater Johannesburg area, such as parks. In retrospect, specifying the location of the study to Thokoza Park only was premature as participants perform in and around the area of Johannesburg. The new title: ‘*Swag*’: *An ethnographic study of izikhothane Fashion identity* reflects the contents of the dissertation more accurately than the old title.

The use of the term subculture (see Appendix E – H) on the consent forms was employed as an easily recognisable term for the participants. The term neo-tribe as descriptive of the community is a relatively new term.

Initially, the identified spelling for the phenomenon was *izikhothane*. During the course of data collection, literature uncovered varied versions of the spelling of the word: *l’Khothane* (Jones 2013; Howell and Vincent 2014); *izikhothane* (Brash bling and Ghetto fabulous 2012; Motshegoa 2012) and *Skhothane* (Inggs and Kemp 2016; Bongela 2012; Ngubane 2015; Tshisonga 2015). None of the authors provided an etymological justification for their chosen spelling of the word. I have attempted to provide definitions for the terms used in this proposal. I will only explain the grammatical rules as they relate to *izikhothane*. The problem with the spellings *izikhothane* and *l’Khothane* is in the fundamental construction of Zulu grammar. In Zulu, the “how much” of a noun that is being referred to is represented by its prefix e.g.:

		Prefix	Noun denoted
Singular	Inkukhu: one chicken	I -	Nkukhu
Plural	IziNkukhu - many chickens	Izi -	Nkukhu

In its plural form, the prefix can be written in either full or short form - the short form being denoted with an apostrophe e.g. *iziNkukhu* becomes *l’Nkukhu*. Whether the prefix refers to ‘the chicken’ or chicken depends entirely on the context. In order to limit complication in understanding whether *izikhothane* or *l’khothane* refers to the plural or singular; or whether it describes the ‘the’ *skhothane* which in itself is redundant, this study uses the capitalised form: *Skhothane*, when referencing a person who participates in the culture. In this form it is a proper noun, as it describes a specific type of person. In the lower case form: *skhothane*, the word refers to the neo-tribe as a whole. Much like how you would label: hip-hop, punk, blues, jazz.

4.8. SWAG SEAMSTRESS: PERSONAL REFLECTION

I am a 26 year old female from an upper to middle income township in Durban. My upbringing has given me the skills to build a rapport with young township males and has also given me the ability to engage with different people from different socio-economic backgrounds. My interviewing experience is limited; however travelling with my brother, who I am comfortable with and who lives in Johannesburg, also facilitated the rapport developed with the neo-tribe members. As this is my second qualitative project, I relied heavily on the counsel of my more experienced supervisors and, where possible, attended research workshops.

The location setting related to my upbringing in that I was familiar with or expected a certain degree of chaos and although it was in a different environment, I could still be comfortable enough to engage casually with the participants.

It must be noted however that the informality and cluttered appearance of Thembisa PMG was a stark contrast to the community in which I grew up. This also fostered feelings of self-isolation - where I would be reluctant to move to suggested venues and I would be reserved at the beginning of the set-up. The presence of an older male accompanying me helped to ease my discomfort as a female entering a very male-dominated environment.

Over the course of the project, I was exposed to the strong religious beliefs of some of the participants. Firstly it was slightly unsettling for me as the researcher to experience the group members outside of their *skhothane* performativity. I thought they would be loud and brash but then when I was confronted with their socially standard identities I was underwhelmed. Secondly, having philosophical beliefs that align with Pantheism, I would at times not want to report on meanings that the crew had interpreted through Christian ideology as I feared it would portray participants as zealous fanatics. However, I realised that this was an injustice to the participants who live these identities and not reflecting their Christian ideals would affect the credibility of the research. In this respect, I had to actively ensure through reflexive contemplation that I was reporting the identities of the crew members accurately.

4.9 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section summarises the findings for this Chapter. The ethical considerations and personal reflection are not included as a summary as these are sections that do not form part of the findings but were necessary in achieving credibility for the study. The study sought to understand individuals' realities hence a framework that included constructivism, phenomenological epistemology and ethnographic methods was used. The ethnographic methodology used a two-step process that consisted of an observation followed by ethnographic interviewing. The study sample comprised 9 *Italian Gates skhothane* participants and the findings that emerged from this data collection process are reflected in Chapter 5. The described findings satisfy the critical research questions and allow the study to construct a reliable definition of the fashion identities of the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew as presented in Chapter 6.

The first finding of the study is the identified characteristics of neo-tribalism displayed by the lifestyle behaviours and choices of the participants. The common links that anchor the participants to *skhothane* are the love of dance and a desire to be perceived as successful. The members of this particular group of *skhothane* demonstrate the active and purposeful adoption of *skhothane* dress to fulfil their desired identity. The findings also show that the participants do not limit themselves to the *skhothane* lifestyle only. Members of the *Italian Gates* crew also identify and participate in musical lifestyles and religious lifestyles.

Growing up, the study participants were exposed to the style worn by the seemingly well-off, local and recently released from jail gangsters who became symbolic of wealth and success. As such, when participants wanted to change their identity to reflect “dressing for success” they identified with the Italian luxury brands and flashy dress sense that is seen on *amaTaliana*. This active construction of the participants’ identity makes the *Italian Gates Skhothanes* intertextual authors.

The *Italian Gates* use the performatives of dress, dance and dissing to express their identity. Dress is the most revered cultural capital that allows the *Italian Gates* to gain social mobility within the *skhothane* neo-tribe. Dance and the dissing serve as enhancements of the performance of identity expression and reassert the idea of affluence. The dress style of the *Italian Gates* crew can be termed as swag. The use of poses to show off their stylish wares can be seen as the swagger of their performance. Swag reflects the overt pageantry that they perform in their dressing. In this study it is a term that denotes fashion ideas of dress that are free of Western ideas of the function of clothing, and refers to the inherent practice of showing off material goods as a symbol of status.

The notable fashion artefacts that gain them favour within the neo-tribe are the acquisition and wearing of two different shoes, leaving on price tags, and the gaudy Italian clothing. Brands that have particularly considerable reputation are: Sfarzo, Arbitr, Vertinum, Rossimoda and Byblos in the *Italian Gates* crew. The clothing consumption patterns of the *Italian Gates* are highly influenced by mass media. It is an influence that causes such rapid diffusion of fashion that their clothing choice follows a traffic circle flow of fashion dissemination. The other consequence that mass media has on fashion is the redundancy of the term anti-fashion. Style-fashion-dress is the more appropriate and all-encompassing term used in referring to all forms of styling the Black body.

The other finding that accounts for the existence of the consumption-focused *skhothane* can be attributed to the *Italian Gates* being suggestively exposed to bling culture. However unlike the “mama I made it” syndrome - which is a concept of bling culture that attributes the desire to conspicuously consume as a reaction to coming from a disadvantaged background - the *Italian Gates* use the “mama I will make it” mentality. The participants are fully aware of their disadvantaged background and their lack of financial prowess but subvert the cultural norms for “poor” dress. They choose to dress for the jobs and social positions that they wish to have. Notably, the *Italian Gates* are under no false pretences about their socio-economic reality - the dress is merely the most visible agent of communicating the participants’ desired social positions. *Italian Gates* are representative of *Skhothane* in the manner in which they subvert the concepts of how someone who is not financially endowed should behave and look. Instead, what the *Italian Gates* have done is to fill the pages of their autobiographies by quoting and appreciating symbols of affluence. As such, the overall look of an *Italian Gates skhothane* member consists of dressing top to toe in graphic printed, brightly coloured, Italian branded clothing, shoes and accessories and multiple gold teeth.

There are four types of *skhothane*: the *Winkel* (also known as the Italians); *i-Chomani*, *Peckser* and *Legends*. The *Peckser*, as the *skhothane* that vandalises material items, is not - as stereotypically assumed - such a common occurrence within the *Italian Gates* crew. One of the surprising

discoveries of the findings is that the vandalism portrayed in media does not define the community unlike the dress - without the expensive Italian luxury items you are not considered a *skhothane*.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

SWAG DONNED

The study sought to understand individuals' realities hence a framework that included constructivism, phenomenological epistemology and ethnographic methods was used. The ethnographic methodology followed a two-step process that consisted of field observation followed by ethnographic interviewing. The study sample consisted of 9 *skhothane* culture participants and the findings that emerged from this data collection process are reflected in this chapter. The described findings satisfy the critical research questions and allow the study to construct a reliable definition of the fashion identities of the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew as presented in Chapter 6.

The following section discusses the findings in this chapter in line with the literature reviewed and the research questions aligned. The chapter seeks to confirm the convergence or divergence of data between the findings and the literature. The results will be discussed under the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 as they relate to the identified themes in the Results chapter.

The departure point for the discussion of results is guided by the research questions that relate to defining neo-tribal fashion identity and the key constructs of that identity. The literature review provided a broad framework of the constructs of neo-tribes. The evidence, or lack thereof, of characteristics of neo-tribalism helped to first determine whether the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew could be considered a neo-tribe. From there, I could then proceed to analyse the constructs of the *skhothane* crew to determine what the key constructs of a neo-tribe are.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS: SWAGGED UP

- 1. How can neo-tribal fashion identity be defined?**
- 2. What are the key features used in the construction of the fashion identity of the Italian Gates skhothanes?**

In order to determine a relative definition for neo-tribal fashion the first thing that had to be done was identify the key features in the construction of the study samples' fashion identity. This included an analysis of *skhothane* performativity - the myriad of rituals and style-fashion-dress performatives used in the expression of their identity. As a coded sign system that is used to communicate identity, the deconstruction of the clothing of a social formation can have a variety of implications about the collective identity of the phenomenon's participants. Postmodern tribesmen demonstrate various traits in order to distinguish themselves within various lifestyles.

According to Maffesoli (as cited in Bennett 1999: 606) and Cova and Cova (2001: 4) tribes are devoid of the structured hierarchies associated with groups. However, while there are no overt instances of structural hierarchies, the *Italian Gates* display codes of governance in gaining social mobility within the culture. For instance, the older *skhothane* and the *Italian Gates* can choose whether or not to engage in battle because they have already reached a high level of acceptance within the community. This could be considered a structural hierarchy – where the “guys at the top” have power. While there

are no clear structural powers put in place to oversee groups if they are performing *skhothane* correctly, there is still a sense of underlying control that maintains the authenticity of the neo-tribe's members. This indicates a divergence in the consulted literature on the fluidity of neo-tribal identities. It is more in line with Kahane and Rapoport's (1997: 25) view that it is the very fabric of social order that has changed to embrace chaos and informality as its governing principles. The code of informality is further exacerbated by the urbanization - where old social contexts in which the identity is formed have now declined (Maffesoli 1995; Bennett 1999). If neo-tribes are no longer stable formations but rather communities connected by a common feeling or passion (Maffesoli 1995: 22), the study findings then provide the answer to the question: what is the common link that connects the participants and thus motivating them to engage in *skhothane*?

The study findings indicate that participants shared the desire to succeed along with an appreciation for the performing arts (droshka and dancing). However, as Dholakia and Firat (2003: 144) state, postmodern tribesmen do not limit themselves to one identity. The self-reflexive identity, as aided by consumerism, of contemporary society allows the individual to fluidly navigate multiple lifestyles (Giddens 1991; Cote 1996). Apart from the shared desire to succeed and an appreciation of the performing arts, participants also adopted the codes of religious affiliation, work, ethnic and musically related lifestyles.

The transition between multiple lifestyles in the life of the studied *skhothane* crew indicates the significance of the different masks worn and performatives that need to be carried out in authenticating one's claim of affluence. Self-reflexivity allows the participants to restructure their social world. The performative strategies employed by *skhothane* to portray an image of affluence are: idolising material goods - particularly luxury Italian brands; redefining middle income socio-economic codes and meanings; displaying affluence through bragging, flashy clothing and dance. The physical identifiers of a *Italian Gates skhothane* member are dressing top to toe in graphic printed, brightly coloured Italian branded clothing, shoes and accessories; multiple gold teeth. The notable fashion artefacts that gain one favour within the neo-tribe are the acquisition and wearing of two different shoes, leaving price tags on to reflect the price of a garment and the Italian clothing. Sfarzo, Arbitrer, Vertinum, Rossimoda and Byblos are the most seen fashion items that are used by *Italian Gates*.

There are in actuality four types of *skhothane* fashion performances:

- 1) the *Winkels* who are also known as *amaTaliana* (the Italians) – these *Skhothanes* are more focused on the Italian dress culture of *skhothane*;
- 2) *I-Chomani* - these *skhothanes* are not particularly entrenched in Italian dressing, it is more of a culture of wearing any expensive clothing and bragging about it.
- 3) The *Peckers* - these are the *skhothanes* that vandalise and tear material goods.
- 4) Lastly are the Legends. These *Skhothanes* are respected members within the culture but no longer participate.

The image of the *Pecksters* is the one perpetuated by media; however the study findings indicate that this is a rare occurrence within the *skhothane* community. Vandalism is particularly not a key feature of the Italian Gates crew performance. In fact, as a formidable crew that has proven themselves within the *skhothane* community, the Italian Gates have the option of not engaging in bragging battles should they choose not to. The Italian Gates fashion identities are closely linked with the *Winkel skhothane*.

The performatives of *Italian Gates* are dress, dance and dissing. Dress is the most appreciated cultural capital that allows the *Italian Gates* to project social mobility. Dance serves as an enhancement of that performance. Unlike the assumption in the media on the vandalism that is a part of *skhothane* identity, it is more appropriate to say that the vandalism is a rare consequence of bragging. Bragging is an activity that serves to reinforce the *Skhothane's* perceived affluence. The production involved in the expression of the Italian gates identity changes the nature of *skhothane* dress from being a sign, to be decoded and understood, but it also becomes a performative.

In the pursuit of respectability, the *skhothane* crew engages in the performativity of luxury status ideals. Literature states that clothing is a complex set of coded messages that communicate identity (Rouse and Rouse 1989: 22; Barnard 2007: 127). The performative *skhothane* swag reflects an identity (however imagined by participants) of affluence. Interestingly, the study findings indicate that *skhothane* do not consider their dress as “out-of-place”. It is only in society’s interpretation of their style-fashion-dress that the sartorial codes of *skhothane* disrupts normative fashion ideas. In order to portray success, or their desired social standing, *skhothane* employ lavish Italian swag as the cultural capital of the neo-tribe. Further commodified practices are the act of droshka – whereby participants that possess the skill, ‘roast’ an opponent or introduce themselves using hyperbolised and humorous rhetoric. One of the constructs of postmodern society is the proliferation and endless reproduction – a Hyperreality (Baudrillard 1994). According to literature, the respecting of individualism makes it difficult, actually impossible, to identify what is fashion and what is anti-fashion (Polhemus 1996: 27; Davis 1992). Considering this, the study agrees with Tulloch’s use of the term style-fashion-dress to describe the dress of the Italian Gates. Style-fashion-dress labels the tensions of all that has to do with clothing the Black body: particularly in the context of the African diaspora (Tulloch 2010).

The study findings further demonstrate that the *skhothane* crew’s identity is heavily rooted in pageant-like performances to display one’s claim of affluence. In this sense their fashion identity is not merely style-fashion-dress – as descriptive of clothing the African body – but refers to a very distinct form of style-fashion dress. The terminology that is proposed, for the classification of the phenomenon of ostentatiously performing one’s style-fashion-dress by the Italian Gates, is Swag. Swag describes the posturing and pomp involved in the performativity of the participants’ appearance. According to Touslee (2014: 6), swag is the embodiment of overbearing self-confidence and style-fashion-dress that distinguishes its wearer.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS: SWAG CONSUMED

3. ***How do social interaction and media consumption influence the formation of neo-tribes?***
4. ***To what extent does consumerism contribute to the development of the Italian Gates skhothanes?***

Consumerism not only influences the formation of the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew, but the participants are the epitome of the concept. The township slang phrase *sidlukotini* means “we eat thread or cotton.” *Sidlukotini* is the embodiment of dressing in lavish fine clothing – it is a slogan, for being dressed in swag. As an act of consumption, “eating thread” reinforces *skhothane* identity and ideologies through imported silk shirts, boldly printed skinny pants and neon and brightly coloured patent leather loafers. The Sfarzo brand and other Italian luxury labels are the chosen swag of the neo-tribe to communicate the idea of affluence.

Identity formation is closely linked to that of one’s parents (Cote and Levine 2015:124 and Nutall 2004). According to the study sample, *skhothane* swag is inspired by the gaudy fashions of notorious local kingpins who demonstrate their wealth through a similar dress style as the *skhothane*’s have adopted. In this way, one of the reasons for the *Italian Gates*’ ostentatious choice of clothing could be a reflection of the participants’ identification with these older and affluent parental figures to which they are exposed. As such, the participants are reflecting the cross- generational practice of conspicuous consumption as they see it from their surrounding environment.

Furthermore, the consumption patterns of the crew have deeper contextual relations to the socio-economic reality of black township youth (Nutall 2004; Van Loggerenberg and Herbst 2010). The *Italian Gates skhothane* crew reflect characteristics of a community that is influenced by bling culture. As discussed in the literature, one of the predominant constructs of bling culture is conspicuous consumption by those who identify with being disadvantaged (Vazi and Martinez-Roca 2006). From a need to show that they have successfully made it out of their unsettled background, individuals display their success through visible material items (Jellars 2011: 58; Vazi and Martinez-Roca 2006). The culture of bling is reflected in the *Italian Gates* crew - where in order to “subject and reject” poverty, they have redefined what society expects “poor” to look like. The image of the *Italian Gates* as young black township youth from an unsettled background, dressed head to toe in one thousand to three thousand Rand branded clothing, distorts the normative luxury fashion codes. After all, luxury fashion is exclusive, for the elite, the wealthy (Okonkwo 2007: xv; Husic and Muris 2009: 234), and not for an 18 year old middle income consumer. The ability of the *Italian Gates* to buy this redefined identity is what Cote (1996a: 421) terms an image-oriented identity. The crew has used the tools of consumerism to redefine their expected identity.

Intertextuality

What the *Italian Gates* crew has done is the embodiment of intertextuality. Intertextuality is the use of a text to make sense of another text (Sawchuck 1987: 65; Bazerman and Prior 2003: 84; Berger 1998:201). Of the five techniques of intertextuality, the *skhothane* crew uses that of quotation and pastiche, quotation being the repetition of a text verbatim and pastiche referring to the appreciation of another's work (Bazerman and Prior 2003: 84). In the pursuit to rewrite their autobiographies, Giddens (1991: 81) likens self-reflexive identity practices to autobiographical writing; the participants have quoted the existing codes assigned to luxury goods. Hence I have called them intertextual authors. Intertextuality is the symptomatic trait of a postmodern world and can only be perpetuated through the proliferation of images (Sawchuck 1987). That is, in order to appropriate images to align to their identity, the *skhothanes* need to have a reference for them. The continuous appropriation of other cultures, other images, and other "somethings" is how people make sense of the world.

Notably, the *Italian Gates* are under no false pretensions of their social reality. In order to portray the idea of success, the crew has defined the cultural capital of their culture according to what they can afford. As cited in literature, Howell and Vincent (2014) call this a restructuring of wealth - whereby participants have valued the price of *skhothane* cultural capital according to their income level. For the *Italian Gates* the dress becomes symbolic of their desires. They are saying that they will not subscribe to the normal poverty ideas that society gives to them. Instead they have written their autobiographies by quoting success symbols and showing appreciation of those symbols. Unlike what literature states about bling culture - that the objective is to show that you are successful despite coming from adverse circumstances (Vazi and Martinez-Roca 2006) – the *Italian Gates* crew uses consumerism to demonstrate a 'mama I will make' it mentality.

In reflecting their imagined influence through their swag, the consumption patterns of *skhothane* reflected a slight deviation from the theories of fashion consumption. The three trickle theories are as follows:

- The trickle-down theory suggests that fashion is first adopted by the elite and then filters down to the masses (Veblen 1899).
- The trickle-up theory looks at fashion looking for inspiration from style innovation from the public (Polhemus 1994).
- Lastly, the trickle-across theory indicates that fashion is adopted across different groups at the same time with mass media as an agent for its dissemination (King 1963).

Due to the individualistic nature of the fluid identities that are evident in the group, and the influence of mass media, this study suggests that the fashion consumption of the *Italian Gates* follows more of a traffic circle flow of fashion dissemination (see Figure 10).

Given the above discussion, this study posits that consumerism as perpetuated by mass media is inherent to bling culture. However, the bling culture for the *Italian Gates* suggests that bling culture is not reflective of successful individuals who come from a disadvantaged background, but is also evident in those who still wish to succeed. So instead of the fashion identity of the participants

reflecting “mama I made it”; we see a “mama I will make it” mentality. The study further suggests that consumption, particularly conspicuous consumption, is a vital part of the performance and affirmation of *skhothane* identities that they wish to portray. In order to convincingly perform their restructured affluence to their audience, the *Italian Gates* need the tools of consumerism. The specifics of those consumption patterns are a restructured idea of wealth relative to their financial means. Finally, the study proposes a traffic-circle flow as a more appropriate description of the fashion dissemination patterns of the Italian Gates crew.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

SWAG MANUFACTURED

This study has investigated the fashion identities of the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew. In doing so, the constructs of the community and the key dynamics that equate the fashion identity of *skhothane* were uncovered. The following chapter highlights the objectives and aims outlined in Chapter 1 through a general summary of the findings. Lastly, the chapter highlights the limitations of the study and proposes directions for future research.

6.1 GENERAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

The aim of the study was to explore and describe the *skhothane* neo-tribe and to map out the neo-tribe in terms of the specifics of its stylistic attributes and the factors that inform identity negotiation. The investigation aimed to explore the ways in which the *Italian Gates skhothane* group express their identity through clothing and the significance of the neo-tribe in a social context. The theoretical underpinnings of this study are rooted in post-subculture theory with the underlying themes of self-reflexivity, cultural capital and neo-tribes. Post-subculture theories were utilised as a framework within which to contextualise the behaviours and fashion identities of the *Italian Gates* crew. Concepts such as Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital further assisted in the identification of important assets that had to be considered when analysing what the crew members placed importance upon.

The overall findings of the study indicate that the Italian Gates become intertextual authors in their use of luxury clothes to portray the image of their desired affluence and social positions. The emergence of the neo-tribe reaffirms the postmodern reality but more so it demonstrates a shift in the identities of young black South Africans.

Furthermore, this study has uncovered that the idea of vandalism as a vital role in the performance of *skhothane* is a misconception that has been sensationalised and perpetuated by media. Secondly, the study uncovered the four types of ways of fashion performances that the *Italian Gates skhothane* can be categorised under: *Winkel* or *Taliana*, *i-Chomani*, *Peckser* and *Legends*. Lastly, the study has provided relevant terminologies in the description of the fashion identity of the neo-tribe, namely, the use of Swag as descriptive of ostentatious performative dress practices.

6.2 LIMITATIONS

One of the major limitations of ethnographic studies is the inability to make a generalisation. Firstly, the demographics of the study sample only project male *skhothane* identities. This was not the intention of this study; however, because of the snowball sampling method selected, the study used an accessible sample. Secondly, while reflective analysis was applied to limit researcher bias, the data set can still be influenced by the researcher's personality and background (being black, female and from the township). It is unlikely that the study would produce the exact same findings should an alternative researcher conduct the study.

Considering the time constraints of the study and the spontaneous and chaotic environment of the fieldwork, it was not practical to seek a study sample that would require parental consent. With this in mind, the study was further delimited to participants that were 18 years or older. The study sample's observed performances were located in Johannesburg, South Africa in the township location in Thembisa.

6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While the findings in this study have made a number of contributions to the knowledge and terminologies that can be applied in describing the fashion identity of *Skhothanes*, the description and definition of the style-fashion-dress of South African, bling culture- oriented neo-tribes, are still incomplete. As such more research should be conducted within this field. The current study identifies concepts such as intertextuality, bling culture, and swag as constructs of the study sample's fashion identity. However, this is an ethnographic study and, as explained in the study, limitations of the findings mean they cannot be generalised beyond the context of the *Italian Gates skhothane* crew. For the purpose of improving transferability, future studies should look at intertextuality, bling culture and swag within a larger sample of *Skhothanes* or in other consumption- oriented neo-tribes.

Although satisfactory sessions were conducted with data collection, there were unforeseen problems with data collection such as access to participants and budget restrictions. The travel budget was affected by the declining popularity of battles - where before there would be a battle every weekend, large gatherings are now planned and occur three times a year at the most. Travelling continually to Johannesburg to attend *skhothane* events was not practical.

Lastly, this study was limited to observation and discussion of male *skhothane*. There is evidence in media imagery and public Facebook posts that indicates the existence of female *Skhothanes*. However there is no documented literature – except passing mention - on the tensions experienced by the female *skhothane* in a male- dominated community; how she navigates her identity in a neo-tribe where the male participants may sometimes use multiple female groupies as an accessory and lastly, what the relationship is between the gendering of fashion and a neo-tribe that values Italian clothing above all else. It is therefore recommended that further studies be conducted using a larger sample inclusive of females.

There is a large gap in knowledge on undocumented South African style cultures. Perhaps a collaboration and compilation conference that focuses on African fashion theory could be considered; one that would result in a compilation of essays on South African style cultures that have swag as a signifying expression of their identity: “a reader of sorts” for swag.

6.3.1 Dissemination of study findings

During the course of the study photographs and edited video material were used as an exchange between researcher and participants. Because there was no monetary obligation and this was

voluntary, as a gesture of good will by the researcher, it was agreed to provide participants with photographs of themselves and a compilation of the interview into a video documentary format. Articles will be written for submission to Fashion and Culture journal publications.

One of the study impetuses was the lack of innovative South African style resources as inspiration. This is an idea further uncovered in literature, that fashion theory just does not have as comprehensive a resource of African neo-tribal sartorial practices as it does for the West. As a beginning step in the documentation of such style cultures, the findings accumulated in this research project will initiate the development of a digital booklet that will be produced in PDF format for free download via a website. The site will be supported with the relevant fashion writings and digital images as extrapolated from the research study findings. The use of web format will allow open access to more people.

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Appendix A – D: Transcripts and Journal notes

See enclosed CD

Appendix E – Letter of information and Consent



Department of Fashion and Textiles
Tel: 031-373 3750, Fax 031-373 3744
96 Brickfield Road, Overport, Durban 4091

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Dear research participant, thank you for showing interest in this study

Title of the research study: 'Swag': An ethnographic study of the fashion identities of the South African *izikhothane* youth subculture in Thokoza Park.

Principal investigator/s/researcher: Busisiwe Memela (BTech Fashion)

Supervisor: Nirma Madhoo-Chipps (MTech Fashion, MA Fashion Photography)

Co-supervisor: Professor Rolf Gaede (DTech, DPhil)

Brief introduction and purpose of the study: The aim of this study is to research the South African *izikhothane* subculture in Thokoza Park that is identifiable through its fashion and lifestyle - where they socialise, what they believe in, who they are, what they dress like, why they dress the way they do and where they come from? Like the American hip-hop and British punk subcultures have impacted fashion, the study aims to document *izikhothane* in order to document the style associated with them.

Outline of the procedures: As a voluntary participant in the study you will be asked to do the following things:

- Be observed, photographed and videotaped by the researcher in your natural scene / setting.
- Be available for 2 sessions of 2 hours each of scheduled video recorded or telephonic interviewing.
- Participate in individual and group interviews

Risks or discomforts to the participant: None

Benefits:

- As the researcher I am compiling information to develop a website - which will feature fashion writings and photographs about *izikhothane*. Furthermore the website will be open to forum

discussions and contributions from guest contributors with the hope of making it a sustainable project.

- I would like to submit a journal article for publication in an academic publication about *izikhothane*.

Reason/s why the participant may be withdrawn from the Study: As the participant, you can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and there is no penalty if you withdraw from the study.

Remuneration and costs of the Study:

- Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time with no penalty.
- No pay will be given to any of the participants.
- It will not cost you anything to participate in this study

Confidentiality: Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission. Should you wish to remain confidential please indicate and likewise if you would like your or group name(s) published.

The DUT Department of Fashion and Textiles and I will be the only ones who have access to original footage of videotaped or digitally recorded activities. If you allow me to take photographs and video footage of you, your permission will be asked through a model release form in order to grant me the required permissions. Again, all footage will be released with your consent.

If you do not wish to be identified, confidentiality will be maintained by means of a censor square over subject's face in video and photographs, false names will be utilised and the pitch of your voice will be altered.

Research data storage

All transcribed data for interview, observation and journal entries will be in Microsoft Word format. All transcribed data; video and photographic material will be protected in a WINRAR zip folder with a password and will be saved in my laptop that is password protected. To prevent loss due to computer viruses or other loss, data will also be stored in a two-step verification Dropbox account where only the researcher and department can access the files. Dropbox integration protects data from third party apps seeking permission to access account. To grant access, you will need to log in to your Dropbox account and explicitly press the authorise button when prompted. All data will be kept in storage for a minimum of 5 years and should you wish to withdraw your data you may.

Research-related Injury: There are no foreseeable injuries to the study as you will be observed in your natural setting.

Persons to contact in the event of any problems or queries:

Supervisor: Ms. Nirma Madhoo-Chipps

Researcher: Siwe Memela 074 370 5312

Supervisor contact: nirmam@dut.ac.za

The Institutional Research Ethics administrator: 031 373 2900.

Complaints can be reported to the DVC: TIP, Prof F. Otieno on 031 373 2382 or dvctip@dut.ac.za.

Appendix F – Zulu Letter of information and Consent



Department of Fashion and Textiles
Tel: 031-373 3750, Fax 031-373 3744
96 Brickfield Road, Overport, Durban 4091

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Mbambiqhaza othandekayo, ngiyabonga ngokukhombisa intshisekelo kulolu cwango

Ucwango lwami lubizwa ngokuthi: “Swag’: An ethnographic study of the fashion identities of the South African *izikhothane* youth subculture in Thokoza Park.”

Okungukuthi: “Umswenko’: Upheno ngokuqoka kwezikhothane eThokoza Park.”

Umcwango: Busisiwe Memela (BTech Fashion).

Umcwango omkhulu: Nirma Madhoo Chipps (MTech Fashion, MA Fashion Photography)

Osebenzisana nomcwango omkhulu: Rolf Gaede (DTech, DPhil)

Isingeniso nenhloso yocwango: Inhloso yalolu cwango ukuphenya kabanzi ngempilo yezikhothane zaseThokoza Park eNingizimu Afrika ezibonakala ngendlela yazo yokuqoka-bahlangana kuphi, iziphi izinto abakholelwa kuzo,baqoka kanjani, kungani beqoka ngalendlela abaqoka ngayo futhi basukaphi? Njengoba i-*hip-hop* yase Melika nama punks aseBrithani asebe nomthelela kwezemfashini, inhloso yalolu cwango ukubhala ngezikhothane ukuze kushicilelwe indlela yazo yokugqoka.

Okuhlelwe ukuba kwenziwe:Njengomuntu ozivumele ukuba ingxenye yololucwango uzocelwa ukuba wenze lokhu okulandelayo:

- Uzobukwa, uthathwe isithombe ebese uthwebulwa nge-video umcwango endaweni ojwayele ukutholakala kuyo.
- Kuzomele ubekhona izikhathi ezimbili ezahlukeni isikhathi esingamahora ama2 ukuze kuthwetshulwe i-video noma kube inhlololwazi esocingweni.

Kuzomele ubambe iqhaza kwihlololwazi lapho uwedwa noma niyiqoqo.

Ingozi kobambe iqhaza kulolu cwango: Ayikho

Okuzozuzwa:

- Njengomcwaningi ngiqoqa ulwazi ukuze ngiqale i-*website*-ezoshicilela ngezemfashini iphinde ibe nezithombe zezikhothani. Ngaphezu kwalokho le-website izoba nezingxoxo ezivulelekile lapho kuzokwamukelwa imibono eqhamuka kwabanye abantu ngethemba lokuyenza ibe umsebenzi oqhubekayo
- Ngingathanda ukubhala ngezikhothani ephephabhukwini lezifundiswa bese lishicilelwa.

Isi/lizathu esi/ezingenza obambe iqhaza ahoxe: Njengomuntu obambe iqhaza kulolu cwaningo uyazikhethela ukuthi uyavuma noma awuvumi ukuba ingxenywe yalolu cwaningo. Uma uvuma ukuba kulolu cwaningo, uvumelekile ukuhoxa nonoma ingasiphi isikhathi akukho mibandela. Uvumelekile ukungayiphenduli imibuzo ongathandi ukuyiphendula futhi akukho nhlawulo ozoyikhoka uma uhoxa kulolu cwaningo.

Inkokhelo nezindleko kulolucwaningo

- Uyazikhethela ukubamba iqhaza futhi uvumelekile ukuhoxa nonoma ingasiphi isikhathi ngale kwenhlawulo.
- ayikho inkokhelo ezonikwa ababambe iqhaza.
- akukho mali ozoyikhokha ngokubamba iqhaza kulolu cwaningo.

Okwemfihlo: Uma uthanda ukuthi kwaziwe noma kungaziwa ukuthi ungubani uyacelwa ukuba usho. Uma ufuna igama leqembu lishicilelwe noma lingashicilelwa uyacelwa ukuba ukuveze lokho.

Yimi kanye neskhungo sezemfundo iDUT emnyangweni weze Fashion and Textile kuphela esizokwazi ukubona konke okuqoshiwe. Uma ungivumela ukuthatha izithombe nokukuqopha kwi-video, imvumo yakho izocelwa nge *Model Release Form* ukuze ngithole imvumo. Konke okuqoshiwe kuzodedelwa ngemvumo yakho.

Uma ungathandi ukwaziwa, ubuso bakho buzofihlwa ngomugqa omunyama emehlweni akho, igama kanye nezwi lakho lizoshintshwa.

Ukugcinwa kokuqoqwe ocwaningweni

Konke okuqoqwe ngenhlololwazi yakho, kuzoqoshwa kwi *Microsoft word format*. Wonke ama-*video* nezithombe zizovikelwa nge *WINRAR zip folder* egcinwe kwi *Laptop* -*password*. Ukuvikela okuqoqiwe kumagciwane e *Computer* okuqoqiwe kuzogcinwa kwi *two-step verification Dropbox* akhawunti lapho kuwumcwaningi nomnyango kuphela abangakwazi ukungena kuyo le akhawunti. i *Dropbox* akhawunti ivimbela ama-*third party apps* afuna ukusebenzisa iakhawunti yakho. Ukuze uvume ukuthi iakhawunti isetshenziswe kuzodinga ufake imininigwane yeakhawunti yakho uciphaze inkinobho yokunika imvumo uma icelwa. Konke okuqoqiwe kuzogcinwa okungenani iminyaka emi-5 futhi uma ufuna ukuhoxisa okuqoqiwe mayelana nawe unghoxa.

Ingozi engenzeka ocwaningweni: Akulindelekile ukuba ulimale ngokuba yingxenywe yalolucwaningongoba uzobe ubukelwa endaweni ojwayele ukutholakala kuyo.

Abantu ongaxhumana nabo uma unemibuzo:

Umcwani ngi omkhulu: Mrs Nirma Madhoo-Chipps

Umcwani ngi: Siwe Memela 074 370 5312

I-*contact* yomcwani ngi omkhulu: nirmam@dut.ac.za

Institutional Research Ethics administrator: 031 373 2900.

Izikhhalazo zingayiswa kuDVC: TIP, Solwazi F. Otieno ku 031 373 2382 nomadvctip@dut.ac.za.



- Ngiyavuma ukuthi ngichazeliwe ngu _____ ngalolucwaningi. Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____
- Ngiyifundile imininingwane yalolu cwaningo, noma ngilalelile ngezwa kuchazwa ngokomlomo. Ngakho-ke futhi ngiyasho ukuthi ngiyayiqonda.
- Ngiyazi ukuthi imiphumela yocwaningo, kanye neminingwane yami ayizukudalulwa.
- Ngiyavuma ukuthi imininingwane yocwaningo ihlaziye ngekhomputha ngumcwaningi.
- Angiphoqiwe ukuba yingxenywe yalolucwaningo, Ngingahoxa ukuba yingxenywe yalolucwaningo nganoma yisiphi isikhathi ngaphandle kwokuhlawula noma ukulahlekelwa ukusizakala.
- Lapho ebenginembuzo khona, ngichazeliwe kabanzi. Ngiyazikhethela mina ukuba yingxenywe yalolucwaningo.
- Imiphumela yalolucwaningo ephathelene nami ekuqhubekeni kwaocwaningo ngizokwazi ukuyithola.

Igama lakho eliphelele **Usuku** **Iskhathi** **Sayina**

Mina, _____ ngiyavuma ukuthi obhalwe ngaphezulu uchazelwe ngokuphelele ngalolucwaningo,

Igama lomcwaningi **Usuku** **Sayina**

Igama likafakazi **Usuku** **Sayina**

Appendix G - Photography consent/model release form



E-mail: busisiwem1@dut.ac.za

031 373 3717/074 370 5312

PHOTOGRAPHY CONSENT/MODEL RELEASE FORM

I do hereby grant permission to Busisiwe Memela to take and use: photographs, videotape and/or digital images of me/my child in promotional or educational materials related to her M Applied Arts in Fashion as follows:

- In printed publications or materials
- In electronic publications or presentations
- On the Durban University of Technology website (*www.dut.ac.za*)

I agree that my image may be revealed in descriptive text or commentary in connection with the above mentioned study. I authorise the use of these images indefinitely without compensation to me. All negatives, positives, prints, digital reproductions and videotape shall be the property of Busisiwe Memela.

Name

Signature

Date

Signed at (location)

Appendix H–Zulu Photography consent/model release form

**‘SWAG’: AN
ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF
THE IZIKHOTHANEYOUTH
SUBCULTURE IN SOUTH
AFRICA**

**E-mail: busisiwem1@dut.ac.za
031 373 3717/074 370 5312**

PHOTOGRAPHY CONSENT/MODEL RELEASE FORM

Ngiyamnika uBusisiwe Memela imvumo yokuba athathe futhi azisebenzise: izithombe ama *video* futhi/noma izithombe ezi *digital* zami/bengane yami ezintweni zokudayisa noma zemfundo ezimayelana neziqgu zakhe ze-M Applied Arts in Fashion ngaloluhlobo:

- Ekushicelwelweni okuphrintiwe noma impahla
- Umqulo ozoshicelwa kwi-*internet* kwezethulo
- Kwi-website yase *Durban University of Technology* (www.dut.ac.za)

Ngiyavuma ukuthi umfanekiso wami ungavezwa embhalweni noma kwezinkulumo ezihlangene nalolucwaningo oluchaziwe ngaphezulu. Ngiyavuma ukuthi zisetshenziswe unomphela ngingeke ngize ngikhokhelwe. Zonke izithombe, imfanekiso ephindiwe nama *video* kuzoba impahla kaBusisiwe Memela.

Igama

Sayini

Usuku

Indawo yokusayina

Lokhu okwababambe iqhaza abangaphansi kweminyaka eyi-18, umzali noma umqaphi naye kumele asayine:

Mina, (igama) _____, (umzali noma umqaphi wombambi qhaza), ngifundile futhi ngiyakuqonda okuqukethwe kulencwadi. Ngiyavuma ukuthi umbambi qhaza enze konke okuqukethwe phambidlana, futhi ngiyangena futhi ngiyavuma ngokuphelele ukucabangela ingozini nokukhishwa esithiweni.

Igama

Sayini

Usuku

Indawo yokusayini

Appendix I - E-mail for recruitment of gatekeepers

This is the e-mail sent out to identify *izikhothane* participants who could be recruited as gatekeepers. Informal language was used in order to suit the age group of the intended recipients.

From: busmemela@gmail.com

Sent:

Subject: Izikhothane Research

Hi there,

My name is Siwe Memela. I am a Masters student at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). I am conducting a subculture fashion research project into *izikhothane*. I would like your input or participation in the study to help make this work. This project plans to document *izikhothane* and better understand them in a more factual manner. I would like to get a first-hand account about *izikhothane* and not just what the media has said.

What do I expect from you?

If you:

- Are a part of the *izikhothane* subculture,
- used to be a part of the *izikhothane* subculture or
- know anyone who is a part of the *izikhothane* subculture who would be interested in participating in the study and helping,

Please contact me via phone or email on this address, Siwe Memela:

Tel: 074 179 4246

031 909 6032

If you have any questions about me or the study you can also contact my supervisor/s:

Nirma Madhoo-Chipps: nirmam@dut.ac.za

Rolf Gaede: rolfg@dut.ac.za

Or The Institutional Research Ethics administrator: 031 373 2900.

Thank you

Siwe Memela

Appendix J: Proposed semi-structured interview schedule

These are the proposed questions for the video recorded semi-structured interview. There is no data set outlining the demographics of *izikhothane*; furthermore, the chosen sampling method of snowball sampling makes it impossible to assume the demographic of the sample. In order to achieve one of the study's aims - to understand who they are and how they translate their identity through dress - demographic questions form part of the interview schedule. Considering that English may not be some of the participants' first language, as a fluent speaker in both languages I will interchange between English and *isiZulu* where further explanation is needed.

Demographics

1. What is your full name?
2. What is your age?
3. Is the participant male, female or other? (The following question will not be asked but will be noted for data capturing purposes).
4. Are you single or married or divorced or widowed?
5. What is your occupation?
6. Where do you reside?

Introductory questions








- 1) For the purpose of this interview, I need to explain that a subculture is a group of people that share a common passion or value for a lifestyle such as *izikhothane*. Knowing this, do you consider yourself part of *izikhothane*?
- 2a) What makes you a member of *izikhothane*?
- 2b) How long have you been a member of *izikhothane*?
- 2c) Is it the same for everyone who wants to be part of *izikhothane*?
- 3a) Is there a ritual or do you wear specific things that confirm that you are part of the *izikhothane* subculture?
- 3b) What is the desired role/effect of the rituals that *izikhothane* perform (e.g. to show a certain belief, to identify yourself to a group of people, purely for pleasure, to attract the opposite sex, personal significance)?
- 3c) Considering the community you have grown up in, how do you justify your rituals and practices from a financial perspective?
- 4a) How much does an outfit cost you? How do you choose what you wear?
- 4b) Does your clothing have any meaning whether personal or decorative?
- 4c) What makes you choose the clothes you buy when you go shopping?
- 4d) How do you view commercial/ normal fashion clothing worn by people on the streets?
- 5) How do you think people view you?




Socio-economic/ Political views

- 1) Why do you participate in this?

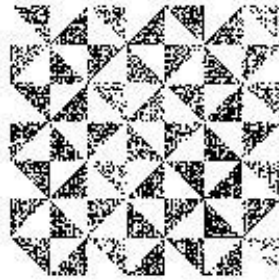
- 2a) What are your views and beliefs influenced by?
- 2b) Do you think your involvement in this is because of the way you see life/views/beliefs?
- 2c) Are your views influenced by the community/circumstances you grew up in?
- 2d) How much of what you see on TV/media/internet influences your lifestyle/decision making/aspirations in life?
- 2e) Who are your role models?
- 3) Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?
- 4a) You said you work, is this how you fund your lifestyle?
- 4b) You said you don't work, how do you fund your lifestyle?
- 5b) Do you ever plan on joining another lifestyle and quitting the *izikhothane* subculture?
- 5b) Do you know of any other groups or lifestyles that you would like to join or participate in?
- 6) Do you always dress like this (work, school, and parties) or is it only specific to when you are going to be with other *izikhothanes*?

Appendix K – URL location for raw data video files

Video Thumbnail	Transcript label	URL	Appendix
	TMBS10102015O	https://youtu.be/J50jD1JPmFw	B
	TMBS10102015_Legend	https://youtu.be/BfuvWZ1M_Lo	B
	TMBS15012017V (12)_Introduction	https://youtu.be/2Q64HcY3ZVQ	D
	TMBS15012017V (12)_That thing	https://youtu.be/m-Vgkjb5Zc	
	TMBS15012017V (13)_Outtro	https://youtu.be/k1gb6G3bt6c	
	TMBS15012017V (14)_Background	https://youtu.be/hiyclOTpLDo	
	TMBS15012017V (15)_Why ubukhothane	https://youtu.be/U-yK-EM5hJY	

	<p>TMBS15012017V https://youtu.be/K3JIU3SEd6g (17)_Droshka</p>	
	<p>TMBS15012017V https://youtu.be/D57mN5CxMhk (18)_Dressing to impress</p>	
	<p>TMBS15012017V https://youtu.be/O8GvKQfRpZY (19)_Dress Code</p>	
	<p>TMBS15012017V https://youtu.be/ChAbj1P7Hi4 (20)_amaKipKip</p>	

Appendix L – Institutional Research Ethics Committee Approval



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Health Sciences
P.O. Box 133, Durban School Site,
Campus, KwaZulu-Cape
Durban, University of Technology

P.O. Box 133, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Telephone: 031 2610
Fax: 031 261 2627
Email: ir@duet.ac.za
<http://www.duet.ac.za/ir/ethics/ir-ethics/>

www.duet.ac.za

20 October 2015

IREC Reference Number: **REC 119/15**

Ms B S Memela
Gershwayo Circle
BB828
Umhlatzi
Durban
4031

Dear Ms Memela

'Swag': An ethnographic study of the fashion identities of the South African izikhothane youth subculture in Thokoza Park

I am pleased to inform you that Full Approval has been granted to your proposal REC 119/15.

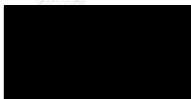
The Proposal has been allocated the following Ethical Clearance number **IR/EC 119/15**. Please use this number in all communication with this office.

Approval has been granted for a period of two years, before the expiry of which you are required to apply for safety monitoring and annual recertification. Please use the Safety Monitoring and Annual Recertification Report form which can be found in the Standard Operating Procedures [SOPs] of the IREC. This form must be submitted to the IREC at least 3 months before the ethics approval for the study expires.

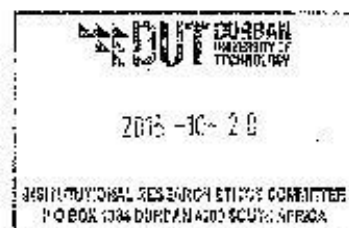
Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely



Professor J K Adani
Chairperson: IREC



Appendix M – Images of Smarteez and Pansula subculture

The Smarteez



(Saunders 2011)



(Schuman 2012)

The Pansulas



Performing *Pantsula's*

(*First Look: Step Up or Step Out* 2011)