Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Women's Studies International Forum

Swapping the veil for casual clothing: A study of Iranian immigrant women living in Norway[☆]

Fatemeh Fathzadeh[*]

Disciplinary Studies of Culture (KULT), Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, Norway

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

With reference to Michel Foucault's theory of power and freedom, this article draws on narrative interviews with Iranian immigrant women living in Norway to explore how the sartorial technology in the two seemingly contrasting national contexts of Iran—a conservative Islamic society—and Norway—a liberal secular society—(re) shape the participants' negotiations of subjectivity and freedom. The study shows that while the potential choice to not to wear the veil after migration allowed the participants to experience some freedom in relation to their clothing practices, this freedom was countered with racial experiences that pushed them to self-policing their appearance and clothes in accordance with established norms of clothing in Norway. As such, the study stresses the need to move beyond the reductive dichotomy between Islam and secularism and highlights how specific normative and semiotic definitions differently operate to regulate and discipline women's bodies and clothing practices.

1. Introduction

This study draws on empirical data collected through 13 narrative interviews with Iranian women living in Norway to probe their freedom of choice in clothes. In doing so, the study contrasts the discipline of wearing the veil as prescribed by the authorities in Iran and the potential choice to not to wear the veil after migration to Norway, a pioneer country in gender equality with liberal/secular clothing regulation. How do the participants negotiate this shift in clothing regulations in the two seemingly contrasting social contexts—an Islamic vs. a secular society?

There is a close link between the body, sexuality and clothing practices. In all societies—though to different degrees—sexuality is partly controlled through clothing regulation, especially along gender and racial lines. As a cultural and social force, sexuality regulates the bodies into the male and female categories and inscribes the cultural norms of femininity and masculinity on the body (Grosz, 1994, p. 62). Given the proximity of clothes to the body and its sexual characteristics, the male/female boundary is translated into clothing conventions. Dichotomous representations of men as serious, active and strong, as compared with women as frivolous, inactive and delicate, are marked out in clothing styles and adornments, which in turn shape male and female bodies and sexualities. Historically, female sexuality is perceived as more

dangerous and threatening than male sexuality and thus has to be regulated through various mechanisms, including clothing conventions (Entwistle, 2015).

Sexuality and clothing regulations are also a means of enforcing racial differences. According to Baldi (2018), the opposition between the West and the non-West is partly explained in terms of women's clothing. Clothes and the extent to which they reveal the female body have become a measurement of women's freedom in contemporary Europe. On the one hand, the covered (veiled) body of Muslim women is viewed as sexually oppressed, in contrast to the uncovered and liberal body of Western women (Scott, 2007). On the other, media portray women of colour as exoticized and overtly sexual; their sexuality is demonized and presented as 'less constrained, less demure, and less docile' compared to Western women (Tarrant & Jolles, 2012, p. 62). These oppositional discourses that construct and regulate the 'other' to Western society have a significant impact on immigrant women's everyday clothing practices.

Given the historical dynamics of veiling practices in Iran, clothes play a major part in the Iranian immigrant women's negotiations of subjectivity. The women in this study had lived at least three decades of their lives in Iran, where their bodies had been monitored and controlled by the Islamic disciplinary regulations of veiling. The potential choice to

not to wear the veil after migration to Norway, where cultural norms appear to be less rigid in regard to female clothing, provides a ripe opportunity for examining how the two seemingly different national geographical contexts (re)shape the women's relationship to themselves and clothing regimes in the two contexts.

To frame this enquiry, I draw on Michel Foucault's earlier work on power, knowledge and subjectivity (Foucault, 1975, 1978) and highlight power mechanisms that constitute the participants' clothing practices. Combining this with his later writing on ethical self-formation (Foucault, 1986; Foucault et al., 1994), I highlight the complementary role sartorial technology plays in the construction of the participants' subjectivity and explore the creative ways in which the participants relate to themselves through their clothing practices. Sartorial technology, here, is defined as socio-cultural practices that are formed through complex modalities of power, including gender, sexuality, race and religion among others. These practices involve the alteration of the body through fabric, colour and style of clothes as well as other bodily adornments such as jewellery and various style of hair (Flewellen, 2018). In the following section, I provide a brief history of sartorial practices in Iran and Norway. I will then map out the research methods and proceed with an explanation of theoretical concepts. Finally, I will present the findings of the study.

2. Background

Regulation of sexuality through clothing practices (particularly that of women) has a long history in Iranian society. In the last two political periods, from Pahlavi monarchy (advocators of modernisation) to the Islamic Republic of Iran (promoters of Islamisation), clothing regulations have played an important part in building the nation and sustaining identities. In both political paradigms, sartorial technologies were deployed to form women into a single collective body, therefore presenting to the outside world (especially the Western world) a national identity of being either modern or religious (Rahbari et al., 2019). The main concern of the Pahlavi regime, as noted by Najmabadi (1987), was 'the material transformation of a backward society' (p. 203). Rather than bringing substantial social and cultural changes in women's status, Reza Shah (the first king of the Pahlavi 1925–1941) grounded his biopolitics in visual registers of modernity. To change the image of the 'traditional woman', Reza Shah outlawed the veil and forced women to adapt Western styles of clothing. Reza Shah's modern sartorial technology simultaneously increased the visibility of a small minority of upper- and middle-class women in public spaces and disqualified the majority of lower-class women from definitions of modernity. The conflict between the modern image of ideal woman and the Islamic realities in which the women lived led to further marginalisation of women (Zahedi, 2007). However, increased opposition between the clergy and the Pahlavi dynasty made the clothing regulation policies of Mohammad Shah, the second king of the Pahlavi (1941–1978), less effective. Once again, the black full-body *chador* appeared on urban streets. Later, with the promotion of the concept of 'authentic Muslim women' by some revolutionary Islamic thinkers—notably Ali Shariati (1933–1977), who viewed both Western and traditional values as the source of women's oppression—a combination of the *manteau* (a loose-fitting garment) and *rusari* (headscarf) became an alternative to the *chador* (a large piece of cloth draping over the head and body that dates back to the tenth century) (Bucar, 2017). Soon after founding of the Islamic Republic, the Islamic regime implemented biopolitical technologies grounded in bodily discourses around modesty, which was primarily implemented through the imposition of compulsory veiling and gender segregation policies as a means to create a strong religious-based national identity.

The first decade after the revolution, women experienced a dramatic decline in their social, economic and political status. With the onset of Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988) soon after the revolution, black became the appropriate colour of clothing for both men and women to signify public

mourning for martyrs who had lost their lives for the country. Strict surveillance policies were implemented in public spaces and major institutions, including schools, work organisations and streets, to control men and women's clothing (Farahani, 2007). The next decade was coincident with major domestic and global shifts, including the death of the supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini (1989), the ceasefire with Iraq (1988), globalisation and the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989–1997), whose moderate policy of easing social and cultural control gave women some authority over the colour and style of their clothing (Moruzzi & Sadeghi, 2006). The turning shift in women's clothing practices occurred, however, with the presidency of Muhammad Khatami (1997), whose liberal national and international policies gave women more freedom over their clothing. In this period, loose-fitting, dark coloured veils were replaced by fashionable, tight and bright coloured veils that gave women the opportunity to expose more of their skin, hair and body contours (Bucar, 2017). Today, Iranian women have more power over the fabric, colour and style of their clothing, although they are constantly monitored and policed in public places by the Iranian authorities.

Similar to other Western countries, women's clothing practices in Norway have been influenced by major social shifts in the Western world, including the establishment of modernity, liberation movements and the rise of capitalism. Feminists' objections to feminine clothing styles, which they find socially and physically limiting, has a long history. Starting in the 19th century, first-wave feminists along with educators and doctors repudiated tight corsets, laces and long, voluminous skirts on the basis of women's health and morality, advocating for simpler forms of dress such as bloomers. While first-wave feminists succeeded, if only to a small extent, in making women's clothing less cumbersome—for example, by challenging men's exclusive right to trousers—the significant change in women's clothing occurred in the 20th century with the rise of the women's liberation movement and sexual revolution. These phenomena presented two opposing forces that created a split among second-wave feminists over the core ideals of female emancipation. On the one hand, sexual revolution and its appreciation of the natural body and women's sexual expression gave rise to stereotypically gendered clothing styles, which portrayed women as sexual, girlish and emaciated. On the other, the importance of equality between men and women and the presence of women in public life led to the promotion of unisex/androgynous clothes (Paoletti, 2015). The conflict between sexual freedom and female clothing styles continues to be a soaring issue for third-wave feminists today. The negative backlash against feminism and the importance of appreciating differences among women has required third-wave feminists to reclaim feminism as stylish and sexy and to stress women's 'freedom of choices' (Groeneveld, 2009). Nevertheless, violent behaviour against women's sexuality, such as revelations occurring through the Me-Too movement, highlights the complexities feminists face in the conflict between women's sexual freedom and other feminists' core values. Along the same lines, studies on clothing practices in Norway have taken up the issue of women's clothing practices within three major themes: women's clothing style in male-dominated careers, including blue-collar (Neumann et al., 2012) and white-collar (Bolsø & Mühleisen, 2015; Krogstad & Storvik, 2012); clothes and their role in identity formation (Berlin, 2012; Klepp & Storm-Mathisen, 2005); and, immigrant women's clothing practices in Norway—namely, Muslim women's veiling (Strabac et al., 2016) and Russian women's appearance and clothing in Northern Norway (Wara & Munkejord, 2018).

3. Framing the enquiry

Drawing on Foucault's conception of power, knowledge and subjectivity, this study sets out to examine the sartorial technologies that constitute Iranian immigrant women's subjectivities in the two seemingly contrasting modern regimes: Norway, a liberal secular society, and Iran, a conservative Islamic society. In doing so, the study examines the

various ways in which the participants negotiate their freedom and reclaim their femininity through their clothing practices.

In his earlier work, Foucault's main objective was to reveal how a particular disciplinary practice (e.g., sexuality) is shaped through knowledge that operates as specific 'truth games' (normative systems) through various 'technologies of power', in order to govern human beings. Rethinking the relation between knowledge and power, Foucault analysed the two concepts as inevitably interconnected. He asserted that knowledge of all sorts is implicated in power. However, according to Foucault, this power is not negative and repressive—meaning, it is not possessed by specific individuals who can then use it against others. Rather, it is an insidious form of power that operates as a technology, as a positive and productive procedure ostensibly intended to persuade, fulfil and liberate human beings. Since this new form of power is directly applied to the body, he called it 'bio-power'. Bio-power, according to Foucault (1978), operates through two axes: the discipline of the body (anatomo-politics), which involves 'harnessing, intensification, and distribution of forces, the adjustment and economy of energies', as well as the regulation of the population as a whole (bio-politics), which brings about 'comprehensive measures, statistical assessments, and interventions aimed at the entire social body' (Foucault, 1978, pp. 145–146).

Sexuality is central to Foucault's conception of bio-power. For Foucault, sexuality is not a 'natural' drive that is repressed through social constraints—an idea promoted by Enlightenment theorists; rather, it is an effect of knowledge and power. His famous quote, 'We must not think that by saying yes to sex, one says no to power', highlights his opposition to liberals' underlying assumption of sexual freedom (Foucault, 1978, p. 157). According to Foucault, the proliferation of discourses on sexuality in modern science fields, including medicine, psychiatry and pedagogy, serve to examine, measure, categorise and control individuals by targeting them through normalisation politics, rather than liberate them from sexual prohibitions. One of the main objectives of Foucault's work had been to reveal the ways in which social mechanisms of control have become naturalised and normalised through liberal discourses of freedom. However, Foucault's works have been criticised on the question of freedom, as it is argued that his rejection of the autonomous subject and his emphasis on the constitutive capacity of power leaves no room for the subject's resistance and freedom (Taylor, 1984).

In response to these criticisms, Foucault shifted his attention from 'technology of power' to 'technology of the self' in his later work (Foucault, 1986) and explored the ethical ways through which the subject constitutes a creative relationship with itself. Ethics, for Foucault, is not understood as a set of moral codes and behaviour; rather, it is defined as a creative way of relating to oneself according to various rationalities and practices (Foucault et al., 1994; Huijer, 1999). Moreover, in Foucault's view, freedom is not the absence of power or an ideal that has to be strived for; rather, it is a condition for exercising power (Foucault, 1986; O'leary, 2006). In seeking to expose the limits of a disciplinary practice, the individual relies on existing 'truth games', since he/she is always involved in what it resists. Resistance, in this sense, is a 'rational will' formed through the interplay of power relations and truths (Lemke, 2011).

Foucault's insight on the formation of the subject can be applied to examine dress as a discursive and disciplinary practice and to reveal the power relations and historical conditions that maintain sartorial realities of the present moment. As a body-related practice, clothes are deployed by the state as a technology of power to administer and control people's lives. Each society (whether secular or Islamic) has a specific sartorial truth—namely, its clothing politics, which is constituted historically within legitimate discourses and accepted forms of knowledge. The knowledge that orders clothing practices is organised around sexual characteristics of the body (Ribeiro, 2003). Sexuality is central to the constitution of the self and its Others. As the other of a man, a woman's body is more closely associated with sexuality and dress. 'What a woman wears', in Entwistle's (2015) words, 'is a matter of greater moral concern than what a man wears' (p. 21), because a woman's body and sexuality are considered to be in greater need of monitoring. Clothing regulation, among others, serves as a mechanism to control women's sexuality.

However, given the changes in the Western secular world in relation to sexual freedom, a sharp division is drawn between Western secular societies and yet another problematic 'Other' of Western freedom, namely, Islamic societies. As Scott (2007) asserts, secularism is built on the opposition between the West/self and the non-West/Other. The idea of freedom in secular discourses, according to Scott (2007), is narrowly linked to Christian values and the rights of women. The liberal discourses on freedom mark a distinction between secular values and Islamic values, which is partly explained in terms of women's clothing: an opposition between uncovered Western women who freely follow their desires and covered Muslim women who is oppressed and lack sexual freedom. This distinction is shaped through the semiotics of dress, that is, a program of self-representation and a means of access to power (Roces & Edwards, 2010). Along the same line, Baldi (2018), in her article 'Burkini, bikini and the female (un)dressed body', questions the controversial debates that emerged in 2016 surrounding the burkini—a modest swimsuit donned by Muslim women on Western beaches—in France and other European countries. Contrasting the meanings attributed to the bikini, as a 'naked body' that symbolises women's freedom and liberation, versus the burkini, as a 'covered body' that is viewed as limited and constrained, she contends that clothes and the extent to which they reveal the female body have become a measurement of women's freedom in contemporary Europe. This distinction is not neutral; it is constructed on a semiotic ideology that is shaped through a particular discourse that define women's desire and agency without considering their specific embodied and affective experiences in relation to clothes. Women's freedom in this sense is based on a specific Christian/liberal/secular rationale that forecloses the plurality of subjectivities (Baldi, 2018).

Likewise, the self-other division is sharply illustrated in discourses on hyper-sexualisation of women of colour in Western popular culture. As Yegenoglu (1998) states, throughout the Western colonial history the people of colour—particularly women of colour—are portrayed as exoticized and overtly sexual in animalistic ways. The media imageries construct a contradictory image of women of colour as alien and overtly sexual in opposition to Western women, whose nakedness is linked to progress and liberty (Christensen, 2009). These oppositional discourses that were shaped in the early period of colonial expansion are still relevant in constructing and regulating the 'other' of Western society. They are deployed as a surveillance mechanism to control and manage immigrant women's bodies and have significant influence on immigrant women's lives in general, and their choice of clothing and the relationship they constitute with their bodies in particular. As these studies illustrate, discourses on sexual freedom in Western society are merely a mechanism, a discursive apparatus for differentiating 'us' (Westerns) from 'them' (non-Westerns). Western clothing practices are structured on certain sensibilities, knowledge and behaviour that are aimed at controlling women's sexuality according to their class, gender, race and religious identity (Fathzadeh, 2020). Drawing on these insights, I explore how Iranian immigrant women's relationship to their clothing transforms in the process of crossing national borders and cultural boundaries.

4. Methods

The empirical material of this study was collected through 13 narrative interviews with Iranian-born women living in Norway, lasting between 2 and 5 h. The participants were selected through the snowballing method. After identifying the initial participants, I asked them for assistance in identifying further potential participants. All interviews were conducted in Persian and transcribed into Persian. The excerpts from the transcriptions used in this chapter were translated into English by me, the author. To maintain confidentiality the participants were

given a pseudonym and all identifiable information was omitted or changed from the written data and presentation of analysis. Although the interview guide covered broader aspects of the participants' lived experiences, this article mainly focuses on the participants' clothing practices. The main questions that guided the study's analytic interest included the participants' decisions to wear or not to wear the veil after migration, and its impact on their lives in Norway. In addition, I posed questions that focused on their clothing experiences in Iran.

The participants' ages ranged from 31 to 56, and they had been living in Norway between 1 and 32 years. Being well-educated, all had obtained their BA in Iran, with the exception of Farideh, who attained hers in Norway, and Shadi and Ziba, who were forced to drop out of college because of the Islamic revolution. They completed their education in Norway at different levels, including BA, MA, PhD, and Post-doc. All 13 participants, except Shirin and Farideh, had work experience in Iran lasting between 2 and 18 years. After migration, they had worked in different Norwegian organisations (e.g., education, health sector and service) between 1 and 30 years. At the time of interview, Samira, Soheila, Taraneh and Simin were unemployed. All participants were living in heterosexual family relationships, excluding Bahar who self-identified as bisexual. Most were married at the time of interview, except Shadi and Taraneh, who had divorced, and Negin, who was a widow. Ziba and Bahar had never been married at the time of the interview. All of them grew up in believing or practicing Muslim families who had lost their faith over time, though Farideh identified herself as a Baha'i.

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of NESH (The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities) and in line with the privacy regulations of NSD (Norwegian Centre for Research Data). Despite sharing some group characteristics, the participants in this study could not be lumped into one category of 'Iranian immigrant women', nor could they be viewed as representative of all Iranian immigrant women in Norway. Having a similar autobiographical frame of reference as my participants, I share multiple positionalities with my participants, including being woman, Iranian, Muslim, immigrant as well as shared spatial history, such as places, events, facilities and constraints. My research questions and the outcome of my research is strongly influenced by this shared positionality, which can be viewed as both the possibility and limitation of the study. While this positioning facilitated an intimate relationship with the participants and encouraged them to share their stories, it also confronted me with the dilemma of the ethics and politics of representation.

To analyse empirical materials, I applied Catherine K. Riessman's (2008) Thematic Narrative Analysis (TNA). According to Riessman, the primary attention of TNA is on 'what is said' (the content of speech), rather than aspects of 'the telling' (the structure of speech) (p. 53). To make sense of the participants' reports of events and experiences, I employed an inductive approach, whereby the themes were determined by the data. The produced themes were then critically interpreted through the lens of narrative inquiry, where the link between the social (macro) and the personal (micro) were reflected upon to foster a deeper understanding of the participants' negotiations of subjectivity. This article is part of my doctoral project, two main themes emerged from the data, including 'clothing experiences' and 'working life experiences', this article in particular focuses on women's clothing experiences. After assigning the key theme to the segments of transcripts, I looked for the link between the coded segments using three main subthemes, including 'interactions: at institutional level and at micro-social level of everyday interactions', 'participant's responses to the clothing norms: incidents where they conform versus those where they resist or subvert the norms', and 'the context where an incident happens: public spaces (e.g., street, park, workplace, taxis, etc.) and private spaces (e.g., home, party, gatherings, etc.)'. These categorised segments were then divided into incidents that happened in Norway and those happened in Iran for the purpose of comparing the participants' experiences in the two contexts.

5. Analysis

5.1. Everyday clothing practices in Iran

In the following section, I flesh out the participants' clothing narratives in Iran. The two main themes discussed include the ways in which the Islamic sartorial technology had regulated the participants' clothing, and the participants' diverse ways of complying and challenging these disciplinary mechanisms of control through self-disciplining as well as ethical practices of freedom.

Before proceeding with the analysis, it is worth having a picture of the participants' style of clothing in Iran. Since there is no legal definition of what constitutes a proper veil in Iran, women have some flexibility in choosing their clothing. However, depending on the context, the dress code is subject to varying degree of strictness. The participants described their veil in a variety of styles depending on the context. None of them wore *chador*, the traditional form of the veil that is favoured by the government. They described their veil, in state organisations (e.g., schools, universities, government offices, workplaces, etc.), as a combination of *manteau* (a loose cloak) and *maghnaeh* (a piece of fabric that covers hair and neck and tightens around the face with one opening), which were usually in dull colours (e.g., navy, black and beige). In other places such as streets, shops, private work organisations and so on, where the participants had some freedom to draw on their own personal taste and existing fashion trends, they would wear a combination of a *manteau* and a *rusari* (a square or rectangular piece of cloth draped loosely on the hair and shoulders), which would make it possible to expose more of their hair, skin and the body contours through a diverse range of styles. In the following quote, Farideh gives a glimpse into her clothing style in two different contexts—namely, the workplace and the streets.

> At work, we had to put on dark colours with strict dress codes. But, in the evenings, I'd go out, walking, having dinner, or window shopping with friends, and I usually wore fashionable colourful *manteau* with Capri pants and a scarf.

5.1.1. The veil, a repressive and disciplinary power

The veil serves as a technology of power for the Iranian government to regulate Iranian women's bodies. The following passage from Samira's narrative, in which she reflects over clothing regulations in an Iranian state-organisation where she worked as an intern for a short period, reveals the insidious ways in which the veil is deployed to discipline women's bodies through surveillance, normalising judgments and punitive measures.

> I worked as an intern in an oil company in the south of Iran for a short period. At the security unit, they would check our clothing. Usually there were two women with black *chadors*, heavy eyebrows and a moustache. You weren't allowed to pass through if you had on socks or pants in bright colours. They would force you going back home, to change your clothes. If your *manteau* had slits on the sides, they would sew it with a thread in opposite colour to make you visible, or they would remove your lipstick with tissues. But the security unit functioned as a completely separate unit. After passing through the security, no one in the company questioned our clothing. After a while, we came up with a solution—we decided to wear *chador* while entering the security, and we would take it off after passing through.

Firstly, Samira's description of the nature of disciplinary practices employed by the female guards starkly illuminates the ways in which women's bodies became a particular site of discipline. These disciplinary practices target the material and aesthetic dimensions of their clothing, including the style, colour of their clothes and traces of makeup on their faces. The aim of this meticulous attention to minute details of women's clothing, such as, 'the colour of socks and pants', 'the slits on the sides of

manteau', 'the shade of lipstick' and so forth, is to train and modify women's bodies. This modification is achieved through specific punitive measures including 'force you going back home to change', 'sewing the slits of *manteaus* with a thread in opposite colour', and 'rubbing off their lipstick with tissues'. Note that these sartorial technologies do not subject women to extreme violence; rather, they incorporate the objective of power in and upon their bodies, by making them visible and known, thus making it the women's own 'truth'.

Secondly, the security unit functions as an instrument for 'moral uniformity', which involves a complex series of institutional arrangements. The purpose is to create an atmosphere of fear and visibility and to make women aware of their status as an Islamic subject who is responsible for their actions. It is expected that after being assessed and corrected by the security guards, the women will follow the Islamic structures on their own. The question here is how Samira is still able to ignore and even circumvent the state's interventions despite a tangled and elaborate set of legal codes and regulations. Her ability to engage in the transgressive act of removing the black chador after passing through security, which is quite risky and requires a skilful performance to reassure her safety, highlights that the security unit is not a site of total control. The major goal of the security unit is 'to balance power relations' through persuasion and incitement in larger society; the transformation of those who defy the law is a minor goal. More importantly, the quote also highlights the productive nature of power relations. The veiling regulations are not merely constitutive of women's bodies; rather they simultaneously enable women to realise their own interests. Through an instrumental use of *chador*, Samira is able to influence and modify the veiling regulations, no matter how insignificant the change seems to be.

Samira's portrayal of the female guards is also worth noting. As the essential figures of the security unit, they have the power to regulate the body of those who pass through the security unit. Samira's depiction of them as wearing 'black *chador*' and having 'heavy eyebrows and a moustache' conjures a powerful masculine image of the two women and brings confusion regarding the symbolic binary systems of gender and sexuality. Painting them with male facial features, Samira places them outside the hegemonic heterosexual discourses of beauty. However, in Islamic discourses, unremoved facial hair signifies simplicity and unadorned femininity, which accentuates the guards' modesty. The black *chador* worn by the women resonate with this quality as well.

5.1.2. Practicing freedom

However, the participants' clothing practices were not merely shaped by the effects of normalising power. Rather, in the interplay of truth regimes and power relations, they problematised clothing regulations and transformed their relationship with themselves, which allowed them to creatively 'practice freedom'. In her narrative, Simin reflects on the creative way she challenged veiling regulations inspired by Turkmen traditional costumes (which consist of a long dress with a long open robe) worn by Turkmens in north-eastern regions of Iran.

Whenever I had the opportunity, I'd challenge compulsory dark colours by wearing colourful scarves, made of floral fabrics which are traditionally worn by Turkmens. I'd wear a long colourful, floral dress underneath my *manteau*, which is now a fashion trend in Iran but at that time it caught people's attention when I walked down the streets. They'd find it weird, but I didn't care.

By combining the Islamic dress codes with a traditional style—namely, by wearing a long colourful, floral dress underneath her *manteau*, and swapping dark colours with brighter ones, which are considered provoking by the Iranian authorities—Simin 'aesthetically' challenged the veiling regulations. However, by saying that people would find her style 'weird', she seems to indicate that her main purpose, which was challenging modest norms of clothing, that is, to avoid the encouraging of sexual attraction in others, went unnoticed by both the street onlookers and the Iranian authorities. Nevertheless, it allows her to transform her relationship with herself into 'a work of art' (Foucault et al., 1994), while simultaneously circumventing the possibility of being arrested.

In the following excerpt, Simin reflects on yet another creative act where she used 'self-techniques' to form a new subjectivity through her clothing. Through cross-dressing, wearing a man's gown and having a short haircut, she attempted to claim a space in public in her own terms.

Sometimes when I had a short haircut and visited my relatives by car, I'd put on no hijab; I'd dress in a tunic and pants without a scarf.

By appropriating some elements of masculine identity, she creatively disguises her femininity, reloads her body with new meanings and undermines the production of Islamic subjectivities. The following excerpt from Samira's narrative points to the strategic way she deploys the veil to advance into a higher position in a state organisation.

Later when I got a permanent position, I'd wear shorter *manteaus* with denim pants. Before I got that permanent position, I usually put on long *manteau* with loose old-fashioned pants, which I really hated.

Here Samira describes the instrumental way she employed a veiling style to obtain a permanent position. By wearing a style favoured by the government, namely 'long *manteau*' and 'loose pants', she presumably signifies her alliance with Islamic norms of modesty. However, at some point after acquiring the position, she switched back to her preferred style, 'shorter *manteaus* with denim pants'.

5.1.3. Self-policing along the norms of modesty

Despite the participants' effort to wrestle away the Islamic clothing norms and the meanings assigned to their bodies through powerful 'Others', their narratives were also filled with attempts to preserve modesty through their clothing. This was most evident in Negin's narrative. Although she expressed her opposition to the veil as an imposed dress code, the following passage shows how her sense of agency at the same time depended on Islamic norms of modesty.

I always consider having a sort of *hojb* [humiliation] and *haia* [decency]. I always wear decent clothes, even at home I like to cover up my body. I wear normal clothes, but I've never tried to hide my body. I don't like catching attention by my clothing.

Drawing on the Persian/Arabic words, '*hojb*' and '*haia*' meaning, respectively, 'humiliation' and 'decency' (together defined as controlling one's desire to avoid being judged by people), Negin crafts a different positive interpretation of modesty and voluntarily controls her body through self-surveillance and self-regulation of her sexuality. In the following quote, Negin aligns her modest style with Norwegian norms of beauty and sexuality. In doing so, she subjects herself to the sartorial technologies that she perceives to be in line with Islamic as well as Norwegian (Christian) norms of modesty, which she defines as 'normal'.

I think people here [in Norway] also consider some boundaries. They rarely wear revealing clothes like showing cleavage, they cover their chest with shawl. Grown-up women are particularly strict. I don't think wearing revealing clothes is normal for women here either.

Similarly, Samira describes the Norwegian style of clothing as relatively modest and in line with her own attitudes towards her body.

I'd like to dress as I wish, but this doesn't mean I wear revealing clothes. You've probably noticed women here [in Norway], especially at workplaces, are usually clothed in a decent way, such as with long sleeves. Wearing revealing clothes isn't common.

These excerpts indicate how the space of possibilities in which the participants begin to imagine new forms of subjectivity is already conditioned by their past histories as well as established norms in

Norway. While the participants challenged, resisted and subverted veiling regulations in Iran, they mostly perceived Norwegian moral norms of clothing as 'natural'. Being compliant to Norwegian clothing norms does not take the form of submission to a 'religious prescription' as it would for the veil; therefore, the participants viewed Norwegian clothing norms as 'standard', while in fact the liberal norms of sexuality in Norway, including clothing, are merely a reformation of the moral norms of Christianity.

5.2. Everyday clothing practices after migration to Norway

The following section focuses on participants' clothing narratives in Norway. Most excerpts in this section inevitably focus on both Iran and Norway as the participants reflect on the past to describe their present styles of clothing. The main themes discussed include the following: life without the veil after migration; the influence of micro-social interactions in shaping the participants' clothing practices; and, the part that migration, racial discourses of sexuality and the sense of belonging to and vitality in a community plays in the participants' choice of clothes.

5.2.1. The potential choice to not to wear the veil

'When was the right time for you to remove your veil, how did you feel at the moment of removing it and how have you felt since then?' was the key question I asked the women in this study, of whom all had chosen to not wear the veil after migration to Norway. In response, none expressed feelings of uncertainty or indecision regarding the idea of stopping to wear the veil after migration, and they stated that they made sure to remove their veil 'before the plane landed in Norway'. They did not construct the veil as an integrated part of who they were, as a sign of their religious devotion or part of their identity. Rather, they expressed feelings of 'freedom', 'release' and 'enjoyment' in the possibility of not wearing a garment that was imposed on their bodies by the Iranian authorities. For instance, Shadi described the change as follow:

> I enjoy the right to choose my clothing style here. I feel I have become my 'real' self.

Portraying a contrast between her public and private life in Iran, Soheila stressed that the decision to unveil after migration was not something she had had to get accustomed to.

> Well, I was forced to wear *hijab* in public, but in my family, we don't wear *hijab* in the interaction with *non-mahram* (non-related) men, […] My family's very liberal, I was never treated like a girl. I'd sit next to my father, watching him fixing things.

The contrast between public and private spaces, to which Soheila is referring in this excerpt, can be explained in light of Islamisation and modernisation discourses in Iranian society. The shift from an autocratic monarchy to an Islamic theocracy, as I mentioned in the background section, brought an explicit opposition between modern versus traditional gender discourses. After the Islamic revolution the state enforced Islamic law in almost all aspect of social conduct in public space, which led to the reconfiguration of the public and private realms. Many activities, such as drinking and selling alcohol, dancing, unmarried men and women dating, and even listening to non-Islamic music, were prohibited. However, despite the state's effort to Islamise the public by eradicating all signs of modernity promoted by the pre-revolution state, modernity and westernisation have permeated Iranian society. Many activities that are condemned in public space are moved to the private space, and in some cases, they are even overindulged. As a result, people, especially those less religious, have to live a double standard according to the paradoxical norms of public and private life (Sadeghi, 2008).

For Nasrin, however, the first time not wearing the veil was marked with the realisation of 'the importance of having freedom over her body'.

> Before I came to Norway, I visited some other countries. I think, for the first time, … it was on my honeymoon, we were at a waterpark, with my husband. I enjoyed wearing bikini freely without being questioned. I think at that point I deeply realised the importance of having freedom over my body.

In the movement across different geographical borders and socio-cultural boundaries where different conventions of female body and dress are available, Nasrin's attention is directed towards the constraints imposed on her body by Iranian disciplinary norms, which in turn brings on the realisation that she can experience her body differently.

5.2.2. The life without wearing the mandated veil

Most participants describe the right to choose their style of clothing without the influence of the Islamic regulation as a significant change after migration. It is worth having a closer look at the following quote from Soheila's narrative. She contrasts the Islamic clothing regulation at her workplace, which demanded a high degree of the body/dress consciousness, with the marginal role clothing plays in her life in Norway. Soheila expresses feelings of 'security' and 'peace' in a way that is echoed by many other participants.

> Here it is more peaceful, you feel more secure. At workplace your focus is on the task at hand. You don't worry over your hijab … your physical body is not the centre of attention. In Iran, I had to think a lot about my appearance… because of the type of work I had and the people I worked with, the places I went.… I was a lawyer, and I went to various detention centres and courts. They were all state organisations, so it was important to conform to dress code. They could prevent you from entering a workplace just because of your look, so I was very careful. My mind was preoccupied with my clothing. If it was planned, for example, to go to court, I'd be careful not to put on light colours or thin, short or tight *manteau*. Here, I am not preoccupied with these things anymore at my workplace or at the university. I dress as I wish.

Working as a lawyer, Soheila describes the adaptations she was required to apply to her clothing according to the places she attended, namely, 'courts', 'detention centres' and 'state organisations'. Similar to Samira, she refers to the punishment mechanisms applied in Iran, e.g., 'prevent[ing her] from entering a workplace', should she dare not follow veiling regulations. In sharp contrast, her portrayal of clothing practices in Norway is of 'peace' and 'security', which, in turn, diminishes the importance of clothing to the salience of 'the task at hand'.

5.2.3. The productive power of micro-social interactions

Contrasting norms of femininity and beauty in Iran with those in Norway, this section highlights the influence of micro-social interactions in (re)shaping the participants' clothing practices. In the course of the interviews, almost all the participants described Norwegian clothing styles as 'simple', 'casual' or 'stylish without makeup'. The origin of casual clothing, according to Clemente (2014), dates back to the early twentieth century when people in a 'dream of living fast and loose and carefree' protested against fashion industry, popular culture, consumerism and elitists (p. 2). In the Norwegian context, Krogstad and Storvik (2012) link the tendency to wear casual styles to the Norwegian puritanical tradition, claiming that Norwegians have an orientation towards interior values, 'which is shown through an ascetic outer appearance' (p. 6). Likewise, Wara and Munkejord (2018), in their study, 'Dressing down to fit in', highlight how the local (Norwegian) ideals of decency and normality, as demonstrated through appearance and clothing, pushed Russian immigrant women to change their feminine style of clothing (e.g., skirts, fur clothes and makeup) to sportswear clothing to fit in and pass as unmarked among locals. According to the study, the local linked femininity to submissiveness, and the absence of femininity to equality and independence (p. 32). Contrarily, in Iran, despite strict regulations on appearance and clothing, fashion, beauty and body

management practices play an important part in Iranian women's everyday life (Rahbari et al., 2018). In the following quote, Simin reflects on the way interactions in Iran and Norway have impacted her clothing differently.

> The only thing that has changed about my clothing is that in Iran I was more stylish, because I'd strive to be different. But here, my clothes are less important. […] Well, in Iran there's restrictions, here you feel free, but it was more important for me how to dress there. […] Also, it is because of the environment, because when people care about fashion, you're part of the people, so you'd care about your look as well. Here, people wear simple styles of clothing, so I don't care much.

Whereas the importance of fashion in Iran propelled Simin to strive to be stylish and different, in Norway, the importance of clothing in her life has faded due to society's relatively weaker emphasis on appearance. Similarly, Sima reflects on the infectious cultural norms of femininity and clothing in Iran, and humorously describes her desire to modify her body should she decide to visit Iran.

> Iran is full of paradoxes. On the one hand, we're complaining about street harassment; on the other, we go out extremely stylish, wearing fashionable *hijab*. Actually, if I'm going to visit Iran, I'd think I have to do a nose job. It's impossible living this way in Tehran [laughter], or I have to dye my hair, change myself somehow, but when I come back here [in Norway] I'm less concerned about these things. […] [*F.F.: Why do you think you feel like this?*] Well … for example, you plan on meeting some old friends, [and] when you're there, you're shocked to see them dressed in beautiful, stylish clothing, while you're dressing as simple as a schoolgirl [laughter].

Mistakenly linking Iranian women's desire for beauty to 'street harassment', Sima amusingly explains how micro-social interactions—e.g., being in friend gatherings where she would find her clothing 'as simple as a schoolgirl's' compared to her friends—forced her to reinvent her body.

5.2.4. Deviation from casual norms of clothing

Most of the participants viewed Norwegian norms of clothing as 'natural' and complied to them without any problem. However, the following passage from Taraneh's narrative highlights how her desire to adorn her body with cloth, cosmetics and jewellery is conditioned by Norwegian clothing norms.

> I defy the norms of clothing in both Iran and Norway. My colourful stylish *manteaus* in Iran were in opposition to norms of modesty, and here my makeup and adornment are against Norwegian simple style of clothing. You know, thirty years ago people here [Norway] weren't at all like what you see now. You could hardly distinguish men from women through their clothing and hair style. It's changed now partly, you see women wearing light makeup, perfume or feminine clothing. […] When I came here, I felt I stood out due to my makeup and grooming, my earrings, necklace. I was pushed to adopt the local style, wearing less makeup, less feminine clothing, like oversized dresses. I felt so visible, so different. I had also darker hair and skin, [which] added to my differences. People's disapproving gaze were on me, and it didn't feel comfortable. My husband a few times noted that I had to dress down, not because he's a zealous Muslim, but he wanted us to blend in. And of course, I wasn't someone who would wear a revealing dress. I grew up in an Iranian family where modesty was a high value. If you see my daughter, she wears very modest styles as well. […] I dress down to fit in this society. I really feel like I'm not accepted.

Reflecting on the similarities and differences of clothing norms in Iran and Norway, Taraneh points to the fact that the demand to wear casual clothing seems to evoke insecurity in her just as the strict Islamic

regulations of clothing did in Iran. A close reading of her narrative shows how sexist and racial discourses can similarly alienate women from their bodies and construct them in a fixed identity of the 'Other'. In Iran, enforcing gender difference primarily through compulsory veiling (as well as gender segregation policies) strengthens the power imbalance between men and women. As sexual objects, women's bodies have to be regulated to avoid provoking men's reactions. Similarly, the casual norms of clothing in Norway, which is organised around productivity, comfort and decency, make immigrants the 'Other' to white Norwegian subjects. Taraneh describes how people's 'disciplinary gaze' in micro-social interactions forced her to 'dress down' in order to 'blend into' Norwegian society. Being the 'Other' to the Norwegian subject, whose sexuality is and remains radically different from them, Taraneh's differences must be abolished and turned into sameness, if she wishes to feel of equal value to Norwegians. This equality, defined as *sameness* in Chinga-Ramirez's (2017) words, is very closely 'tied to the Norwegian people, to the way they behave and their demeanour, … rather than to a political goal' (p. 152). Therefore, to attain an equal status, Taraneh has to inhabit Norwegianness, meaning that she has to adopt the characteristic of the Norwegian people and their cultural values by minimising her differences. However, despite mimicking Norwegian subjects, Taraneh says she still does not feel accepted. Rather than making her similar to Norwegians in such a way that provides a sense of belonging, it results in 'the opening of difference and otherness within [her], making a return to the self-same impossible' (Yegenoglu, 1998, p. 9).

Similarly, Soheila describes how her light makeup at her workplace catches her colleagues' attention.

> Here, people wear stylish clothes, but they don't have makeup. It feels good, it's relaxed! I apply light make-up as a deep-seated habit [laughter], and they usually comment on it by saying, 'It's good that you make yourself up every day'. I take it as a compliment but if you think about it, they're indirectly pointing it out to me.

Sohelia's 'deep-seated habit' of wearing make-up, though lighter than what she would wear in Iran attracts comments from her colleagues that, as she points out, could be interpreted as a double-edged sword: it could be an act of judgment and not just a compliment or innocuous remark.

The following passage from Soqra's narrative highlights the force of micro-social interactions on the body to conform to the normative ideals of what is appropriate form of dress.

> I feel more relaxed here. Sometimes I'm busy, I just jump out of the house, not thinking of my hair or my look. I don't worry about people's opinions on my look. But in Iran, it's very important; even a few strands of hair sticking out of your scarf needs lots of attention. It's a must in Iran. Now, when I go to pick up my kids, I even don't look in mirror. Naturally, here no one care how you look like. The simpler you are, the better you're accepted. If you wear lots of makeup and look different, you'll stand out, but it's completely the opposite in Iran.

Favouring Norwegian 'casual' styles over Iranian's beauty norms as an expression of freedom and individualism—'I don't worry about people's opinions on my look [in Norway]'—Soqra reflects on how the aesthetic ideals of femininity in Iran that require meticulous attention to the smallest details of one's body—'a few strands of hair sticking out of your scarf needs lots of attention'—forced her to conform to the shared norms. However, in adding 'the simpler you are, the better you're accepted [in Norwegian society]', she conveys that her preference for Norwegian styles might also be the effect of social interactions which helps one avoid, in Soqra's words, 'stand[ing] out'.

The following excerpt highlights Soqra's conflicting feeling towards sexuality, body and the written/unwritten norms for appearance and clothing in Norway.

I don't feel comfortable wearing a sleeveless dress at work, although I'm ok wearing them out of work. At work I'd rather dress in decent way. Sometimes we talk about it with my colleagues whom I share my office with. […] We have a colleague, she's a foreigner, but she's been living here for a long time, [and] she dresses up at work, very revealing. I wish I wouldn't mind dressing up either, cause all my dresses are sleeveless, so finding the right clothing for work is difficult. One of my Norwegian colleagues once said she also wouldn't feel comfortable wearing something sleeveless; she believed exposing one's arms in official settings would be inappropriate in Norway. But I'm not sure, as I've never worked in another workplace.

Our ability to read what is a proper form of dress in a particular time and place is not merely managed by the state and civil societies, but also through how we participate with them. As White (2000) argues, 'the very act of talking about others—or oneself—disciplines. The very practice of sorting out the epistemologies that shock and scandalise creates and catalogues ideas about deviance and virtue which are enforced with each telling' (p. 61). Soqra and her colleagues' conversations about what are proper forms of dress at work and the condemnation of the colleague who appears at work in hyperfeminine styles of clothing leads to more and more self-policing acts.

The quote also highlights the difficulty Soqra experiences in identifying unwritten dress codes in Norwegian workplaces. As Craik (1984) points out, clothes 'are part of a specific discursive struggle, a struggle organised around the concept of sexuality' (p. 73). In Soqra's view the exposure of one's arms at the workplace might signify sexual availability. Her internalised understanding of what is sexual or normal clothing is reinforced through her lack of familiarity with unwritten dress codes in Norwegian workplaces. It is further intensified by her Norwegian colleague's own internalised understanding of what is proper clothing, thus proving the effectiveness of micro-social interactions in controlling women's clothing experiences. Through everyday micro social interactions, unwritten norms of clothing—however subtle—are constituted and maintained.

6. Conclusion

Drawing on 13 narrative interviews with Iranian immigrant women living in Norway, this article contrasted the participants' clothing practices in Iran where they had been mandated to wear the veil, with that of Norway, a country with secular/liberal clothing regulation. In doing so, it explored how the two apparently contrasting national and cultural contexts affected the participants' relationships to themselves and to the clothing regimes in the two contexts.

While the narratives differed in the two national geographical contexts, they nonetheless brought out several discourses that highlighted the similar nature of sartorial technology in both contexts and their dependency on the participants' past histories and current established norms of clothing in Norway, which limited the space of possibilities for the participants to imagine new forms of subjectivity. In Iran, the mechanism of control was both repressive and disciplinary and shaped along gender and sexual lines; moreover, it was conducted through institutions (such as workplaces, schools and universities) as well as micro-social interactions. The oppositional norms of modesty versus beauty and femininity pushed the participants to negotiate two contrasting subjectivities. On the one hand, they struggled to maintain an appearance that accommodated the veiling convention in order to avoid arousing religious controversies. They were forced to comply and conform to veiling regulations and the norms of modesty attached to it, out of fear of being arrested or punished by the Iranian authorities. On the other, the veil functioned as a domain of imaginative elaboration onto which they not only projected their fantasies of a fashionable woman and expressed their individuality, but also, through creative use of the colours, fabrics and styles, they altered and subverted Islamic clothing norms and practiced freedom.

In Norway, however, the participants' clothing practices were regulated along racial and sexual lines, controlled through disciplinary regulations at micro-social interactions (e.g., the disciplinary gaze and colleagues' comments). All participants described the change from wearing the compulsory veil to choosing not to wear the veil after migration as 'release', 'freedom' and becoming 'real'. However, while the participants constantly challenged and resisted the veiling convention in Iran, they mostly viewed Norwegian moral norms of clothing as 'natural' and unquestionable. The pressure to dress in 'casual styles'—in other words, not caring for one's appearance or not wearing make-up and adornments—were described by most participants as a way to be productive and comfortable as well as to avoid standing out. Since being compliant to Norwegian clothing norms did not take the form of submission to a 'religious prescription' as it would for the veil, the participants viewed them as an accepted 'truth'. However, as the excerpt from Taraneh's narrative highlighted, the imposition of a norm, whether with sexualised or racialised undertones, could have equal alienating effects on women's bodies. Taraneh's desire for wearing make-up and adornments is perceived as a deviation from Norwegian casual norms of clothing and are thus subject to normalisation, but not by oppressive authorities; rather, they are rendered deviant by the normalising gaze of colleagues/friends who made her feel visible and different. In order to attain equality and be accepted, her differences had to turn into sameness by inhabiting Norwegians' behaviour, demeanour and cultural values.

It is worth noting here that the purpose of this study is not to privilege one form/style of clothing—be it casual, fashionable or Islamic—over the other. Rather, I have aimed to situate women's clothing experiences in their historical contexts and highlight the tangible and intangible ways in which cultural standards of clothing are inscribed upon women's bodies. While I question Norwegian regulations of clothing and view them as equally restrictive on the basis of their referentiality to symbolic norms of a specific culture, my intention is neither to deny the freedom that women have gained over the choice of their clothing in a liberal Western context such as Norway nor celebrate women's absolute freedom. My intention, thus, is to elucidate the ways in which a 'truth' (here of sartorial practices), no matter how much entangled with stories of freedom, when viewed restrictive to a person and inconsistent with her affective and embodied experiences, could equally be destructive to the person's freedom.

Declaration of competing interest

I have no conflicts of interest to declare.

References

Baldi, G. (2018). Burkini, bikini and the female (un)dressed body. Retrieved from https://criticallegalthinking.com/2018/06/22/law-critique-burkini-bikini-the-female-undressed-body/.

Berlin, B. (2012). "I samtidens skugga": En studie om kläder och kulturkonsumtionens betydelse i identitetsskapandet hos unga vuxna ["In the shadow of the times": A study of clothing and the importance of cultural consumption in identity creation in young adults]. Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University (Bachelor thesis).

Bolsø, A., & Mühleisen, W. (2015). Framstillinger av kvinner kledd for makt [Representations of women dressed for power]. Tidsskrift for kjønnsforskning, 224–246 (3-04).

Bucar, E. (2017). Pious fashion: How Muslim women dress. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Chinga-Ramirez, C. (2017). Becoming a "foreigner": The principle of equality, intersected identities, and social exclusion in the norwegian school. European Education, 49 (2–3), 151–165.

Christensen, A.-D. (2009). Belonging and unbelonging from an intersectional perspective. Gender, Technology and Development, 13(1), 21–41.

Clemente, D. (2014). Dress casual: How college students redefined American style (1st ed.).

Craik, J. (1984). Fashion, clothes, sexuality. Australian Journal of Cultural Studies, 2(1), 67–83.

Entwistle, J. (2015). The fashioned body: Fashion, dress and social theory. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Farahani, F. (2007). Diasporic narratives of sexuality: Identity formation among Iranian-Swedish women. Stockholm, Sweden: Stockholm University.

Fathzadeh, F. (2020). The veil: An embodied ethical practice in Iran. *Journal of Gender Studies, 30*(2), 150–164. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2020.1863194

Flewellen, A. A. (2018). *The clothes on her back: Interpreting sartorial practices of self-making at the Levi Jordan plantation* (Doctoral thesis). Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Austin.

Foucault, M. (1975). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison (A. Sheridan, Trans.)*. Paris, France: Gallimard.

Foucault, M. (1978). In R. J. Hurley (Ed.), *Vol. 1. The history of sexuality: Volume I: An introduction*. New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1986). In R. J. Hurley (Ed.), *The history of sexuality, volume III: The care of the self*. New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M., Rabinov, P., & Hurley, R. (1994). *Michel foucault: Ethics: Subjectivity and truth*. New York: New Press.

Groeneveld, E. (2009). 'Be a feminist or just dress like one': BUST, fashion and feminism as lifestyle. *Journal of Gender Studies, 18*(2), 179–190.

Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile bodies: Toward a corporeal feminism*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Huijer, M. (1999). The aesthetics of existence in the work of Michel Foucault. *Philosophy & Social Criticism, 25*(2), 61–85.

Klepp, I. G., & Storm-Mathisen, A. (2005). Reading fashion as age: Teenage girls' and grown women's accounts of clothing as body and social status. *Fashion Theory, 9*(3), 323–342.

Krogstad, A., & Storvik, A. (2012). Picturing politics: Female political leaders in France and Norway. *Historical Reflections, 38*(3), 129–152.

Lemke, T. (2011). Critique and experience in Foucault. *Theory, Culture & Society, 28*(4), 26–48.

Moruzzi, N. C., & Sadeghi, F. (2006). Out of the frying pan, into the fire: Young Iranian women today. *Middle East Report*, (241), 22–28.

Najmabadi, A. (1987). Iran's turn to Islam: From modernism to a moral order. *The Middle East Journal, 41*(2), 202–217.

Neumann, C. B., Rysst, M., & Bjerck, M. (2012). En av gutta: Kvinner og klær i mannsdominerte arbeiderklasseyrker [One of the boys: Women and clothes in male-dominated work fields]. *Tidsskrift for Kjønnsforskning, 36*(3–04), 240–254.

O'leary, T. (2006). *Foucault and the art of ethics*. London, England: Continuum.

Paoletti, J. B. (2015). *Sex and unisex: Fashion, feminism, and the sexual revolution*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Rahbari, L., Dierickx, S., Longman, C., & Coene, G. (2018). 'Kill me but make me beautiful': Harm and agency in female beauty practices in contemporary Iran. *Iran and the Caucasus, 22*(1), 50–60.

Rahbari, L., Longman, C., & Coene, G. (2019). The female body as the bearer of national identity in Iran: A critical discourse analysis of the representation of women's bodies in official online outlets. *Gender, Place & Culture, 26*(10), 1417–1437.

Ribeiro, A. (2003). *Dress and morality* (2nd ed.). Oxford, New York: Berg.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Roces, M., & Edwards, L. (2010). *The politics of dress in Asia and the Americas*. Portland: Sussex Academic Press.

Sadeghi, F. (2008). Negotiating with modernity: Young women and sexuality in Iran. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, 28*(2), 250–259.

Scott, J. W. (2007). *The politics of the veil*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Strabac, Z., Aalberg, T., Jenssen, A. T., & Valenta, M. (2016). Wearing the veil: Hijab, Islam and job qualifications as determinants of social attitudes towards immigrant women in Norway. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 39*(15), 2665–2682.

Tarrant, S., & Jolles, M. (2012). *Fashion talks: Undressing the power of style*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Taylor, C. (1984). Foucault on freedom and truth. *Political Theory, 12*(2), 152–183.

Wara, T., & Munkejord, M. C. (2018). Dressing down to fit in: Analyzing (re)orientation processes through stories about Norwegianization. *Women's Studies International Forum, 67*, 30–37.

White, L. (2000). *Speaking with vampires: Rumor and history in colonial Africa (Reprint 2019. ed.)*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Yegenoglu, M. (1998). *Colonial fantasies: Towards a feminist reading of orientalism*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Zahedi, A. (2007). Contested meaning of the veil and political ideologies of Iranian regimes. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies, 3*(3), 75–98.