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We are not watermelons

We are not watermelons one of the informants answered when I asked him about the way the public discourse discuss the issue of immigrants in Norway - public debate in Norwegian media and the society. He said nothing more, not even a single word and left. I had no idea what he meant by that phrase and I became almost obsessed to find out what “we are not watermelons” signifies. After many discussions with close friends I found that; in Iran, watermelon is a national fruit as strawberry is in Norway. When one goes to the bazaars, all the groceries sell watermelons and it is the custom that every one of these shopkeepers shout and claim that his watermelon is the best in the whole bazaar. On the other hand, it is very common that the customers bargain on the price. The only way to do that is to argue about the quality of the goods – the watermelon in this case. The interesting point is that the main focus of this anecdote - the watermelon – is of no importance in the larger picture. Nobody considers the watermelon to make a difference in his own future. If we consider the power relation, then the watermelon is the part with no power (at all) to represent his views. My informant was telling me in an indirect way that nobody cares about what immigrants themselves have to say in relation to the majority’s attitude and their own future. According to the informant it is not important to ask how emigrants feel in relation to the ways that the Norwegian media discusses issues that so strongly concern emigrants and their future lives.
CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

The Focus of the Project and Research Questions

I started the postgraduate degree in social anthropology with the aim of doing a fieldwork in Iran. My research proposal was approved in spring 1999 and I traveled to Iran the following summer. Even though I had a written letter from the embassy, the officials in Tehran were not cooperative in giving me the required permission so I could pursue my research. After three month, going from one department to the other, the government representatives told me that projects such as mine could be used by western countries against the Islamic republic of Iran. This was a polite way of telling me that I should not go through with the fieldwork. I had no other option than returning to Oslo and pursuing another research project.

I decided to do a fieldwork among Iranian refugees in Norway. Immigrants and refugees have been a hot topic in Norwegian public discourse since the beginning of the 1990s. It is difficult to look through major Norwegian newspapers during the week or even sometimes a day and not being able to find an article that discusses issues related to immigrants or refugees. In other words if we accept the statements of an editor of a major Norwegian newspaper (VG) where he stated that the newspapers\(^1\) (media) give their readers what they want to read; then one can say that immigrants or refugees are among the topics that interest the Norwegian public immensely. Refugees from Iran and their children add up to approximately 11 thousand people in Norway (Lie. B. 2002). Among them 9645 are first generation immigrants and 1371 second generation (Ibid). The migration of refugees from Iran to Norway started in the second half of the 1980s - as the

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\(^1\) He was interviewed by the NRK radio in relation to remarks made by a well-known Norwegian professor (GALTUNG) who teach and work at Switzerland about the inadequacy of Norwegian media’s international coverage. His response to Galtung’s comments was that the Norwegian media writes about the news that the Norwegian public likes to read.
result of Iranian revolution in 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988. Immigration of Iranians almost ended during the second half of the 1990s. Amongst Iranian refugees who settled down in Norway there were many single “adult” men and women who arrived to Norway without any family or friends. This thesis is mainly concerned with the “fate” of individuals that belong to this group of Iranian refugees. The contribution of the thesis rests upon its focus group, which can be categorized as “alone immigrants”.

The public discourse as well as the majority of academic researches in Norway has been concerned with issues related to groups such as immigrant “families” or “juvenile/under age” asylum seekers. Seldom there are news or public debate on issues regarding single adult refugees who came to Norway on their own. Therefore one can argue that there is relatively little thorough knowledge about the life experience of this immigrant group in Norway. I chose to focus primarily on single first generation Iranians with higher education from Norwegian institutions. It was important for me to see the differences in their experiences based on their education. I thought that the career opportunity available for those with university degrees from Norway would give them better economic opportunity and life experiences in relation to the host society and the new socio-cultural environment compared to the refugees with no education. Central to the public discussions of immigrants is integration of immigrants in Norway. The general public consensus in public discussions seems to be that if an immigrant learns the language, educates him/herself and follows a career then he/she would be successfully integrated into Norwegian society.

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According to Hagelund (Problematising culture- discourses on integration in Norway. Institute for Social research), in the context of Norwegian public discourse, the word “immigrant” is widely used to refer to all residents of a so-called non-western background. Thus also people born in Norway with immigrated parents are also considered as immigrants in public discourse and official statistics. Even refugees from Balkan and the former Soviet Union are also perceived as “non-western”. I intend to use the term immigrants and refugee interchangeably with each other because as a refugee one is living in exile with the hope of going back in a near future. That the political or social situation will change for the better and one can go home. But in the case of my informants they have been in exile for the last twelve to fifteen years and there have been no fundamental changes that could make the situation easier for them to return. In other words after so many years in Norway their status from being a “refugee” have changed to the “immigrant”.
During the fieldwork I was surprised by the contrast between my informants daily life experiences and the idea of integration as it was argued through the public discourse. The most interesting point was my gradual awareness of an increasing “negative” interpretation/understanding among the majority of male informants of their life quality and future opportunities in Norway. The majority of male informants showed an increasing interest and desire to move from Norway to another country. This was interesting because the majority of those who I spoke to (during the fieldwork) had a positive image of Norway prior to their settlement. At the same time, this was surprising because as refugee or immigrant, one arrives to the host society with optimistic expectations. A refugee is someone who is leaving behind a turbulent and insecure past for the benefit of a relatively better and safer future. One hopes to gain more freedom, democracy and other rights that the individual refugee or immigrant was denied in their country of origin. I find it interesting, and to a certain degree important, to discuss the causes behind such great change in my male informant’s attitude towards a society which they had a considerable “positive view” or “expectation” prior to arrival. This is the main issue of this thesis. In other words, I will discuss the central aspects of my informant’s life experience in host society to illustrate what are the reasons behind their desire to either move out or to have that option in mind in order to make their life bearable.

In this thesis I describe the experiences of alone adult immigrant group and analyze this tendency of growing negative expectations for future opportunities. Focus on the life experiences of the individual refugee made me aware of the extent of their “isolation” and “exclusion” from the arenas that members of the majority group (ethnic Norwegians) take for granted. Further, when I looked closer at these aspects of their lives, I became sensitive to the lack of regular contact and relationship between my informants and members of the majority group. This became a significant issue because, as an Iranian I was aware of the lack of an Iranian community, which could potentially substitute for lack of interaction with the members of the majority group. This is a significant issue that distinguishes Iranian refugees from other immigrants groups such those with “Pakistani”
or “Turkish” origin. According to Umit Necef (1996), immigration in Denmark and other Scandinavian countries took the form of chain-migration; that is, the first-comers paved the way for their relatives and later for other fellow-villagers. People who were neighbours in the village also became neighbours in residential areas in the countries of immigration. They work together in the same factories or have been dismissed from the same ones, and their children go to the same schools. Iranian refugees distinguish themselves from such patterns of immigration. The majority of Iranian refugees come from urban areas – large cities. Few of them knew each other prior to their arrival to Norway. Therefore the social organization of Iranians in Norway becomes a central issue. For that reason, the effects that the lack of network and relationship with both members of the majority group and other Iranians, can have on individual refugee or immigrant’s life quality becomes even more significant.

The majority of Iranians (whom I was able to talk during the fieldwork) singled out the media as one of the institutions that can be held responsible for the failed integration of immigrants or refugees into the host society. They believed that the negative representations of non-western immigrants - in general and Muslims in particular - by the media can be seen as one of the reasons behind their isolation and exclusion from the host society. This is one of the reasons that made me to include media as an important variable in my discussion throughout this thesis. The argument that I use in relation to the media is based on the idea that the media as the source of information plays an important role in affecting different aspects of my informant’s life. It is the aim of this thesis to show that the media plays an important role in slowing down the process of integration of minorities into the host society. The negative representation of non-western immigrants and refugees by the media increases the gap and creates boundaries between the members of the two groups. Immigrants and refugees are projected by an image that is in stark contrast to the Norwegians. This image of the immigrants and the refugees in the

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3. There are many elements and variables involved in the process but in this case I chose media because my informants saw it as an important factor. The importance and the relevance of the media will be further discussed when I lay out the theoretical framework of the thesis.
majority of the cases is related to their culture or religion. In other words, culture as a concept is used in a deterministic\(^4\) way in media discourse.

During the past years, a growing number of anthropologists have criticized the use of culture as an abstract system that controls the behaviour of the individuals. This way of looking at the concept culture, perceives it as an inherited part of the human being that is almost genetically conditioned. In contrast to such an essentialist view of culture, the critics argue for a concept of culture that makes it possible to study the differences and variations in the given society or research project. Differences such as that between men and women, urban and rural, young and old or modern and tradition and so on (Hervik, P. 1999). In their view culture is not a homogenous entity that individuals are born with, but is knowledge that is distributed among the members of the given group. The view that sees culture as knowledge that is unevenly distributed brings us beyond the previous perception of the term and therefore can help us to see culture as a dynamic entity and the individual as an active participant who plays an important role in its production.

The focus group in this thesis are first generation refugees and immigrants who are born and raised in Iran and were forced to leave their country. The cultural knowledge of these individuals (from Iran) is an issue that must be taken into account when I discuss and analyse their present life situation in Norway. Cultural knowledge becomes significant when one considers the lack of regular relationship and contact between the informants and members of the majority group. If we accept the idea that it is through interaction that members of different groups can gain the basic knowledge and the social skills that is required for understanding each other, then the lack of regular relationship can be considered as a negative development. The negative impact of the lack of regular

\(^4\) The term “cultural determinism” has been applied to the CULTURAL RELATIVIST position especially with the students and followers of BOAS in American cultural anthropology. The term implies that the concept of culture is used by the anthropologist as an explanatory principle, which can account for all differences and forms of behavior of the group that one studies. Such view and the analytical use of term culture have been criticized and the use of the term culture has been modified through the years (Seymore-Smith, C. 1986. Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology).
relationship becomes additionally relevant when we consider the process of acculturation or re-socialization (that is based on the idea of culture as dynamic entity) of immigrants in host society. Furthermore, the regular contact between the members of different groups would help them to gain sufficient cultural knowledge that is required for learning each other’s social codes so they become able to either demystify or amplify categories and stereotypes represented to them by the media (and public) discourse.

According to Tyler (1994) human identity is created “dialogically” in response to our relations, including our actual dialogue with others. In this thesis I adhere to Tyler’s proposal that human identity is being constituted and created dialogically. By doing so, the public and personal recognition of the given identity becomes an important issue. The discussion and analysis of the data throughout this thesis will show that the informants are relatively isolated and excluded from a number of cultural practices, social life and forms of relationships, which the members of the majority group would take for granted. One of the ways to interpret the data is by pointing out that individual refugee or immigrant may experience “lack of recognition” on many levels. The demand for recognition animated by the ideal of human dignity, as it is argued by Gutmann (1994), points in at least two directions. The protection of basic rights of the individuals as human beings and the acknowledgment of the particular needs of individuals as members of specific cultural groups. Both of these directions are, in many ways, related to the integration policies adopted by the government in any given country.

Integration has been the key term in official policy of Norwegian government for the last three decades (Hagelund.A. Problematising culture- Discourse on integration in Norway. Institute for Social research). The political elite accepted Integration as an ideal that can represent how the multicultural Norway should develop and function. But integration, as an ideal, has not been given a precise definition by the political elite. Besides its association with equal opportunities, rights and duties, the meaning of integration tends to be understood in relation to what it is not: integration is not assimilation and not
segregation (Ibid). In early formulation of policies that aimed to facilitate relations between migrants and the Norwegian society, integration was launched in pair with assimilation as a matter of choice for the individual immigrant. It was believed that the immigrants should have the option of choosing between either integration or assimilation (Ibid). Assimilation as an option was excluded from official politic in the beginning of the 80s. The immigrant’s culture and language were perceived as important to their identity and therefore given protection against the forces of assimilation. At the same time, the officials wanted to emphasise that the freedom of choice should not be misinterpreted as the freedom to “stay completely outside the Norwegian society by for example not learning Norwegian and acquiring knowledge about the Norwegian society” (Ibid). Later, integration has been understood in terms of obligation to participate. Hagelund (ibid) argues that the official formulations of integration have changed from offers of protection against assimilatory forces to the duty and right to participate in social life.

In recent years the Norwegian government’s policy towards the integration of minority groups have been changed by giving an additional focus on the civil rights of the individual members of a given group (the first one in Gutmann’s argument). While former governments documents described collectivities in need of protective rights in relation to the majority society, recent governments policies shows a shift of concern towards individual’s right to be considered as individuals and not as members of cultural or religious groups (Ibid). The changes is the result of an increasing public – discourse - attention to and awareness of cultural practices that are against the law because they violate the civil rights of individual members of an “ethnic” or “minority” group. The individual members of the group who are given much attention and protected against these cultural practices are female members of certain ethnic or minority groups.
But the public discourse in its attempt to protect these individuals (women) tends to generalize and include all the members (male) of an ethnic (immigrants and refugees) or religious (Muslims) group as the ones who either support or actually carry out the action. By doing so the public discourse provides a “gendered” representation of events related to immigrants, refugees or minority groups. Individuals such as my male informants are not only denied recognition but they also are being stigmatised publicly through the media discourse. This lack of recognition on the part of my male informants is one of the important reasons among many behind my informant’s decision or continuous consideration to leave Norway for a more desirable life.
Methodological Approach

*Doing fieldwork in your own culture*

Doing fieldwork in one’s own culture involves a number of difficulties that are related to the fact that one at the same time studies parts of one’s own reality (Wadel.C.1991). This is a challenging experience for the fieldworker on many levels. The first difficulty can be related to fieldworker’s shared mutual knowledge with his/her informants. As a researcher, I not only shared a mutual cultural knowledge with informants but I also - to a certain degree - shared my informant’s experience of living in Norway as refugee. The most important challenge when one considers the mutual knowledge and shared experience between the fieldworker and focus group can be related to the “participant observation” as the methodological tool for the “production of data”. For someone who is doing a fieldwork in his/her own culture, it is easier to take important issues for granted because they are so familiar to the researcher that one is not able to see their significance. In other words, as someone who is doing a fieldwork in his/her culture the notion of “distance” is a crucial element for a successful research.

The second important concern when the research is being conducted in one’s own culture is related to the “categories” that one shares with informants. Within the academia these categories have been called for “pigeonholes” or “cover terms” (Wadel.C.1991: 66). These are categories that one uses during the fieldwork to classify the produced data. The informants share the majority of these categories with the researcher. These categories can affect our ability in observing the importance of actual actions and interactions in a given situation or events. By using the cover terms we label our data and put them into the boxes that researcher and informants are familiar with (Ibid).

But in the end, books or theories that discuss the methodological issues related to fieldwork are not able to equip the given researcher for the practical difficulties that he/she might face in the field. There are no special path or practical rules that all students
can use prior to their fieldwork to prepare them for conducting the specific research.

Every research is a practical activity that requires the exercise of judgment in the specific context. One cannot be secure of a positive outcome by only following the methodological rules. My way of dealing with all the problems during the fieldwork, was to enter the field with the idea that everything can be and is of importance in relation to the project and that the best way to do the research is to start from the smallest units and try to build up the generalities from the data later. The choice of starting from the smallest unit had also to do with “access” to the data. I was not going to study a factory or a business firm. Neither was I going to study a single tribe in an African setting. What I was going to study was a part of urban, modern settings with all the obstacles that it contains. The easiest way of gaining access to data was by building relationship with the every individual that I could think of as probable informant.

My fieldwork took place in Oslo from the beginning of the February 2000 to the end of autumn of the same year. Through the course of my fieldwork, since I had to establish a wider range of network of relations, encompassing the different categories of Iranians, a number of problems emerged. I found my Iranian identity to be both an advantage and disadvantage in the course of my fieldwork. My identity as an Iranian man helped me to mobilize the support of other Iranian men. It was possible to have friendly chat, conversation or interviews with them. At the same time it was easier to make contact with other Iranian men through my male informants. Furthermore socializing or “going out” to different public arenas was not problematic. But my gender was a disadvantage in mobilizing the Iranian women. I didn't receive many positive replies from them who I had asked to become informants. I also found out that it was uncomfortable and problematic for my female informants to be seen with me in public. And it was even more difficult to be with them in a private setting.

The fact that I was an Iranian myself has made me question whether I was getting for the most part the negative aspect of the life experience of my informants. Being Iranian
myself have made it easier for them to talk about the problems that they face in their life in Norway. Being an Iranian who has been living under the same condition as themselves, a refugee, led them to see me as someone who has had similar personal experience. I can say that I was being perceived as an insider and therefore they were more interested in telling me about the hardship and the reality of their lives in Norway. I think if it were a Norwegian anthropologist who was doing this research, he/she would produce different type of data. My informants would have problem in opening up and trusting him/her and therefore they might use “impression management” to show a positive view rather than telling the truth as they were experiencing it.

A female Norwegian anthropologist would have access to a different milieu among the Iranians. She might be able to produce more relevant data on Iranian women’s daily life experience and social status in Norway. Iranian men may have shown some kind of cautiousness towards a female Norwegian anthropologist in relation to some aspect of their personal life. A Norwegian anthropologist who was a man would have the opposite problem. He would have problem in gaining access to data that are relevant to female section of the Iranian group. Iranian women may have problem in opening up and telling him different aspects of their private life or their life experience in Norway. Both of them (Norwegian male or female anthropologist) would write a different type of paper not just because they had access to different type of data but because of their lack of knowledge of Iranian culture.

When it comes to my own position, I have to argue that I am not a “Muslim third world” anthropologist who has come to Norway to study the ethnic dimensions of Norwegian society. I have been living in Norway for the last fifteen years. I am therefore well informed and aware of different aspects of Norwegian culture and society. My information and knowledge of both Iranian and Norwegian language, culture, history and society is the difference that “can” make a difference. On the whole, I have tried to use
my Iranianness and history as a refugee as an advantage in producing data but at the same
time I did my best to execute an objective analysis.

I am also aware that one tends to focus on the obstacles in life. The negative aspects of
my informants lives are important aspect of their lives as well. One does not use so much
energy and efforts to analyze the positive experiences or happy stories. The positive
stories are not an important issue to discuss among the immigrant groups that I have done
my fieldwork in. The way my informants told their stories and experiences led me to
believe that they had been thinking about those issues for a long time. I believe they have
used time and energy to analyze them and to rationalize them.

*Difficulties in finding Informants*

Initially I thought that finding informants in this focus group would be unproblematic. I
soon realized that in fact very few adult alone Iranians immigrants were willing to give
me the required time and energy that my project requested. At the same time, it became
clear that the majority were unwilling to speak openly with me about their life experience
in Norway. I believe in many cases, these experiences were conceived as too personal,
and therefore difficult to share with a stranger like me. I also think that there were too
much emotion involved in these experiences and not many would like to go back in time
and re-experience the events. In the beginning, I started to talk to my own friends who
had completed a first university degree and were working. But later I found out that my
friends and I had a close relationship and knew each other all too well to produce
objective data, because of the closeness many aspect of the information remained implicit
and unspoken. I believe they expected me to read between the lines and draw my own
conclusions. But I needed them to express their own experience with their own words and
emotions.
In this period, I decided to start choosing informants that I had no personal relationship with. In this way, there was a less chance of producing the same degree of preconceptions. I didn’t know where they lived before moving to Oslo. I had no information about their family background and class orientation in Iran. I had no knowledge of their marital status. Most importantly, it was not possible to manipulate specific information out of them. All these factors would make the process of producing data more objective. In order to achieve the goal, I asked my own friends to help me. I asked them to spread the request that a student in social anthropology is looking for informants with the aim of writing a thesis on the life experience of Iranians in Norway.

After one month, there were eleven people that showed their interest. No setting will prove socially homogenous, and the adequate representation of the people involved in a particular case will normally require sampling (Hammersley, M & Atkinson, P. 1996). Since I wanted to have representative proportion in relation to the focus group, gender, age and education were the most important criteria’s in choosing my informants. The amount of time and energy that each individual could offer was also important in choosing informants. There were eight men and three women. The youngest informant was a 21 years old female and the oldest one a 38 years old male. All of them had either finished or were in the process of finishing a first degree at a university.

I also found gender to be a very interesting variable. I was perceptive in data that showed significant differences in daily life experience between the two sexes in the host society. If there were such differences then it would be interesting to know what it is and what are the mechanisms and processes that produce these differences. Among all my informants, there were two woman and three men that represent the main source of the data that are produced during the fieldwork. But the scope of my network goes far behind the informants only. I will try to use all the information that I have been able to gain through my interaction with all Iranians whom I have been able to have contact, conversation or relations with.
Production of data

As I have mentioned above, among my informants there were two female and three males that I consider the main source of data. These five have been interviewed once every week between Februarys to October of 2000. In the beginning I had decided to use a microphone to tape all conversations. I even bought a mini disc with a small digital microphone that TV stations use when interviewing people. However after a short period I found out that the use of a microphone change the whole atmosphere of the interviews. It seemed that my informants felt threatened by knowing that their voices were being recorded. They simply did not speak out as freely and openly as I had expected. In the end, I decided to put the microphone aside and start to write out our conversation instead. The pen was trustworthier than the other new electronic equipment.

Besides interviews and participant observations, I use newspaper (Aftenposten) articles as data. Analysis of articles published by one of the leading Norwegian newspaper enables this thesis to empirically document one of the central concerns of this thesis. It is through careful reading of newspaper articles that I have been able to embody a representative picture of different ways the public discourse represents immigrants, refugees and Muslims.

Most of the meetings with my informants were held in public places like coffee shops, bars, restaurants, clubs and public libraries. I thought that these places could give me the chance to observe the interaction between ethnic minority groups and the members of the majority group. I was interested to see their reactions to the way that individual Norwegian behaved in public towards the members of the minority groups – Iranian in this case. Such observations I believed would create deeper understanding of my informants’ life situation in the host society. At the same time such public places opens the opportunity to experience the uncontrolled events that might happen in the course of a conversation/interaction.
An example can illustrate the importance of interaction in public setting. I was conducting an interview with my informant in a café, when a man came in and sat two seats from where I was sitting with his face pointing towards my informants. After couple of minutes, from where I was sitting I could see that he was trying to make contact with the informant. He smiled and shook his head. In general, I can say that he was doing his best to behave friendly. My informant showed no reaction what so ever. The only reaction from him was pointed towards me, when he explained that that man had to be either a homosexual or mentally disturbed. The point that he wanted to make was; Norwegian who does not belong to one of the two mentioned categories would not seek to have a positive attitude with an immigrant or that they are not open to have contact with the members of minority groups that come from the third world countries. However, after about twenty minutes later, three or four friends of that man arrived to the cafe and sat besides him. When they start speaking to each other my informant found out that they were French! After a while I believe he got really upset and told me, do you see what they (Norwegian society) have done to us, this guy is French and what he did is normal behavior in his country France; "it is his culture to behave friendly".

I think such events say a lot about many aspects of an immigrant’s life situation and experiences in his/her new environment. It can open up for deeper insights about how it feels to be an immigrant from a third word country in a context such as Norway. It also says something about the daily life experience of the individual immigrant in their interaction with the members of the majority group. For me this example shows the serious challenge that the Norwegian society faces when it comes to the interaction between majority and minority groups. I think this is a good example that can illustrate the distance and the lack of trust and understanding that exists between these two groups.
Theoretical Framework

At this section of the thesis, I will present the theoretical framing, which I find to be most suitable for the analysis of data that have been produced during the fieldwork. I intend to argue that the public representation of statuses such as “immigrant”, “refugee” or “Muslim” by the Norwegian media has important practical consequences in daily life of my informants in Norway and for their relationship with Norwegians. Therefore I find “discourse” analysis to be the suitable theoretical model for analyzing the public opinion in Norway and the projected image of the “Muslims”, “refugees” and “immigrants” to the public.

I will adapt the model that has been developed by Hervik (2000) where he used discourse theory for discussing the Danish media’s projected images of the immigrants and refugees through what he called “discursive positioning” of a given group. Hervik (ibid) used the model to analyze the responses and behaviors of members of the majority group (native Danish). In contrast to Hervik, I use his model to discuss and analyze the effect of the media on the members of the “minority group” (Iranian in this case) to find out to what extent the media discourse can be a hinder for integration. I intend to use “discursive positioning” to show the impact and effect of public discourse as it is exemplified by the Norwegian media on my informants life.

Historically, discourse analysis can be traced to rhetoricians like Aristotle who studied the various structures of rhetoric and indicated their effectiveness in a process of persuasion in public contexts (Van DijkT.A.1988. Pp: 18). But discourse analysis as we know it today is a new interdisciplinary field of study that has emerged from several different disciplines such as anthropology, linguistic, literary studies or other humanities and social sciences. The development of discourse analysis took place more or less at the same time in most of the scientific fields mentioned above, namely during the late 1960s and the beginning of 1970s (Van Dijk.T.A. 1988).
One of the most influential personalities in developing of the discourse theory today is Michel Foucault. He believed that for the centuries western philosophy had favored epistemologies (study of knowledge) that worked towards certain, foundational truths whose proposition would end in truth (Brown.A.L.2000.pp: 20). What is meant by this is that the tendency in believing that a person could be said to know that a proposal was truth only if that person were a unified subject who was able to declare the given proposal with no possibility of doubt. The knowing subject was believed to be morally better than those who failed to know truths and did not devote their lives opening up ways to possible truth. All systems of thought have exceptions; within the canon of western philosophy there are exceptions to this rule. But as Brown (Ibid) points out, it was not until the twentieth century when exceptions to the belief that subjects could and should know Truth became as widespread as the traditional rule.

Foucault turned to philosophers like Nietzsche, Marx and Freud because he saw them as “masters of suspicion”. Foucault believed that such thinkers spread seeds of doubts about the strength of forms of humanistic discourses common within modern European culture, specially the ideal of a value-free objective methodology of scientific investigation and its accompanying faith in the liberating possibilities of reason in the political and moral spheres (Edgar.A & Sedgwik.P.2002. Pp: 71).

As it can be understood from above the core interest of Foucault lied in uncovering the historical development of the modern “episteme” (knowledge). Foucault wanted to replace the notion of general history with the one that addresses forgotten histories. His task became to read the documents in a way that he could tell a new story, this time about how the story came to be told in the manner in which it was told (Brown.A.1.2000.Pp: 6). Underlying all this was his genuine interest for the truth. In his view the truth was never outside of “power”. There is no truth that is outside the struggle of power relations. And as he pointed out, truth does not lack the power. Power is an implicit part of the truth and
as Foucault saw it every society has a “regime of truth”. It is these regimes that can determine in every given context (time), which discourses are allowed and which are not (ibid). In other words it is important in relation to truth to find out that who have the power to own and produce it.

Traditionally one can define power as when someone is forced to do something that he/she otherwise would not do. But Foucault is not interested in power in its traditional definition. The power that Foucault is interested is the power that has the tendency of not being perceived as power but as, for example, science or even liberation. It is Foucault’s aim to reveal these types of powers that is parts of our daily life relationships and experiences with others. For example the relationship between a doctor and his patient is defined through an assumed set of rules that are mutually understood. The relationship is constructed through the professional role that one of the actors plays as someone who is able to help and the recognition that he receives from the other actor as someone who requires specific need. Within the framework of this relationship there is a form of asymmetrical power relationship that is in doctor’s favor.

As we can see for Foucault the power is everywhere. Everyone has power and everyone is situated in such a way that the power can be used for or against his/her. This does not mean that the domination is everlasting. In the contrary he says that every interaction engages participation. When one speaks of participation then the notion of resistance become an implicit part. In other words, for Foucault there is no power without resistance. No discourse of truth goes unchallenged. Discourses become arenas for studying power relations in the given society. He is interested in understanding discourses and the underlying power relations that produce them. Discourses are arenas of knowledge. But discourse is not plain language. Foucault saw discourses as a “system of rules regulating the flow of power which serves a function of promoting interests in a battle of power desires”(Brown.A.L.2000.pp: 31). But as he points out there is not just one dominant discourse. Discourses can be seen as a series of circles. There is university
discourse, media discourse, psychoanalytic discourse, prisoner’s discourse and so on. A discourse is neither alone nor is it complete. Discourses correlate and overlap each other in a continuously moving plane. The function of the discourse— as he points out— is to produce truth. Truth is not out there to be discovered, it is created in the interest of those who exert the most power in the given society or historical moment. In his view it is the institutions such as media, universities or armies in the western societies that have the power to produce and own the truth. Further, institutions such as media, universities, nation-states, or the dominant class in a given society form the contexts where micro-relationships between the individuals’ takes place. It is within the frameworks of these contexts that the individuals modify or reproduce strategies for their further interaction.

As it is argued by Fairclough (1992) “discourse” is a difficult concept to define, mostly because of its use in so many different disciplines with so many overlapping theoretical standpoints. In “the archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language” (1972) Foucault laid out the main premises of his theory on discourse. He defined “discourse” as the systematic forms of knowledge, social subjects, social relations, subjectivity and framework of ideas (Hervik, P. 1999). One of the central problems with Discourse theory as pointed out by many scholars including Fairclough (1992) is its notion of power. Foucault related the discourse to the power in the way, as it is not possible to separate them from each other. For him power is directly related to the institutions in a given society. In accordance to him the institutional power in a society is the feature that can decide which discourse can be the dominant discourse of that society. It is the dominant discourse that has the power to decide which knowledge to be available and how that knowledge is understood in the given society. Barfield (1997) explains, “Analyzing accounts-as-discourse focuses one’s attention on how knowledge and representations – constructions of “The Other” – are produced by and help to reproduce relationships of power in institutions and society”. He uses Said’s Orientalism (1978) as an excellent example. With the use of discourse analysis Said addresses “the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce – the orient
(ibid, pp: 123). What is meant here as pointed out by Fairclough (1992, pp: 40) is: “specifying socio-historically variable discursive formation”. It is the system of rules that make some statements and not others possible to express in certain historical context (time), places and institutional locations. The discourse is controlled and produced by the powerful institutions of a society and it is therefore the information organs like the “media” in our case are very important because they are so powerful to define the discourse (Toft, S. 1999, pp: 58,59). Powerless groups; the Iranian immigrants in my case “… are subjugated by the dominant discourses of society; the way in which everyday language structures the world and confirms a set of values” (Eriksen, T.H. 1995, pp: 146).

Toft (1999) sees Fairclough’s (1992) critical readings of Foucault’s useful for projects such as hers and mine. Using Fairclough’s argument, she points out that Foucault exaggerates the importance of power in his theory of discourse. Because as Fairclough suggests the theory does not incorporate the real chances and opportunities of the individuals in relation to the action they can take in real life. When Foucault talks about how humans act, it is always in relation to the specific discourse. In so doing discourse appears to be a static structure, which, automatically controls individuals actions. As Fairclough argues, one cannot say anything in a micro practical level where the individual actions and practices takes place. To be able to do so he suggests that we have to undertake concrete analysis of actions such as textual statements and representations. By doing so we can examine discourse in relation to specific representations that are being produced by the right (powerful) people. This is used to replace the common practice in giving actions meanings in relation to presumably discursive structures (ibid).

Toft (1999) further points out that using Fairclough’s (1992) critics of discourse will distance us from a Foucaultian concept of discourse that is all too comprehensive and inherent in its nature and defined as knowledge. Using his interpretation of discourse as a practice that does not decide the content of the given discursive knowledge but one that
only works as a “filter” for which knowledge could go through and be available in the society. At the same time it works as the distributor of the available knowledge in a given society as well. As it is argued by Toft (1999), the idea of discourse as the practice that defines, distributes and regulates the available knowledge in a given society is vital and fundamental in projects like this thesis where the basic argument is that given groups - my informants - are projected in a negative way by the Media. When the same ideas and histories – discourse - are repeatedly appeared and marketed over the time, they will become a part of the imagination of those who these histories are told (ibid).

By “discourse” I am referring – for example - to the practice of choosing a specific topic to be printed or to be discussed in a talk show instead of another. Why is it that certain topics and aspects of a given group are getting so much attention rather than others?
Since I have no field material in relation to the editorial activities in a given newspaper I cannot say anything rather than pure speculation about why and how these topics are chosen but my fieldwork material shows filtering information – discourse – have impact on the various aspects of my informants life. On the one hand my informants showed extensive interest in discussing the Norwegian media and immigrants and on the other hands as the rest of the paper will show the image that media represents have both direct and indirect consequences in many aspects of my informants lives.

**Discursive positioning**
Peter Hervik in his introduction to “Den Generende Forskelighed” discusses the importance of “discursive positioning” in relation to the way he applies discourse in his research project. Hervik argues that people construct their understanding of each other through interaction. Even though the sum of one person’s point of view or opinion cannot be reduced to anyone else’s, it will always be a reflection or variation of a “referential framework” that is shared with a larger group or a number of people (Hervik.P.1999.Pp: 30). Further he points out that the social interaction should be conceived as a part of a larger situation where the participants occupy different positions or compete for the same
or different position(s). In other words, in any given social interaction individuals either compete or are given a number of positions. Some of these positions would last for as long as they live such as gender, religion, ethnic origin and professions. Others are short or transitory and Hervik (ibid) call them for “subjective positioning”. By subjective positioning he is referring to the identities or positions that we -with a variation in its strength - are subjected by the others without necessarily identifying with them or having any emotional attachment to them. Hervik continues by arguing that the logic behind their analytical premise lies in the idea that cultural knowledge and discursive influence are not copied directly in our body or brain but that they are being reproduced under specific contexts. According to him it is on the level of practice that these discourses and understandings meet each other under the given historical and spatial circumstances. This means that both the language and experience that involves interaction between members of different groups in a given context are restricted by and affected through their personal experiences. But the social experiences of the individual members of the given group do not control the outcome of the given interaction directly. According to Hervik, the language, including social categories that are being used to portray immigrants are different from the social categories that are being used to describe the native Danish. Further, social categories that are used in relation to immigrants are part of public discourse that aims to position the individual members of the given minority group through the quality(s) that the given category represents.

The above discussion shows that I intend to use media as data in this thesis and give a comprehensive attention to the ways it represents the immigrants in Norway. The inclusion of media is connected to two different but interrelated reasons. In the first place, media became an important element in this paper because during the fieldwork one of the informants told me that he has been gathering newspaper articles about refugees and immigrants in Norway since 1995. Later when I asked him if I could use the articles in my paper he gave me more than five or six kilos articles of various contents but all relevant to the refugees or immigrants life situation in Norway. Also almost all the
Iranian who I got in touch with spoke of the negative ways that Norwegian media were creating an image of them both as refugees or immigrants and as Muslims and Iranians. As one of my informants says:

The concept of “refugee” has become very negative over the time in Norway. Firstly it has to do with the media’s coverage of refugees and secondly the considerable growing number of the groups and individuals who are against Norway accepting refugees from the third world countries. The concept is so negative that many Iranians when asked about the reason for coming to Norway start lying. They usually argue that either they came here to study or they met a Norwegian girl abroad and came here together with her.

Another male informant of mine said:

Norwegian media’s debate about the foreigners in Norway is the same as Ricky Lake or the Operah’s talk show in the United State. The important issues of the society are reduced to entertainment. Usually they come up with conclusion that it is not foreigners who have problems. They themselves are the problem. For example TV2 invites Vidar Kleppe to discuss such issues as Muslims school in Oslo. Everybody knows his point of view. It is like inviting “Eischman” to discuss issues like “Jewish schools” in Germany. Kleppe ridicules even those who have good reasons to argue for the establishment of such school.

The above accounts are not just couple of isolated incidents or statements but they are part of an increasing sensibility and consciousness among the Iranian whom I spoke to during the fieldwork about the importance of media representation in their daily life experiences in Norway.

The second reason behind choosing media as a central part of this paper has to do with its importance as the main source of the news and information in the world including Norway. Husband (2000. Pp: 190) argues that there is no need to argue that the mass

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5 Vidar Kleppe is a very well known member of the far right wing Norwegian political party known as “Fremeskripts partiet”. He is most known for his dedication to stop the immigration to Norway and his racially biased statements.
Media are an important aspect of our social worlds in the late twentieth century. According to him entertainment media are not allowed to be innocent forms of relaxation anymore; but whether soap opera or Disney cartoon, their ideological content and potential for shaping beliefs, values and identities are open for scrutiny. Further, news is also equally a target of heated analysis as its ability to frame the events in our world and reflect partisan interests is studied and contested (ibid).

Media becomes important because the majority of the Norwegian population do not have face-to-face interaction and/or relationship with immigrants or refugees on the regular daily basis. I was not able to find any statistic by Norwegian statistic central bureau concerning the number of the Norwegian that have personal interaction with immigrants or refugees in their daily lives. But according to Togeby and Gaasholt’s (1995) research in Denmark there are only 15% of the Danish who have personal interaction with immigrants or refugees. As Hervik (1999) points out, this means that 85% of the population does not have regular face-to-face interaction with the immigrants and refugees. It is also the point of view of this thesis that there are not a significant difference between the population of Denmark and Norway when it comes to the personal relationship of their inhabitants with the members of the minority groups such as immigrants and refugees particularly when the focus groups are Muslims. This point is important because as Hervik (ibid) argues, the same majority who has no personal contact with immigrants and refugees receives their information and knowledge about them through the mass media. This knowledge is then pretty much dependent on the ways the media are projecting or representing issues related to the immigrants or refugees. The kind(s)/type(s) of representation is dependent on the choice of experts, what kind of news to be covered, from what point of view the given news is represented, and so on. The majority population who does not know the immigrants or refugees personally or have never traveled to their home country sits with a small amount of knowledge and is therefore unable to argue against the media’s massages and representation (Ibid). Fuglerud (2001:127) argues that categories and hegemonic forms of knowledge that are
represented to the members of a given society have important impact on the relationship between members of different groups. He points out that many Norwegians who have never had a personal relationship with a member of a given minority group (immigrant), still have an opinion about how one can expect them to behave. According to him this is an important issue since it has systematic consequences on, for example, treatment of work, housing, social help and other types of applications that belong to immigrants.

If we accept the above argument then media becomes the institution that members of majority group learn most of their information about the immigrants and refugees. But as members of the given society or group we do not learn about each other in isolation. There are many elements that play important role in the process of learning. Hervik (2000), argues that recent studies show that one cannot take the relationship between the extra-personal and intra-personal sphere of culture for granted. Discourses - public massages included - are not xeroxed or faxed in to the mind of individuals. Learning is not something that an individual does by him/herself but it is a process that takes place in a “context of social interaction” (Hervik.P.2000.Pp: 4). According to him, learning is always situated and is a part of the social life of the given individual. Therefore to understand the discourse one has to relate it into a larger framework of cultural interpretation. To be able to understand the meaning of a given discourse one needs (as it is the case with any language) a point of reference or in Hervik’s own word: “a referential world upon which meaning is made” (Ibid. 4). In this context the media is one of the institutions that plays an important role in the creation of the referential world that members of different groups use to produce meaning about each other. I guess I am trying to argue that people use categories to make order in a chaotic world. In order to position individual members of different groups by given categories one needs to have basic information about them or the group that they belong. This information is used for categorizing groups of people or individuals. Since in our case the majority of Norwegian does not have regular personal relationship or interaction with refugees or immigrants then the required information is acquired through different channels including the mass
media. This has consequences for the members of both minority and majority groups as long as they do not have face-to-face interaction or personal relationship with each other. In the case of the minorities they would see the media’s representation, choice of topics, and so on as to be representative for all the members of the majority group. Relatively speaking they would consider the majority of Norwegians to be agreeing in what the media is representing. In the case of the majority they would also see the information received through the media as representative for the whole group namely the immigrants or refugees.

**Content and structure of the chapters**

This paper is divided in four chapters. Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the central issues that concern this thesis and therefore can be considered as analytical chapters. Chapter two discusses the “social organisation” of Iranian in Norway. This chapter begins with a historical perspective on Iranian immigration in general. I will point out the main reasons for Iranian refugees departure from Iran. I briefly describe which social class the informants belong and if they shared western cultural values prior to their settlement in Norway. I also describe how they came to Norway, how long it took for them to arrive to Norway, whether they were jailed in the transit country and so on. In the last part of the second chapter I will try to use relatively central variables such as, “education”, “gender”, “generation” and “ethnic and linguistic variation” to show the social organisation and stratification among Iranian refugees in Norway.

In chapter 3, I will discuss the notion of public sphere. Here, I will adopt a comparative perspective to illustrate differences between Iran and Norway. I will argue that in Iran, face-to-face or informal arena is still the main source of gaining information. I will use parks, which I call for “green spaces” as example and argue that the green spaces can be understood and studied as “total social spaces”. Further, I will argue that in Norway the informal arena have been replaced by a more formal one where the face-to-face
interaction does no longer function as it does within the Iranian context. I will suggest that the informal arena (s) in Norway have been replaced by media discourse. In other words, media discourse has replaced informal arena(s) as the main source of gaining information. In the last part, I will represent a close reading of selected newspaper articles from “Aftenposten”. The selected articles from one of the leading Norwegian newspaper are aimed to show the way immigrants, refugees and Muslims are represented in Norwegian media.

Chapter 4 discusses my informant’s gender relationship across the boundaries of the groups. The aim of the chapter is to show what kind of difficulties refugees or immigrants face when they live in a society with gender relationships that contrast with the one they are used to from their home country. Further, I will discuss the consequences of gendered representation of immigrants and refugees as it was discussed in chapter three. At this section I will represent one article from Aftenposten as a representative example of how the Norwegian media’s representations of immigrants or Muslims are gendered. In this chapter, I also use male/female or man/woman (sex) as variables. The aim of using such variables is to illustrate the different consequences of gendered representations of immigrants, refugees and Muslims on my male and female informants. A discussion of how public discourse (media representation) affects the interaction between members of majority and minority group is the aim of this section of chapter four. I will discuss the interaction between the members of the two groups on a “micro level” by focusing mostly on “interaction theory”. By doing so I will include a gender perspective that focuses on the difficulties that Muslim men face in practicing the male identity that is partly based on a cultural values that contrasts with the one’s that is shared by the members of the majority group. By identity, I am aiming towards “self esteem”, “self confidence” and “self evaluation” that individuals experience through being recognised by the others.
I end the thesis with “final remarks” where I aim to have a discussion that includes the impact of the “lack of community” (chapter two), “gendered public discourse” (chapter three) and “asymmetrical gender relationship” (chapter four) on daily life experience of my male informants. Furthermore, I will debate the importance of “recognition” on my informants identity. However, the most important point in this chapter is to show how the lack of recognition on the part of my male informants can be seen as one of the reasons behind their decision in leaving Norway. Further, it will be argued that the positive recognition that my female informants receive can play an important role in their relative satisfaction and positive evaluation of their future opportunities in Norway.
CHAPTER TWO:

Social organization of Iranian refugees in Norway

Emigration of Iranians to western countries began during the last two political regimes of Iran, namely the former “Shah” and the “Islamic republic of Iran”. During 1960s Iran started its oil production that became the major factor in the country’s economic growth and industrialization project. Rapid western oriented industrialization created an acute need for educated professional labor for different industrial sectors (Keddie. N.1981). Iran had not yet developed the higher education institutions that had the capacity for educating these professionals. Therefore in the beginning of the 1970s, many Iranian students went abroad – West Germany, France, United Kingdom, Italy and the United States were the countries that received most of those students. Among these students there were many who did not return to Iran after completing their education. These were those who either married or found a job through their professional skills and therefore gained residence status abroad. But, the majority returned home after completing their degrees. Those students who returned to Iran brought with themselves the cultural values – music, cloth, food, and knowledge of the political systems, political freedom, and democratic ways of governing, from the country in which they lived during their education. Among those who returned to Iran, there were many who moved back to Western countries, mostly after the Islamic revolution of 1979. They were not the only ones who left Iran for western countries. There were a large number of young Iranian men and women and families who decided to leave Iran after the Iranian revolution or during the Iran - Iraq war. In the next sections of this chapter I will lay out the most

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6. This is an important factor in relation to the flow of information from western countries to Iran. Members of their close families and relatives were able to travel to the countries where these individuals were living and bring back information to Iran. At the same time the majority of these individuals were visiting Iran on regular basis and were invited by relatives and friends to dinner and other types of socialization. Due to these gatherings and interactions people around them were able to gain information about many aspect of life in western countries.

7. The importance of these students on bringing western values into Iran should be considered parallel to the process/project of westernization of Iranian society by the last Iranian king and the importance of mass media.
important aspects of the effect of the Iranian revolution on Iranian society and the daily life of Iranian men, women and families. This will be the necessary relevant information for those who have no prior information about Iranian refugees and the reasons behind them living in exile.

**The impact of Islamic Revolution on Iranian society**

The period between 1977 and 1979 can undoubtedly be regarded as one of the most important period in Iran’s political, social and economic history in the last 3-decade. The political struggle had been solved by the fact that on January 16, 1979, the so called “symbol” of the Iran’s stability and progress, the Shah, was forced to leave Iran under the pressure of one of the most extraordinary revolutionary upheavals in the recent history (Afkhami. R. G. 1985). After the Revolution, the political and social atmosphere of Iranian society changed dramatically. For the first time Iranian were experiencing political freedom in their everyday lives. The new political parties were established after the revolution. Almost all of these parties were active in marketing their political views and ideologies. At the same time, they were also active in recruiting new members. “January to May 1979 saw the freest and culturally most dynamic period of recent Iranian history. More than 250 publications flourished, including those by a wide spectrum of leftist and other secular political factions, women’s groups, regional and ethnic groups, Jewish intellectuals, and many other groups” (Hamzeloo, 1979. in Sereberny. A & Mohammadi. A. 1994. Pp: 165).

Lively political and ideological discussions took place on every street corner of almost all major cities and on the university campuses. “University campuses played host to the photography exhibitions documenting the revolutionary movement, to endless meetings, and huge rallies held in homage of past heroes, such as the Fadaii guerrillas who fell in Siahkal. For the first time it felt like the dawn of freedom” (Sereberny. A &

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8. Siahkal is an hour from my own hometown and the incident happened before revolution and the shah’s secret service agents killed them. The incident became an important event because people saw those political activists who were killed by Shah’s secret service as heroes.
Mohammadi. A. 1994). Such political atmosphere created a unique political and social consciousness among the Iranian, especially younger generations. This socio-political consciousness led to a new culture of critical awareness. Suddenly the majority of Iranian population that were alienated from the political scene by the Shah’s regime felt included in building a safe future for themselves and their country. Many Iranian youth became either a member of a political party or they sympathized with them. But it soon became clear that a real “public sphere” of political debate would not be allowed to last for long (ibid).

The post-revolutionary atmosphere was highly charged by revenge and purge, notably in the army, state bureaucracies, and education (Ibid). The ranking members of the Pahlavi regime who stayed in Iran were quickly executed despite the repeated calls to bring them to the trial. High-ranking employees, both at the private and public sectors, were removed. An atmosphere of revolutionary purity was developed. During this period, the commitment to the Islamic ideology was far greater worth than any professional qualification (ibid). Those who were regarded as “liberals” and others who were perceived as “human rights” activists were considered radicals. The term “liberal” became a term of condemnation; western-educated politicians were targets of critics and were publicly humiliated as being tie-wearers, and west-struck. Secular groups were further labeled as “devilish” or “atheist”, and therefore counterrevolutionary. Islam and anti-imperialism were used to alienate those people who dared to say any kind of critic. At this time the government started the process of what they later called as “pak – sazi” or “cleansing” (ibid). Known and reputed SAVAK agents as well as old directors and heads of departments were all dismissed from the organizations. The farther down the organizational hierarchy, the more such accusations were based on hearsay and were increasingly arbitrary. Pak-sazi called into question the responsibility of all who had worked under the Pahlavi regime in Iran for the injustices that had occurred.
On the streets of the most major cities, there were self-proclaimed groups of Islamic youth, which became well known as “Hisbollahi” (because of their slogan "hezb faqt hezbollah, rahbar faqt Rouhollah", which meant: the only party is the party of God, the only leader is Rouholah). These groups gave themselves the responsibility to define and guard the Islamic Republic and its values. They arrested anyone they believed to be in opposition to the Islamic values and they caused disruption at the liberal rallies, and attacked the publishers who published material, which they did not approve (ibid). At the end of the summer of 1979, all the critical voices were forced to silence by the government of Islamic Republic. This led to the prohibition of all other political parties except the dominant Islamic Republican Party (ibid).

Post-revolutionary political, economic and social environment of Iranian society had consequences for Iranian women as well9. “The Islamic revolution had a marked and transforming impact on all areas of Iranian life. But for women, its consequences were specially profound – legally, professionally, psychologically, both in the home and in the society” (Esfandiari, H. 1997 pp. 1). One of the most important changes during the reign of the last Iranian king, in relation to the women issues, was the “family protection law” (FPL) of 196710. Before the implementation of FPL, men could divorce their wives anytime they wanted and on any ground they wanted. Men were able to have more than one wife without their first wife having anything to say about it. Iranian men were also able to enter into temporary marriages. They were given the custody of their children automatically in the case of divorce. They had the authority to prevent their wives from working or even travel abroad (Fischer. M. 1980. Esfandiari.H.1997).

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9 - The following paragraphs discuss the issues related to Iranian women lives after the Revolution of 1979. It is important for the writer, to point out that many issues discussed at this section have been modified and thereby changed during the last 24 years. Iranian women have been able to demand their rights in accordance to their interpretation of Islamic laws. It not the aim of the author, to argue that Iranian women enjoy the same kind of freedom that women in western countries have. But it is important to take into account that every society has its own dynamic way of dealing with different issues.

10 - I am forced to limit the scope of the thesis and therefore it is difficult to do justice to all aspect of the changes that the Iranian revolution had brought to the lives of Iranian women. At this part of the thesis I am just mentioning the most important aspects of the changes that is relevant to the argument that I am making through out the thesis.
The FPL has made the way easier for the leadership of the women movement of Iran to seek the expansion of this law. In 1975 the modification of the law was approved by the parliament. The new law gave the wife the right to prevent their husband from working in fields that could bring dishonor to the family. With the death of the father, the custody of the children were given to the mother, something that was previously given to the close relative of the man. The new law increased the age of the marriage for girls from 15 to 18 and from 18 to 20 for the boys (Esfandiari.H.1997). The new law opened the opportunity for women to serve as judges and lawyers, something that they were not able until then. Women did no longer need permission from their husbands to leave the country and to travel abroad. The revision of the Family Planning Law, implemented new laws that made discrimination against women in the labor marked unlawful. Women were given up to seven month paid maternity leave, with the option to work part time for the first three years of child’s life (ibid).

The family protection law was abolished after the revolution. Therefore, Iranian men once again were given the right to divorce their wives and without reasonable ground. They were also given permission to have more than one wife. The custody of the children was once again given automatically to the husband in divorce cases. Women could no longer file for divorce under any circumstances. The marriage age was once again reduced from 18 to the puberty for girls in order to keep it within the Islamic laws. The new constitution\textsuperscript{11}, after the revolution, had only four articles dealing with women issues. All four of them were related to the way women should behave in the public, within the context of the family and in relation to the Islamic laws and principles (ibid). According to the new constitution Iranian women could no longer serve as judges and lawyers anymore. Their court testimonies were also given half the value of the men’s. Inheritance laws specified that male family members get significantly more than female heirs.

\textsuperscript{11} After the Revolution in 1979 the former constitution was replaced by a new one that was more Islamic oriented.
Before the revolution of 1979, Iranian women were on their way to work in all sections and levels of Iranian society. The general atmosphere during the revolutionary aftermath encouraged the Iranian women to go back to their traditional role – staying at home. The general opinion was build around the idea that the best way of accomplishing the task is to make it difficult for them to work or participate in the society at the same level as the men did. In other words, they were forced directly or indirectly to go back into the kitchen (Esfandiari.H.1997).

After the revolution the government of the Islamic Republic started the process of “reform/reconstruction” of the Iranian society as a part of the Islamisation process. One of the most important sectors to undergo reform was the education sector. Since the students had played a major role in the victory of the revolution and the university campuses had become a meeting place for all the political parties, it became necessary Islamesize this important arena. This reform was a part of a larger reform program that is also known as the “Cultural Revolution” (Mir - Hosseini. Z. 2000). During this reform, which took almost two years to complete, the government closed down all the Higher Education institutions. At the same time, the entire curriculum for all level's, from primary school to the universities were changed. “the 1980 cultural revolution resulted in the closure of all universities, and when they reopened two years later they were “Islamised”...(ibid. Pp: xiii).

As has been mentioned before, the loyalty to the Islamic values became the most important criteria in employing people in public institutions. This was particularly enforced for university admittance. The universities became effectively semi- closed institutions. Those who had passed the nation wide examination required for admission were also required to be the followers of the Islamic values. The officials were checking the background of all candidates. Checking the university student’s background was the
job of department of education and a section called “siaci va aqidati” with many of its employees connected to the secret service.

Many young Iranians were denied admission to the universities after the revolution. The majority of those who were denied permission to the university education belonged to the class or families that were conceived as part of the former regimes hegemony. These young individuals were those who have been active in the revolutionary process but had to pay the price for either the wrong doing of their parents or just being born in the wrong family or class even if their parents did not belonged to any political or other organizations.

**The impact of Iran-Iraq (1980-1988) war**

The war between Iran and Iraq started by Iraqi military occupying some parts of south and south west of Iran in 1980, one year after the Islamic revolution. It became the duty of all Iranians to participate in the war and defend their country against the external enemy. There were huge technological and professional gaps between the Iraqi and Iranian army. The majority of high-ranking Iranian officers had been executed in the beginning of the revolution and new army professionals did not yet replace them. At the same time the Iraqi regime was considered as a western friendly regime and therefore countries such as France, United Kingdom and United State of America and Germany were selling them advanced military equipments. The Iranian army on the other hand, because of its technological shortages, was forced to use human shield in order to stop the Iraqi military in its offensive. The news of massive lost of human life on the part of Iranian military had reached all Iranian cities. Many Iranian youth refused to participate in the war. Most of the families were worried for their young boys and their future. Those who refused to participate found it difficult to live a normal life. Because of the War,

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12. Personally I have witnessed C130 army airplanes that came to Tehran airport one after another that were filled by dead bodies. There were great difficulties in finding out which body part belonged to which corps.
food was distributed by coupon. Those members of a family who were called to go to the war and had refused were no longer on the list to get their share of food coupon. It meant that these families had to buy food for their male children in the black market at hugely inflated prices. At the same time, these boys were not able to apply to any higher education institutes. They were also banned from employment at all official governmental offices. It meant that the only jobs available for them were on the black market. They could not also walk freely on the street, because there were all sorts of control by the revolutionary guards and the Para-military “bassigee” organization, ready to recruit them by force to the military.

The Pahlavi era transformed the Iranian society in many different ways. Ethnic, religious, and geographical differences gave way to “class” distinctions and a national identity. Aristocratic privileges were replaced by the new measures of social status, such as educational level and influence in state agencies. Many of those who belonged to the lower classes started to educate themselves. They used education consciously as a tool for climbing up the social ladder. Rapid urbanization and higher levels of education were accompanied by increasing economic stratification. A new class was formed of professionals, army officers, bureaucrats, and entrepreneurs, with values and beliefs different from those of their fathers and with expectations of a more open society based on secular values.

Those who were opposed to the late Shah’s regime with the religious leaders in the center saw the rapid changes (modernization) and Shah’s emulation of the west (new image of Iran) as a part of westernization process (Esfandiari.H.1997. Sreberny Mohamadi & mohamadi, 1994). They feared that the Shah was threatening Iran’s national and religious identity. This fear was justified by pointing to the secularization of Iranian society that had forced the Shi’i clerics away from the center stage of Iranian politics. Such view can be examined in a broader academic perspective, namely the post modern theories where many scholars have pointed out problems such as, rootedness, centeredness, the rise of
the nationalism and construction of the identities. Development of associations and attachments to the communities larger than family, tribe, locality and religion have been pointed out as one of the problematic dimension in the transition of a society into the modernity. Geertz, 1973 expresses such challenge as integrative revolution. What he means is that these societies have to establish a new unified identity that could combat the fragmenting forces of previous primordial identification (traditional Islamic values in Iranian case). Within such perspective, the continuity of the state is dependent on the people’s identification with a view of a nation that state personifies. For the state to be able to accomplish such a task, media and other institutions become central players for the development of “national identity”. But in the case of Iran, mass media, the new information technology and government’s mimic of western culture by focusing on secularization, posed a threat to the pre-existing national and cultural identities. It simply lacked the ability or did not attempt to produce parallel alternative systems of values, beliefs and practices that could succeed the past.

During the upheaval of the revolution, the religious opposition, with the clergy in its center, who were highly supported by Iranian across all different social classes, saw one primordial identity, religion, to be under treat from different number of forces at once: rapid development, development policy that was heavily dependent on the west and a totalitarian regime that tried to undermine this identity further. They demanded the downfall of the Pahlavi regime. After the revolution, many secular Iranian were shocked and confused because of the way they were treated by the revolutionary government. Those whose search for an indigenous identity had led them to support the religious opposition felt a painful sense of hostility and disloyalty, as they realized the span of the gap that separated them from the religious clergy. It is here at this point that the cultural gap between the secularism and shi’i Islam that had existed since the beginning of the former century can be seen clearly. But nowhere this gap is clearer than in the way Iranian women have been treated. Where secularist saw the elimination of the veil as a means to introducing Iranian into the Western twentieth century, the clerics saw the
control over the appearance of the women as fundamental to the Islamic values and its integrity. Both secularists and traditionalists used force to implement the dress code in Iran. Neither of them understood that it was a personal matter. Enforcing the veil under the Islamic Republic was probably as intrusive and painful for the independent women of the 80s as unveiling was for the traditional woman of the 1930s.

For more than seventy years, Iranian government sponsored and campaigned for secularization of Iranian society. But after the revolution and for the first time, those secularized and anti-clerical Iranian felt to be on the wrong side of the power relation in Iran. But in contrast to the traditional religious groups who had to stay in Iran because they had nowhere to go during the decades of secularist rules, the westernized middle class, many with contacts with Europe and America, had a clear alternative to what seemed to them a return to archaic past.

**Representation of key informants**

As the above discussion shows the majority of Iranian who left Iran, either during or after the revolution, including my informants, belonged to the secularist section of Iranian society. I have mentioned in the first chapter that as an Iranian I was able to have relationship with many Iranians during my fieldwork. The information and data that I have been able to produce goes far beyond the few key informants that I will present in the following section. But these informants played a key role in introducing me to the ways they experienced their lives in Norway. In many ways they opened a new gate that represented a reality that I had not experienced personally. In the following, I will present five individuals that can be categorized within the anthropological terminology as “key informants”. I will use education, gender, and generation as the most important variables in order to give an adequate presentation of them.

**Informant A** is an Iranian man and former political activist who was expelled from a university in Iran after the Cultural Revolution. His family belongs to the middle class in
Iran. He grew up in one of Iran’s largest cities that is also known for its religious activists. He was forced to leave Iran because of his political interests and to avoid conscription to the Iran-Iraq war. He came to Norway as a refugee, through United Nation, via Pakistan. He lived in Pakistan for about one year prior to his arrival to Norway. He has been living in Norway for more than fifteen years. He is in his late 30s, not very tall, with a light olive complexion. A man who is interested in social and political issues and well informed when it comes to the domestic politic of Norway. He is single and holds a hovedfag (equivalents M-Phil) degree in natural science from a Norwegian university. He works in a private international company.

**Informant B** is a single Iranian man in his early 30s. He is a former political activist who was expelled from a university in Iran after the Cultural Revolution. He is from a middle class Iranian family and was born and raised in one of Iran’s largest cities. He was forced to leave Iran because of his political and ideological differences with the Iranian government. He came to Norway as a refugee after going through Greece and again with the help of United Nation. He lived in Greece for more than a year before his arrival to Norway. He has been living in Norway for more than ten years. He came to Norway alone without any family relations and he knew no one here before settling. He holds a university degree in natural science from a Norwegian university and works as a civil engineer for an international Norwegian firm. He is tall, with olive skin and black hair. He is well informed in political and social issues of Norway. He talks with a rapid clip, so it is hard to keep up with him.

**Informant C** is an Iranian woman who is in her 30s. She comes from a modern middle class Iranian family. Her parents were neither religious nor traditional. As a child she grew up with the idea that her family were very rich but as she got older she found out that they were not as rich as she thought. She came to Norway with her husband but at the moment she is divorced and live at her own apartment with her children. She came to Norway through Turkey as a refugee. She lived in Turkey less than six month prior to her
arrival to Norway. She holds a degree in natural science from a Norwegian university and works for the government. She is of average height and has dark hair and brown eyes. She is articulate, well-spoken, confidant, down to earth, and capable. For me she represents the prototype of the well-educated Iranian woman who grew up during the revolution.

**Informant D** is a single Iranian man in his early 30s. He comes from a middle class Iranian family. He was born and raised in Tehran and was living there prior to his departure. Among his close family he is the only one who has left Iran. He left Iran after his high school graduation. He went to Pakistan and lived there for about three months. Later he was forced to leave Pakistan to Bangladesh. He lived in Bangladesh for thirteen months. Nine months of this period he spent in jail. He and other Iranians who were with him were set free after a long hunger strike and one suicide. He came to Norway in 1986 as a refugee through the United Nation. He holds a postgraduate degree in natural science from a Norwegian university and is unemployed. He is thin and of average height, with olive complexion and black hair. He is a man with a good sense of humor and a good deal of common sense.

**Informant E** is an Iranian woman in her 20s. She came to Norway with her parents when she was very young. Her family belongs to the Iranian middle class and they are from a large city in the south of Iran. She went to secondary and primary school in Norway. At the moment she is in the process of completing her master degree in a Norwegian university. She is thin, with light brown hair and light olive skin. She is a woman of few words and an air of word weariness. She is well informed on social and political climate of Norway in issues related to the immigrants and refugees.

The description of the above 5 key informants is typical of the majority of Iranians that I have had relationship in the course of the fieldwork. Typically, they were either students who were expelled because of their political ideology or they did represent values that
were in contrast with the revolutionary values that the government admired. The political, social and economical changes of Iranian society – as we can see – had profound consequences on the life of individual Iranian men and women. It is then interesting to find out the extent of the changes on the life of these individuals by using their own statements. According to informant B:

“After the revolution I became more interested in social and political issues. During this period I learned that one should sacrifice and that people live differently. Eventually I started to study at the university. During the university period I had no political activities. But at the same time I was apposed to all the political programs of the new government including the war. The government campaigned a new plan that all university students had to go to the war for a period of six month. We started openly to talk to fellow students to discourage them in participating in the war. They expelled me from the university. This was the turning point in my life. After this incident I sat home for the most part … I couldn’t sit home for the rest of my life. Either I had to join the system. It meant that I had to suppress others who thought differently than the new government did. Or I had to join one of the political groups who were still active. Then I had to become militantly involved in their struggle with the government. Thirdly, I had to leave all those I loved behind and move to another country. The third option was the most difficult one, but at the same time it was the most politically correct one. This was the only one with no bloodshed. You come to a point in your life that you have to leave all the familiar elements of your life behind and start a new journey. Only because you do not want to have negative impact on the process of changes that was taking place at that time in Iran”.

The next statement belongs to the informant C:

“I was twelve or thirteen years old during the revolutional upheaval. I have very close relationship with my two older brothers. After the revolution they became politically active and I looked up to them. I became interested in politic too. At the first year of my secondary school I became friend with a girl at our class. Through her I learned that there are other things in life than studying and going to school. During the high school I became actively involved in politic. When I was at the third year of the high school I was expelled because of my political activities. But at the same time I have to admit that this was the best period of my life. I can say that my life before me turning eighteen was the best
period in my life. This was the period when we used to travel during the summer to where you are from (me, interviewer) the Caspian Sea, with my brothers and their friends. Friends of my brother were coming to our house and I had a very good relationship with them. One day my brother came to me and told me that one of his friends is interested in me and wants to talk to me. That boy was very politically active at the time. Him and his family were politically active even before the revolution. Every body has certain values in life. At that time these kinds of people were my role models. During our first private conversation he talked for one hour about the connection between politics and marriage. I had no clue what he was talking about. After five or six meeting I got tired. I told him directly about the things and that I didn’t liked him. But he didn’t give up. All these took five month. After five month we got married. Not traditional but we went to the city hall ourselves and got married. None of our family members were present. My husband had no job. He couldn’t find a job. Because of his political affiliation it was impossible for him to find a job. After four or five month we left Iran. He had no future in Iran. We travelled to Turkey. We were four month there and then we came to Norway’.

To sum up, after the declaration of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the implementation of its new policies the social, political environment and the living condition in Iran have been perceived as repressive by majority of those who has left Iran. Royalist sympathizers, socialist and liberal elements have been forced to leave Iran; followed by young men who did not wished to be drafted to fight in the war with Iraq; followed by young women and families, when the gender restrictions became too confining. The majority of them left their country for the first time. Many of them have never lived for any length of time outside Iran prior to their settlement in different western countries. I have mentioned in the first chapter that Iranian immigrants/refugees come from large urban areas of different Iranian provinces that represent the heterogeneity of the Iranian society. In other words Iranian refugees who came to Norway are in many way representative for the ethnic, linguistic and socio-cultural diversity that characterizes Iranian society. Majority of these individuals brought these features with them to the host society. In the remaining sections of this chapter I will use the most relevant variables to
analyze the social organization and stratification among the Iranian refugees and immigrants in Norway.

**Lack of community among the Iranians in Norway**

During my fieldwork, I became more and more aware of the increasing number of Iranians who complained about the lack (or showed their desire for) of an Iranian community in Norway. The lack of an Iranian community provides us with the opportunity to study and analyze the socio-cultural factors that are important in understanding relationship among Iranians. The aim of this section is to give a brief account of different variables and criterions that are used by Iranians as categories for inclusion or exclusion of a given group or individual(s). By doing so we will be able to further extent our understanding of group characteristics of Iranian in Norway. To address the group characteristics, I find “the socio-economic factors and make up” and “diversity among Iranians” to be of the most important issues that one should take into account. However, what is being presented here is a selection of the most important criterions that can be used for classification of individuals.

Before doing so, it is important to discuss the problematic aspects of employing “community” within the contemporary social science. The first issue related to community, as an analytical concept in social science is the problem of its definition. A precise definition of the term “community” has proved to be hard to pin down even though the term is one of the widest and most frequently used in social science (Rapport, N & Overing, J. 2000). Community as an academic concept has been defined differently in relation to the context and the school of thought that it has been used:

“… Representing togetherness of the past (Tonnies), contemporary behaviour communality (Frankenberg, Miner and Greer, Warner), Political solidarity (ethnic, local, religious), or a utopia future (a rural idyll, a world order) … (Ibid)
Therefore within anthropology, there is an increasing criticism towards community as an analytical concept (Amit, V & Rapport, N. 2002. Also Baumann, G. 1996). Many anthropologists have noted the slipperiness of this concept and argued that it is too vague in its definitions and therefore of not much value as an analytical tool (Bauman. G.1996). But as it is pointed out by Amit (2002), the very features that tend to produce this ambiguity also help to ensure the persistence of a notion of community both within academics literature and in popular vernaculars. The resonance of a term like community makes it a useful rhetorical addition to a large mixture of public appeals seeking to exploit the term’s generally positive connotations of ‘inter-personal’ warmth, shared interests and loyalty (Bauman. G.1996. Pp:15). A comprehensive discussion on difficulties related to the term community is outside the scope of this paper. However, in this thesis I intend to use the term as it correlates to the way my informants understand and use it. In other words it is the “emic” or “native points of view” that lays the basis for my definition of the term. In the words of one female informant:

“… The relationship between Iranian in Norway is more based on the culture. It is important that you belong to the same culture. We cannot say that we have one Iranian culture. There are so many different cultures in Iran. Iran is a big country with many different ethnic groups. For me what represents Iranian culture is the heterogeneity of its culture. You have different ethnic cultures even in the same city. I think it is very interesting that Norwegians can create a small community when they are outside Norway but Iranian can not do that when they are abroad…”

One of the male informants described it as:

“… For the Pakistanis, they go back to their own neighbourhood and seek their own identity and sense of belonging in their small but in a way complete community. For Iranian no such cohesive community exists. So they are floating. We feel there is no such cultural distance that society perceives as reality. We have no longer any sense of belonging…”

Another female informant told me:
“…First we have to talk about Iranian community. In Oslo we have no such community as for example the Pakistanis have. There is no formal organisation or place where the Iranian gathers, then when we talk about Iranian community, we are talking about small groups getting together. Like four or five families have contact with each other. Or some single Iranian either boys or girls have relationship with each other…”

The above statements are representative for how my informants understand and use the term community. According to such statements the term community can be defined as:

1- A group of people who live in the same area, or area in which they live
2- A group of people with a common background or with shared interests within society
3- A group of nations with common history or common economic or political interests

Ethnic, Linguistic and Religious Variation among Iranians

Ethnic, religious and linguistic categories are important because Iran is a true example of what the Anthropologists call “mosaic” when they discuss Middle Eastern countries. According to Bill and Leiden (1974, in Abrahamian, A. 1982), in nineteen-century Iran was a land of infinite variety, of social complexity. Iran resembled a colorful mosaic and a complex kaleidoscope (Ibid). The most important reason behind Iran being considered as “the social mosaic” in the Middle East was the physical geography of the country. Iran’s geographical condition has led to the isolation and economic self-containment of many of her villages, cities and tribes. This isolation forced the inhabitant of these areas to produce and consume their own handicraft as well as their own agricultural goods. Local self-sufficiency was reflected in and reinforced by the lack of well-developed communication (Abrahamian, A. 1982). Paradoxically, improvements in transportation did not necessarily facilitate social communications. The geographical hardships were compounded by ethnic differences. Iran was and still is a land of linguistic minorities:
In the central plateau, the town population spoke Persian; the villagers Persians, Bakhtiyari, Luri, or Armenian; the nomadic tribes Bakhtiyari, Qashqayi, Baluchi, Arabic, or Mamasani. In the Caspian provinces, the peasantry used Gilaki, Taleshi, or Mazandarani; the townsmen Persian and the Azeri dialect of Turkish; the tribes Kurdish or the Turkoman dialect of Turkish. The inhabitants of Azerbaijan were predominantly Azeri speaking; but the region also had pockets of Tat and Armenian settlements, and of Kurdish, Shahsavans, Turkoman, Afshar, and Qareh Daghi tribesmen. The western province consisted predominantly of Kurdish, Luri, and Arab tribes; and partly of Afshar, Azari, Persian, Bayat, Gurani, and Assyrian settlements. Moreover, many of the Kurdish valleys had developed their own Kurdish dialects. The southern provinces contained Baluchi, Arab, Afghan, Afshar, Kurdish, and Nowshirvani tribesmen. Finally, the northeastern region was populated with Persians, Azaris, Turkomans, Kurds, Arabs, Shahsavans, Afshars, Jamshids, Tajiks, Afghan, Qajars, Hazaras, Bayats, and Baluchis (Abrahamian, A. 1982. Pp. 15).

This ethnic mosaic and complexity, as described above, have been further complicated by religious differences. The population of Iran can be divided in three different groups according to their religious affiliation. First, there is a division between Muslim majority and non-Muslim minority. The non-Muslim minority are made up of different religions such as: Armenians, Assyrians, Jews and Zoroastrians. People with different religions were also living in different areas of the country. For example, the Jewish population of Iran were living in many major cities including Tehran, Isfahan and Tabriz or Zoroastrian who are the remnant of the ancient religion of Iran were living in Kerman, Yazd and Tehran and so on. The second division can be made between the Muslim populations itself; between Shi’i majority and Sunni minority. The Sunnis themselves were divided into different tribes at the periphery, especially the Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs, Baluchis, and Hazaras (Ibid). The third division is among the Shi’i Muslims themselves. They have been divided between the main official branches that are known as the Mujtahedi Twelvers, and many small unofficial sects, schools, and factions scattered throughout

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13. The Mujtahedi Twelvers, as Shi’is, considered the prophet’s legitimat heir to have been not his elected successor – the Sunni caliph, but his son-in-law Imam Ali. As Twelvers, they traced the line of descent from Imam Ali through his martyred son Imam Hussein to the Twelfth Imam, who had disappeared in the reign of divine justice. During the nineteen century the Shi’ism have developed two major schism: Sheyhkism and Babism. The Babism was splited into two rival branches: Baha’ism and Azalism. In addition to these new communities there were also many old shi’i sects. There was Isma’ili sect who lived in many parts of Iran. They believed in seventh Imam instead of twelve. There were also those who
the country. In modern day Iran the cities are not divided anymore on the basis of the religious schools and sects. But all the different sects and school and small branches of shi’i Islam are still represented and are active in Iranian society. It should be noted that all these diversities based on ethnic, religious and language variations laid the basis for the creation of communal diversity as well. There is still diversity in the way of life among the villagers, the nomadic tribesmen, and the urban population. There is diversity in religious beliefs, particularly between Sunnis and Shi’i, Muslims and non-Muslims, Twelver Mujtahedis and other Shi’is. More over, there is diversity in language and dialects, especially among the Persians, Azeris, Turkmen, Baluchis, Luris, Kurds, Gilakis, and Mazandaranis. All these languages are represented in today’s modern Iran and they each belong to different provinces.

Besides the linguistic differences, religious differences and; tribal ways of life there are also differences between the urban lifestyles and rural villages. During my fieldwork, I came to know many Iranian who spoke many of the above-mentioned languages. I met Iranians who spoke Arabic, Azari Turkish, Mazandarani, Gilani, Luri, Baluchi, as well as Persian. It was interesting to see that they spoke Persian (the national language) with those who were not able to understand their local language. But they spoke the local language when they were together with the members of the same ethnic group or those who were from the same province where they were from. If someone was among a group of for example Azeri, Kurds, Gilani, or Mazandarani speaking, then he/she could not understand their language. One of my informants told me:

“A friend of mine drove me to Oslo from the city where I used to live before. He was originally from Azerbaijan. Since I didn’t know many people in Oslo he invited me to spend the night at his friends apartment. I didn’t know that they practiced Ali Ilah’i doctoring. These teaching denounced mosques, opposed polygamy, rejected the concept of ritual uncleanness, permitted the consumption of pork and wine, and, most unorthodox of all, defined Imam Ali as the reincarnation of GOD. Furthermore all the major towns were divided into two factions known as Ni’matis and Hay’darys. Both of these sects were Sufis.
were also all from the same town. However, the whole night they spoke Turkish and I had no way of understanding
what they were talking about. I have seldom felt so left out and excluded”.

What the above statements represents besides supporting the linguistic and ethnic
diversity that is representative for the Iranian in Norway; is that, it at the same time
supports the idea of ethnic boundaries and situational aspect of ethnic identity. I guess
after all one should go back to Barth (1969) and his associates who argued that ethnicity
and ethnic identities are situationally determined. It is important to take into
consideration that those who consider themselves to be members of an ethnic group have
common referential framework while interacting with each other. For example they share
the same language, relate or identify with the same locality (space), and have the same

“Most significantly, ethnic category membership provides members with the elements of a corporate history in time
and space: a history which offers some explanation for their common membership, why they are members, where they
originated … ethnic category membership provides persons with the elements of a ‘social biography’ which connects
‘culture’ and behaviour, and the past to the presents … this suggest that such membership provides persons with
elements of ‘social identity’ which they use to orient themselves to other individuals, either as fellow members, or as
other kind of persons”.

In other words, the membership of an ethnic group requires different types of loyalties as
well as different types of behavior considering different contexts and situations. When
they are together with other Iranians who do not share these cultural and ethnic traits,
they speak Persian and behave as members of the Iranian category. But when they are
with those who represent these cultural and ethnic traits they suddenly switch to the
common language and cultural traits and behave as the members of a given ethnic group
category. My informant’s friend, while driving him to Oslo, identified himself as a
member of the larger category of Iranian. But in presence of others, who identified each
other as the members of a given ethnic group and shared common language and history
he followed their lead and behaved accordingly. What I have been able to find out while doing the fieldwork is that it is common for a small group of individuals who are from the same region and speak the same local language to feel closer to each other than they do in relation to the larger category of being Iranian.

When it comes to religion, the two major branches of the Islam are represented among Iranian in Norway. For example most of the Kurds, Baluchis or Iranian Arabs (who comes from the southern part of Iran) are Sunni Muslims. Zoroastrians, Bahaii’s, Armenians, are also among Iranians who are living in Norway\textsuperscript{14}. However, in my fieldwork I have not been able to produce any data that can support the importance of religious affiliation in classification and group organization of Iranians. Meanwhile, I have not been able to meet any Iranian with Bahaii or Zoroastrian religion in the course of the fieldwork. But I was able to meet many Armenian Iranians, but their religion did not seem to play an important role in their relationship with other Iranians such as Muslims.

\textit{The important of political affiliation on group organization}

The ideological and political differences among political parties and organizations are another variable that should be included when one discusses the lack of an Iranian community in Norway. After the Islamic revolution of 1979, Iranians experienced political and organizational freedom for a short period of two or three years. But as the government became more aggressive in its politics towards political freedom and freedom of expression, many of these political parties and organizations were declared illegal. As a consequence, those who were either members of political parties or just sympathized with other ideology than what the Islamic Republic represented were

\textsuperscript{14} I have not found any statistic on how many Armenians or Bahahi or any other Iranian religious minority are living in Norway. I am not sure there is any statistic on this topic. If one could know the numbers and the concentration of their presence then it would be easier to find out if there are any communities based on religious affiliation.
arrested and jailed. Many Iranian who came to Norway and sought asylum were members or sympathizers of one of the political parties that have been banned after the revolution. It is noteworthy that some of these political organizations are still represented in Norway and they are listed below:

- Iranian people’s Fadaee Guerrilas
- Fadaian Organisation (minority)
- Fadaian Organisation (majority)
- Mojahedin Khalgh
- Rahe Kargar
- Rahe Tudeh
- Communist Party of Iran
- Reza Pahlavi (monarchists)

It is likely that there are other political groups that are active in Norway, with a significant number of members, besides the one that I have mentioned above. These organizations represent different ideological doctrine, from socialist, Marxist, communist, monarchist ideologies to different types of Islamic worldviews. Most of these organizations follow the slogan of; “my ideology and politic is the best” - and there is no room for dialogue. Therefore there is no constructive dialogue among the members of these groups since they do not accept each other’s politics. Because of these differences the political affiliation play an important part in interaction of Iranian with each other. As I have been told by a male informant:

“The political and ideological backgrounds are not among the criteria’s that are used to include or exclude someone from a group”.

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15. It should be considered that there are two major groups of Iranian who came to Norway. Firstly, those who have came here through United Nation. Secondly, those who came to Norway and sought asylum.
16. I am not trying to include all Iranians in our discussion. Political affiliation may not be an important criteria for all Iranians but it is for a good number of them.
But he further emphasized that:

“With the exception of Mojahedin and Islamic fundamentalists. Some political groups are not really welcomed among the majority of Iranian because of the way that they behave in public gatherings. Even though they have no authority at the moment and live in a same situation as the rest of us – refugees – they give themselves the right to decide what is good or bad for those Iranian who live in Oslo”.

In contrast to the above statements there are also those who choose to have contact for the most part with those who have had an active political life. For example another informant told me that:

“Political involvements and activities are an important category when I choose someone to have a friendship with. I really like to have connection with those who have had political activities. I have more to talk about with them than with those who are not interested in politic at all.”

The above statements show that political affiliation and being active in a political organization are used as factors for inclusion or exclusion of individuals into a group or a friendship. The root of the problem can be traced back to the lack of a well-developed political and organizational culture in Iran throughout the history. Political and other types of organizations such as labor organization have been illegal in Iran for many centuries. Even cultural activity that could bring people together and close down the ethnic and linguistic gaps were also banned within the Iranian society. This lack of a well-developed political and organizational culture is evident when one observes the lack of cooperation and collaboration among these groups both in Iran and in Norway where political activity is not illegal. In Iran, immediately after the revolution while all of these parties were legal, there was a notable absence of dialogue and communication between the political groups. However, what I was able to observe during my fieldwork was that
the relationship between the members and sympathizers of these political organizations
continued in the same manner and patterns of behavior towards each other from Iran.
Through what I have seen and heard during my fieldwork the ideological affiliation and
political standpoint plays an important role in interaction and relationship building of the
individuals who are either members or sympathizers of any of these groups. For example,
one of my informants told me about a group of Iranian who gathered together once a
week and discussed social and political issues of both Iran and Norway. I have been told
that most of the participants were politically active and involved17. After a while I met
one of those who actively participated in the group discussions and asked him about what
he thought about the way the group was working. He told me:

“… The group does not exist anymore. People were at odds with each other in many different issues”.

But as he went on to explain the reasons behind the disintegration of the group, he
included the ideological differences as an important reason behind the lack of
collaboration. He said:

“These Marxists are very narrow minded. These pseudo intellectuals are not able to see the world in any different ways
but a Marxist point of view”.

However, because of the political and ideological associations many Iranians who are
still involved in politic or are politically active, tend to have relationships with the ones
who they can relate to in terms of political opinions and ideology. In other words,
political affiliation and ideological identification are among the elements that are being
used to include or exclude individuals from a group or a future friendship.

17. By politically oriented I mean they have been member of an political group in Iran or sympathised
ideologically with a political party in Iran.
**Apolitical Iranians and their relation to political activists**

Among the Iranians who came to Norway and received permanent resident visas, either through United Nation or by themselves (seeking asylum), there is a significant proportion that are apolitical or do not openly state their political opinions or generally not active in politics. This group is in sharp contrast to the political activist with regards to their relationships with other Iranians. As I mentioned previously, political activities and ideological affiliations were illegal in Iran and members were actively persecuted. Therefore, parents were very generally concern about their children’s political points of views and ideological affiliations. Parents would often disallow friendship between their children and politically active children (or indeed children of political activists). The government in effect used parents to control and reduce political activity amongst the young adults. Controlling your children means something else in English than in Farsi. So strong was persecution of opposition political activists that many Iranians who are living in Norway still remember the psychological pressure of the Iranian authorities. Among them there are many who blame different political parties as the reasons behind their immigration form Iran. Therefore they have no political affinity and tend to have no relationships with the members or sympathizers of any Iranian political organization and their members or sympathizers in Norway.

Meanwhile, during the last twenty years the political atmosphere of Iran has been changed towards a more liberal policy\(^\text{18}\). The election of President Khatami in 1997 have created a political shift that made it possible for many Iranian who have been living in exile since the revolution, to travel back to their country. During my fieldwork I was able to observe and discuss the impact of such political change on different aspects of relationship between Iranians. I found out that many Iranians who are able to travel back to Iran tend to be reserved in developing relationship with those Iranians who are

\(^{18}\) There is an intense debate among the Iranian on the nature of the political changes in Iran during the last ten years. There is no overall consensus concerning the reform policies of President Khatami.
politically active in opposing the government of Islamic Republic of Iran. The majority of these individuals are afraid or extremely cautious because they believe that if the Iranian government finds out about their connection to the members of the opposition, then they would create difficulties for them when they are visiting Iran. However, personally I have not been able to find any examples that can support their fear. As the result this type of behavior supports the idea of “continuity” in relation to a-political Iranians reluctance in developing relationship with those Iranians who are political activists. However in this case, the political affiliation is being used by those whom I refer to as a-political Iranians, as factors for inclusion and exclusion of given individuals into a group or relationship.

**Education: a category for social organization?**

As mentioned before among those who came to Norway there were many Iranians who have been expelled from the universities because of their ideological differences with the governments of Islamic Republic of Iran. After settling down in Norway the majority of these individuals continued their academic educations in one of the Norwegian universities or colleges. All of my informants, those I have interviewed on the regular basis, have a university degree with the exception of two. A university education or rather education in general, became an essential criterion for considering social grouping amongst Iranians in Norway. In the words of one of the male informant:

“I remember that there were Iranians who had very negative view about those Iranian who were studying at the university level. They said that those who studying think that they have higher cultural values”.

Another male informant told me:

“Those with higher education do not mingle with those without higher education. There are many Iranians who went for the work who have the same cultural background as those with higher education. But after couple of years of studying we lost contact with each other”.
The third informant, who is also a male, told me that:

“… I include those knowledgeable Iranians who I know as my friends… what I mean with knowledgeable do not necessary mean academic education, but in the end I have common ground for conversation and shared interests with those who have higher education than those without”.

Next statement belongs to a female informant:

“We have some geographical categorization. At the same time these geographical categories works also as cultural categories. These are the primary categorization. If you look at it as a matrix, it can be compared with the first row of the matrix. In each of these geographical categories we have sub-groups. The sub-cultures of each main category can be similar to another sub-culture of another main category … In my opinion the most important subculture or category is the intellectual one. Such category excludes a good proportion of Iranian in Oslo. It doesn’t mean that everybody should be agreeing with what I say, or vice versa. Generally it has to do with the common ground and interest which you can build a relationship on.”

The above statements support the idea of education as a category for inclusion and exclusion of individuals in a group or relationship amongst Iranians. There are many reasons for such practice. One of the reasons behind such attitude is the different level of language proficiency among various groups of Iranians. University education besides academic capabilities requires high-level language proficiency. All my informants could speak both Norwegian and English in an academic level that is far better than the average level. The ability in reading and speaking Norwegian (and to lesser extend English) language combined with the academic education creates, different interest and needs among the individuals, compared with those with lower or no education. As all the above statements shows, it gives the individuals the basis and the common ground to talk about issues that they share an interest. Because of academic backgrounds, these individuals developed interests that are different with the other Iranians with lower or no educations. Therefore even if they initiate a relationship with each other, after a while they will find
out that there is not much common ground to talk about. This is the cultural side of the education. But education has also economic sides as well. My informants are among those who have chosen the topic of their study consciously in relation to the marketability of the field. But according to informant C; they at the same time are also influenced with other criterions as well. For example their families and parents have a strong influence on their choices. Education is one of the most important topics for Iranian parents. As it was pointed out by informant A:

“… Family has an important role in education. The most important influence of the family is on what subject their children want to choose. My parents sent me to the one of the best high schools of our city. Forty-nine of fifty students of the last year of the high school went directly to the university. This is a very high percentage in an Iranian standard”.

Because of their awareness of marketability of the topics many of them have studied subjects that are very much in demand – medicine, civil engineering in different fields from cybernetic to telecommunication. Many have gone on to complete doctoral programs. Informant A continued with stating that:

“… I started studying engineering in Iran however with time my interests had changed and I very much wanted to do social economics or social sciences. However at the time I believed that it could make it difficult for me to get a job as a foreigner in Norway. I, therefore I continued with natural sciences, which I believed gave me a better chance of success and upward mobility in the Norwegian society. This may also be true internationally, i.e. if I leave Norway for another country. Every decision that we made at that time was made from a weak position. People here choose subjects of study that may not exactly provide a bright economic prospect, many choose out of their interest. They feel the security that the society here provides them. Our decision or my decision was based on choosing a marketable profession. At the same time we are brought up as the middle class people in Iran to seek these kinds of subjects like engineering or medicine to move upward or keep the social position, which our families had or have…”

Because of their education my informants were able to get jobs that are relevant to the field of their studies. This enabled them to have income that is different from other
Iranian with lower or no education. The higher income of this group gives them many advantages compared to other Iranians - economic and material wealth are of particular importance in Norway. Their earnings enables them, for example, to choose among a wider range of neighborhoods to live – rent an apartment. This creates an accommodation pattern that is different with the rest of the Iranian population in general. The majority of my informants lived in different areas of Oslo; none of them lived in the same neighborhood. As I have asked them directly, none of them knew any other Iranian who lived at the same area where they were living. In few cases where they were other Iranians living in the neighborhood, the relationship was on merely formal and good mannered.

My informants “high status”, “class possession” and “language proficiency” (it is important to note that we are discussing the internal ideas – emic - not the opinion of the members of the majority’s) are important criterions and variables that should be taken into consideration. Iranians with lower or no education (who have lower income or low status jobs) see the Iranians who are highly educated as snobbish and therefore do not initiate relationship with them or accept them in their group. On the other hand, Iranian with higher education have developed a common ground and interests amongst themselves for development of their friendships.

At the same time, because of their professional occupations, income, language ability and pattern of accommodation they have more in common with the members of the majority group (in some issues) than with other groups of Iranians, such as those without education, professional jobs and high incomes. For example, many were occupied with additional carrier opportunities that were in many ways connected to the broader Norwegian social and economic conditions than general Iranian situation in Norway. Many of them are interested in the economic developments of Norway - related to

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19. Among my informants there are those who are working for international Norwegian companies that offer them accommodation. The apartments or flats that are offered by these companies are placed at west end of Oslo that is perceived of high status neighborhoods.
different sectors - that can give them further carrier opportunities. They generally
followed governance of the country, sometimes passionately, because of the changes that
it may bring and how relevant it can be for their future carrier opportunities in Norway.
In other words, they have become individualists who are more occupied with their own
interests rather than the interests of the larger group of Iranian in Norway.20

In the above discussion I have - for the most part - concentrated on the relationship
between upwardly mobile and higher educated Iranians and the general characteristics of
Iranian immigrants as a minority group in Norway. In the next chapters of this thesis I
intend to focus on the “relationship” between my informants and the members of
majority group (Norwegians). Social and cultural integration in everyday life implies
participation of face-to-face interaction with other people – including members of
different ethnic groups (Høgmo A. 1998). A central perspective, when one studies, face-
to-face interaction between the members of ethnic groups in everyday life, is based on
Goffman’s (1969) analysis of different ways of communicating “respect” towards each
other. Høgmo (1998) argues that in an interaction situation one can also through his/her
expressive actions mediate “contempt” towards the others. According to Høgmo (Ibid)
there are different ways of expressing contempt towards the others in every society. But
the common aspect for all of these different expressions is their ability to “exclude” and
“stigmatize” the person who is in the receiving end. Contempt can be expressed through
the “body language”, “facial expression” or “glance”. These are forms of communication
that members of majority group use in their daily interaction with the members of their
own (majority) group as well as minority group. In other words, we should concentrate

20. Many Iranians have told me about the fact that Iranian in other western countries has been able to
develop a sense of community among themselves. They used countries such as “Spain”, “England”,
“Canada” and “USA” as examples where the existence of such communities could be observed. As an
Iranian myself - with relatives in both USA and Canada - I am well aware of the existence of Iranian
communities in these societies. In both USA and Canada Iranians are well organized and represented
officially in many levels in their respective societies. There are numerous numbers of TV and Radio
channels in Persian language that are broadcasting on regular basis. The same criterias or variables that I
used above are also amenable on Iranians who are living in these countries. Then why is it then there are
Iranian communities in these countries but not in Norway. This is an issue that I will touch upon briefly in
the end of this thesis.
on how the members of the minority groups read the behavior of the individual members of the majority group. What kind of experience lies behind their specific interpretation of a given behavior?

Further more, there are several factors that should be considered when we discuss face-to-face interaction between members of different ethnic groups. Social positions such as class and gender - as well as ethnic background - are important factors that can shape the way people relate to each other. In his research project Høgmo (Ibid) was able to learn that African men (gender) were exposed to discrimination more than for example African women. The African men were discriminated because of Norwegian women’s behavior towards them. According to him, Norwegian men feel threatened by the attraction of Norwegian women to black men, therefore try to discriminate against African men. In Høgmo’s (Ibid) view, this kind of discrimination is the result of a masculine competition between the Norwegian and African men. At the same time, the notion of “class” is also an important issue since Norwegian men, who tend to discriminate the African men, tend to belong to the lower classes of Norwegian society. In the next chapters of this thesis, I will make an argument that will support Høgmo’s idea to a certain extend but in contrast to his data I will argue that the gendered image of “refugees”, “immigrants” and “Muslims” by the Norwegian media, creates a situation where Norwegian women do not consider this group as potential future partners. In other words, Høgmo’s argument based on muscular competition between African and Norwegian men, because of the way the Norwegian women behave, is not directly applicable to this thesis. Even though, intimate relationships between my male informants and Norwegian women is relatively infrequent but they still experience a negative behavior in their interaction with the members of majority group (Norwegian women).
Chapter Three:

The notion of ”Public Sphere”

“A comparative perspective between Iran and Norway”

This chapter is primary concern with the notion of “public sphere”. The aim of the chapter is to discuss the concept through a comparative perspective that looks at the differences that this concept represents in Iran and Norway. The main idea behind such perspective is to argue that the differences in public sphere can lead to differences in ways that people behave towards information that they receive from the formal arenas/institutions. It is the aim of the chapter to show that different historical development can lead to different ways of organizing the “public sphere” and that this organizational difference has consequences in the ways people behave towards each other, the authorities and the information received through different channels.

In “structural transformation of the public sphere” Habermas (1989) study the various forms of an active, participatory bourgeois public sphere in the heroic era of liberal democracy with the more privatized forms of spectator politics in a bureaucratic industrial society in which the media and the elites controlled the public sphere (Kellner. D. 2000). The two major themes of the book include analysis of the historical genesis of the bourgeois public sphere, followed by an account of the structural change of the public sphere in the contemporary era, with the rise of state capitalism, the culture industries, and the increasingly powerful positions of economic corporations and big business in public life (Ibid).

21. It is important to note that what Habermas describes as the bourgeois public sphere represents an ideal type. In the preface of the “structural transformation of the public sphere” (1989), he points out that: “Our investigation presents a stylized picture of the liberal elements of the bourgeois public sphere and of their transformation in the social-welfare state” (Habermas 1989: xix)
The bourgeois public sphere, which began around the 1700 in Habermas’s interpretation, was created as an arena that could mediate between the private concerns of the individuals in their economic and social life in contrast to the demands and concerns of the social and public life. In other words, the public sphere here mediated between the domains of family and the workplace (private sphere) and the state (public sphere), where often exercised arbitrary forms of power and domination. The “bourgeois public sphere” that Habermas identified consisted of “social spaces” where individuals gathered to discuss their common public affairs and to organize against arbitrary and oppressive forms of social and political power (Ibid. P: 263–4). The principles of the public sphere in Habermas’s view, involved an open discussion of all issues of general concern in which discursive argumentation was employed to establish general interests and the public good.

According to Habermas (1989), new institutions such as “coffee shops” in Great Britain and “salons” in France became social spaces where individuals who belonged to different section of society could meet and exchange their ideas.

“…In the salons the nobility and the grand bourgeois of finance and administration assimilating itself to the nobility of the intellectuals on an equal footing … in the salons of the fashionable ladies, noble as well as bourgeois, sons of princes and counts associated with sons of watchmakers and shopkeepers. In the salons the mind was no longer in the service of a patron; “opinion” became emancipated from the economic dependence.” (Habermas. J. 1989. P: 33).

The bourgeois public sphere that Habermas identifies, presupposes freedoms of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision-making (Kellner. D.2000). After the democratic revolutions, Habermas concluded that the bourgeois public sphere was institutionalized in constitutional orders which guaranteed a wide range of political rights, and which established a judicial system that was to mediate claims between various individuals or groups or between individuals and groups and the state (Ibid). The public sphere became the arena for the informally
mobilized body of non-governmental discursive opinion that can serve as a counterweight to the state. Changes in the public sphere distorted also the condition for those who were in position of power. Those in power positions were forced into looking for other ways that they could legitimize their authority. The ruling elite were/are forced into the public sphere where they publicly explained the reasons behind their judgments/decisions. But public explanation was not enough in itself for those in authority positions; they had to convince the majority portion of the society to gain their support. Those in power positions could no longer justify their power by referring to institutional, traditional or religious authority. Their authority rests upon the notion of a public sphere as an arena for rational debate.

However the economic organization of the society led to the structural poverty, injustice and inequality became an observable part of the system. The legitimacy of the model was challenged by the new institutional arrangements. These institutions undermined the idea of ruling through the logic of the public sphere. Labor movement, freedom to vote and the creation of political parties made the idea of politic as a discourse between the equals impossible (Eriksen.E.O and Weigård.J. 1999). In other words the social spaces of the bourgeois era that laid the foundation for a free rational debate that could force the will of the public on those who were in position of power became institutionalized. The public sphere became the arena where different actors were competing for the same thing – “public opinion”. It is at this point where the media started to play a decisive role by manipulating the public opinion. However, before starting a discussion of the manipulative role of the media in contemporary public sphere – which is the aim of the third section of this chapter – I intend to discuss the notion of public sphere as it exemplifies itself in Iranian context.

**The notion of Public sphere in Iran**

In above discussion, I have pointed out that according to Habermas’s (1989) interpretation there are certain criterias that have to be met in a given society if the aim is
to develop an ideal public sphere as the one during the bourgeois era. These criterias create an atmosphere where the individual members of the given society enjoy basic freedoms that are required for an ideal public sphere. The most important criterias as pointed out above are: freedom of speech (expression) and assembly, a free press and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision-making. In second chapter of the thesis, I have briefly discussed the historical development of the political and organizational freedom within the Iranian context. Our discussion showed that Iranians throughout their contemporary history, did not benefited from the same level of political or organization freedom as those who live in the western countries. During the former regime of the Shah, there was only one political party in Iran, and outside the realm of this party any political activity would be considered as illegal. The government also controlled the national TV and Radio stations\(^{22}\). Even the revolution did not lead to the people’s expectation of a free environment where members of the society, irrespective of their rank or social background, could play their part in deciding the future of their country. We saw that even after the revolution, all political parties with the exception of the dominant Islamic Republican Party, were prohibited. The new government saw the media as an important instrument that could be used for marketing their points of views on different issues to the public. However, after the election of president Khatami in 1997, Iranian society witnessed a short period of an unusual press freedom. But such freedom did not last long and the judiciary eventually closed down the majority of the newspapers that voiced a critical view of the government (right wing conservatives). Known journalists and editors of the popular liberal newspapers were arrested and received jail sentences. National TV and Radio stations are still owned and controlled by the government. Generally speaking, the political and organizational freedom, as we know them in western societies, do not exist within the context of Iranian society. This has important consequences on shaping the public sphere within the Iranian context.

\[^{22}\] It should be pointed out that there has never been a private TV or Radio station in Iran.
Because of Iran’s historical development, that includes the lack of certain types of freedom, the notion of public sphere have developed in a different way compared to the western one. When people do not enjoy freedom of expression or political participation, it does not mean that they do not express themselves at all. A good example that can clarify my argument is Iranian cinema. If those involved in Iranian film industry had the same kind of freedom as their western counterparts and could express their massages through the same film language, as the western filmmakers do, then there would exist no Iranian cinema that could represent an alternative and original film. Iranian cinema developed as its present form because Iranian filmmakers had to find alternative ways of representing their views. In other words, the lack of freedom may force the members of a given society to look for alternative ways of expression that can lead to a public sphere that is different with the ones we know in western societies.

The Iranian public sphere is significantly different to the one that I described above through Habermas. The historical experience of Iranians have created a situation where the majority of the people do not trust the institutionalized forms of information because it only represents the view of those who are in power. I have mentioned before in chapter two, that after the revolution, the majority of Iranian become more critical towards the different aspects of their society. This critical awareness includes the information that they receive through the institutional channels – mass media. Since the formal arenas for political or organizational participation is limited for the majority of Iranians, then the informal arenas within the Iranian society start playing a more central role. This includes the way people receive their information from other channels than the formal ones such as TV, Radio, newspapers or other governmental institutions. As a consequence, face-to-face interaction plays an increasingly important role and becomes the primary source for gaining information among the individual members of the society, and through this it
shapes the public sphere\textsuperscript{23}. Here I will describe an example to illustrate the notion of public sphere in Iran:

In Iran, the public use \textit{“neighbourhoods”} as the primary source of meeting other people or obtaining information and developing a strong identity attachment. Adelkhah (1998) argues that the neighbourhoods are still one of the most important spaces for identification within the boundaries of cities in Iran. In the evenings, the older generations usually gathers in small groups and sit in front of a friend’s small shop and discuss social or political issues while playing backgammon or drinking tea. Younger generations have their own spots or corners on the street where they meet each other at certain hours usually in the evenings. Every district or neighborhood in most Iranian cities has a “green space”. As Adelkhah (ibid) points out, these public green spaces or parks have been provided with flowers, benches, children play areas, and water basins with fountains. At nightfall lighting in the national colors (green, white and red) plays on the vegetation and fountains; it contributes greatly to the attraction of these places in a climate where the first hours of the evenings are the most pleasant moments and are particularly good for relaxation.

People visit these public green spaces in family groups, which is fairly traditional, but also in various special groups – of women, young people, retired people, soldiers, etc – who are able to go there independently without arousing curiosity. The inhabitants of the localities make use of the public green spaces in various ways:

“They go there to rest, to sleep, to have picnics, to look after their children, to chat, to play sport, to follow artistic shows, to revise for their examinations, to read newspaper on display, to watch open air films, to pray, to do shopping, to go after girls, or just to pass by (Adelkhah.F.1998.Pp: 18)”.

\textsuperscript{23} It should be noted that there is an official – institutionalized - public sphere in Iran. There are many government institutions that together with the state owned media creates the official public sphere.
The majority of these ways of making use of public spaces involve new ways of living. The public green spaces are also principal places for practicing fashionable sports – aerobics and jogging in the early morning, table tennis and badminton in the afternoon – and eating meals. It is important to point out that since there are not pubs, discotheques and alike, then parks become a “social space” where people can meet each other and be social.

According to Adelkhah (Ibid), these public green spaces are also setting for social reconciliation. They provide for co-existence among different classes of society and their favorite leisure practices. Next to the young couple tucking into a pizza bought from the fast food dealer at the crossroads is a sonnati (traditional, “authentic”) family eating shami-kabab prepared at home; and the father will move to one side to pray while his grandchildren play ball games. At the same time, the parks are the place where the ever-growing numbers of young Iranian go to meet the members of the opposite sex. Mostly because they are public spaces, the parents give their daughters permission to go there without any restriction.

Adelkhah (1998) points out that the parks in Iran are being perceived as the extension of the courtyard gardens of people’s homes. Adelkhah’s (Ibid) informants stressed the feeling of the intimacy that was produced by the green spaces. Since using public green spaces has become a regular habits and since public parks are build in every district, many people take their children or go there with their friends to relax. With this becoming a regular habit, many have the feeling that it is like home. As well as this feeling of familiarity, the municipal parks provide people of the neighbourhood with a way to widen their social space. Many people go there and meet new people with the aim of developing those meetings into friendships.

24. What “feeling like home” means is related to the familiarity of the place that makes someone to relax. At the same time it refers also to the intimacy that one feels with the location (space). It is not meant as a private sphere (garden) where one can take the cloth off and sunbath.
It is not only at the district level that the green spaces contribute to broadening the city dwellers social life. A retired man can take a bus across the city to spend the afternoon in a park that he likes more than others. The open green spaces play an important role in the creation of a field of consensus or at least neutral feeling among the city dwellers. As Adelkhah (Ibid) points out, within Iranian social and political context, admiring flowers, trees and fountains is like talking about weather in Norway; there is a code that allows people to start a conversation without any reference to a particular social group such as religious, political, sexual or professional. Adelkhah (Ibid) argues that since almost all Iranian urban centers follow the same town planning policies, it is possible to argue that public social spaces such as parks are helping to unify society on a national scale and encouraging a feeling of national identity.

The “value” attached to green open spaces is not merely because of the facilities or services that they provide. Adelkhah (1998) in her research found out that people put particular emphasis on the spiritual qualities of the parks. Besides being the Koranic symbol of the paradise, they are described as places of “reviving the spirit” (ruhiyeh) and “peace and quite” (aramesh); they “bring joy to the heart” (del-e adam shad misheh), and the flowers are endowed with a mystical virtue (khasyat-e erfani). The public green spaces appeal to imaginary concepts, deeply rooted in people’s minds, of the “oasis of fertility” (abadi), as opposed to the idea of ruin (kharabeh, viraneh) or aridity (khoshki). According to these views then, parks link “spirituality” with “material plant life”, and that is indeed what gives them strength. The basic principle of life is to ally spirit with matter – baten (inner reality) with zaher (appearance). As it is argued by Adelkhah:

“…Parks are an antidote to corruption (fesad), which arises precisely from separation of the internal order (baten) and the external order (zaher). And they, representing the principle of fertility, are opposed to “ruin”, so they are also the antithesis of “poverty” (faqr), the mother of all vices (Adelkhah.F.1998.Pp: 20-21)”.

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The above example shows that because of political, organizational and other types of restrictions public sphere in Iran have developed in a different way(s) to that of the west. The example shows the existence of a public sphere besides the official one, which includes the governmental institutions and the state media. This alternative public sphere provides the members of the society with the opportunity in interacting with each other relatively freely and without the usual restrictions. The parks in Iran resemble in many ways to the salons or cafes, of Habermas’s description, in terms of the face-to-face interaction of the individuals. However, they lack the political power that Habermas idealizes. The extent to which this public sphere will develop, as an arena for political discussion is beyond the scope of this paper and will not be further discussed. But the fact remains that when individuals gather in the parks, they exchange ideas and information about different matters that interests them. In the next section, I will discuss the second part of the Haberma’s “structural transformation of the public sphere” where the focus is on the contemporary public sphere and the role of the media in manipulating the public opinion.

**The contemporary notion of public sphere**

I have already mentioned that the media starts playing an important role when those in power position are more and more dependent on receiving support through a positive public opinion. In “*structural transformation of the public sphere*” (1989), Habermas discusses a transition from the liberal public sphere which originated in the Enlightenment and the American and French Revolution to a “media-dominated” public sphere in the current era of what he calls for the “welfare state capitalism and mass democracy”. According to him, this historical transformation is grounded in which giant corporations have taken over the public sphere and transformed it from a sphere of rational debate into one of manipulative consumption and passivity. This transformation involved private interests assuming direct political functions, as powerful corporations came to control and manipulate the media and state. At the same time, state began to play a more fundamental role in the private realm of everyday life (social engineering), thus
eroding the differences between state and civil society, between the public and private sphere. Further, as public sphere declined, citizens became consumers, dedicating themselves more to passive consumption and private concerns than to issues of the common interests and democratic participation (Kellner. D.2000). Habermas (1989) argues that while in the bourgeois public sphere, public opinion, was formed by political debate and consensus, in the desecrated public sphere of welfare state capitalism, public opinion is administered by political, economic, and media elites which manage public opinion as part of systems management and social control. Hence, while in the earlier stage of bourgeois development, public opinion was formed in open political debate that was concern with the interests of common goals that attempted to forge a consensus in regard to general interests, in the contemporary stage of capitalism; public opinion was formed by dominant elites and represented for the most part their particular private interests. The rational consensus among individuals and groups in the interests of articulations of common goods is no longer the norm. Instead, struggle among the groups to advance their own private interests characterizes the scene of contemporary politics. (Ibid)

What Habermas (1989) argues is that, the function of the media as a medium for facilitating rational discourse and debate within the public sphere have changed to the one that - for the most part – discusses those themes validated and approved by media corporations. The interconnection between a sphere of public debate and individual participation has been broken and transmuted into that of a realm of political information and a show where the citizen (consumers) ingest and absorb passively entertainment and information. According to him, citizens become spectators of media presentations and discourse of news, information, and public affairs (Kellner. D.2000).

Mass media developed on the basis of an ideal that commercialization of the participation in the public sphere on the part of broad strata would give the masses in general access to the public sphere (Habermas.1989). This expanded public sphere, however, lost its
political character to the extend that the means of “psychological facilitation” could become an end in itself for a commercially fostered consumer attitude. The media started to use different technique in the representation of the news or other materials.

By means of variegated types and layout and ample illustration reading is made easy at the same time that its field of spontaneity in general is restricted by serving up the material as a ready-made convenience, patterned and predigested. Editorial opinion recedes behind information from the press agencies and reports from correspondents: critical debate disappears behind the veil of internal decisions concerning the selection and presentation of the material. In addition the share of political or politically relevant news changes. The public affairs, social problems, economic matters, education, and health (the delayed reward news) are not only pushed into the background by (immediate reward news) comics, corruption, accidents, disasters, sports, recreation, social events, and human interest, but as the characteristic label already indicates, are also actually read less and more rarely. (Habermas, J. 1989. Pp: 1769-70)

Hubermas (1989) further argues that by the arrival of the new media the form of communication as such has changed; they have far greater impact than ever was possible for the press. Moreover, the mass media engage in one-way communication that does not allow feedback, thus eliminating another feature of a democratic public sphere. In these ways the media encourages and to a certain degree fosters passivity and the fragmentation of the public sphere into privatized consumers (Kellner. D. 2000).

However, the media (press) that was a private institution composed of private people was turned into public business corporations. The notion of public opinion became important for those who were in power position. Managing public opinion according to Habermas (1989), become the practice of the public relations. The addressees of the public relations in public opinion are the private citizens as the public and not directly as consumers. The sender of the massage hides his business intentions in the role of someone interested in the public welfare. Habermas (ibid) further argues that opinion management with its

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25. Here Habermas (1989) makes a different between “opinion management” and “advertising”. In advertisement the private people is consumer not the public.
promotion and exploitation invades the process of “public opinion” by systematically creating news events or exploiting events that attract attention. By means of a dramatic presentation of facts and calculated stereotypes it aims for a reorientation of public opinion by the formation of new authorities or symbols, which will have acceptance; this is what Habermas (1989. Pp: 194) calls for “engineering of consent”. What the term engineering of consent means is the process of creating consensus where the promotion of an idea, person, product, and organization succeed. In other word the consent is dependent on the publicity for gaining consensus among the members of the society. Publicity that once was defined as the exposure of political domination before the public use of reason; becomes synonymous with reaction of an uncommitted friendly disposition. According to Habermas (1989) publicity imitates the kind of aura proper to the personal prestige and supernatural authority once bestowed by the kind of publicity involved in representation. It is through the representation that one receives publicity in the contemporary media dominated societies. And this publicity is being facilitated through the public relation corporations. Public relations do not genuinely concern public opinion but opinion in the sense of reputation. The public sphere becomes the court before whose public prestige can be displayed instead of an arena for public critical debate.

However, the relevance of Habemas’s argument in relation to this part of the thesis is its emphasis on the manipulative role of the media in the contemporary western society in shaping a public sphere based on a shared public opinion. Habemas’s argument in my view is to a certain degree amenable to the current atmosphere of Norwegian public sphere when the focus is on the representation of the refugees or immigrants by the media. The public behavior towards the received information can be related to the historical experience of the Norwegians. If we compare the development of the two societies (Iran and Norway) we can see one very important contrast that – I argue – have an important consequence to the way people react towards the information they receive through the institutional channels. In contrast to Iran, Norway have benefited from a
relative democratic system throughout their recent history. One important consequence of
this fact is the level of trust that exists between the people (public) and those who are in
power positions (elected officials and other institutions including the media). Generally
speaking, within the Norwegian context, governments have been elected democratically
and therefore represented the majority of the people. In contrast to the experience of
Iranians, the Norwegian public have benefited through the freedoms of expression,
political participation and a like. The lack of restriction is an important factor that plays a
decisive role in generating trust between members of the society and the authority.
Therefore it is possible to argue that the Norwegian – relatively speaking - are more
receptive towards the information that they receive through formal institutional channels-
mass media. In my view, this has important consequences on the life experience of
refugees or immigrants on many levels, especially when the picture that is generated of
them by the media and received by the immigrants themselves, is predominantly
negative. On the one hand, the negative representation plays an important role in the way
the members of the majority group perceive the individual refugee or immigrant. On the
other hand, since Iranians have a critical view of the media, in their interaction with the
members of the majority, their critics clashes with the picture that the member of the
majority group have developed through the representations by the media. In the next
section, I will represent a selected numbers of articles published by one of the leading
Norwegian newspaper that is representative for the overall representation of “refugees”,
“Muslims” and “Iranian” by Norwegian media in general. I would divide my analysis of
the media into three parts as follow: representation of immigrants and refugees in general,
the negative image of Islam and Muslims in Norway and representation of Iran as the
symbol of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism with no room for making a separation
between the government of Islamic Republic of Iran and the individual Iranian.

**Analysing the media discourse**

*Aftenposten* is a nation wide - non-tabloid- Norwegian newspaper. It is a newspaper that
is politically non- partisan. But ideologically speaking it can be placed in the right side of
the center rather than the left. Generally speaking, *Aftenposten* is a quality press. The quality press is used here because of “their” commitment to the objectivist epistemology of news, which reflects a more independent, authoritative and detached stance of journalism, which results in representation that should be more diverse and fairer than those in tabloid press (Poole.E. 1999). Looking through *Aftenposten* archive on their website, I found more than 800 articles\(^{26}\) by using the word “immigrant” in its search engine. These were only material published since 1999. When I tried to find out how many articles were published since for example 1998 the search engine could not load the whole materials because there were more than 1000 article. However it should be noted that newspapers such as *Aftenposten* exists within a complex system of other communication devices like periodicals, television and special reports, museums and exhibitions, school textbooks, movies and the World Wide Web. “Yet these diverse contexts are in communication with one another, purveying and contesting a limited universe of ideas about cultural difference and how it can or should be interpreted” (Lutz. A.C & Collins. L.J.1993).

At the same time, authors, photographers and editors of a given newspaper or a TV station are all human beings with their own cultural package and value system which when put together with the given magazine or newspapers “politic of representation”\(^{27}\) creates an specific way of looking at the world – “institutional lens” (ibid).

Anthropologists Susan Pollock and Catherine Lutz (1993) studied the different ways of using the term “archaeology” in American newspapers during the Gulf War. According to them, the cultural background of the journalists does not disappear even considering that the ideal for the news broadcasting is the objectivity. The American journalists who

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\(^{26}\) These 800 articles include both those published in the morning or evening issues and those that have been written only for the Internet issue of the newspaper. It also includes the overseas section, but since the newspaper does not use more than two pages of overseas news, then the number of articles from this section is relatively few.

\(^{27}\) By the politic of representation I am aiming at two issues. At one level I am aiming to the process of choosing one issue over the other, ie, How an editor covers certain issues and discards others. At another level, I am aiming to which page the news is published in. for example, why news is published in the beginning, middle or the end of the paper. Since it can affect the number of those who read that specific article.
were writing about the Gulf War are selective in their choices of the topics and they write about them in a specific fashion. However the relevance of their research in relation to this paper is that they are able to show how the same story is told over and over again by just changing the way it is represented in order to support a special point of view (Pollock, S & Lutz, C.1994).

The articles written by Aftenposten could be divided in different categories based on topic. The most common topic that is written about are, “unemployment, immigrants and criminal statistics and immigrants as clients of the social security services. There are hundreds of articles relevant to this discussion, which can be cited. Here I have chosen a few that I feel are representative and central to the discussions.

**Immigrants as swindlers**

The first thing that comes to mind reading these articles is the non-problematic use of the term “immigrant” by representing them as a homogenous group. For example in an article published in 07.12.2000 under the title “systems for cheating money from the Norwegian national health insurance for the sick citizens”, it is argued that “immigrant groups in Oslo have been able to build up special systems for cheating money from the Norwegian national health insurance using false documents issued by Norwegian doctors”. Further the article uses statements from one of the front figures of the international Red Cross’s branches in Oslo - interestingly enough the person has a Pakistani origin - who states that the Red Cross knew about this kind of activities for a long time. Then the article informs its readers that not all immigrants are criminals but after saying that, it announces: “many Moroccans – without referring who these individuals are or what they do so we (the readers) know what position they have within the named group - have told a major Norwegian tabloid newspaper that there is one person from Morocco that spends most of his time in different coffee shops in Oslo and get orders for false documents for those immigrants who wants to cheat the Norwegian national health insurance (sykemelding). Then it continues by informing its readers about
how much such documents would cost. In the end it refers to the same tabloid newspaper for previously publishing an article about the Pakistani’s in Oslo where one of them, a medical expert, is accused for helping the other Pakistani and Indian to get false documents. In the end the Turkish are also included for doing the same as the other immigrant groups according to the article.

**Immigrants as criminals**

One of the most engaging debates on the media is the crime statistics and immigrants. *Aftenposten* is no exception when the newspaper gives special attention to this issue. An article published 20.01.1999, under the title “Frightening violence statistic” discusses this topic. Under the heading it says ”young men with parents from Asia and Africa rank highest in robbery statistic in Oslo”. Further it points out that victims of these rubbers have often-Norwegian parents. The article informs that four of five rubbers under eighteen have “alien-cultural” background. These are youth who come from war areas or they are second or third generation immigrants who don’t find themselves included in society. Saying, “Norwegian men between 20-29 are most likely to be the victims”. The chief of the crime division in Oslo is also quoted. As the article continues, it quotes again the chief of police where she says, “we have a new category of criminals”. “These are young persons – under eighteen - belonging to the various gangs who rob people”. Further she continues by mentioning various ways of stopping the trend. In the end she says that she have chosen to go out public with the statistics because for a long period there have been a lot of talk without facts about the issue.

Following this, there is an article published in 17.06.1999 by the heading: “Immigrant men are over represented in crime statistic in Oslo”. Under the heading it writes “male immigrants commit double as many crime act comparing to the Norwegians”. Then the

28 The terms such as “far away cultures” have come into the public discussion of immigrant’s issues by the far right wing political party of Norway and its leader Carl I Hagen. Interestingly the Norwegian media picks up all the new terms created by him into their vocabulary. *Aftenposten* is no exception in doing so when it comes to the Norwegian media in general.
article starts with reference to the latest numbers published by the Norwegian statistic central bureau. According to these numbers, which, according to the journalist “Can not be misunderstood” immigrant men are over represented in all ages when it comes to criminality, compared to other men. One person from statistic central bureau is interviewed saying, “Low income and education plus poor living standards are among the reasons behind immigrants higher crime rate than the Norwegian. The background for the statistic is the figures published by the Oslo police in relation to number of convicted criminals in 1998. The article argues, considering all age groups, the immigrant men commit more crime than the Norwegians and the differences are greatest for the men under 30. Between the 25 – 29-age group immigrants commit double as many violation of law than the Norwegian. Immigrants are also over represented in other crime statistics such as narcotics, swindling and violence committed by men.

However in response to all these – there are articles related to this issue written in the same paper in 29.09.00, 29.09.00, 29,09,00 (three in one day), 2.09.00, 27.09.00 (again three in one day), 24.09.00 (two), 29. 02.00, 06.09.99, 24.08.99, 23.08.99, 23.08.99, 23.08.99 - in an article published on 28.09.00 under the title of “we take distance from gang criminality”, the head of the center against ethnic discrimination is coated under the heading by saying that: we completely dissociate ourselves from the gang criminality. The whole idea behind the article is that the leader for the mentioned organization as an immigrant himself is given a chance to take distance from the criminal actions of the others. However at 15.06.00 one of the front figure of the Pakistani community in Oslo who is also active in politic as a member of the labor party writes an open letter to the immigrant gang members where he publicly asked them to “show their respect to the Norwegian people who have built this society”. He further writes: “You rob and beat the innocent Norwegian people who serve you everything on a silver plate”.
In a series of articles written by Aftenposten, the newspaper have brought into life a discussion on what should be done when the immigrants get older and need care taking. The idea behind this series of articles were firstly to inform the Norwegian population and secondly to find a solution. The debate started by an article published under the title of “labor party politician suggests: suitable houses for elderly immigrants”. It starts with stating “elderly immigrants are extremely scared for ending up in the Norwegian institutions”. The author of the article interviewed a well known Pakistani politician from the labor party who interestingly enough points out the cultural, religious and language differences to be the major factors behind the proposal. They are Muslims and therefore it is impossible for them to accept being washed by a strange woman. More interestingly he connects “the older generation immigrants fear of ending up in institutions, with immigrant’s boys marrying girls from their own homeland”. He continues with stating, “the elderly fear that if their sons marry a Norwegian girl, his partner would not accept the responsibility for taking care of them. In order to insure their own welfare, the older generation immigrants require that their sons should marry a girl who has the same cultural background as them”. However another Pakistani politician is also interviewed who does not agree with the connection between marriage and welfare of the older generations.

In response to the article mentioned above, the newspaper published many articles. Almost all political parties in Norway had their own column to say what their party politic is in relation to the issue. Here I will mention one article published under the title “openness for the minority elderly houses”. First the social minister is quoted saying “special elderly houses for the older immigrant or special units within the existing Norwegian ones cannot be left out as solution. Further, the minister is quoted as saying “but special units for the immigrants can create practical problems”. Even though she sympathizes with them but she points out the necessity of adapting to the life situation
within the available institutions. Further, the article points out that when we are in an institution such as the existing ones then we have to take into consideration that people with different “cultural backgrounds” might wash us, even if it feels to be unpleasant for some people. Then the article makes parallel with comparing the immigrants with Norwegian women who have problems with being washed by the strange men. The alternative as the minister points out is “not being washed at all”. In the end, the issue becomes a political debate between different political parties. The conservatives (Høyere) argue against the idea of public subsidies for institutions that is going to be used by only immigrants. Fremskrittspartiet - an extreme right wing of the Norwegian politic that can be compared to Le pan in France or Haider in Austria - announces their disagreement with the proposal by pointing out that such practice will be conceived as “special treatment” of immigrants. “These people should adjust themselves to the new conditions and accept the situation as it is within the existing institutions”. The leader of this party is quoted by saying “I am against the idea of the differential treatment of people on the basis of race and religion. Vi – his party- has fought for a long time for integration of immigrants in this country.

**Unemployment and immigrants**

Another topic that interests the media is unemployment among the immigrants. Here I just mention two articles that are published by Aftenposten. The first one is published under the title “almost every 3rd immigrants in Oslo receives social security help”. The article starts with informing the reader that nearly 500 billion Kroner have been paid in the form of social security help to immigrants in Oslo in 1996. Then it continues by mentioning that the numbers that can be represented by Aftenposten is “sensational” because it can document that 33% of immigrants are dependent on social security helps. This would constitute for the every third immigrant in Oslo. This is an overrepresentation since the immigrants make up only for 13% of the whole population in Oslo. It continues with pointing out that while the amount of money paid to the Norwegians have been reduced by 82 billions during the same period the money paid to the “non-western”
immigrants and refugees have grown up with 88 billion. In the end the article mentions different immigrant groups and how dependent to the social help they are.

In contrast to the article mentioned above is an article published with the title: “immigrants work harder”. The article is based on a research that has been done within different firms in Oslo. The first sentence of the article is a statement about “higher work pace among the immigrants provokes their Norwegian colleagues”. Based on the research result the article argues, ”racial discrimination is not the biggest problem that the immigrants face at their working places”. According to the research result only 10 to 20% of the immigrants are discriminated at their work places. The biggest problem is being accepted within the social milieu in the work place. Then it points out that since the immigrants do not have the same opportunity as the Norwegian in applying for the better jobs they work harder so their bosses can see and promote them. This is then creates problems for the Norwegians because it forces them to work harder too.

**Analysing the news**

Before discussing the media’s representation and constructed images of Muslims and Iran, I will briefly analyze the represented picture of immigrants and refugees as it was discussed above. Looking at the examples that I have given above it wouldn’t be difficult to understand that all the articles are representing the “immigrants” and “refugees” as a “problem group”. Looking at the first example, the article construct’s an image of immigrants as swindlers. They are portrayed as people who come here to use the Norwegian system for their own benefit. The heading of the article says, “Immigrants have built systems for …”. But when you read the article it mentions that there is only one person who have been going from coffee shop to coffee shop to get orders for the false papers.

The second example gives a picture of “Immigrants” in general and those with parents from “Asia and Africa” in particular as “criminals”. According to “the numbers” which
as the journalist explicitly points out can not be misunderstood, they go around in Oslo and not only rob people but they also beat them up too. The third example, gives a picture of the first generation immigrants as problems by focusing on; what should we do when they become old and need caring? It is easy to forget that these people have worked for the last thirty or forty years of their lives in Norway. In the fourth example, the immigrants are projected as problems because every 3rd of them are dependent on social help. Not only those are not working and therefore not giving anything back to the society but they have also became economic burden of the majority population. Norwegians should work and pay tax so these people can go to the social security offices and cash their checks.

In most cases, the real agents who have been the reason behind the discussions are in the process changed and usually are replaced by either public institutions who are represented by their spokesperson and the so called “experts”. In the third example the discussion starts with the older immigrants demands for special caring houses. The debate develops in such way that these old people are no longer included in the discussion by being asked to speak their opinion on the matter that concerns them more than anybody else. The discussion itself and the medium (news paper) become the arena for political struggle of different political parties. By doing so, the discussion is distanced from the core topic to the different political and ideological standpoints. And the agents who receive most time, space and attentions are the leader of political parties and the ministers of the specific departments.

Frequently the media creates a picture where the “cultural” differences are measured by the social indicators (Toft. S. 1999). When the request for special units in Norwegian institutions for the older people is discussed as “special treatment”, it changes the focus from the “cultural” differences to the social practices. At the same time, the focus changes from “culture” or “religion” to the social practices by for example focusing on “who and how they should be washed? Which itself again changes the focus from culture
and religion to the hygiene. As Toft (1999) points out, the social practices are then measured by the logic that is associated with social norms. Then the media’s argument can be read as: these people want to do things not as the majority – Norwegian – do by focusing on the social practice of special case rather than the cultural or religious rights. The logic behind such argument has to do with the “sameness” mentality rather than the “equality”. The sameness mentality is deeply rooted in Norway because of the social democratic ideology that puts the emphasis on creating a society where people are like each other when it comes to economic status and social or cultural practices. It has also to do with what is called the “janteloven”. When one includes the sameness and the janteloven as variables in the broader picture, then it is easier to understand the logic behind the arguments and the picture that it tries to project. By doing so, the media gives more space to the “problematic aspects” of the “alien culture” by emphasizing on the fact that they are here among us as a part of our society and in the heart of “the Norwegian society”. Their being here includes challenges in all different levels of the society. Instead of looking for the common grounds that can build bridges for deeper understanding among different groups in the given society, the media focuses on the differences and project the differences as challenges and problems.

The second topic that is important to discuss when we look at the presented articles is the representation of immigrant groups as one “homogenous group”. It has become a common practice in the media to use the term “immigrant” in such way that it includes not only all the different nationalities but also all the members of these different nationalities too. By doing so; on the one hand the immigrants are represented as a homogenous group, while on the other hand individual members are excluded from having influence in the way they are represented by the media. The problem is the lack of “equal representation”. The same pictures, which include all the individuals within the category of “immigrant”, are projected over and over again. All the examples given above used the term “immigrants” in their headings. It is then tempting to ask: Who speaks for the persons who do not recognize themselves in the projected picture? Who
would defend their rights in such media constructed reality? I have mentioned before that the majority of the Norwegian have not a face-to-face interaction with the immigrants on a regular basis and therefore they get their information about them through the media. When the media projects a picture of them as “homogenous”, “challenging”, “problematic” and negative; it would be interesting to see how such media constructed reality has practical consequences for those individual who can not identify themselves with the way they are represented in the media. By doing so, in the end, these people become a “muted” group. One may argue that in newspaper articles and TV debates, immigrants are included. We may have all see immigrants on TV or in the newspaper articles being asked about their opinions. But when one looks at the articles in particular and the media in general, one finds out certain individuals to be represented as some kind of spokesman or woman for all different groups of immigrants. These individual immigrants, who for the most part have become media celebrities, are given time and space to repeatedly give their so called expert opinion on behalf of all the others who are not represented and therefore muted.

**Islam, Muslims and the media**

In this part of the paper, I will argue that the media - newspaper in our case - by specific way of broadcasting the news create a particular image of Islam. I will also discuss that Iran plays a central role in the construction of such images. The extraordinary interest for issues or news related to Islam can be divided in two different levels: the “Local” and the “global”. Globally speaking, the interest in Islam and Islamic countries has risen enormously during the last decade, especially after the fall of the Soviet Union. Western medias partial coverage of crises such as Persian Gulf War, Bosnia, Iran-Iraq war and the Arab-Israeli conflict can be used as examples. The biased propaganda in western media

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29 I have found no statistic on this issue. But according to Togeby and Gaasholts (1995, Pp: 65) only 15% of Danish people have face-to-face contact with the Immigrants at their working place and only 9% of them have contact with the immigrants at their homes. This implies that 85% of the Danish population get their information through the media. I have made the assumption that the same is applicable in Norway. (Although I do not mean to put all Scandinavians in a homogenous group).

30 - A good example is the Iran-Iraq war 1980-1988. During the war the Iraqis were represented very positively while Iran was represented very negatively. In other words Iraq was seen as an ally of the west
against Islamic movements all over the world, after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, using labels such as, “fundamentalism”, “militarism” and “terrorism” have helped to confuse the public opinion in all the western countries including Norway. As the result, for many westerners the bogeyman of communism have given way to the Islam which in turn has created a rapid growth of public concern for the “Islamic Fundamentalism” (Mowlana. H. In Hafez. K. Edit. 2000).

Misleading Representations of Islam
When we look carefully to the sources of news for the global coverage of Islam, we find out that in a global world, where the distribution of information is believed to be globalized, the distributors are very few in number and therefore the condition for a fair distribution of news is far from the ideal (ibid). What is important here is that these few international news agencies have gained power in such extend that they are able to define what is news worthy and how this news are told. Bosnia can be used as a good example of such practice. The struggle of the Bosnian Muslims for the independent of their territory has been labeled as “Islamic ethnicity” by western media. Their religion was used as criteria for ethnic category where none existed before31 (Mowlana. H. 1994). Using “Islam” in contrast to “Serbs” and “Croat”-where in the past their religion has not been an issue and therefore Christianity have never been mentioned in any news in contrast to the Islam and Bosnian Muslims - was one of the most misleading rhetoric used by the media during the entire massacre. As the result, the Bosnians who fought for the disintegration of their land were identified as “Muslims” who formed an ethnic group. This was in contrast to the Serbs and Croats who were not assigned a religious identity. If the media had stop using such misleading categories, the aggression against the Bosnian

while Iran was an enemy. But a few years later when Iraq occupied Kuwait the medias representation was quite different. At the same period the Persian Gulf War “was cast as a global confrontation between humanity and bestiality, a battle between civilization and barbarism” (Mowlana. H. The renewal of the Global Media Debate: in Hafez, K, edit. 2000).

31 - Even if there were a group who were willing to identify themselves by using religion, this group was not representative for all the Bosnians “Muslims”.

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could be identified as religious persecution. The Muslims could then be labeled simply as Bosnians. (Ibid).

One may ask why this has happened? How can this be possible? Why Bosnians were named as Muslims? One way of looking at this problem is by focusing on the fact that the media analyses Islam and Muslims through the western eyes and by using western point of views. Oliver Boyd-Barret has shown that the major global news agencies like Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Agence France Press and United Press International (UPI) have adopted Western Interests as norms, giving preference to news from Europe and the United States, covering the developing world primarily when severe crisis occur or Western interests are affected (Boyd-Barrett 1997 in Hafez, K ed. 2000). For example as it is argued by Mowlana (2000), there is a fundamental difference beneath the physical horror of what happened between the Serbians and the Bosnians “Muslims”, which have been denied and ignored by the western media: the “nationalism” of the Serbs opposes the “communalism” that the Bosnian “Muslims” live by (Ibid). The western media has never investigated this aspect of the Islamic thought and way of life in Bosnia. Instead the western media analysts have focused on the formal, secular, political (modern) institutions such as the state, political parties, bureaucratic institutions and other modern parliamentary and governmental institutions. It is interesting to point out that the most serious treat to the modern-nation state in the Middle East and North Africa comes from – what the west have been calling for - the political Islam and not from the modern institutions. The different Islamic parties or groups are challenging the legitimacy of the modern national state in countries like Iran, Turkey or Egypt. What the western media reports as news when covering Islam and issues related to Islamic countries is distorted because those who report it misunderstand the mentality and therefore the politic in these countries.

“To understand the dynamics of image making in the media and the crisis of political legitimacy in the Islamic countries … one must understand the Islamic concepts of state and community, the syndrome of nationalism as a
Mowlana (Ibid) further argues that as the result, the western media’s coverage of Islam is within the worldview of its western audience by analyzing the events in the framework of specific paradigm where the focus is on secularism rather than religion or traditionalism/re-traditionalism. This should be looked in parallel to the fact that in an era when the economic homogenization of popular western products, such as, coca cola, MacDonald, Burger King or Television Programs, have reinforced the perception that western world view and its paradigm is gaining authority, the Islamic countries are maintaining resistance to such hegemony. Within the Muslim world, we can witness strengthening of the fundamental values, attitudes, moral and its underlying structure.

One cannot understand such reaction without looking back into the historical and political situation. Historically, the West and the East have had their conflict of interest regarding the western use of power over the region, mainly due to the Middle Eastern oil. The condition has worsened in the resent years because of the current changes in global politic, economical and military order since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, which has made the East a threat to the western interests. What is at the stake is a power struggle rather than a religious struggle. These struggles have led the western countries to question their own identity and become more ethnocentric in their politic and therefore create images of the others in order to reassure their own security/identity. The growth of Islam, together with the western domination in the most part of the world have created a situation where the west has turned further inward and against Islam (Bishara 1995; Hassan 1997; Hippler 1995; Husband 1995; Kappert 1995; Mowlana 1994; Nonneman 1996; Said 1997; Schlesinger 1993; SchulZe 1995; Vertovec 1995).

What happens is that the media maintains this ideology by representing Islam and thereby Muslims as a threat to western civilization through the projection of images of “oriental
irrationality” and “fanatical masses” (Lueg 1995). On the global level, Islam can be argued to be portrait as follow: the media creates an image of Islam as monolithic and of Muslims as a homogenized unit; the variety among the Muslims with their differences are ignored; The most common projected image of a Muslim is the Muslim fundamentalist; And this characteristic is attributed to all the Muslims; Islam is seen as a threat and those who have it as their religion are people who are extremists (Pool, E. In Hafez, K, edit. 2000). As it is argued by Pool (Ibid), linking Muslims to the conflict in the media have taken away the number of alternative images that they can be identified with. Further she points out that the underlying theme that is also running through these representations is the projection of western superiority to the Islam. The west is seen as more progressive when it comes to the strength, modernity and human rights.

Norway: A different picture?

Speaking in the local- Norwegian- context, the discourse of representing Islam and Muslims by the media appears to show an anti-Islamic presence. The overall picture that is created globally in the media covering Islam creates such effects, but the process seems to be subtler when it comes to representing Norwegian Muslims. This is, because of the lack of real conflict, such as the ones that exist internationally between Norwegians and the Muslims residing in Norway. But still the underlying discourses and the ways the articles are written in Norway about the Norwegian Muslims pass on the ideologies that reinforces the type of ideologies represented in coverage of global Islam. Here I want to point out that it is possible to separate the coverage of Islam into overseas and home news. However, there is a similarity that Muslims are presented as a homogenous unity. In which case, it remains practical not to separate the international or national news involving Muslims. In the next section I will represent examples from the Norwegian newspaper – Aftenposten - that will support my argument that the Norwegian media in their coverage of Norwegian Muslims consistently refer back to the global Islam. By doing so they generate or reinforce the idea that all Muslims are alike all over the world.
Using the search engine of the *Aftenposten* newspaper on the Internet has resulted in 109 articles on Islam since January 2000. These include both local and global coverage of the topic. The articles repeatedly refer to the global Islam when they are discussing and analyzing the local Norwegian national affairs. We have already seen that “how a process of “disinformation” in the coverage of Islam has resulted in an “Identikit” Muslim, chosen for his ability to fit into pre-conceived categories” (Poole. E. In Hafez, K. edits. 2000). The question remains, is this framework applicable when we are discussing the Norwegian context?

For the first, all the articles represented previously when I discussed the representation of immigrant in the media is actually written about the Muslim minorities in Norway but the term “immigrant” have been used instead in the heading. Many of the articles that I mentioned in the section with the subheading “immigrants as swindlers”, “immigrants as criminals”, “elderly immigrants as a problem group” and “unemployment and immigrants”, are about Muslim minorities in Norway, however, the heading refers to immigrants and not Muslims. All the articles refer to one or another Muslim minorities in Norway such as: Pakistani, Turkish, Tunisian, Iraqis or Iranians. People belonging to these minority groups have been mentioned explicitly without any relevance to the topic of discussion, since the article is written in a general rather than a particular way because of the use of the term immigrant in their headings.

Secondly, one can observe a clear representation framework, considering the news coverage in relation to Islam and Muslims in Norway. If we do a content analysis based on the topic rather than the nature of the articles, we will find out if there are certain defining themes that can be used as indicators for the meaning and significance of Islam in the news coverage. However it should be noted that the increasing interest in covering the global Islam have enlarged the number of articles that deals with the coverage of Islam in Norway. The newsworthiness of the Muslims and Islam is related to the
established notions of “who these people are and what they represent” when it is compared to the Norwegian culture. Further more, when one looks at the topics covered by the newspapers about Islam, it becomes more and more apparent that there are certain themes that are frequently associated with the Norwegian Muslims. These topics can be summarized and simplified as follow: Islam and its place in the education system (Muslim schools in Norway); female circumcision; religious rituals in Norway; the difference between Muslims and the Norwegian culture as obstacle for integration; the problem of Muslim women’s dress code in the Norwegian society, mostly in relation to the work place; Islam and taboos such as homosexuality; Muslims mosques and praying.

I have described above, the media in its coverage of the global Islam creates a picture that is perceived as to be threatening to the western society and values. It is interesting that the same ideology has been extrapolated in the Norwegian media’s coverage of the Islam and Muslims in Norway. One of the issues that can be used as an example is the special schools for Muslims. During the 90s there have been a public debate about whether Muslims have the right to have their own schools? The debates have been for the most part concentrated on the legal issues and the social consequences of such schools. The media has also argued that the government should not give any economic assistance. Even though the politicians and Government employees defend the idea of multiculturalism in their public debates, the idea of giving Islam the same status and legitimacy as Christianity, is perceived as problematic. At the same time, the issue of education is also discussed in relation to the fundamentalism. This again shows a flow of or the idea of outsiders, an extremist group, who are creating problems for Norwegian institutions.

Fundamentalism also becomes a point of focus when topics are discussed regarding practiced Islamic rituals or political debates about asylum seekers from the non-western countries. Here again the focus is on potential threat from people who have come or
would come from outside and organize religious activities that is perceived in Norway as fundamentalist. One interesting issue is that such debates create images of Norwegian culture being continuously invaded by those who have extremist tendencies. Again, this is related in many ways to the fact that global Islam is covered by both sections of news, international and national Norwegian news. A consequence of this type of coverage, both on TV and Radio, is that it brings up the issues related to multiple identities, and loyalties of the Norwegian Muslims. The same trend can be discovered when the media covers the Islamic rituals that takes place in Norway. What these reports focus on is the representation of the extreme rituals, for example when Muslim men beat themselves during rituals in holy month of Ramadan, something that is considered as sadomasochistic in a Norwegian culture and therefore, it serves to shock the Norwegian population. Again one can discover the underlying theme of the invasion of the Norwegian society and culture by those who have extremist tendencies.

The other important tendency of Norwegian media in covering Norwegian Muslims, is related to human rights. Most of the cases that are covered, by the media as problem, are argued in relation to the human rights and freedom of speech. And in so doing, they are represented as apposing to the Norwegian liberal values and democratic practices. However I have to point out that what I am arguing here is not that there are nothing worth criticizing among the Norwegian Muslims, on the contrary. But what is important for me to argue against is the overall picture that the majority population is receiving through the Norwegian media.

**Iranian revolution and western media coverage of Iran**

During the end of the 1970s, Iran suddenly took the center stage of the world media’s attention. One of the most important reasons behind such surprising focus was - and still is - that the Iranian revolution represented the first successful attempt by “political Islam” in taking over the state in a country which have through her recent history have been a close ally of the west in general and the United State in particular. Looking back in the
past not many countries in the world so distance and different from the United States have been able to engage the country so intensely.

“Never have American seemed so paralyzed, so seemingly powerless to stop one dramatic event after another from happening. And never in all this could they put Iran out of mind, since on so many levels the country impinged on their lives with a defiant obtrusiveness…” (Said, E. 1997. Pp: 6).

The importance of Iranian revolution in world politics can be discussed in many different ways using different academic schools to analyze the event. The increasing interest of the western media in covering news about Iran, after the revolution of 1979, can be connected to several events that have surprised the world since they took place. The first of these, which I use as an example, is the American hostage crisis.

In the November 4, 1979 Iranian students occupied the American embassy in Tehran. They held fifty-two American citizens as hostages in the embassy for a period of 444 days. The hostages were released on January 20, 1981 and a few days later, they returned to their country. What makes this case interesting and applicable to this paper is the one sided coverage of the event which have portrayed all Iranian as homogenous Muslim fundamentalists group like who all participated in occupying the American embassy.

In Norway, Aftenposten was one of the newspapers that had a comprehensive coverage of the event. Looking through microfilms at Norwegian National Library, I was surprised with the extent of attention that the event had received by Aftenposten. Aftenposten reported news regarding the occupation of American embassy in Teheran on an almost daily basis throughout the 444 days ordeal. Many times the articles were published in both morning and evening edition of the newspaper. Let me illustrate the extent of reporting by representing the headlines of a few articles: “USA’s embassy in Iran occupied” (Monday 05.November.1979); “Iran: British hostages are released” (Tuesday 06.November.1979); “Hostages in Teheran are ill-treated” (Thursday
One of the important consequences of western media’s coverage of the American hostage crisis in Teheran was their ability in constructing a sense of belief that Iranian students were torturing the prisoners. The projected image of Iranian students as torturers can play an important role in shaping the public opinion of the people in the west about Iran: If the educated section of a given society is capable of behaving in this fashion then what can we expect from the rest of the society? Aftenposten, in an article published on November 8, 1979, reported “The American hostages who are being held in Tehran’s embassy in Iran are being ‘pushed around’, ‘ill-treated’ and ‘threatened’ by Iranian occupants”. Further more, Aftenposten in another article published on 10.November.1979 “… In the meantime the fanatics in Iran are using more than ever the powerlessness of American government. It has been reported that the hostages are ill-treated and one of them has been exhibited for the cameras and hysterical demonstrators with tied hands and blinded eyes”. However it is true that Iranian students have not been kind to their hostages but even the fifty-two of them themselves have never went as far as calling their treatment as “torture”. This is evidence in a transcript of their news conference at the West Point, which was published in January 28 in the New York Times (Said.E.1997).

The media used one or two specific events, Iranian revolution and occupation of American embassy, to make generalization about a country as diverse and heterogeneous as Iran and its official religion, Islam. Aftenposten on November 7,1979 in an editorial with the headline; “the defeat of the reason” wrote, “… Prime minister Mehdi Bazargan and his government’s of politicians and experts have resigned. Oil-country’s (oljelandet) real ruler “messenger of Mohammad on earth” Ayatollah Khomeini, have transferred the power to the revolutionary council”… "With Bazargan’s government the last moderate
elements are also disappeared from the revolutionary-government’s leadership. Rational people that understood a country could not be governed by religious fanatism. Men who had done their best, despite their limited power, to create the normal atmosphere that is needed in Iran…”

The projected image of Iran is better understood when we compare the way the newspaper articles represented Iran with respect to USA. An editorial article was published on 10-November-1979, with the title, “A superpower humiliated” whereby Aftenposten quoted Cyrus Vance (the American foreign minister of the time) as saying that “only silent, careful and resolute diplomacy can save the life of American hostages who are being held by revolutionary students”. The article continues by pointing out, “…but USA’s dilemma has always been painfully clear: Firstly, a democratic government and not least a superpower that have placed itself on the fore-front of defending human rights cannot submit itself to Khomeini’s demands and hand over the Shah. Secondly, USA is dealing with an opponent who is acting on the basis of pure fanatism…” The article continues by explaining to the Norwegian public “…As this was not enough Iranian students in The US are demonstrating in favor of Khomeini. Right in front of the eyes of the people whose hospitality is the reason behind their existence in that country … one should admire the self-discipline that the majority of American are showing while the humiliation is continued ... Khomeini is playing with fire. All countries that until this moment believed that a few international law are inviolable have got some frightening stuff to think about.” In another editorial published at 16-November-1979, Aftenposten reports to the public, “…when one looks at the concrete result of the way these religious fanatics think, one looses the belief that they are capable of reasonable act … Americans are rightly horrified and shocked over the support that the Iranian government is giving to these misguided students harassment of diplomatic personal… But to accuse USA for having warlike intention is so monstrous that it should be rejected … it is the Iranian Ayatollahs who have created a situation where if everything go wrong can lead to a war … Up to this point, it is Jimmy Carter alone who have tried to bring Ayatollah Khomeini
to reason … It is the time for all western democratic governments to show their solidarity with the American superpower, not just in words, but in action …”

As the above examples shows, Iran is portrayed as the “other” by the western media. Forty million Iranian were reduced to what Said calls for “Fundamentalist screwballs” (Said.E.1997, Pp: Ixii) and this general portray continues. None of the major western news agencies have attempted to understand the Iranian revolution or to find out why it took place in the first place. None have made a connection between the students act in occupying the American embassy and a long history of subversive activity in Iran and its politics.

“Past American actions spoke to them of constant intervention in their lives, and therefore as Muslims who, they felt, had been held prisoner in their own country, they took American prisoners and held them as hostages on United states territory, the Teheran embassy” (Said. E. 1997. Pp: Ivi).

**The Salman Rushdie affaire**

Few books in the recent history are capable of being compared with Rushdie’s “Satanic Verses” in terms of the attention given to them by the media. The book took the center stage of the global and local media, when the late Ayatollah Khomeini considered it as blasphemous and an insult to Islam and all Muslims in the world. Norwegian media’s coverage of the event was no exception. Using search engine of the Norwegian National library’s database and Rushdie affair as key phrase, I was able to find 610 articles published by *Aftenposten* since 1993. On international level, the media’s enormous coverage of the event was mostly evident during the first few months after Khomeini’s fatwa. But in Norway, the coverage of this event took a dramatic turn because of the attempted murderer of satanic verse’s Norwegian publisher. William Nygaard was shot three times outside his residence in Oslo on 11th-october-199332. The event generated an

intense public debate about the role of Iranian government in the assassination attempt. For example, on 16th-December-1993 Aftenposten published an article with this heading: “Nygaard saken og stattterrorisme” (Nygaard case and state terrorism). The aim of the article was to show the public in what extend Iran could be hold responsible for the attempted assassination, and in what extend the event could be perceived as state-terrorism. The author of article pointed out: “… in a situation where most countries are taking distance from their earlier support of terrorism we are observing that the cleric-regime in Teheran is escalating its state-terrorism. While countries like Syria and Libya seems to end their use of international terrorism, Iran is about to raise its support for national and international terrorism. Many Arab countries have blocked their diplomatic relationship with Teheran because Iranian embassies are being used for the support of militant Muslim movements in many North African countries”.

The attempted assassination of William Nygaard had an extreme negative effect on diplomatic relationship between Iran and Norway. On 18th-December-1993 Aftenposten published an article with the heading, “Foreign Ministry: several other countries should condemn Iran”. The article was written with the aim of showing to the Norwegian public that Norwegian government is about to take the leading role (on international level) to pressure the Iranian government to do more than just distancing itself from the fatwa. The article ends with informing the readers that, in contrast to other northern European and Scandinavian countries that are increasing their relationship with Iran; Norway is the country that has reduced its relations with the country. In another article published on 03-February-1995 under the heading “Iranian spokesman threatens with trade boycott”. The article informs that the Iranian foreign ministry is threatening Norway with trade boycott if Norway does not change its anti-Islamic behavior33. The Rushdie and Nygaard affairs had such negative impact on diplomatic relationship of the two countries that in the end, Norway’s ambassador was called home in protest. The majority of Aftenposten’s articles

33. The whole story is based on a single statement that was broadcasted by Iranian state Radio. An anonym person who worked for the Iranian foreign ministry made the statement.
that dealt with Nygaard’s assassination attempt considered Iran as the main agent behind the event, even-though there were no official evidence that could prove such accusation. *Aftenposten* published an article with the title “Nygaard’s case: All tracks and theories points towards Iran” on 09th-October-1998. The article intended to show the extent by which Iran could be held responsible for the attempted assassination. The article in its second section explains, “time after time the police have been confronted with allegations where all tracks pointed towards Iran, but until now it has denied the existence of such tracks”. For the first time, the head of criminal division of police department in Oslo, Roger Andersen, is admitting that “the investigation is only concentrating on tracks and theories that are able to establish a connection between the fatwa and Nygaard’s role in publishing Rushdie’s satanic verses”. Further, the article points out that *Aftenposten* had been informed about a Norwegian Shia-Muslim who has been in contact with Iranian embassy in London shortly after the attempted assassination in Oslo. The article ends with quoting Nygaard as saying; “he had never been in doubt about who had planned the attempted murderer against him. Iran should be exposed to continuous pressure that can make it clear for the world the grotesque nature of its regime’s behavior in today’s modern society”.

However the media maintained its coverage years after the event, mostly around the anniversary of the fatwa and Nygaard’s assassination attempt. *Aftenposten* published on the fifth anniversary of the attempted assassination on William Nygaard; “five years after attempted assassination on William Nygaard; three shots, one fatwa and no solution”. Furthermore the article pointed out, “…when Ayatollah Khomeini in 14th-February-1989 announced to his followers the now so famous fatwa against Salman Rushdie, he also issued death sentence for blasphemy over the translators and publishers of Rushdi’s novel; ‘satanic verses’ … the news of attempted assassination on Nygaard received the impression/character of ‘lost virginity’, as we experienced it when Olof Palme was shot death on open street”. Further more, the article informed in detail about the police investigation and the hard process of Nygaard’s recovery in the hospital. In the last part,
the author makes a distinction between the democratic west and undemocratic Islamic world by stating; “… then it became apparent that the world’s most inflammable culture clash could be found here: between the democratized and secularized west on the one side – and the revolutionary Islamic world on the other side”.

The media coverage of the Rushdie affaire touched upon a variety of topics such as: His personal fate and well-being and demonstration around the world for and against the author. Many of the articles concerns with this event have covered it mostly by discussing the fatwa as an insult to the Article 19 of the Human Rights Declaration of the United Nation (1948), which gives every individual the right to express his or her opinion. Through the various articles, editorials and TV programs there were given major attention to the importance of Rushdie’s right to stand for and express his ideas and opinions. At the same time most of the media coverage did also gave attention to showing how there exist an inherent opposition between Iran and Iranian because of their religion, which is Islam and human rights. While Salman Rushdie himself have distinguished between Islam and Islamic orthodoxy but the media did not applied such distinction (Hafez, K, 2000).

According to Hafez (Ibid), the way that western media treated Rushdie affair can be argued as similar to Ayatollah Khomeini’s treatment of the Rushdie himself. As Ayatollah Khomeini with his fatwa excluded Rushdie from the Islamic world, the western media excluded Iran and Muslims from the world of civilization. Islam was effectively equated with barbarism. It is interesting to note that instead of supporting Rushdie’s personal right, the media promoted an ideological campaign against Iran and Islam. This ideological campaign was based on and in return reinforced history old prejudices against Muslim and Middle East. In doing so they misrepresented the news in different ways. Firstly, they did not bring the complexity of the event to their audiences. They neglected to inform the public that not every Iranian have the same opinion as the Iranian government. Secondly, they took the Iranian case and generalized it into the
whole Muslim world. By doing so they did not informed their audience that the public opinion in many Muslim countries were in accordance with the international standards of human rights. In this respect, western media’s coverage of Rushdie affaire can be used as an example for how western journalism can be an obstacle for intercultural dialogue (Ibid). The way that the western journalists translated the cultural context of Iranian in present case was often essentialist because of their enormous emphasis on bringing up the differences rather than the existing similarities. Highlighting differences gave support to such ideas like Huntington’s “Clash of Civilization”. At the same time and on another level the lack of interest in western media for covering issues important to the third world - in general and Muslim in particular - can be seen as a sign for looking at the other as the weaker part that is conceived as to be culturally inferior to western cultural superiority. This is another sign for supporting the idea that the western media’s looking at the issues involving the third world lacks the tools for a sufficient intercultural dialogue.

Not without my Daughter

In the last part of this chapter I intend to discuss the importance of the use of visual media in representing Iran in the west. A number of future films and television movies have come out since the release of the hostages that deal, not with the Shah but with Americans (westerners) in Iran and Iranians in America (west). Some of these, such as The final Option (Sharp, 1983), Threads (Jackson, 1984), Under Siege (Young, 1986) and The Delta Force (Golan, 1986), are antiterrorism and antinuclear films that do not focus on Iran specifically. Iran nevertheless figures in them as a threat and a spark of one kind or another. Among all the films, there is one in particular that has received more media coverage and attention than the others. “Not Without my Daughter” (Gilbert, 1991) was screened in the theaters in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of the Kuwait, just days before the attack of the US-led United Nation forces on Iraq in January 1991. The film was screened in Norway during the summer of 1991, while the book was already a best seller in Norway in 1989 and 1990. Aftenposten in an article published at 24th-July-1990, represents the success of the book by ranking it as number nine among the ten best-sold
novels of that year\textsuperscript{34}. The article represents the book as “… a true history by Betty Mahmoody about a young mother and her child who are being held captive by her Muslim husband (islams ekteman) in Iran. A year later, when “\textit{Not Without My Daughter}” was screened for the first time in movie theaters in Norway, \textit{Aftenposten} in it’s review of the film wrote, “documentary style tear bringing drama (tåredrama) about American mother (USAmor) that is captured in Ayatollah-Iran (AyatollahIran)\textsuperscript{35}. Further more, the article reports that “when these types of histories stands in weekly magazines, they are called for ‘stories from reality’. But when they are screened on Movie Theater, they are then called ‘documentaries’ or ‘documentary style drama’. In the end it is all about melodramas that are based on reality”.

The rest of the article informs the public about the plot of the film. It reports that “\textit{Not Without My Daughter}” is based on a real story of an Iranian expatriate physician who returns to Iran with his wife, Betty Mahmoody, and their daughter. Upon arriving in Iran, her husband undergoes a conversion crisis and become an ardent fundamentalist Muslim taking his own wife and daughter hostage in their home. The wife was kept captive for one and half year and was able to escape through contacting the representatives of - the Westernized secular Iranians who can be considered as regime’s - opposition. Betty Mahmoody eventually escapes from Iran with her daughter, thanks to the help she receives from secular Iranians.

\textit{Not Without My daughter} portrayed the father and stereotyped Iranians as cruel and wife-beaters. In the book, as well as the film, the horrible atmosphere is largely created by the change in husband’s personality. When the father is back in his barbaric home country, his eyes grow dark and empty, like those of so many other Iranians. According to Betty Mahmoody, everything in Tehran is filthy – cockroaches run around everywhere,

\textsuperscript{34} The headline of the article is as follow: “Tunge bøker for lette dager”. The article has been published at this date: 1990.07.24
\textsuperscript{35} This is the exact way the article write about the movie and the exact way in describing Iran: AyatollahIran.
mosquitoes bite her child, smelly people do not wash themselves, and they allow their teeth to rot in their mouth, while spending all of their time gossiping maliciously and mindlessly.

Images in the mind cannot be measured but Not Without My Daughter has been more effective at shaping the image that people in the West have about Iran than any number of news items combined. The film had such a important effect that in 2003, a Finish Iranian filmmaker (Alexis Kouros) have made a one and half hour documentary that shows another version of the story with the name: “Without My Daughter”. This film represents the Father’s story and his struggle to contact his daughter. The impact of the film can be further understood when we consider that a 14 years Old Norwegian girl uses the film as the point of reference when she asks for guidance in a letter written to Aftenposten. She writes about how she has been in love with a boy who is Serbian. And how his foreignness has made her father to ground her for three weeks. According to her story, her father uses “Not Without My Daughter” when he wants to explain to her about what kind of incidents can happen to her by a foreign boyfriend. She writes, “I have seen not without my daughter and it had a profound effect on me. But for all I know my boyfriend is from Serbia and he can be Christian”. (Aftenposten. 20.03.1993)

The relevance of the film’s or other visual medium is that they affect the consciousness of the ones that see them with a non-critical eye. According to my informants, the book and the film had an enormous impact on the way the Norwegian women perceived Iranian men. They were constantly asked in their interaction with Norwegian women about the veracity of the content of the film. Many of my male informants told me that it was difficult for them to argue against the way the film portrayed Iranian men, simply because Norwegian women would not believe them. According to my informants, for

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36. The story is published in the section where people write letters and ask for advise and guidance. The headline of the article is as follow: “På skråss med simon; Husarrest for forelskelse”. (Aftenposten. 1993.03.20)
Norwegian women\textsuperscript{37} the film was perceived as something that they could use to confirm their image of Muslim men in general.

\textsuperscript{37} - It should be noted that by “Norwegian Women” I am not including all women who live in Norway. The term refers to the experience of my informants in relation to the film and the impact that it’s content had on the way the Norwegian women behaved towards them.
Chapter Four:

The Romance Market

Informant’s relationships with the opposite sex

The aim of this chapter is to discuss and analyze the difficulties that immigrants or refugees are facing in a host society that represents a gender relationship that is in stark contrast with the one that immigrants or refugees are familiar with. I will argue that the majority of the Muslim refugees and immigrants do not share the boy/girlfriend culture (kjereste kulture) that the members of the majority group represent. I will also argue that the lack of such culture can be seen as the source of many problems and misunderstandings between the members of the two groups. In order to show the lack of boy/girlfriend culture among the informants, I will start this chapter with a discussion of Islam and its importance in relation to the gender relationship in Iranian society. By including Islam, we will be able to touch upon important issues such as segregation of the sexes and the importance of marriage in Iranian society.

In the last part of second chapter, I explained that social positions such as class and gender, besides ethnic background, should be included in our studies if the aim is a comprehensive understanding of difficulties that immigrants and refugees face in the process of integration in host society. I have pointed out that African men (gender) are discriminated by Norwegian men that belong to lower social classes, because Norwegian women find African men sexually or romantically attractive. As I explained, according to Høgmo (1998) the discrimination that the African men experience in Norway is the result of a masculine competition between the male members of the two groups. In this chapter, I will focus on the impact of gendered image of immigrants and refugees that is projected by the media on the relationship between the members of the opposite sex. The represented data and the following analysis will point towards the existence of a gender asymmetry between the male members of the two groups, Iranians and Norwegians. I
will argue that “gender” and “origin” when combined together and implemented in interaction situations can play an important role in future relationship between the members of the opposite sex.

**Islamic approaches to sexuality**

The origin of Islamic law, the conservative or traditional interpretation of it, begins with the Holy Qur’an as it has been revealed to the Prophet Mohammad. Haeri (1989) argues that for Muslims, the Qur’an is the miracle that contains the supreme truth. It is the word of God, and it is therefore believed to be “divine, perfect, and timeless” (ibid. Pp: 4). The content of the Qur’an covers a relatively limited area of life, leaving other spheres of the increasingly more complex Islamic societies open for individual interpretation. When it comes to the women’s sexuality, the Shi’i ulema’s (the learned) interpretation and views are relatively based on the law of nature. Haeri (1989) argues that the Shi’i Muslim belief in the finality of Islamic laws is paralleled only by a similar belief in another set of most probably unchangeable laws, namely the law of nature. It is the law of nature which determines the makeup of a man and a woman and how their relationship ought to be. The nature describes men and women as fundamentally different but at the same time unavoidable of each other. Just as law is believed to be absolute because it is rooted in Qur’an and inspired by the Prophet’s deed and action, sexuality is also perceived to be absolute because it is anchored in nature. Then sexuality is instinctual, unchanging, and inescapable. This duality is crucial in shaping the importance of marriage in Islam (Haeri. S.1989).

Shi’i ulama celebrate the Islamic ideology of marriage and sexuality as being positive, self-affirming and understanding of human needs (ibid). They argue that marriage is the

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38. Mir-Hosseini (1999), in a remarkable study of the contemporary debate on gender among the Iranian clerics shows how the views are different from the beginning of the Islamic Revolution. But still the conservative fraction among the clerics as she shows has the power to force their interpretation of Islamic laws. However Mir-Hosseini’s book is remarkable because it shows how the views on women rights and status are changing (more liberal) within the Islamic Republic of Iran.

39. It should be noted that there are different voices and reading of Qur’an. By no means there are just one perspective on the subject.
tradition of the Prophet Mohammad and therefore people are encouraged to follow his practice and tradition. Celibacy on the other hand, is considered as evil and unnatural. Islam according to a majority of Shi’i ulama is a divine religion anchored in human nature (fitrat). It is argued that its goal is to minimize the human suffering and to satisfy not only “the yearning of the spirit but also the burning of the flesh” (Tabatabai. Et al. In Haeri.1989.Pp: 5). When the Nature is accepted by the shi’i ulema through the acknowledgement of the pleasure of the flesh, it is then viewed as dangerous and disturbing to social order. As the source of social disorder, female sexuality must therefore be controlled both legally and morally. Therefore Islam practices the segregation between the sexes, meaning that before the forces of nature moral principles should be enforced. According to ulema (the learned), not only the strict rules of gender avoidance should be developed, but the external forces must also be brought to control the behavior of the sexes, to keep them segregated (Haeri. S.1989).

**The Socio-cultural Dimension**

A Levi- Strauss model of culture/nature would provide a perfect understanding of male female relationship in Iran. Men are perceived as the ones that stand for law and order and as the guardians of cultural tradition. Women, on the other hand, represent nature and are seen as irresistible, central, powerful and frightening. The power of female sexuality is exemplified through the cultural and religious belief that men should not look at their wife’s genital. It is believed that if they look, their offspring will be born blind (Haeri. S.1989). Haeri (1989) argues that not only women ought to be controlled and segregated but that they also have to be guarded against themselves. Because contrary to the men whose power and authority is derived from a divinely inspired legal and political system that locates them at the top of the sociopolitical hierarchy, women derive their power from within themselves. They are seen as the bearers of a mysterious power that satisfies and controls male sexual pleasure, as well as ensures the continuation of his descents (Ibid).
Because of segregation of sexes, the Islamic law conceives gender relationships within two categories, lawful (mahram) and unlawful (namahram). Men and women must not associate freely with each other unless their relationship is prescribed either by blood or by marriage (ibid). The lawful relationships are formed either through marriage or birth. It involves the members of the close family such as paternal ancestors, maternal and paternal siblings and sibling’s children. Outside this limited circle of lawful relationships, the only legitimate way for establishing cross-sex relationship is through the institution of marriage. Both Haeri (1989) and Mir-Hosseini (1999) argue that the lawful/unlawful (mahram/namahram) paradigm, or rules of segregation and association of the sexes, is one of the most fundamental and pervasive rules of social organization, social relations, and social control in Iran. Further, they argue that it is through the process of socialization and education the rules of segregation and their related principles are inculcated early in life. Through the years, Iranian society has developed elaborated etiquettes, rituals, and local customs to further control and contain male/female relationships. Besides the veil, symbols of segregation are evident everywhere. For example, I have already discussed the duality in Iranian culture about the inner and outer self when I was talking about the “green social spaces” in chapter three. The same duality can be seen even in Iranian architecture. The traditional Iranian home is build in a way to distinguish women’s (inner) quarter from the men’s (outer) quarter (Haeri, S. 1981. Pp: 215-16 also; Farman Farmaian. S. 1992). The contemporary modern Iranian houses have a guest room, which is reserved for the guests and differs from the rest of the house where the members of the family use regularly. It is only used when the visitors are outside the close circle of friends and relatives. This duality of male and female quarters alongside of the veil (dress code) is the reminders of not only the prearranged places of men and women in the public and private spheres, but of where they stand in relation to each other.

“The paradigm of mahram/namahram and its symbolic manifestations colour people’s social world, informing their behaviour in their daily actions and interactions. In everyday life, the principle of segregation of the sexes however,

As we can see, because of the structure of the Iranian society and the importance of tradition and religion that shapes the gender relations in Iran, the institution of marriage plays an important role in enabling the sexes to have a meaningful and desirable relationship. Marriage is a relationship outside the boundaries of the sex segregation and moral dilemmas and guilt that is associated with the sexual or romantic relationship.

**The Importance of Marriage**

However the central issue in our discussion is not Islam and its treatment of women or gender but my subject group’s relation to the opposite sex. Many Iranian, who are living abroad, including my informants, belong to the secular section of the society and have grown up before the Islamic revolution. Nevertheless although before the Islamic revolution, the dominant values of Iranian society were more secular than religious or Islamic, Iran was traditionally oriented in its treatment of the gender relationship compared to the more progressive Norwegian society.

Before the Islamic revolution, women were free to wear western oriented cloth instead of the veil. Male and females could walk hand in hand in public, go to coffee shops, restaurants, bars, discothèques and so on. It was not illegal to accompany a female who is not a close relative (namahram) as it is after the revolution. But such free (western oriented) behaviour was followed by a small segment of the society, namely the urban middle and upper classes. Even within this segment, still the relationship between male and female, as boy/girl friends, were kept discrete from the family. For example

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40. Most of my informants left Iran when they were young. My oldest informant was a 42 years old male and the youngest one a 21 years old female. The average age of the majority of my informants was between 25-35 years old. This shows that many of them have left Iran when they were young. But it should be noted that the very young ones have come to Norway with their parents. At home their parents socialised them mostly within the Iranian culture; including the gender relationship.

41. The majority of my informants belong(ed) to the middle class of Iran.
according to one of the young female informants who has grown up here in Norway (with her Iranian parents)

“… I think that girls generally hide their relationships with their boyfriends from their parents, distance families (if they live in Norway) and family friends, because they want to have their options open, in case if they meet someone better. It is not appropriate for an Iranian girl to have many boyfriends. Iranian boys do not choose a girl that have had many boyfriends” (one and half generation Iranian girl who has grown up in Norway).

Schools (from primary to high school) were segregated on the basis of the sexes. The socialization of the children by the nuclear family was and still is based on a strong gender ideology. According to Eickleman (2002), most studies concerning gender and sex roles in the Middle East, points to the markedly different patterns of socialization of the two sexes. For example, one of the female informants (21 years old) who can be categorized as one and half generation told me about her conversation with an Iranian boy (same age):

“… One day a friend of mine, a boy at the same age as I, came to me and told me that I should not do this or that thing. I asked him why? He said that girls do not do such things. I told him that you are doing these things yourself. He answered me that we are boys”.

As we can see from the above statements, even in Norway there are some families that socialize their children according to their native-culture and tradition and according to the sex of the children. However, the ultimate goal of female and male socialization was and still is to prepare them for the institution of permanent marriage. Living together as it is being practice in western countries has never been practiced in Iran and is against the law with the exception of “temporary marriage42”. Therefore the institution of permanent marriage was and still is the most important rites of passage for the both sexes.

42. For a comprehensive discussion and analysis of the institution of temporary marriage one can read Haeri (1989).
“The life stories of men and women presented here bring into focus the fundamental and focal value of marriage in society and the overwhelming desire of Iranian men and women to be married. It is the most significant rite of passage in Iran, and not only does it confer status and prestige on men and women, it also establishes the only legitimate channel for association between the sexes, erotic or non-erotic. The absence of alternative male-female relations, on the one hand, and the structure of sex segregation in Iran, on the other hand, culminate in the investment of all the genders expectations, hopes, and desires in the institution of marriage” (Haeri. S. 1989. Pp: 208).

Traditionally in Iran, it has been the responsibility of the close or extended family to find a potential candidate, a proper wife or husband. It is the father or the guardian of the boy that takes the responsibility of discussing all the important issues with the family of the girl. However, in contemporary Iran there have been changes and in many cases the male and the female decide for themselves. Nevertheless, the tradition continues and it is the boy’s guardian who asks the girl’s parents. They are free to marry each other if they are eighteen but then they may be met with informal family sanctions. As we can see the family of both parts play an important role in institution of marriage.

As our above discussion shows, one of the ways that Iranian women can realize their desired position in the society is through their association with a man, their husband. In Iran, women find personal validation and public recognition through marriage. It is through the institution of marriage that women have the opportunity of reaching the next stage in their life circle, motherhood. Most of the young Iranian women that I have met during my fieldwork expressed a desire to be married. This is very interesting because these young women have lived most of their lives in Norway. Most of them have gone to secondary and high school in Norway. Let me use one of my young female informants statements in relation to our topic of discussion:
“Iranian girls are influenced by their families even if their families are living in Iran. It is because their families have done so much for them. Husband or boy friend is like a commodity. It is something that you want to show off. I think in the old times, education was important because a person with education was considered as someone who could understand more and therefore be more desirable to girls. If we look at Iranian men who have studied in Norway, most of them have studied subjects that are very attractive in an Iranian context. I say that one should not give herself to someone only because he is a doctor (medicine) or a dentist. But at the same time Iranian girls are also attracted towards men with such educations. Maybe it is because of economic security and luxury. Therefore the values that you consider in your choices are still based on the Iranian culture and value system”.

Another female informant (one and half generation), when asked about her choice of husband, told me:

“I think it is because of their upbringing. The families usually transfer their values to their children. Norwegian society has almost had nil effect on young Iranians who grows up here in Norway. If there is any effect then it is not visible to my eyes … environment is very important. If you are in a group where everybody is doing things that is opposite with your values or aims, then soon or later you will give in and do as they are doing”.

The two above statements are from two of the youngest informants who have grown up in Norway. Their statements show the influence of the families in socialisation and upbringing of their female children. It shows that values belonging to the Iranian culture still play an important role in the gender relation among Iranian in Norway. The differences in culture and values attached to it play an important role in the ways the opposite sexes relate to each other.

**Segregation and its effect on cross-sex relationships**

What happens when the sexes are segregated from the time of the childhood and have a different way of relating to each other, whilst living in a majority Norwegian culture? It can be argued that if they get married they enter the institution of marriage with little
familiarity of each other’s worlds. What is important here is that the individuals bring into a relationship socially upheld and idealized images of the other, reified as the result of their long segregated lives. According to Haeri (1989), the relationship between the sexes is, in the majority of cases, accompanied with “tension” and “insecurities”. This exists mostly because of the lack of experience as a result of the segregation. The same insecurity applies to the romantic relationship outside the institution of marriage like boyfriend and girlfriend. And when the individual with such cultural background and values settles down in a socio-cultural environment that is in stark contrast, the cultural shock is enormous. In the words of one of the female informants in her late thirties:

“… We Iranians are all coming from a country that lack a culture for girlfriend/boyfriend or romantic relationships before marriage … Our boys who come here have come from a very “strict” society, where parents control their behavior, specially when it comes to their relation to opposite sex. In Iran when a boy is in an age like 20, his parents start showing or telling him which girl to be curious about. What it means is that it is time to marry. They come with such a background to Norway. Here they are now away from both close and distant family’s control”.

Another male informants told me about his first reaction towards gender relationships in Norway:

“When I came to Norway, since I was very young, I had no prior sex experience. I can say that I had a romantic/idealistic view about it. I think my view about everything was based on an idealist perspective … when I was living in Iran we were frustrated. We wanted to have the same relationship with the girls, as it was common in the West. We were frustrated because of limited relationship with opposite sex. I think the view that we had about relationships between girls and boys in the west was also idealistic in Iran … The behavior of Norwegians in relation to sex and sexuality was shocking when we got here”.

Another male informant explained his view by comparing Iranian men with men from Morocco:
“… Opposite to those from, for example Morocco, who are very aggressive when they are in town (clubbing), we Iranian’s are very cautious in our relation, first interaction, with Norwegian girls. We do not have that kind of male aggressivety. Culturally, we are gentler in our interaction with the opposite sex. In Norway, we felt that sexual interaction is too aggressive. Norwegian girls want more intensity in sexual or romantic interaction. In the beginning we wanted to court a girl much longer before initiating the sexual relationship”.

The two above statements are clear examples of the lack of what I have described as “boyfriend/girlfriend culture” among my informants. In the first example, the informant points out openly his lack of experience with the members of the opposite sex prior to his arrival to Norway. At the same time his ideal form of relationship between the sexes was based on the western values, but as he points out after his arrival to Norway he finds out that they were ideal rather than realistic. It is so, because in many ways the information that my informants had regarding Norway, prior to their settlement, was not only limited, but it also was to certain degree information for myself rather than information in itself. In both statements my informants see the gender relationship in Norway as chaotic. One way of explaining and analyzing such a perception, is through segregation and lack of face-to-face interaction between the members of the opposite sex. The male and female members of Iranian society are not familiar with each other’s world. In other words, the members of the two sexes do not grow up together within an environment that encourages contact between them from early childhood. As result, the men and women from such society experience anxiety and uncertainty when it comes to their every day relationship. One of the side effects of such strong feeling of anxiety is that the individuals are generally insecure in their relationship with the opposite sex. This is evident in the second statements where the informant refers to the aggressive courting behavior of men from other parts of the world. One can interpret his referring to aggressiveness as a sign to his lack of confidence in initiating a relationship or contact with a member of the opposite sex. The men from other parts of the world are seen as aggressive because they feel confident to be direct and initiate a conversation with a
Norwegian girl or woman in a public place (bar or club). Interestingly, the confidence of the men from other parts of the world in initiating cross-sex relationship is interpreted as an expectation or requirement by Norwegian women. Norwegian women are given attributes based on observation rather than personal experience.

**Relationship with the opposite sex in the early stages of their lives in Norway**

As our above discussion shows my informants came to Norway with a set of practices and cultural values related to relationship between opposite sexes that differs from the Norwegian norms. As we have noticed one of the significant differences is the lack of what I have called the “boy/girlfriend culture”. I will now illustrate how the lack of such culture can play an important role in individual immigrant or refugee’s future cross-sex relationship(s). Through empirical examples, we will become aware of how cultural differences that shapes the behavior of the members of the opposite sex can become an important factor in future choices related to cross-sex relationships. The first statement belongs to a female informant in her mid thirties who talks about an episode where she experiences the cultural differences in how men behave towards women in the two respective countries. The episode shows how different cultural values can create different expectations from the person whom one is having a romantic relationship with.

“… One night I was very sick and had to lay down in the back of his car. He drove me to my apartment and left. He never even asked me if I needed help, or if I want him to drive me to a doctor. Here I understood that it is not what I thought. I think if he was an Iranian man he would do quite the opposite…”

The next statements belong to a young informant. One that can be categorized as one and half generation:

“… I went out with my colleagues from my work place on Saturday evening. One of the boys came to me and initiated a conversation. The first thing he asked me was about where I come from. The next one, if I am Muslim. Then I told him that I could answer your entire questions before you have even asked them. The day after, when I sat down with
my friends I had not much to talk about. When you go to an Iranian party, you have so much to talk about the day after”.

A second female informant in her mid thirties gave me her opinion about Iranian boys in Norway:

“… In Iran boys used to fall in love very quickly. Iranian boys are generally very romantic because of their cultural background. Iranian boys in their interaction with Norwegian girls have experienced many types of cultural shocks. For example when a Norwegian girl, after two month of relationship tells him that they are finished, it is a shock for the boy. It is like putting a lam in the jungle with lions or tigers … Every time they experience such break with a Norwegian girl they get hurt; their heart breaks every time this happens. Here in Norway most of these boys have no support. Their parents are not here and they do not have a network to get help”.

Next statement belong to a male informant:

“… I have always seen the relationship with a girl as a way of creating a family. But here I found that the relationships between the opposite sexes are for the most part based on physical pleasure. I fell in love in Iran, but as I remember I was thinking about creating family”.

A second male informant, when discussing relationships said:

“… A classic example of an Iranian man coming to Norway: With his family in Iran, his parents suggest that he should find a nice Norwegian girl from a good family according to traditions in Iran. The boy goes to a discotheque. After a while and after many failed attempt, he strikes a relationship with a ‘Hanne’ or ‘Anne’ … the photograph of Hanne or Anne will be send to Iran as the chosen girl. The parents, specially the mothers send a flood of Iranian goods and gold and clothing and immediately consider her as her daughter in law. After a while, Anne or Hanne gets tired of the guy and is ready for a new adventure. For one reason or other she leaves him, leaving him alone with the difficult task of explaining to the family that their daughter in law is no more. Although for the Hanne or Anne, this is a normal procedure, for the poor man it is a heart-breaking event that will dominate his life for a long time. In most cases they
never really recover from this heartache. In the Iranian context, the existence of a young beautiful, educated, nice and
domestic woman is very crucial. No life is complete without it. And since we are in a new country and do not share the
rules that controls the game, it leads to many mental struggles”.

The next statement belongs to a male informant of mine in his late thirties. Here he tells
us about his experience after the breaking up with his Norwegian girlfriend:

“… My Norwegian girlfriend and I were together for seven years. She left me because of personal problems between
us. But in reality I can say that it had also to do with pressure that I was exposed to by the Norwegian society. I could
not give her the security (financially and socially) that she needed at the time. After this event, I went to the
psychologist at the university. I went there to get help about my situation and my personal problems. The psychologist
instead of letting me talk about my problems took part in the discussion. He said that such problems did not exist. What
I was saying according to the psychologist was my imagination. I told him is it my imagination that foreigners have
harder time finding job in Norway. The psychologist told me that it is something that I imagine and in reality it is not
like this”

The first statement of my female informant shows the importance of cultural differences
in cross-sex relationship. My informant, compares the behavior of her companion with
her own cultural values and backgrounds. The interesting point in this empirical example
is the importance of the “expectation” of the individual from her counterpart. But her
expectation is based on cultural values that belong to another culture. And she is
disappointed when the expectation is not met. Again here we can notice the lack of
information about the culture of the society where one has settled down. After many
years in Norway she still expects a Norwegian man to behave as an Iranian man. It is also
the case with the third statement. In that statement the male informant still holds on to his
cultural values from his country of birth. This brings us to his experience of what he calls
for cultural shock. Cultural shock is experienced when the expectation of a given
situation or event is not fulfilled. In this case the informant’s expectation is based on
either his cultural value that belongs to another country or an ideal based understanding (emic understanding) of the culture of the host society. In both cases, since understanding is not based on reality then the expectations are not fulfilled. At the same time he also focuses on the differences that exist between the two cultures, in this case the nuclear family. As I have mentioned, family plays an important role in Iranian culture. Again we can see the differences that exist between the two countries regarding to the process of modernity and modernization. The single most important institution in Iranian society is still the nuclear and extended family. And almost every thing is structured around this institution. But in Norway the nuclear (and extended) family have given its place to other forms of structures as the result of modernization.

Another important issue regarding the above statements is the importance of experience. As I have pointed out, lack of experience is one major factor that should be discussed when we aim to study the cross-sex relationship of my focus group. It is the lack of experience together with a strong feeling of anxiety and insecurity that makes the end of a romantic relationship be experienced as a major personal crisis. This point has been discussed by my female informants when we were discussing relationships between Iranian boys and Norwegian girls. I think the use of metaphors such as lamb or lion by my female informants is one way of referring to lack of experience of Iranian men. A interesting point is that my informants “emic” understanding of their lives in Norway is build around the idea that having a Norwegian partner would reduce their insecurity that they feel in their daily life experience in Norway. They think that they may feel more secure because of their inclusion into their Norwegian partner’s family and the circle of close or distant friends. Therefore partners are given an extraordinary important place in the lives of my informants, immigrants or refugees, as a replacement for the absence of their immediate families. In other words, partner becomes the one that is expected to satisfy many different needs of the given individual. It is therefore not surprising that when a relationship with a partner ends, there is a strong effect on the individual. At the same time one can also argue that when such event, such as an end of a romantic
A relationship, is experienced late in immigrants or refugees life cycle the impact of such break ups is compounded and feels stronger than if it had taken place at a younger age. Relationships can be experienced as extra important, because one may feel as it is always the last relationship. This again is related to the cultural values that belong to the country of origin where the institution of marriage and nuclear family play(ed) such an important role.

I believe that a comparative perspective will shed further light on the issue. In Norway, members of the opposite sexes generally grow up in a free environment that provides them with opportunity to develop understanding of each other. These are understandings based on actual experience; at least this is the case when one compares Norway with Iran. For example, a man having a female friend (without sexual relationship) is common in Norway, while in Iran; the term friend is used in the most part as a replacement for “male friends”. One would either have a sexual relationship with a woman (who is not family member) or have no relationship at all. Boys and girls in Norway, through regular contact at school, work place and through leisure activities, develop an understanding of each other’s world that is based on their personal experience with each other. The personal experience between the members of opposite sexes makes them more “secure” and less “nervous” in their relation to each other. This is the opposite of what I have pointed out above in relation to Iran.

The last point to be made in relation to the data that I have represented above is the obvious lack of information concerning Norwegian culture and society. My informant’s statements show a high degree of generalization, stereotyping, for example when they discuss the girl/boy friend culture in Norway (their emic understanding). Clearly it is not possible for all women and men who live in a country, to think and behave like each other. I do not believe that it is the aim of my informants to include all Norwegian men and women in the same category neither. The lack of information is the consequence of the lack of contact between the members of the two groups. As long as individuals do not
socialize with each other, they will build up their ideas about each other from what they hear from the others. In the next part of this chapter, I would like to argue that one of the obstacles in establishing contact between the opposite sexes among the minority and majority group in Norway is the media’s representation of the refugees and immigrants, especially Muslims.

The impact of Norwegian media’s representation on cross-sex relationship

The media’s representation of immigrants and refugees can play an important role in forming the future relationships of members of the two groups. An aspect of interest in relation to this chapter is that the media’s representation of the refugees and immigrants tends to focus on the issues that are related to the male/patriarchal dominance. I have pointed out previously, in chapters 1 and 3, that the focus of the debate is to exert pressure on the minority groups, predominantly the Muslims, to distance themselves from the parts of their culture, custom or tradition that is perceived as illegal according to the Norwegian law. The majority of the cases that are being covered by the Media are related to issues where the female immigrants, daughters or wives, are subjected to traditional or cultural practices that are not only against the Norwegian law but they also symbolize a set of values that are particularly alien to what the individual Norwegian is accustomed to. Let me illuminate this by giving a couple of examples of the newspaper headlines before analyzing one of these article. The following headlines have been published by Aftenposten: “Forced marriage taken place in foreign countries, is valid in Norway”. (aftenposten. 6.Februar.2002); “For the sake of Honour: it has happened again. Another Swedish girl had to sacrifice her life because of being ‘too Swedish’”... (aftenposten. 27.Jan.2002); “1 of 4 immigrants girls are afraid of forced marriage; scared of the police if they are forced in to a marriage: 9 out of 10 girls would seek help from their aunts, uncles or brothers if they are pressed in to marriage. Non of them would ask the police or any other public institutions for help” (aftenposten. 24.Jan.2002); “twelve years jail sentence for killing wife” (aftenposten. 31.July.2002); “Circumcision and culture” (Aftenposten. 9.Jan.2002);” When a mother wants to kill her daughter”
“The misguided ‘honor’ – a tenacious dark power” is the heading of an article that is published at 22.01.2003 by Aftenposten. The article is written by, Hege Storhaug, the manager of one of the non-government organizations (NGO) that predominantly works with immigrant women’s rights. Human Right Service is a highly respected NGO that actively participates in Norwegian public discourse through newspaper articles or TV and Radio programs. The subtitle of the article informs the audience that it is one-year since the Swedish-Kurdish immigrant woman Fadima was “honour killed” by her father. According to Storhaug, the tragic gunshots that killed Fadima in Uppsala (Sweden) have triggered a broad debate about integration of immigrants in Norway, but the destructive force of “honor” is not weakened in a number of immigrant milieus.

The first part of the article provides a comparative perspective on the meaning of the term “honor” by showing how different it is being used among Norwegians (majority) and Immigrants (minority). She points out that in Norway “honor” is connected to a person’s moral integrity, respectability and inner quality (individual level). But in a number of immigrant milieus in Norway “honor” is used in a way that in our eyes is “reprehensible” (forkastelig) and “destructive”; a term with a contents that have sent Fadima to her grave. “The honor of her family was violated. Fadima had a boyfriend. She refused to marry her cousin in Turkey. She, who was their property, had ridiculed her family with her disobedience: they no more had control over her sexuality. Their loss of honor (ærestapet) had to be regained. For her family “honor” is a collective

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43. Storhaug uses the word “æresdrept” in Norwegian.
44. Storhaug uses the word “I våre øyene” in Norwegian.
phenomenon”. Storhaug continues by arguing against those who refuse to make a difference between honor-killing and jealousy-killing. She points out that murder is not murder. There are differences in motives behind the act. In order to be able to prevent future episodes of “honor-killings” we have to have knowledge about it and she wants to inform the public about what criteria can be used to identify an honor killing from other types of murder such as jealousy killing\(^{45}\). She recites a number of criteria that could enable public to see the difference:

- Murder is planned. It is a collective and rational decision.
- The family appoints the murderer.
- Others in the family can take the blame.
- The family will support the murderer and cover the truth.
- The murderer shows no empathy.
- The murderer conceives himself as a victim.
- The threat continues indefinitely until the person is dead. In other words all her life.

The article further points out additional criteria in addition to the central criteria listed above that had played central roles in Fadima case. “She had broken the sexual norms of the given group”. The other central motives that can lead to the same fate (according to the author) are: “refusing to marry someone chosen by the family or deciding to get divorced”. The second part of Storhaug’s article cites a number of empirical examples (honor killings) in Norway since 1982 up to this day. The interesting points about the empirical examples are the use of “would be” cases. For example, the article points out that in 2001 there would have been four honor killing cases (kan vi ha hatt) in Norway. Three of the four examples belong to cases that have not been processed by the justice department yet. Phrases such as “honor could be the motives behind the killing” or “the judge has not made his decision”(domen er ikke falt ennå) and etc are used.

\(^{45}\) It is my word and not Storhaug’s.
The third part of the article starts by declaring, a list of honor killings would probably never be completed, because according to the author, there are many unreported or unsolved cases where the girls have been killed by their parent’s or relatives while visiting their native country. The majority of these cases, are not reported to the police or if they are, there are no one who have been convicted for the crime. The article continues by referring to a recent case where an immigrant man from Somalia killed his wife and children. Storhaug writes, “Psychiatry is supposed to be the main explanation behind a man from Somalia killing his wife and children. But it is possible that this tragedy has also elements of ‘honor killing’ – she wanted to get divorce. But so long, the killings look like what we call as ‘family tragedy’”.

In the last part of the article the author refers to a number of researches, without naming or giving any reference to them, which document that the majority of the honor killing cases in the world are taking place in Pakistan. She uses the names of two groups as being the ones that the honor killing is a common practice: Pakistanis and Kurdish immigrants. She further includes Iran and Morocco into the list of the countries where the honor killing is being practiced frequently. In relation to Iran, she informs the public that honor killings are common among the Arabs and Kurds and not the Persian. In relation to Morocco, she points out that “sexual control is stronger among the Berbers than Arabs”. She continues by pointing out that “some families have more honor to defend than the other families”. “A woman who breaks up with a family with higher honor status is in more danger than a woman who belongs to a family with a lower honor status”. In the end, she shortly points towards the important role that integration can play in preventing honor killing. According to her, “how good or bad a family is integrated into the host society can play an important role”. Without going further in dept to discuss the importance of integration she jumps to the next point where the focus is on the lack of knowledge in relation to immigrants and refugees culture from the countries of origin. She points out explicitly that the police authority in Oslo has considered this point to be a
serious issue. They are catching up by gaining information about the honor killings. The
police have recently met a Norwegian-Pakistani man and a Pakistani woman who is
going to be forced into marriage and therefore oblige to escape. The article ends by
pointing out to the public that “unfortunately honor killings in Norway will increase. The
more immigrant women are aware of their individual freedom, the more they are in
danger of extreme actions and behaviors by the male members of their family and
groups”. In the end she recommends that Norway is in need of a national movement
where the focus should be on changing/replacing values that honor killing is based on.
Her last comment is pointed to the Prime minister of Norway by asking him if he is up to
the challenge!

In order to limit the scope of the thesis I have to focus on what I consider as the most
relevant issue to our discussion and its consequences: namely the authoritative style of
journalism. The above article is used as examples because it contains certain
characteristics, including the authoritative style of journalism, that are (relatively
speaking) representative for Norwegian media’s representation of immigrant men and
women’s gender relationship. Reading the article creates the feeling that the author is
someone with enormous knowledge and expertise, on the topic. Such reaction is created,
besides the writing style of the article, through the given information about the issues that
the public have little knowledge. Firstly, the author is able to give a definition of the issue
of discussion by making a comparison between Norway, something that the individual
reader can identify with, and other parts of the world. Implicitly, the immigrants are
placed at this category as the others. Secondly, the author represents several criteria that
can be used to identify honor killings from other types of murderer. Thirdly, the author is
able to inform the public about the specific countries where such tradition is mostly being
practiced. Further she is able to name specific group(s) within a given country where
their members practice such tradition.
The authoritative nature of the articles enables the author to represent the information in a manipulative nature that encourages the public to trust what they read. Through the authoritative style of the media representation, the author is implicitly inviting the audience to trust her/him on the basis of her/his expertise. You should accept what I am saying because I am the one who has enough knowledge and experience on the subject. Nina Dessau (2003) discusses the same issue in relation to the nature of Norwegian public debate concerning issues that involves Islam and Islamic traditions among Norwegian immigrants (Muslims). She points out that the public debate on forced marriage among Muslims immigrants in Norway have developed in such way that Muslims have no longer legitimacy when they announce their opinion on the subject. At the same time, those who can argue having first hand experience but representing a contrasted view compared to the Muslims enjoy an enormous authority in public debate. However the interesting point in Dessau’s argument is the importance of authoritative nature of the participants in public debates and the legitimacy of their arguments in the eyes of the public; be it journalists, academics or directors of NGO organizations.

If we put aside the authoritative style of news representation we are able to look at its content in a different way and examine the accuracy of the given information. It enables us to find out that in many ways the above article combines “speculation” with “fact” in order to support a particular argument in its representation. For example, in the first part

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46. It is interesting to point out that Norwegian TV2 in a documentary program (rikets tilstand) about female circumcision that were aired at 4. October, 2000, created an atmosphere of “national panic” that included the prominent intellectuals as well as politicians. The panic was so strong that no one questioned the content of the program and the way the issue was represented. As the result, all members of “verdikomisjon” (value commission) sacked a respected African member who was seen in the documentary program to support female circumcision. Some time after the program was aired and the atmosphere of panic had given way to a more rational thinking on the subject, the members of the verdikomisjon said that they regret sacking their African colleague. One of the leading member of the commission, Reidar Almå, a professor in sociology, said: because of the given atmosphere none of us were able to stand against what people believed to be the reality. However, the dialogue between the individuals who participated in the documentary became available to the public and it became certain how the program was deliberately edited in order to produce a specific result. This is not a single episode where the media have manipulated the given news to produce a certain result (Aftenposten. 09.02.2002). However examples like this are data that can be used to support the argument that I made in chapter three about the importance of media and public relation companies in manipulating the public discourse.
of the article the author argues that the destructive force of honor is not weakened in “a number of immigrant milieus” without giving any specific names. Who are these numbers of milieus among the immigrant groups in Norway? Which immigrant group is the target of this argument? Further, the author points out that what is being practiced in these number of milieus is in our eyes reprehensible and destructive? Again one is not able to figure out “whose eyes” is she talking about? The author? The government? The Police? The nation? The speculative nature of the article is further revealed by the selective use of the “would be” cases. The article in its discussion of honor killing represents immigrants in a way that it accuses a number of immigrant groups of a serious crime. All the members of these number of groups are included into the category of would be honor killers. These are serious accusations towards groups of people who lack the required power to defend themselves in public discourse. For example, how is it possible for a Norwegian to distinguish between Arab Iranians, Kurdish Iranians and Persian Iranians? Are these differences based on physical attributes or are they just cultural? How can we help the individual Norwegian to identify among these groups when they introduce themselves as Iranians? Or how can someone identify between Berbers and Arabs when all introduce themselves as people of Morocco? Or when she argues, “some families have more honors to defend than other families”? How can we measure the degree of honor among different families?

This brings us to the core issue considering Norwegian media’s representation of Immigrants and refugees; namely the “essentialist” nature of it. It is essentialist because it’s argument is based on the idea that immigrants or refugees behave in a specific way because of their culture. As I mentioned previously culture, becomes synonymous with an inherited part that is almost genetically attributed to the individual member of a given group. For immigrants and refugees, in contrast to the members of the majority group, culture is understood as a force that the individual have no control over. Therefore all members of the group are expected to behave in accordance to their culture. The interesting point about such representation is that they tend to focus on the differences
rather than similarities, and in doing so they represent immigrant (Muslim) men and women in contrast to each other by placing them on the opposite poles in relation to one another (Brune.Y.2003). In this respect, the media representation is gender biased since it usually argues that it is the male section of immigrant or refugee groups that maintain such cultural practices in order to control and suppress the female members of the given group. According to Brune (Ibid), the typical immigrant woman, that media represents to the public, is someone who works at home, is forced to stay inside, can neither write or read, has no information about her rights and her children are usually problem children. The key words that can be used to describe their condition are isolation and exclusion from the rest of the society (Ibid). Further more, such representation stands in contrast to the Norwegian ideals in relation to women liberation. Women who metonymically are being permitted to represent immigrant women’s life experiences stand in stark contrast to almost every aspect of Norwegian feminism and women emancipation in Norway. Generally speaking, the Norwegian media overwhelmingly focuses on the immigrant women’s struggle for freedom by showing the different ways this struggle is counteracted by the male members of their group, all Muslim men. The articles are written to represent an ongoing struggle between freedom, Muslim women, and suppression, Muslim men. While representing immigrant (Muslim) men and women in this light, the same articles tend to project an idealized version of Norwegian society and values. Immigrant (Muslim) women’s lives, that is being constructed through the media, are compared to the lives of women who live in a modern society where alienation, exploitation and suppression of women do not exist (Ibid). The problematic aspects of this modern society are not an issue of concern on the same level as the negative aspects of immigrant’s lives are. Therefore the content of the articles points towards an ideal condition where sexual freedom is associated with women liberation and equality between the sexes. Bangstad and Assal (2003) indicate that there are few studies that look at violence against

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47. The Norwegian media do not discuss the negative aspects of Norwegian society with the same degree of interest and frequency as it shows for the immigrant’s culture or tradition. Dessau (2003) gives a good example of how important issues such as “teenage girls having sex in exchange of gifts” or “14 years old girls are pressed by their peers to have group sex” have not received the attention that they really deserves.
immigrant women in Norway. Nevertheless, the few studies demonstrate that the number of immigrant women who experience domestic violence is less than the Norwegian average. At the same time, the same studies show that the number of non-western women who are registered by the police for experiencing domestic violence is more than the number of Norwegian women.

Furthermore, the values that immigrants women’s are striving after is illustrated by judging their lives against Norwegian women’s living condition through using terms such as “in Norway”, “Norwegian way of living”, “the Norwegian daily life” and “like Norwegian women”. By doing so the immigrant women’s struggle for freedom becomes possible through their acceptance of the Norwegian lifestyle (Brune, 2003). This is taking place when immigrant women, in contrast to immigrant men, are represented in a non-essentialist way. The majority of the cases that gets media’s attention involve young women who behave against their cultural norms and are therefore represented as courageous. According to Brune (2003) the articles, and the used pictures, tend to represent the immigrant woman with a masculine eye. “The classification, the interest for her sexual accessibility, the visualization of her body and cloth,” remind us of objectification of women as the other sex” (Brune. Pp: 71).

Within such context, immigrant men’s use of violence, or indeed other actions, to stop their women’s efforts for freedom, is interpreted as taking the opportunity from immigrant women to become like Norwegian women (us). The members of the majority group see immigrant men’s use of violence against their spouses’ struggle for freedom as a way of showing their disgust and bitterness towards Norway and Norwegian values, specially values related to women liberation. Looking at the Norwegian media’s representation of the immigrants, it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that among immigrant groups, it is the Muslims (men) that dislike Norway and Norwegian values and lifestyle.
The stereotypes that the Norwegian media represent to the public are powerful instruments that can be used to generate meaning about different immigrant groups. Stereotypes are being used as referential framework to produce meaning about members of a group that one have no regular relationship with. The power of stereotypes rests upon their ability to create resonance in the culture that they are being used or produced. Homi Bhabha (1994, p: 77) argues that a stereotype can only produce meaning if it is accompanied with a continuous and repetitive chain of other stereotypes. Brune (2003), argues that such chains of stereotypes are the corner stone of a common sense worldview. The media, through its use of stereotypes and by reducing a complex reality to a set of categories, is able to produce prototype immigrants. A prototype is an object that represents the category in its best. It means an example that includes most of the common characteristics of the given category. Prototype categories are not out there in a vacuum. Stereotypes, prototypes, or any other type of categories become part of people’s cultural knowledge and thereby used by them in their interaction with each other.

Subsequently, the stereotypes that the Norwegian media represents to the public while covering issues related to minority groups (Muslims) have important consequences on their daily life experience in Norway. On the one hand it has important consequences on how members of the majority group perceive the minority group. On the other hand, they become more aware and sensitive towards the issues that are being covered by the Norwegian media. Let me represent some data about what we have discussed above. The first statement belongs to one female informant who is in her late thirties:

“… In relation to Iranian boys relationship with Norwegian girls I have to say that it has a lot to do with the status of Iranian boys. Norwegian families do not like their daughters to be with Iranian because of all the negative propaganda in the Norwegian media against Muslims and Iranians. Media has a direct effect on the way Norwegian families look at Iranian boys.”

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48. In the next section of this chapter I will discuss what the cognitive anthropology calls for “figured world”. In my view what Brune (2003) calls for “common sense worldview” Goes under the category of figured world.
The next statement belong to a male informant in his mid thirties:

“In our interaction with Norwegians we feel like we have to give positive impression of how we are all the time. It is to prove to them that we are different from the image that is propagated by the majority as our identity. It takes away from us a free discourse. This creates a situation for us that when what is normal for a Norwegian man to say is put into a negative context when we say the same thing. It is natural that people wants to be perceived as positive, rather than negative. So, it is a natural reaction from our part. But sometimes in some period when one feels so failed in all his/her attempts to create a positive image, one suddenly start to interact negatively as one has given up. You use a lot of energy”.

The above statements illustrate the level of awareness that exists among the members of the minority groups, Iranian refugees in this case, about the ways that the media is projecting them. Explicitly, these statements argue for the effect of such image on the daily life and face-to-face experiences of my informants with the members of the majority groups and in cross sex relationships in particular.

**Male informants and their experience in cross-sex relationship**

During my fieldwork, I became aware of the importance of cross-sex relationships for my male informants. No matter what we discussed, the conversation always ended with romantic relationship with opposite sex. In our conversations, my informants have for the most part perceived their status as refugees, Muslims and Iranian as important negative barriers in their relationship with members of the opposite sex in majority group, Norwegian women. One of the important issues related to the topic of our discussion is the place/arena where the members of the opposite sexes meet. My data shows that in the work place, formal arena, my informants have formal relationships with their female colleagues. Usually the female colleagues have no information about my informants’ personal life outside the office. If they meet each other outside work, as my informants have pointed out, they do still have formal relationship based on their status as
colleagues. Then the best way to discuss and analyze my male informants relationship with the opposite sex is to look at the informal arenas during leisure activities. I think an empirical approach will help us to understand my informants’ point of view. The first statement belongs to a male informant in his early thirties:

““Our status as Iranian plays an important role in our interaction with Norwegian girls. It is usually negative. In the beginning, when I started to study at the university, there were usually many Norwegian boys and girls who had Iranian partners. But after a while there were no Norwegian. In other words, most relationships ended. Why? The society functions as a control organ. Norwegian girls having Iranian boyfriends would lose their status among their families and friends… this is one of the reasons that Iranian boys go back to Iran and marry. They do not have many choices. Specially in relation to their class background they do not have the chance to get to know Norwegian girls who have the same social background as they have.”

The next statement belong to another male informant in his late twenties:

“The way the Norwegian media writes about us has direct consequences on the way Norwegian girls look at us. During the second half of the 1980s when Iranian men started to emigrate to Norway, Norwegian girls were attracted to our biological appearances. But now they want to categorize you in different ethnic groups. They want to know if you belong to the ethnic group that they have affinity for. You have to justify yourself all the time when you meet a girl that you do not know… you may have the same appearance as Italian guy, but if you tell her that you are from Iran, they will try to keep distance. IT IS NOT COOL TO BE IRANIAN WHEN IT COMES TO THE PERCEPTION THAT NORWEGIAN GIRLS HAVE ABOUT US.”

Next statement belong to another male informant in his late twenties:

““… Those who come from Mediterranean countries have usually very positive view of Norwegian girls but it is exactly the opposite when it comes to those who are from the third world countries. This is because the girls have a very positive attitude towards those from Mediterranean countries. Then it is easy for them here in Norway. They do not need to make a lot of personal efforts to find a social network. They do not need any social merits, because they are
naturally accepted. They even become sought after. And this is true in every level of the society. Even when they experience that things are difficult here for them, if you compare it with us, it is not a big deal. That’s why some people lie about their nationality when they go out. Because they have the same appearance as those from Mediterranean countries, they represent themselves with different nationality. This has caused many funny stories.

Next statement belongs to a male informant in his early thirties:

“ Iranian boys are rejected in both categories: Norwegian men and Norwegian women. Iranian girls are definitely accepted and most sincerely are welcomed to have sexual relationship with Norwegian men. But I am not sure if they are accepted in Norwegian girls social groups… The opposite sex is the most important group when you live somewhere. I do not care if Norwegian boys accept me or reject me … I do not even care if Iranian boys accept me. Because as a boy I either accept them or reject them as friends. But I do not have any biological needs towards them. Who cares? Girls, that’s a need. It is a must. You cannot live without girls. That’s it.”

The above statements touch upon important issues that are relevant to our discussion. One of the important ones is my informants “emic” understanding of their statuses as “refugees” and “Iranians”. Due to my informant’s experiences of the cross-sex relationships, they see their low status as Iranian and refugees to be a very important element that has a negative impact in their interaction with the members of the opposite sex in the majority group. The issue of “status” (socio-cultural position) is important in two different but interrelated ways. On the one hand, it is important when we consider the members of the majority group’s (Norwegian women) perception of Muslims in general and my informants (male) in particular. Why do Iranian men feel that the female members of the majority group do not consider someone like them as candidates for a romantic relationship? On the other hand, how my male informants perception of their low status, and the negative experiences following that, can affect their “self confidence” or “masculine identity” (the second question will be discussed in the last section of this chapter).
In order to answer the first of the above questions, we have to place it in the socio-cultural environment where the action or event is taking place. As I have mentioned before, it is the belief of this paper that majority of Norwegians do not have personal or daily interaction with the members of the minority groups. Therefore the media plays an important role as the main source of information when it comes to the refugees and immigrants. But the process is far more complex than just a quasi (because of A the B is happening) relationship between media and spectators. If we consider the information received through the media as cultural messages, then we have to find out how these cultural massages gets under the skin of the individuals who are exposed to it in a period of time (D’Andrade. R. G & Strauss. C. 1992). Most importantly, what kind of effect such cultural messages have on individuals when they get under their skins and becomes part of the reality. Then it is correct to ask; if there is a direct link between culture and action? It is easy to say that people tend to do things because their culture tells them to. But such statements do not tell us any useful piece of information, simply because they do not tell us why people do (or not do) what their culture tells them to do. D’Andrade (1992) argues that in order to find out more about the mechanisms behind the actions, we have to consider studying the notion of motivation. But in order to understand motivation we have to study its connection with culture. We have to find the motives behind romantic relationships within the cultural world where it is taking place. The motive is important for our discussion because it can say something about a person’s choice of partner.

“Subjectively, motivation is experienced as a desire or wish, followed by a feeling of satisfaction if the desire is fulfilled or a sense of frustration if it is not. Observing others, one notes that people become aroused and active under certain conditions. Along with this increase in activity there is typically a striving for something - a goal directedness in behavior – followed by various emotional reactions related to the success or failure of the goal pursuit. These facts are common –sense understandings of motivation”. (D’Andrade. R. G. 1992. Pp: 24)

There have been different approaches to the studying of motivation. Generally speaking anthropologists have problem in trying to determine what motives people had when they
do something. For most anthropologists, it was not apparent what field methods could be applied to answer important questions such as: how does the great variability in human goal striving come about, and how is such goal striving related to culture? However, according to D’Andrade (1992), the recent works in cognitive anthropology indicates that the techniques used to identify cognitive schemas can be used to identify motivational goals. The general idea is that some cognitive schema function as goals and therefore have motivational forces. (Ibid)

A schema is a conceptual structure that makes the identification of objects and events easier. D’Andrade (1992) uses a computer software program that is build to identify a specific object, a specific face for example. He explains that a schema is this sort of program: a process by which objects or events are identified on the basis of simplified pattern recognition. Furthermore, he points out that to say something is a schema is a shorthand way of saying that a distinct and strongly interconnected pattern of interpretive elements can be activated by minimal inputs.

“A schema is an interpretation which is frequent, well organized, memorable, which can be made from minimal cues, contains one or more prototypic instantiations, is resistant to change, etc”. (D’Andrade, R.G. 1992. Pp: 29)

There are two properties to schemas that make them relevant to my arguments. For the first, they have the potential of starting action. In other words, they can work or function as goals. Secondly, they are hierarchically organized. The hierarchical organization of the schemas is important for understanding the motivational force. D’Andrade uses an example that can help us to understand the relation between hierarchy and motivation.

“One recognizes some chair as part of the “finding seat” schema, which is part of the “attending a lecture” schema, which is part of the “finding out what’s going on” schema, which may be for some people part of the “doing anthropology” schema, or perhaps “meeting a friend” schema, etc”. (D’Andrade, R. G. 1992. Pp: 30)
This type of means-ends goal linkage is one principle of schema hierarchy. When schemas are hierarchically organized, there should be an order for which an individual prioritizes one over another. By looking at schema as such, we are able to find the motives behind the actions. D’Andrade (1992) divides schemas into three groups but the most relevant of the three in relation to our discussion is the first category in the hierarchy. At the top of the interpretive systems there are the ones that are related to persons most general goals. They are called for “master motives”. Love and work can be placed here. It is the topmost level of interpretation that is typically linked to the action by which an individual operates in his/her socio-cultural context. In other words, a person’s most general interpretations of what is going on will function as important goals for that person.

Dorothy Holland (1990) and her associates studied the world of “romance” among the female students in three American universities. According to Holland (Ibid), gendered type categorizations that are used in student’s conversations are interpreted against a “figured world” or “cultural world” of intimate male and female relationship. The specific categorization of an individual was cognitively related to how that person would function in a relationship in this ideal world of romance - figured world (Hervik, p. 2001). Holland and her associates (1990) were able to point out that on the campus students have developed standards to measure how attractive a probable romantic partner is. These standards of attractiveness are related to the hierarchical aspect of the schemas as pointed out by D’Andrade (1992). Holland (1990) points out that for the women of her study the importance of attractiveness could be distinguished in its consequences: The kind of men they could attract and the kind of treatment they received from them. Holland shows that the attractiveness and prestige of the female students were validated; to a major extend, by their relationship with men who were her potential romantic

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49. Within the schema theory the main focus is on the forms of behavior and interpretation that is based on an understanding of culture as system of meanings (Hervik, P. 2001). The basic components of such system of meaning as I have mentioned above is called a schema. When there are cluster of schemas that are connected to each other anthropologist call them as “figured world”, “cultural world”, and cultural models (Holland, D. 1998).
partners (Holland, D. 1990. Pp: 98-99). For a woman having a man interested in her was seen as a sign of her attractiveness but I believe this does not include every man on the campus. If it were going to include all the men on the campus, why would they develop standards of attractiveness to measure the future male partners?

“Women proudly proclaimed that they were going out with men who were “popular” on campus, known as sports figures, residents of the ‘best’ men dorm, or ‘outstanding’ in their fields of study. Women were also proud to have it known that they dated men with the correlates or signs of prestige and attractiveness, a lot of money or especially nice clothes, apartments, or cars. In contrast, they were uncomfortable when others described their dates or boyfriends as low-status, ‘jerks’ or ‘creeps’. If a high status man were interested in a woman thought to be average, her prestige among her peers would be raised. Correspondingly, if a ‘good looking’ woman was involved with an ‘average’ man … her prestige tended to decline. According to the model, the best finds were the attractive men, the ones who had prestige on campus…” (Holland, D. 1990. Pp: 99).

It is important to note that the “attractiveness” is conceived as both as essence of a person and as an effect on another person. On the one hand, attraction takes place because of something in the other person. On the other hand, a person’s attractiveness is judged by the behavior he or she elicits from the other (media in our case). The woman’s “reputation” of being attractive should be attested by those men who are perceived as being worthy – having prestige or belong to a prestige group- of her status (attractiveness) through showing her his interest and affection. When we consider the above discussion, it is then relevant to ask, what schema(s) Norwegian women are using to interpret the status or attractiveness of my male informants.

In our above discussion we saw that female students on campus used gendered type categorization in relation to future romantic partners against a figured or cultural world. The figured or cultural worlds are used as a referential framework to create meaning about something. The Schema, cultural or figured worlds that Norwegian women are able to use as their referential framework to generate meaning about my male informants - and
thereby find their place in the hierarchy of romantic partners - is the Norwegian media. If we accept that there are standards of attractiveness among the Norwegian women, an if we believe that such standards can play an important role in their choices of romantic partners, then where do we place my male informants in that hierarchy, considering the referential framework that is used?

**Female informants and their experience with cross-sex relationship**

As I have shown, the media represents immigrants or refugee (Muslim) women as those who are being suppressed or abused by the male members of their family or the group they belong to. They are represented as “victims” who are passive and have no control over their own lives and destiny. This gendered representation has practical consequences for Muslim women in general and Iranian women, as in the case of my informants. I will use an empirical approach to describe Iranian women’s experience of cross-sex relationship. The first statements belongs to one of my female informants who is in her thirties:

“The three years that I spent in college were the best years. Everything was well. There were four or five Iranian boys there. But as you know our culture has thought us that we should not have a close relationship. Therefore I interacted a lot with Norwegian group. I had very good relationship with Norwegian boys in my group. Besides me, all the members of the group were boys. I received too much attention from Norwegian boys.”

Next statement belongs to another female informant who is in her twenties:

“I can say that it is possible that I have accent and talk funny and that is interesting for them. But at the same time I think I attract more attention among Norwegian men than Norwegian women who work or studied with me. For example, if I am in a party, either at work or university, I was asked many times to dance by Norwegian men but

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50. It should be noted that my female informants -like my male informants- belong to the secular section of the Iranian society. Therefore they do not use any dress code like “veil” or “headscarves” that could be interpreted as a sign of being religious or traditional. A good number of my female informants had/have no problem with drinking (light) alcohol when they attend a special event, despite being muslims.
Norwegian women did not get the same attention. But from my point of view, behind such attention there should be an expectation”.

Next statement belongs to one of female informants in her late twenties:

“… Norwegian boys are very kind and humble. They are not haughty in relation towards Iranian girls. And they know the society very well. They can show me things that I had never seen. They can show me parts of society and Norway that is impossible to get to know if you had an Iranian boyfriend. The kindness and openness of Iranian girls do attract Norwegian boys. The attention that we give to our boyfriends is not usual among Norwegian girls. We do fulfill each other”.

Generally, my female informants were positive about Norwegian men, as exemplified by the three statements above. In the first statement, the three years that my female informant spent in college were recognized as the best years because she felt welcomed. She received attention that exceeded her expectation. She kept the cultural practice from her home country when it came to her interaction with Iranian boys. I guess it was because of being careful about what people may say behind her back. The second statement shows that it is not only the college or student environment that shows a positive response towards Iranian women. At the work place, as the statements shows, her male colleagues gave more attention to her (foreign/dark hair woman) than to Norwegian women who worked with her. In the third statements she shows how important it is to have a romantic partner who is native Norwegian. Let us now see what can be seen as reasons behind such positive perception of Norwegian men.

When we talk about Iranian women who are in their thirties or the end of late twenties, generally speaking the first generation immigrants or refugees, we have to keep in mind a couple of important issues. Firstly, we should remember that they have gown up in Iran or they have a memory about how Iran is. In the first section of this chapter, I discussed in detail the Iranian culture and the Islamic view on gender relationship. For many of
these women Iran represents patriarchal society where the structure of the society is formed on the basis of male point of view or dominance. Coming to Norway, seeing or experiencing something different that gives them the opportunity of becoming economically and individually independent, is experienced as a positive event. Two of the above statements belong to women who are divorced from their Iranian husband (they have been married before coming to Norway). If they were still living in Iran, they would probably not be able to have such “social” and “economic” standards of life-quality as they do in Norway. There is another important issue that we should keep in mind in relation to Iranian women in general. We have to remember that these are women who have been forced to leave their country and become refugees, now they are divorced in a country where they have no close family and friends nor do they have any network of people to rely on. For women in their situation the sense of security becomes an important issue. This is one of the reasons behind my first generation female informants preferring a relationship with a Norwegian man to an Iranian man. When I discussed the issue with my female informants, they used the word “strategy” to explain why some Iranian women, again mostly first generation, prefer Norwegian men rather than Iranian.

“ Iranian girls are usually more serious in their relationship with Norwegian boys. The girls think more ‘strategically’. Norwegian boys usually know the town. They know where to go out. They know what kind of food is good in what kind of restaurant...”

What my first generation female informants call for strategy I would call for selectivity based on “standards of attractiveness”. If we look carefully we see that for the American college students, attractive men were the ones who had money, were popular, athletics and, were doing good in their academic fields. For my first generation female informants, the attractive future male partner is someone who can creates the sense of security and belonging that they missed after leaving their country of origin. Those who can create such sense of security in their “emic” understanding are the native Norwegian men. The majority of first generation female informants believe that having a Norwegian partner
can help them feel more included into the Norwegian society than by having a non-
 Norwegian partner (immigrant or refugee). To feel included in the Norwegian society is
to be able to experience different aspects of the Norwegian culture and tradition. My first
generation female informants believe that this can happen when they have a native
partner. From my point of view, another important issue to consider is Norwegian
society’s perception of immigrants and refugees as a group in general. When the general
perception is negative and thereby the members of these groups are ascribed lower status
than the natives, then it is also understandable why the first generation female informants
prefer native Norwegian men as attractive future partners.

However, the important point is that the attitude of Norwegian men towards my female
informants is different from the behavior of Norwegian women towards my male
informants. This brings us to the main issue of this chapter; namely the existence of a
gender asymmetry between the male members of the minority and majority group. I use
the term “gender asymmetry” to refer to a condition where the male members of the
majority group (Norwegian men) interact intimately with female members of the
minority group (Iranian women) while male members of the minority group (Iranian
men) do not have the same level of interaction with the female members of the majority
group (Norwegian women). According to the majority of male informants (see
representative statements at page 131 – 132), Norwegian women behave negatively
towards them when they find out about their origin. In other words, Norwegian women’s
behavior changes in an interaction situation when they obtain information about the
country of origin of the male informants. The negative behavior that the male informants
experience in their interaction with Norwegian women is explained in part (emic) by
referring to Norwegian media’s representation of immigrants and refugees (Muslims).
They have pointed out repeatedly that the first question that they are being asked in their
interaction with a Norwegian woman is related to their place of birth (origin). It is
interesting that the majority of male informants described a contrast between Norwegian
women and women from other European countries such as England. They pointed out
that in England they were asked repeatedly about their career instead of their country of origin? I believe my male informants were drawing a distinction between the criteria’s that female members of the two societies use when they want to eliminate someone as future romantic or sexual partner. According to my male informants, in England when women asked them about their career, they were interested to find out about other criteria’s that they considered as important. The question about the career implicitly answered many other issues such as: What economic condition one is living under? Which area in the city one is able to live? What kind of car one is able to drive? What kind of restaurant one is able to go to? Without knowing it, my informants were discussing different “standards of attractiveness” in accordance to different cultural world that one is living in. In their own way they were telling me that the women of the two countries used different criteria to measure the life quality and social status of a person.

The same idea can be used when we consider the importance of “origin” for Norwegian women. It seems that by knowing someone’s origin, one is able to obtain information about other criteria that one considers as important. These criteria can vary from religion to cultural values related to different subjects such as women’s liberation. But since my fieldwork is conducted among Iranians instead of Norwegians and, because of lack of data from this group, I am not able to state anything more than speculation in relation to importance of origin to Norwegian women. Therefore I chose to use my informant’s own emic understanding and experience instead of speculation. If we go back to the statements in pages 131-132, we can see that in the second statement, the informant interprets the importance of origin as a criteria that Norwegian women use to categorize a person in different ethnic groups. Further, in the same statements, he continues with saying that “it is not cool to be Iranian when it comes to the perception that Norwegian girls have about us”. This is not an isolated incident when we consider the perception of Iranian men about their origin. The majority of Iranian men showed similar experiences and judgment when they spoke about their interaction with Norwegian women. The data that I have represented in this chapter and the following discussion points towards the
importance of origin and gender as two central criteria’s that are often combined together and then implemented in the interaction situation by the members of the majority group (Norwegian women). In order to illustrate the importance of origin in an interaction situation, I propose to go back to Høgmo (1998), and the interesting way that he uses concepts such as “respect” and “contempt” (ringeakt) in human communication.

Høgmo (Ibid) following Goffman (1959, 1969) emphasizes on the importance of communication on human relation. According to Goffman (1959 and 1969), in interaction situation individuals have the possibility to use their cultural repertoire to communicate “respect” to one another. It is through our ability in communicating respect that we are able to develop positive relationship with other individuals. The positive relationship is generated because by communicating respect to the other we include our counterpart as one of us. Further, Høgmo (Ibid) argues that in an interaction situation the individuals aim to establish mutual respect with one another. It is through creation of this mutual respect that individuals are able to trust each other in a given interaction situation.

What makes Høgmo’s (1998) argument further interesting is his ability in pointing out that individuals involved in interaction can, through the same expressive actions, also mediate the opposite of respect. He calls this sort of expressive behavior for communicating contempt (ringeakt). By using our cultural repertoire, in an interaction situation, we are able to communicate that our counterpart is not of any importance to us, stands lower than us, or is someone that is of no importance to us.

Høgmo (1998) argues that trusting one another plays an important role in the interaction between individuals because as human beings we are suspicious of the world around us. We interpret everything that can influence our lives as a potential threat. It is through the socialization that humans are taught to trust the world they live in – this is the first important aspect of human socialization. The second important aspect of human socialization, according to Høgmo, aims at teaching the individuals the ability to create
positive relationships with one another by communicating respect to each other. But in practice, we can risk the danger of falling in disfavor in a given interaction situation. We are therefore not able to know through our actions towards others if we fall in favor or disfavor. Therefore we interpret other individual’s actions towards us as their methods of communicating “respect” or “contempt”. If our counterpart tells us that “you did a good job reminding me of the appointment” or “I totally agree with your proposal” while his/her body language confirms what he/she says to us, then we can interpret it as signs for that we have fallen in her/his favor. Therefore, Høgmo (Ibid) argues that communication of contempt should be placed in the same category as an expressive action like Goffman’s description of various forms of communicating respect in a given interaction. We can, through our use of words, intonation, glance and gestures, directly communicate our impression of the other to him/her. Through our production of “contempt” we are able to communicate “unfriendliness” or “alienation” and thereby make our counterpart to feel alien in our everyday life. We can send him out in the cold, or invite him into the warmth so he/she can feel as an equal partner in a given interaction. It is through our communication of contempt that we inform the other that he/she is not worthy enough to be a part of the world that we live in. In so doing, we are able to either deny or take away his opportunity of becoming a full member of our society and thereby bring upon him stigma.

Norwegian women’s use of origin as an important criteria for eliminating future sexual or romantic partner, can be analyzed within the framework of the above discussion. The origin of individuals plays an increasingly important role, in our analysis, because as I have pointed above a central perspective in studying ethnic groups in everyday life is to look at the situations where members of the majority groups communicate “respect” or “contempt” when they interact with the members of a minority group. The negative behavior of Norwegian women towards the male informants - because of their origin - is interpreted by the male informants as a way of expressing “contempt” towards them. Norwegian women may use the same criteria, origin, in their interaction with Norwegian
men who belong to different geographic parts of Norway. But when this criteria is used regarding the members of the minority group, it is interpreted as extremely negative signal, mostly because one consider the rejection to be based upon information that one has not gained through personal experience.

The use of a criteria such as origin may be perceived differently by Iranian men compared to Norwegians. The different perception of a criteria such as origin can be explained by looking at different ways that the Norwegian public discourse represents immigrant, Muslim and Iranian men compared to Norwegians. In the case of Iranians, who are immigrant and Muslim, the public discourse is negative in it’s representation. Obviously, negative public discourse against Norwegian men does not exist. Members of the minority group, Iranian men in this case, interpret the emphasis that Norwegian women give to their origin, to be another way of communicating contempt towards them. In an interaction situation between a Norwegian woman and an Iranian man, conversations that includes topics such as “not without my daughter”, “women liberation in Iranian society”, “relationship between Islam and arranged or forced marriage” or “segregation of the sexes” is interpreted as if she is trying categorizing individuals, into the same category as the media projects Iranians, Muslims or immigrants when discussing above issues. It is so, because, as I have shown in chapter three the media represent immigrant or Muslim men as a homogenous group. Words such as “Iranian”, “Muslim” or “immigrant” are then understood as symbols that stands for something that have gained an increasingly negative content. It is the negative connotation of these terms that makes the interpretation also negative.

This is what Goffman (1969) calls for “definition of situation”. The definition of situation plays an important role in distinguishing which of the participants many statuses should form the basis for their interaction. When the individuals involved in an interaction agree in their relevant statuses, then they tend to over-communicate the relevant status position in the given interaction situation and at the same time under-communicate the statuses
that are discrepant. In our case, according to my male informants, Norwegian women have a tendency to over-communicate statuses that the male informant do not identify with and therefore wish to counteract by under-communicating it. In other words, the individual experiences that in his cross-sex interaction with the members of the majority group, he is being rejected because of values or criteria’s that he does not have. Let me give an example that can make my argument clear

“I went out with one of male informants during a weekend and met many Norwegian friends at a bar. I knew many of them because I had either studied with them or through mutual friends. I introduced my informant as a friend of mine to some female friends. I left him with them and moved to the other side where I could observe the event. I came back to him after a while to find out what they were talking about. He asked me about how I knew the friends that I had introduced him to. I told him that I have studied with them. He smiled, and then asked me: are they also anthropologists? I told him that a couple of them had finished their education and worked as anthropologists. Then I asked him if being anthropologist was important? He told me that the first question that he was asked, was about his country of origin. The second question they asked him was if he is a Muslim. I asked him about his answers? He said that he told them that this is a very bad way of starting a conversation.

Before analyzing the event I have to point out that it is the origin of my informant that makes his religious affiliation relevant to the given situation. After knowing that he is from Iran did the girls become interested in knowing if he was also a Muslim. What makes this event further interesting is that my informant, as a secular Iranian who do not practice Islam in his everyday life, have been positioned or given identity that he would rather under-communicate in the given context. If he were from a Latin American or any Western country, his religion would not be a relevant status in his interaction with a Norwegian woman in a similar context – situation. A Norwegian woman would not ask a man from, for example, Chile, who was sitting in a bar and drinking - if he is Christian, (implying a practicing Christian). One is tempted to ask, what is the relevance of Islam and being a Muslim in a situation (context) when the individuals are in a bar and leisurely drinking alcohol? I guess, after all, Barth (1966) is right when he argues that:
“...The more a certain type of behavior is statistically associated with a status, the more it will be reinforced through serving as an idiom of identification.” (Barth. F. 1966. Pp: 3)

In order to be able to apply Barth’s argument in our analysis of the above event we have to reverse the logic in his argument. We have to analyze the Norwegian woman’s interest in the male informant’s religion and origin as a signal for expecting certain behavior. It is here that the definition of situations shows its analytic importance. The individuals involved in the interaction have different definition of situation. Iranian man who is drinking would preferably under-communicate his religion. While his counterpart, Norwegian woman, is over-communicating the exact status that he tries to under-communicate. The male informant understands Norwegian woman’s over-communication of his status as a Muslim to be negative, because in his view, she expects a certain type of behavior to be associated with that status. He believes that a Norwegian woman associates a Muslim man with a certain behavior that is represented to her through Norwegian media. It is this kind of repeated experience that affects and in turn shapes the future cross-sex relationship between the male informants and their Norwegian counterpart.

Barth (1966) points out that “feedback” plays an important role on shaping future behavior of individuals in interaction situations. He argues that the punishment and rewards of varying degrees of success will make the majority modify their performance. Furthermore, in an interaction situation, the course of interaction is affected by the behavior of each party. Each party’s behavior is modified by the presence and behavior of the other. In relation to my focus group, feedback plays an important role in two different but interrelated levels. On the one hand, as pointed out by Barth, feedback plays an important role in a micro level where individuals interact with each other. On the other hand feedback is also important on a macro level when we consider representation of immigrants, Muslims and Iranians in the Norwegian media. The representation can be
understood (emic) as an additional way of how the majority is responding (feedback) to the minority group on a public level. It is the combination of these two levels that makes the role of feedback even more significant. Let me illustrate the importance of the role that feedback can play in cross sex relationship between my male informants and Norwegian women through two empirical examples:

Example 1
I had an appointment with one of my male informants in a café at the center of Oslo. I arrived earlier than him to make sure that we find a place to sit. I ended up keeping two chairs at the bar because there were no tables available. When my informant came he said that could not sit on these chairs because of his back problem and that he had asked two other friends to join us. I told him that there were no tables available at that time. He looked around and found two available seats on one of the larger tables where two female Norwegians were sitting. I said that there are people sitting on the table. He said it is actually two tables put together so we can sit there. He also said, “don’t worry they will move when two dark skinned foreigners sit besides them”. Then he walked toward the table while I bought something to drink for both of us. As I turned back to see if he was sitting at the table I saw a big smile on his face? I was wondering what had made him so happy that day. As I went to the table to sit there I saw why he was laughing. The Norwegian girls on the other table were moving away. He said, “you see, why do you worry about finding a place to sit!” After this incident, we talked about several issues but one of his sentences I found to be most interesting. He said: “I have no problem with Norwegians. For them we don’t exist”.

Example 2
I went out one weekend with three of my male informants. They decided to go to a bar in the central part of down town Oslo. We were there for about two hours and the place start getting packed with customers. One of my informants started to talk to a Norwegian girl and I said to myself that this could become an interesting event after all. Several minutes later my informant came towards me and I saw that he was upset. I asked him what was wrong and why he was upset. He told me that the girl he was talking to was very rude. I asked why? He said that they are a group of friends (all girls) who were slightly drank. I told him that this is a usual case nothing to be upset about. He got more upset and told me that she had asked him to move to another side of the bar so they could have his corner for couple of guys that they met at bar but were standing at the other side. My informant interpreted Norwegian girl’s behavior as ethically or
racially oriented. He was upset because in his view there were many Norwegians at the same spot but he was the one that was asked to move to another place. However, we left the place with the idea of going to another bar but when we went to the street my informants were more interested in going home.

When we look at the above examples, we can relate the interpretation of Norwegian women’s behavior by the male informants to their previous negative experiences. For example, in the first example, it is clearly acceptable for the female customers to be leaving their table at the time when we arrived. One can also think that the customers may simply be not in a mood to sit closer than usual to strangers of the opposite sex. Clearly, there is always many other reasons that have nothing to do with the ethnic origin of those who sit beside them. I find the behavior of my informant to be based on his negative previous experiences with Norwegian women. Similarly, in the second example, there can be many reasons for why the girls asked the informant to move to another spot rather than another individuals. Maybe they asked him because he was standing alone but the others were together with their friends and therefore it was difficult to ask them to move somewhere else. It is possible that his ethnic origin played no significant role in the event. I would argue that it is the sum of the behaviors, feedback, that an individual receives through the years, which lays the basis for interpretations of the given situation.

In the previous sections of this thesis I have pointed out that Høgmo (1998) considers “gender” to be an important criteria in his discussion of the reasons behind the discrimination of members of minority groups in Norway. Høgmo (Ibid) points out that African men are exposed to discrimination more than African women because Norwegian women perceive them as sexually or romantically attractive. In contrast to Høgmo’s argument, my research shows that Iranian men are experiencing negative behavior by Norwegian men as well as Norwegian women. In other words, the different attitude that Høgmo (ibid) discovers in the way the members of the two sexes (Norwegian men and women) behave towards the African men does not apply to the life experience of my
male informants. At the same time the data in my research points towards the inclusion of another factor besides the “gender” and “class”, and that is country of origin. The majority of male informants explained the negative response that they receive, in an interaction situation with a Norwegian woman, to be based on their “wrong origin”. In the case of my male informants, this feeling was intensified further because many of them were professionals working in international companies with colleagues from other countries. When they socialize with their friends from the work place, they are able to compare Norwegian women’s behavior towards them and their colleagues (this includes their Norwegian colleagues as well). They generally experienced that in a social setting, Norwegian women behave positive towards colleagues that have the right country of origin. In contrast they felt rejected because of their “wrong” country of origin. These negative experiences, lack of recognition by the members of the opposite sex, play an important role in influencing their self-esteem, self-confidence and thereby their life quality in the host society.

The important role that positive or negative experience can play in relation to gender identity of an individual should be understood within the framework of how one studies human identity. Generally speaking in social science one differentiates analytically between sex and gender. One of the key issues in feminist theory as well as men studies is that gender is socially constructed. Most social scientists differentiate between “sex” and “gender”. Sex is considered as the biological aspect of a person while gender is applied as a term that aims to describe characteristics that a given society ascribes to person’s of one sex or the other. The majority of social scientists also believe that most (if not all) behavior commonly associated with gender is learned rather than inherited. In this respect, masculinity and femininity can be examined as sets of social expectations.

51. It should be noted that my material shows an increasing negative attitude by the Norwegian women towards the Muslim men in general. It is not something that just Iranian men experience. Because of the thesis I have been forced to follow the public debate on immigration issues in the last two years. Surprisingly during the last year I have been noticing that there are more women who are against the immigration or asylum as an institutional rights than men. Maybe this has to do with representativeness of women in different departments that has to do with shaping the politic in relation to immigration.

52. The important of class will be briefly discussed in the next section of the thesis (finale remarks).
created and maintained in a particular society. From such vantage point masculinity, or male identity, becomes what a given culture expects from its men. (Saco. D. 1992) If masculinity is to be conceived as a social construction, then it is appropriate to ask what role do the media play in formulating it? The central role that the media plays can be explained through its ability in providing the public with information regarding gender ideals. It plays an increasingly fundamental role in informing the public about how an ideal woman or man should appear and behave (Kimmel. M.S.1992). It is through media representations that individuals, men and women, become aware of the ideals and societies expectation. If we accept the above argument then what kind of image the immigrant or Muslim men are sitting with, when we consider the Norwegian media’s representation of them, compared to for example, Norwegian or British men? And in turn, how would such representation affect their masculinity or male identity (mannlighet). I would argue that the negative behavior that one experiences in interaction situation combined with the negative representation of immigrant or Muslim men by the media leads to a condition where, in the end, it will become difficult to practice a masculinity (mannlighet) that is stigmatized strongly in the public discourse.

In chapter one I pointed out that I intended to adapt the idea that identity is constructed dialogically in response to our relations, including our actual dialogue with others. Within such a perspective, the identity of an individual is shaped through his interaction with other individuals. The identity of an individual is identified and receives confirmation through his interaction with others. In other words, the identity of a person is constructed and maintained through the ways that other individuals express their perception of him/her (discourse). The perception of the others is expressed through their use of different metaphors. Høgmo (1998) argues that if we interpret G.H.Mead (1934) within such perspective, we can then declare that the individual’s self or identity is constructed in different symbolic processes where he or she, in interaction with the others, constructs a picture or a metaphor of himself. We can call these forms of interaction as discourses: the argumentative verbal interaction that takes place in an expressive level. These
expressive actions can take the forms of sign related interactions such as glance, body language or movements. Høgmo (ibid) argues that these actions or forms of behavior can affect the self-perception of an individual. What the others communicate to him can in the long run affect his understanding of who he is. It is within this perspective that we are able to understand the important role that the others play in the construction of identity.

All the statements, which have been represented in this chapter, points towards an increasing awareness among the male informants about the fact that it has become increasingly difficult for them to practice their masculine identity because of public stigma. The majority of male informants have discussed this issue explicitly during the fieldwork. Let me use one of the statements from the page 131-132 to illustrate the point:

“… in our interaction with Norwegians, we feel like we have to give positive impression of how we are all the time. It is to prove to them that we are different from the image that is propagated by the majority as our identity … this creates a situation for us that when what is normal for a Norwegian man to say, is put into a negative context when we say the same thing …”

It is at this level that the recognition of the others becomes an important issue in the construction of identity and thereby quality of life of an individual.
Final Remarks

The primary concern of this thesis has been with the life experience of first generation adult Iranian refugees in Norway. The focus group of the thesis has been characterized as adult refugees who came to Norway unaccompanied with any close family or friends. In general, the main focus was towards the changes in Norwegian immigration policy and the following consequences of such changes on the public debate related to issues concerning immigrants and refugees. Therefore the public sphere was also included as a central part of the discussions throughout the thesis. The underlying assumption was based on the idea that the majority of the Norwegian population have no regular contact with the members of minority groups and therefore they receive their information through the media. In other words, media representations of immigrants and refugees have been perceived as a significant factor that influence the process of integration of minority groups in host country.

In summary, this thesis describes the importance of three central developments in life quality of immigrants and refugees in host society. Firstly, the lack of an Iranian community. Secondly, a public sphere that is dominated by the negative representation of the minority groups, and thirdly, the impact of such representation on the cross sex relationship between the members of the minority and majority. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly discuss the importance of central issues in each chapter (summary) and then place the consequences of each of these features in relation to each other. I will start with the first chapter where I briefly represented Norwegian government’s integration policy and the changes that it underwent between 1970s and 1990s.

Summary of the essential issues in each chapter

In chapter 1, I have introduced the integration policies of Norwegian governments and the changes that it underwent during the last decade of the last century. One of the most important and noticeable changes in government’s policies, towards the integration of
immigrants and refugees, aimed in protecting the civil rights of the individual members of the minority groups in Norway. I have pointed out that during the 1970s, assimilation was considered as an option in addition to integration for immigrants. Throughout the 1980s, the policy of Norwegian government has changed and assimilation was no longer perceived as an alternative. The government decided that the culture of the minority groups should be protected from the forces of assimilation. But as pointed out, the political elites in Norway avoided any attempt in defining their vision of what integration means or would look like in its final form. Integration was defined in relation to what it was not, it was neither assimilation nor segregation. During the first half of 1990s the policy of protecting minority cultures was replaced by the one that aimed at protecting the civil rights of the individual members of the minority groups and their right in being perceived as individuals rather than just members of a larger ethnic or religious group. Those who were/are being protected, in the majority of the cases, are female members of an ethnic (refugees or immigrants) and religious groups. The public discourse, in its attempt to secure the civil rights of the female members of these groups, have for the most part represented the male members of the same groups (immigrant, refugee, Muslim) as those who are capable of violating the civil rights of the female section of their groups. This thesis aimed at arguing that the continuous generalized and negative representations of immigrant men have consequences on their daily life experience in host society. The effect of such negative representation can be discussed in relation to different aspects of the informant’s lives. But in order to limit the scope of the thesis I had to narrow the analysis of data to their experience with the members of the opposite sex. In other words the main focus of the thesis in the end was based on the informants cross-sex relationship with members of the majority group.

Second chapter started with a historical perspective of immigration of Iranians to western countries. I discussed the impact of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and Iran-Iraq war on the Iranian society. These two major events and their consequences are central to Iranians leaving their home country. In the second chapter, I also explained the social organization
and group formation of Iranian immigrants in Norway using variables that could be labeled as internal. I used ethnic and linguistic variation, political affiliation, and education as variables that can explain the social organization and stratification among Iranian immigrants in Norway. The aim of this chapter was to briefly inform the readers about the reasons behind Iranian refugees existence in Norway. I also described what section of Iranian society they belonged and thereby what kind of values they represent.

Chapter 3 was mainly concern with the notion of public sphere. I chose Habermas’s (1989) “the structural transformation of the public sphere” as the theoretical framework of the chapter. Habermas’s arguments are in many ways amenable to the contemporary social and political condition because of the important role that media and public relation companies can play in manipulating the public opinion and thereby justifying various actions. In chapter 3, I argued that different social, political and historical development can lead to different ways of organizing public sphere in different societies. A comparative perspective was applied by discussing the differences between the public sphere in Iran and Norway. I described that in Iran people receives their information through informal arenas and therefore face-to-face interaction are the primary source of information.

I chose parks (social green spaces) as a good example that could illustrate how the lack of a free public sphere in a society such as Iran can lead to a condition where people organize other type of public sphere besides the official one. At the same time, using examples such as parks helped us to show the existence of more than just one public sphere. The differences between public sphere in Iran and Norway were considered in relation to different ways that people react to the received information. In other words, people’s perception of institutions, where they received their information from, plays a significant role in these institutions ability to produce consent. I have argued that in Norway people, for the most part, receive their information through formal arenas/channels such as national or international media institutions. It was pointed out
that historically Norway has had a democratic social and political development. The political elites and those in power have been elected within the framework of a democratic process. Historically, the elected representatives and political elites did not exploit people’s trust for their own benefit. Neither did they use their power in suppressing their political rivals. It is this historical development that plays an important role in how people trust their government and the governed. In general, public in Norway perceive the information received through formal channels as trustworthy and are not critical because of their overwhelming reliance on the system. The manipulative aspect of media and public relation companies are no longer critically discussed within the framework of the public sphere and therefore people are not always wholly informed about different aspects of a given issue.

In the last part of the chapter 3, I represented a selected numbers of articles from *Aftenposten*. The articles were selected with the aim of representing three aspect of Media’s coverage of issues related to immigrants in Norway. Firstly, the tendency to represent immigrants as a homogenous and a problem group. Secondly, Norwegian media’s coverage of issues related to Islam and Muslims. In this section I have argued that the news related to Islam and Muslims could be divided in local and global coverage but that such division is not helpful as long as the local coverage of the issues related to Muslims and Islam reflects the same ideas that are being projected in global media. Thirdly, Norwegian media’s representation and coverage of news and issues related to Islamic Republic of Iran. Here I pointed out that Islamic Republic of Iran plays an important role in constructing the overall image that is being projected of Islam on both global and local level. The occupation of the American embassy in Teheran, the Salman Rushdie affair, and not without my daughter were used by this writer as examples that could show how an image of Iran and Iranians were being constructed by western and Norwegian media.
In chapter four I discussed the cross sex relationships of the focus group. In the first section, I represented the Islamic view on relationship between men and women as well as issues such as segregation of the sexes and importance of marriage in Iranian society. The discussion in this part of the chapter aimed at showing that sections of minority population do not share the boy/girlfriend culture that members of the majority group have. I argued that regular contact between the members of the two groups is lacking and needed for the development of the necessary knowledge to share the majority culture. Further, I argued that the media representation of refugees and immigrants is gendered because it tends to place the Muslim men and women in opposite poles. Generally speaking, it was argued that media projects an image of Muslim men as a homogenous group whose behavior can only be understood in reference to their culture. The argument that is frequently used in the media is based on the idea that Muslim men do things because their culture tells them so. Such representations of immigrants or Muslims have been argued as to be essentialist in its nature.

The rest of chapter four was dedicated to the impact of such gendered representation, on the life experience of female and male members of focus group. I chose schema theory to show that, as human beings, we need a referential framework (information) to generate meaning about other individuals or issues of interest. A schema was defined as conceptual structure that makes the identification of objects and events easier. To say something is a “schema” is a shorthand way of saying that a distinct and strongly interconnected pattern of interpretive elements can be activated by minimal inputs. In other words, a schema is an interpretation that is frequent, well organized, memorable, which can be made from minimal cues. It contains one or more prototypic instantiations and is resistant to change. Schemas play an important role when the members of the minority and majority groups have to rely on second hand information about each other. It is at this point that media representation of immigrants and refugees (public discourse) plays an increasingly central role in providing information that generates meaning about individuals that one has no personal relationship with. The importance of gender
representation of immigrants and refugees by Norwegian media should be understood within the framework of this context as well.

My data shows that female Iranians generally have had a relatively positive experience in their interaction with Norwegian men. This positive experience in the long run leads towards a more optimistic perception of their future life opportunities in host society. Generally speaking, they received recognition and help that exceeded their expectation. In contrast to my female informants, my male informants felt that they were represented in the Norwegian media as individuals who are influenced by tradition and culture, one that is in sharp contrast to important values that members of the majority, i.e. Norwegian women, desired. Media represents immigrant (Muslim) men as individuals who bear traditional and cultural values that is in contrast to criterions that Norwegian women appreciate in their choices of future partners (standards of attractiveness). My data points towards a development where the female section of the majority group do no longer perceive the male informants as probable future partner.

In the last section of chapter 4, I have argued for the existence of a gender asymmetry between the male members of minority and majority groups. The first generation Iranian women show an increasing interest towards the male section of the majority group. Their experience showed that the Norwegian men’s response towards them was in accordance to their expectation. Further-more it was argued that the male informants in their interaction with female section of majority group experience lack of interest or rejection, when their counter part gain information about their country of origin.Origin and gender have been argued as two central criteria that are often combined together and then implemented in interaction situation. The importance of origin has been further discussed in reference to Høgmo’s (1998) use of Goffman’s (1969) theory regarding human communication. The importance of Høgmo’s (1998) argument was argued to rests upon his ability to show that communicating contempt is as equally important part of human communication (expressive action) as communication of respect. Further, I discussed that
emphasis on country of origin in an interaction situation, could be interpreted as communication of contempt. Such interpretation was argued to be based upon the Norwegian media’s representation of immigrants, refugees and Muslims. It was pointed out that words like immigrant, refugee and Muslim have become symbols that stands for something that have gained an increasingly negative content. It is the negative connotation of these terms that makes the interpretation also negative. Such vantage point can help us understand the important role that negative public discourse can play in interaction situation. At the same time such approach shows that the negative public discourse can be interpreted by members of minority groups as how the majority group is responding to them (on a macro level). As long as the public sphere is dominated by negative voices that constantly criticize more or less every aspect of immigrants and refugees lives, tradition or culture, it will give the members of minority groups reasons to believe that this is representative for all members of the majority groups. There is clearly a significant section of the majority group who do not share the medias opinion and representations of immigrants and Muslims but on the whole, this section of majority groups are silent. The silent of members of majority groups who do not approve the media representation (public discourse), gives the members of the minority groups reason to believe that they too also approve such negative representations.

**Connecting the core issues of each chapters**

I have pointed out, in chapter two, that the majority of informants belong to the secular sections of Iranian society and therefore represent values that are different to those of the official public sphere in Iran. This contrast is important because the global media, including the Norwegian media, have a tendency to project the values represented by the official public sphere in Iran as representative for all Iranians. Unfortunately, Iran is represented as a homogenous country with a homogenous culture. These images have important consequences on the life experience of Iranian immigrants and refugees who are living in countries with limited relationship and therefore information about Iran and Iranians. The consequences of such representation can be understood by reference to the
overwhelming trust that Norwegian show to the system. As pointed out previously, people in Norway trust their politically elected representatives. Therefore many Norwegians believe that those in power in Iran also represent all Iranians. The same trend can be seen in relation to the US, especially after the election of George Bush as the new president. Norwegian media’s representation tends to show that the current American administration and the values that it represents are representative for all Americans. The heterogeneity of a population of more than 250 millions is almost forgotten. However, the contrast in values between Iranian immigrants and official Iran, can be observed in, for example, the dress code of female section of the focus group as well as male informants perception of women liberation and equality between the sexes. None of the female informants wore the Islamic dress code, the veil, while I was conducting the fieldwork. Their style of dressing was similar to the female section of the majority group. Many of them were comfortable consuming alcohol and behave in a way that is not commonly attributed to practicing Muslims. The male informants represented a relatively western oriented view on equality between the sexes. They were uniformly against female circumcision and forced marriages and discussed these issues frequently.

In chapter 3, I pointed out that one of the most problematic aspects of Norwegian media’s representation of minorities has to do with their generalization. I have shown that Immigrants and refugees are represented as a homogenous group who share the same culture and values. One of the problems with such generalized representation is that it also includes sections of minority groups who do not share the values of the ones that is being represented. This is true when we consider the life experience of the focus group in this thesis. It is important to take into consideration that the focus group of this thesis are included in media representations on two different levels. On the one hand, they are included within the media’s generalized representation of Islamic Republic of Iran. On the other hand, because of their status as immigrants and refugees they are also included in the generalized image that Norwegian media projects of these groups. Being included within such generalized categories indicates that one is also forced into a position and
given identity(s) that one does not identify with. It was the aim of this thesis to show that this discursive positioning of immigrants is perceived as the most difficult and problematic issue by the members of minority groups; i.e. Iranian refugees in Norway. The challenges that such condition represents are increased when in interaction situation one experiences that he is being rejected because of the values that one does not have. My informants face a challenge of coming to terms with frequent experiences of rejection because of values that they have been painted to have but values that they infact do not subscribe to. The individual is, again, being positioned and given identities that he does not identify with. In other words, members of the focus group, especially male informants, feel that they continuously have to explain who they are and what values they stand for, values that are starkly different to the image that is projected by the Norwegian media.

This increasingly negative life experience plays an important role in influencing the life quality of minority groups in host society. Being forced into a position where one must chose a defensive position (to defend his culture, religion, and values) all the time is experienced increasingly negative in accordance to the numbers of the years that one has lived in a given society. Such condition could be experienced less problematic during the first years of the settlements because one could argue that it might change in the future. But after fifteen years one have come to the conclusion that the situation have developed to the worth rather than changing for the better. Such condition plays an important role in the development of an increasingly negative perception of one’s future life opportunities in host society.

The increasing attention and generalized coverage of negative aspects of immigrant’s culture and tradition have additional consequence, one being the effect on formation of supportive Iranian community. Previously, I have mentioned processes, by using internal variables, that have prevented formation of an Iranian community. An external force that is an obstacle in formation of a supportive Iranian community is the Norwegian public
discourse regarding different aspects of minority cultures and traditions. Negative and critical representation is for the most part directed towards the minority groups that show a strong group identity. This negative discourse is interpreted as an invitation (majority group inviting minorities) to adapt a different behavior that demands changes in relation to the group mentality. Minority groups, in this case Iranian immigrants, believe that members of the majority group are demanding a different behavior compared to the one that they are criticizing. The focus group of this thesis saw the criterias that were circulated in public discourse, as their key in succeeding in the project of becoming fully integrated in the Norwegian society. By following these criterias they thought they were doing what majority group expected from them. They studied, learned the language and incorporated parts of Norwegian culture and values in their lives (acculturated). Despite doing all the right (emic) things, they found it difficult to be accepted as an equal member of the Norwegian society.

The extent of disappointment of first generation male informants can be understood if we consider the amount of energy and efforts that they invested in becoming a part of the host society. The class orientation of the informants can be placed at this framework as well. Higher education and language proficiency provided them with professional carrier opportunities. Their economic and social position (emic) has placed them in a class position; i.e. they identify with a social class that is higher than other immigrants and refugees with low or no education. The majority of the informants identified with the middle class Norwegians but their negative experiences have shown them that they are not perceived as members of that class. The choice of future partners should also be studied within the framework of this perceived class orientation. It seemed natural to show interest (chose) in someone with a relative equal level of education and carrier opportunity. The combination of the amount of effort that one has invested together with class orientation makes rejection in interaction situation to be felt stronger. The more they invested in becoming integrated, the stronger they experienced the failures.
My informants belonged to the secular section of Iranian society. Both my male and female informants had a positive view of Norwegian men and women. This shows an apparent dissimilarity between Iranian immigrants and a number of other minority groups, such as those from Pakistan. The immigrants from Pakistan are one of the oldest minority groups in Norway, but the numbers of Pakistanis married with Norwegians are very few (Storhaug.2003). The same argument can be made in relation to Tamil immigrants and refugees in Norway (Fuglerud.1999). The issue of marriage among Pakistani immigrants in Norway is discussed in relation to their culture and tradition. The focus of discussion is based on the idea that those from Pakistan are only interested to choose a spouse among their close or distance relatives. The underlying assumption is based on the idea that they do not desire Norwegian women as future romantic partners. It would be interesting to find out if Pakistani men find being rejected by Norwegian women as less of a bad experience because Pakistani men are not (apparently) interested in Norwegian women. However, what makes the different perception among different minority groups towards the Norwegian men and women as future partners relevant to the present discussion is its ability in playing an important role in how the individual member of the minority group (Iranians) experience rejection in an interaction situation.

A second factor that makes the experience of Muslim Iranian immigrants different to that of Muslim Pakistani immigrants is supportive communities. The existence of strong Pakistani communities and geographical settlements in Oslo are well documented. The existence of their community provides them with a supportive network. The community, besides providing them with help in time of need, supplies them with other options as well. Through their participation in the community and organized events, they are able to meet female members of their ethnic group. When we consider these features then we can understand the important role that community can play in a host society where members of minority groups face increasing problem in their integration into the host society. For the focus group of this thesis the lack of community becomes an important issue because of their failure in integrating into the Norwegian society. They feel that they have
nowhere to turn to in the time of crisis, or when they experience exclusion and isolation. My informants believed that an Iranian community could help them to manage their daily life experience in a host society where they are excluded from many of its arenas. Further more, lack of an Iranian community was a particular issue because of their status as single adult refugees who came to Norway with no family or close relatives.

Moreover, the lack of the community of Iranian is more relevant to the life condition of male section of focus group than to the female section. The differences are somehow related to the policies of Norwegian governments. Norwegian government in its effort to protect the civil rights of female section of minority groups, have built special institutions that are responsible for the well being of those women who face serious difficulties. These institutions, in the most part, are gender specific because they are responsible to protect the women section of minority groups when they face physical or emotional threat by their husbands or other male members. The majority of urban areas in Norway have crises centers that are responsible to protect women when they face serious crisis in their lives. But for the male section of the focus group, there are no public or private apparatus that can help them when they face serious difficulties. The lack of such apparatus plays a more significant role when members of a given minority group have no community that they can rely on.

The consequences of the lack of an Iranian community together with the external pressure such as negative media representation play a further significant role for the refugees compared to other immigrant groups. What makes the refugees more vulnerable than the other minority groups is their status as individuals who live in “exile”. The majority of the informants in this thesis did not have the option of visiting their home country. This is an important feature relevant to the present discussion in two ways. One, their inability to go back to Iran indicates that they are not able to look for a suitable partner elsewhere. In the first part of the chapter 4, I described the importance of marriage as the “rites of passage” to the adulthood. Clearly this is a compounding factor
for the first generation adult Iranian immigrants in Norway. Their upbringing in Iran aimed in preparing them for an adulthood that could only be accomplished through the institution of marriage. Secondly, living in exile is a painful experience in itself. Exile, is unavoidably tied to the homeland and the possibility of return (Naficy. 1999). Living in exile can be experienced like living in liminal condition. Esmail Khoi the Iranian poet, who now lives in England, in the following passages written in English, graphically sums up the internal dynamics of the type of emotional pressure produced by the liminal state of in-betweenness:

“The refugee is, and will remain HOMELESS in this sense. For him or her, everything is, and is to remain, unsettled. This is her/his predicament. The time is ALWAYS the time being, and HOME is dreamland in the far far away. Un-wanting to be in the host society and unable to go back home. Un-welcome here and un-wanted there … An outsider here, an outcast there. Physically here, mentally there. Not a split personality, but a split person. The refugee is, and is to remain, the typical example of what I call “People In Between” (Khoi. 1987. In Naficy. 1995. Pp: 86).

The above statement shows the important role that the notion of ‘home’ plays in constructing the sense of belonging to a place or a society for those living in exile. A place where he/she feels at home and thereby is able to start a new life and further create social ties with the majority group(s). It is here at this juncture that the recognition plays its decisive role. For refugees, the painful experience of leaving home can only be reduced by his/her ability in establishing a sense of social belonging in the host society. And such project cannot be accomplished by his/herself in isolation. It needs the participation and good willing of the members of the majority groups. One needs to be recognized in many levels and in different ways. This recognition goes beyond the written laws and protection that citizenship provides the immigrants with. One needs to be recognized as someone that has something positive to contribute to the host society and hence feel recognized. It is this recognition that lays the foundation for “self-respect”, “self-confidence” and “self-esteem”. Recognition in its both forms (positive and negative) has a moral and psychological weight that has an enormous meaning for self-
respect and dis-respect. Self-respect cannot be developed without experiencing recognition from others. Self-respect is dependent on “the other”. Recognition is something that the subject should experience by being recognised by the others. As such, recognition requires two sides or mutual relationship.


I find the second sentence in the above statement as the one that includes a number of issues that have been discussed in this thesis: “Kamp for overlevelse er naturens kamp; kamp for anerkjennelse er den sosiale dimensjonens kamp”. The represented data and the following analysis in this thesis showed that members of the focus group, especially the male informants, experience lack of recognition on many different but interrelated levels. However, one of the single most important issues of concern is the ever-growing role that the public representations of minorities play on the daily life experience of the individual members of these groups. In my view an essential problem has to do with the target audience. Media institutions, political elites and experts who are given opportunity to express their opinions on different issues related to negative aspects of minority groups seems to have forgotten one important issue, namely who the target group of their discussions are? Are they aiming to reach those immigrants whose attitudes or tradition is being criticised? I strongly believe that one cannot influence the behaviour of those sections of minority groups that are being criticised through public discourse. Those sections of minority groups, who force their daughters into marriages, keep their wives at home and circumcise their daughters are most likely not taking part in TV and newspaper debates. The question remains, what such public discussions can achieve in the long run?
It seems to me that the media coverage of the issues related to minority groups, for the most part, considers members of the majority groups as their prime target. This is important because the representation in the end seems to reassure the members of the majority groups about their reservation towards the minorities. In other words, it creates an atmosphere were members of the majority group can sit on their couches and confirm their stereotypes. In the end one sits with the feeling that the problem with integration of minority groups in host society is related to their culture and tradition. They are the problem because they are refusing to become like “us”.

In this thesis I have attempted to show that negative media discourse have, for the most part, consequences on the life quality of those immigrants who are doing their best to become integrated into the host society. The presented data indicates that the negative public discourse have a profound consequence on the life quality of highly educated and intelligent sections of minority groups who do not identify with the images that media is constructing of them. The constant negative representation of minority groups is emotionally exhausting for these individuals. It is this emotional exhaustion that in the end forces the male section of the focus group to express a desire to move to another country where they believe they might have a more positive life experience. During the last three years, since I started conducting my fieldwork I became familiar with many Iranians (including 3 of my informants) who have left Norway for another country. The remaining informants, all continue to express disappointment and a desire to leave. Their dissatisfaction is mostly related to the social condition rather than the material standards. As the result, the majority of male informants have stopped watching Norwegian TV programs including talk shows that discuss issues related to immigrants and refugees. They neither buy nor read Norwegian Newspapers. I find this trend to be very worrying for future integration of minority groups into the host society.

I started this thesis by an episode that I felt to have had important consequence on my perception of informant’s life experience. I end the thesis by a statement made by one of
the male informants that is representative for many issues that have been discussed in this thesis. This conversation took place when I asked him about “what is meant by integration of immigrants in Norway, and if there are any differences between Norwegian governments and people’s point of view on the subject? He answered:

“I don’t think there is much difference between the Norwegian government and the majority of the Norwegian when it comes to the question of the integration of foreigners. In-spite of the few and far in between of the Norwegian governments attempt to put foreigners at work in private and public sector, the idea of integration among Norwegians and their government is basically the same. I could describe it in one word as “PATRONIZING”. Integration is perceived as washing the hall way in your apartment, joining the 17th of May parade, if you are a woman, to be able to drink at bars and have as little cloth as possible, of course speak Norwegian, being totally remote from your culture and blindly consider the Norwegian way of life as the superior one. Although most Norwegian claim to support the idea of integration of the foreigners, in reality this idea means that they want our kind of foreigner to be as invisible as possible. Their supports for the integration does not mean that they prefer us or even want us as neighbors or sons in law. What they mean is that we have to turn into little harmless semi-Norwegians and be as far away from them as possible.”
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