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## Dina Torkia's *Modestly*: Beauty Work, Autobiographical Habitus, and the Modest Fashion Influencer

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~~Keywords: habitus, hijab, autobiography, Islam, remediation, influencer, cultural hybridity, intersectionality~~

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### ~~Abstract~~

~~The article examines the Islamic fashion Vlogger Dina Torkia's book *Modestly* in terms of the ways in which it combines beauty and fashion advice and tutorials relating to modest fashion, hijab styling and cosmetics application. Through a CDA-based textual analysis of the book's narrative and its many beauty and fashion-based images, the article stresses the ways in which, having gained renown as a social media-based influencer and Vlogger, Torkia's book represents a remediated approach to communication practices of beauty and style advice. Hence, in a printed book form, *Modestly* consistently combines instruction with autobiographical content. In this regard, the article explores the differing ways that *Modestly* articulates expressions of Bourdieu's concept of habitus in the context of modest Islamic fashion. This is explored in terms of the nature of the beauty and fashion instruction that is the main focus of the book, but also in how the autobiographical aspects of the text articulate Torkia's own self-reflective expressions and experiences of cultural and sartorial habitus in relation to a Muslim lifestyle, modest dress and beauty conventions, and self-reflective (and changing) perceptions and articulations of cultural hybridity and intersectional identity.~~

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### ~~Introduction~~

~~This article explores the contemporary representation of Islamic modest fashion through the case study of the prominent British-Egyptian Muslim Vlogger, and fashion and beauty influencer, Dina Torkia. Starting her fashion blogging career as Dina Tokio in 2011, as one of a group of increasingly prominent "hijabi bloggers" (Cochrane 2015), Torkia has developed into one of the most significant and influential Muslim fashion voices across a number of digital platforms such as YouTube and~~

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Instagram. In this article, I examine her autobiographically-infused style guide book, *Modestly*, published in 2018. While, as Reina Lewis and Emma Tarlo (2011) stress, modest styles of dress are evident in the religious practices of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, the thematic approach of this article draws upon distinctive sets of literature centring upon Islamic modest fashion. I critically focus on discourses based on the nature of autobiography, reflexive cultural hybridity and the role of the fashion influencer in relation to religiously-based fashion work.

Revisiting discussions of the fashion blogger - especially that of Agnès Rocamora's (2012) approach to the remediation of fashion media discourses, I demonstrate how Torkia's distinctive literary approach involves the transfer of characteristics from one medium (Vblogging) to another (an autobiographical book). In *Modestly*, she fuses candid personal life insights with instructional guides to hijab styles and related beauty regimes that are now conventionally presented on digital platforms. The autobiographical format of Torkia's book gives a personalised life-history foundation to the instructional components of the text, which cover in detail areas such as hijab styling, seasonal dressing and, most significantly, the ways in which hijabs can be combined with western apparel to create distinctive fashionable looks. Furthermore, the article also considers the differing approaches that Torkia expresses to the wearing of the hijab, especially in light of her decision, following the publication of *Modestly*, to no longer wear a hijab on a daily basis, an action that resulted in online criticism.

*Modestly* is an autobiographical fashion narrative of a young British Muslim woman who uses the personalized material and numerous photographic images to serve as instructional style advice with Torkia acting as a personal and visual role model. Drawing on the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, I explore how Torkia articulates her approaches to hijab styling, modest fashion wear and cosmetic beauty regimes and techniques. Through its re-mediatized and hybrid form, with its tone and expression central to Torkia's blogs and Vlogs, but in a traditional published print-media book format, *Modestly* synthesizes autobiography, style guidance and cultural commentary in a manner that communicates and reinforces Muslim beauty expectations in ways that reflect central aspects of habitus that represents a 'system of dispositions acquired by implicit or explicit learning' (Almila 2020: 15). Moreover, Torkia's book also serves to reflect upon her own personal relationship with modest fashion, her own distinctive cross-cultural habitus, but also clearly and visually offers wider guidance for readers to engage with her beauty and fashion-based modest style habitus. However, with consideration to her changing behaviour to the hijab post-publication of the book, the article further explores the ways in which Torkia illustrates the ways in which a sense of habitus can undergo processes of transformation and change.

By critically analysing the text, words, language and tone, and, importantly, the images contained in Torkia's book, I pay attention to the ways in which all of these forms of discourse tap into wider social practices such as power and the gendered and socially visible nature of hijab, as well as the author's personal self-reflection and self-awareness. This method is consistent with the basic tenets of a critical discourse analytic (CDA) approach (Mullet, 2018; Rogers et al, 2005). As Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak (2007) stress, a CDA approach is a potent means by which to critically explore the connections between texts and social actions, such as the expression and exercise of habitus. Because Torkia's book re-mediatizes her blogs and Vlogs in book form, I begin with a discussion of digital fashion communication.

### **Digital fashion communication**

While print media constituted the dominant form of fashion communication for decades, habitually in the form of professional and iconic fashion magazines (*Vogue*, *Elle*, *Harper's Bazaar*, etc.), a key trend of the first decade of the twenty-first century has been the rise of alternative individually-focused digital fashion platforms, including the fashion blogger. As Monica Tilton states, the rise of the digital fashion blogger has been 'meteoric' since 2007, as social media and blogging platforms use increased, and their distinctiveness is that, in establishing themselves as 'fashionable personae', they 'document how dress is converted into fashion by taking pictures of themselves wearing particular outfits, by writing about their wardrobe choices, and by publishing these stories on their blogs' (2015: 203). Key elements concerning the nature of fashion blogs and bloggers range from their status as 'self-appointed arbiters of style' (Luvaas 2013: 58), to the ways in which the individualized insights and, most importantly, the personal fashion-based experiences expressed to readers and viewers of the digital content (Dejmanee 2018). This activity emerged from the blogosphere culture of the mid-1990s, aligning its 'mix of personality and attitude' with 'communicative technologies, interactivity, community-building, and genuine conversation' (Burstein 2005: xxi) and status as technological socially-received platforms that could give individuals both new ways to express a sense of self, but also to share online aspects of autobiography (Hayton 2009). In this context, fashion bloggers, especially from 2008 onwards, actively wrote about fashion trends, but also meticulously, and continuously, documented their personal fashion style, with some bloggers working with established fashion brands, thus establishing 'a professional platform as an authority on style' (Findlay 2015: 170). The fashion communication mediascape has involved the emergence of digitally-based 'fashion authorities' such as Susie Lu, Zoe Sugg, Alexa Chung, Gabi Gregg, Wendy Nguyen, Kavita Donkersley,

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Danielle Bernstein, Bryanboy, Leandra Medine, Shini Park, Aimee Song, Chiara Ferragni and Alissa Wilson. They have become prominent and influential fashion voices and mediators of style and trends, for both followers and the fashion industry.

In her analysis of the development and content of online fashion blogs, Agnès Rocamora argues that a major factor central to the fashion blog was that it represented a new technology of the self. This is so because, while built upon the communication of fashion, bloggers also present key aspects of their own senses of identity for their communities of readers and viewers. As Rocamora states:

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[The] self bloggers display on their pages is not a visual self only, but one whose external rendering is intertwined with autobiographical details. Indeed, following a personal fashion blog means not only discovering the sartorial style of its author, but also regularly finding out a bit more information about her life, the moments and events that punctuate it. Personal stories are narrated supporting the practice of fashion as a technique of the self. (2011: 412)

Fashion blogs, therefore, represent a distinctive part of a wider process of digital mediatization within the fashion industry, whereby social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram) have transformed interactions with fashion commentary, fashion shows and fashion retail (Rocamora 2017). In this context, mediatization's major impact has been a process of 'remediation' within fashion discourses, especially in relation to the progressive replacement of print with digital online content. Hence:

Bloggers, for instance, regularly borrow visuals taken from the printed press to illustrate a post when they're not directly writing about and celebrating the visual in question... Fashion blogs also remediate print magazines by way of some of the poses personal fashion bloggers adopt when putting themselves into the frame of the computer screen, poses that evoke those of models in glossies. (Rocamora 2012: 101)

The primacy of the visual is a crucial element with regard to the evolution of blogs, to the extent that the terms 'fashion blogger' is now arguably something of an anachronism, and that the blogger is now more commonly termed a social media influencer. In this sense, the influencer is the individual whose sense of product knowledge and strength of self-presentation can appeal to site subscribers and professional companies (Djarfarova and Trofimenko 2019). Influencers are especially effective on platforms that are primarily visual and based upon photographs and video content, such as

YouTube and Instagram, with its capacity to act as a ‘gigantic database of images, videos, captions, [and] comments’ (Leaver, Highfield and Abidin 2020: 8). Accordingly, fashion influencers have engaged in a process of mediatizing by establishing strong online identities based upon self-branding strategies that present their followers with visual fashion-based narratives that are ‘inspirational, relatable, instructive’ (Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017: 196). Therefore, traditional fashion bloggers have segued into social media-based ‘micro-celebrities’ or digital personae who ‘make a living from being celebrities native to and on the internet’ (Abidin 2018: 1). However, the issues central to the content created by various fashion-communicating digital micro-celebrities does, via its personalized nature, enable influencers to address an array of specific fashion issues, including culture and religion. This is the focus that I now address through specific fashion guidance, education and distinctive mediatization processes.

#### **Islamic fashion media and modest style influencers**

With regard to fashion media and Islam, Feyda Sayan-Cengiz cites Islamic fashion and lifestyle magazines such as Turkey’s *Âlâ* as representative of media that articulate the interaction of consumerism with the Islamic way of life. In terms of content and style, these magazines represented a sense of identity for Muslim women in a global context while working ‘to reconcile piety, modesty, and beauty’ (2018: 166). *Âlâ* was part of a wider Muslim-based fashion lifestyle magazine culture, including periodicals such as: *MSLM Fashion Magazine*, *Bidoun*, *Alef*, *Muslim Girl*, *Emel*, *Azizah*, and *Sisters* (Lewis 2015). As Annelies Moors (2013) argues, throughout the twentieth century European fashion had come to be progressively prevalent within many Muslim majority countries. However, the expansion of the Islamic revivalist movement, beginning in the 1970s, encouraged women to increasingly adopt the practice of al-haya’ – modesty (Mahmood 2011). As Moors states:

Initially, this meant a move towards a uniform and sober style, such as uniform full-length, wide coats in muted colours, that many hoped would do away with the sartorial distinction between the wealthy and the poor...In the course of one to two decades, however, more fashionable styles started to replace these austere and purposely non-fashionable forms of Islamic attire. By the 1990s the Islamic revival movement had become more heterogenous and had shifted from an anti-consumerist radical movement to a more individualised reformist trend with identities increasingly produced through consumption. (2013: 19)

In Lewis’s (2015) view, these developments produced distinctive new styles of modest fashion for Muslim women, with the Internet servicing this growth in two distinctive ways. On the one hand, the

growth and expansion of a modest fashion-based e-commerce and e-retail sector offered a wider range of modest fashions for consumption in the form of cyber-Islamic commerce (Tarlo 2010a). On the other hand, the establishment of modest fashion-focused bloggers have served to act as style mediators to Muslim women. Bloggers, therefore, have served a crucial function as wearing modest, or, as Elizabeth Bucar argues, pious clothing and styles, captures a number of precise ethical and religious dimensions, hence:

Wearing pious fashion properly requires gleaning advice from others. There is no centralized rulebook of proper modest dress. Women learn from peers and various experts what successful pious fashion consists of...community and social institutions help women reflect on their own style of pious fashion. As a woman begins to dress modestly, the sartorial practices of those around her act as a mirror within which she gauges her own success. (2017: 17)

As Lewis argues, the Muslim online ‘fashionistas embraced the blog just as did their ‘secular’ counterparts, with the development of the modest blogosphere’ (2013: 50) to provide a number of peers to meet this need. In this way, as Lewis (2015) contends, the end of the 2000s saw the early development of modest blogging, such as Jana Kossaibati’s *Hijab Style* and Hana Tajima-Simpson’s *StyleCovered.com* and the establishment of modest fashion designers such as Sarah Elenany, Barjis Chohan and Eva Kurshid. In this context, Elif Kavakci and Camille Kraeplin refer to the establishment of a distinctive ‘Islamic culture industry’, part of which is the rise of fashion bloggers dubbed ‘modest fashionistas’, or ‘hajibistas’: Muslim women who dress stylishly while ‘still adhering to an array of “modest” apparel that coincides with Islamic dress code’ (2018: 852). While such fashion bloggers will advise on an array of modest fashion styles and garments, the hijab, the religious scarf that covers a woman’s head, hair and neck (Van Roogen 2012) is a particular focus for blogger or influencer coverage, and there are a number of further prominent bloggers who are key Islamic fashion and hijabi style social media influencers, such as Ascia Akf, Amena, The Muslim Girl, Haute Hijab, Leena Asad, Aishah Amin, Yasemin Kanar, Sahar Foad and Dina Torkia. With regard to the London-based, Egyptian-British Dina Torkia, Kavakci and Kraeplin argue that, with almost a million followers, she has combined her social media presence with her aligned status as a hijab designer to effectively and successfully monetize her online activities across a number of social media platforms, thereby mastering ‘the dynamics of the attention economy’ (2018: 861).

With reference to Islamic fashion within a British context, Tarlo examines the ways in which such consumption expresses a distinctive quality of Islamic cosmopolitanism. Significantly, this is an ethos that stands in stark opposition to social and cultural assumptions that Islam is a profoundly inward-looking religion, which inevitably influences the clothing styles and fashions that are available. Yet, as Tarlo stresses:

Cosmopolitanism...evokes an entirely different set of associations. It is linked to ideas of hybridity, pluralistic dialogue, and openness to the worlds of others. It is associated with progressive thinking and a willingness to cross borders and challenge various forms of petty parochialism (2007: 145).

Given her status as a 'popular figure among fashion-conscious hijab wearers' via her online style and make-up tutorials (Lewis and Hamid 2018: 207), Dina Torkia actively reflects and communicates this sense of cosmopolitanism, in terms of the fusion of Islamic and Western sartorial styles. Furthermore, a key element of her popularity is based, argue Kavakci and Kraeplin, on the ways in which she combines her professional fashion-focused communication with personalised content, such as the coverage of her wedding to Sid Kaan, the news of her pregnancies, and their lives with their two children. However, while she has an extensive online portfolio of content, Dina Torkia combined her approach to Islamic beauty work and fashion styling with personalised and autobiographical insights within her book, *Modestly* (2018). In this text, she deepens the importance of hijab and modest fashions, offers style advice and guidance in a remediation form from digital to print and reflectively considers issues of cultural hybridity in addition to addressing the distinctive challenges of being 'visibly Muslim' via clothing has for women within Western societies while also presenting and revealing a multifaceted approach to the concept of habitus.

### **Communicating beauty and revealing habitus: *Modestly* as a hybrid media text**

In examining the development of fashion blogs and visual strategies, fashion blogs have been defined as representing the 'remediation of print' (Rocamora 2012: 101). Rocamora stresses that bloggers effectively replaced the medium of print with that of digital communication; moreover, many 'use digital screens as mirrors onto which they monitor and project themselves whilst projecting their image to their audience' (2017: 515). This was the approach of Dina Torkia, who established herself as a Vlogger with the broadcast of her first style tutorial on YouTube in December 2011, and produced hundreds of videos on her channel with a distinctive modest fashion, style and beauty guidance. She



also posted updates on shopping 'hauls', branded product tests, cosmetics tutorials, in addition to personal insights relating to her family. As such, with almost a decade of posting experience, and with hundreds of thousands of followers, Torkia released her remediated text: *Modestly*, published in 2018 and representing a print book that captured many of the aspects of her Vlogging career and life, but with distinctive autobiographical and reflexive content and commentary. The personal and autobiographical approach is clearly manifest in the first section of the book, entitled 'My Journey', and begins with discussing her bi-cultural Egyptian/British background. She details an account of her birth, in 1989, in Cairo to an Egyptian father and English mother, and describes her early years moving between the two countries until permanently settling in London, when Torkia was six years old. The primacy of selfhood and self-representation within the genre of autobiography (Anderson 2001), with its stress upon the narrative as the story of the self (Gilmore 1994) and as the meeting of writing and selfhood (Benstock 1998), becomes a dominant theme in 'My Journey'. This autobiographical style continues in the first part of the book, as Torkia recounts her teenage experiences with eating disorders, bullying experiences at school, a period of anxiety-induced hair pulling habit that resulted in partial hair loss and her drift into higher education without any definitive career goals. Such issues are counter-balanced with her revelations of her meeting Sid Kaan, their growing relationship and eventual marriage.

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These aspects of the book reflect personalized recollections that are distinctively autobiographical, but which, with respect to her influencer microcelebrity status, also represent an example of what Sean Redmond dubbed the 'celebrity confessional', whereby individuals with some form of popular renown 'speak openly and honestly about where they have come from..[with]...reference to their humble beginnings...troubles, hardships' (2010: 2). This sense of intimate revelation is further underscored by the informal, often conversational tone and language that is present within the narrative, suggesting a remediated form of her Vlogs into the medium of print. The key autobiographical elements of her autobiographical accounts and her developing sense of selfhood is related to her adoption of the hijab at the age of eleven. As she recalls:

My first day of wearing the hijab or headscarf was also the first day back at school after the summer holidays...I wasn't scared about wearing a hijab. To me, it wasn't such a big deal. I was always taught that you wear the hijab when you get your period, so it was a natural progression and an accepted part of my life. (2018: 20)

Discussing the hijab, Tarlo (2010) stresses that while a key strength of the garment is that it enables the wider world to perceive a Muslim woman specifically as a Muslim women, and not in terms of a

sexual object, the garment can result in a women being seen as nothing beyond religion, and so there is a risk of a reduced sense of self. This conception of women, via clothing, being constantly ‘visibly Muslim’ and that the hijab ‘is one of the most visible symbols of Muslim identity’ (Zakaria 2017: 108) is a factor that Torkia directly addresses with regard to the distinctive challenges that modest fashion can bring for women. As she states:

It’s not often that we get acknowledged for our daily struggles. I’d dare any of the men in our families and communities to walk a day in our shoes...If there are any men reading this, I say this: a little appreciation can go a long way. It’s the Muslim women in hijab who largely end up taking the brunt of Islamophobia in our day-to-day lives. It is women in hijab struggling to fit in at work, at school, who are being told we shouldn’t do this or that because we wear it. (Torkia 2018: 21)

From her own perspective, therefore, an early message of *Modestly* is one in which the hijab becomes a reinforcement of identity, especially in the context of intersecting cultural identities. In Tarlo’s analysis, mastering the hijab with regard to differing ways of tying it, or combining it with differing fashion styles can enable a Muslim women to integrate ‘her pre-hijab past with her hijab present [and learn] to unite, or literally “tie up” different multifaceted strands of identity and belonging’ (2010: 76). This is a factor that is central to how Torkia presents her own approach to Muslim-based modest fashion, and with regard to her style advice for viewers/readers. In a significant passage in the book, she clearly sets out her own personal relationship and employment of Islamic modest fashion:

A person’s own understanding of the religious guidelines on wearing the hijab influences the style that is adopted. The styles we wear are heavily influenced by our culture and surroundings. My way of dressing modestly is definitely reflective of the British Muslim experience. It’s all about perspective. I believe clothing from any culture can be worn within the religious requirement of modest dressing, it’s simply about how you wear clothes. (2018: 27-28)

How modest clothing is worn becomes the dominant focus of two extensive chapters: ‘Fashion’ and ‘Beauty’, in which the tone moves away from the overtly autobiographical or ‘confessional’, to one based upon direct and clear modest style guidance. In this context, these chapters reflect what Elizabeth Wissinger refers to as the process and exercise of ‘glamour labor’, the fashion-based ‘work’ that surrounds many aspects of an individual’s image in terms of the ‘self-fashioning’ of physical

presentation (2015: 3). Accordingly, in *Modestly*, Torkia presents a print version of her online style tutorials, reinforced with numerous glossy colour images, using her own image and beauty regimes as visual models for readers to emulate and so manage their fashion image and appearance. From the outset of the book, her status as a premier modest fashion-based influencer and role model is established in her guidance for aspiring fashion bloggers, with advice ranging from ‘stay focused’ and ‘don’t lose your passion’ to ‘keep your content original’. With regard to style guidance, she begins with approaches to hijab styling and, in her use of informal language and colloquialisms, ensures that the book is further seen as an extension of her blogs, but with additional personalized content including discussions of the fashion icons and celebrities whose style and beauty choices have personally influenced her. In this vein the hijab styling section contains subtitles such as ‘Three Easy Peasy Everyday Headscarf Styles’, which set out approaches such as the Everyday Drape, the Everyday Wrap, and the Everyday ‘Meet Me Halfway’ Look. Furthermore, Torkia sets out advice on the use of differing fabric uses (chiffon, silk, cotton, modal blend scarfs) in addition to turban trends, exploring the ways in which headscarf styling approaches need to reflect differing face shapes, such as: heart, square, long rectangular, round, oval and narrowly large foreheads. Of the latter, Torkia states and advises:

Personally, I love this face shape but I do get a lot of requests from ladies who want to potentially narrow their foreheads and lengthen their faces a little, which just requires one simple step: bring the sides of your scarf a little forward to create an oval shape on your forehead. This will instantly add length to your face and proportion your face evenly. (2018: 90)

In terms of beauty guidance, Torkia covers subjects and techniques such as the need for regular hydration as central to her skincare routine in addition to the use of specific high-end and more affordable cleansing products. From this point, the text sets out detailed and clear steps on applying base, contouring techniques, eyeliner and eyeshadow application and eyebrow tweezing. Significantly, the discussions of haircare stress the distinctive issues that modest fashion raise in this regard, as she reveals: ‘If you wear a headscarf every single day and have worn it for as long as I have (about eighteen years now) you can understand the toll it can take on your hair’ (2018: 158). In this fashion, Torkia discusses how she uses products to remedy such effects of modest headwear:

Every fortnight or so, I'll douse my hair in coconut or castor oil and wrap it up in a towel for the night, washing it out in the morning. It's really helped to keep my hair thick and soft while wearing the hijab. (2018: 159)

Clearly, from her numerous YouTube videos, but also in a number of sections in *Modestly*, Torkia presents herself as a modest fashion role model, the text's 'given example,' and the locus of guidance and imitation on the part of readers. Yet, *Modestly* arguably also represents a distinctive modest fashion and style 'habitus' guide, reflecting Pierre Bourdieu's sociological approach to understanding processes of social class and taste distinctions that represent 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions that are produced by the particular conditions of a class grouping' (1994: 95). In this way, habitus explains

[The] regularities of behaviour that are associated with social structures, such as class, gender, and ethnicity, without making social structures deterministic of behaviour, or losing sight of the individual's own agency. Habitus is a way of describing the embodiment of social structures and history in individuals...it is a set of dispositions, internal to the individual, that both reflects external social structures and shapes how the individual perceives the world and acts in it. (Power 1999: 48)

As Joanne Entwistle argues, habitus links individuals to their given society and its bodily practices and expectations. In applying the concept of habitus to fashion, Entwistle states:

Choices over dress are always defined within a particular context: the fashion system provides the 'raw material' of our choices but these are adapted within the context of the lived experience...Dress in everyday life is a practical negotiation between the fashion system as a structured system, the social conditions of everyday life such as class, gender and the like as well as the 'rules' or norms governing particular social situations. (2015: 37)

Looking at habitus with regard the body in relation to fashion, Jennifer Craik stresses that the rules of a given social habitus influence a social actor's ability to navigate the differing modes of their culture, but such cultural expectations are also "inscribed on the body" through body techniques and modes of self-presentation' (1993: 4). Given the context of guidance in terms of modest fashion, Torkia sets out the nature and parameters of fashion and beauty work within the conventions of a modest Islamic cultural habitus with regard to her perception that 'adopting modesty is a way of life'

(2018: 197). Furthermore, the idea of habitus also illustrates the ways in which Torkia articulates modesty with reference to cultural identity.

As Kavakci and Kraeplin (2017) argue in relation to hijabi social media personalities and habitus, Bourdieu's concept is frequently related to specific social 'field' within which it was produced. In this context, the 'field' assumes a social space that has a set of rules and conditions that are distinctive from other fields and social spaces. This analysis draws from the work of Karen Waltorp (2015), and her analysis of young Muslim women in terms of a 'composite habitus'. From this perspective, Bourdieu never stressed that the workings of habitus are ever total, nor does it represent an all-encompassing uniform system as there can be spaces of disconnection between differing parts of a social field. In this sense, what is dubbed a 'double bind' reflects situations in which the rule expectations of one institution within a society contradicts those of another, for example the family and the education system, and so many individuals experience split habitus. For Waltorp, this is especially significant for many young 'second-generation' immigrant Muslim women who 'inhabit a complex, composite habitus in which they have a range of possible strategies' (2015: 53) and bi-cultural 'identities or dispositions' (Kavakci and Kraeplin 2017: 854).

This perception of a multi-faceted sense of habitus is a factor that is palpable throughout *Modestly* as Torkia self-reflectively discusses her sense of possessing and communicating a distinctive sense of cultural hybridity, as expressed in her cultural self-identification as a 'halfie'. In defining the concept of cultural hybridization, Jan Nederveen Pieterse stresses that, in the context of processes of globalization, it is habitually predicated upon intercultural montage, collage and *mélange*, or 'the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices' (1995: 49). However, in terms of the experiences of such cultural hybridity, Pieterse emphasizes processes of 'transcultural cut-and-paste' (2009: 89) that manifest in everyday, routine expressions such as 'identities, consumer behaviour [and] lifestyle' (2009: 101). These perceptions of cultural hybridity and the transcultural represent a persistent motif throughout *Modestly* with regard to both the autobiographical aspects of the text and the style guidance sections. For example, when reflecting upon the ways in which, due to her Muslim and non-Muslim families, she was able to celebrate festivals such as Eid and Christmas, she observes that 'some Muslims say it's not "allowed" to mark Christmas, but I believe it's a vital part of the national British culture, and therefore it is a part of me, too' (2018: 15). This issue is reflected upon in terms of Torkia's discussion of starting her YouTube blog underpinned by the goal of blending modest fashion with a distinctive 'urban, British vibe' (2018: 59). This essence is evident in the ways in which Torkia's hijab advice invariably involves mixing modest fashion garments with mainstream fashion garments and accessories. For instance, she extols the fashionable effect of a black abaya combined with jeans,

white T-shirts and sneakers. With regard to hijab garment complements, she stresses the fashionable efficacy of fitted blazers, floral tops, heels, flat pumps, chinos, oversized sweaters and the use of beanie hats as alternatives to scarves as they are ‘a lot easier to wear, yet somehow can still look similar to a turban style’ (2018: 112). With regard to summer wear, Torkia gives advice on how modest swimwear can be created by combining leggings, cycling tops and swimming caps.

This combinatorial approach to fashion and ‘glamour work’, therefore, is a central aspect of Torkia’s public persona, and approach to the nature of modest fashion and the ways in which it can be culturally commingled. This expression accords with Susan B. Kaiser’s fashion-based analysis of cultural hybridity and transnationalization, in which subject positions occupy multiple standpoints that intersect, and so ‘coexist and overlap’ (2012: 35). A key way in which such intersectionality is expressed is through style, fashion and dress as they enable individuals ‘opportunities to connect the dots across a variety of subject positions and...to explore ways of being and becoming as subjects in the world’ (2012: 37). Commenting on the aesthetics of Dina Torkia’s style tutorial videos (in addition to those of fellow modest fashion Vlogger, Amena Khan), Kristin M Peterson maintains that:

Ultimately, the women create an aesthetic style in these videos that allows them to blend the various elements of their identities and to negotiate the ambivalences of contemporary life. They resist the Western stereotypical image of the oppressed and veiled Muslim woman, while at the same time complicating the Islamic idealization of the pious and obedient woman. Dina...[employs]...the aesthetic style of YouTube to assert that they control their own appearances and, in the process, to shift the larger sensory regime of what is considered attractive, stylish and enjoyable. (2016: 110)

This ethos is a critical factor within *Modestly*, as Torkia often reflects upon how she negotiates her Muslim identity; she sometimes engages in personal choices and adaptations in terms of her identification with strict Islamic guidelines, reflecting Anna-Mari Almira’s view that veiled and hijab-wearing Muslim women negotiate their aesthetic approaches in accordance with ‘religious doctrines, community pressure and beauty norms of the wider society’ (2020: 132). With regard to Torkia’s text, while stressing the beneficial mindfulness qualities of prayer, she also candidly acknowledges that she struggles to engage in prayer on a regular basis, and she also reveals that her hybridized approach to modest fashion within her Vlogs is not always supported. As she reveals: ‘Some people have been critical, of course. Telling me I’m a bad Muslim, and this isn’t how Muslims are meant to dress’ (2018: 60). This sense of autobiographical reflection iterates how the book contextualizes her

blogging work, and while offering a similar form of step-by-step style guidance, Torkia's bi-cultural and composite sense of habitus reflects a distinctive approach to modest fashion. In this sense, given that the hijab is the dominant garment within her text, she stresses that it is not, at least for her, a rule-bound expression of self, as she reveals:

In reality, the hijab shouldn't limit you in anything that you want to do. If only I'd had my current mentality of not putting so much pressure and stringency on wearing the headscarf then maybe I'd be a different person altogether now... Looking back I realize how much of a mammoth decision it is for young girls to commit to wearing a headscarf at a young age. However, I believe that everything happens for a reason and in my case I'm glad of my experiences as they have allowed me to delve deeper into what modesty and the hijab actually is an to gain my own understanding rather than buy into what we're systematically taught on a very general basis. (2018: 22 and 24)

In this way, while *Modestly* is essentially based upon Muslim-inspired fashion and beauty that reflects Islamic values, the issue of a composite sense of habitus is threaded throughout the text. Torkia identifies herself as a bi-cultural subject and as a source of fashion influence and beauty instruction and guidance.

#### **Fashion remediation and the habitus: Cultural hybridity, modest fashion and change**

Given that the key trait of online fashion bloggers is that they engage in 'combining different products and creating unique outfits' (Strähle and Grünewald 2016: 102), I have argued that Dina Torkia's *Modestly* represents a remediated version of her Vlogs in terms of personalized style advice and cosmetics guidance. However, and more significantly, the nature of this remediatization, the fusion of style and beauty guide with elements of autobiography, means that it is a text in which the workings of an expression of habitus related to culture, religion and fashion are discernible, especially with regard to self-reflective articulations of bi-cultural identity. Hence, *Modestly* communicates and reflects on the dynamic changes central to Islamic fashion, and its intrinsic associations with image adaptation. As Magdalena Cruciun states, given the ethical and religious aspects of modest fashion, 'Islamic fashion is about aesthetics as well, involving experimentation with materials and forms, stylistic innovation, the aesthetic qualification of garments, and the formulation of aesthetic ideals' (2019: 11). Therefore, Torkia's discursive approach represents a reflection of, and commentary on, a distinctive modest fashion-based habitus relating to specific fashion and beauty ideals and representations. As such, the transfer from visual social media interpolation to print is highly

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significant. This is because while her YouTube videos are highly personable and engaging in terms of how she addresses her audience, the print version enables her to personally contextualize her approach and status as a prominent British Muslim fashion influencer. At one level, Torkia's videos, in addition to presenting aspects of fashion and beauty styling, frequently cover aspects of her family life and personal views and so accord with the nature of the diary, with its purpose 'to give "reminiscences of the life", from day to day' (Nolte Lensink 1999: 156). Still, *Modestly* deepens the autobiographical context in terms of the ways in which it aligns its influencer-style modest fashion guidance with consistent aspects of autobiographical 'self-scrutiny' (Pilling 1981). Yet, on another level, the autobiography is factual – reminiscences of childhood, early adulthood, school experiences, higher education, personal issues and traumas, and her rise as a prominent modest fashion blogger. more significantly, the book expresses Torkia's reflective relationship with Muslim fashion and values, especially with regard to her acknowledged bi-cultural sense of identity. So, *Modestly* acts as a remediatized style and beauty guide, but also, more significantly, as a multi-faceted presentation and self-reflective insight into the ways in which habitus can be experienced and evaluated in terms of distinctive social and individual intersectional experiences of it. As Power notes, a salient aspect of habitus is that it 'shapes and produces practice, but does not determine it' as there is always some flexibility of practice' (1999: 49), what Waltrip refers to as those instances in which there can be a sense of disconnection between differing parts of a cultural and social habitus configuration. This is a central component of Torkia's book, a factor exacerbated by its fusion of religiously and culturally inspired modest fashion and beauty advice, but also revealed in its autobiographical sections and commentaries. Furthermore, the issue of differing experiences of a fashion-based sense of habitus explored and presented in the book became a further potent issue as, post-publication of *Modestly*, Torkia announced on her blog that she was not going to wear the hijab any longer on a full-time basis. Torkia's rationale was that it was due to the judgement that women face in terms of dress expectations. In terms of the motivation for her decision, Torkia stressed: 'Let me make one point very clear: this mentality is in no way Islamic. It's cultural' (in Forrest 2019: 2).

Linking habitus with fashion and dress, Almila stresses that 'when getting dressed, an individual is (at least partly) aware that they are creating an appearance that will be observed and evaluated by different kinds of others' (2020: 16). The issue of creating a specific appearance in terms of fashion and beauty is of course the essence of the modest fashion and beauty advice central to *Modestly*, but while Torkia received many supportive messages via social media for her decision, critical responses were widespread. For instance, level, posts on her site and across other social media platforms stated that her decision negated her modest fashion online brand, a factor especially acute in the wake of the publication of *Modestly*. Consequently, while the book scored a significant number

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of 5 star and 4 star reviews on Amazon based upon the themes and support for the fashion and beauty guidance presented by Torkia, the majority of 1 star reviews do not critically discuss the book's content at all, but rather her changing attitude to the wearing of the hijab following the publication of *Modestly*. In the face of such criticism, and with a number of messages being abusive, Torkia made a 47-minute Vlog that consisted of simply reading out the torrent of troll comments that she had received, entitled 'The Bad, The Worse, and the Ugly'. However, since adapting her approach to the wearing of modest dress, Torkia has articulated that while she would no longer be committing to the hijab on a daily basis as she had done for the previous twenty years, but that she still believed in head-covering as part of a modest dedication, and that, crucially, modest will 'always be a part of her and her heritage, religion and culture' (in Ghanem 2019: 2). Hence, the issue of habitus is central to the various modest fashion discourses that Torkia communicates, both in her book and beyond, because dress 'not only shapes individuals' experiences in relation to their social and physical environment; it also forges and expresses communities and community belonging' (Almira 2020: 116). Hence, as Torkia stated in the face of post-publication criticisms:

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I've heard people assume that I've used the headscarf for 'fame and money'. If you know me you know that money and fame doesn't motivate me... It never has. I started blogging and I was already wearing a scarf. I just wanted to enjoy fashion that I could relate to. I was doing me then (10 years ago) and now I'm doing me, again (ten years on). I'm a whole different person to who I was when I started. People change and that's a great thing. It's called progression. (in Srouji 2018 Mvslim.com)

This reflexive attitude to modest dress is similarly acknowledged within *Modestly* as her approach to modest fashion is continually tempered with her identification as a British Muslim. As such, as a subject who has always identified with a distinctive sense of cultural hybridity, Torkia identifies and exposes the nature of the ways in which habitus can constitute a 'double bind' from which contradictory cultural expectations can impose and demand on individuals. As Torkia acknowledges in *Modestly*:

My relationship with wearing the headscarf is ever fluctuating, with plenty of ups and downs over almost twenty years of daily commitment. It will always be ingrained as part of my culture. Modesty as a whole is something I think I will always try my best to adhere to as a general dressing guideline, it's just how I feel comfortable living my life, headscarf or not. (2018: 24)

This ethos is further connected to differing approaches to modest fashion and dress codes, as Torkia reflects: ‘We need to encourage more conversation, to be more tolerant, to be more understanding that there is no one way to represent a Muslim woman’ (2018: 197). Hence, *Modestly* keenly distills key aspects of Dina Torkia’s blogging career in a remediated form, and is a reflection of her status as one of the most prominent British modest fashion bloggers and influencers. It interweaves style advice with personalized self-scrutiny in relation to modest styles with a call to evaluate social and cultural attitudes to modest dress codes and beauty work, and cosmetic techniques and practices. *Modestly*, therefore, represents a potent contribution to mediated style and beauty discourses and instruction from an Islamic perspective. Moreover, it illustrates both the ways in which a distinctive sense of cultural, fashion and beauty-based habitus can be effectively communicated via the style guide sections of the book to readers, but also how an individual subject’s experience of habitus is evaluated, and how it can undergo processes of change.

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