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Arranged Marriages as Support for Intra-ethnic Matchmaking? A Case Study on Muslim Migrants in Germany

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the behavioural and institutional mechanisms that guide the match-making process of arranged marriages¹ amongst Muslim migrants in Germany and clarifies how this practice may influence ethnic homogamy. The focus is on general characteristics of arranged marriages rather than differences between diverse ethnic groups. The methodology is qualitative due to the sensitive and complex topic and the current state of research. Typically, the whole family is deeply involved in the process of arrangement, which consists of three stages (pre-engagement, engagement, marriage). Thereby, the extension of parental scope of action by means of institutionalized admission procedures turns out to be vitally important. In consideration of the fact that mate selection takes place at the pre-engagement stage, it is the most crucial. Furthermore, differences to other partner-choosing processes are at their most distinct at this point, being responsible for the identification and labelling of this model as an arranged marriage. Selection criteria are mainly determined by the reputation of the marriage candidate and her/his family along with cultural features (such as belonging to a particular religious group, ethnicity or nationality). In our study, preferences for a cultural homogenous match were the most dominant ones. This inclination may cause the tendency towards transnational marriages when there are no suitable marriage candidates to be found in Germany.

ARRANGED MARRIAGES AS SUPPORT FOR INTRA-ETHNIC MATCHMAKING?

Compared to classical immigration countries such as Canada, the United States, or Australia, Germany is more or less just starting to analyse the impact of migration. Although Germany has been a de facto immigration country for at least thirty years, it only recently accepted this status politically. Previous research on migration in Germany focussed mainly on social inequality, social integration, and factors influencing migration, but paid less attention to behavioural patterns within immigrant communities when these did not directly affect other groups in society. One of the neglected topics in this context are immigrants' matchmaking processes. Most former German studies dealt with bi-national marriages and conducted

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research with a demographic research design (Haug, 2002; Klein, 2000; Schroedter, 2006). In fact, there is a small number of bi-national marriages which are affected by the composition of the marriage market and cultural patterns (Haug, 2002; Kondzialka, 2005; Schroedter, 2006; Straßburger, 2003). But we have little insight into different forms of marriages, the manner in which they are accomplished, and the consequences they induce. One of these forms is the so called “arranged marriage”. This strategy of finding a future spouse through special institutionalized familial arrangements is not the only way Muslim immigrants conduct matchmaking, but it does play a particularly important role in Islamic societies (Cohen and Savaya, 2003). Therefore, this topic deserves closer attention in sociology of migration as well as in sociology of the family studies than it has received up to now. Referring to common sociological theories on the family and research on ethnically homogamous marriages, we examine if and how arranged marriages induce ethnic homogamy in our sample.

Initial research on “arranged marriages” in Germany was conducted by Gaby Straßburger (2003 and 2007), but she focused on Turkish immigrants only. Additionally, our paper intends to identify common characteristics of arranged marriages amongst Muslim immigrants in Germany. In contrast to Batabyal (2004, 2002, 2001, 1999), who formalized the overall decision making process in arranged marriages and analysed its properties from the perspective of a marrying agent, our focus lies on the social circumstances of arranged marriages and their effects on ethnic homogamy. Therefore, we will concentrate on familial induced arranged marriages and disregard professional institutions, go-betweens or internet matchmaking agencies, who are central protagonists in other research designs (Applbaum, 1995; Vaillant and Harrant, 2007).

In general, arranged marriages are not confined to the cultural context of Islam. We focus on Muslim immigrants because they are the largest group of immigrants in Germany who marry in this way. In order to identify common characteristics of arranged marriages we sought contrasts in respect to the interviewees’ ethnic and national backgrounds as well as their religious persuasion. As religious motivations are often interconnected with traditional patterns of action, they can rarely be distinguished. Our study does not intend to implement this separation either. Instead, the paper is written from a cultural-sociological point of view. The initial results of our qualitative field study will present criteria that are central to the process of finding a partner. Each of these criteria has to be verified by the ensuing research and analysed in more detail according to ethnic, national, and religious factors.

As familial arranged marriages do not occur amongst the indigenous German population nowadays, they did not draw much attention from German scientific community up to now. Therefore, anthropological demography (Bernardi and Hutter, 2007; Heady, 2007) may provide a promising access for understanding this demographic phenomenon. So far, German researchers have looked for social determinants which influence the selection of a partner. But they generally forget to ask how the selection process is organized and how identified factors can exert an influence on mate selections. This can only be done by analyzing different practices in more detail and by identifying the behavioural and institutional mechanisms that guide such processes. For that purpose, relevant contexts have to be identified, especially in respect to the limitations and opportunities they impose on individuals. In addition to the composition of marriage markets and provision of national laws (which are not focussed upon in our paper), family structures, familial behavioural patterns and focus groups provide relevant context information. Our paper concentrates on these aspects because our study showed that they are essential to the arranged marriage model. Families and surrounding communities both in their native country and in Germany play a pre-eminent role in the process of getting married, especially in reference to the choice of a partner. Secondly, relevance structures of people involved have to be examined in order to understand their framing of

the situation and therefore their perception of potential behavioural outcomes. The paper will show that cultural patterns play an important role because they influence the awareness of relevant marriage partners within the contextual framework. Analyzing these behavioural and institutional mechanisms that generally guide an arranged marriage, we intend to clarify how this practice may influence ethnic homogamy. As knowledge concerning this matter is limited, it is necessary to conduct qualitative research first and to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods later on.

In this article, we will begin with a conceptual classification on arranged marriages. Thereafter, we review the theoretical framework on homogamous marriages. Methodical aspects and field access are discussed in the third section. Referring to the former theories, we report our results on arranged marriages in section four, demonstrating in detail how different mechanisms may lead to ethnic homogamy. Finally, our main results will be summarized and followed by a reflection on potential future research.

1. ARRANGED AND FORCED MARRIAGES. AN ATTEMPT TO DELINEATE

In order to define arranged marriages and to discuss this particular form of matchmaking, we have to take into account two points: on the one hand, most forms of matchmaking rely on some sort of social arrangement. Therefore, we have to explain why we call only this form an “arranged” marriage. On the other hand, they have to be distinguished from forced marriages, which are seen as belonging to a subgroup of arranged marriages. Both do share some similarities, but arranged marriages are divided into consensual arranged marriages and forced arranged marriages.²

The main characteristics (in the sense of ideal types) of an arranged marriage are:

1. Contact usually starts with the intention of marriage (Applbaum, 1995: 37; Straßburger, 2003). This is in clear contrast to other living arrangements, in which the couple may decide to marry after living together or having an intimate relationship. Generally, cohabitation with a common-law spouse, a same-sex union or single-dom are not seen as legitimate options in Muslim communities (Straßburger, 2003; Toprak, 2005). Thus, the marriage serves as a fundamental point of reference for the couple and their families. Even individuals who pre-select a partner on their own are looking for a wife or husband. They know that they are expected to marry and not to live with a partner or have sexual intercourse with him or her before marriage. Therefore, dissimulating this potential behaviour is regarded as evidence of the behavioural social norm, which might be followed by sanctions, if an individual offends against it.
2. The relationship is based on a non-intimate concept of partner selection and marriage. Restrictions concerning cohabitation, living together and other forms of private interaction between unmarried partners also avoid testing the relationship itself. So, the couple and their families have to select other criteria that are seen as indicators for a lifelong and firm relationship. Emotional harmony is of lesser importance.
3. Arranged marriages normally involve the spouses' families of origin and therefore they can be characterized in relative terms as duofocal instead of dyadic (Applbaum, 1995; Bhopal, 1998; Cohen and Savaya, 2003; Hirschman and Teerawichitchainan, 2003; Jones, 1994; Rudelson, 1997; Straßburger, 2003; Talbani and Hasanali, 2000). A marriage is seen as an everlasting tie between two people and also between two families. Although family members, relatives and friends may play an important role in other types of marriages, in an arranged marriage the families' influence on the selecting and choosing of a partner is

more direct, legitimate and comprehensive. Furthermore, it follows institutionalized steps which will be described in more detail in section 4.1. This explains why “arranged” is the chosen epithet for this matchmaking process.

In general, the arrangement process tries to balance the respective interests of the individuals concerned against the needs of the families as a whole. To what extent a single family member takes part in the decision-making depends on familial behavioural patterns (Straßburger, 2003). This issue draws attention to a particular form of arranged marriages, the forced marriage. It is difficult to identify it from an external perspective. Even people involved may reconsider their interpretation of the situation at different stages of their lives. Therefore, the lines between consensual arranged marriages and forced marriages are often blurred – particularly, if the means of coercion and the internalized norms are more implicit.

The following aspects should only be treated as indicators for identifying a forced marriage after an individual examination of the particular case. Accordingly, a forced marriage occurs if at least one person is pressed to marry another person by means of psychological or physical force (Fachkommission Zwangsheirat der Landesregierung Baden-Württemberg, 2006; Karakaşoğlu and Subaşı, 2007; Mirbach et al., 2006). This might mean that the matchmaking process continues in spite of refusal from one or both of the spouses. In other cases, rejecting the family’s or the head of the family’s decision is not a real option at all. Consequently, children have no opportunity to disagree with their parents’ choice. Moreover, a person might decide to marry against his or her own will because imminent sanctions against the family or the individual are perceived as being worse than entering into an unwanted marriage.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON HOMOGAMOUS MARRIAGES

Recent sociological studies on migrants marriage practices emphasize the tendency of ethnical homogamous marriages amongst Muslims (González-Ferrer, 2006; Haug, 2002; Lievens, 1999; Schroedter, 2006; Straßburger, 2000; Zang, 2008). This begs the important question: which mechanisms support the tendency of intra-ethnic marriages? Theoretical work on inter-marriage and homogamy (Kalmijn, 1998) suggests three main influential forces: the impact of relevant social groups, individual preferences for certain characteristics in the future spouse, and the constraints of respective marriage markets. As we will show in section 4, all these aspects are material in arranged marriages, but the related theories have to be extended as regards the involvement of spouse’s family of origin as well.

To be more precise, influence of relevant social groups (e.g., families, religious, and ethnic communities) is exerted because marriage may change the internal cohesion and homogeneity of the group. According to Barth (1969), we understand ethnic communities as categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves referring to shared symbols, language, myths, cultural values and memories of the relevant group (see also, Smith, 1994). Continuing mobility and migration processes have changed conditions for these identification processes fundamentally: ethnic groups cannot rely only on face-to-face-contacts and interaction between their members, but became transnational, “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983).³ Even if parts of an ethnic community live permanently apart from their place of origin, they have images of the shared characteristics of their ethnic community that underline the boundaries to other groups, especially to the dominant national culture (see also, Barth, 1969: 14).

As far as a marriage implies the acceptance of a new “member” into the group, restricting access becomes important. Thereby, communities have a self-interest to act to a greater or

lesser degree indirectly (socialization) or directly (imposing sanctions, devising formalized admission procedures) as “gate-keepers”. The above mentioned characteristics (values, norms, etc. of the relevant social group) are transmitted to the members as a genuine part of their collective identity within the complex process of socialization (Giesen, 2002). Especially the family and more specific the parents have a large impact on their children concerning the establishment of cultural orientation within the stage of adolescence (Vollebergh et al., 2001). That includes conceptions of appropriate partners and legitimate matchmaking processes. If the impact of this socialization is reduced by further socializing factors such as formal education or peer groups (Haug, 2002; Kalmijn and van Tubergen, 2006; Read, 2003; Schvaneveldt et al., 2005), the social group may also impose sanctions (withdrawing support, excluding someone from the group, exerting psychic or physical pressure on someone). Furthermore, arranged marriages provide formalized procedures obligatory for prospective spouses and their families. This practice ensures direct and extensive control of the families of origin over the matchmaking process (see section 4.1). This aspect especially remains underexposed within common theories. Ethnical homogamous marriages occur, if a relevant social group favours them and works to bring them about.

Secondly, individual preferences mostly refer to the economic theory of the family (Becker, 1973, 1974) and the social exchange theory (Homans, 1958, 1972; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Winch, 1955). According to them, people tend to maximize the joint conjugal benefit by selecting partners whose resources or features best match their own: “Potential spouses are evaluated on the basis of the resources they have to offer and individuals compete with each other for the spouse they want most by offering their own resources in return. (...) When married, spouses pool these resources to produce family goods, such as economic well-being, status, social confirmation, and affection.” (Kalmijn, 1998: 398). Literature suggests the differentiation between socio-economic (e.g., income and status) and cultural resources (e.g., values, religion, language). In general, people look out for someone with similar cultural, but better economic resources (Kalmijn, 1998). Whereas the first is intended to facilitate decisions about joint activities (e.g., the raising of children, the purchase of consumer durables or the division of labour) or confirm each other’s behaviour and values, the latter will improve (or at least maintain) the individual status. As an arranged marriage is primarily seen as an interconnection between two families who aim to enhance their prestige and to retain their traditions by means of a marriage, they likewise evaluate the status and cultural background of the respective family (Applbaum, 1995). Since creating an interfamilial network is of major interest, a third resource is of central importance: the social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1973) of the families involved. Kinship relations as a subtype of social capital are easy to mobilize and support the transfer and accumulation of further social capital (Nauck and Kohlmann, 1998; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). Therefore, the selection of members from promising familial networks attracts attention. With regard to individual and familial preferences the tendency of ethnical homogamous marriages can be interpreted as a result of a balancing process which gives cultural resources first priority (see section 4.2).

Besides the mentioned micro- and meso-level influencing factors, macro-structural aspects of marriage markets limit the meeting opportunities of potential marriage partners. The underlying assumption is: the more often one is in contact with certain population groups; the more likely one is to marry a member of that group (if cultural norms or individual preferences do not prevent one from doing so). Contact opportunities are shaped by several structural arrangements such as the demographic composition of the population (group sizes, sex ratio, age ratio; see, Blau and Schwartz, 1984; Kalmijn and van Tubegen, 2006), the regional distribution of certain groups (Blau and Schwartz, 1984; Haug, 2002: 411) and functional settings (e.g., school, neighbourhood, workplace; Kalmijn, 1998). Following Feld’s focus theory

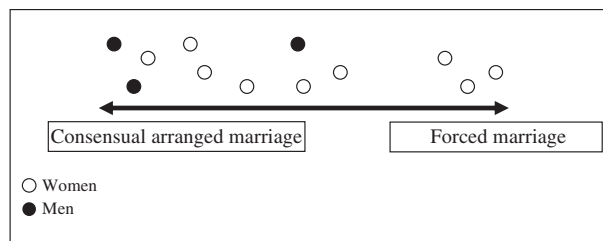
(1981), social interaction is concentrated in specific foci of activity like the above-named functional settings. These settings are often socially segregated in respect of ascribed and achieved personal characteristics, which lead to different opportunities of social interaction between population groups. Usually, mate selection is largely limited to people with whom one shares a focus. In the case of an arranged marriage, which explicitly activates the networks of all family members in order to find a proper spouse, their foci play a role as well (Applbaum, 1995). The likelihood of ethnical homogamous marriages increases if the foci of potential marriage partners and their families who both decide on a marriage are ethnically segregated (see section 4.3). Demographic aspects like a small ethnical group size or a disproportionate sex ratio in an ethnical group could complicate a homogamous partner choice. Then, transnational or transregional marriage arrangements might become an option for people who give ethnical criteria priority (González-Ferrer, 2006; Lievens, 1999).

3. METHODOICAL ASPECTS AND ACCESS IN THE FIELD

With regard to our aim, that is, to gain detailed information and an internal perspective of marriage traditions, the choice of an inductive approach was self-evident. We conducted twelve focused, semi-structured biographical interviews that were differentiated into consensual arranged marriages and forced marriages (see figure 1 for the classification). From these autobiographical records we have obtained a first set of qualitative findings on individual experiences of different stages of the marriage process, which will enable us to draw conclusions on influencing factors and their mode of functioning. The interview partners originally came from Syria (5 interviews), Turkey (4 interviews), Lebanon (2 interviews), and Kosovo (1 interview), and live in Germany (Bonn, Stuttgart, Trier and surroundings) at present. The age of the interviewed women (9 interviews) ranged from 19 to 40 years and in the group of interviewed men (3 interviews) from 31 to 51 years. The majority are married at the moment (8 interviews), while three persons are unmarried and one is divorced. Half of the sample has attained high school level qualifications, while the other half ended their education at a lower level. Although all interview partners are Muslims, their individual religious backgrounds are quite heterogeneous: they are Sunnites, Shiites or Yezidi. This heterogeneous sample intends to reveal the general characteristics and phases of arranged marriages within the cultural background of Islam in order to carry out a more differentiated analysis later.

The first interview partners were recruited with the help of private contacts known to the research group; making use of a simple snowball sampling technique, more interview partners

FIGURE 1
CLASSIFICATION OF THE TYPES OF MARRIAGES (12 INTERVIEWS)



Source: Own illustration.

could then be contacted afterwards. Snowball sampling is used for populations that are neither well-delimited nor well-enumerated. As it is not a probability sample, the snowball sample is subject to special biases because some people are more likely to be recruited into the sample. The research group initially tried to minimize these effects by contacting different migration organizations, schools, mosques, associations etc. and by imposing quotas. During the sampling process the highly sensitive character of the topic became more and more obvious through the fact that it became very difficult to find interviewees who were willing to speak about such private aspects of their lives. Therefore, only this simple snowball sampling technique, with no interference from the researchers, proved to be successful. This, however, led to an overrepresentation of women as men were more unwilling to be interviewed. People who had experienced a forced marriage refrained from giving interviews, because the topic was linked with some kind of trauma or at least with painful memories. Other immigrants were aware of the fact that the consensual arranged marriage is often equated with the forced marriage in the German media. Therefore, potential interviewees feared being misunderstood and decided not to talk. These worries frequently discouraged people from contacting the researchers and, in addition, led to a number of cancellations of organized interviews. The interviewees tried to meet any requirements in a number of meetings and discussions before the interview itself, sensibly talking to the interviewees, and then in the interviews themselves mitigated against any possible feelings of distrust by using flexible, not standard, open interviewing methods.

As we already had some information about Muslim marriages from former projects, the experience of the research team and scientific literature (e.g., Baumgartner-Karabak and Landesberger, 1978; BMFSFJ, 2004; Straßburger, 2003; Toprak, 2005), the interviews on the one hand followed an outline with several topics and specific questions in which were of interest. On the other hand, they also contained long narrative passages in which there was room for subjective interpretations or for the relevance structures of the thematised narratives of the interviewees to be explored. These narrations often concerned family life and background, which can be regarded as essential context information. Above all, this combined qualitative approach underlines the idea of the interviewed persons being experts of their own life story. As our research team includes members with an immigration background as well as those without, we had the opportunity to combine both perspectives: the former team members provided not only the first access to the field, but also a deeper understanding, an inside perspective of Muslim traditions and norms. Researchers with no immigration background could step into the classic role of the stranger (in the sense of Georg Simmel). They were not bound by any (wider) family networks or community affairs to the field of research and are only familiar with the subject matter from a professional point of view.

In addition to the 12 interviews with a subjective or more self-determined perspective concentrating on individual biographies, five interviews with (professional) experts in the field were conducted. These experts all work with immigrants (e.g., in battered women's shelters and immigrant information centres). As psychologists and social pedagogues they are specialized in the work with and the problems suffered by immigrants. Through this they are also familiar with the situation of people from an Islamic background in Germany. Due to their organizational affiliation they are often confronted by women who want to prevent a forced marriage or who are asking for help after having been married for years. Accordingly, these experts mainly talked about the forced type of arranged marriages, but also helped us to understand the cultural circumstances involved.

The material from all the interviews was transliterated and later structured following Mayring's method of qualitative content analysis (2000). Detailed notes made by the researchers on the socio-demographic information of the interviewees and the interview situation itself (context information) completed the material.

4. RESULTS

4.1 The Familial Influence on Marriage

Parents exert influence on their children's marriage because a marriage is seen as an everlasting tie between two families which may adversely affect the internal cohesion and homogeneity of the kinship. Previous studies outlined the parental control via socialization and sanctions (Kalmijn, 1998). Supplementary to that, we will demonstrate how an arranged marriage extends the parental scope of action by means of institutionalized admission procedures, which are characteristically for an arranged marriage. Since interviewees reported on interventions of the broader kinship or ethnic community on the matchmaking process, it can be assumed that the practice of an arranged marriage is also well-established in order to monitor access to their community by dint of parental supervision (see also, Zang, 2008). Thereby, the parents are responsible for the preservation of the communities' cultural norms.

In the following, we will describe the arrangement process in more detail and demonstrate how this practice ensures direct and extensive control of the families of origin. We will give priority to the first stage as it differs most clearly from other matchmaking processes. Due to these differences and the special familiar arrangements, the marriage is called an arranged marriage. On the basis of former research (e.g., Straßburger, 2003) and our findings, we suggest a division of this process into three phases (see figure 2):

1. The first stage can be referred to as the pre-engagement phase. It starts with the pre-selection of potential marriage partners and serves as a sophisticated assessment of appropriateness. In consideration of the fact that mate selection takes place at this stage, it is the most crucial one and further decisions depend on developments at this point. This stage ends with the engagement celebrations or the breaking off of negotiations.
2. The second stage can be called the engagement phase, as it starts with the engagement celebration. It tends to ensure the respective spouses and their families against the risk of an unexpected break-off and is the start of the wedding ceremony's preparations. It is concluded by the wedding and the cohabitation. Although it is more difficult to halt the arrangement process at this stage, it is still an option.
3. The third stage is also defined by its starting point and is called the marriage phase. After being married the partners set up a household and consummate the marriage. Furthermore, it is expected that the couple will start a family. Ideally, this phase is intended to last until one of the partners dies, but may also end with a divorce.

During the pre-engagement phase prospective marriage partners and their families look for potential candidates. Traditionally, the latter assume responsibility for pre-selecting a partner and arranging a first meeting between the prospective spouses. When children reach marriageable age, their mothers particularly keep an eye open for potential candidates and gather information about them. Helping children to find a match and found a family of their own is more or less seen as a family duty, because a marriage is typically considered to be the only conceivable living arrangement (see, Breuer, 1998; Straßburger, 2007; Toprak, 2005). Supporting children in putting this idea into practice means assisting them in getting ahead. Due to the expansion of the educational system, the increase in women's employment and technological progress, there is definitely a wider range of opportunities for women and men to meet and get to know one another today. Asked about any noticeable changes in the last few decades, a Lebanese man stated that technical equipment offers more opportunities to talk to the other person outside of face-to-face meetings. This could provide further opportunities to

FIGURE 2
IDEAL TYPES OF THE ARRANGEMENT PROCESS

Phase	Characteristics	Functions
1. Pre-engagement	Search for potential partners Family visits and introduction Proposal	Pre-Selection: Search for information, contact Assessment of appropriateness Aim is to choose a partner
2. Engagement	Acceptance of the proposal Betrothal Meetings of the families Joint activities of the betrothed Negotiations of the marriage contract Organization/Preparation of the wedding	Ritual labelling of status passages Better acquaintance of the families and partners Negotiating conditions of the marriage Aim is to provide security for all involved
3. Marriage	Marriage Possible family reunification in Germany Setting up a household or patrilocality Consummation Children	Ritual labelling of status passages Legalization of intimate relationship Legalization of cohabitation and foundation of a family

Source: Own illustration.

get to know each other better. Nevertheless, he assumes that this would not change the essential matchmaking process. It might only reduce the time needed to find the right partner:

“Thanks to modern communication media such as the internet and telephone (...) it has become much easier, more modern so to speak, (...) there are many more ways to communicate whereas (...) before you had to rely on meeting at joint family parties. Hence it will become much easier to get to know each other gradually and thereby to shorten the time of engagement. But the basics, rituals, and rights and so on, we assume that those things will stay practically the same.” (Lebanese man aged 42, B8, lines 545-551)

Probably as a consequence of this development and in contrast to the traditional form of arranged marriages, it is more accepted nowadays that future marriage partners pre-select a partner on their own. But even in this case, the final decision will be undertaken by the families. The couple then has to prove to their families their ability to start a new enduring relationship and their prospects of founding a family themselves. It is up to their families to consider, whether they are a good match for each other or not. In summary, this means that families might exert influence on the process of pre-selecting a partner, but they definitely do control the process of choosing a partner for an arranged marriage. In order to distinguish the traditional form of an arranged marriage from the newer one, we suggest labelling the latter an arranged marriage that requires familial approval.

After pre-selecting a potential partner, various meetings of the two families are arranged to vet the respective partners. Traditionally, the family of the groom visits the family of the bride and declares a marriage intention. After this, the family members have to demonstrate the qualities and skills of their son and daughter respectively, and to evaluate the other candidate in detail in following meetings. Prior to this, the mothers or the prospective spouses may converse in order to establish first impressions and estimate the chances of a match. These chances are then scrutinized more fully in subsequent meetings. Each family tries to increase their knowledge of the other candidates and their family backgrounds through various forms of interaction (Beck-Gernsheim, 2005; Straßburger, 2003; Toprak, 2005). Through this, the involved families can assess what might be good indicators for a permanent and stable alliance (Straßburger, 2003). Therefore, biographical and personal characteristics of the prospective spouses and their relatives are taken into account, and we will describe these in detail in the following section. The families are supposed to continue their evaluation between meetings by consulting reliable informants. As both sides gain in confidence, the groom meets with relatives, family members or other reliable persons:

Interviewer (Q): “Why is it that important to have friends and relatives with you?”

Interviewee (A): “That’s tradition. It gives a much better impression going there with the consent of the family. It is acceptable to go there alone, if the parents have died or when your family lives far away and there is nobody and nobody knows you; then it’s all right to go there alone. But the parents absolutely have to agree to it. It is simply a confidence-building measure. When you come with some people, the family sees that you are known and are not a loner that they should be worried about. (...) It’s also possible to take the mayor or other people from the town with you, if you are acquainted. That will mean, that they will have much more confidence in you, if you bring one or more respected people with you.” (Lebanese man aged 42, B8, lines 40-57)

The wife of the interviewee adds by way of explanation:

“If the parents don’t know him [the prospective groom], it’s possible that he will have to come several times. (...) As a general rule, if you know each other, then you know immediately, what it is all about, (...). Then it’s done at once. (...) My father (...) went to them for the first time, they knew him, they knew of him from their neighbours - indirectly, not personally - and that’s why he had to come several times, and he also came with neighbours that knew his family quite well, and they put in a good word for him, for my father. And then he came several times, and the neighbours showed that they had confidence in him, and they said that my father is a good man.” (Lebanese woman aged 40, B8, lines 87-102)

During the meetings, real experience of the potentially new family members is gained. Besides the rationally accumulated knowledge about them, faith in the alliance can increase or decrease by establishing or not establishing emotional ties with them as well. Normally, there are several meetings between the families unless they already know each other well simply because they are related or live in the neighbourhood (Straßburger, 2003). As soon as confidence in the prospects of the match and its overall benefits has been established, the families give their consent to the marriage. Proposing a marriage to someone officially is the first intermediate step in the arrangement process. Reasons for break-ups at this point are generally either dislike of the potential partner or unsatisfactory information about the family involved. This information could be defined as a negation of the requirements of both sides (concerning doubts about the respectability of a family, bad reputation or premarital sexual relations on the part of the potential bride). Two things should have become obvious by

now: firstly, it is important to emphasize that the families try to find out, whether there are any reasons against the marriage going ahead. They neither challenge a marriage in general nor accept a relationship without a marriage. Secondly, it is important to understand that this form of “testing” does not include a virtual test of the relationship itself (e.g., living together or having an intimate relationship with or without sexual intercourse). The only aspects that are examined are any indicators of a stable relationship.

The engagement phase starts with the acceptance of the proposal and the betrothal. The celebration of the engagement is the first event that takes place in front of a wider public and officially demonstrates the spouses’ marriage intentions. This serves as a ritual labelling of a status passage as it is celebrated in the circle of acquaintances and relatives.

“At the betrothal, jewellery was given to the bride. Gold lying on a tray was brought into the room where it was given to the bride who sat on a stairs-head. (...) There were about 60 people in the room, and counting children, altogether 100 people. First, the drinks were served and then the cake and finally the rings were exchanged. (...) Then one sat down and talked about formalities, formalities concerning the following steps.” (Syrian man aged 51, B4, lines 16-23)

After this official act it is difficult to withdraw the promise of marriage as that could cause a loss of face for both families. Therefore, those involved try to resolve all critical aspects during the pre-engagement stage, making it the most crucial one. The engagement phase is supposed to provide a kind of protection for the relationship (Straßburger, 2003; Toprak, 2005). The spouses and their families become better acquainted and have more opportunities to talk to each other in a more personal setting. After the betrothal the fiancées achieve a different status. They are allowed to go out together and meet in public, but a third person must nevertheless always be present. However, they are able to talk to each other privately and to get to know one another better.

“So, (...) what was impossible to do before getting engaged, was to be allowed to visit her at her home, (...) Then I could simply sit with her without any problems (...) to become more familiar with each other in a more intense way that was not there before.” (lines 408-411)

“Then the couple also go out together and have the possibility (...) to study the character of each other, and - to some extent - they still can split up.” (lines 92-94) (Lebanese man aged 42, B8)

Moreover, certain forms of security (e.g., documents that confirm the groom’s intention to grant the bride’s rights) have to be negotiated in order to ensure the bride’s livelihood in the face of possible divorce or death (Straßburger, 2003).

“And this is simply to insure the woman’s rights. If there is an agreement, the formalities have to be fixed: the morning gift etc. And there are witnesses, several witnesses who can testify to it, and that’s what it is all about.” (Lebanese man aged 42, B8, lines 76-79)

Over the course of the meetings, the form and amount of the morning gift are hotly debated. This seems to be the most critical point as opinions and expectations can differ to such an extent that they lead to a break-off of the engagement.

“Everything is talked over with the family and the bride is allowed to talk about her wishes too. But this sum may be changed considerably, because relatives of the groom usually try to beat down the price. (...) Almost as coverage, not only in the case of death. (...) A divorce

could be very expensive, and that's why men usually don't leave their wives." (Syrian woman aged 39, B2, lines 484-491)

The marriage contract records the central agreements that are signed later during the Islamic wedding ceremony. If there are any disagreements between the families or partners during the engagement phase, it is still possible to cancel the engagement. In addition to conflicts about the marriage contract, deceit and concealment of important information about the future partners may play a role. After agreeing the content of the marriage contract the marriage ceremony will be prepared by the families. In general, this phase aims to provide a sense of security for all involved and does not differ much from other marriage types.

The marriage phase starts with the Islamic wedding ceremony, the wedding celebrations or consummation of the marriage (Straßburger, 2003; Toprak, 2005). After being asked for the starting point of the marriage phase, some interviewees referred to the ceremony while others regarded the first sexual relations as beginning the marriage. Both serve as ritual labelling of status passages. The wedding legalizes an intimate relationship, cohabitation and foundation of a family. Therefore, the couple again achieves a different status. As an arranged marriage is a non-intimate concept, closer connections with the partner are only forged after marriage. Partners are allowed to cohabit and to go out unattended. To all intents and purposes this is when they can first become properly acquainted. Traditionally, the couple stays with the husband's family (patrilocal residence), but nowadays it is quite usual that they have their own house (Toprak, 2005). In the cases of transnational marriages, family reunification in Germany is legally possible. Furthermore, the couple is expected to found a family of their own and quite often their first child will arrive shortly after getting married. The marriage phase is intended to last until one of the partners dies; divorce is not considered respectable:

"Naturally, divorce is a difficult thing. It is a setback for both partners, for the families involved, the parents. A divorced Kurdish woman is always viewed badly. Unfortunately, that's the way it is." (Syrian man aged 51, B4, lines 473-475)

This being the case, for people who do not want to stay with their partner any longer the situation can become unbearable, especially for those who were forced into marriage. The latter is regarded as a specific case which cannot be discussed within the scope of our general findings and has to be looked at another context.

During the whole process an intensification of the interactions between the two families and the marriage partners can be observed. While at the beginning the meetings are infrequent and casual, they become more frequent and planned during the engagement. This however also makes it more complicated to break the process off. Whereas it is commonly accepted that one party may decide to refrain from further meetings during the first phase, a later termination usually brings about social consequences (e.g., a loss of face). As trust plays an extremely important role, arrangements are usually brought to a stop for want of confidence. The break-off is also more or less interpreted as a betrayal of trust, especially when it takes place after the promise of marriage seems to have been given. Therefore, the pre-engagement phase is the lynchpin of the whole process. Hence, the process can be interpreted as a flood of decisions, which help to create a relationship with an increasingly obligatory character. As the people involved become better acquainted, so do their conversations become more intimate, sensitive, and detailed (Straßburger, 2003). Other marriage types differ from the model described above, primarily at the early stage. So, although family members, relatives and friends may play an important role, their say in why or how a partner is

chosen is limited: in contrast, in an arranged marriage, family involvement is more direct, legitimate and comprehensive. As already described, such a marriage follows institutionalized and long-established steps. Thus, families simultaneously exercise control over the matchmaking process and over the access to their kinship and ethnic community. In so doing, they are able to assert and preserve their cultural norms and conceptions of appropriate marriage partners. If these are ethnically defined, the chances of ethnical homogamous marriages increase.

4.2 Individual and Familial Preferences for Marriage Partners

The relevance structures of people involved guide the awareness of appropriate marriage partners and are socially predetermined by cultural norms. Social patterns may differ between social groups, but are typical for certain groups of people. Examining the characteristics of families and individuals used as indicators for a possible permanent and stable alliance, the most important aspect seems to be the reputation of the person and especially that of his or her family (Applbaum, 1995; Lievens, 1999). A psychologist, whose work involves arranged and, especially, forced marriages, states:

“(...) if people come from the same region, they don’t ask for the family name (because the last name doesn’t play any role there), but instead for the name of the father and grandfather. By doing so, they are able to identify who they are dealing with. Is that a good family, a bad family and so on.” (Psychologist, working in a specialized hospital for Turkish immigrants, E4, lines 1060-1063)

After being asked about the relevant criteria in selecting a marriage partner, a Syrian interviewee explained that the reputation of the spouse’s family was of prime importance to her mother:

“Then my mother told me that she knows his family, that this family had a name and that she liked them and thinks that they would be a good match.” (Syrian women aged 39, B2, lines 333-335)

Families, who use the described arrangements as an instrument for mate selection, have high community orientations that are based on traditions, customs, confidence, and solidarity (Applbaum, 1995; Bhopal, 1998; Cohen and Savaya, 2003; Haug, 2002; Moghadam, 2004; Lievens, 1999; Norris and Inglehart, 2002; Schwaneveldt et al., 2005). Respectability and reputation count highly as the social capital a family or person can rely on. The collective conscience is extensive and strong, reaching deep into people’s lives, controlling all their actions through the threat of religious and traditional sanctions, and – in relative terms – asserts the primacy of society over the individual. Therefore, the behaviour of one member of a group or family has an impact on the reputation of the group or family as a whole. A loss of face may lead to social exclusion and can affect various social interactions, including social support, leisure and commercial activities – or the marriage prospects of other family members (Applbaum, 1995). Consequently, respectability and reputation of the prospective family members have to be scrutinized in advance. As the purpose of a marriage is to establish, secure or enhance social relationships that are supposed to provide stability and protection for the individuals, it is an exceptionally important living arrangement for the future lives of all the people involved. Therefore, selecting members from promising familial networks attracts a lot of attention. Section 4.1 already explained how the arrangement procedure intends to explore these familial networks in the course of meetings and interviews with reliable informants.

Since assessing a reputation only takes place within a intra-community cultural framework of reference, social and cultural resources are associated with each other.

According to the aforementioned economic theory of the family and the social exchange theory (see section 2), families and prospective spouses strive for an optimal match which maximizes their benefits. A psychologist analysed the status of an arranged marriage as follows:

“Arranging marriages means gaining benefits for both families. That is always important. (...) That means that at all times it has (...) some kind of economic logic, a kind of rationality, where relationships and interests are concerned, (...) if one says that this is a decent family, and my daughter shall marry into this family. One view is that she is then protected. If she starts her own family, you can assume (...) that she has goals in her life and that the nuclear family, that she originally comes from, benefits from this as well.” (Psychologist, working in a specialized hospital for Turkish immigrants, E4, lines 67-74)

Since confidence in the prospective relationship and reputation are important aspects in the decision process, marriage between relatives is generally accepted (Lievens, 1999). In this case, the prospective spouse is well known from personal acquaintance and there is no need to rely on other people’s information or to gather detailed information during the arrangement process. This specific advantage is underlined by an interview partner:

“(...) the women that are seen most frequently, are kin; you also feel (...) safer, (...) parents do have a better feeling of protection, yes and of course you do know him and because you are closer to one another, it’s easier to assess his character. That’s also a crucial factor.” (Lebanese man aged 42, B8, lines 626-632)

As a consequence of this strong community orientation, the second most important factor in selecting someone as a potential marriage partner and family member is the degree of cultural homogeneity. It serves as an indicator for a stable alliance, because it is intended to facilitate decisions about joint activities and preserve and guarantee cultural norms (Lievens, 1999). Mentioned indicators are nationality, ethnicity, religion or a specific religious persuasion. Depending on the family’s preferences, some factors play a more important role than others. The psychologist interviewed outlines the relevance of community orientation:

“As a general rule, people are expected in traditional societies to act within their communities and not outside them.” (Psychologist, working in a specialized hospital for Turkish immigrants, E4, lines 1057-1059)

A Syrian woman explained what this meant for her and her family: while a specific religious orientation was the main factor for her, her parents referred to ethnically defined criteria. They wanted her to marry a Kurd, because they too were Kurdish.

Interviewee (A): “I was afraid of not finding anybody who wanted to live like I do, I mean as regards Islamic traditions. (...) For my parents it has always been important that he was a Kurd. (...) I would have married an Arabian man or a German one as well. But eventually I thought that it was my parent’s consent I should be aiming at. (...) He was a Muslim and Kurdish. (lines 37-49) (...) Then I realized, that I agreed with his Islamic persuasion. You never know the character of a person, even if you live with him or her for 10 months on your own.”

Interviewer (Q): “And how did you realize that you agreed with his Islamic persuasion?”

A: “For instance, the way he talked to my brother and what they were talking about. My brother often went to seminars with him as well. (...) Who was instructing him? - That was the most important aspect. I definitely asked him about that, who is instructing you and what are you learning. Then I knew that he was the right person.”

Q: “Did this give you an idea about how it would be in the future, I mean on the grounds of your common religious persuasion?”

A: “Yes. This was my guarantee.” (Syrian woman aged 21, B6, lines 58-68)

Expert interviews report different reactions, in the event that the preconditions for a marriage are not appropriate. In some cases, the prospective spouse has to adapt to the cultural code, while in others that is not an option and the family prohibits marrying a specific person. It is interesting to note that these families do not change their preconditions; instead – if at all – the prospective spouse has to conform to the cultural norms. A psychologist working for a hospital specializing in Turkish immigrants states:

“If the families are religious, it is very important to them that the partner is Muslim too. Sometimes we do have problems within the Muslim community here, for instance when a young Alevi falls in love with a young Sunni. (...) I have had the concrete case of a female Turkish doctor who wanted to marry a Korean man. Her family was very conservative, very religious, she was too. (...) Finally, they made him convert to Islam.” (Psychologist, working for a hospital specialized in Turkish immigrants, E4, lines 1045-1052)

After being asked whether they would allow their daughter to marry a German, a Lebanese couple demonstrated why some families attach so much importance to cultural homogeneity. In the interview, which was conducted with the help of a translator, they clearly stated that the cultural indicators enable confidence and solidarity and that it is felt that people sharing the same culture are more likely to live in harmony.

“He said that closeness and unity of the whole family is made certain when the partners have the same cultural background (...) that cohesion is better and traditions and rights are preserved, if someone comes from the same culture. They have some problems with the fact, that if it is a possibility – they gave examples where a German man converts to Islam – then they would allow their daughter to marry him, too. If he agrees to uphold their traditions and rights and if the family is committed to him, then it’s possible to allow the daughter to marry this man. Some doubts remain, but perhaps it’s just a process that needs time and one needs more time to feel confident in him. Of course it takes more time to get along with someone from a different culture.” (Lebanese man aged 42, B8, lines 558-570)

Families and people with the described community orientations tend to ignore others, who are not part of their – however defined – community. This might mean that they would either simply not even think of marrying someone from outside this community or they are not allowed to do so. In this sense such behaviour can be characterized as an act of social closure, which takes place before or during the arrangement process and is determined by cultural patterns.

Sometimes the socio-economic status of the marriage partners is a third factor in the decision process, but this seems to be less important. Unlike the previous criteria, this factor was not mentioned by interview partners. On inquiry they pointed out that socio-economic status might not be an essential reason for exclusion but that it affects the timing of the marriage, because the couple should be able to set up and maintain their own house-

hold. Therefore, striving for cultural homogeneity seems to be more important than socio-economic factors. However, we are not absolutely certain about the status of socio-economic characteristics because in some way they may also be related to reputation. Furthermore, this might be different in other cultural contexts: for example in Pakistan and India, the socio-economic background of the future spouses is linked with the affiliation to a certain caste, which compatibility with is extremely important in choosing a partner (Hombach, 2002). In Japan, there is a whole set of criteria such as level of education, income, occupation, proof of effective networks, religion and even physical attractiveness of the bride-to-be (Applbaum, 1995). Here we have to face the restrictions of a qualitative approach, a qualitative study can only deliver some plausible and coherent references to the magnitude of different factors, and quantitative research is needed for evidence. Moreover, it has to control other influencing factors such as age of marriage, age cohort, first/second generation, language skills, educational attainment and sex (Bhopal, 1997; González-Ferrer, 2006; Haug, 2002; Heaton et al., 2001; Hirschman and Teerawichitchainan, 2003; Jones, 1997; Kalmijn, 1998; Lievens, 1999; Schvaneveldt et al., 2005; Zang, 2008) as well as respective interaction terms.

4.3 Constraints of Marriage Markets

Contact opportunities are shaped by several structural arrangements (see section 2). Our qualitative study enables us to analyse the social segregation of focus groups and their influence on mating chances. However, quantitative aspects of marriage markets like group size, sex and age ratio, and regional distribution of certain groups are not in the scope of our research.

Meetings normally take place in public. This can be places people go to as part of their everyday lives, like schools, universities, workplaces, shopping centres, centres for religious worship or simply in the neighbourhood. Supplementary, semi-public get-togethers also present opportunities to meet prospective partners. These might be family celebrations or the above-mentioned meetings between two families, who intend to arrange a marriage. In contrast to other living arrangements, for which public meetings might be the starting point in becoming acquainted with someone before being followed by more private meetings, the arranged marriage form specifically prohibits any meeting in the private domain. The right to meet in private is reserved for married couples only. An affianced couple might officially go out together, but they are normally expected to take other people with them. If they are not yet engaged, they can only resort to arranging apparently coincidental meetings in public. After being asked where partners meet, an interviewee from Lebanon told us:

“Only at family celebrations, that means within the framework of events in the household for instance. (...), but normally not going out alone. To do that they should be already engaged. But of course there are many opportunities to meet each other almost by coincidence in public, when they are at school or university or when they get the chance to run into each other at the supermarket. (...) Yes, well, it is possible to meet in public, at the market or something, but it is absolutely impossible to get into a car together, and say, go as far as fifty kilometres. They have to be in public, in company, mainly because these meetings should be spontaneous anyway.” (Lebanese man aged 42, B8, lines 142-152)

Another interview partner from Syria expresses to what extent this rule is being internalized. She also demonstrates that public opinion plays an important role.

Interviewer (Q): “Could you have gone out with him on your own theoretically?”

Interviewee (A): “I don’t know, to tell you the truth. We also didn’t talk about that (...) He didn’t want that. Me neither!”

Q: “What are the reasons for not going out on your own? If it had been forbidden, what could have been the reason?”

A: “I don’t know, maybe because of other people and so on.”

Q: “The people here in Germany or those in Syria?”

A: “No, I think more the people here in Germany.” (Syrian woman, aged 23, B5, lines 145-157)

The foci of people under examination are mostly segregated in respect to ethnic criteria (Esser, 1990; Wimmer, 2002). Half of the marriages were or – in cases of not realized forced marriages – should have been arranged within the kinship. Further came about with the help of siblings or ethnical homogenous friends who made contacts with completely ethnical homogenous partners like a member of their Quran School, a peer group member, a colleague or a fellow student. Finally, two interviewees met their partners in the educational system of their country of origin. Our findings show that prospective spouses do not need to be part of the same focus group: while half of our interview partners made contact with their spouse directly, the other half relied on the help of other family members and friends in order to pre-select an adequate person.

As a consequence of migration, meeting places need not only be in Germany. Instead, family celebrations, holidays and other transnational meetings are used to establish contact between immigrants who live in Germany and people living in their countries of origin (González-Ferrer, 2006; Schroedter, 2006). Transnational marriages are arranged because the German immigrants or their families are looking for potential partners in their country of origin, from among their cousins, for example, or their extended family. The same is true for persons and families in the country of origin itself, especially because for some of them, Germany is an attractive place to go. González-Ferrer points out that there is still a large number of children of immigrants in Germany who bring their partners here from their countries of origin: “second generation immigrants and the more educated ones are more likely to marry a native both for men and women” (González-Ferrer, 2006: 181-182). But the central topics of the pre-engagement phase – direct interaction with the families and information research – are possibly more difficult in this case (Straßburger, 2003; Toprak, 2005).

A Syrian woman reports her experiences from her summer holidays:

“Just like at other visits, she – as the eldest daughter of the family – was the focus of the relatives’ and residents’ attention, who were interested in a marriage.” (Syrian women aged 25, B9, lines 2-3; the interview was conducted with the help of a translator)

In another interview, which was also conducted with the help of a translator, a Syrian man talked about his efforts to find a wife in his country of origin:

“In 1994, he visited various families [in Syria], which included, amongst others, the family of his now ex-wife. He was looking for a wife. (...) When he started again searching for a wife in Syria during a visit one year later, he ended up again at this family with their young daughter, having been otherwise unsuccessful in his search.” (Syrian man aged 51, B4, lines 9-14)

There seems to have been some change in transnational marriage arrangements. While at the beginning the place of origin was the main place for marriages to be arranged, nowadays other places, such as travel destinations, also play an important role. Whether transnational marriage arrangements (González-Ferrer, 2006; Lievens, 1999) are a consequence of the marriage market in Germany, where immigrants may not find enough potential marriage partners, is an open-ended question, even though this assumption seems plausible. Additionally, transnational interaction provides opportunities to meet a potential partner in the country of origin, even if that was at first not the intention. As a final thought on transnational arranged marriages, it might be interesting to take into account that the groups involved in these arrangements have an individual notion of national or regional borders. This is because their residential area is not their primary, or at least not their only, focus of interest in terms of the marriage market.

5. CONCLUSION

The focus of this article is on general characteristics of arranged marriages amongst Muslim immigrants in Germany. What distinguishes this type of marriage from other ways of finding a partner, for example, those where love is the predominant motivation? The most important characteristic is that the whole family is deeply involved in this process of arrangement, which consists of three stages (pre-engagement, engagement, marriage) and follows institutionalized regulations. The selection of a partner is made within an endogamy framework negotiating the interests of the families and individuals involved. Furthermore, the intention to marry is clear from the beginning of the process. Nevertheless, an exchange in the form of cohabitation or physical affection between the two potential partners is not allowed. Instead, a variety of criteria, which are regarded as relevant indicators for a steady and long-lasting relationship, are verified. Arranged marriages should not be equated with the subtype of forced marriage. In this type of arrangement, at least one of the partners is forced (mentally or physically) to marry another one, having no other alternative. This perception of enforcement can often only be identified by the person concerned – what complicates an external categorization of this subtype.

Arranged marriages can partly be described and explained by common theories of sociology of the family, but it is vital to distinguish between the observed levels of protagonists: the level of marriageable persons and the one of the family and social community. In particular the article provides evidence about how the arranged marriage type induces ethnic homogamy. For that purpose, the impact of relevant social groups, individual and familial preferences for certain characteristics in the future spouse, and some constraints of respective marriage markets are analysed in detail. Parents and ethnic communities exert influence on marriages because they may affect the internal cohesion and homogeneity of the kinship and ethnic community. Here, arranged marriages ensure direct and extensive control of the families of origin over the matchmaking by means of institutionalized admission procedures. Thus, they are able to assert and preserve their cultural norms and conceptions of appropriate marriage partners. Examining the characteristics families and individuals use as indicators for a good match, the most important criteria are culturally defined. Hence, striving for cultural homogeneity seems to be of prime priority. In line with these findings, ethnically segregated focus groups are preferred in order to pre-select potential marriage candidates. If constraints of the marriage market complicate a homogamous partner choice, transnational marriage arrangements may be an answer. As a consequence of this underlying mechanism, the chances of ethnical homogamous marriages increase. To sum up, arranged marriages are

more likely to be ethnically homogamous than others because most families who use this kind of matchmaking process are traditionally and ethnically orientated and due to the described arrangement procedures they are able to achieve their aim.

As indicated at the beginning, research about arranged marriages in Germany at present concentrates on qualitative methods. Our project has tried to enrich the debate, mainly in reference to a better understanding of the underlying criteria and the different stages of the matchmaking process itself. Nonetheless, quantitative research is essential to verify the present findings. Quantitative investigations should pay attention to the different status of the actors (e.g., through family interviews), meeting places and selection criteria (recording group memberships, social networks and their relevance to the matchmaking process). Furthermore, they should differentiate the heterogeneous cultural backgrounds and affiliations and test the influencing value of different factors. Above all, there is a fundamental lack of statistical material about the concrete number of consensual arranged marriages and forced marriages and connected socio-structural attributes such as the extent and constituency of marriage markets. All these unanswered questions underline the importance of qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods interacting – or to rephrase: the suggestive cooperation of anthropological and socio-demographic research.

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NOTES

1. Arranged marriages also occur in different non-religious and religious contexts in Asia (for instance in India, Pakistan, China and Japan), Africa and the Middle East (Applebaum, 1995; Batabyal, 2001; Bhopal, 1998; Blood, 1967; Croll, 1981; de Munck, 1996; Hombach, 2002; Mamet et al., 2005; Malhotra, 1997; Markus, 2004; Medora, 2003; Otani, 1991; Talbani and Hasanali, 2000; Wolf, 1972; Xia and Zhou, 2003; Xu and Whyte, 1990) and could even be observed in larger parts of (mainly Christian) Germany in the past.
2. According to Nauck (1997), the background to this practice is a special every-day-life theory of evolution: “(1.) The so called consensual or arranged marriage, (2.) children, and this results in (3.) love between the partners and – due to children – (4.) economical security.” (Nauck, 1997: 171; see also, Nauck, 2001: 43, translation by the authors).
3. Anderson established the concept of “imagined communities” for nations and these as a matter of course are different to ethnic groups (especially in the sense of nation states). But some of his arguments, e.g. the perception of people as a community even if they are not acquainted with each other, regardless socio-economic inequality and the actual place of living, can be adopted for ethnic groups as well.

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