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Abstract
As a response to shock stories in the media, hard-line immigration policies and a popular focus on arranged marriages ‘the Danish way’ this project attempts to follow a poststructuralist approach in order to shed light on the ways in which perceptions of arranged marriages among the Danish people interviewed through the project are formed and expressed. The term ‘arranged marriage’ can be seen in the context of a vast array of marriage practices and beliefs. To provide greater focus, the project takes its point of departure in arranged marriages within the setting of the Pakistani diaspora in Denmark. This enables the project to contextualise the data produced and analyse it within the framework of arranged marriages among Danish and non-Danish Pakistanis. In order to gain a snapshot of perceptions of arranged marriages, a number of qualitative interviews (short, semi-structured, long narrative and mini-focus group interviews) were carried out and common themes identified. Over the course of the project it became clear that the media in Denmark provides most of the information received by the Danish public on arranged marriages. Such information is presented in a very negative and one-sided fashion with a focus on shock and sensationalism. In light of this it was not too surprising to see this negativity echoed among the perceptions of arranged marriage as expressed during the interviews. Among the themes that emerged, the topic of freedom of choice and perceptions of freedom generated great debate and comment among all interlocutors. Throughout this debate (and others) adherence to a belief in Western superiority and hegemony was demonstrated through a combination of stereotyping, Othering and use of different reference points for forming perceptions.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Motivation

“Under alle omstændigheder er arrangerede ægteskaber i strid med vesteuropæiske normer om ægteskabet hvilende på individets frie valg, forelskelse og romantisk kærlighed.”

(Gyldendal, n.d.)

“In any event, arranged marriages are contrary to the Western European code of practice regarding marriage, which rests on the individual’s freedom of choice, falling in love and romantic love.”

The combination of this type of loaded information, coupled with negative attention by the mass media and politicians in Denmark makes it almost impossible to regard the practice of arranged marriages as being acceptable. Headlines that read “Forbyd Arrangerede Ægteskaber” (Rafiq, 2013) and statements made by prominent politicians such as the following citation by the former Minister of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, Bertel Haarder in 2002, imply that if you consider yourself Danish then you should hold arranged marriages in abhorrence.

“Arranged marriages and honour killings make every Dane shiver and feel pushed back to the Middle Ages. There is a massive majority in Denmark who do not want to see [such marriages]. And they are right because the children grow up in Denmark and their parents should not push them back to the Middle Ages by arranging a marriage that frequently has an unhappy ending” (Larsen 2002 in Schmidt, 2011, p. 262).

With a blurring of the terms ‘arranged’ and ‘forced’ marriage, it is easy to interpret the work being carried out by international organisations such as UNICEF to prevent forced marriages in countries where the practice is prevalent then the picture of a practice that goes against “Western” norms and standards is complete. It came as a surprise, therefore, when one of Denmark’s national television channels DR3 announced the airing in 2013 of a programme entitled Gift ved Første Blik1 whereby three young couples, matched by four experts in the fields of sociology, anthropology, sexology and religion, each entered into an arranged marriage. The first time that the couples saw each other or even were told each others’ names was at the wedding ceremony. This seemed to present a huge paradox in terms of ways of viewing arranged marriages in Denmark and caused us to ask ourselves: Why is it that a ‘Danish style’ arranged marriage is considered acceptable, and even possibly trendy, among young Danes when arranged marriage among people of non-Danish origin or in countries outside of Denmark is considered to go against fundamental ‘Danish’ values? What is the

1 Married at First Sight
difference? Could it be that so-called Western experts are given credibility in terms of representing science and a progressive approach, whereas a system based on little-understood traditions and family-based decisions in a non-Western country is considered restrictive, backwards and against Western ideals of marriage? What makes the Danish way so much better and more acceptable?

This formed the basic motivation for this project – how to reflect on this paradox and to see if there were any connections between more general concepts of Western hegemony in the field of development and the situation regarding arranged marriages in Denmark.

1.2 Context of research area

Under an overall umbrella of arranged marriage in the Pakistani/Danish context, this project takes its point of departure in an evaluation of the extent to which Danish perceptions of arranged marriages are connected with an ethnocentric viewpoint; with arranged marriages being represented and perceived as a backwards and inferior cultural practice that is both alien and threatening to the nation-state of Denmark as well as to Danish culture and values. In light of this, the Danish government’s policies, rules and regulations regarding arranged marriage and immigration are also reviewed and their potential impact on both integration of Pakistani immigrants into Denmark as well as the system of arranged marriages are discussed.

It can be seen that over the past few decades there has been an increase in attention given to transnational arranged marriages in Denmark both in the media and among the general public in Denmark but also at the political and academic levels as well as among Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)(Rytter, 2013, p. 73) (Schmidt, 2011 pp. 257 - 260). A number of studies have been carried out regarding media portrayal of ethnic minorities in Denmark whereby it is shown that there is a strong tendency to represent ethnic minorities and related topics (including arranged marriages among Muslims) negatively and in a way that contributes to and strengthens stereotyping. (Schmidt, 2011)(Andreassen, 2005)(Andreassen, 2007)(Quraishy, 1997) (Bhabha, 2004). Furthermore, in 2002 the Danish Government issued a revised version of the laws regarding transnational marriages2 that set a number of conditions to be met in order for a non-Danish spouse to be allowed to join his/her Danish spouse and live in Denmark (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2012a).

Some of these conditions were put in place specifically with the intention of preventing forced/arranged marriages. Due to factors such as a preference for arranged marriages – and in particular consanguineous marriages – combined with a relatively young average age at marriage, Pakistani immigrants and their successive generations seem to be particularly affected by the 2002 changes made to the Rules for Family Reunification. This is perhaps reflected by the number of studies that have been carried out investigating different aspects of arranged marriages within the Pakistani Diaspora in

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2 Rules for Family Reunification
Denmark, for example (Rytter, 2013) (Pedersen and Rytter, 2006) (Rytter, 2003) (Quraishy, 1997) (Quraishy, 2000) (Schmidt, 2011). These studies mainly focus on looking at the issue of transnational arranged marriages from the perspective of Danish-Pakistanis; however, it does not appear that much research has been carried out with regards to Danish perceptions of arranged marriage. This situation changed with the recent experiment “Gift ved første blik” (as described above) that made the issue extremely topical by bringing it into Danish living rooms. This programme presented a Danish version of an arranged marriage that did not elicit the same widespread adverse reactions that arranged marriages between non-ethnic Danes were subject to.

This raised questions over the reasons behind such perceived differences between arranged marriages i.e. between those conducted under Danish conditions and those carried out according to ‘other’ (in this context, Pakistani) cultural values. This in turn led to questions about the extent to which this can be attributed to concepts and practices of Othering and associated stereotyping, as presented by Edward Said (Said, 2003) and Homi Bhabha (Bhabha, 2004), that fit with the hegemonic idea of the West’s superiority as presented by Arturo Escobar (Escobar, 2012, pp. 8–9). Other questions were also raised as to the relationship between Danish perceptions of arranged marriage and acceptance of Danish political decisions and regulations such as the changes made in 2002 to the Rules for Family Reunification.

In order to further investigate these aspects, the following research question was formulated to form the basis of this project:

• In which ways could Danish perceptions of arranged marriages reinforce the underlying beliefs of Western hegemony?

We will try to answer this question by using a number of qualitative interviews to elicit both perceived themes as well as actual perceptions regarding arranged marriages. This data will be reviewed within the context of transnational arranged marriages in Denmark, with particular focus on marriages between Danish and non-Danish Pakistanis. In order to analyse the data produced, we will draw on various established theories as well as relevant research that has been carried out in this area.
1.3 Delimitations

Representation

We delimit ourselves from giving a representative view of how arranged marriages among Pakistanis are perceived by ethnic Danes. Instead we aim to provide a snapshot of how the people involved in data generation perceive arranged marriages. The views presented are not in any way intended to be representative for a wider group of people. This is in keeping with the use of qualitative research, and more specifically with the use of focus groups within a poststructural context.

Age groups/generalisability

As our study does not aim at being representative for the Danish population, or indeed for any sector of the Danish population, we delimit ourselves from examining a representative array of age groups. For the purposes of the focus group interviews we chose to focus on young and old due to their potential for exemplifying the nature of stereotypes in terms of how they can function in a society and how they travel in time.

Danish point of view

The subaltern view well represented in a number of studies and cases. Thus, we delimit this point of view as a main focus of the primary data generation in this project and instead focus on Danish perceptions. In order to contextualise and provide a framework for discussing the data produced, we provide a detailed description and analysis of arranged marriages in Pakistan – past and present – based on secondary sources.

Gender

Although arranged marriages are often considered in light of gender issues, it is not the intention of this project to investigate this aspect of arranged marriages. We therefore delimit ourselves from gender analysis in this project.

Not taking into regard whether arranged marriage is a good thing or not

This project has as its objective to seek out and analyse Danish perceptions of arranged marriages. It does not seek to either condone or condemn the practice of arranged marriages; in this way we delimit ourselves from an analysis and evaluation of the practice of arranged marriage.
1.4 Terminology

*Developing countries and the West*

We acknowledge that there is an on-going debate in the field of development in regard to terminology and being politically correct. We find that all definitions and terms have connotations more or less adhering to this, and have with that reasoning decided to use the terms *developing countries* and *the West* as referencing due to their common use in media, literature and day-to-day speech.

*Ethnic Danes’ and non-ethnic Danes’ perceptions of Danish*

This adjective is used to refer to perceptions of traditions, behaviours etc., which appears to be so-called Danish. Some participants in our interviews did not regard non-ethnic Danes perceptions as being ‘as Danish’ as ethnic Danes, which is why we will differ between these terms in our analyses.

*Arranged Marriage and Forced Marriage*

We use the definitions provided by expert in the field, Mikkel Rytter. “An arranged marriage is the norm, based on negotiations between, on the one hand, the parents and child (and probably the extended family), and, on the other, the two families involved. Forced marriage is characterised by the lack of negotiation or consent of one or both of the young people involved, and can be defined as an exception to the norm of arranged marriage (Gullestad in Rytter, 2013, p. 73).

*Traditional*

We use the term in a loose way to identify a behaviour or ritual repeated several times by groups of people, thereby also adding a social aspect to it.

*Othering*

The term is used following the same line of thinking as Professor Edward Said, who uses the term to highlight the relationship between any group of people regarded as different and inferior (Other) and discriminated against accordingly by those who consider themselves as being the superior opposite.
2. Methodology

This section is set up to provide an overview of the theoretical analysis of methods we intend to apply to our field of study. It will briefly explain the concepts, methods and strategies in the project and will therefore offer the theoretical underpinning for understanding this specific setup.

2.1 Theory of science

The theoretical point of departure in this project will be to apply a post-structural glance/observation on the field of study. The poststructuralist approach to the field is – rather than working with a separate methodological and methodical level – to incorporate the two in one intermediate level, which will serve as strategy of analysis (Andersen et al., 2005, p. 10). In other words, one primary poststructural focus is the observation of the field, since it shapes both the subject of study and the observer. The strategy of analysis entails a necessary reflection of partly how we will observe and construct our subject of study and partly, how we as observers will appear in the study.

2.2 Methodological strategy

Methods, methodology and theory are interlinked, thereby simultaneously contributing to that special glance poststructuralism offers. The practicalities in this regard will affect the structure and outcome of our project. The following will provide an overview of this intended structure and the conditions under which this project is shaped.

As presented in the Problem Area, we let our initial interest guide the way the project is shaped. Once identified, these interests and our poststructuralist determination step by step shaped our methodology and actions we took to meet and answer the research question. In the light of this, we chose not to have a predetermined theoretical frame, but instead took our point of departure in a series of unstructured interviews with randomly selected people we met on the street in Copenhagen. When coding these interviews, we were able to extract themes and topics, which again were narrowed down and helped to specify our focus. This step we granted as very important as we intended to try and limit the extent to which our predetermined perceptions of our area of interest led our research. However, we do also acknowledge the difficulties associated with this, due to the fact that we ourselves constitute part of our research field. In an attempt to minimise our influence we tried not to lead respondents and, where possible ask questions in an open and more general way. In order to provide more clarity on this point we include an overview of our interview guide in Appendix D. In this way, all three types of interviews are interlinked, as illustrated in Appendix A. For example, the short semi-structured interviews generated both themes for the focus group interviews as well as highlighted the need for a positive case story to present as stimulus in the focus group interviews. Furthermore, all three types of interviews generated data for analysis.
Hereby we have constructed a lively structure or methodology of our empirical work. Though it might seem loosely shaped, it is for us a way to stay as true as we can to our poststructural glance and follow up and analyse things, as we produce empirical data while remaining an integral part of the field. The next step is to elaborate on the methodical considerations in this project.

2.3 Methodical considerations
This section will serve to elucidate the reflections and arguments that the analysis grounds on.

Due to this scientific theoretical standpoint, our work is not based on a belief that our studies will produce ‘real’ or thorough descriptions of ‘reality’. Rather it seeks to examine these complex constructions and perceptions that arise in the encounter with the field. In view of this, a qualitative methodology can be seen as highly appropriate due to its ability to capture the complexity of social phenomena (Barbour, 2007, p. xi).

Qualitative research is more than a toolbox of methods; it encompasses the entire approach towards data production, and has been described as:

“... based on specific attitudes – of openness towards who and what is studied, of flexibility in approaching a field and moving in it, of understanding a subject’s or a field’s structure rather than of projecting a structure into what is studied...” (Flick, 2007, p. 14)

For this project we use a triangulation of methods, including unstructured interviews, narrative interviews, and focus group interviews with a degree of observation. By analysing experiences of individuals or groups these experiences can be related to among other things, everyday practices (which correlates very well to our overall objective/problem formulation); they may be addressed by analysing everyday knowledge, accounts and stories (Barbour, 2007, p. xii) They seek to unpick how people construct the world around them and put what is happening to them in terms that are meaningful.

Qualitative research refrains from setting up a well-defined concept of what is studied and from formulating hypotheses in the beginning in order to test them. Concepts are instead developed and refined in the process of research (Barbour, 2007, p. xiii)

2.4 Methods for data production
As mentioned earlier, a qualitative approach was followed in order to investigate people’s perceptions of arranged marriages. Qualitative research has been described as being more than just a number of methods in that it is: “based on specific attitudes – of openness towards who and what is studied, of flexibility in approaching a field and
moving in it, of understanding a subject’s or a field’s structure rather than of projecting a structure into what is studied...” (Flick, 2007, p. 14).

In order to address the research question, the following methods were used:

1. Short semi-structured interviews
2. Narrative interview with key informant
3. Focus group interviews

### 2.4.1 Short semi-structured interviews

A series of semi-structured interviews using an interview guide were carried out in order to gain an understanding into people’s perceptions of arranged marriages as well as issues that people associate with arranged marriages. This yielded two results in terms of project direction:

Firstly it was found that the people interviewed had limited knowledge about arranged marriages and yet expressed some firm opinions about the topic. This led to the decision to conduct focus group interviews as described below; Secondly the opinions given helped develop themes for focus group interviews carried out at a later stage in the project.

**Selection criteria**

In light of the fact that the information gained was not intended for use as part of a statistical analysis the aim was not to look for statistical representation among interlocutors. Instead people were selected at random on the street. One informal selection criteria was, however, that the person approached looked as though they would be willing to spend the time talking with us. In other words people who were obviously in a hurry were not approached.

A total of eight interviews were conducted with four men and four women participated in the interviews.

**Format of interview**

As mentioned above, an interview guide was developed for the interviews (Please see Appendix D) with the following format:

**Interaction with the interlocutor**

An introductory phrase explaining who we were and a brief description of the project, the person was then asked if they would be willing to discuss the topic of arranged marriages with us for a few minutes. Once they had agreed to be interviewed they were
informed that any information generated would be treated anonymously. In order to start the process a general opening question was used and from this point on the interlocutor was given the space to talk freely in a conversational manner about arranged marriages.

Practicalities

It was decided to use one facilitator and one note-taker. This was to reduce potential feelings of intimidation that might occur in a situation whereby one person is being interviewed by two. It also allowed the facilitator to concentrate fully on the interlocutor and follow up on comments without having to stop and record what was being said. To help create a non-threatening atmosphere, the note-taker took care not to sit/stand between the facilitator and interlocutor and tried to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Closing and evaluation

At the end of each interview the interlocutor was thanked for their time and for sharing their opinions. After this, the facilitator and note-taker reviewed the interview, cross-checked the notes with what was remembered as having been said and discussed the issues that had been raised by the interlocutor as well as personal feelings and other observations.

Collation of data

Once all interviews were completed, the notes were typed up and tabulated for ease of analysis. The tables produced not only included the points made by the interlocutor but also any other information about the person (male/female, estimate of age, etc.) as well as general reflections on the interview itself. Again, the typed notes were cross-checked with the field-notes as well as memories from the interview.

2.4.2 Narrative interview

In order to investigate arranged marriages in Denmark it was decided to carry out a narrative interview with a Pakistani woman whose marriage had been arranged, currently living in Denmark. A narrative interview can be defined as an interview whereby instead of being given questions to answer, the interviewee is asked to tell a story about a particular part of their life (Flick, 2007, p. 78). Personal contacts were used and Nadia (name changed to preserve anonymity) was interviewed. The purpose of the interview was not only to gain a better understanding of some of the issues facing Pakistanis in arranged marriages in Denmark, but also to provide material to build a case study on that could be used during focus group meetings to be held at a later stage in the project.
Format of the interview

The interview was completely unstructured and Nadia was simply asked to tell the story of her marriage. During the course of Nadia’s narrative points of interest were followed up on and probed by asking questions in a conversational manner. These questions were spontaneous and were guided by Nadia’s remarks and comments. The interview took one-and-a-half hours and was recorded (with the consent of Nadia).

Selection criteria

Although Nadia is known to one of the group members it was assessed that the benefits outweighed potential bias. This is due to the sensitivity of the topic; it was felt that it would have been very difficult within the time-frame and scope of the project to identify a stranger who would be willing to openly discuss arranged marriage in this way. It was found that Nadia was very much at ease and willing to discuss personal details and aspects of both her own and her sister’s marriage.

2.4.3 Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews were held in order to gain a deeper understanding into both how participants perceive arranged marriages as well as the reasons behind these opinions. As stated by David Morgan: “Focus groups are useful when it comes to investigating what participants think, but they excel at uncovering why participants think as they do.” (Morgan in Barbour, 2007, p. 32). There is no one set method to follow when conducting focus groups as design depends greatly on the aim of the group with choices being made, for example: regarding the role of the moderator, ranging from that of facilitating to directing the group (Morgan, 1998, pp. 50–52); number of participants with “small” groups of between 4 and 8 participants or “large” groups with over 10 participants (Morgan, 1998, pp. 71–76); type of questioning in terms of using an interview guide or a series of pre-determined questions (Krueger, 1998, pp. 9–12). It is possibly more relevant to look at defining a focus groups through the way in which it is carried out: “any group discussion may be called a focus group as long as the researcher is actively encouraging of, and attentive to, the group interaction” (Kitzinger and Barbour in Barbour, 2007, p. 2). In this sense, being active relates to the way in which the focus group discussion is run and ensuring that participants talk amongst themselves as far as possible rather than to the moderator. As a part of running focus groups in a way that encourages participation it is also important to prepare well when developing a topic guide and selecting stimulus material. Furthermore although it is important that group members have enough in common and feel comfortable with each other so that they can talk easily together, it is also important that they have enough differences of opinion to allow for debate and discussion. (Barbour, 2007, p. 3).

One of the strengths of focus groups when compared with one-to-one interviews is that
focus groups may also encourage participation of individuals who may otherwise be reluctant to talk about their experiences due to feeling that they have little to contribute to a research project (Kitzinger in Barbour, 2007, p. 19). Focus groups are also considered as being particularly appropriate for accessing perspectives on topics to which participants may previously not have considered (Barbour, 2007, p. 27). Furthermore, focus groups allow data to be produced through enabling participants to react and build on responses of other group members (Morgan, 1997) thus giving access to data that might not occur during a one-to-one interview

Format of the interview

It was decided that a moderately structured group best suited the needs of the project: Moderately structured groups are described as being appropriate for situations whereby the aim is to learn both about the focus of the research but also just as much to learn about participant’s interests. (Morgan, 1998, pp. 52–53). In this case the aim of the focus group was to both learn more about issues that had been raised during the semi-structured interviews but also to learn more about what participants perceived as being interesting and important. In accordance with recommendations for planning a moderately structured focus group interview, the “funnel design” was used whereby questions are used that enable the discussion to move from broader to narrower topics (Morgan, 1998, p. 53) (Krueger, 1998, pp. 21–30). Five categories of questions were used:

1. Opening: quick question to put people at ease and break the ice;
2. Introductory: open-ended questions to start discussion of the topic in general terms and to allow participants to say how they perceive the subject (arranged marriages). These allow a less structured conversation and give the chance to discover new insights. There is less moderator involvement with the emphasis placed on encouraging all members of the group to participate;
3. Transition: questions that link introductory questions with key questions, go into issues in more depth than the introductory questions, cover predetermined issues that are central to the topic. The moderator takes a greater directive role to enable the group to focus on the topics;
4. Key: Specific and narrow questions where the moderator is looking for specific answers;
5. Ending: The moderator provides a short summary and asks whether the summary adequately covers the issues and ideas that have been discussed. The final question is a way to ensure that all participants feel that they have had the opportunity to contribute and to check whether there are any issues that participants would like to have discussed regarding the main topic but did not feel that they had the chance to do so.

Questions were developed drawing on information gained from the interviews conducted earlier and are presented in Appendix E. Prior to conducting the focus group it was emphasised to participants that the aim was for them to hold an informal discussion about arranged marriages with the moderator using various visual and audio prompts as well as direct questions to guide the conversation.

The focus group was conducted with one moderator and one assistant moderator. This was to ensure that the moderator would be able to focus purely on the group, following leads, giving appropriate prompts, etc. The role of the assistant moderator was to provide support for the moderator by taking charge of the practicalities – providing refreshments, handing round materials for use by the group, etc. as well as note-taking regarding the group dynamics and interactions or individual characteristics that may be relevant for the analysis. The focus group interviews each lasted for between 75 and 105 minutes and were recorded (with prior permission from the participants).

**Selection criteria**

The original focus of the project was “Danish” perceptions of arranged marriages. Recognising that “Danish perceptions” was too broad a focus for the scope of the project it was decided to narrow the focus to “perceptions among older and younger Danes of arranged marriages”. The category “older” we define as being retired people above the age of 70. The category “younger” we define as being people between 22 and 25 years old.

These two categories (young and old) were selected due to their relevance to the issue of changes that have occurred within marriage practices (both Danish and Pakistani) over time. More specifically to establish:

1. The degree in which stereotyping is based on a “fixed” conceptualisation of a practice (i.e. of what an arranged marriage is) despite changes that occur over time in the practice itself
2. The degree in which perceptions of marriage as a concept in itself (i.e. not focusing on arranged marriages) differ between generations
3. The degree in which younger people can be said to be more open-minded than older people in terms of trying new ways of finding a partner (e.g. internet dating) and accepting differences

It is important to note that the interviews conducted are not intended to produce data for extrapolation to the wider population or within the same age groups of the wider population (i.e. it is not the intention of the project to state that the results are relevant to other young/elderly Danish people. Instead the intention is to provide a deeper
insight into the perceptions of the interlocutors involved and to draw conclusions that are relevant to these people only.

**Number of group members**

The focus groups were conducted with the aim of having between 4 and 8 participants in each group, i.e. groups that can be referred to as “mini-groups” (Greenbaum, 1998). This was partly due to practicalities, as it was difficult to schedule larger groups of appropriate participants, but it is also in concord with recommendations that more in-depth information can be generated by small groups due to the greater contribution required from each participant, especially when the aim of the group is to gain a deeper insight into opinions and thoughts on a topic (Greenbaum, 1998)(Morgan, 1998, pp. 73–75).

**Homogeneity and group dynamics**

In keeping with guidelines on focus group interviews as outlined in relevant literature (Morgan, 1998, pp. 59–69), it was felt important that the participants in the groups interviewed were as homogeneous and compatible with each other as possible. This aims at ensuring that participants are comfortable speaking and airing their views with each other, this helping to generate the good group dynamics that are so important for a successful focus group interview. This would probably not be the case if participants were a group of people who had never met before and who were each representing different segments of society. As described above, separate focus groups were held with groups of older and younger people.

**Our role as researchers and ‘moderators’**

In the previous section, Theory of Science, our role as researchers was already emphasised, as this had implications regarding the empirical data we were producing. Our poststructural stance makes it impossible for researchers to act like ‘a fly on the wall’ – rather it is the case that we, for a big part, are the creators of data. Therefore, it is a priori for poststructuralists that we will always be part of the field we are doing research on, and thus constructing.

Researchers play an important role in the research, “(...) either in terms of their own personal presence as researchers, or in terms of their experiences in the field and with the reflexivity they bring to the role (...)” (Barbour, 2007, p. xiii).

In more practical terms, the researcher has different tasks to do both before and after the interview. In addition to designing the interviewing guide, planning and preparing for the interviews, the researcher (or ‘moderator’ in connection with focus groups) should pick up on differences in views of the interlocutors and be ready to follow up and explore these. The moderator should also be aware of the dynamics within the group to
see, for instance, if and how a consensus is made, or if the participants are developing explanatory framework and for what, etc. (Barbour, 2007, p. 3)

2.5 Validity
When dealing with validity it is at utmost importance to stay true to the scientific theoretical point of view of the project or research. One good example of this is our poststructural viewpoint, since it positions us far from for instance realistic research ambitions that intends to provide ‘true’ or ‘real’ descriptions of reality (Søndergaard, 2005, p. 264). Instead, one focal characteristic of poststructuralism is how truth is partial and pluralised (Stormhøj, 2006, p. 46). This renders an absolute truth impossible, because this would require an absolute standard as measure. Hence, a central precondition in poststructuralism is that any description of ‘reality’ will preclude another. In this project it means that any perception will be ‘reality’ for the individual, but should not be understood as an absolute truth valid for all.

The same is applicable for our analysis. Instead of aiming at constructing an absolute truth or real presentation of ‘reality’, we will offer possible understandings and ways to achieve ‘something’, based on having on the one hand empirical data and on the other a number of theoretical concepts (Søndergaard, 2005, p. 264).

2.6 Generalisability
It has already been made clear that our poststructural view implies that all scientific knowledge is partial. However, we still argue that the debate and argumentation in this project can be used in a broader sense. This is possible because we argue that the discussion we bring to light about arranged marriages, could be seen in regard to perceptions on a range of other issues (such as freedom and coercion).

Another important thing to state is that when we mention generalisability in this project it has nothing to do with the quantity of empirical work we have made. Rather it embeds those stances and insights we are able to gain through our qualitative work with the field. The complexity it entails is what we are seeking to uncover, which is why we are triangulating the methods. The complexity in perceptions of arranged marriages in Denmark has something to say about the overall Danish situation when it comes to interacting with other cultural practices and our role in the Western hegemony. In this way, we argue that we meet the intention of generalisability, and are able to work with it in as far it is allowed by our poststructural viewpoint.

Having more interviews or interlocutors would therefore, with this argumentation, not necessarily be tantamount to a higher level of quality. We have addressed several different views from our different empirical work and strived to stay open-minded to the nuanced and complex field.
2.7 Data Treatment

The interviews conducted contain a number of translations. Besides the pure linguistic translations (English-Danish, Danish-English), this project also holds other translations more figurative speaking. The first one is translating our problem formulation with research questions into questions for the interviews, and thus finding a simpler and more applicable way to get the interlocutors to reflect upon certain things. The second translation takes place from the oral interaction to the written transcription, which will be elaborated on in the following section (Brinkman and Tanggaard, 2010, p. 43). However, a note on the interviews conducted in the streets will be presented first.

Since our intention with the street interviews was brief immediate sessions, order to not make the participants feel uneasy with the situation we chose not to record them. Instead we distributed the work between us, and let one do the interview, while the other would take notes. After each interview both of us would go over the notes and add our impressions of the session, while writing down phrases and other things to remember.

All other interviews both key and focus groups, were recorded using a dictaphone, and then subsequently transcribed into an text object for analysis. This step is important to consider given the influence it has on the data we are producing.

The transcription, however thorough, will not be able to record all information, and thus some elements will be lost, for instance irony or body language like nodding or shaking of the head, disbelief, or some group dynamics (Brinkman and Tanggaard, 2010, p. 43). The lively oral interaction will thus be simplified and ‘frozen’. Apart from this, the transcript allows the researcher to work more intensively with the interviews, carry out coding, finding themes and continue the analysis of the produced data.

In order to create consistency among the interviews, we followed Kvale’s precept of designing a concerted transcription guide (Kvale, 1997, p. 171). The primary constituent of the strategy is to stay true to the options shared, and thus transcribing it as verbatim as possible. We did however, find it important to do the interlocutors justice by presenting their views as we believe, they would have wanted to express themselves in written language (Kvale, 1997, p. 171). This entailed leaving out disturbing “Ehs” or repetitions in the same sentence.

To conclude, all our participants in all interviews are anonymised in order to protect their views. Our interviewee from the key interview was given a pseudonym, because some viewpoints of hers were used as a central stimulus in the focus group interviews. Instead of a number or simply no name, we named her ‘Nadia’ for the interlocutors to have something more personalised to relate to.
3. Danish Marriage Traditions

In order to describe the framework for this section, the following quote can be used as point of departure:

“Even though roughly 90% of Denmark’s population are of the opinion that traditions form a part of our national heritage, and many believe that these traditions need to be preserved and not subjected to outside influences, reality is something different. What we in everyday terms understand by traditions certainly belong to the so-called cultural baggage, but this baggage adapts and is changed over time (...)” (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 35).

This quote clarifies why examining the origins of cultural traditions is interesting with regards to understanding contemporary perceptions of the same. It seems that traditions are generally regarded as being something fixed or never changing, but the case is rather that traditions are ever changing and modified throughout time. This section will cover a review of main issues of Danish marriage traditions with point of departure in the 19th century, and will bring it up-to-date with examples of newer marriage issues in Denmark. This contextualisation will be used to reflect interviewee’s perceptions of traditions and change in cultural practices in Denmark.

What differentiates traditions from rituals is their strong connection to the past, even though both concepts may have roots that go (far) back in time. A tradition can be described as a joint or common way of acting for a large or small group of people (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 35). Both for rituals and traditions it applies that the action refers to something repeated on a regular basis and that it involves several people, thus there is also a social dimension (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 35). Therefore the following section on traditions will opt to cover the different approaches towards such trends as these, and will be divided into eight parts: Love and Marriage, The Choice – Marriage as Society’s stable Unit, Identity and Behaviour, Initialising the Marriage – the Betrothal, I do-party, The age of marriage and other standards, Arranged Marriages and Married at First Sight.

3.1 Love and Marriage

As an institution, marriage has its roots in feudal societies of previous times (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 12). It was an arrangement made in order to secure the continuation of the peasant family and their stock, and created a safety net for the young couple and their respective families alike. At that time, there was no apparent conjunction between marriage and love, and neither was love a precondition to marriage itself. It was only much later during Romanticism that love and marriage were

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3 According to a survey carried out by Else Marie Kofod in 2000.
4 Personal translation
bound together in more bourgeois parts of society (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 14). So romantic notions and attraction did not usually initialise the marriage, as these were thought of as providing too fragile a basis for something as substantial as marriage. Love was perceived as a gift of grace, a wonder, and was not perceived as something humans were (or should be) in control over. God was perceived as the creator of love, and therefore one should have faith in order to receive love (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 20). Once the marriage was formed, love would happen between the couple in their married life.

It is in this context, however, important to emphasise that traditions and rituals differ immensely in different classes of society. What seems to be the norm of peasants and the lower classes might not have been actual or widespread among the higher classes. At that time the difference was seen both in traditions and in legislation (Hansen, 2006, p. 19). For instance, it was in the higher classes that it first became acceptable to even consider marrying for love.

3.2 The choice – marriage as society's staple unit

In direct opposition to love-marriages, it was not uncommon in the 19th Century that the married couple-to-be were not acquainted before the wedding (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 19). It was thought of as wise not to interfere in the process of finding the future partner, as it was likely to add distractions in the choice; such as attraction to his or her appearance or other non important things. The choice, on the other hand, was entrusted first and foremost to God, then to close relations and subsequently friends of the bride- or groom-to-be (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 19).

There were, however, the practical things to take care of which for obvious reasons were hard to delegate to God. Therefore parents were considered the only viable option for taking the responsibility to consider and decide whom their children should marry (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 105). It had considerable consequences for the parents themselves, which added to the general stance that parents should be leading marriage decisions. The important thing for the parents was to ensure that the family’s assets, such as their farm, shop or business, could be carried on and secured. If this step was followed, the new generation would likewise be sure of good and safe economical and social circumstances (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 105). This resonates with the importance parents put into finding an economical equal spouse, who preferably should not be of a lower social standing.

The leading role parents played in Denmark in the 19th century should therefore be seen in the light of a general concern of how to uphold the family's social and economical security. Moreover, this played a decisive role in regard to people's identity and behaviour in society at that time. Due to this, marriage was not only a very important institution in society of the time, but also its staple unit in more than one sense (Hansen, 2006, p. 19).
3.3 Identity and behaviour
Just as marriage comprised a central role in societies in Denmark in the 19th century, marriage was also taken as a point of identification on a more personal level. Once more there is a clear difference between the different social and economical living standards in society. This section on how marriage affected identity and behaviour will take its point of departure in smaller village societies and among peasants, as this tends to be where most literature focuses.

One of the reasons why it is interesting to examine how and to what extent marriage affected such personal matters among the lowest economical class in society is because marriage had the ability to create numerous consequences for the individual. First of all, the individual had a very low priority in society (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 36). Instead, the community existing in a smaller village or parish was prioritised, not only in terms of fulfilling an important role in regard to common tasks and investments – but also on the social scene (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 36). Therefore, when two people decided to marry it also concerned the whole community since it signified that a new member needed to be phased in. For example it could be of potential danger for the community if the married couple were not economically stabil, e.g. having a farm or small business and (at least) a well-equipped household. The danger, so to say, was the possible extra burden that society would bear by providing social security for an unstable new member, and thereby society would risk being thrown out of balance (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 36).

These risks are some of the changes society faced when two young people chose to get married thus becoming a part of the community. Looked at from a different angle, these were also changes that marked a difference for the newlyweds in the society. Changing status from being unmarried to married entailed that they now belonged to an entirely different guild and consequently had a say in community matters (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 39). For the women, getting married entailed that they now were their husband’s responsibility, as they were declared incapable of managing their own affairs.

To summarise, it becomes clear that changing status from unmarried to married had a range of consequences for men and women alike. It gave a freedom to vote or have a say in community matters, as well as providing social and economical security. These were some of the values and material goods the foundation of marriage could or should account for and leads to explaining which traditions were present and to what degree they affected people.

3.4 Initialising the marriage – the betrothal
The engagement was the initiation of the marriage, where vows are made for the coming couple. The importance of the engagement has, however, changed radically during history.
In the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century the denomination most commonly used for two people having promised each other a marriage, was actually not engagement but rather betrothal. The term betrothal (or troløvelse in Danish) attests to its significance by meaning that one will be truthful toward the act of marriage. For the two persons involved, the term in Danish for the woman and man respectively were fæstemø and fæstemand – where the term fæste in this context refers to the marriage contract that the wooer and the father of the bride would make (Hansen, 2006, p. 19). At this step, the marriage was already regarded as established and presents would for instance be exchanged. The origins of these terms stems from before the Reformation, where marriage was regarded a secular act (Hansen, 2006, p. 19).

After the Reformation in the 16\textsuperscript{th} Century marriage became an act closely connected to the church (Hansen, 2006, p. 19). The local priest and at least five other witnesses were required to bear witness to the betrothal in order for it to be considered valid. The subsequent ceremony in the church was only a confirmation of the vows made at the betrothal, and thus was only seen as secondary.

Once the betrothal was made it could not be broken unless this was accepted by the Court. Breaking the betrothal was thus seen as asking for a divorce, something that people were very unlikely to subject themselves – or others – to (Hansen, 2006, p. 19). This is, however, one of those issues where there is a clear difference between peasants and the bourgeoisie regarding what was acceptable both legally and socially. High-ranking citizens were, by law, not required to follow this and therefore in practice it was only peasants who had to obey the requirements of getting betrothed. This was legally changed in 1799 so that no one would have to follow suit but it remained the same for peasants far into the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century (Hansen, 2006, pp. 19–20). The bourgeoisie had in other words, far more freedom to do what they pleased and were not bound in the same way as peasants were to follow national legislation.

Due to this change, the notion of engagement gained foothold in the different stratum of society. Unlike betrothal, the engagement was (and still is) an entirely private conception, which could be ended without any official involvement (Hansen, 2006, p. 20). Despite the legal change, the requirements from the era of betrothals lingered on; namely that the marriage still had to be formally initiated and proclaimed at least three months before the wedding. This was formally done with banns announced in the church, and this ceremony likewise served as an opportunity for anyone opposed to the wedding to speak out about their concerns – a tradition that is still practiced in traditional Christian wedding ceremonies (Hansen, 2006, p. 20). It is interesting to note, that this legal obligation of engagement actually continued in some form right up until 1969 when it was abolished in Denmark (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 51).

As an extension to the engagement and the banns, a so-called Ja-gilde (‘I do’-party) was held. The following section will illuminate the circumstances and tenor of this specific tradition.
3.5 ‘I do’-party
Where the betrothal and the banns were mainly an act for the public and the church respectively, the ‘I do’-party was first and foremost for the two families about to unite. The main purpose of this party was to get all practicalities, especially the economical ones, clarified and get a clear overview of the other family’s status – both socially and economically. Christiansen and Nielsen has a source accounting that: “All possibilities, fortunes, expected inheritance, have to be brought out into the open ... this is where the future is budgeted for. Here the foundation for the young couple’s existence is laid (...)”(Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 37). This quote illuminates the importance of this party, as it becomes clear that the foundations of economical security and more are laid here for the coming husband and wife.

The party was held at the bride’s home and usually took place on the last Saturday before the banns (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 37). To uphold the agreement and render it visible the couple were obliged to shake hands. One of the family’s elders would put their hand on top of the couple’s and utter something serious before giving them their blessing (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 37). This ritual was actually seen as the binding agreement that would initiate the marriage, and from this point forth the couple would be regarded as man and wife. It is interesting because this non-official tradition had more importance attached to it than for instance the banns in church. It was crucial for the two families that they could make a good and secure match as reflected in how the different traditions and agreements were weighted.

3.6 The age of marrying and other standards
Getting married in the 19th Century was not an easy affair. As already clarified in the previous sections there were several agreements and banns to take into account before the actual wedding could take place. Besides this, there were, however, a number of more practical considerations to comply with before being able to join the fellowship of the married. One of these things was – and still is – the age of marriage.

As provision to enter into marriage, a minimum age of 20 for the groom and 16 for the bride was required (Hansen, 2006, p. 20). However, if they chose to get married in such an early age they needed their parents or guardian to approve before it could go ahead. The average age for both men and women was nonetheless much higher, even though some chose to get married at an early age. In 1870-1874 the average age for men was a surprisingly high 30.9 years, whereas the age for women was 27.8 years on average (Hansen, 2006, p. 25). There is a minor incongruence in the different sources, but all point at average ages around the numbers stated (Rubin and Westergaard, 1890) (Hansen, 2006) (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002). All of these sources do, however, point to a relatively high average age in the 19th Century. Reasons for this can mainly be found in the economical status of the coming couple. As brushed upon in the previous

5 Personal translation.
section on Identity and Behaviour, it was important that the man should have a well equipped home and an opening to inherit or take over land. For bachelors living in the bigger cities they would have to have finished their education before marrying and likewise have a well equipped home. Money did, therefore, play a prominent role. For instance, if the father of the bride did not feel confident in entrusting his daughter to a man of debateable economical status, he was free to reject the marriage offer (Hansen, 2006, pp. 20–21). Neither could a man marry if he had received the so-called Fattighjælp (Economical support for the poor) and not paid back the amount within five years (Hansen, 2006, p. 21). This is comparable to today’s requirements for family unification, where it can not be approved if the Danish spouse has received kontanthjælp (similarly an economical support) within the last three years (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2012a).

3.7 Marriage traditions up until the present day.
Many things have changed since the 19th century in terms of the foundation of marriage and how people perceive it. The previous review has clarified some of the main issues in this regard and the ground is now laid for an elaboration of how the marriage tradition in rough terms has changed up until newer times. The section will only focus on a few issues and will review the whole progression together.

In the wake of registry-office wedding being legalised, marriage traditions – like several other aspects of society – became secularised. Nowadays they account for about two third of all weddings in Denmark (Danmarks Statistik, 2012). A major change in this direction came in the 70s, where many people opted out of civic norms and traditions, causing a large percentage of Danes to boycott marriage as they did not see a reason to commit to each other on paper (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 52). This anti-ritualistic development did, however, change again, and it can be seen in statistics that the percentage of couples choosing to get married is now increasing (Danmarks Statistik, 2012).

Also when looking at the aspect of love the situation is quite different than previously. Where a love-marriage was once considered risky business, nowadays the common opinion is that the couple’s love for each other should be what binds the marriage – not money or rank (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 105). The authors of the book Kærlighedens Ansigter6, describe this as a chink in modern marriage’s armour: its inability to withstand adversity, because of romantic love being the most stable entity in the relationship (Christiansen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 28).

Parents’ influence and arrangement of marriages

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6 ‘The Many Faces of Love’
As identified earlier, parents or guardians were very much involved in their children's marriage. The family had to agree on the selection of spouse and would reject a less wise choice (Hansen, 2006, pp. 26–27). Full arrangement of marriages was also common, and a significant involvement of parents in major life decisions could be seen in Denmark up until the 50s. The royal family also carried on with this practice up until very recently. The idea of arranged marriages might, however, sound weird or unusual to the majority of Danes today, but the difference between that and what we regard as a ‘normal’ Danish marriage might not be as wide as first perceived (Simonsen, 2005). In the article by Simonsen, Mikkel Rytter argues that it is a myth that those two forms of marriage are perceived as opposites as they are usually controlled by the same things; that is, finding a suiting partner. For Pakistani families in Denmark for instance, an evaluation of the possible partner will take place before the wedding, in much the same way as Danish parents or friends will evaluate and approve of the partner when they are introduced to that person. The degree of parents’ involvement is different – but the driving forces behind it are closely connected to each other (Simonsen, 2005).

3.8 Married at First Sight
Bringing the marriage discussion right up-to-date, in 2013 DR3 launched a programme that followed and documented eight weeks in the lives of three couples, from the point in time when each couple entered into an arranged marriage. What made this programme stand out was that the three couples were ethnic Danes who had been matched by a panel of experts7. None of the individuals or their families had any knowledge of their bride/groom-to-be before their wedding day. After eight weeks of marriage each couple was given the option to divorce or remain married. During the programme a lot of emphasis was given to the ‘science’ behind the matchmaking with the impression given that the experts’ combined fields of experience and knowledge created the best-chance scenario for ensuring a good match that would lead to love blooming between the couples. The programme proved immensely successful in many ways – firstly through the number of people who applied to take part in the programme; secondly the immense popularity enjoyed by the programme when it was on air; and thirdly the wave of interest and discussion that it has created, not only in the media but also through debating panels (for example at the Museum of Copenhagen) and general discussion.

7 Comprising an anthropologist, a priest, a psychiatrist and a sexologist
4. Marriage traditions in Pakistan

With reference to relevant literature (Rytter, 2013)(Nayab, 2009)(Zaidi and Shuraydi, 2002), personal communication (Interviewee A, 2013) and web-based discussions (Rough Cut, 2006)(Overseas pakistan, n.d.) it can be seen that both historically as well as in today's world, arranged marriages are the predominant marriage type in Pakistan. It is difficult to find statistical sources but one estimate puts the percentage of marriages that have been arranged by a third party in Pakistan at 80% (Rough Cut, 2006)

As mentioned in section XXX traditions are not static and that they change over time. This is also true when regarding traditions among the Pakistani community – both in Pakistan as well as in the Pakistani Diaspora – in connection with the practice of arranged marriages. This chapter gives a historical overview of marriage rituals and fundamental aspects of marriage in a Pakistani context as well as an insight into some of the major changes that have occurred (and are still occurring) both in Pakistan as well as in the Danish-Pakistani community.

4.1 Marriage in Pakistan

There are some key aspects which separate marriage in Pakistan from marriage in Denmark. These include the importance of marriage, concepts of family identity versus individualism; perceptions and importance of consanguineous marriage; and average age at first marriage. These are explained further below.

4.1.1 Importance of marriage

Marriage is considered to be extremely important in Pakistan and it is almost unthinkable for a woman (or man) to remain unmarried. As stated by Rytter “it is therefore not so much a question of whether they are going to be married or not, but rather a question of when, where and to whom” (Rytter, 2013, p. 69). Figures collated by the United Nations for 2007 (United Nations Data, 2007) show only 1.4% of women in Pakistan between the ages of 45 and 49 in 2007 to be single. With the percentage of men in the same age bracket who were single in 2003 being 1.74%. The remaining women/men were married, widowed, divorced or single as shown in table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women aged 45-49, 2007</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Marriage statistics for Pakistani men and women in 2003 and 2007 respectively

Adapted from (United Nations Data, 2007)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Widowed</th>
<th>9.8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 98.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Married</th>
<th>95.39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 98.26

This shows that by the age of 45-49 the vast majority of men and women in Pakistan in 2003 and 2007 respectively were either married or had been married. This concurs with data from the 1990s that shows the percentage of women who marry to be 98%, while marriage for men is given as being “almost universal” (Retherford et al., 2002, p. 37).

### 4.1.2 Importance of family

The importance of the family in Pakistani society cannot be over-stressed. This is a constantly recurring theme across the literature and personal accounts regarding both society in general, as well as arranged marriages in particular, in Pakistan. Whereas in the West/Denmark people are appraised and regarded according to their merits as an individual, in Pakistan the individual is inextricably linked with his/her family's merits. This has many consequences outlined by Korson (Korson, 1969, pp. 154–155) as follows:

- The status, connections and reputation of the family are often more important than those of the individual;
- Success as an individual is regarded in terms of improving the position of the whole family (economically; socially; in terms of prestige);
- Older children are expected to help younger siblings (in terms of education; finding a job; finding a spouse);
- The extended family provides protection and help to its kin;
- There is intergenerational continuity with very close family ties being created between grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins as well as between members of the nuclear family units;
- There is great respect shown by children of all ages to their parents (Rytter, 2003) (interviewee A, 2013).
Although Korson’s work draws on a study conducted almost 50 years ago, in 1969, it can be seen from contemporary studies that this is still very much the case today with marriage within the Pakistani culture being seen as a marriage of families and not just between individuals. (Nidal, 2010) (Rough Cut, 2006) (Rytter, 2013 p. 69) (Haq, 2012) (Overseas Pakistan, n.d.) (World Trade Press, 2010, p. 9). As Mikkel Rytter notes: “In Pakistani families it is the responsibility and duty of the parents to see that their children marry. Therefore a young man needs his parents’ help and influence, if “it is going to be done right”” (Rytter, 2003). Even with new web- and television-based methods of matchmaking as described in table X, the emphasis is on marriage and not dating and parents are still heavily involved in and have influence over the process (Riccardi, 2004) (Shackle, 2013) (Haq, 2012). Not only is it seen as the duty of parents to see that their children marry but children also regard it as their duty to uphold family honour and prestige when it comes to not only their choice of spouse but also adherence to the norms of marriage. This means that even when a marriage can be considered a ‘love marriage’ or ‘semi-arranged marriage’ the couple involved will often still follow the customary way of allowing their respective parents to make the formal request for marriage, as if the match has been decided on between the parents with the couple agreeing to their suggestion (Rytter, 2013, p. 74).

4.1.3 Importance of consanguineous marriage
It is very important to acknowledge and understand the high level of consanguineous marriages in Pakistan, especially between first cousins: in 2010 Pakistan was said to have “one of the highest rates of consanguineous marriage in the world.” (Jones, 2010). Furthermore, results from the 2006-7 Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) show that roughly two-thirds of women were married to a relation, with 52% of all women married to their first cousins. Only 33 percent of married women were not related to their husbands. (Jones, 2010, p. 9) (Nayab, 2009, p. 4). Although this highlights the preference for consanguineous marriage in Pakistan, it is also important to gain an understanding of the reasons for this preference. According to research carried out in Karachi in 1995, the main reasons among those interviewed for consanguineous marriage were found to be sociocultural rather than economic or religious (Hussain, 1999) and are outlined below:

- Best opportunity for compatibility between husband and wife, and the bride and mother-in-law;
- Pride – remaining within the bounds of clan endogamy implies that the family is ‘sought after’ and has a better social standing than if it opted for an exogamous marriage (such a marriage may imply that the parents were unable to find a match within the family due to undesirable traits in their daughter);
- Social and cultural similarities between first cousins likely to help in development of stable marital bond;
- Having common relatives to turn to for assistance if marital conflict occurs;
• Better and ‘more caring’ attitude of the in-laws, making it a happier and easier transition for the bride;
• Less importance attached to physical attributes of the proposed bride – reduces the stress of visits by ‘bride-inspectors’ (potential mothers- and sisters-in-law) (source: Hussain, 1999, pp. 455–457)

When comparing figures from the Pakistani Demographic Health Surveys for women in consanguineous marriages it can be seen that between 1990-91 and 2006-07 there was actually a slight increase in such marriages. Although the increase is very small (2%) it does show that consanguineous marriage is maintaining its status as being a desirable form of marriage (Nayab, 2009, p. 3)

4.1.4 Young age at marriage
In Pakistan it can be seen that the average age at first marriage is relatively low (in comparison with Denmark) with the 2006-7 average age at first marriage for women being 21 and 26 (in 1998) for men (Nayab, 2009). In Denmark the average age at first marriage in 2012 was 32 for women and 35 for men (Statistics Denmark, n.d.)

According to Quraishy (Quraishy, 1997) (Quraishy, 2000) the young age at first marriage in Pakistan can in part be attributed to a lack of tolerance for sexual relations outside of marriage; therefore it makes sense to marry at an age when sexual desire is strong - put by Quraishy to be at the age of between 18 and 24.

4.1.5 Why is there a preference for arranged marriages in Pakistan?
In order to answer this question, it is necessary to summarise some of the issues discussed in the previous sections on marriage in Pakistan and Denmark. As shown, arranged marriages have taken place in various forms across continents, religions and time. Even in today’s Denmark parents still take part, albeit indirectly, in the choice of spouse (Quraishy, 2000). Quraishy refers to a study that was carried out by the newspaper Politiken in 1997 whereby Danish parents responded to a questionnaire about choice of partner. In the survey 65% of parents said that if their daughter wanted to marry a Muslim then they would try to prevent her from doing so.

In general it can be concluded that reasons behind arranged marriage in a Pakistani context include:

• The importance of family involvement – to secure a “good” marriage in terms of family, character, similarities, etc.
• Lack of opportunity for young women and men to meet and form a relationship due to the practice of purdah whereby there is very little contact allowed between the opposite sexes (Korson, 1969) (Rytter, 2013)
• Young age at marriage might mean that it is felt that there is a lack of maturity which can be provided by drawing on the experience of parents and other family members (Quraishy, 2000).
• The role played by the family as a social safety-net: if problems arise in a marriage that has had involvement from the family in its establishment then it is more likely that both sides of the families involved will take an active and helpful interest in resolving any such issues (Schmidt, 2011, p. 268)(World Trade Press, 2010, p. 10).

4.2 Bringing marriage up to date
It is just as difficult to give an example of a ‘typical’ arranged marriage in Pakistan as it is to present a picture of the ‘typical’ Danish marriage: there is no one snapshot that fits all circumstances and there are a wealth of different customs as well as variance between families. However, by drawing on a number of sources (Quraishy, 1997)(Nayab, 2009)(Overseas pakistan, n.d.) (Rough Cut, 2006)(Haq, 2012)(Jones, 2010) (Zuffoletti, 2007), it is possible to give a rough outline (Appendix B) of the more practical and ceremonious stages traditionally involved in an arranged marriage in Pakistan, assuming that each stage is successful and leads to an official marriage.

As discussed in chapter 2, societies and customs change over time, table 2 (below) outlines some of the major changes that have occurred over the last few decades within Pakistan in relation to the marriage system. These changes in themselves are not static and will, in all likelihood, continue to change in one way or another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Modern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in age at first marriage</td>
<td>1950 mean age at first marriage for women = 17.9</td>
<td>2006 mean age of women at first marriage = 20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: (Nayab, 2009)</td>
<td>For men = 23.4</td>
<td>1998 mean age of men at first marriage = 25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in pre-marriage contact with proposed spouse</td>
<td>Often the prospective bride and groom would not actually meet each other until the wedding ceremony itself.</td>
<td>In many cases, especially in urban areas and among families with a higher level of education the bride and groom-to-be will often have the chance to meet each other (under supervision) and spend time together although physical contact between the couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: (Nidal,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: (Haq, 2012) (Siddiq, 2013) (World Trade Press, 2010, p. 9)</td>
<td>is kept to a minimum. Other forms of contact are also being increasingly used such as telephone and internet.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase in decision making process by prospective bride/groom</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Source:</strong> (Haq, 2012) (Shackle, 2013)</td>
<td>Parents and elders took the lead in choosing spouses with little input from the prospective bride/groom. The parents' decision would ultimately prevail.</td>
<td>It appears to be increasingly the case that either party (bride or groom) can reject their proposed spouse at any stage of the process thereby making it more into a choice among a number of suitors rather than simply accepting one who is chosen for you. This is referred to by some as a “semi-arranged marriage” and is mainly applicable among well educated middle-class and upper families living in urban areas (Haq, 2012) (Shackle, 2013) (Siddiq, 2013) (Critelli, 2012) &lt;br&gt;There is also a relatively new phenomenon with an increase in access to, use of and acceptability of matrimonial websites (e.g. Shadi.com; Mehndi.com) that have been set up specifically to assist people to find husbands/wives. There is also an interactive matchmaking programme on the Pakistani TV channel Geo Television called ShaadiOnline.tv which has (to date) aired 150 episodes and is described as having &quot;swiftly gone from a &quot;must-shun to must-see TV&quot; (Riccardi, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Less segregation between the sexes in marriage rituals</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Source:</strong> (Overseas Pakistan, n.d.)</td>
<td>Previously ceremonies such as the <em>Mehndi</em> (described above) were held separately for men and women (if at all held for men).</td>
<td>Now often held jointly with the men taking a more active role in the ceremony than before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase in opportunities for young men and women to &quot;meet&quot; albeit</strong>&lt;br&gt;Men and women separated from puberty.</td>
<td>More opportunities have opened up, especially in urban areas, for young people to meet via the internet and make arrangements to meet in person. There are also opportunities for the wealthy to mingle, date</td>
<td></td>
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virtually


and enter into romantic relationships prior to marriage (Haq, 2012)

| Increase in acceptance of “love marriages” although still very limited and mainly in urban areas among the wealthy elite. | The concept of a ‘love marriage’ is described as being “viewed as a gross misstep by the couple and is considered almost as an immoral act. Such an action is considered a threat to the established authority of the two families and is rarely, if ever, countenanced” (Korson, 1969). | Love marriages are in certain circumstances accepted, especially among the young and wealthy elite and young urban middle class in Pakistani society (Shackle, 2013). |

Despite arranged marriages still being the dominant form for marriage in Pakistan, table 2 outlines some of the changes that have been and still are occurring in the way in which arranged marriages are carried out.

The most striking change is in the increased role being played by the prospective husband/wife in the selection process. Here it is well documented that at least in urban areas there are far more opportunities for young people to be a part of the decision making process when it comes to choosing a spouse. There are numerous case studies and reports whereby prospective brides/grooms are not simply given a photograph of their spouse-to-be and are told that this is the person to whom they will get married. Instead prospective choices are discusses and the young couple in question can both give their input at this stage as well as reject suggested spouses. Of course this cannot be generalised across the whole of Pakistan and there are still many cases, especially in rural areas, where the more rigid form of arranged marriage is followed. However, it does signal a change in what is often referred to as being a very rigid and non-participatory practice.

Another change that is important to note is the increase in average age at first marriage. In her study, Nayab links this change in women’s age at first marriage to education
levels: when the figures are broken down to show average age at first marriage by education it can be clearly seen that the higher the level of education, the higher the age at first marriage (Nayab, 2009) with there being very little change in age at first marriage being shown for women with no education. This might be taken as an indication that if more girls receive more education then the average age at first marriage will continue to increase. Deeper investigation into this is, however, beyond the scope of this study. For the purposes of this study it can be said that there is an ongoing trend among women who have received education beyond primary level to marry at a later age.

There are also increased opportunities for young people to interact via mobile phones, television programmes and the internet which may also have an impact on young people’s ability to participate in the spouse selection process as it widens their network of contact with members of the opposite sex and opens up more choices. This is more relevant for urban youth than it is for rural youth where telephone and cable networks do not exist to the same extent and people are more reliant on state television and radio for access to information (Haq, 2012).

The opinion about love marriages is also under discussion with families (in particular urban, wealthy and educated) beginning to allow couples to choose their own spouse although presenting the union as having been arranged between the two families.

To summarize, it can be said that arranged marriages in Pakistan are in a constant state of change regarding some fundamental aspects such as age at first marriage, input by prospective wives/husbands into selection of their spouse and contact between young people of the opposite sex. However, these trends cannot be generalised to encompass the whole of Pakistan where there is a lot of diversity regarding marriage traditions. Instead they can be seen as an indication of changes that are occurring to some extent within some segments of society and that the situation is likely to continue changing.

4.3 Arranged marriage among Pakistanis in Denmark

Again it is difficult to present a ‘typical’ example of an arranged marriage within the context of Pakistanis in Denmark. The in-depth interview (as described in the methodology) carried out with “Nadia” for the purposes of this project gives an example of a transnational semi-arranged marriage between a Pakistani-Danish groom and Pakistani-non-Danish wife. In this example the situation is shown whereby two first-cousins are brought together surreptitiously by their families to see how they would get along. They fell in love; the two families approved the match (having already had it in mind prior to the two cousins realisation of mutual love) resulting in a successful and happy 17-year-long (to date) marriage.

Through his extensive research and interviews with people from within the Danish-Pakistani community Mikkel Rytter presents an overview of what might be considered a
‘typical’ arranged marriage (from the groom's perspective) in a Pakistani family living in Denmark:

“When the eldest boy in the family is in his 20s and is about to complete his education, he starts to talk with his parents about which of the girls from within their family/social network might make him a good wife. His parents have probably already got some concrete suggestions, just like the boy will often have some girls in mind that he finds attractive in one way or another. If they can all agree on a potential bride then the next, more drawn out, process begins. The parents take stock of the situation and look into how far the girl and, more importantly, her family might be interested in entering into a marriage. Only after this can a formal proposal be made”. (Rytter, 2003)

There are, of course, many variations regarding all aspects of arranged marriage within the Danish-Pakistani community today. However, some patterns appear to be emerging as summarised below:

• Broadened criteria: It is now accepted that families widen their search for spouses by looking outside of the traditional sources (family, kin and fellow villagers in Pakistan) to include suitable (educated, influential) families in Denmark; from major Pakistani cities or from other migrant families living in Europe or North America (Rytter, 2013 p. 64). In some cases cross nationality weddings occur as long as both parties are Muslim (Rytter, 2013).

• Input of potential bride/groom in selection procedure: There has been an increase in choice and flexibility regarding spouse selection by second generation Danes with Pakistani roots. Not only in terms of finding a suitable spouse but also in terms of ‘love marriages’ occurring within the overall ‘arranged marriage’ framework. In other words young couples have in effect found each other without input from their respective families but then have agreed to formalise the wedding and present it to society as if it had been arranged: i.e. the families involved will contact each other and a marriage between the couple will be proposed (Rytter, 2013, p. 74)

However, despite there being an opening out of the marriage process with young people playing an increasingly active role in identification and selection of their spouse, the need for family approval and for upholding family status is still highly respected. This can be seen through the many cases whereby, despite the couple having found each other without input from their families, the formal wedding route is still followed from the stage of formal proposal making onwards (Rytter, 2013, p. 74)
In many ways it could be said that the arranged marriage situation within the Pakistani community in Denmark both mirrors and moves faster with some of the more radical changes being experienced among certain groups (well educated, wealthy, urban) in Pakistan.

4.4 External pressures on the Pakistani marriage system in Denmark.
However, it is not only internal pressures from younger generations that is contributing towards changes in the practice of arranged marriage among Pakistani families in Denmark: there are also a number of powerful external pressures that are being specifically exerted to force change. Such external influences are mainly in the form of a set of requirements that couples who would like a transnational marriage have to fulfil in order for the foreign spouse to be allowed to come and live in Denmark with his/her Danish wife/husband. These requirements were laid down by the Danish Government in 2002 in the regulations for family reunification. There have been slight changes made to the 2002 regulations and it is the 2012 version (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2012a) that this project refers to.

Table 3. outlines some of the changes that have occurred in Danish-Pakistani arranged marriages that might be contributed to the family reunification regulations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in practice or perception</th>
<th>Possible relevance to regulations for family reunification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in number of transnational marriages within the group of Danish Pakistanis:</td>
<td>Spouse from overseas must be at least 24 at the age of marriage (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2012a).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1989</strong> among 18-24 year olds &gt;80% marriages contracted with spouses from Pakistan.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2004</strong> among 17 -27 year olds 59% engaged or married to a spouse from Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Rytter, 2013, p. 69)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistanis who wish to marry or who are currently married to their first cousins either have to lie and keep their relationship as cousins a “dirty little secret” (interviewee A, 2013) or face the consequences and live in Sweden, cut off</td>
<td>Rule of supposition means that marriages between first cousins are automatically classified as forced marriages and right to residency will be withheld from the non-Danish spouse (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2012b)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>from their family network in Denmark</td>
<td>(Rytter, 2013, p. 103)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families unable to follow their</td>
<td>By restricting the right to residency (as above) for marriages between people under the age of 24 or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preferences in terms of marriage criteria</td>
<td>between close family members the regulations effectively close off a large segment of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and so have broadened their criteria to</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>include Pakistani families in Denmark</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>that they might not have considered a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suitable match as well as non-Pakistani</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>families (Rytter, 2013, p. 64)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the above regulations and their possible effects on arranged marriage practices are considered together with the information on arranged marriage practices in Pakistan as given previously, it can be seen that there are a number of points of interest. Please refer to Appendix C for further elaboration of these.
5. Construction and representation of arranged marriages by the mass media.

Before reviewing the data produced during the interviews conducted a review of other relevant work and research that has been carried out will be presented. This not only helps contextualise the data but also illustrates how the research carried out by the project fits with other contemporary research.

In the publication Der er et yndigt land: Media, minoriteter and danskhed⁸ (Andreassen, 2007), Rikke Andreassen highlights what she perceives to be a paradox: that while, in her experience, most Danes readily voice opinions about visible minorities, at the same time, research conducted in 1995 (Gaasholt and Togeby, 1995, pp. 64–65) has shown that less than 20 percent of Danes have as much as a single conversation a week with people of immigrant background. This highlights an issue that if people are not basing their opinions on their own experiences, then what are these opinions based on? (Andreassen, 2007, p. 9) (Gaasholt and Togeby, 1995, p. 65). Andreassen presents the mass media as being a primary source of such information for people in Denmark. With this viewpoint, Andreassen concurs with research carried out by Peter Hervik (Hervik, 1999, pp. 28 – 29) who also draws on results presented by Gaasholt and Togeby. Both Hervik (1999) and Andreassen (2007) highlight the importance of news media, in particular televised, as a major source of information regarding visible minorities.

While Hervik’s work concentrates on the ways in which Danish people react to an increasing multiculturalism, Andreassen’s work is more narrowly based on the portrayal of refugees, immigrants and their descendants by three main types of story that she identifies as being found repeatedly in Danish news media. One of these story types concerns repressed immigrant women and includes the topic of forced and arranged marriages: it is here that her work has its most direct relevance to this project and her main findings regarding this are presented below.

It is important to note that throughout her work, Andreassen follows a poststructural feminist approach, through which she argues that her research can only point to general trends but cannot be used to generalise to the wider population as the way in which individuals understand what they see and read is influenced by many other factors (e.g. background, education, setting while watching/reading the news). Due to this, Andreassen maintains that people do not see or interpret television or newspapers in the same way. In other words, information presented by the news media is open to a wide and varied interpretation and as such is perceived in different ways by its audience. Similarly, Hervik discusses the importance of understanding that identities are socially constructed and that people do not simply inherit their personalities or viewpoints. Both authors also present a number of detailed studies into particular techniques that are used by the news media to create certain, often negative, impressions of visible minorities. In this way the lack of neutrality of the media is

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⁸ It is a lovely country: the media, minorities and danishness
explained and exposed. It is beyond the scope of this project to look further into such techniques but some general findings in terms of the effect of such techniques are presented below:

General findings relevant to this project:

- Visible minorities are described in binary opposition to ethnic Danes: When visible minorities are portrayed in a specific way then ethnic Danes are almost always portrayed (directly or indirectly) as being the opposite. In this way perceptions of visible minorities can be influenced at the same time as Danish self-perception and ideas about Danish culture. In this way the media can be seen to create identities and reinforce stereotypes.
- The media consistently portrays women as victims (of violence, Danish legislation, their own culture and Islam);
- Within media coverage of visible minority women, there is a focus on domestic violence, marriage practices and honour killings. Within this focus the media insinuates that domestic violence is particularly a Muslim problem;
- Visible minority women are portrayed as forming a homogenous group, living in a patriarchal and static culture (while presenting Danes as being progressive people, not living in a patriarchal culture);
- Television news media uses a wide variety of techniques to create the idea that minority women are repressed (journalists’ questions; visual aids used; sensationalist reporting; etc.);
- Minority women are not given a true voice by the media, often “experts” (white, well-educated, ethnic Danes) are used to present the “truth” of a situation, while excluding the chance for the “victim” to present her own “truth”.
- Visible minorities are often used synonymously with Muslims;
- Muslims (‘them’) are portrayed as being fundamentally different from Danes (‘us’);
- Stereotypes of visible minority women are repeated, and have been repeated in the media since the 1970s, without any significant changes being noted in descriptions or attitude.

Specific findings regarding portrayal of arranged marriages

- Andreassen provides examples of the ways in which “shock” stories and statistics are used to give the impression that most minority women (who are presented as Muslims) are forced into arranged marriage and that they receive death threats if they do not agree.
- Arranged and forced marriages are often presented as being the opposite to love marriages with no regard for the wealth of interpretations that can be found regarding these categories or the many ways in which such distinctions are not clear cut, as discussed in chapter 4.
• There is a lack of distinction made in the media between different groups of visible minorities or between forced and arranged marriage. This leads to a generalisation that the problem of forced marriages is more widespread among all visible minorities, who in turn are presented as a homogenous group of “Muslims”.

To summarise, Andreassen’s research shows how the media constructs an image of arranged marriage as being an issue connected with Muslims, whereby Muslim men are portrayed as being inherently violent while Muslim women are portrayed as being passive victims of a situation wherein they have no free choice and risk death if they step outside the norms of their society; a society that is portrayed as being completely the opposite of “normal” Danish society.

5.1 Exposure to information regarding arranged marriages
The previous section outlined findings regarding how the mass media employs certain techniques to portray issues surrounding arranged marriages in a particular light. The following section highlights participants’ views on the information they receive regarding arranged marriages – both in terms of where they receive information as well as of the type of information they receive.

5.2 Media
Findings from the project regarding the perceived role of the media in influencing perceptions of arranged marriages will be presented through relevant results and quotations from the street interviews, the narrative interview as well as the focus group interviews. Data that was generated will first be presented in turn and then discussed jointly, with reference to other research that has been carried out in this area as described above.

5.2.1 Street interviews
During the short street interviews, it became clear that the people we spoke with had heard about arranged marriages mainly through the media. Furthermore, two interlocutors had also had limited personal contact with people in arranged marriages. The street interviews were not recorded so it is not possible to present direct quotes. However, from the notes taken, it is possible to present some of the relevant perceptions people had in connection with the media and arranged marriages. This data was generated by asking the interlocutors if, and where, they have heard about arranged marriages before and what they have heard.
• Information about arranged marriages is mainly received through the media (newspapers and television).
• Arranged marriages are presented negatively in the media; with extreme cases being highlighted (one interlocutor mentioned a specific story about an eight-year old girl who died due to sexual abuse following an arranged marriage).
• Arranged marriages are often portrayed in the media as being synonymous with forced marriages and connected with Muslims.
• The media often portrays Muslims in arranged marriages as being people without any free will.
• It is difficult to develop an opinion about arranged marriages other than that which the media portrays, when the media is the only source of information.

5.2.2 Narrative interview
During the telling of her story, Nadia mentions that one of the reasons that she and her husband decided not to tell people in Denmark that their marriage was arranged and that they were cousins was due to the large amount of negative attention that arranged and consanguineous marriages were receiving in the Danish press at that time.

N: (...) The only reason is, because like I said, the media, they were already when I moved here 17 years ago, it was very looked very badly on arranged marriages back then. So and at the time, it was more that “the children they have are bound to be handicapped, there’s going to be some kind of strange ‘cos it’s within the family”. There was quite a bit of talk about it, and my husband and I we both, we didn't feel comfortable announcing that we were cousins, or that we have a partly arranged marriage. Because it wasn’t looked at very positively in the society or the culture. And just to make it easier for ourselves and for other people to accept us we just leave that bit out. We still do.

(Appendix L, lines 681-691)

5.2.3 Focus group interviews
Most of participants related that they have heard about arranged marriages either on the television or in the newspapers. A single person mentioned that they had personal contact with someone who had entered into an arranged marriage.

5.2.4 Negativity, shock and scandal.
All of the groups expressed the opinion that what they hear in the media about arranged marriages is negative. Many participants also expressed the view that as well as being ‘negative’ in an unspecific way, the type of stories presented are very one-sided and focus on shock and scandal cases, as illustrated by the following quotes:
B2: Der findes de der helt forfærdelige eksempler på 13-årige piger, øh, som bliver gift med 60-årige mænd, og det er som regel dem, der rammer overskrifterne.

(Appendix I, lines 663-664)

B2: There are the really terrible examples of 13-year old girls, oh, that are married to 60-year old men and, as a rule, it is these stories that hit the headlines.


(Appendix I, lines 999-1001)

B2: Yes, yes, and that you will live in mortal sin if you get divorced that is. Well, incest, and then the father kills his daughter. These are some of the stories we hear about.

A3: Der er det så vi har hørt de der meget grelle tilfælde med tvangs ægteskaber, så er det sådan så nogen har følt at de bliver truet på livet. De bliver truet på livet af familierne.

G3: Så er der æres drab og sådan noget.

(Appendix J, lines 722-725)

A3: It is that that we have heard about: the really rough cases of forced marriages, such that people have felt that their lives have been threatened. They are threatened with death by their families.

G3: And then there are honour killings and the like.

5.2.5 Request for a more nuanced picture

Both older and younger participants mentioned that the media ought to present a wider variety of stories. However, it was the group of older participants (appendix J) who particularly expressed their desire for the media to give a more balanced picture, by presenting stories that represent the arranged marriages, such as Nadia’s story, that are not as shocking. At the same time, participants also agreed that one of the problems is that the media’s choice of story is a two-way process and that to a certain extent this is driven by a demand, from those who watch television and read newspapers, for stories to be exciting and somehow sensational:

F3: Du hører jo kun om dem, der er noget i vejen med. Du hører sgu ikke om dem, der ikke er noget i vejen med.

(Appendix J, lines 421-422)

F3: You only hear about those where there are problems. We don’t hear a damn thing about those who don’t have any problems.

A3: Vi kunne godt ønske os, at der var lidt flere historier om det. Men det sælger ikke lige så meget opmærksomhedsmæssigt, som det er hvis det er sådan noget sensationelt.

F3: Vi er så tilbøjelige til altid at snakke om det dårlige.
5.3 Reactions to Nadia’s story

Following analysis of the street interviews, the media was named by the interlocutors as playing a large role in terms of providing information about arranged marriages. However, it was also indicated that the information provided is very sparse and negatively biased. With this in mind it was decided to present a case-study of a “happy” arranged marriage to see how participants would respond. Here only general responses are presented as responses that are specifically addressing aspects of Nadia’s story will be discussed in later sections of this report.

Of particular interest here is the way in which the older group responded. Some of the group expresses a strong opinion that they did not feel as though Nadia’s story was in any way a representation of an arranged marriage as it was too “free” and did not fit with their own preconceptions of arranged marriage (possibly aided by the information provided by the media as discussed above). This reaction is illustrated by the following quotes:

G3: Det er meget sødt.

F3: Jeg kan ikke se, hvor meget arrangeret det er. Som man læser det op, så synes jeg egentlig ikke, det er arrangeret.

G3: That is very sweet.

F3: I can’t see how much arrangement there is in it. As it reads, I don’t really consider it arranged.

F3: Ja, men hvis vi skulle snakke om så noget, så kunne vi har godt have tænkt, der ville være et lidt mere groft eksempel, end den her (...) (Appendix J, lines 926-928)

G3: Yes, but if we are going to talk about something like this\(^9\), then we might well have expected that it would be a bit of a rougher example than this (...) (Appendix J, lines 983-985)

However, others in the group saw the example as providing some of the nuance thought lacking in the portrayal of arranged marriages by the media. It was noticed that the case study shows that there is a difference between forced marriages (often referred to as

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\(^9\) Referring to ‘good’ stories about arranged marriages

\(^{10}\) i.e. a case study of an arranged marriage
arranged marriage) and arranged marriages. After discussing the issue, the group agreed that there was not much that could actually be objected to in the case study, as it was presented. Some of this discussion is given below:


B3: Yes.

G3: Ja, det ville få modstand.

(Alle snakker sammen og viser enighed)

G3: Men sådan et ægteskab her, det ville ikke give modstand. De er jo glade for hinanden.

(Appendix J, lines 1001-1011)

A3: I don't think that there are many Danes, that is ethnic Danes, who would kick up a fuss about such a story. I don't think they would. Fuss gets kicked up where you can see that there is force, where there are clear negative consequences: If you don't do this, then there will be consequences.

B3: Yes.

G3: Yes, that would meet opposition.

(Everyone talks and shows agreement)

G3: But a marriage like this, there wouldn't be any opposition. They are happy with each other.

A3: Så medierne burde hjælpe os alle sammen med, at få lidt flere bragt af den slags historier også, ik?

(Appendix J, lines 1016-1017)

A3: So the media ought to help all of us by using a few more of these kinds of stories, eh?

When viewing all of this together, a paradox can be seen here in that while there is a request for a more nuanced picture and the media is blamed for portraying arranged marriages in negative way, at the same time when a regular, non-dramatic story is presented then not everyone considers it to be anything worth discussing.

It should be noted that within the youth group, Nadia’s story was considered to still hold true for the group members’ preconceptions in terms of the lack of freedom for the bride and groom in arranged marriages. However, it was also considered that there was a greater degree of freedom in it than expected and that the issue was not as clear cut as had previously been thought.
5.4 Sub-conclusion
To summarise, to some degree it can be seen that much of what the participants in the various interviews describe complements findings from other research carried out in this field (as described in section 1). However, this is not to say that the one thing proves the other. These are merely the perceptions of a number of people about the Danish media and its role in providing Danish people with information about arranged marriages. What is interesting to note is that the issues raised show that, for the people involved in the interviews, there is strong recognition that the media is playing a very biased role in its portrayal of arranged marriages. Furthermore, it appears that from the experiences of the participants, there is a certain homogeneity about the way in which arranged marriages are presented by the media with a focus on issues of coercion and lack of freedom and choice.

A certain degree of openness and desire for a more nuanced discussion was shown with participants actively requesting that the media presents a more balanced picture. During the course of the focus groups it can be seen that in some cases the introduction of new material caused participants to think differently about the way in which they perceive arranged marriages and recognise that the situation is more complicated and varied than previously thought.

Certain differences in perception were shown between the younger and older groups: for the older group (presented in appendix J) the presentation of Nadia’s case study opened up questions of how to define an arranged marriage, with consensus being reached on the importance of degrees of freedom. It seemed for this group that there was a need for freedom to be missing if a marriage was to be considered arranged. regarding the case study, the group considered that Nadia had been free to say “no” and that she and her husband had “chosen” each other. This made it difficult for the group to categorise the marriage as arranged or to consider it to be a situation greatly different from any other marriage. In this way it was not seen as being something to object to purely on the grounds of it being “arranged”.

On the other hand, the younger group had a different way of perceiving freedom and did not consider Nadia’s marriage to be one based on free choice.

This emphasises the point that perceptions are different due to complexities such as personal experiences, background and expectations. Despite there having been consensus between the groups in terms of their perception of arranged marriages, there was difference shown in their definition of the term, mainly on the basis of what is considered as being “free” by one, is considered as being “not free” by another.
6. Perceptions

One of the characteristics of a poststructural project is its framework. It provides both possibilities and limitations to which the researchers have to adhere. From this it follows that it is out of our hands to find ‘truthful’ facts or ‘reality’, as discussed in the methodology. Instead, our poststructural stance allows us to focus on analysing perceptions of this reality and of how people in our study make sense of, and act in regard to, these perceptions. It allows us to focus on people’s immediate responses and to examine the constructions and complexities of these responses. In much the same way focus group discussions are particularly relevant for studying people’s perceptions, due to the small degree of involvement from the researcher’s side.

Following from this, a whole chapter is dedicated to analysis of our interviewees’ perceptions of both marriage in Denmark and of arranged marriages. The three sub-sections each deal with a theme that we were able to extract from the interviews, that is: Firstly, perceptions of the foundation of marriage; secondly, perceptions of freedom of choice; and lastly, perceptions of modernity and development. Under each theme both the views on Danish marriages and the view of arranged marriages with regards to the theme are presented. The sub-conclusion will gather all the threads and lead up to the last analysis section on Othering.

6.1 Perceptions of the Foundation of Marriage

The objective of this section is to examine perceptions in regard to how the interviewees consider the foundation of marriage; both Danish marriages and arranged marriages in general (without a geographical specification). An examination of the basis of any similar as well as any distant perceptions gives an interesting – and important – perspective to the further analysis, as it can give an indication of the origins of other perceptions. Perceptions of Danish values will be analysed in the first section, followed by an analysis of perceptions of arranged marriages.

6.1.1 Marriage in Denmark

Perceptions vary, just as traditions and values do through out time. With reference to chapter 3 on Danish Marriage Traditions, it can be recalled that marrying for love is considered a fairly new tradition, arising in the wake of Romanticism. Up until the late 19th Century socio-economical security and family agreements were the main reasons people would marry, but the fact that this slowly changed until it became socially accepted to marry for love, plays an important role in today's society. This was a major change that, along with the impact of secularisation, made marriage a commitment between two persons instead of an agreement with God. The following analysis will examine what was perceived as being general or fundamental with regards to forming an accepted base for a marriage.
It’s got to be love

When analysing our interviews it was possible to point at some very generalised perceptions of what getting married entails. Whereas opinions were often divided on other subjects, we found that when participants discussed the foundation of marriage they would quickly reach consensus. Different associations and ways of describing marriage were still pointing at the same thing: which is that the so-called love-marriage is perceived as being a very traditional and Danish way of marrying. The resistance and cynicism that occurred in regard to more traditional behaviour was seemingly not reflected in participants’ views on love. When asked to describe what connotations marriage has for them, several answers pointed to the same as this participant’s view:

F1: Det skulle jo gerne være kærlighed.
(Appendix H, line 246)
F1: Well, there really should be love.

Among the focus group members, love and the joy of getting married to someone of your own choosing was identified as a main association of marriage and its foundation (also see Appendix Y, lines 88-89, Appendix Z, lines 89, 93-94) In a similar way, the issue of falling in love was seen throughout the interviews as a very important part of both marriage and the preparation for it (whether or not it was an arranged marriage). An interesting argument came through when the youth were discussing the programme Gift ved Første Blik. They all proclaimed their interest in the show and thought it was a pleasure to see how ‘real feelings’ developed between the couples. Only one out of three couples were still together by the end of the eight-week programme, which the youth argued was due to the fact that they were the only ones falling in love from the very beginning (Appendix Y, line 733). It is interesting that this fact carried more weight than the whole foundation of the set-up, which matched couples according to a much wider range of economical, social and personal facts. This represents an idealistic picture of the foundation of marriage in Denmark, and does not, for instance, take marriages of convenience, violent marriages, or marrying for getting social benefits into regard. This romanticised picture of marriage is, however, challenged in the following section where perceptions of the foundation for arranged marriages are analysed and discussed.

6.1.2 Arranged Marriages

It is extremely interesting that, despite their having very limited personal experience of arranged marriages, participants in both the younger and older groups expressed views regarding the basis for arranged marriages with confidence, almost as if their views were hard facts. Furthermore, the views presented by both groups were very similar to each other. It could be argued here, following Homi Bhabha’s work on stereotyping (Bhabha, 2004), that this is an example of successful stereotyping with the same
unchanging stereotype being presented time and time again so that it becomes entrenched and unquestioned in people's minds as being “true”. As illustrated in the previous section, this was also the case regarding Danish marriages where the different groups had similar perceptions regarding the foundation of marriage.

*What’s love got to do with it?*

Both groups expressed the opinion that arranged marriages were based less on love and more on practical matters related to economy and social standing. It should be noted that most of these views were expressed during discussions within the groups after being shown a photograph (as described in ???) of a wedding in Pakistan (referred to from this point onwards as photograph 2), but before Nadia’s story was presented.

The following conversation between two participants in the older group III illustrates the opinion that love is not highest on the list in terms of reasons for marrying in the context of an arranged marriage. This conversation struck up after being presented with Nadia’s story:

F3: Jeg spekulerer på, når nogen mødes herhjemme i Danmark, så er det meget følelser, der gør at man bliver enige om at blive gift sig, ik? Jeg tror ikke, at det er det. det er mest fremhævende, eller, hvad hedder det... til imellem dem. Der er det noget om at folks...

A3: (afbryder) Fornuften?

F3: Ja... og at kunne sikre mig at få en god tilværelse.

(Appendix J, lines 1112-1116)

F3: I’m thinking that here, at home in Denmark, when people meet then it is very much their emotions and feelings that are behind their decision to get married, right? I don’t believe that it is here where the emphasis, or whatever you call it, ...lies between them11. It is more to do with people’s...

A3: (interrupts) sensibleness?

F3: Yes... and ability to secure a good life.

This can be seen as representing a viewpoint that places arranged marriages in opposition to the ‘Danish’ way of marrying and builds on a perception that in Denmark people marry for love. This is despite having heard Nadia say that she and her husband were in love before they got married and that, 17 years later, they still are. Again, this may demonstrate the strength of the stereotype and indicate that it requires more than just hearing an alternative story once before such a stereotype starts to seriously be questioned.

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11 Referring to people in arranged marriages.
In a similar way, the perception of the role played by money in an arranged marriage is brought up by group I during a discussion after being shown the second photograph, as illustrated by the following quotes taken from that conversation:

F1: Men tror I ikke der er meget om i udlandet, det kommer også an på penge. (...) Altså det der, det er en, der har nogle penge, så ham skal du bare gifte dig med. (...) men jeg tror det er meget i udlandet. (...) Ja. Derfor bliver det arrangeret. Sådan tror jeg det.
(Appendix X, lines 545-556)

F1: But don’t you think that a lot of it overseas, it’s also about money. (...) That’s to say that there is someone who’s got some money, he’s the one you should get married to. (...) but I think there is a lot of it overseas. (...) Yes. That’s why it is arranged. That’s how I see it.

Although in the conversation that follows from this, F1 indicates that she might be wrong; her opinion is again confirmed by B1. Later conversations held by the group also identify money as being of great importance in an arranged marriage. As in the first example, the fixation on money and economic reasons for marriage is presented as being in opposition to the “Danish” way which once more puts distance between “arranged” and “Danish” marriages.

Similar conversations were held between members of the younger group (group I) whereby members were in agreement that, contrary to the situation in Denmark, arranged marriages are not founded on love but rather on practicalities, with comments such as “Så er et ægteskab langt mere en praktisk foranstaltning”\textsuperscript{12}. Furthermore, the younger group also expressed the view that not only does love not form the basis for an arranged marriage but that it isn’t something that is looked for. This is demonstrated by the section of conversation below:

B2: (...) de mennesker de ved fra de bliver født, at det er sådan der deres liv bliver, og så man har måske en anden måde at forstå kærligheden på. Man er indstillet på, at “Okay, jeg skal ikke ud og søge kærligheden. Den kommer til mig på et tidspunkt, og så skal jeg arbejde med den derfra”.

D2: Det er måske også fordi forelskelsen har utrolig meget værdi her i Danmark.

B2: Jaja, det skal være.

(...) 

B2: Og hernede tror jeg bare at man er meget mere indstillet på at få det til at virke, på en helt anden måde.

D2: Ja.

(Appendix I, lines 571-582)

\textsuperscript{12} In this way marriage is much more of a practical arrangement (Appendix I, lines 540-541).
B2: (…) these people they know from birth that this is how their lives will be. In this way they probably have a different way of understanding love. They are prepared in a way that “Okay, I won’t go out searching for love. That will come to me at some point, and I will just work with it from there.”

D2: That’s also probably because being in love is so highly valued here in Denmark.

B: yeah, it has to be...

(…)

B2: And down here I think that people are just much more inclined to make it all work out, in a completely different way.

D2: Yes.

In this way, all three groups downplay the role of love and romance in arranged marriages and present love as the driving force behind marriage in Denmark. According to the groups, it appears that instead of love, it is money and security that form the foundation for an arranged marriage. This concept also appears to be tied together with the opinion that it is the parents who choose a spouse for their children and that this will naturally mean that there will be other criteria in place. As said by a participant in group I:

C2: Der må være en eller anden grund til, hvorfor man vil gifte sine børn væk. Den sociale rangstige tænker jeg også lidt

(Appendix Y, lines 525-527)

C2: There must be some sort of reason why you would want to marry your children off. I am thinking a little along the lines of social climbing.

It seems that participants had a difficult time in understanding why people would want to enter their children into an arranged marriage unless for material or social gain. At no point was the possibility mentioned that the young bride/groom-to-be might themselves want to have an arranged marriage. Furthermore, as shown in the quote earlier (Appendix I, lines 571-582) there was a perception that young people entering into arranged marriages have a fatalistic approach and accept that this is the way it has to be as they don’t know any different, with the implication being that different is somehow “better”.

A similar view of people (girls in the following example) being passive acceptors of the “fate” of an arranged marriage is also expressed by the older group II during a discussion about how arranged marriages can become forced if the young people involved are not given the option to say no:

Again, there is the feeling that one of the reasons behind the continuance of the practice of arranged marriages is because it is simply what people are used to and because they do not have the freedom to go against it. At no point is it suggested by any of the groups that arranged marriages could be something that continues because it is a system that is enjoyed or because it suits particular conditions in a particular country and culture.

### 6.1.3 Comparative analysis and summary

After being presented with perceptions of the foundation of marriage for both Danish and arranged marriages, an outline of the findings and a comparative analysis can be made. First and foremost, it was interesting to see that for the Danish part our interviewees were quite clear about how the ideal picture of a marriage should be painted; based on a romanticised idea that love and the act of falling in love should be the foundation of marriage. However, they did acknowledge, with some discontent, that the divorce rate in Denmark is surprisingly high. With regard to how arranged marriages are seen, the range of perceptions varied much more, also at times acknowledging that the origins of their beliefs were rooted in ignorance, rather than personal knowledge or information in that regard. Their ideas and perceptions of arranged marriages could therefore also be seen as much more critical and focusing on negative aspects, than those of Danish marriages. Ignorance can be a source of resistance towards new things, as repeatedly seen in both Danish society as well as throughout history. Linking this to the previous analysis of exposure to information through both media and personal relations, gives us an idea of some of the possible effects of being presented with very critical and non-nuanced views; not only for arranged marriages but often also regarding general cultural diversities, as seen in the portrayal of migrants for instance. Taking Pakistani marriage traditions, as presented in chapter 4, into regard another issue also occurs: the Danish perception of arranged marriages does, for the most part, not fit with the diversity and nuance present within the Pakistani marriage system. These misperceptions might account for lot of the resistance to the practice of arranged marriages as unfolded above, and as will be presented and analysed in the following analytical sections.
6.2 Freedom of choice

Freedom came up very strongly as a being of importance firstly during the street interviews and then again during the focus group interviews. It appeared that not only did the people we interviewed associate arranged marriages with a lack of freedom, but that this was one of the perceived aspects of arranged marriages that caused most concern. It also became clear that perceptions of the meaning or definition of freedom varied from person to person, according to their situation and experience. It became relevant and interesting to question the extent to which these perceptions of freedom were based in concepts of Othering (i.e. “we” are free, therefore “they” are not) and superiority (i.e. “our” interpretation and experience of freedom is the benchmark with which to measure the freedom of others, as “our” freedom is naturally the most desirable form).

A further issue was raised regarding freedom due to a general tendency to confuse the terms “arranged marriage” with “forced marriage”. This has obvious repercussions when discussing aspects of freedom as, by definition, forced marriage denies freedom.

Following the analytical structure outlined in the previous section, perceptions of “Danish” freedom will be presented and analysed followed by perceptions of freedom in AM-countries, before presenting a comparative analysis of the two.

6.2.1 “Shopping for love” in Denmark

The aspect of freedom already emerged as a theme during the initial short unstructured interviews. It was, however, generally not brought up unless in connection with perceptions or ideas of arranged marriages. This was the case not only for the short interviews conducted, but also for the focus group discussions and, to some extent, also with our narrative interview with Nadia. Freedom of choice appeared as being used as a defence for Danish values and was perceived as something in great opposition to the idea of an arranged marriage. The latter discussion will be unfolded further in the following section on Perceptions of Arranged Marriage, whereas the former discussion will be included and expanded as follows.

To exemplify, the following quote gives an idea of how a participant in the interview emphasised freedom:

B2: Præcis! Jo men fordi vi står bare med et ben i hver lejr, hvor vi sådan er fuldstændig frie individer og hele verden er vores legeplads. På den anden side vil vi godt noget traditionelt, lige minus de der sure øh... ting, vi skal sluge med.

(Appendix I, lines 301-303)

B2: Exactly! Yeah, but because we have a foot in each camp, one where we appear as completely free individuals and where the world is our playground. On the other side, we still want something more traditional, just without the bitter err... things that have to be swallowed at the same time.
As supported by a range of similar quotes (Appendix Y, line 239-240, Appendix X, line 709, 907 among others) this quotes indicates that there is general agreement on the importance of freedom. If we take the amount of times that freedom was mentioned into account and consider this along with the emphasis and weight attached to such comments, it can be suggested that freedom is perceived as an integral part of the Danish society. It seems to be a point of reference for several of the interviewees, including the eight ‘random’ people from the first interviews in the street. Because the interviewees in the street were only asked if, and what, they knew or had heard about arranged marriages, the issue of personal freedom was something they themselves brought up. In eight out of eight cases the interlocutors pointed at a perception of arranged marriages as something that goes against our personal freedom of choice. One person even said that it was a breach again human rights to be married, if it was arranged. This is very telling about perceptions of Danish society and about which principles were valued by the interviewees. The strong reactions by the focus group members to both Nadia’s story and arranged marriage in general reveal a fond belief in the principle of freedom. This could be seen in all three groups as mentioned above, although the emphasis was again strongest in the youth group.

B2: Nej, lige præcis! Altså den der.. den der individualisering. Åh, men vi har så travlt med at vi skal være selvstændige individer og vi kan shoppe kærlighed, som vi kan shoppe tøj. Altså...

(Appendix I, line 277-279)

B2: No, exactly! This... individualisation. Oh, we are so busy being independent individuals and we can shop for love, like we shop for clothes. I mean to say...

This statement appears to be as much about the strong individual character, as it is a statement concerning freedom. It seems from her perception that nothing can oppose us in our pursuit of being in control of our own lives. Neither, it seems, can our freedom be limited in our personal choices, as it now enables us to be completely free in our choice of love – as extracted from her saying that “we can shop for love, like we shop for clothes”. This was met with consent from the other members of the group. The same cynicism as will be highlighted in this chapter’s last section can also be traced here. This thinking is slightly paradoxical, as it is perceived by the youth group as being something fundamental in Danish society while at the same time is evoking scepticism.

It is however, not only the focus group and street interviews participants’ views that emphasise freedom as a distinctive feature of Danish society – Nadia likewise accentuates this. Her reflections add up to the assumption that freedom is perceived as an integral part of Danish society. Even though she does not focus on freedom to the extent our other interviewees do, she touches upon it a few times – particularly in relation to explaining situations, where she has a degree of freedom, and thus
emphasises her situation as not being forced. With Nadia knowing that her story would be used to present to a group of Danes, one should consider the following: In which ways and to what extent is her presentation of having a choice a reaction to her perception of how arranged marriage is seen in Danish society? It is, however, not possible to answer this question, but we should acknowledge that this could add a bias in her story, as she knows it will be used to depict a positive perspective of an arranged marriage. For this reason, she might be using the issue of freedom to ‘soften’ her own situation by several times emphasising that she had a lot of freedom, and thus to a degree arguably downplaying any threat to the Danish focus on freedom (Appendix L, lines 45-48, 356-360, 106 among others).

6.2.2 Freedom to say ‘No’
One theme that came through very strongly, both in the street interviews as well as during the focus group interviews, is the way in which interlocutors perceived arranged marriages as being connected with force: this was expressed as being present in varying degrees ranging from a lack of freedom of choice to explicitly forcing two people to marry regardless of their own wishes. In terms of the street interviews “tvang”, or ‘coercion’ in English, was a word that all but one interlocutor used either to describe an arranged marriage or as something associated with arranged marriages. In addition, several interlocutors talked about the lack of freedom of choice for those entering into an arranged marriage as being an issue.

Although the focus groups were not explicitly asked about coercion in arranged marriages, the topic was discussed in depth by the group members. During these discussions the perception that arranged marriages involve a lack of freedom was often mirrored against a picture of a free Denmark; where individuals can choose as they wish. It should be noted that there was also a great deal of discussion within groups regarding degrees of freedom and where the line can be drawn between an arranged and a forced marriage. The question of force and lack of choice can be seen as one of the threads that ran through the entire group discussion, resurfacing and being re-discussed at various points.

For the first group force was an issue that came up early on, as can be seen by this part of a conversation that started in response to being shown photograph 2:

(Appendix H, lines 519)

B1: Well, here I will say one thing: Force. Nothing good can ever come out of it.

And again, this almost automatic connection of force with arranged marriage is reflected in a conversation between members of group II during a break in the
interview. Although the focus of the group was on arranged marriages and the term forced marriage was not used by the moderator, it appears that forced marriage is what came to mind when thinking about the subject of arranged marriage:

B2: Jeg troede vi skulle lave det her interview på engelsk.

(…)

C2: Du havde måske gjort dig klar? Med at vide hvad tvangsægteskaber hedder på engelsk?

(Appendix I, lines 486-489)

B2: I thought we were going to do this interview in English.

(…)

C2: So you probably prepared yourself? By learning what forced marriage is called in English?

Later during the interview the term arranged marriage switched easily into forced marriage when a participant was expanding on in what ways arranged marriages could be considered ‘medieval’:

B2: (...) Og så har vi jo utrolig mange fordomme i Danmark i forbindelse med kvinder, der er meget meget ulykkelige. Som bliver tvangs... altså, tvunget ind i voldelige ægteskaber, og har nogle dybt ulykkelige ægteskaber osv, og det er meget afromantiseret. (...) For så sidder vi og er superkritiske overfor at det er tvangsægteskaber (...)

(Appendix I, lines 555-558; 561-562)

B2: (...) And then we have an incredible amount of prejudices in Denmark about women who are very very unhappy. Who are forced...well, have been forced into violent marriages, and have some deeply unhappy marriages etc., and that it is very de-romanticised. (...) And there we sit, being super critical that these are forced marriages (...)

However, both the younger and older groups recognised this lack of clarity between arranged and forced marriages as a problem and discussed the issue at length. On this point, it was clear to see that there was a difference in interpretation of the term “freedom” between the younger group (I) and the older group (III). Some members of group I were very clear that in their view, Nadia had not made a “free” choice due to external pressures of wanting to “do the right thing” and not upset her parents. Furthermore, it was considered that her encounter with her cousin (pre-marriage) had been highly orchestrated with the ulterior motive from their parents being marriage between the two. However, the fact that Nadia and her cousin had approached their parents with their wish to marry challenged some of the group members’ preconceptions regarding arranged marriage as being a situation whereby the parents simply decide and the children obey. This highlighted the complexities and confusion surrounding the issue of arranged marriages to the group. Although it was mentioned
that, within the conditions of her culture and upbringing, Nadia probably genuinely feels that she was free to decide, it was also said that in a Danish context then she most certainly was not. Some parts of the relevant dialogue are presented below to try and illustrate these opinions:

B2: Altså, det siger hun jo indirekte og selvfølgelig er det sandheden for hende, fordi hun sidder der, hvor hun gør. At man vælger rigtig meget ud fra... ens forældres følelser, fordi man bliver selv glad af at gøre sine forældre glade. Så det er her, hvor jeg siger at det heller ikke er særligt frit, altså. (...) Jeg synes ikke hun er særligt fri, men jeg er sikker på hun vil sige, hun er meget meget fri og lykkelig.

(Appendix I, lines 943-946; 951-952)

B2: Well, she says that indirectly\(^\text{13}\) and of course it is the truth for her, because she is positioned where she is. That you make choices that are so geared towards...your parents’ feelings, because making your parents happy makes you happy. This is the point where I say that it isn’t particularly free. (...) I don’t think that she is particularly free, but I am certain that she will say that she is very free and happy.

In contrast, many members of Group III felt that Nadia’s story did not represent an arranged marriage scenario as they felt she had simply fallen in love and then married accordingly. In this respect her marriage was considered to be more in line with a Danish marriage. At the same time, it was felt by a couple of group members that it was a question of nuance and that it was as though this (Nadia’s) portrayal of an arranged marriage had been categorised wrongly as it went against the stereotypes and one-sided picture of arranged marriages presented by the media. This sparked off a discussion regarding what constitutes an arranged marriage and raised the question of: when does an arranged marriage become forced? After a fairly lengthy discussion a consensus was reached whereby group members felt that a deciding factor could be whether there were any consequences to saying “no” to a suggested marriage. This was seen as a way of representing freedom of choice for the group. There was a general sentiment expressed that if it was the case that: parents identified and then suggested possible spouses for their children; that the children could accept or reject such choices without fear of repercussions; and that if the marriage did not work out then it was acceptable to divorce; then such a marriage could not be considered ‘forced’ and would thereby be acceptable in a Danish setting. The following quote is taken from a discussion about Nadia’s marriage and represents some of the above points:

B3: Det gælder her, at de to unge mennesker de kunne godt lide hinanden. Og jeg synes det bedste, det er forældrenes synspunkt, hvor de siger ”er der noget, der går galt her – så er I frit for. Det ændrer ikke noget på forholdet, hvis I går fra hinanden”. Derfor siger jeg, at det faktisk ligner meget vores forhold.

A3: Det er en frihed.

\(^\text{13}\)Referring to an interpretation that Nadia has to bear a heavy burden of responsibility on her shoulders.
Even the younger group, despite their misgivings regarding the degrees of freedom enjoyed by Nadia, also agreed that her marriage has similarities to marriages in the West. This complexity is shown in the quote below where the group are reflecting on Nadia’s story:

D2: (...) Det ser, det ser Vestligt ud på en eller anden måde, men på samme tid har forældrene været mere involverede end de er her, fordi her vil man ikke gå hen og spørge sine forældre “Hej, vi vil gerne giftes, er du ok?” (...) (Appendix I, lines 889-892)

To summarise, certain differences in perception were shown between the younger and older groups: for the older group (presented in appendix J) the presentation of Nadia’s case study opened up questions of how to define an arranged marriage, with consensus being reached on the importance of degrees of freedom. It seemed for this group that there was a need for freedom to be missing if a marriage was to be considered arranged. Regarding the case study, the group considered that Nadia had been free to say “no” and that she and her husband had “chosen” each other. This made it difficult for the group to categorise the marriage as arranged or to consider it to be a situation greatly different from any other marriage. In this way it was not seen as being something to object to purely on the grounds of it being “arranged”.

On the other hand, the younger group had a different way of perceiving freedom and did not consider Nadia’s marriage to be one based on free choice.

This emphasises the point that perceptions are different due to complexities such as personal experiences, background and expectations. Despite there having been consensus between the groups in terms of their perception of arranged marriages, there was difference shown in their definition of the term. This difference was mainly based on the premise of what is considered as being “free” by one, is considered as being “not free” by another.
6.2.3 Comparative analysis and summary

There are four main issues that can be seen in the above discussions. Firstly that freedom as a virtue seems to be perceived as an integral part of both being Danish and living in the Danish society. Resistance towards arranged marriage is often expressed in terms of having your freedom restricted in some way. This is backed up by the fact – and second main issue – that although all groups were unanimous in their opinion that arranged marriages represented a loss of freedom, this perception was partly dependent on definition and perception of what arranged marriages actually are. This was exacerbated by the confusion between the terms ‘arranged’ and ‘forced’ marriage. It appears that this problem of mixing terms is one that is particularly an issue in Denmark whereby the differences between arranged and forced marriages are not taken into account – neither in the media nor in political discourse (Siim, 2007). For many members of the older group of Danes, it can clearly be seen how their perception of the freedom of arranged marriages changed after hearing and discussing Nadia’s story. Using a perception of freedom that identified with Nadia’s, they did not consider that her story reflected the standard presentation of an arranged marriage that they had been exposed to in the media. Instead, it was considered that the amount of freedom she experienced could be likened (as she herself states) to the freedom experienced in a Danish marriage that had come about with the help of a matchmaker.

This leads into the third issue that revolves around perceptions of freedom being dependant on the eye of the beholder. It was clearly shown that there is no absolute truth in as much as that there is not one single definition of freedom that can be used to measure how free people are. Despite hearing Nadia’s assertions that she was free to choose - both to marry at 18 but also who to marry - the younger group expressed scepticism over this freedom. In their eyes, and according to their perception of freedom, she was not free but still bound by the subtleties of family honour and obedience/respect for her parents. In this way the youth group expressed the opinion that it was actually Nadia’s sister who demonstrated her freedom as, although she had experienced a much more controlled marriage, she had been free to leave it when it did not work out. The youth group also expressed awareness over the fact that they were unable to quantify freedom for Nadia as parameters between the two (i.e. young Danes and a young Pakistani woman) were too different.

As a fourth aspect, the youth group also expressed the view that despite not being able to properly compare freedoms, the Danish experience of freedom was somehow freer than that of the freedom defined and experienced by Nadia. This again, can be seen in the context of Western superiority and Othering as it does not consider the many other considerations that may lie behind the decision to follow an arranged marriage such as having close family bonds, help in finding a spouse, family support throughout life, etc. In other words, the situation of an arranged marriage is assessed with Western criteria of freedom without considering that there could be other aspects at play that are given importance in a different way.
6.3 Modernity and development

As the previous sections describe, those interviewed during the project expressed a number of opinions and perceptions regarding marriage in Denmark and arranged marriages. Various associations were made comparing the two marriage “systems” based on a mixture of experience and stereotyping. This section investigates how these perceptions might be linked to wider issues in development such as hegemony and euro-centrism. It does this by focusing on the ways in which participants regarded Denmark as being a modern and free society, as opposed to AM-countries that were perceived as traditional/backwards and restrictive.

In order to provide a framework with which to discuss these views, a short overview of some of the relevant issues in development is now presented.

Since President Truman’s inaugural speech in 1949 where he announced his four-point programme, the field of development has gone through a series of changes in terms of the theories and strategies followed and subsequent practices carried out. However, it has been argued that certain prevailing concepts have applied, and still apply, throughout (Brohman, 1995)(Escobar, 2012). Among these concepts is the idea that developing countries have “needs” and “problems” that the West measures, using Western standards as the benchmark through this construction of superiority, the West can be seen to have established its hegemony over developing countries (Escobar, 2012, p. 8). Furthermore, this points to an underlying notion, as proposed in Rostow’s modernisation theory, that developing countries are simply positioned further back along the same developmental pathway as Western countries and that in order to “develop” (i.e. reach the same level of development as Western countries) then all they need to do is to “catch up”.

Although modernisation theory has more or less been discredited it can be seen as a simplistic view placing developing countries as “have-nots” as opposed to developed countries that “have” is still prevalent. It is also important to mention at this point the way in which the terminology used in the field of development further reinforces and shapes perceptions of superiority and inferiority. A clear example can be seen with the terms “developed” and “developing” country. It is perhaps telling that although there is a clear definition of a “developed” country as given by Kofi Annan: “A developed country is one that allows all its citizens to enjoy a free and healthy life in a safe environment” (Annan, 2001). Developing countries appear to be defined in much looser and less clear terms. By viewing developing and developed countries in terms of the Other, then it could be said that a developing country is everything that a developed country is not. In this way, if developed countries are portrayed as having achieved certain standards (e.g. free and healthy life) then it would then be assumed that developing countries have not. In addition, the term “developed” implies that a country has gone through a process and reached its potential, whereas “developing” implies that this process is still ongoing and that the ideal aim is to reach “developed” status.
This begs the question of whether or not such perceptions of Western superiority can be identified as a theme in the perceptions of arranged marriages as expressed during the project’s interviews. The following section will shed light on this by following the structure of previous analysis sections, that is, firstly by presenting and analysing perceptions of Danish marriage traditions and secondly by presenting an opposing view reflecting arranged marriages as being “behind” Danish in their development.

6.3.1 Perceptions of the meaning of traditions in Denmark – Cynicism
Perceptions of traditional behaviour plays, as we perceive it, an important role with regard to citizens’ views on national identity. In regard to the framework provided above, our hypothesis (regarding perceptions of Danish identity as modern and progressive) builds on interpretations of the project’s interviews, as the overall analysis will also point at. Due to this, the following section will treat the issue of identification with a modern, superior position in the light of how traditions are seen. That is, that holding on to traditional behaviour can be seen as backwards, whereas casting traditions off can be viewed as trying to follow the wave of modernity, experienced in the West. In the interviews it is possible to detect an overall theme, which is well illustrated by the youth group in particular. Cynicism is what best describes this theme, and as we interpret it, it is mainly directed towards traditional issues and what they entail. This cynicism will be illustrated below as seen in two different perspectives: the youth’s perception of religion and the church; and in regard to self-promotion as being perceived an negative part of weddings nowadays.

Traditions in general were one of the issues that were mainly brought up in response to the first stimuli in the focus group discussions. The stimuli (as presented in the Methodology and enclosed in Appendix M) consisted of two photographs of two weddings; a Danish and a Pakistani. In rough terms, the following will contain an analysis of how the church and state influence perceptions of marriage in Denmark, as well as to which role happiness and love play in the such marriages. Some connotations of what a traditional marriage can be are presented in this compact quote from one of the interlocutors from group II:

D2: Jeg tror, jeg tænker nok at et dansk bryllup følger en vis form. Selvfølgelig gør nogen folk nogle skøre ting, men de er i kirken, det er med familie og venner, der er en flot brudekjole og et stort, flot lokale, god mad og... masser af drikke og sådan. (...) Det er på en eller anden måde, hvad kan man sige... det samme. Så er der selvfølgelig forskellige måder lige og og...
(Appendix I, line 77-79, 82-83)

D2: I think I believe that a Danish wedding follow a certain etiquette. Some people will of course do crazy stuff, but it still takes place at the church, it will be with family and friends, there will be a lovely wedding dress and a big, elegant location, nice food and... lots of drinks and the like. (...) Somehow it's, how to put it... the same. Of course, then there will be different ways for, for...
Her perception of a typical Danish wedding is that it follows certain etiquettes. Of the several aspects she points out, two will be further elaborated on this section; Church based wedding and the more outwardly visible aspect she is pointing at. The latter will follow after a thorough review and analysis of the Christian aspect.

She puts to the fore that a certain etiquette entails that the wedding ceremony takes place in traditional Christian surroundings; the church. The same connotation is shared by several of the other interlocutors in the three different groups, as shown below:

B2: Jeg tænker traditionelt, konventionelt, øh... kristent bryllup. (...) I en dansk kirke efter danske traditioner.
(Appendix I, line 36, 38)
B2: I'm thinking traditional, conventional, eh... Christian wedding. (...) In a Danish church following Danish traditions.

B3: Det ligner jo et ganske almindeligt dansk bryllup.
G3: Også i den grad.
K: (...) Nu siger du "ganske almindeligt dansk bryllup"?
F3: Kirkebryllup. (...) selvfølgelig.
(Appendix J, line 26, 29-34)
B3: It looks like a standard Danish wedding.
G3: Indeed.
K: (...) You said "a standard Danish wedding"?
F3: Church wedding. (...) of course.

When viewing all these together it becomes clear that a consensus about the link between wedding, church and tradition can be found across the different groups. The meaning of this tradition, however, does not always correlate between the different age groups; with the younger group being much more cynical and critical about traditions than the older. Possibly because of their higher age, the older groups instead made a lot of personal references to the act of getting married (Appendix H, line 332-333, 1143, 1147, Appendix J, 43, 50, 1347-1348, and more). In order to show a part of this cynicism or loss of traditional values, the following quotes are suitable:

C2: (...) vi er blevet så ikke-religiøse. Vi tror ikke rigtig længere på noget. (...) At det er mere traditionen, at det er en kirke, men når de sidder derinde, ja, de tror måske i virkeligheden ikke på Gud, vel? Det er mere traditionerne.
(Appendix I, lines 88-89, 430)
He has a disbelief in a genuine intention behind many people's preference of a church marriage and is pointing at a loss of faith in general. His quote implies a lack of something as opposed to having had it before, or in other word, he implies that something is no longer how it used to be. He continues by arguing that God is not even there anymore watching over you – that things are left for you to take care of (Appendix I, lines 91-94, 99). In response to this, two of the others agree that religion is something people choose not to have anymore – not because it no longer serves any purpose, but rather because society has just become like that. This kind of resignation is reinforced in the following quote regarding to weddings:

D2: Jeg tror også på en eller anden måde, at brylluppet har mistet en eller anden betydning i den vestlige verden. (...) (Appendix I, lines 339-340)

D2: I believe that weddings have lost some kind of meaning in the Western world. (...) 

In opposition to this cynicism of the youth group, the two older groups do not question religion in regard to wedding traditions. Rather, they seem to acknowledge that it is the foundation many people choose for their wedding, which also to a large degree includes themselves. However, when it comes to religion in broader terms they (with emphasis on group III) unanimously agree that religion is the cause of “all discomfort in the world”, e.g. war and that “it’s created by the devil himself” (Appendix J, lines 806-810).

As mentioned, cynicism can also be detected in how the youth group saw self-promotion as being very present in weddings today. They had stereotyping preconceptions of people spending huge amounts of money on their wedding, and using the wedding situation to promote a specific self-image. For instance as immediate response to the photograph:

C2: Man kan næsten se hvordan festlokalet også ser ud. (...) Og der holder sikkert en virkelig dyr bil på den anden side. (...) Sådan en Rolls Royce. (Appendix I, line 61, 67, 72)

C2: You can almost imagine what the reception room looks like. (...) And there’ll probably be a really expensive car waiting on the other side. (...) Like a Rolls Royce. 

This is mentioned after pointing out that everything in that photograph appears to be very stylish (matching umbrellas, expensive dress) and a bit posh (Appendix I, line 50-
When they emphasise this, they do it in a sarcastic manner. This distancing from what they perceive as a widespread custom is also a step away from identifying with traditional behaviour, as this traditional behaviour is perceived cynically:

B2: (...) At man iscenesætter utrolig meget op til den dag. Man gør meget ud af selve iscenesættelsen. Og festen og... (...) Også fordi hvis man så vælger at holde genbrugsbryllup, det giver jo ligeså meget iscenesættelse som det dyre Hellerup-bryllup. Så det handler rigtig meget om at vise hvem man er via hvilken fest, man holder.

D2: Ja. Og alt fra de små øh, bordkort til altså, til invitationerne til...

B2: Jaja. Om man holder det ude i skoven, eller om man holder det på en klub eller... (...) Jaja, det er altså sammen iscenesættelse, om man holder et naturbryllup ude i skoven eller om man er på en strand i Hawaii eller er i et forsamlingshus eller man er i... på et slot, eller om man holder sådan et hipsterbryllup inde i København. Altså... det er... Man skal virkelig vise omverdenen hvem man er.
(Appendix I, line 99-107, 118-121).

B2: (...) that people stage a great deal of things up to this day. You make a big deal out of this staging. And the party and... (...) It’s also because, if people choose to have a second hand wedding, it requires the same extent of staging as the expensive Hellerup wedding does. So it is a matter of showing whom you are through which kind of party you are throwing.

D2: Yes. And everything from those small eh... place cards to eh... to the invitations to...

B2: Yeah, yeah. It doesn't matter if you celebrate it in the forest or if you celebrate it in a club or... (...) Yeah, yeah. Everything is staging whether it is a natural wedding in the forest; or if you are at a beach in Hawaii; or in a local hall or at a... at a castle; or if you throw a kind of hipster wedding in Copenhagen. Well... it is... The point is you want to show the rest of the world who you are.

Following these quotes it becomes clear that appearance and self-promotion of the wedding are also some of the main aspects associated with a traditional Danish marriage situation. With that said, the group still agree that it is a very important day, and that the feelings behind are the same no matter how much money is spent (Appendix I, lines 85-97). However, it is very interesting to see how this younger group, to a much larger extend than the two other groups, point at possible new traditions. They list a comprehensive range of different kinds of approaches and “themes” that could possibly frame a wedding and show their openness towards changing traditions. This emphasis on individuality and being in control of your own personal “wedding show” instead of following traditions can be seen as a step away from the traditional foundation of marriage as an act in front of God.

As a last note to the so-called cynicism of the younger group, it should be mentioned that several quotes and discussions in the group were feeding this critical approach. In several discussions the topic of individuality was brought up, and used as an explanation for much of this self-promotion. In the same way that traditions and self-
promotion were talked about very critically and with a great sense of cynicism, so was individuality. The group argued that individuality might be a concrete reason for the high divorce rate, as well as their resistance towards arranged marriage, due to the fact that it would mean having to compromise for individuality. They argued that individuality had made parents reluctant to deal with their children's choices in life, since it is no longer socially acceptable for parents to take part in their children's decisions. Moreover, they said that it could be argued that a whole generation of Danes have issues with too great a sense of individuality, and that this is causing them problems and uneasiness when dealing with the challenges life has to offer, such as being able to compromise (Appendix I, lines 211-222, 287, 296, 777-778). All in all, this cynical view of self-promotion and superficiality should be seen as a result of leaving a traditional pattern behind, or rather; hollowing out a traditional pattern to make it fit a individualised, modern way of living.

Summarising all this together, it becomes apparent that the youth's belief in traditions has weakened and has been substituted by a sense of loss of deeper meaning in them. Traditions do, however, still exist as an entity from which the group compared other marriage and wedding traditions, as can be seen in the way that they perceived arranged marriage.

6.3.2 Perceptions of Arranged Marriage – Stuck in Time

As seen in the previous section, perceptions of traditions can indicate a change of things in a society; that's to say either linking traditional behaviour to that of a past time or radicalising the view on them thereby bringing them into a newer, more modern era. As for perceptions of arranged marriage, it appeared as a theme in all three groups that they are something to be associated with the past; representing a practice that a modern and well-functioning society, such as Denmark, has developed out of. This aspect will be explored further below.

Stuck in time

In general, the groups were of the opinion that arranged marriages, with their connotations of strong traditions, passiveness as well as a lack of free choice, love and individuality; do not belong in today's Denmark. Although there was wide variation in time-frame regarding when arranged marriages might have been a part of Danish culture (from Roman times through to 100 years ago) the idea that there is a place for arranged marriages in a modern, Western European society was not entertained. The only exception being among the royal families, but even here participants noted that there have been many changes with members of the royal family now choosing their own partners in a way not possible 100 years ago (both group I and II referred to the example of Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark's marriage to Mary).
Both the younger and the older groups referred to some of the traditions that they perceived as being part of an arranged marriage (strong family bonds, parents being more involved in children’s marriage, focus on economy) as being something that has been a part of Denmark’s past but that no longer is.

One participant in group II talks about how, on seeing the second photograph, it was easy to assume that it was a photograph of an arranged marriage. The following quote is an illustration of some of the thoughts behind such a marriage:

C2: (...) Og det har jo også noget med traditionerne at gøre. Og at der ligesom, man er fra nogle andre kår. Nogle andre traditioner, et andet samfund hvor at det sådan.. og sådan har det jo også været i Danmark før kan man sige. Det er vigtigt ligesom, at finde en der kunne forsøge og finde en god familie, ik?

(Appendix I, lines 172-176)

C2: (...) And it also has something to do with tradition. And it is just like you have different circumstances. Some other traditions and a different society where it is like that...and you can say that it has also been like that in Denmark in the past. It is important that you find someone who can provide and find a good family, right?

This led into a general conversation about different aspects of marriage traditions in Denmark and again, the point was made that certain traditions or beliefs have lost their meaning in Denmark whereas in countries such as that in the photograph, it was perceived that traditions are still strong and meaningful.

Later in the conversation another participant highlights the view that the practice of arranged marriage belongs in the past when it is specifically referred to on three occasions as being linked to medieval times:

B2: Jamen, det var jo sådan i Middelalderen, at familier indgik i de her sådan.. praktiske foranstaltninger, så allierede man sig på den måde. Via ægteskaber. Giftede sine børn sammen, sådan at man...

(Appendix I, lines 539-547)

B2: Well, this is how it was in the Middle Ages; families entered into these sorts of...practical arrangements, that was how people made alliances. Through marriage. Married their children together, so that...

The participant also states that because arranged marriages are seen as medieval, it leads to many more connected ideas and thoughts about arranged marriages, especially in terms of arranged marriages being seen as practical, unromantic, and generally following an old, cultural tradition. This would seem to build on the assumptions that:

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14 Arranged marriage
15 For example a strong belief in God’s guidance
arranged marriages follow a Western medieval model; and b) arranged marriages have remained unchanged since medieval times; and c) negative associations with the medieval period in general are transferrable to a situation where arranged marriages are practiced today.

As mentioned, the older group also expressed the opinion that arranged marriages are a past tradition that Denmark has moved on from. One participant talks about the practice of arranged marriage as dating back to Roman times, saying that it continued over the ages, surviving in the Muslim and Indian worlds but not in Western Europe or Denmark. Although this view is disputed in terms of how far into recent Western European history the practice continued (with, again, reference to arranged marriages within noble and royal circles), it is agreed that the practice is no longer considered a part of Danish culture. There is a clear feeling that in this way, countries such as Pakistan, where arranged marriages are dominant, that it is a question of time before they “catch up” with Denmark. An example of a remark that demonstrates this sentiment is taken from group II:

B3: Men det er bare... når man så tænker på at for bare 100 år eller lidt over 100 år siden i Danmark, der var det meeeegot normalt – også som vi snakkede om før – med arrangerede ægteskaber. Og se så her, de er bare 100 år bagefter (...) Altså, i det øjeblik at de havde det ligesom os, at de bare selv kunne bestemme...
(Appendix J, lines 188-193)

F3: But it is just...when you think that for just 100 years, or a little over 100 years ago in Denmark, this was veeeeery normal –as we talked about before – with arranged marriages.
And look here, they are just 100 years behind (...) Well, at that moment when they have it just like us, that they can just decide for themselves...

Here a link is made between freedom and modern Denmark as the participant continues to say that in Denmark parents don’t decide who young people should marry but that they decide for themselves. Again, this situation is contrasted with that of, in this case, the Middle East and other places16, where it was stated that people are not allowed to make their own decisions (Appendix H, lines 192-196). There is also the concept that AM-countries are in a way following in Denmark’s footsteps and that they just need to catch up by following the same pathway. This again, indicates that the “Danish way” is the “right” way to go and carries with it a certain amount of superiority. This concept will be discussed in more depth in chapter 7.

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16 Participant did not specify beyond: "and other places".
6.3.3 Comparative analysis and summary
Considering these two sets of perceptions in relation to each other, a few things become apparent: First, a cynicism expressed by the younger group implies that they are experiencing a move away from traditional behaviour, among other things. This is seen in the way they perceive the hollowed out, but yet common, connection between religion and a modern Dane. Even though they explain this as a result of a profound form of individualism in Danish society, it is discussed with a great sense of scepticism; implying that people today are actually missing out on something (resulting in high divorce rates), rather than gaining from this individualism. When traditions lose their value to people, as the cynicism of the youth implies, they become less important and might be regarded as belonging to the past. The link to how arranged marriage is perceived, is the preconception that foreign marriage traditions have not changed, and therefore have remained the same throughout time, thus being a cultural tradition regarded as not modern, and even backwards, as also implied and expressed by the participants in the interviews. There was an overall tendency to categorise arranged marriages as very traditional and very unlikely to change – therefore making a direct link to the past. This, we argue, could be a likely part of what we perceive as a general resistance towards the idea of arranged marriages. Taking it a bit further, when a cultural practice is met with resistance due to connotations of it being backwards or not modern, it could have a connection with the general view of the West as being modern and progressive; and thus superior in relation to AM-countries. Several findings in the interviews point at the same, as some foreigners (specifically women in arranged marriages) are described as victims, poor, possibly illiterate, with no education and in need of help (Appendix J, 1383-1384, 1409-1412, Appendix I, lines 1156-1160, 1166-1168 and more) – much with the same terminology that Escobar argues developing countries are being described with, and thereby recognised as being inferior to the West.

6.4 Sub-conclusion
This second analysis chapter covers perceptions of three main themes: the Foundation of Marriage; Freedom of Choice; and Modernity and Development. As probably clear by now, the themes are analysed both in regard to perspectives on Danish society and marriage traditions as well as in regard to perspectives of arranged marriages and AM-countries.

As for perceptions on the foundation of marriage two main issues become clear. Firstly that the groups were unanimous in their perception of love as the desired and most accepted foundation for marriage in Denmark; and secondly that ignorance can be seen as having an impact on perceptions of the foundation of an arranged marriage. The ideas and perceptions of arranged marriages expressed by the group could therefore also be seen as much more critical and focusing on negative aspects, than their perceptions of Danish marriage. It also tells us that their views do not match how
arranged marriages among Pakistanis are most commonly described (with reference to chapter 4 on Pakistani marriage traditions). These misperceptions can be argued to account for a part of the resistance towards arranged marriage, as seen in our analyses.

The analysis of Freedom of Choice covers a range of issues, of which we focus on four as being central. First of all, it was clear that freedom of choice appeared across both street interviews and focus group discussions as being a right one has which is of great importance. Furthermore, arranged marriages were repeatedly perceived as being a threat to this ‘right’, as several of the street interviewees expressed it. As the focus group interlocutors were being presented with Nadia’s story, it also became apparent that, regarding the assumption of arranged marriages presenting a loss of freedom, many participants’ perceptions changed after hearing Nadia’s perspective of what an arranged marriage can look like. Using a perception of freedom that identified with Nadia’s, they did not consider that her story reflected the standard presentation of an arranged marriage that they had been exposed to in the media. This leads into the third issue, namely that perceptions of freedom are highly individualised – what appears to be freedom for one, is not freedom for the other. The youth group showed particular critical views of Nadia’s perception and explanations of freedom, but did seem to accept that a proper comparison of freedoms would have to be culturally specific. Following from this, a fourth main issue of this analysis section can be seen in the context of Western superiority, as the Danish experience of freedom was somehow more desired than that defined by Nadia.

In the section on Modernity and Development it became clear that there was a distinction between the way in which traditions of Danish marriage were interpreted by the younger and the older groups. The latter were, for a large part, speaking from their own experiences and were more positive in their outlook, whereas a strong sense of cynicism could be detected in the former. This cynicism, as we interpreted it, arose as the youth were recognising a loss of traditional values in Denmark which, to some extent, were being replaced by superficiality and self-promotion. This links it to the second half of the analysis on Modernity and Development, since arranged marriages were unanimously perceived as being very traditional. On several occasions the participants described the tradition of arranging marriages as backwards and as being 100 years behind the West. It was also implied that these foreign traditions are perceived as being static and not changing or progressing – which stands much in opposition to how Danish marriage traditions have changed. From this it can be concluded that, within the focus groups, perceptions of the meaning of marriage traditions varied according to whose traditions were being taken into regard. This, we argue, could be a likely part of what we perceive as a general resistance towards the idea of arranged marriages. Taking this further, when a cultural practice is met with resistance due to connotations of it being backwards or not modern, it could have an influence on the general view of the West as being modern and progressive and thus superior in relation to countries where arranged marriages are common practice.
7. Western hegemony and Othering

As mentioned in the methodology, we allowed ourselves to be guided by our analysis of the street interviews with regards to the choice of concepts and theories. This led us to investigate the concepts and theories surrounding Othering, Stereotyping, Cultural Fundamentalism and Western Hegemony in the context of development discourse. These concepts provide a theoretical background within which the data produced by our interviews can be further discussed and analysed. As they complement one another and are in many ways intertwined with each other they are not presented individually but instead an attempt is made to reflect this interconnection.

According to the Professor of Anthropology Arturo Escobar, development discourse has, since the mid-1940s, both been creating knowledge about, while exercising power over, the so-called developing countries (Escobar, 2012, p. 9). There is widespread agreement that such a discourse has constructed the West as being superior, progressive, scientific, rich and modern and as such, representing a “goal” for developing countries, which in turn are constructed as being inferior, backwards, traditional, poor and primitive (Escobar, 2012, pp. 52–54). This hegemonic representation is considered by Edward Said in his work “Orientalism” which has been likened to a lens through which the places and people of the Orient are distortedly viewed. Such distortion is based on knowledge being acquired that is not objective or innocent but instead reflects and promotes certain interests; those of the West (or in Said’s terms, the Occident). This provides a view of the Orient as being unfamiliar, different and strange and makes it possible for people in the West to have preconceived notions of the kind of people who live there, what they believe and how they act, despite not having any personal experience on which to base these ideas (Edward Said On Orientalism, 2012). In this way the Orient is presented by Said as being the Other of the West, i.e. everything that the West is not. Although in Said’s work, the Other is representing the Orient, it can be seen that the term can be used to highlight the relationship between any group of people regarded as different and inferior (Other) and discriminated against accordingly by those who consider themselves as being the superior opposite. It should be mentioned that although Said is credited with popularising the term Other, it is a term first brought to light by Philosopher Emmanuel Levinas’ (Caro, 2009).

The discourse of Othering, however, can be seen as being reliant on the “...perpetual recognition and disavowal of difference.” (Escobar, 2012, p. 54). This can be seen as being fulfilled through successful stereotyping as described by Homi Bhabha (Bhabha, 2004 chapter 3). Successful stereotypes need to present knowledge and identification that is over and above what is either logical or empirically provable; they represent something that is taken as being ‘known’ without having to be proved, while at the same time they need to be continuously repeated, maintaining their aspects of gratification and terror each time they are told. (Bhabha, 2004, pp. 94–111). Bhabha sees the stereotype as a simplification, not in terms of being a false representation of a given reality, but in terms of it being a static, fixed representation that does not also allow for
any difference in representation. This is reflected in an interview whereby Said gives the starting point for his interest in Orientalism as being two-fold: firstly as an immediate reaction to the Arab/Israeli war of 1973: Said states that leading up to the war there had been substantial imagery and coverage in the media presenting Arabs as cowardly, not knowing how to fight and that it was a foregone conclusion that they would be beaten as they were not modern. Said states that it came as a huge surprise for people when the Arab army then demonstrated that they could fight just as well as the opposing army. This has more modern echoes in the way in which the recent Arab Spring uprisings took the Western world by surprise as it was not expected that people in Arabic countries would be so opposed to their system of governance that they would actively stand up for their rights (Villum, 2011)

A second reason for his interest, lay in a longer process of recognition of disparity between his own personal experience of being an Arab and the way in which Arabs were portrayed in fine art and culture (Edward Said On Orientalism, 2012). In much the same way we can see that stereotypes are used to characterise the field of development, both in terms of presenting development work as being altruistic and ‘having the answers’ while recipients of development aid are presented as being passive victims that need ‘help’ from the West.

Bhabha further discusses racist stereotypical discourse in a colonial setting and draws a line linking the morals and ideologies of improving or civilising a native population that is ‘known’ and objectified in terms of racial theories, stereotypes and colonial experience with the acceptance of discriminatory and authoritarian forms of political control as being appropriate and necessary (Bhabha, 2004, pp. 118–119).

Verena Stolcke ties this concept of racist discourse to the contemporary situation whereby she argues that cultural fundamentalism has displaced the now politically discredited racism: by regarding the abstract concept of cultural boundaries and difference as something real and concrete a framework is provided that enables Othering and discrimination to continue (Stolcke, 1995). An example of this can be seen in the recent case in Denmark whereby too many tickets were sold for a series of three FCK football matches, necessitating the cancellation of the excess tickets. A decision was taken to cancel tickets belonging to football fans with ‘foreign’ names on the premise that they would be less likely to be ‘true’ FCK fans (Bergløv, 2013). In other words it was considered that those people would share closer cultural links with the opposing (non-Danish) teams than with the Danish team. Stolke argues that European anti-immigration sentiments and policies are rationalised through ideas of cultural identity and distinctiveness. This manifests in views of immigrants from non-western European countries as not only being undesirable and threatening to the host country’s cultural identity but also as being the cause of socioeconomic ills such as deficiencies in social services and unemployment. As Stolcke puts it, according to the media and

17 Bhabha (quoting Fanon ‘racism and culture’) gives the use of phrases such as ‘I know them’ and ‘that’s the way they are’ to illustrate this point.
18 FCK is Copenhagen’s main football club.
politicians: “the ‘problem’ is not ‘us’ but ‘them.’ ‘We’ are the measure of the good life which ‘they’ are threatening to undermine, and this is so because ‘they’ are foreigners and culturally ‘different.’” (Stolcke, 1995, p. 3). There are several points made regarding the premise of cultural fundamentalism that have specific connection and interest in terms of this project: Firstly that there is a cultural ‘other’ whereby the immigrant or foreigner is regarded as being the opposite to the national or citizen. Secondly there is an assumption of a homogenous national identity that can be threatened by the immigrants’ cultural diversity. There is room in cultural fundamentalism for acceptance of immigrants who assimilate culturally. This carries the assumption that nationality and citizenship are both founded on a shared cultural heritage. And that without cultural sameness then access to citizenship rights are denied (Stolcke, 1995). In other words, those who are perceived as having a cultural background that is different to that of the majority of society, and who do not assimilate and conform can never be fully accepted by that society.

These aspects have been contextualised into a Danish setting by several researchers, some with a particular focus on the Danish government’s approach towards arranged marriage. Anthropologist Peter Hervik gives an in-depth view of the way in which cultural fundamentalism, as outlined by Stolcke, manifests itself in Denmark and in Danish society. To investigate influences on how foreigners are socially constructed in Denmark, Hervik identifies a neo-racist domination, in both the Danish media and politics, since the 1990s that constructs and positions immigrants and refugees as unwanted guests (Hervik, 1999b in Hervik, 2004, p. 248). Within this he highlights a key feature as being “...the construction of a rigid dichotomy between ‘we’ – Danes, and ‘they’ – the out-group of foreigners – to the point that is unbridgeable.” (Hervik 1999b in Hervik, 2004, p. 253). Underlying this perception is the understanding that the ‘out-group’ does not ‘naturally’ belong in Denmark (Hervik, 2004, p. 256). In the same way that Said discusses construction of the Other, Hervik draws a parallel between a lack of personal contact with immigrants, coupled with negative stories in the media, and the reference to a distinction between a ‘we-group’ of Danes and a ‘they-group’ of immigrants that ran throughout the interviews he conducted. Hervik further states that there is a “...basic assumption that immigrants and refugees are widely different and thus accordingly do not belong in the company of Danes in Denmark” (Hervik, 2004, p. 256) and that this reasoning is used by right-wing press and political parties in their representation of immigrants and refugees (Jørgesnensen & Bulow 1999; Hervik 1999a in Hervik, 2004, p. 256).

This theme of politicisation of culture is taken up by Social Researcher Tina Jensen where she discusses a polarisation between ‘Danes’ and ‘Muslims’ whereby due to the ‘us’ (Danes) and ‘them’ (Muslims) nature of the discourse, the category of ‘Muslim’ is perceived as including anyone of immigrant status (Gudrun Jensen, 2008, p. 390). Also perceived as belonging to the category of Others are Danes who have converted to Islam. This is regarded as illustrating a Danish way of looking at the relationship between ‘self’ (with a focus on ‘sameness’ that emphasises consensus, unity and
equality) and ‘others’ (who are excluded due to their perceived differences that are considered as a threat to national unity)(Sjørslev 2004 in Gudrun Jensen, 2008, p. 390). Jensen identifies different ways in which the relationship between ‘self’ and ‘others’ is constructed in Denmark and points to a public discourse that ranges from that of polarisation as in Orientalism to the discourse of assimilation (Gudrun Jensen, 2008, p. 392).

Bringing the discussion to a closer focus on perceptions of arranged marriage in Denmark, Siim and Borchorst cite the Danish government’s Action Plan for 2003-2005 on Forced, Quasi-forced and Arranged Marriages as being an example of political strategy that has the objective of preventing all forms of arranged marriages – both with and without force. According to Siim and Borchorst, the Action Plan takes its point of departure in the ‘clash of culture’ between Danish majority norms present in ‘normal families’ and the cultural tradition of forced and arranged marriages presenting them in terms of gender equality (‘us’) versus oppression and lack of self-determination (‘them’) (Siim and Borchorst, 2010, p. 147). This can be seen as Othering based on double stereotyping that ignores both nuances in the arranged/forced marriage debate as well as differences between ‘normal’ Danish families. In this way it could be said that this is a further example of cultural fundamentalism where political discrimination is justified on the basis of perceived irreconcilable differences.

7.1 “We are what we are, and the Others are something else”

The concepts of Othering, stereotyping and cultural fundamentalism, as unfolded above, can provide an interesting perspective on perceptions of specific cultural behaviour and phenomena, like marriage traditions, family identity. In a number of different discussions in the interviews, perceptions of the three groups appeared to evoke around the same topic: that which is hard to talk about; what which we do not know much about; and what which we in several ways distance ourselves from. In other words, these could all be seen as examples of Othering in the way Said, among others, theorised on the concept of the term. At the same time, a number of the cases where Othering becomes apparent, the argumentation becomes more substantial if we examine it in broader terms and look at it likewise as acts of stereotyping and cultural fundamentalism.

The section below will thus contain an analysis of the main important and influential cases where these theoretical concepts can illuminate the complexity of the situation. The first parts of the analysis section will mainly deal with examples of Othering; the second part will be going further with stereotyping and cultural fundamentalism, as extracted from both street interviews and focus group discussions.
7.1.1 Not someone we know

It quickly became apparent that the specific use of terminology added a nuance to the discussions in the focus groups. Likewise, it stood out that not only a few words were used to describe people originating from countries, where arranged marriage is an integrated custom. As a focus group discussion enables a closer examination of definitions and explanations it will be interesting to clarify which terms and descriptions were used. The following is a list of some of them:

“De der udenlandske familier, indvandrere, de fremmede, den muhamedanske verden, fremmede børn, en nede fra Pakistan, de er noget andet, dem der bor dernede, de udlandige, en dernede fra, dem der kommer udefra, de nydanskere, anden- og tredjegenerationsindvandrere, dansker, pæredanske, de tyrkiske gæstearbejdere.”

“Those foreign families, immigrants, the aliens\textsuperscript{19}, the world of Mohamed, (strange) foreign children, somebody from Pakistan, they are something else, those who live down there, those foreigners, someone fro down there, those who come from outside, the non-ethnic Danes, second- and third generation immigrants, Dane, Danish through and through, the Turkish guest workers.”

The list includes some of the terms used whenever the participants needed to address a specification to the subject talked about. It gets clear that they did not make a clear consensus of which descriptive words to use. This could imply that the participants in the interviews among themselves were confident enough to use whichever term they preferred. It could, however, also imply that it is not an easy task to choose your words, which is a challenge we as researchers in the field of development also face. In group III they were dealing with and/or defending their terms, as seen in the following quotes:

B3: (...) de fremmede – ja, det er det, jeg kalder dem (...) 
B3: (...) the foreigners – well, that’s what I call them (...) 

F3: (...) så er det næsten kun – nu kalder jeg dem fremmede – men, men fremmede børn, der er der.  
F3: (...) then it’s almost only – well, I call them foreigners – but, but foreign children that are there.

B3: (...) der er mange her – nu kalder jeg dem for indvandrerne – men som jo er ganske udemærkede.  
B3: (...) there are many here – well I call them migrants – but they are really alright.

(Appendix J, lines 185, 316-317, 1174-1175)

\textsuperscript{19} The term “fremmede” has negative connotations in Danish, which gets a bit lots in translation to English. ”Fremmede” implies that it is foreigners, but literally also means ”strangers”, which adds to the negative sound of the word.
These quotes could point at the difficulty in talking about these subjects. It also adds a distance towards the people they have a discussion about. In some cases the distancing is so wide scaled, that recognising the other in the right settings is nearly impossible. An illustration of this can be found in the responses to the photographs of the two newlywed couples. The two groups consisting of elderly Danes had matching replies, whereas nobody in the youth group mentioned anything in this context. The first of the following two citations were uttered by members of group III as an immediate response when handed the photograph of the Danish couple, the second response was shared by a woman in group I when handed the photograph of the Pakistani couple:

F3: Det er nogen, vi ikke kender.
G3: Det er ikke nogen vi kender, nej.
(Appendix J, lines 21-22)
F3: It is somebody we don’t know.
G3: It is not somebody we know, no.

D1: Er det nogen, I kender? Min mand har ellers spillet meget dilettant, men det er ikke i det stykke der i hvert fald.
(Appendix H, lines 272-273)
D1: Is it someone you know? My husband played as amateur in many plays, but not in this piece for sure.

The first responses can be categorised as immediate realisations that the persons depicted were not recognised personally. The second response, despite to a certain degree being comparable with the former, carries a range of other connotations. The response can be linked to the concept of othering in several ways. In order to get a point of reference, she starts out the same way as the first quote, by asking if we are acquainted with the persons depicted. As she does not recognise the setting in the photograph to be a showing a wedding like the first photograph they were just shown, she makes a completely other point of reference. Most likely due to the missing recognition, she links it to something more familiar; in this case a play. We acknowledge that the Pakistani wedding appears a lot more colourful and thereby at first very different from the Danish. It is, however, still very representative of a Pakistani wedding situation, where guests were colourful clothes for the celebrations and the newlywed couple is centre of attention with their family members gathered around. It is interesting that she links this wedding situation to an artificial situation in a play, even though it is recognised that wedding pictures in all cases can be orchestrated to some degree. Her non-recognition of this situation could reveal something about her
preconceptions of the marriage situation. This could thus provide further substance to the assumption of her not caring for or disliking a foreign wedding tradition.

7.1.2 Opposites and the Same
Following from the discussion of the participants’ multifarious use of terms, an analytical discussion of the consequences will be interesting, as it gets clear that according to the participants’ perceptions the foreigners are that, which they are not.

As Said clarifies, by examining or defining the Other, one will thereby be able to constitute and define a part of the Self. This can be illustrated in the quotes below:

B3: Jamen, altså, der har jeg altså et eller andet der siger ”vi er os og de andre er noget andet”. (...) jeg synes det er i orden, dem der bor dernede, de har lov til at være, som de er. De skal tro på det, de vil. Og det skal vi andre også! Kommer man ned til et fremmed land, så må man indrette sig efter det land, man kommer ned til. Og det er der jo mange, der kommer her op til Danmark, de kan ikke indrette sig efter hvordan vi lever her. De vil stadigvæk leve dernede, hvor de kom fra – og det kan ikke lade sig gøre!
(Appendix J, lines 399-405)

B3: Well, hmm, in that regard something tells me that “we are who we are and the others are something else”. (...) I think it’s okay that those who live down there, they can stay as like they are. They can believe in what they want. And so can we! If you are going to a foreign country, you have should adapt to that country you are going to. And there are many people who come up here to Denmark, they cannot adapt to who we do things around here. They still want to live like down there where they came from – and that’s not possible!

A2: Fordi vi gør det på en anden måde.
D2: Ja, vi gør det i hvert fald anderledes.
(Appendix I, lines 380-381)

A2: Because we do it in another way.
D2: Yes, we definitely do it differently.

(Appendix I, lines 774-778)

B2: (...) I just think it is a completely different, well, a completely different view on the world and on culture, when we’re talking about Pakistan. They don’t have these ideas, preconceived ideas – well, they probably do – but in a completely different way than us. About what love is. And what a marriage should be. (...) 

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20 Said in regard to the program Gift ved Første Blik.
It is extremely interesting that the interviewees disassociate themselves with the ‘others’. This distancing adds up to a general perception of the groups that Danes and non-ethnic Danes will most likely never be able to fully relate or identify themselves with each other. This distancing can be seen in the interviews in two ways: the apparent opposite and in the attempt of comparison. As elaborated on above, the former can be seen in the underlining of situations or issues where a comparison is perceived as by no mean possible – it is so distant from the Self that identification is rendered impossible. The interviewees make it very clear that what they just discussed, is foreign and Other. A closer examination of the last quote does, however, also imply something else. The generalising assumption that the case of arranged marriage is “completely different with Pakistan” gets very apparent here. What was said subsequently does furthermore reveal an interesting example of stereotyping. First and foremost, the argumentation and stereotypical assumption here is that Pakistanis have a completely different idea of what love and marriage is. It is a big assumption to make that the idea of love for Pakistanis should be so foreign compared to Danish ideas of the same that it appears to be impossible to compare. This is interesting due to the fact that love is perceived as the most widespread and acceptable foundation of marriage in Denmark, thus implying that a Pakistani view could not be Danish or part of Danish society. That stereotype could possibly be part of the reason why some ethnic Danes (but all of our interviewees) are reluctant to the idea of arranged marriage; for instance:

B3: (...) at når man ser de fremmede – ja, det er det, jeg kalder dem – så er arrangerede ægteskaber noget, som vi alle sammen er imod. (Appendix J, lines 185-186)

B3: (...) when you see the aliens – well, that’s what I call them – then arranged marriages is something all of us are against.

Following from the above, this assumption could therefore also be exemplifying why certain perceptions of arranged marriage can be seen as cultural fundamentalism: distancing one from the Other, based on purely cultural differences.

In cases where identification with the Other is far from being recognised, a situation can occur where no information can be taken in to regard to oppose this view. An example of this can be seen in group I immediately after being presented with Nadia’s story utters:

F1: Ja, jeg synes det er noget mærkeligt noget.

K: Du synes det er noget mærkeligt noget? Hvad er det, der er..?

F1: Ja, det der med at man skal.. forældrenes synspunkt og alt det der... hvad var det jeg læste om?

K: Ja? Hvad er det med forældrenes synspunkt der er sådan lidt?
F1: Ja det... at forældrene skal blande sig for meget. Selvfølgelig skal de være med i det, men de skal jo ikke bestemme det hele.

(...)

K: Men er der nogen af de ting, hun har sagt her, hvor du tænker at forældrene måske blander sig lidt for meget?

F1: Ja, for der står jo at man, hun, de skal... det betyder jo, at hun skal ikke være ked af det, hvis hun bakker ud.

(Appendix H, lines 694-700, 704-707)

F1: I think it's a very curious thing, that.

K: You think it is a curious thing? What is... ?

F1: Well, that thing that you have to... the parents' view and all that... what was I reading about?

K: Yes? What is it about the parents view that is a little... ?

F1: Well, it... that the parents are so involved. Of course they should take part of it, but they shouldn't decide it all.

(...)

K: But is there something about the things she mentioned, where you think the parents are too involved?

F1: Yes, it says that you, her, they should... that means that she should not be sad if she wants to back out of it.

Following this quote it can be noted that she appears to not actually have taken Nadia’s story into account. She seemed to be in trouble finding her words – or an explanation – for finding Nadia’s story unfamiliar and curious. This is particularly interesting for this participant because she generally did not seem to have trouble finding her words. This could give the impression that she had a preconceived opinion about arranged marriage, but could not find substance for this view in Nadia’s story, and thus had trouble finding her words and a reason for this view. This is an example of a situation, where Othering becomes very apparent, since a viewpoint showing something else is interpreted as not being comparable in the interviewee’s perception. Stolcke refers to perceptions like this as neo-racist, because the foreign culture perceived as being so far apart from her own that they cannot possibly co-exist in full acceptance.

As mentioned above there were two ways in which distancing can be seen: as direct opposites and in attempts at comparison. The above quotes were examples of the former, thus the following will analyse examples with regard to the latter. These following quotes are illustrations of attempts at comparison in which the non-ethnic Danes are perceived as being different than Danes or Danish customs:
A3: (...) Han\textsuperscript{21} identificerede sig helt med det danske. (...) fra at være næsten normal dansk kan man sige, altså meget dansk i sin tænkemåde (...) (Appendix J, lines 457-460, 463-464)

A3: (...) He\textsuperscript{22} identified himself completely with the Danish way. (...) from being almost normally Danish you can say, that is, very Danish in his way of thinking (...) (Appendix J, lines 457-460, 463-464)

F1: Hvorfor jeg ikke har bidt mærke i noget er, at det er jo ikke det land, jeg kommer fra, vel? (...) Så jeg holder mig til dansk. (Appendix H, lines 508-511)

F1: The reason why I didn't notice anything is, well, it is not that country where I belong, right? (...) So I stick to Danish.

D2: Det ser, det ser Vestligt ud på en eller anden måde (...) (Appendix I, line 889)

D2: (...) It looks, it looks Western, somehow (...) (Appendix I, line 889)

G3: [om polske gæstearbejdere] Og som er blevet normale danskere hen ad vejen. (Appendix J, line 1452)

G3: [regarding polish guest workers] And who has become normal Danes along the way.

B3: Men det er sgu mere det, at hvis man får en nede fra Pakistan, så er der en vis forskel. Selvom familien har boet heroppe i Danmark og de har så en datter... Hun må ikke få lov [til at gifte sig med en etnisk dansker]. De bliver aldrig 100\% danske (...) (Appendix J, lines 374-377)

B3: The damned point is rather that if you'll get someone from Pakistan, then there'll be a difference somehow. Even if the family has been living up here in Denmark and they have a daughter... She will not be permitted [to marry an ethnic Dane]. They will never become a 100\% Danish (...) (Appendix J, lines 374-377)

Similar definitions or explanations were found in the street interviews. Of particular interest for this issue, was a man in his late twenties. He was telling about his Danish friend of foreign origins who was about to have his marriage arranged by his parents. The interviewee explained that his friend was actually okay with this and was planning to adhere to his parents’ advice, even though, as the interviewee pointed it out: "He is just as Danish as you and I!" From that it can be noted, that the interviewee did not add distance to his friend, nor to the fact that he was not ethnically Danish. Rather, it appeared that he did not seem to comprehend that a Dane could tolerate being in an

\textsuperscript{21} A front man for a group of Muslims during the so-called Mohammed-crisis in Denmark.

\textsuperscript{22} See footnote above.
arranged marriage and thus added distance or Othered his friend’s choice on behalf of his cultural background.

To summarise this issue, this following quote will be presented:

B3: Det kedelige i dag er jo, at anden- og tredjegenerationsindvandrere, hvis man kan kalde dem det, de er jo pæredanske! De har boet her og forældrene og bedsteforældrene, de er boet her i 50 år. De er født danskerne, er danskerne. Men, det er ikke danske piger, de går efter. Så får de en nedefra, som kommer herop.

(Appendix J, lines 1543-1547)

B3: The sad thing today is that second and third generation immigrants, if you can all them that, are Danish through and through! They have lived here and their parents and grandparents have life here for 50 years. They are born Danish and are Danish. But, it isn’t the Danish girls they go for. So they get one from down there to come up here.

The paradox in this sentence is his argumentation. He is stating that although second and third generation migrants are Danish through and through, they still don’t want to date a Danish girl: ‘Danish girl’ probably implies that she is an ethnic Dane and does not have foreign origins. This ‘accidental’ paradoxical argumentation could imply that, despite arguing for the opposite, he does not fully recognise non-ethnic Danes as Danes anyway. This matches Stolcke’s assumption that cultural sameness and citizenship should be shared to be fully accepted.

Looking at the above a pattern can clearly be seen whereby a distinct line is drawn between ethnic Danes and Danes with a visibly different origin. This line seems to be drawn along cultural lines as when people otherwise regarded as Danish carry out a cultural activity (arranged marriage) that differs from the perceived Danish ‘norm’ then this creates confusion over their identity as Danes. In other words it seems that among the groups interviewed it was difficult to regard a person as Danish if they were culturally engaged in an activity that was considered non-Danish.

7.1.4 Superiority and condescending behaviour
The last analysis in this section will deal with cases where an attitude of ‘knowing better’ has been implied and used as argumentation. If gathered, many of the already analysed quotes could point to the same, as this quote below illustrates:

C2: Og det er så også fordi, hvad kan man sige, at fra den Vestlige verden så gør man dem til ofre. Eller måske er de? Og sådan er det jo bare med indvandrere… (...)

D2: Ja, fordi vi kender jo vores måde at gøre det på...

C2: Ja, og fordi vi føler at vi har svaret, altså. Vi er ikke bundet af nogen religion nu, vi her helt frie, lik? Som vi nu er, altså, vi føler vi er på det højeste stadie af… evolutionen.

D2: (Griner)

(...) 

C2: Ja! Nogen gange er der en bedrevidenhed, især fra politikere også.

(Appendix I, lines 1166-1168, 1172-1178, 1185) 

C2: And then it is also because, what to say, that the Western world turns them into victims. Or maybe they are? And that is just how it is with immigrants. (...)

D2: Yes, because we know the way they do things...

C2: Yes, and because we think we have the answer eh? We aren’t bound by religion, we are completely free, right? As we are now, I mean, we feel as if we are at the highest stage of... evolution.

D2: (laughs)

B2: Yes. Then we can also take a look at our colonial history and the like. History is just repeating itself. We don’t really have the answer.

(...) 

C2: Yeah! Sometimes there is a sort of know-it-all attitude, especially from politicians.

This quote shows examples of many aspects including: a perception that the West perceives and turns people from developing countries into victims; stereotyping with implying that immigrants behave in a certain, implicitly known way; Others by implying that immigrants are not free by virtue of the West’s perceived freedom; as well as implying that Western governments and aid agencies have a self-perception that they have the answer to the perceived problems of developing countries. The speaker does, however, question if this really is the case or if history is just repeating itself. Finally it is acknowledged that there is a condescending, know-it-all attitude in the West – especially among politicians.

The belief in the West as being superior or maybe even a fear of losing that superiority is an issue that can be seen in various levels – both in society and in the interviews conducted for this project. Another perspective on this can take the shape of fear of losing national identity or fear of the nation being threatened on its set of values, traditions or material goods. In society it can be detected in scare-stories in the news which focus on problems with migrants, or in migrant politics in far-right parties, which are gaining more and more support from the Danish public (e.g. as seen in national elections, November 2013). In the third focus group this became apparent during the following discussion:

F3: (...) Men det er jo altså igen de der fundamentalister, ik? De vil jo gerne at det danske samfund, det blev lavet om.

(Appendix J, lines 500-502)
F3: (...) But then again it is these fundamentalists, right? What they really want to do is to change Danish society.

D3: Nej, de vil blive ved med at forsøge at få overmagten! (...) Derfor så er det, jeg siger – og tror på – at de vil få overmagten. (...)
(Appendix J, lines 560, 636-637)

D3: No, they will keep on trying to gain power! (...) That's why I say – and believe – that they will gain supremacy. (...)

It should be noted that these opinions were discussed and opposed by several of the others in the group, but nonetheless, the issue he describes is still relevant. It is another example of how cultural fundamentalism can take shape, in this case as a fear of losing your own identity or culture, due to an ‘invasion’ of foreign cultural diversity.

7.1.5 I don’t know you but I know all about you!
It is also worth noting that many stereotypes were drawn on to discuss arranged marriages throughout all of the interviews. There are far too many to mention here but some are presented in a list below as being representative of those referred to:

“(...) brudeparret har ikke noget at skulle have sagt. Det er de ældre i familien, der bestemmer.” “(...) det handler måske ikke altid så meget om kærliged mellem de to...” “Så er et ægteskab23 langt mere en praktisk foranstaltning...” “De mennesker de ved fra at blive født, at det er sådan deres liv bliver...” “De forholder sig til det på en helt anden måde...” “...der har de en anden tilgang til ægteskab, til kærlighed” “...en kvinde, der kommer ind, som er analfabet, og som ikke har en uddannelse, og vil ikke have nogen uddannelsesmulighed.” “De kommer aldrig ud nogeninde og kunne gøre noget, eller lave noget. De vil kun være en byrde for os alle sammen.”

“The prospective bride and groom don’t have a say. It it the elders in the family who decide.” “(...) It probably isn’t so much to do with love between the two...” “In this way marriage is far more a practical arrangement...” “These people, they know from birth that this is how their life will be...” “they relate to it in a completely different way...” “...there they have a different approach to marriage, to love” “...a woman, who comes in who is illiterate and uneducated, who won’t have chance to get an education,” “They will never come out and be able to do something or make something. They will be a burden on all of us.”

In this way it can be seen that, in keeping with Bhabha’s explanation of stereotyping, many of the comments are not founded on personal knowledge but rather on overblown information that is continuously repeated until it becomes accepted as fact.

23 Arranged marriage.
7.2 Legislation
As described in the previous section, one aspect of cultural fundamentalism is that by constructing cultures as being irreconcilably different and in opposition from the perceived majority ‘norm’ it is possible to justify discriminatory legislation under the guise of protecting the nation-state from the threat of cultural differences. In other words as a way of keeping ‘them’ separate from ‘us’. Denmark has the dubious honour of having moved from putting forward an immigration law in 1983 described as ‘the most liberal in the world’ to introducing a revised version of that law in 2002, describing it as ‘the strictest in the world’ (Schmidt, 2011, p. 259).

For the purposes of this project we take our point of departure in the version of the Ægtefællesammenføringsregler (valid from May 15, 2012) as published on the internet by the Danish Immigration Service (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2012a). Although there are many conditions that must be met in order for a Danish citizen to be allowed to bring her/his non-Danish spouse to live in Denmark, we selected four that seemed to have the most relevance regarding their impact on arranged marriages (Appendix L). As mentioned in the methodology these were presented to the focus groups for discussion. This generated the responses as given below.

7.2.1 It’s ok as long as you’re not Danish
There was a general opinion across the groups that the requirements under the law were in general overly tough and discriminatory, with a couple of members of the younger group (group I) even showing disbelief that the laws could actually exist. The link was also made between the law and the ways in which arranged marriage and immigration are viewed in terms of prejudices and preconceptions. As one participant exclaimed:

B2: Det reflekterer det jo meget godt – de fordomme, vi har. Men hold da op! Altså, hvor mange danskere kunne leve op til det her?
(Appendix I, lines 1218-1219)
B2: It really reflects – the prejudices that we have. But come on! I mean, how many Danes could live up to this?

Here the participant also acknowledges the unrealistic nature of the conditions in that they are almost unachievable, not only for transnational marriages but just as much for marriages between two Danish citizens. This view was supported by other members in the group.

The groups of older Danes, were somewhat more divided in their opinions on the law; showing more acceptance for some of the requirements than for others. However, there was again a general feeling that marriage is not an appropriate area within which to create laws, especially if they are laws which are one-sidedly aimed at Danes marrying
non-Danes. The opinion that a country’s laws should be the same for all citizens was voiced along with a feeling that the government had no place meddling with an area as private as marriage, as the quotes below show:

D3: Jeg synes ikke vi skal blande os ind i det problem\textsuperscript{24}.
(Appendix J, line 1226)
D3: I don’t think that we should interfere in this problem\textsuperscript{25}.

G3: Jeg synes, vi har for mærkeligt et folketinget, de hver regler om det her. Det er simpeltthen sindssygt, synes jeg. (…). Det er helt gakgak, synes jeg. Det er helt vanvittigt.
(Appendix J, lines 1474-1478)
G3: I think that our parliament is too weird, that it makes rules about this. I think that it is simply insane. (…) I think it is gaga. It is completely crazy.

This view was upheld by others in the group who thought that it was not right for the government to meddle in people’s private lives to this degree.

In terms of the individual legal conditions, the two points that generated most discussion were the age requirement of 24 and the non-acceptance of marriage between cousins.

There was some consensus among the groups of older Danes that the ruling that both partners must be 24 years of age was acceptable. Some members of group I expressed the opinion that it might also be relevant for the age of consent to be raised to 24 for all Danes. Group III was divided with roughly half of the members viewing the law as reflecting a need to control what they perceived as a flow of ‘the wrong type’ of immigrant, that is to say, immigrants who are young and do not have a good enough education or work experience to make a valuable contribution to Danish society. The other half, however, were of the view that the law was discriminatory and inappropriate. However, there was recognition that this law should be seen in the context of increased immigration and subsequent (perceived) drain on welfare resources. Nonetheless, it was also argued that if this was the case then it would be far better to focus attention where there is a problem (e.g. abuse of the social security system) instead of making a set of rules that do not address the problem directly and that are built on prejudice and supposition.

G3: Jeg synes, hvis der finder socialt misbrug sted, hvor man tager en stakks pige ind, og skal ham lade ham forsørges af det danske samfund, så skal man angribe det. Og ikke selv skabe sådan nogle tåbelig regler.

\textsuperscript{24} Said with reference to government legislation about transnational marriages.
\textsuperscript{25} Refer to above footnote.
G3: I think that if there is social fraud, where you take in a poor girl, and if he lets her be supported by the Danish society, then you should attack that. And not create such stupid rules.

This was an opinion that was agreed on by several of the group members – that it would be more effect to target where the social system is abused instead of targeting a section of society. It was also noted and agreed that abuse of the social services is not simply an ‘immigrant problem’ but that many Danes also commit social fraud.

The other area that generated a lot of discussion, particularly amongst group III, was that of the illegality of marriage between cousins due to the supposition that such marriages are forced. There was a distinct and unanimous sense of injustice regarding this aspect, centring on the fact that it is legal for two Danish cousins to marry so it should be legal for Danish and non-Danish cousins to also do so. This was a point on which the whole group were in agreement, with comments such as:

F3: Altså, det jeg falder over, det er det med at fætter-kusine bryllup er ikke tilladt, selvom det ikke er ulovligt! (...) Det er sgu da noget underligt noget!

B3: Precis.


Here the focus is very much on fairness and equality between Danes and immigrants, although it might seem strange that there is not the same focus when regarding the other conditions (e.g. the 24 year old rule). This might be explained by the fact that participants saw some economic and social advantages with not allowing immigrants under 24 to come to Denmark.

It is interesting to note that following Nadia’s story, one of the issues that all groups picked up on was the fact that she married her first cousin. This generated two completely polarised views with the older groups regarding marriage between cousins as being fine as long as it is possible to carry out health checks to minimise the risk of inherited genetic disorders among children of such marriages. The younger group, however, expressed deep disgust at the concept of marriage between cousins, under any
circumstances (between two ethnic Danes, transnational marriages, etc.). In this group, not only were stereotypes of birth defects referred to but a deeper abhorrence of the act of marriage between cousins was clearly displayed.

It should be noted here that both of the groups of older Danes had members with personal knowledge of cousins who were married. Although the stereotypes of birth defects were mentioned by all groups, they were not considered to be as grave a problem by the more elderly groups as they were by the younger group. This could be an indication of improved access to information changing perceptions.

7.4 Sub-conclusion

It can be seen that from the data generated, a number of issues were raised that reflect aspects of the theories discussed at the beginning of this chapter. In terms of discourse, participants clearly refer to AM-countries and their people in terms that put distance between the speaker and the subject. Many times reference is made indirectly by using terms such as “We in Denmark are free” with the implicit reference that “Those in AM-countries are not free”. In this way foreigners are defined in terms of what Danes are not and are thereby disassociated. Although this can be expected to a certain extent, especially when discussing matters that little is known about and where information comes mainly from a biased media, it was surprising to see that a basic emotion such as love was similarly treated. It appears that in some way, the sense and practice is so strong that when love is put in the context of Others then it is not possible for it to have similarities to love between Danes. It seemed difficult and even unquestionable for the members of the groups to imagine that Others could love each other or need love in the same way as Danes do.

Furthermore, it is clear to see that the type of language used when talking about people from AM-countries has a similar effect as the language that is often used to describe people in developing countries (as discussed earlier): a picture is again painted of people in an AM situation as being victims of their own circumstances, unable to break free or resist, ignorant of “better” situations and needing “help” to find a freer and more individualistic way of finding love. In this way, the superiority of the West is again reiterated and strengthened.

In terms of cultural fundamentalism, it can be seen that in cases where people from AM-countries (and immigrants in general) assimilate by adopting cultural practices of the Danes then they are accepted as being “almost Danes” or even “as Danish as you and I”. However, as soon as they ‘slip back’ into cultural practices that are perceived as being non-Danish (i.e. arranged marriage) then this special status is soon lost. Cultural difference, it seems, overrides other identifying markers. In this way the “...certain openness which leaves room for requiring immigrants, if they wish to live in our midst to assimilate culturally” (Stolcke, 1995, p. 8) of cultural fundamentalism can be seen in action.
Interestingly the point of legislation is an area that seemed, in some cases, to stretch the boundaries of Othering. Here ideals of equality seemed to take precedence. However, this was only apparent up to a point and was not a view taken homogenously across the groups. While the younger group of Danes took distance from all of the legislation mentioned, the issues were not as clear cut among the more elderly Danes. Here it seemed that some doubt was generated among some group members due to stereotypes of immigrants coming to Denmark to benefit from social services and becoming a burden on society. It was only on the issue of marriage between cousins that complete consensus was reached regarding the unfairness and inappropriateness of the legislation. Here it could be questioned to what degree perceptions of the legislation were based on the perceived negative economical and social effects of immigration.
8. Discussion

As the project progressed we found that it continuously opened up new and exciting areas for exploration. The fact that the situation of arranged marriage in Denmark revealed itself to be highly complex and paradoxical also served to awaken our curiosity and motivate us throughout the course of the project. In addition we found that our own personal perceptions changed both in terms of how we perceive both Danish society as well as the more general issue of arranged marriage.

An aspect of the project that we found particularly thought provoking was the fact that the aspect of freedom was emphasised so strongly and with such conviction at all stages of data production and yet on deeper investigation it was clear that this was freedom on Danish terms. By this we mean that it was expressed that it is a basic human right to marry the person of your own choice and that it is a denial of this freedom if you receive direction and are guided in this choice. However, this does not take into account the possibility that it could also be just as much a choice to be guided and receive the benefits and support of a positive arranged marriage scenario. In this way the current Danish legislation regarding marriage between cousins can be seen as being paradoxical: By assuming that marriage between cousins is forced and undesirable, a law was made with the intention of protecting women and men from being forced into such a marriage. This in itself can be seen as a highly Eurocentric view as it does not take into account the value associated with, and the desirability of, consanguineous marriage in an AM-country such as Pakistan where over 50% of marriages are between first cousins (see chapter 4). However, through making this law, they are in effect preventing people who wish to marry their cousin from doing so, thereby denying them their freedom of choice.

Another aspect of legislation that calls for further reflection appears is in the stipulation that in a transnational marriage, if any form of public financial assistance has been received within a period of three years by the Danish spouse, then that person is not permitted to bring her/his foreign spouse to Denmark. This is paradoxical in that Denmark is a country that brands itself on being progressive and modern is instigating regulations that come straight out of the 19th Century whereby someone receiving Fattighjælp (economic assistance for the poor) was not allowed to marry due to the burden on society that this would entail. It is made all the more interesting as this was mirrored in the discussion held with group III where this particular condition was accepted by some as being necessary to prevent “illiterate, uneducated poor women who can only feed chickens” to entering Denmark and being supported by the State.

26 App. Z, lines 1411-1412, 1383-1384
The nature of a hegemonic relationship whereby not only does the dominant party use their privileged position to define who is superior and who is inferior, but the less privileged party also has to give consent to these definitions.

Although it was clear to us that the imposition of the Danish standpoint that marriage between cousins is unacceptable what was less clear was the extent to which this was accepted by the inferior party. In other words, does the Danish view override the Pakistani view of marriage between cousins, replacing an otherwise positive self-perception with a negative one? If this is the case then can we see that this is somehow accepted, thereby reinforcing and validating this relationship?

As a way of shedding light on this issue, we can draw on Nadia’s story by looking more closely to her reluctance to tell people that she is in an arranged marriage to her cousin. What struck us with her experience is that instead of challenging the widespread view that marriage between cousins is wrong and socially unacceptable, she chose to avoid the issue by hiding this aspect of her marriage. What we found particularly disturbing was the way that Nadia herself considered that the conditions of her marriage were something that she had to carry round with her as a “dirty little secret”. This is even more striking when this is seen in light of the high prestige afforded to marriage between cousins within the Pakistani marriage system. It is almost as if her marriage has gone from being of the highest status to the lowest. By not speaking up, her silence becomes a form of consent.

When we reflect on our observation that some participants’ perceptions were shaken through discussion of an actual example of a different perspective of an arranged marriage, it becomes even more of a pity that she does not share her story. Although it is out of the scope of this project, it would have been interesting to see if what would happen if Danes were exposed to stories like Nadia’s – would people rethink their opinion about cousins marrying each other?

Could it be possible in this way to deconstruct the types of prejudices generated in society against arranged marriages?
9. Conclusion

Our motivation for the present project took its point of departure in our curiosity about the amount of loaded information regarding arranged marriages we were exposed to. Sweeping and negative statements in the media combined with a brand new television programme experimenting with a Danish, and proclaimed, better way of arranging marriages were among the things that caught and bolstered our interest. With this motivation we asked the question:

- In which ways could Danish perceptions of arranged marriages reinforce the underlying beliefs of Western hegemony?

In order to answer this question we carried out a qualitative interview with a Pakistani woman in an arranged marriage, three focus group discussions and a number of short interviews in the streets of Copenhagen. By providing a contextualisation consisting of an elaboration of both Danish marriage traditions and of arranged marriage traditions in Pakistan, we were able to analyse our findings in the three combined theoretical and analytical sections, the main points of which we will conclude on in the following.

Contextualising and Exposure

Firstly, examining how the traditions of marriage have developed from past times up until today points at an important issue in regard to how traditions are perceived; namely, that even though they are most commonly perceived as a never-changing and fixed part of national heritage, traditions do modify and change accordance to circumstances. In this way, we could see how Danish marriage traditions changed from referring to a crucial transition into the guild of the married and a commitment to the attention of God, to being secularised from the church and broadcasted by national television as entertainment. In much the same way, traditions of marriage have undergone a transformation in Pakistan too: From the situation whereby it was mainly a foregone conclusion that the spouse was chosen for you, marriage has changed into being an act where the person getting married will most likely be offered possibilities instead of being limited in the choice of a spouse. A comparison of the two marriage systems also shows similarities: for instance in terms of the parents’ desire to find and accept a good match for their child.

This contextualisation of arranged marriage is, however, not available for everybody, which can be illustrated by nearly all interviewees’ experiences of an un-nuanced exposure to information about arranged marriages. There is a strong recognition among our participants that the media plays a very biased role in its portrayal of arranged marriages, which was mirrored in their perception of the same. Loaded exposure plays an important role as many of our interviewees had no other (personal) reference to the subject and thus were expressing being influenced by the negative attention it is given.
Perceptions

Following from this, we were able to divide participants’ perceptions into three main themes. These were then analysed by concurrently comparing how Danish marriages and arranged marriages were perceived in regard to each of those themes in turn. As a starting point, the perceptions of the foundations for marriage were analysed from which we can conclude two main points: Firstly that the groups were unanimous in their perception of love as the desired and most accepted foundation of marriage in Denmark; and secondly that lack of knowledge can be seen as having an impact on perceptions of what foundation an arranged marriage is build upon. This which coheres with what we could conclude from the analysis on exposure to information. Views expressed about the foundation of arranged marriage were, to a large extent, more critical and focused on negative aspects, opposing the idealised perception of the foundation of Danish marriages. If held up against the review of Pakistani marriage traditions as provided in Chapter 4, these critical views are based on beliefs and do not have a grounding in actual facts. These perceptions can, following from this, be argued to account for a part of the resistance towards arranged marriage, as we conceived it in our analyses.

Reasons for this resistance can also be seen in the analysis chapter on Freedom of Choice. Taking all our empirical data into regard, we can conclude that the much-appreciated concept of freedom appeared to be of great importance to interlocutors when putting forward their views on arranged marriage; which were perceived as limiting or losing this freedom of choice completely. From this the issue of confusion of where to draw the line between a forced and an arranged marriage became apparent, and showed a general tendency to mix the two, causing even further resistance towards the idea of arranged marriages. Presenting our focus group participants with Nadia’s story did, however, challenge their views as having a degree of freedom was generally not considered as being an arranged married. We found that the youth group were particularly critical regarding Nadia’s perception and explanations of freedom. Nonetheless, this group did appear to accept that, due to a difference in perceptions and definitions of freedom, a direct comparison between Nadia’s freedom and group members’ freedom was not possible. Instead such a comparison would have to consider many other factors that go into building perceptions of freedom. A further component was seen regarding perceived Western superiority, as the Danish experience of freedom was somehow expressed as representing a more desired state than that defined by Nadia. An aspect that came across strongly here is the role that different criteria play when assessing a situation or topic. The young group of Danes were most likely basing their perception of Nadia’s freedom on a set of criteria and ideals that did not take into account other aspects that Nadia might herself refer to. The same can be said in reverse when reviewing Nadia’s perceptions of Danish freedom.
From the third analysis section on perceptions we can conclude that there is a difference in how the younger and the older groups perceive issues regarding traditions and progression. Presumably due to belonging to a different generation, and for some by having personal experiences, the groups of elderly Danes voiced mostly positive perceptions of Danish traditions opposing the cynicism we noticed in the youth group. Regarding the youth group, we interpreted the loss of meaning in Danish traditions and their replacement by self-promotion and superficiality, as indicators for this cynicism. When compared to how both elderly and young Danes almost unanimously perceived arranged marriages as being very traditional, it became apparent that the ‘Danish way’ of marrying was perceived as being more modern. This perception was also seen in some interviewee’s descriptions of AM-countries or of the tradition of arranging marriage as being backwards, medieval and a century behind the West. This, we argue, can be seen as being likely to partly contribute towards why arranged marriages are being perceived with a general resistance. Concluding from this, this resistance to arranged marriage and the process of linking it to being backwards are likely to have an influence on the broader view taken by the West as being modern and progressive and thus superior in relation to AM-countries.

*Othering and Stereotyping*

Likewise these perceptions highlight another number of issues, which our final analysis chapter revolves around; namely Othering and stereotyping. Here we can conclude that when referring to AM-countries and the people who live in or originate from them, the interlocutors used language and terms that put a certain amount of distance between the speaker (Danish) and the subject (people in arranged marriages). There are several examples of foreigners being defined by our interviewees in terms of what Danes are not, thereby disassociating the one from the other. In some ways this was not too surprising, especially when the discussion focused on subjects about which relatively little was known and whereby perspectives were based on very biased information. However, when participants were expressing their perceptions of love, something that one might expect to transcend cultural boundaries, then it was apparent that this too received a similar Othering treatment.

This Othering, as we understand it, has the same type of effect, and makes use of similar language when discussing arranged marriages as when used in development discourse: By this we mean that just as people in developing countries are provided with characteristics of being victims, helplessly waiting for the West to show them the way to a better life, so are people in arranged marriages often portrayed as helpless and unable to break out of a repressive situation without “help”. Again there is the impression created that all they need to do is to become more individualistic and take control of their own possibilities and choices to become “free”, i.e. by following a pathway laid down based on Western ideals and principles.
In terms of cultural fundamentalism, it can also be concluded that it is entwined with Othering. It would appear that for the participants in our study, once immigrants assimilate and adopt Danish culture and ideals then they are considered to be on the way to becoming Danish and can thereby gain acceptance in society. If, on the other hand they revert to their previous non-Danish cultural practices then they once more become distant and considered in terms of being everything that a Danish person is not.

When taking the point of legislation into regard it seemed to make the issue of Othering clearer. Although the groups perceived the details differently, it generally seemed that ideals of equality took precedence. This can be exemplified by their perception of marriage between cousins not being accepted in the law of family unification, to be both unfair and put bluntly.

Lastly, a discussion raised questions of freedom of choice as a fundamental value in the Danish society as both allowing for paradoxical thinking and actual conflicting limitations for that freedom.

These conclusions should be seen collectively as providing an insight into some of the ways in which Danish perceptions of arranged marriage can be seen to reinforce the underlying beliefs of Western hegemony.
10. Bibliography


