

# Germany

## The Media and Muslims in Germany

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### Summary

This report analyses the representation of Muslims in the German Media. To this end, four national daily newspapers were monitored. The analysed newspapers comprised the right-conservative Die Welt, the conservative Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, the liberal Süddeutsche Zeitung, and the centre-left Frankfurter Rundschau, thus encompassing both the most influential mainstream newspapers and a large ideological spectrum. In a first step, the four newspapers were monitored in a period from September to December 2011, in which approximately 1000 items dealing with Islam or Muslims were identified. The share of the news items was more or less equally distributed among the four newspapers, with around 250 articles related to Islam or Muslims from each source. Around 80 percent of the items covered international issues, and about 10 percent national or local issues. National news items dealt with issues such as terrorism, Islamism, Islamophobia, education, German-Turkish relations and forced marriages.

Focussing on forced marriage as a case study and by applying methodological tools such as framing and discourse analyses, the construction, representation, and denunciation of Muslims (vis-à-vis German majority society) will be examined. The case study of forced marriage shows that German mainstream Media coverage of Muslims is predominantly one-sided, biased, and exclusivist, while the conservative newspapers use a stronger rhetoric than the liberal and centre-left press. Muslim women are represented as powerless and silenced victims of forced marriages, who are in urgent need of empowerment and emancipation. Their predicament fate is reduced to the culture and religion of their parents' country of origin. In contrast, Muslim men are portrayed as the violent and inhuman aggressors. In short, Muslims

are constructed as the 'other', challenging the values and norms of German majority society by importing cultural and religious practices from abroad, which are diametrically opposed to a Western life-style.

## **Introduction**

Currently, Islam is one of the most prominent issues in the German Media. Although there has been a significant increase in the news coverage on Islam and Muslims in the post-9/11 era, it should be noted that controversial discourses about Islam and Muslims have a long tradition in German Media, as shown by the coverage of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the affair around Salman Rushdie's novel "The Satanic Verses" in 1988. However, in the aftermath of 9/11, barely a day passes without news coverage about Islam and Muslims, be it of local, national or international relevance. Parallel to this development, the image of Islam, and construction and portrayal of Muslims in German Media, has been the subject of numerous academic studies such as those by Jäger and Halm (2007), Hafez and Richter (2007) and Schiffer (2005). The general tenor of these studies is that the coverage about Islam and Muslims is predominantly negative, stereotypical, sensationalist, and hostile. Islam is mainly covered in relation to conflict issues such as terrorism, fundamentalism, violence, intolerance, backwardness, suppression of women, honour killings, and forced marriages. Muslims, portrayed as a homogenous entity, are often represented as the 'other' and a threat. As most majority society Germans have little or no direct contact at all with Muslims, their image of Islam is significantly influenced and shaped by the mass Media. The negative portrayal of Muslims may serve to build or provide evidence for existing anti-Muslim attitudes and prejudices. Parallel to this, several surveys show an increase in anti-Muslim resentment in Germany. This in turn fosters a confrontational social climate where Islam is perceived as a main source for societal problems and threats (Hafez&Richter 2007).

The German Islam discourse can be contextualised in a broader discourse that has been taking place in many countries of the Western hemisphere about the internal as well as external 'other', negotiating who belongs to 'us' and who not. Mostly the discourse revolves around issues such as immigration, integration, and multiculturalism. Therefore, these public discourses offer a valuable set of data that is invaluable for the in-depth analysis to "understand the everyday and institutional reproduction of racial difference and discrimination" (Augustinos & Every 2007:124).

This report intends to analyse the construction and representation of Muslims in the German Media. This report consists of two main sections. In the first section the conceptual and methodological framework of this report will be outlined. While conceptually we draw upon 'new' racism in general, in particular anti-Muslim racism, and its special relationship with the Media, methodologically we refer to discourse analysis and framing. Then, in the second section of the report empirical data on forced marriage generated from Media analysis will be introduced.

## **1. New(s) racism and Muslims**

For quite some time now, there has been a growing interdisciplinary expertise on contemporary forms of racism in modern Western European societies. Researchers from different academic disciplines have been analysing discursive forms of written and oral items about themes related to race, immigration, integration and refugees. These studies have comprised ordinary daily conversation on the one hand, and formal institutional talk found in political speeches, parliamentary debates, and the Media on the other (Augoustinos & Every, 2007:123).

In this context scholars draw readers' attention to a paradigmatic shift from 'old' to 'new' racism. While the biological 'old' racism of "slavery, segregation, apartheid, lynchings, and systematic discrimination, of course of white superiority feelings, and of explicit derogation in public discourse and everyday conversation" (van Dijk, 2000: 33) is characterized by its blatant forms of prejudice (Augoustinos & Every, 2007:124), the 'new' racism denies that it is racism at all and wants to be respected and democratic. According to the logic of 'new' racism, "minorities are not biologically inferior, but different. They have a different culture, although in many respects there are 'deficiencies', such as (...) drug abuse, lacking achievement values, and dependence on welfare (...) – pathologies that need to be corrected of course" (van Dijk, 2000:34.). Since in the wake of the experiences of World War II overtly articulating racist opinions has been considered a social taboo, a new rhetoric has been developed that presents hostile sentiments of "out-groups as reasonable and justified while at the same time protecting the speaker from charges of racism and prejudice" (Augoustinos & Every, 2007:124).

Academics have been focusing on the forms of racism described above, but have, however, been labelling the phenomenon differently, e.g. 'symbolic', 'everyday', 'neo', 'cultural' or 'modern' racism (Augoustinos & Every, 2007: 124). What these studies have in common is that racism is still prevalent, but rather subtle and indirect and,

therefore, more difficult to grasp and recognize. In the particular case of Germany, for instance, in the public discourse the use of the term 'racism' is avoided and mainly used in the context of National Socialism and contemporary rightwing extremism. So the phenomenon of 'racism' is not only historicized but also regarded as problem of the extreme right (Shooman, 2012: 53). In fact, racism today is not only encountered at the margins of the society, in the type of right-wing extremists as it is mostly proclaimed, but also among ordinary people and elites (van Dijk 2000:34). Jiwani & Richardson suggest that "the last few decades have witnessed increasing racism, in form and frequency, recontextualizing and recycling older forms of racism to target new(ly) racialized groups" (2011: 242).

In this context van Dijk draws attention to the complex interplay between 'new' racism, discourse, dominance and the Media:

The New Racism of western societies is a system of ethnic or 'racial' inequalities consisting of sets of sometimes subtle everyday discriminatory practices sustained by socially shared representations, such as stereotypes, prejudices and ideologies. This system is reproduced not only in the daily participation of (white) group members in various non-verbal forms of everyday racism, but also by discourse. Text and talk about the 'other', especially by the elites, thus primarily functions as the source of ethnic beliefs for ingroup members, and as a means of creating ingroup cohesion and maintaining and legitimizing dominance. This is especially the case for Media discourse in general and the news in particular (van Dijk, 2000: 48).

The mechanisms outlined will be analysed in the second segment of this paper in-depth. At this point, some remarks on racism and Muslims shall be addressed, as this paper will focus on the framing and denunciation of Muslims in German Media. In the course of the discussion about 'new' racism, proponents of the critical race theory have put forward the "racism without race" argument as one main feature of this new phenomenon: "Ideologically, current racism (...) fits into a framework of 'racism without races' (...) It is a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences" (Balibar 1991:21). In this framework the racialization of the Muslim 'other' is identifiable: over the course of time in German Islam discourse a synonymous use of the terms 'migrant', 'Arab', 'Turk', and 'Muslim' is can be observed. This can be read as an ethnicization of the category 'Muslim', a process in which the identification of 'the Muslim' is carried out through identifying aspects such as a 'foreign' sounding name or physical appearance – headscarf, long beard or darker skin or hair colour (Schooman 2012:55). Schooman describes the racialization of Muslims as follows:

Regardless of their personal self-perception, the majority society constructs them [Muslims] as a homogeneous and natural entity and marked with collective ascriptions, in contrast to the white Christian/atheist German or European. Furthermore, knowledge about them and their nature as a group is generated and they are considered to be 'identifiable' via different characteristics (...) [A]n amalgamation of cultural-religious and physical features takes

place, which can be understood as a marker for an “alien origin”. Certain ‘ethnically’ framed groups are (not only) in the racist discourse religiously marked as Muslims. Therefore, these categories can neither just be added up nor taken apart. Rather, departing from an intersectional understanding of anti-Muslim racism, it should be noted that these ascriptions are closely interwoven with one another, generating specific experiences. (Schooman, 2012: 55).

## 2. ‘Race’ and the Media

It is no great revelation to claim that the Media has a tremendous impact on society at large. Together with various other influential societal actors, such as academics, politicians, and business people, it directly or indirectly shapes and forms the lives of a significant number of people (van Dijk 2000:36). The work of decision and opinion makers, and thus journalists, does not take place in a socio-political vacuum but is highly embedded in the discourses of a nation, therefore, as Kaplan illustratively puts it, the news can be understood as “a tale of the nation, which commemorates and commiserates in the nation’s tragedies as well as its triumphs” (cited in Jiwani & Richardson, 2011: 251). In his study on ‘Race in the News’, Law underlines that “[n]ews Media have been a key site for the representation of ideas about racialized groups, providing a mass of comment, information and speculation which repeats, reinvents and shapes wider sets of race-related ideas” (Law 2002:1). Furthermore, Law critically points out that “[t]he prevalence of racism in the Media is often vehemently contested or perversely ignored, and little attempt is often made to grasp the full nature and extent of racist ideas that have persisted over generations and across nations” (Law, 2002:15).

According to van Dijk the power of the Media can mainly be characterized as both ‘discursive’ and ‘symbolic’, constituting the primary source of people’s – be it elite groups or ordinary citizens – ideologies, knowledge, and attitudes (van Dijk, 2000: 36). Even though the Media do this together with other leading influential societal actors, such as academics and politicians, considering the freedom of the press, Media representatives are accountable for the “prevailing discourses of the Media they control” (Ibid.).

van Dijk identifies two main reasons for the existence of racism in Media as being the predominantly white elite, which is gathering and producing news on the one hand, and the absence or ignorance of minority journalists and sources on the other (van Dijk, 2007: 107). Consequently, under these circumstances it

is not surprising that in such a production context, news and opinion about non-western immigrants, refugees, and minorities —and in general on ethnic affairs— is hardly unbiased. As is the case for all outgroups, the overall discursive strategy is to emphasize Our good things and Their bad things, and to de-emphasize (deny, ignore, mitigate) Our bad things

and Their good things. Such polarization, expressing and reproducing underlying racist prejudices and ideologies, is implemented at all levels of Media discourse. (Ibid.)

In the context of *new racism* and Media van Dijk critically states:

when power over the most influential form of public discourse, that is, Media discourse, is combined with a lack of alternative sources, when there is a near consensus, and opponents and dissident groups are weak, then the Media are able to abuse such power and establish the discursive and cognitive hegemony that is necessary for the reproduction of the 'new' racism (Ibid.: 37).

Therefore, analysing the ways in which journalistic accounts of minority communities are played out in national newspapers will offer us invaluable insights as to how the news "reproduces inequality and relations of domination" (Jiwani & Richardson, 2011: 251).

### **3. Muslims and German Media**

As was mentioned above the Media representation of Islam has been the subject of various academic studies (Jäger&Halm 2007; Hafez/Richter 2007; Schiffer 2005). An example for this is a scientific study which illustrated that coverage of Islam is unidirectional and negative at the two main German public television channels, ARD and ZDF: in contrast to other world religions, news about Islam is one-sidedly connected to conflict issues such as terrorism, extremism, integration problems and international altercations. The authors of the study critically state:

Instead of practicing a neutral information policy, the very one-sided choice of topics in the magazine and talk-shows as well as documentaries and reports of the ARD and ZDF contribute to the increase of the already existing prejudices against Islam among the majority of German society and the 'fear of Islam' in Germany, which is measurable through by means of opinion surveys. Infotainment programming that is oriented at popular topics cannot serve as a proxy for a sophisticated journalism. The few positive counter examples (...) cannot weaken the argument that the wide-reaching magazine shows of the ARD and ZDF main programme and with that the thematic basic structure of the national public service broadcaster is Islamophob. (Hafez&Richter, 2007: 2)

In this context Jäger and Halm draw attention to the 'binary reductionism' of the German Islam discourse:

A dichotomic black and white thinking is taking place where the presumed negative characteristics of Muslims are highlighted and in contrast the positive ones are denied, ignored or understated. In contrast to this the 'autochthonous' majority society's positive elements are highlighted while the negative ones are ignored, downplayed or denied. (Ibid.: 5)

Furthermore, an increasing interwovenness of issues of integration and Islam can be observed in two respects: on the one hand there is a realization that the four million Muslims are not leaving Germany and, therefore, it is time 'to integrate Islam into

Germany'. On the other hand, a religious turn took place in the German integration discourse, namely, as already mentioned before, the ethnicization of the 'category' Muslim which is expressed in the synonymous use of the terms 'migrant', 'Arab', 'Turk' and 'Muslim (Schooman 2012:55). Muslims and Islam have increasingly been seen as a security problem since 9/11. This has led to the discourse about Islam overlapping more and more with the discourse on integration. Questions of integration are increasingly being negotiated in respect to the religious affiliation of immigrants. Therefore, the integration of Islam is on the top agenda of German society and politics (Jäger/Halm, 2007: 6). The integration of Muslims into Germany is not a political matter of course but rather an act of 'domestication' of a problematic population, where German authorities one-sidedly determine its dialogue partners as well as the issues to be discussed. Alluding to this problem Halm, Liakova and Yetik state that in "the German discourse about Islam the little influence of Muslims themselves on the discourse is obvious. Muslim actors may have a chance to articulate their views in the public discourse. However, in this context they are forced to problematize issues which the receiving society determines" (2007: 45).

At the same time in the integration discourse the demands directed at Muslims are increasing, whereby the level of integration is constantly being raised and absurd obstacles created (Jäger/Halm, 2007: 5). The involvement of the Media in this process of exclusion is of twofold significance; firstly, they promote racism in the majority society, which leads to the increase of rejection, stigmatization and discrimination Muslims; and secondly, Muslims are increasingly withdrawing and isolating themselves (Jäger/Halm, 2007: 5).

#### **4. Methodological approach**

Analysing the phenomenon of racism in the news can be a challenging undertaking.

Law illustrates the challenge as follows:

The complex chameleon-like character of racism, which is subject to variation and change across contexts and times, poses considerable problems for intellectual analysis. The process of conceptualization involves constructing an adequate encompassing definition, identifying key common elements and their articulations, and operationalising these elements to enable measurement and evaluation. (Law, 2002: 15)

In this paper we will critically analyse the way news in the press may contribute what is sometimes called the "new racism", with a particular focus on anti-Muslim racism. As news items are a form of text, we will make use of a 'discourse analytical' approach as outlined by van Dijk (2000). This approach implies that news will not be treated as

transparent 'messages' whose 'contents' are superficially and quantitatively examined but rather the complex strategies and structures of news items and their relations to the social context will be analysed (van Dijk 2000:33). In the particular case at hand the social context comprises of the practices of journalists in the production of news and the interpretations of the readership. This approach will help to unravel the Media's role in the (re)production of racial inequalities in contemporary Germany.

In this context van Dijk points out that particularly

because of their often and symbolic nature, many forms of the 'new' racism are 'discursive': they are expressed, enacted and confirmed by text and talk, such as everyday conversations (...) TV programmes and news reports in the press, among hundreds of other genres. They appear 'mere' talk, and far more removed from the open violence and forceful segregation of the 'old' racism. Yet, they may be just as effective to marginalize and exclude minorities. They may hurt even more, especially when they seem to be so 'normal', so 'natural', and so 'commonsensical' to those who engage in such discourse and interaction. They are a form of ethnic hegemony, premised on seemingly legitimate ideologies and attitudes, and often tacitly accepted by most members of the dominant majority group. This unique control of the majority over the prevalent forms of public discourse, policies and social conduct makes minority resistance (or white dissidence) against such racism even more difficult and precarious. It needs no further argument that the consequences of these forms of discursive racism in the lives of members of minority groups are hardly discursive: they may not be let into the county, the city or the neighbourhood, or will not get a job. (van Dijk 2000:pp.34)

In our context a discourse analytical approach seems to be an appropriate tool as the subjects who are involved in the discourses obtain their knowledge, which ultimately also constitutes the basis of their thoughts, feelings and actions, from their respective discursive environments (Jäger, 2007: 52). From this one can derive that discourses are effective: they are forming individuals' knowledge and consciousness, thus (indirectly) resulting in actions. Jäger describes the long-lasting effects of the discourse as follows:

The effect is not only created through single and short confrontations with individual discursive fragments or texts. The effects of discourses are the result of longer discursive processes, in which out of the swarm of opinions, with which the subjects are confronted with, gradually a core set of knowledge emanates. This is very important to note as this knowledge is the basis for the actions and behaviours of the subjects and eventually in shaping social reality at large. (Jäger 2007:52)

In our age, often referred to as the "information age", individuals are over loaded with information and news and experiencing to be part of various discourses at different levels, be it politics, Media, everyday life and so on. This process contributes to the generation and formation of their knowledge and behavioural disposition. From this Jäger concludes "the Media is significantly contributing to the production of this knowledge and thus also bears joint responsibility for the civil/social as well as human quality of this knowledge (...) The Media are not only *in*-forming, they are forming consciousness (...) and wielding power" (Ibid.: 53). Furthermore, the discourse



analysis can provide insights into how “news systematically conveys images (mental representations) of Us, and negative ones of Them” (van Dijk, 2000: 48).

The framing concept can largely be ascribed to the influential sociologist Erwin Goffman, who developed this concept in the mid-1970s. Generally speaking, framing analysis is a method developed for the analysis of how people grasp and comprehend activities and situations. Over the years framing has gained wide acceptance and popularity among social scientists. Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson define framing as “the process by which a communication source constructs and defines a social or political issue for its audience” (1997:221). The concept of framing is commonly used in news analysis / Media research with regard to ethnicity and ‘race’. Framing is mainly applied in order to “indicate that something of importance may be excluded from the Media picture” or to focus “on what is actually in frame, in the photographic sense” (Downing&Husband 2005:36). According to Downing&Husband the concept of framing is invaluable as it

- “notes how something unsaid, out of frame, may be as (or more) important in representing ethnicity or ‘race’ as what is said (...),
- encourages (...) they consideration of the motivations (...) of those Media professionals who reproduce these daily(...),
- prompts us to explore the long-term impact on audiences’ definitions of social reality (...), and

directs attention away from interpreting a single news story exclusively from its specifics, which in and of themselves may be unexceptionable, and towards the ongoing flow of coverage” (2005:36).

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Before we continue with the specific case study, the issue of forced marriage shall be contextualised in the German debate. Amongst others, forced marriage is a popular recurring theme when discussing Islam and Muslims in German Media. Depending on the political climate, time and again the issue of forced marriage is raised. Most of the time this issue is discussed in combination with other delicate issues, such as parallel societies and honour killings.

In dealing with academic research regarding forced marriage Karakasoglu and Subasi identify several challenges. Firstly, in Europe the issue of forced marriage is not

only discussed in the context of migration and integration but also framed as gender-based violence in an ethnicizing manner (although it is not ethnically bound). Secondly, due to the complexity of the issue and the poor data basis researchers come to different conclusions in terms of the extent and background of the phenomenon. Thirdly, the public debate is dominated by non-verifiable data and popular literature. Popular literature is very problematic in this context because it culturalizes the phenomenon by detaching the issue from its social context of gender-linked violence against women (Karakasoglu&Subasi 2007:120).

In 2009 the German Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth<sup>1</sup> commissioned a study in order to learn more about structures, scope, and forms of forced marriages in Germany. This study ought to be understood as a supplement to volume on forced marriage, which the Family Ministry and the German Institute for Human Rights launched together in 2007. For accompanying counselling with respect to methodological and substantive issues an advisory council was appointed. The members of the council came from practical backgrounds, academia and ministries.

In the following segment of this report the representation and construction of Muslims in the German Media will be analysed. For this purpose, from September to December 2011 four national daily newspapers were monitored. The analysed newspapers comprised the following:

- *Frankfurter Rundschau (FR)* is seen as a centre-left newspaper sympathizing with the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). The FR has a print run of some 150,000 copies.<sup>2</sup>
- *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)* is considered to be the national key medium of the conservative centre comprising radical ('right'-)conservative as well as more liberal views. The FAZ has a print out of some 450,000 copies daily.<sup>3</sup>
- *Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)* can be classified as a liberal newspaper and considered to be Germany's newspaper of record, thus the most influential national newspaper in Germany with a daily circulation of some 535,000 copies.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In the rest of the report referred to as the Family Ministry.

<sup>2</sup><http://daten.ivw.eu/index.php?menuid=1&u=&p=&detail=true> (20.03.2012)

<sup>3</sup><http://daten.ivw.eu/index.php?menuid=1&u=&p=&detail=true> (20.03.2012)

<sup>4</sup><http://daten.ivw.eu/index.php?menuid=1&u=&p=&detail=true> (20.03.2012)

- *Die Welt* is a strictly conservative newspaper that can be placed a bit further to the 'right' than the FAZ. *Die Welt* has a daily print out around 333,000 copies.<sup>5</sup>

The analysed newspapers can be considered as the most influential mainstream quality papers encompassing a large ideological spectrum.

In a first step, all four newspapers were monitored for the keywords "Islam" and "Muslim" in the period from September to December 2011. About one thousand items dealing – directly or indirectly – with Islam or Muslims were identified. The share of the news items was more or less equally distributed among the four newspapers, with around 250 articles related to Islam or Muslims from each source. However, the overwhelming majority (80 percent) of the collected data covered international news, such as the 'War on Terror' (Iraq and Afghanistan), issues related to the 'Arab Spring' (elections in Tunisia and Egypt, the intervention in Libya), the Israel-Palestine conflict, and Iran. Around 10 percent of the articles covered local news, such as "Open Mosque Day"<sup>6</sup>, Salafis, lectures and readings about Islam and mosque building projects. News items which were mainly of national relevance constituted around 10 percent of the total articles on Islam and Muslims. National news topics covered issues such as terrorism, Islamism, Islamophobia, education, German-Turkish relation and forced marriages.

We have chosen to analyse the news coverage on forced marriages as on the one hand with 25 news items – which constitute about one quarter of the total national news items related to Islam or Muslims – it provides sufficient material, on the other hand the issue was covered by all four newspapers at hand. On the issue of forced marriages the FR covered seven, the FAZ three, *die Welt* eleven, and the SZ four news items. From the analysis of the news articles one can conclude that 19 items were hostile, three were inclusive, and three neutral.

## 5. Launch of the study on forced marriages

On November 8, 2011, one day before the study was officially introduced to the public, the Family Minister Kristina Schröder from the conservative Christian Democratic Party (CDU) published an exclusive guest article in the daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) which can be considered as the mouthpiece of German

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<sup>5</sup> <http://daten.ivw.eu/index.php?menuid=1&u=&p=&detail=true> (20.03.2012)

<sup>6</sup> On October 3, which is also the German Reunification Day, most Muslim communities take part in the "Day of the Open Mosque". In 1997 this was initiated by the Council of Muslims in Germany.

conservatism. With her guest article “An escape route out of forced marriage” (8.11.2011, p.10) and the release of the study on forced marriage Schröder paved the way for a controversial public debate in Germany on forced marriage in the following weeks.

Minister Schröder praises the study “Forced marriage in Germany. Numbers and analysis of counselling cases” (BMFSJ 2011)<sup>7</sup> as groundbreaking and unique in the field of forced marriages in Germany, presents some striking numbers, and also shares several political conclusions she draws from the study. After announcing that in the year 2008, 3443 cases of forced marriage were registered in the counselling centres in Germany, she draws the attention to the “horrible dilemma” the persons concerned are confronted with: “The loss of self-determination through a forced marriage always goes hand in hand with the danger that with the call for help family ties will be lost as well” (08.11.2011, p.10).

She continues by identifying the deficient German language skills among the victims of forced marriage as a primary source for their unfortunate situation, thus argues that German language skills are not only indispensable for daily life and career perspectives but also for “a self determined, in a real sense independent life apart from parental restraints.” Hereby, she portrays the situation of the victims of forced marriage as self-inflicted, due to their poor command of German. However, in this context she does mention structural as well as institutional discriminatory practices in Germany, particularly in the spheres of education and employment, even for those who speak German perfectly and are highly qualified.<sup>8</sup>

The Minister then writes the following paragraph, which can be read as the key passage because it identifies the religion of Islam as the main source for the phenomenon of forced marriages:

According to the statements of the people affected by forced marriage, 83.4 percent of the parents are Muslims, 9.5 percent belong to the specific Kurdish Yazidi's. 3.4 percent are Christian and 1.3 percent Hindus. With good reason, many academics are warning against short and simple causal chains. Nevertheless, the religious aspect should not leave us cold. The connection between cultural background and human behaviour is a sociological matter of course. Yet this connection is being ignored or denied with regard to Islam. In view of the dispute about whether Islam is part of the problem or not, unfortunately it is totally overlooked that Islam must clearly be part of the solution. We must see that Islamic authorities in Germany understand the denial, and that they see action against forced marriages more as their duty. (08.11.2011, p.10)

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<sup>7</sup>[http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Broschuerenstelle/Pdf-Anlagen/Zwangsverheiratung-in-Deutschland-Anzahl-und-Analyse-von-Beratungsf\\_C3\\_A4llen.property=pdf,bereich=bmfsfj,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf](http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Broschuerenstelle/Pdf-Anlagen/Zwangsverheiratung-in-Deutschland-Anzahl-und-Analyse-von-Beratungsf_C3_A4llen.property=pdf,bereich=bmfsfj,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf) (23.01.2012)

<sup>8</sup> See EUV-WP 1-3 where institutional and structural discriminatory practices in Germany are discussed.

By listing the different religions with their respective affiliation to forced marriages it becomes obvious that Islam – almost 85 percent of the persons concerned identified themselves as Muslims – seems to constitute the major problem in this context, while other religions are not really noteworthy, as they are not even in the double-digits. It is quite striking that the Family Minister especially picks up this category and makes it to the central aspect of her article, especially considering the discussion that took place about the relevance and inclusion of the category “religion” in the study:

During the preparation of the survey there was a already controversial discussion with the advisory board about the inclusion of religion as a signifier: The religious affiliation was mainly described as an “empty variable” which does not allow interpretations without comparative numbers and additional knowledge about the religion actually practiced. Therefore, common ground was found with the advisory council that a survey would only serve for descriptive purposes. (BMFSJ 2011:34)

The study includes a rather careful and sceptical approach towards the use of the category of religion in this context and states that

with the selected method and the available data it was not intended to examine if and which connection between religiosity/religious affiliation with forced marriage exists. In order to explore the influence of factors such as education, origin, religiosity etc on the practice of forced marriage further research would be necessary. (BMFSJ 2011:36).

This cautious approach of the researchers and the advisory board demonstrates the sensibility and the degree of (possible) politicization of the issue at hand and illustrates that the discourse is not taking place in a socio-political vacuum. Interestingly, Chantler, Gangoli and Hester, who analysed the issue of forced marriage in the UK-context, express similar concerns and describe how this has influenced their research (design): “[T]here is often an association of forced marriage with certain communities – South Asian and/or Muslim – and we were anxious that our research should not feed into further pathologizing of these communities” (2009:595).<sup>9</sup>

In their study Chantler, Gangoli and Hester draw the following conclusion:

within the forced marriage debate, South Asian and Muslim communities are perceived as being largely responsible for forced marriages, whilst our research demonstrates that the range of communities in which forced marriage occurs is much wider (...) [F]orced marriage is often seen as a product of a ‘backward’ culture or religion in a pathologizing manner. The narratives in our study illustrate the interplay between culture, religion, poverty and state practices including immigration practices which points to the need for a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of forced marriage. (Chantler, Gangoli and Hester, 2009: 587)

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<sup>9</sup> They further explain: “There was also the possibility that minoritized participants (stakeholders, community organizations for the mapping survey, survivors) might perceive the study as instrumental in further restricting immigration and in potentially interfering with cultural practices around arranged marriages. This had the potential of creating distrustful and suspicious research relationships right from the outset, and of creating a sampling bias in favour of organizations and individuals who did not have a critical or radical perspective on the issues being explored. Whilst this may have been the case, our inclusion of a wide range of organizations from overtly feminist and antiracist organizations right through to an imam at a mosque illustrates that we were successful in engaging with participants from a variety of perspectives” (Chantler, Gangoli & Hester 2009:595).

They go on to argue that an exclusive focus on “South Asian communities detracts from the factors contributing to forced marriage in other communities, thus making those experiences invisible. The danger of gearing policy and practice towards specific communities and on age is a far from satisfactory response to tackling forced marriage” (Ibid.: 608).

In their international study on forced marriage Karakasoglu and Subasi argue along the same lines: “neither immigrant population nor religious communities constitute a homogeneous group, and thus the reasons cannot simply be limited religion and culture” (2007:120).

Drawing on national as well as international research findings the BMFSJ-study explains that there “is broad consensus in academia that forced marriages cannot be reduced to certain religious traditions, they can be found in different social, ethnic, and contexts all over the globe, also in Europe” (BMFSJ 2011:9). In order to prevent misinterpretation and even misuse of the category ‘religion’ authors of the study further state that due to the survey methods the data at hand does not give reliable information according to which criteria people’s religious affiliation was identified:

the counsellor as well as the counselled have their own ‘forms of intuition’ which could not be identified in the context of this study. Generally it should be assumed that the knowledge about attributes like origin, religious affiliation, religiosity and alike – and with that the self-assignment – also effect how certain communities are looked at in the public debate. (BMFSJ 2011: 35)

Although the Family Minister is fully aware of this critical issue – she herself warns from short and simple causal chains – she still prefers to make use of the category religion and presents this a courageous and long overdue way of dealing with it: “Nevertheless, the religious aspect should not leave us cold. The connection between cultural background and human behaviour is a sociological matter of course. Yet this connection is being ignored or denied with regard to Islam” (FAZ, 08.11.2011, p.10). Not only does she present herself as someone breaking a taboo and being honest about the problems, but also essentializes them, and thus puts Islam and Muslims in the spotlight of the issue.

In her piece Minister Schröder does not only emphasize that more than 80 percent of the victims of forced marriage are Muslims but also stresses that people with a Turkish background are particularly affected: “23 percent were born in Turkey (...), and Turkey was the most common country of origin of parents, with 44 percent.” By pointing out that almost all affected persons have a migration background, that 23 percent were born in Turkey, and that the most frequent country of origin of parents

was Turkey (44 percent), the issue is not only externalised and portrayed as an imported foreign problem from abroad but also framed as a specific Muslim Turkish one. Hence, the issue of forced marriage is both religionized (Muslim) and ethicized (Turk).

Furthermore, besides stigmatizing Muslims in this article she uses the issue of forced marriage for other political purposes as well, namely the question of dual citizenship.

Thirty two percent of the victims of forced marriage were born in Germany, and of those who were born abroad four out of five have been living in Germany for five or more years. Forty-four percent are German citizens. Both parameters – long residency in Germany and the German citizenship – apply for many of the victims of forced marriage. This shows that these parameters apparently cannot be counted as a reliable measure for the societal integration of migrants. One should know that it is not possible to support the identification of immigrants with the German legal and societal norms through dual citizenship. (FAZ, 08.11.2011, p. 10)

This passage shows that the study of forced marriage is being (mis)used as a justification for additional political purposes, namely for a more restrictive and discriminatory integration and immigration policy. In this context Subasi claims that this issue is instrumentalized to enforce entry-regulations and more restrictive visa arrangements. For example, the issue of forced marriage has been used to legitimize controversial language tests, which spouses from abroad have to take before being eligible to move to Germany: “The way the public discussion about forced marriage is led, makes them [Turkish population with an immigrant background] strangers again, which paves the way for politicians to pass more restrictive laws against them” (2011).<sup>10</sup>

It should be noted that Schröder was already a prominent political figure strongly opposing dual citizenship. When referring to this study on forced marriages she refers to other delicate issues concerning Islam, Turks and immigration, which offer populist ways to mobilise the public. In a subtle way these statements give the reader the impression that regardless of whether these people were born, raised or have been living in Germany for a long period of time, they are difficult to integrate as their very nature is irreconcilably different from the German one.

Furthermore, she states:

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<sup>10</sup><http://www.migazin.de/2011/11/14/diese-debatte-starkt-die-ausgangsbedingungen-fur-gewalt/> (13.02.2012). Prior to becoming Family Minister Kristina Schröder had already tried to distinguish herself as an expert on Islamism, extremism and radicalisation. Several years ago she was a prominent figure opposing dual citizenship. She was known as ‘the hunter of Islamists’. In 2010 Schröder drew broad attention on herself when she brought up the issue of “Deutschenfeindlichkeit” (hostility against Germans/anti-German racism) among immigrant youths.

In Germany one likes to argue about the difference between integration and assimilation. Whoever extensively deals with forced marriages will have to admit: regardless whether forced marriages are (...) culturally, religiously socially justified – none is compatible with our basic law's notion of a human being. Some traditional roots must once and for all be severed if one is serious about it with the 'arrival' in Germany and the acceptance of the basic rights and the legal norms here. (8.11., p.10)

In the following paragraph she states that people threatened with or affected by forced marriage have already experienced violence in their education and describes the connection between violence in families and forced marriage as alarming. By doing this issue of violence is brought up and the connection between Islam, Turks and violence is established.

This piece also tells something about the current government's approach to this issue. The Family Minister was neither criticized by fellow colleagues for her initiative nor rebuked by Chancellor Merkel, who usually intervenes in important political questions. Also, the symbolic release of the study by the Family Minister together with the Federal Officer for Integration, Maria Böhmer, make it seem like an action with broad support from the government. Therefore, the silence about this issue can also be read as the official government stance on this issue.

On November 9 Family Minister Kristina Schröder and the Officer for Integration Maria Böhmer – two leading female representatives of the Federal German government and both politicians from the conservative party Christian Democratic Union – introduced the research study to the public, which was covered by all four daily newspapers that are subject to this report.

### *5.1. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*

One day after the guest article by Schröder was published in the print edition of the FAZ, it's online version followed up on this issue by publishing a piece entitled "Schröder: Speak more about forced marriage in schools" alluding to the main political demands resulting from the study.

In contrast to the guest article by Schröder, there was no mention of religion or Islam in this item. However, the hint that "almost all affected persons were immigrants or the descendants of the immigrants, 44 percent had Turkish roots" (09.11.2012)<sup>11</sup> implies that in the public perception Turks are equated with Muslims. In this item statements such as the political demand of a closer cooperation with the authorities of the countries of origin, who "with all their power and strengths must fight against the heavy human rights violation" externalise the problem on the one hand, or that in many

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<sup>11</sup><http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/zwangsverheiratung-in-deutschland-schroeder-in-schulen-mehr-ueber-zwangsehen-sprechen-11523447.html> (09.01.2012)



cases victims of forced marriage “were abducted to a foreign country” portray them as an entity of organised crime.

The end of the article deals with some legal ramifications of the forced marriage debate, namely the right of residence for spouses. The minimum period of time a couple has to be married in order for the partner to get a residence permit was recently increased from two to three years. In light of this Mehmet Kilic, a Member of the German Parliament with a Turkish background, has been given a voice and expressed his critique of the legal measures. However, here it is not clear whether this has been done from the perspective of the minority voice or a voice of the opposition party.

On a superficial level the item seems to be neutral and informing about the political demands resulting from the study. However, a closer look reveals that the usage of vocabulary like ‘countries of origin’, ‘immigrants’, ‘44 percent had Turkish roots’, ‘abducted’, or ‘high dark rates’ tend to frame the issue rather negatively.

The very same item appeared in the print version a day later, on November 10, but under a different title. Interestingly, although the FAZ kicked-off the debate about forced marriages there was no further coverage of this issue.

### 5.2. *Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)*

On November 9 the issue was placed in the print version of the SZ in a prominent section of politics, namely “background” and “op-ed”. The background item’s title “Impelled to the yes-word” along with it’s teaser “Almost half of women who are forced into marriage have a German passport – most of them come from religious families“ already indicate the (religious) direction of this piece. In the article victim’s affiliation with Islam and their origin as Turks is highlighted, thus religiously and ethnically framed. Drawing on the important function of headlines and highlighted text passages van Dijk ascertains that

[s]ince topics express the most important information of a text, and in news are further signalled by prominent headlines and leads, they are also best understood and memorized by the readers. In other words, negative topics have negative consequences on the ‘minds’ of the recipient. (2000:38)

The following passage is an example showing the religious lens through which the author approaches the issue of forced marriage: “The broad majority of the marriage candidates’ parents (83 percent) belong to Islam, almost 10 percent are Yazidi’s, a religion common among Kurds, and nevertheless 3.4 percent are Christians” (09.11.2011, p.5). Why is the author of this piece saying “nevertheless” when speaking about the 3.4 percent Christians who are affected by forced marriage? Did he not expect that Christians could be forced into marriage as well? Although the number of

3.4 percent seems to be marginal compared to the rest, the author's usage of the word 'nevertheless' alludes to his astonishment that Christians are also affected by it.

The two findings of the study related to education and violence must have been of particular relevance and importance for the SZ as they chose to visually highlight them in the text. The first highlighted sentence is: "The phenomenon is not only limited to working-class families". This means that contrary to the general notion that forced marriage is primarily an issue of the uneducated lower class is not valid for this milieu; hence, in the Muslim community this phenomenon is widely spread in all milieus, including middle and upper class. This passage may lead to the conclusion that for those people even education does not help to overcome this issue. It leaves the impression that even educated Turks / Muslims are problematic cases, because it is not possible to integrate them so that they are in accordance with the notion of a human being as outlined in German basic law.

Another highlighted statement is "one quarter of the victims report death threats before marriage" which is integrated in the following paragraph:

In the counselling centres the victims were expected to also give information about the motives of their families (...) The marriage with an unknown was understood as a means against an undesired boyfriend or girlfriend or even against homosexuality. About a third of the spouses were expected to move abroad or were already living there. Thus these families show how much they are attached to the mindset of their countries of origin. Here for the family honour it is important that the bride enters the marriage 'untouched' and gay sons are considered as a 'shame'. (09.11.2011, p. 5)

Furthermore it is stated that a quarter of the victims report that they were threatened with weapons and death, and in the cases of more than half of the victims the kinship used violence. Approximately 70 percent were blackmailed or threatened into marriage. In relation to this a study from 2004 is referred to which is considered complementary, thus making the issue of forced marriage scientifically grounded (and complementary in its findings).

Neither a critical statement about the study is expressed nor a voice from the minority community included. In this context the one sentence in the item "(...) authors of the study are warning that the problem is primarily seen as an Islamic one and that issues of tradition, images of masculinity and poverty are neglected" (09.11.2011, p.5) sounds rather marginal and is highly likely to be overlooked.

Taking together the title, teaser and the two visually highlighted sentences the article conveys a clearly negative picture of the Muslim and immigrant community, and in particularly concerns the Turkish one, where, even among the more educated sections of society, a significant segment of the population is forcing their children into marriage, often using various forms of violence.

The “background”-piece on forced marriage by Roland Preuß is complemented with his op-ed entitled “With imams against forced marriages”. As the title implies, the comment is solely about the religious dimension of the issue.

It is the contrast to the Western romantic notion of marriage, this makes forced marriages already so disconcerting. While some are searching for their great love of their lives, many migrant families force their daughters and sons into the misfortune of marriage (...) Surely, criminal law alone will not suffice, immigrants need to change. They must detach from their traditions, which are opposed to basic law in Germany (...) In this context imam’s play a crucial role, because they enjoy much prestige among religious families. And according to the study it is exactly these religious families, which are responsible for forced marriages. The prayer leaders can certainly argue with the Islamic teachings which is do not prescribe forced marriage (...) German politics can support this by making clear that there can be no compromise when it comes to forced marriages. (09.11.2011, p. 4)

The author draws an antagonistic Manichean view of the world: here the ‘us’ – the idealized Western romanticized individual searching for the great love of their life – versus ‘them’ – the religious immigrants with their imported obsolete archaic traditions suffering under the pressure of violent and religious male authorities. Without further specification the religious immigrant is portrayed as opposed to Germany’s basic law. It is particularly the generalising statements such as “*many migrant families force their daughters and sons into the misfortune in marriage (...) immigrants need to change. They must detach from their traditions, which are opposed to basic law in Germany*” that depict the phenomenon of forced marriage within the Muslim immigrant community as the rule rather than the exception. Not only is the demand made that the religious immigrant has to change but it is also suggested how they should to change; namely, through the means of the religious leaders of the Muslim community. The item concludes with a rather optimistic outlook, making reference to positive developments in Turkey and Turkish Media in terms of dealing with the issue of forced marriage, but despite this the general tone is rather stigmatizing and patronizing. Without a critical reflection this item supports Schröder’s narrative of forced marriage, especially with its focus on Islam.

Over the course of the day the online version of the SZ also covers this issue under the title “Schöder announces hotline for victims of forced marriages”, first repeating the same findings of the study and the measures demanded by Schröder and Böhmer. This time the article also encompasses critical voices from the Green Party – criticizing that the measures are not going far enough and demanding more victim protection, and including comments from *Terre des Femmes*<sup>12</sup> complaining that the government is not fulfilling its duty of care for young women. However, it was only

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<sup>12</sup> *Terre des Femmes* is a non-profit human rights organisation based in Germany that supports girls and women through raising public awareness, international networking, campaigning, individual personal assistance and the promotion of self-help projects abroad.

Aydan Özoguz, deputy chairperson of the Social Democrats (SPD), explicitly referring to the problem of the stigmatization of Muslims:

“The integration policy spokesperson of the SPD’ parliamentary group, Aydan Özoguz, described the hotline as a measure against forced marriages not as sufficient. Furthermore, she reproached Schröder of categorically stigmatizing Muslims. When the Minister presented the study she had indicated that the majority of the affected people were Muslims”<sup>13</sup>

### 5.3. *Die Welt*

Also *Die Welt* covered the issue with an article entitled “One in three threatened with death”<sup>14</sup> followed by the teaser “A study of the Family Ministry explores the phenomenon of forced marriage on a national level for the first time. Most of those seeking help are women who have already experienced violence in their upbringing” and highlighted “Nearly 70 percent of the affected persons are younger than 22. Almost all have a migration background. One third were born in Germany” (09.11.2011, p. 5). What is specific about this article is that it not only lengthily portrays a woman with a Kurdish background who has been the victim of forced marriage but it also underpins the story with selected findings of the study on the one hand and calls on the assessment of Aydin Findikci, a sociologist from Munich, on the other. By doing this the issue of forced marriage is filled with witness testimonies from real victims, backed up by a research study and an assessment of an expert. All in all this gives the impression of a professional and thoroughly researched credible and authentic story.

Sonja Fatma Bläser, who provides the witness testimony, is portrayed as a heroic woman, who succeeded to break ties with her violent family, and after a tiring and suffering journey has reached independence and freedom. She is now married to a German man (thus, saved from violence and the problem is solved) and has even assumed a German name – symbolizing the new identity and the perfect integration. This indirectly implies that she, the Muslim women, through marriage with the German (probably non-Muslim) man, has been exempted from violent Muslim men and is now leading a peaceful, fulfilling and emancipated life. Fatma Bläser’s life mission is to raise awareness of forced marriage in the migrant community. She founded an association for victims of forced marriage, which is exclusively funded through the revenues of her autobiographic book, and is holding readings and visiting schools. She serves as an eye-opener not only for the issue of forced marriage but also for the permissive German politics towards Muslims and integration. For decision makers and opinion

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/schroeder-kuendigt-hilfstelefon-bei-zwangsheirat-an-schroeder-kuendigt-hotline-fuer-zwangsehe-opfer-an-1.1184903> (09.01.2012)

<sup>14</sup> The same article also appeared in the online version on the same day. A shorter version was published in the print version of *Welt Kompakt*, which is an abridged version of *Die Welt*.

shapers it is strategically of great importance that women like Bläser complain about Germany's legal system, presumed to be liberal.

The 'wrong tolerance' which she encounters in Germany again and again, makes her furious. 'Many politicians do not put their cards on the table or show a weird understanding towards traditions which violate human rights.' In her experience Islamists [sic!] can perfectly organize themselves in Germany (9.11.2011, p. 5).

She is demanding a 'zero tolerance' policy towards the 'Islamists'. These authentic insider voices provide arguments and justification for proponents of a more restrictive and harsh policy towards immigrants. Furthermore, she embodies the mediator as well as enlightener giving guidelines for helpless and confused German teachers, who are unable to cope with the phenomenon of forced marriage: "She meets confused teachers who do not know how to deal with this phenomenon. She teaches them to be watchful when students tell before a holiday to the home country of their parents that they have received many presents from the relatives living there." (09.11.2011, p.5)

Besides the representation of victims of forced marriage, this item portrays Muslim men as barbaric and inhuman aggressors. As the article is filled with emotionally loaded negative ascriptions of Muslim men the relevant passages will be quoted below:

(...) the father tried to beat integration out of her body (...) When she spoke with boys from her school, when she painted her finger nails, when she wanted to get her drivers license – she was always beaten up. When Bläser was 19, her father once and for all wanted to force her back to the world of his traditions: In 1985, during a holiday in Turkey the young woman was married to a relative without warning. She fled, hid in Germany, survived a murder squad (...) Bläser acknowledges that she is repeatedly threatened. Once the breaks of her car were manipulated, another time at a reading of hers a young Turkish man with a gun showed up (...) Almost 300 affected women come to Bläser's counselling centre each year. Among them are young Turkish girls who were to be killed by their fathers with rat poison because they did not want to marry (09.11.2011, p. 5)

By stating that in her daily work, especially when visiting schools and during her readings, Bläser "(...) time and again (...) meets students from the third generation of immigrants who have the same patriarchic-fundamentalist mentality as their grandfathers" (9.11.2011, p.5) the item frames young male immigrant Muslims as problematic non-integrated potential threats, who, following the footsteps of their forefathers, will be aggressors of violence and are very likely to force their sisters and daughters into marriages. This statement has a biologicistic element as well, as it implies that this mentality is virtually passed from generation to generation 'biologically' is not only widely spread but also quasi intrinsic to this community.

In this context, however, the inclusion of Aydin Findikci's assessment is striking, as the reader does not get any further information about why he is included here and what qualifies him to offer his assessment. Is it his competence as a sociologist? Is it his migration background, which is not further explained, but which one can assume from

his Turkish sounding name? Or is it maybe both, the sociologist with a migration background who knows how the immigrant Muslim community ticks and can explain it to the German audience? Maybe the author felt it helpful to get an insight from a sociologist in order to shed light on what Schröder described: “the connection between cultural background and human behaviour is a sociological matter of course. Yet this connection is being ignored or denied with regard to Islam.” The reader can only assume that he must be considered as an expert on this issue by the author of this article. But brief research about Aydin Findikci reveals that it was not the first time that *Die Welt* referred to him in the context of Islam and integration. From the previous articles Findikci has written for *Die Welt* one can easily understand that he has an extremely biased and hostile attitude towards Islam.<sup>15</sup> However, the way his assessment is being presented in the article is very critical: “There are no reliable figures about forced marriages in Germany. Aydin Findikci, a sociologist from Munich, believes that 30000 with an Islamist [sic!] background, take place annually” (09.11.2011, p.5). From this passage it is not clear whether it was Findikci or the author of the article who chose to use the misleading term ‘Islamist’. Interestingly, the term ‘Islamist’ is used in another passage as well where the author paraphrases Fatma Bläser: “In her experience Islamists [sic!] can perfectly organize themselves in Germany” (09.11.2011, p.5).

What makes this item special in contrast to all others is that it talks about ‘Islamist’ rather than an Islamic background or Islamists rather than Muslims. In the entire context of the item it is being used synonymously even though there are major and crucial differences between these terms. The reader is given the impression that an Islamist and Muslim and Islamist and Islamic is synonymous.

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<sup>15</sup> Findikci had already published two articles in *Die Welt*, one in the section ‘guest article’, and the other one as an op-ed. The titles, teasers, and the highlighted sections of the articles make clear the direction the content takes: 29.12.09; Guest article – Title: “Outdated Quran interpretation curb integration”; Teaser: “Is it as the poet says, that the mosques are the barracks of the Muslims, the minarets their bayonets, the domes their helmets, and the believers their soldiers? In an urgent appeal Aydin Findikci, who teaches sociology at the University in Munich, is correcting a false understanding of Islam in Germany.” Highlighted text passages: “The unchanged word of God?; The organised faith is Islamist; Mosques politically misused.”

<http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article5665837/Veraltete-Koran-Auslegung-bremst-die-Integration.html> (12.01.2012)

20.10.10; Opinion - Title: “Why the headscarf is hindering integration”; Teaser: “Aydin Findikci thinks that headscarves are worn on behalf of the Sharia as a symbol for dividing the society into believers and non-believers”; Highlighted passages: “The headscarf as a symbol against the laicist system; Wearing a headscarf and honour killings.”

<http://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article10406136/Warum-das-Kopftuch-die-Integration-verhindert.html> (12.01.2012)

By letting a crown witness from the Muslim community speak, an exclusive glimpse into the otherwise unknown, mysterious, inaccessible, and violent world of the immigrant Muslim community is given from an authentic insider.

The general style of this item is sensational and the language extremely emotional. The examples chosen are heavily dramatic and the testifying characters authentic. In particular Muslim men are portrayed as violent, uncivilized, barbaric, and oppressive. The item has not only a very supportive undertone for Minister Schröder's position but it also provides information calling for a more restrictive law and order policy, especially towards Muslims. In this item a victim of forced marriage is portrayed and the results of the study introduced. The study is presented as a uniquely first time groundbreaking document shedding light onto a hitherto fairly unknown, new and foreign but still socially pressing phenomenon.

#### 5.4. *Frankfurter Rundschau (FR)*

On November 9, the FR-online also covered the story with an agency report from AFP (Agence France Presse) entitled "Young, from a religious family - and forced into marriage" with the following teaser: "The young women that are pushed into a forced marriage go through many struggles. In this context, one in three victims is threatened with death, a new study has revealed. Many victims of forced marriages are younger than 17. The majority come from strongly religious families"<sup>16</sup> (9.11.2011). Although in this AFP item there is only a general discussion about religious migrant families and neither Islam nor Muslims are explicitly mentioned, the picture that is placed next to the article makes it is obvious that Muslims and Islam is meant in this context.



Caption: "According to a study almost half of those who are either forced into or threatened with marriage are German citizens, about 95 percent are women and girls."

The depiction of a person with a purple headscarf from behind, wearing a pink hooded sweater and a ring on her ring finger, suggests to the reader that this is a

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<sup>16</sup><http://www.fr-online.de/politik/zwangsehe-jung--aus-religioeser-familie---und-zwangsverheiratet.1472596.11122202.html> (12.01.2012)

young female Muslim and victim of forced marriage.<sup>17</sup> Here, not only the hair of the women is veiled but also her identity, she remains anonymous and an unknown to the readers.

At this point we would like to refer to the instrumentalization of Muslim women in anti-Muslim racism by pointing out the effects of particular forms of pictorial representations. Muslim women are per se considered to be suppressed and subordinate to men, and their treatment represents the thinking and actions of Muslims in general (Schiffer 2008).<sup>18</sup> Schiffer argues that the discourse about 'the Muslim' demonstrates the framing and ordering function of language and pictures.

The headscarf wearing Muslim women is used for illustrative purposes when it comes to integration problems, naturalization, and German language tests. By this the clearly visible symbol also becomes a symbol of foreignness and 'otherness' (Schiffer 2008).

This agency report refers to the articles published in *Die Welt* and *SZ* (discussed above) and cites the Commissioner for Integration. However no minority voice is expressed in this item.

On November 10, the print edition of the FR did a special focus on forced marriages in Germany covering the issue on page two and three of the politics section. The two page focus included an overview about the key findings of the study, provided an insight into the legal situation of forced marriage in Germany, presented victims stories, and covered an interview with a prominent women's rights activist and Islam critic Seyran Ates, who has a Kurdish-Turkish background.

The article, "Enforced misfortune in marriage" by Katja Tichomirowa classifies the study as important and unique, but not representative. Tichomirowa begins her article by stigmatizing "strictly religious Muslim" families:

It is a serious human rights violation, (...) the forced marriage. However, it is being practiced thousands of times in Germany. Young men and women, usually from strictly religious Muslim families – often under the threat of violence – are being forced to marry. Many of these marriages happen in the victims' countries of origin. (10.11.2011, p. 2)

Here the author stresses the strictly religious identity of the victims and their countries of origin, highlighting their supposed 'otherness'.

Another important item in this context is the contribution by Maurice Farrouh on page three of the FR, in which, with the help of the women's rights organisation *Terre des Femmes*, the fates of two women are documented. Both cases are about Muslim

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<sup>17</sup> Interestingly this particular picture has also been used in several other news articles covering the issue of forced marriage.

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.migration-boell.de/web/diversity/48\\_1231.asp](http://www.migration-boell.de/web/diversity/48_1231.asp) (13.02.2012), published May 2008.



women, the first called Leila, whose parents are originally from Lebanon, and the other Ayse, who has a Turkish background.

Leila's situation is described as:

From her strictly Muslim parents many things were forbidden that were normal for other girls of her age: going out, possessing a mobile phone, surfing the internet. For Leila all this is taboo. She cannot even shut the door of her room. (10.11.2011, p. 3)

Ayse's fate is presented as follows:

The parents, who originally come from Turkey, want to marry her with a man from a befriended clan. Arranged marriages are quite common in the family context, and the children usually do subordinate themselves under the will of the parents (...). For days her mother and her siblings want to talk her into the marriage. They tell her that it is normal. They tell her that she has to save the honour of the family (...). Ayse refuses but the family ignores it. They threaten her and promise her expensive wedding gifts. Eventually, they tell her that she has no choice in the matter. (10.11.2011, p. 3)

In this desperate situation, it was her attentive German female supervisor who helped the suppressed and helpless young Muslim women out of her desperate situation.

At least she can graduate from school and pursue an apprenticeship as a saleswomen in a shoe store. It is the only connection to the world outside the family. The supervisor quickly realizes that Leila has big problems. After a short hesitation the girl entrusts herself to her. The owner of the shop establishes a contact to a counselling centre. (10.11.2011, p. 3)

In both cases it is emphasized that the young Muslim women – both then and now described as girls – manage to escape from the chains of their suppressive families only with the external help of the “white” German women. While in the case of Leila it is the attentive German female supervisor at work who helps the desperate Muslim girl, Ayse receives help from the German women rights organisation *Terre des Femmes*.

It is striking that in these contexts women from (white) German majority society are either presented as the helpless and desperate observers of the situation because they are overwhelmed by the situation or as the saviours of the victim from of the situation.

The general impression the reader gets from these two cases is a very negative and stereotypical image of ‘strictly religious’ families with a Syrian and Turkish background – violent and suppressive family structures, where the individual has to subordinate his or herself to the collective idea of the family and women are immature, weak, desperate and not self-confident until they receive help from “white German” women who empower and liberate them.

## **6. Reactions of the advisory board**

At the end of November 2011, just a few weeks after the publication of Schröder's FAZ-article and the launch of the study, when one had assumed that the public debate

about the forced marriage study was over and that all positions had been presented, the discussion took an unusual turn and a second phase of the discussion began. This was due to the fact that, after reading Schröder's FAZ-article, members of the academic advisory board of the study on forced marriage felt the urgent need to publicly intervene with a statement. In their statement they express that in light of the Minister's presentation of the results of the study they feel "great consternation" (sueddeutsche.de, 29.11.2011)<sup>19</sup>, and hence, would like to clarify two crucial points. While one critique is directed at the use of the religious affiliation, the other one targets the supposed number of people concerned by forced marriage.

The advisory board states that during the entire research for the project there was already a concern

that a survey about religious affiliation could lead to misunderstanding, misinterpretation or problematic ascriptions. Unfortunately, now this concern is confirmed through the FAZ-article, in which Minister Schröder claims that 'according to the statements of the people affected 83,4% of the parents were Muslim'. This claim is just wrong, because persons affected by forced marriage at no point were ever directly asked in the context of this study. The number mentioned is rather a result of people working at counselling centres (...). Therefore, the correct formulation would be 'counsellors indicated that they assume that 83,4% of the parents of the persons concerned are presumably of Muslim origin.' Whoever ignores these differences denies the validity of any empirical study. One can save oneself that trouble beforehand. (sueddeutsche.de 29.11.2011)

The SZ-item in detail refers to the statement of the advisory board pointing out how Schröder intentionally misinterpreted the findings and, thus, propagated anti-Muslim resentment.

The article has an inclusive tone towards Muslims criticising how German authorities intentionally create, construct and shape anti-Muslim prejudices and stereotypes. However, no minority voice is expressed in the item. Besides the spokesperson of the Ministry, who speaks in favour of his superior, it is Monika Schröttle, a member of the study's advisory council, who is quoted in the article.

Minister Schröder's course of action is strongly condemned. She is presented as a populist politician – in the past she gave controversial statements about Islam and immigrants and led controversial political campaigns such as that on the issue of citizenship – as well as being an incompetent academic – referring to her dissertation as a "classic B-type work":

It is not the first time that Schröder causes headshaking in the academic world. At the end of 2009 shortly after her swearing in critique emerged about dissertation, which academics would call a 'typical B-type work' (...) primarily serving one's own career, from a scientific perspective rather irrelevant. During the election campaign in Hesse in 2008, Schröder claimed an increase of 'anti-German racism' among foreigners. Then too she misinterpreted the scientific findings, in this case those of the respected criminologist Christian Pfeiffer from

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<sup>19</sup><http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/familienministerin-in-der-kritik-wissenschaftler-attackieren-schroeder-fuer-islamophobe-untertoene-1.1221681> (11.01.2012)

Hannover (...) Schröder (...) explained the contradiction in her unconventional way (...) 'That's how it is in academia. Everyone draws his / her own conclusions. (sueddeutsche.de 29.11.2011)

Although the author of the article is trying to make a point by criticizing Schröder's approach to the issue, the positive description of Christian Pfeiffer as "respected" is rather confusing because Pfeiffer is himself a controversial figure. Although the hint to Pfeiffer's study is correct in the context of anti-German racism it should be noted that in 2010 the very same study produced the catchphrase "the more religious, the more violent" with regards to young male Muslims.<sup>20</sup> For this he has been accused of doing 'politically motivated research' and 'populism' at the expense of Muslims.

In the same context, but in a less positive tone, the FR also refers to Pfeiffer:

She [Schröder] interpreted a study of the sociologist [sic!] Christian Pfeiffer as a proof for an increase of 'anti-German' violence – a thesis about which particularly one person was surprised: the author himself" and also reminds the reader about Schröder's past where she tried to distinguish herself with Islam critique. Amongst other things she requested to 'fight political Islam like terrorism'. (FR, 30.11.2011)

Interestingly, only the SZ and FR covered the statements of the advisory board. They also referred to a previous study in relation to this, that the Minister misused for her own purposes.

Even though FR and SZ deserve credit for following the issue and reporting about the statement of the researchers, it should also be noted that apparently it was not important enough to include it in the print version of their respective papers but to leave it with an online coverage of the issue. When the study about forced marriage was released both papers covered this issue in print as well as in their online version as it was considered very relevant.

When the study was released there was no questioning of the findings of a study which was commissioned by a minister known for misusing study findings and for being openly critical of Muslims and immigrants. The question remains why the Media does not take a more critical, sceptical and hesitant approach when studies about Muslims are released and in particular by this minister.<sup>21</sup> It could be that the findings presented

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<sup>20</sup> The Federal Ministry for the Interior commissioned the Criminological Institute of Lower Saxony to carry out a study on causalities between experience of violence, Media consumption and integration. For this purpose several thousand pupils were also asked about their religiosity. Ultimately, the study found connections between the degree of self-assessed religiosity, macho behaviour, integration and violence.

<sup>21</sup> In March 2012 the German public witnessed a similar case when the Federal Minister of the Interior, Hans-Peter Friedrich, released a study on Muslim youth in Germany. One day before the official release of the study the biggest selling German tabloid "Die Bild" exclusively published the content of the study. "Die Bild" published an article which it entitled "Shock study - Minister for the Interior warns radical Muslims. Young Muslims reject integration" and reported about the worrisome key findings: "about 20 percent of all Muslims in Germany reject integration. Young Muslims without a German passport are especially radical." According to the study one in four non-German Muslim rejects integration, has a tendency towards violence and questions Western values. This item included a quote by the Federal Interior Minister with the

were not too much of a surprise for members of Media, they actually anticipated this and their stance on this issue was been reaffirmed.

Interestingly, *Die Welt* and *FAZ* did not cover this statement at all. Actually it would have been a logical step for the *FAZ* to also cover this as a continuation of the debate on forced marriage which was exclusively started in it's paper with the guest article by Kristina Schröder. By withholding this important statement from its readership the *FAZ* is leaving the arguments put forward by Schröder in the air and not challenging it. This can also be read as a way of supporting this position and not revealing the contested and misleading position of the Minister.

Strikingly, *Die Welt*, which covered this issue in a sensational way, did not cover this item either. On the contrary, instead of critically discussing this issue, *Die Welt featured* more stories about forced marriages and honour killings supportive of Schröder's arguments. Furthermore, *Die Welt* also published an essay by Necla Kelek, a controversial public figure known for her 'Islam critique'.

Among the newspaper items analysed the article "Cutting the throat in the name of honour" (Welt online, 27.11.2011) was the most sensational. The combination of the title with its teaser "A new study shows that violence against Muslim women has not declined. Hamburg wants to fight against it"; the picture of a black *niqab*-wearing women; the dramatic and strong language used; the extreme cases chosen; the one-sided experts voices expressed and the selective choice of research on the subject all give the reader the impression that forced marriage is intrinsic to Islam, thus diametrically opposed to the conception of a human being outlined in German basic law.



Caption: A fully veiled women. Still numerous Muslim women are victims of violence in their families.

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following statement: "Germany respects the origin and the cultural identity of its immigrants. But we do not accept the import of authoritarian, anti-democratic and religious-fanatical views. Those who fight freedom and democracy will have no future here – to make this clear is the task of everyone." After the publication of the study the researchers publicly intervened into the debate, stating that their report had been hijacked for political purposes, and expressed their worries and concerns on how the research findings were misinterpreted.

A representative of the German section of the international women rights organisation *Terre des Femmes* gave the following statement in relation to this issue: “Patriarchy is not a phenomenon of the past (...) Even today living according to traditional value patterns does restrict the free development of many girls and women, and in particular, migrant Muslim women living in Germany” (Welt online, 27.11.2011). Giving a voice to a representative of an organisation, which is perceived as politically and financially independent and thus has a positive reputation and credibility in the public eye concerning women’s rights, strengthens the credibility of the item. As they have yearlong experience in women’s rights issues and are politically independent their assessment of the situation is of particular importance and provides the item with an expert view. However, it is of note that she is not speaking of German Muslims but of Muslims living in Germany.

It is not only an expert from a prestigious NGO like *Terre des Femmes* but also a social education worker whose voice is heard. This shows that the author has conducted a thorough research by shedding light on the disastrous situation of Muslim women from different perspectives of the actors involved in this complex and sensitive issue.

While describing the painful fates of the Muslim women, in this item the representation of men is also striking:

That her little daughter is today still alive and healthy, is a small miracle for Serap Y. In October 2010 her brother, Ibrahim Y, came into the apartment of the then very pregnant woman, threw her to the ground, kicked in her stomach and back and finally stamped on her. Because her unborn child was from an illegitimate relationship with a Kurd, she had injured the family honour (...). In other cases like the one of the German-Afghan Morsal Obeidi, any help came too late. In May 2008 her brother killed the 16-year old in a backyard (...) with 23 stabs with a knife because she had violated the rules of the Afghan family (...) with her Western lifestyle.

He [her brother] controlled us at every step, we girls were not allowed to go out during the day. When my older sister looked out of the window for a longer time, he would beat her (...). The family [her husband] believed that a man can discipline his wife, whenever and however he wants (...). When we ate all family members ate first and I was last. I was the quasi-servant of my mother in law (...). He did not want me to get an education. He always said ‘that the more you are educated the earlier you will leave me’ (...). (Welt online, 27.11.2011).

Until the day when they were at a wedding and a strange man dared advances. ‘My husband was in rage, and it ended in a mass fight. Because he assumed that I as a women had provoked the situation he wanted to cut of my throat in front of 200 people’ says Yildirim. ‘I only survived because my son defended me. The rest of my family wanted to see me dead.’

Since this incident she has been living separated from her husband, and has divorced him. ‘I am still on the run, I moved to another city, because he and his family want to find and kill me’, says the 37-year old.” (Welt online, 27.11.2011)

Muslim men, be it the brother or the husband, are portrayed as extremely violent and incalculable aggressors, who, because of their perverted understanding of honour, are able to kill their sisters or wives. Providing the reader with the information that these cases are just the tip of the iceberg may invite the reader to conclude that this is not the exception but rather the norm amongst Muslims in Germany.

These emotional and dramatic statements from victims of forced marriage are embedded with the results not only with the latest published study on forced marriage but also with a study by the *Lawaetz* Foundation from 2005 where it is stated that “82 percent of those seeking help were of Muslim faith, the majority of them with a Turkish, Afghani, or Kurdish background.” Taking those two studies together, there is an inference that it can empirically proven that the issue of forced marriage is linked to Islam, and that people from Turkey are mostly affected by it.

At the end of the debate on forced marriage the prominent ‘Islam critic’ Necla Kelek intervenes with an article entitled “Under the veil” (*Die Welt*, 06.12.2011, p.2). Reading the title in combination with the teaser “The Family Ministry's study about forced marriages in Germany shows blind spots. About the bizarre attempts of migration researchers to declare Islam as culturally insignificant” alludes to the double meaning of the title. In the article Kelek aims to ‘unveil’ the ‘veiled’, explain the phenomenon of forced marriage and describe how German migration researchers have failed in this context.

This item is a response to the criticism of the study articulated by the advisory board. Although *Die Welt* did not report about the critique expressed towards the study, it places Necla Kelek's article in a very prominent position. Thus the reader does not really have a chance to get the full picture, or particularly read about the aspect of religion and Islam and Islamophobic undertones. Instead, *Die Welt* provides the floor for Kelek who uses this opportunity to back the Family Minister in her policy direction, balancing accounts with the migration studies in Germany in a very strong and personal manner, and to explain why the category of Islam is indispensable in understanding the phenomenon of forced marriage. In the following we will lengthily cite from this article in order to demonstrate the density and power of her statements:

It [the study] sheds light onto an ongoing drama, which for the first time ever was empirically analysed in a study by the Family Ministry. Herewith, the widespread myth that forced marriages are just individual cases – an idea defended by Islam, migrant organizations and migration researchers – has been taken to grave. Victims are mostly young women who go to school, migrants of the umpteenth generation, and Muslim. They are mostly kidnapped and deported to the country of their parents to marry. But the 3345 cases are still just the tip of the iceberg. (*Welt online*, 27.11.2011).

But in order to name the “risk group” they had put aside their blinders.<sup>22</sup> (...) [T]hey deny that forced marriage has also something to do with cultural disposition. Although they note that almost all persons in search for advice have a migration background and 83 percent indicate Islam as their religion. This causality ‘may not leave us cold’ said Family Minister Kristina Schröder. But the weakness of the study has also something to do with the restricted perspective, as it does not take into account the culture of Islam in the analysis of this problem.

According to the advisory council the religious affiliation is an ‘empty variable’, thus irrelevant. The researchers deny the proved existence of “force to marriage” in the Islamic culture. As is widely known, in Islam only in a marriage is sexuality legitimate, and the parents have only fulfilled their religious duty when their children have married, be it on a voluntary basis or with pressure. Whoever negates the social dimension of religion makes a methodological mistake, gets skewed results in the analysis and finds the wrong conclusions.

For years [the researchers] have been trying very hard to avoid the ‘culturalisation’ of integration problems, in particular the practice of marriage. Now they think that they need to protest against the Minister as they feel deceived because, contrary to their explicit statement, Islam was mentioned in the assessment of forced marriages. Also, according to the University researchers there is no causality between Islam and forced marriage, however, those claiming otherwise will be ‘zwangsrelegiert’ by the migration officials (...) The monocausal definitions of the study show how the migration studies lobby is in the position to ideologize academia and to reduce integration problems to social, economic and educational deficits. And if that does not help one refers to the habits of the clan as a source of the issue, however, without questioning where the traditions stem from, who legitimizes them and why the situation of women and the practice of marriage corresponds in so many Islamic societies on a global level. Do they all belong to one clan? A naively-romantic notion of social structures and behaviour is being practiced at German universities.

The study shows that (...) it is not only the economically weak and the uneducated who are aggressors and victims. And it makes clear that the German citizenship and the German language are not protecting from forced marriage – and as an integration parameter are helpful only to a limited extend” (06.12.2012, p. 2)

Kelek not only portrays the Muslim community as a homogenous entity but also the migration studies in Germany. In a very polemic and to a certain extent conspirational manner she describes the German migration studies as an ideologized lobby group who ‘zwangsrelegiert’ – a German play upon words that can be translated as ‘forced expulsion’ alluding to the phenomenon of forced marriage. Hence she implies that German migration researchers are applying the same brutal and inhuman means towards deviationists, i.e. if they culturalize the issue of forced marriage, as male Muslims.

She speaks of a proven link between forced marriage and Islamic culture by referring to the supposed religious duty of Muslim parents’ to marry – if necessary forcefully – their children. This statement is not presented as her personal interpretation of religious duties in Islam but as a commonly known and shared understanding and practice in Islam.

The above quoted passage is part of what Karakasoglu refers to as the ‘veil literature’. Here one can observe an interwovenness of personal stories with

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<sup>22</sup> Accusing the academics of non-academic research and biased approach to the issue. They do not know how to deal appropriately with this phenomenon and they are blinkered.

generalising statements about 'the Islam' and 'the Muslims'. Repeatedly a dichotomic view is put forward in which the free-democratic, secular, enlightened, Judeo-Christian, and tolerant Europe is challenged through the non-integrable, violent, irrational, and backward Islam (Karakasolgu 2011)<sup>23</sup>. The image of Islam is represented in diametrically opposed notions of subversive and oppressed Muslim women as opposed to emancipated European women. In this context the authentic Islam critics take up a crucial role as they help to see through to the very core of the issue with their 'insider view'. From this starting point 'otherness' and socio-economic deprivation is only viewed through the influence and power of the religion of Islam. For example, Necla Kelek states in her bestselling book the following: "Muslims have always been of the opinion that everything that happens in their lives happens with the approval of Allah. A free will and an own opinion do not exist in any way." (Kelek 2005:37, cited in Karakasoglu 2011). According to Kelek, Muslim women are the victims of Islam, thus liberation from patriarchic oppression seems to be possible only through detaching from the religion.

Over recent years Muslim women, who have had direct or indirect personal experience with forced marriage have served as 'crown witnesses' in the public discourse. They write books, publish articles in newspapers and magazines, and are welcome guests in TV talk shows. They receive prestigious awards from official and civil society actors for their courageous and relentless dedication for women's rights. They are presented as the ideal integrated Muslim woman to the German public, a woman who has a distanced, sceptical and critical approach to the religion of Islam, who is emancipated and liberated, who does not wear a headscarf and does not dogmatically practice religious rituals. They are approached from various state and civil society actors in order to give an authoritative and authentic expert view on the situation of Muslim women in Germany, and to serve as a reference point. They have a great influence in shaping German public opinion on Muslims and in particular Muslim women. The most popular amongst those are figures such as Necla Kelek and Seyran Ates. Their books have a wide target group in Germany.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>[http://www.fb12.uni-bremen.de/fileadmin/Arbeitsgebiete/interkult/Karakasoglu/UEberseemuseum\\_Geschlechterrollen\\_muslimische\\_Maedchen\\_19012011.pdf](http://www.fb12.uni-bremen.de/fileadmin/Arbeitsgebiete/interkult/Karakasoglu/UEberseemuseum_Geschlechterrollen_muslimische_Maedchen_19012011.pdf) (12.02.2012)

<sup>24</sup> Necla Kelek's books include: "Chaos of cultures: The debate about Islam and integration (2012, *Chaos der Kulturen: Die Debatte um Islam und Integration*)", "About freedom in Islam (2010, *Über die Freiheit im Islam*)", "Heavenly journey. My dispute with the guards of Islam (2010, *Himmelsreise. Mein Streit mit den Wächtern des Islam*)", "The lost sons. A plea for the liberation/emancipation of Turkish-Muslim men (2006, *Die verlorenen Söhne. Plädoyer für die Befreiung des türkisch-muslimischen Mannes.*)", and "The alien bride. A report from the inner of Turkish life in Germany (2006, *Die fremde Braut. Ein Bericht aus dem Inneren des türkischen Lebens in Deutschland*)".



In her article “Crown witnesses for the prosecution?” Schooman analyses the phenomenon of female Muslim women in the context of the Islam debate in Germany and identifies following characteristics

- socialization in predominantly Muslim milieus
- negative experiences in their family context
- blaming of ‘Islamic culture’ of their countries of origin for negative experiences
- emancipated themselves from their culture of origin

With their fate they ‘witness’ the widespread perception of the oppressed Muslim woman and by “bearing witness on behalf of an imagined collective” they (re)produce “social knowledge, which confirms existing hegemonic images of Islam” (Schooman 2011:332). Furthermore, the witnesses receive their legitimacy out of their “status as ‘authentic voices’ on the basis of their origin from the Muslim minority” (Schooman 2011:338). With their exclusive insider views they help the majority society to comprehend the inaccessible interior of the unknown ‘other’. And in contrast to the second hand experiences through the Media, “here the reader gets the opportunity to participate in seemingly first-hand experiences, which to a certain extent are also presented as a form of ‘secret knowledge’” (Schooman 2011:338). The witnesses seem to be giving voice to a collective of innumerable silenced victims. Readers are introduced into the thoughts, feelings, fears and hopes of the victims (Schooman 2011:343). In the context of anti-Muslim racism crown witnesses have two main functions: on the one hand the effect of the negative and personal experiences do morally immunise the victims from accusations of racism and legitimize (majority society’s) anti-Muslim resentments (Schooman 2011:344pp).

## Conclusion

The aim of this report was to examine the construction and portrayal of Muslims in the German Media. In order to do this four national mainstream newspapers – comprising the (right) conservative, liberal and left-liberal spectrum – were monitored from September 2011 to December 2011 and the issue of forced marriage was taken as a case study. The case study demonstrated that the Media coverage on Muslims is

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The books of Seyran Ates are amongst others: “Islam needs a sexual revolution“ (2009, *Der Islam braucht eine sexuelle Revolution*), “The Multicultural Fallacy“ (2007, *Der Multikulti-Irrtum*), “Great journey into the fire. The story of a German Turkish woman“ (2003, *Große Reise ins Feuer. Die Geschichte einer deutschen Türkin*).

predominantly framed in a negative and stereotypical way. In general, Muslims were repeatedly associated with being 'strictly religious', violent, repressive, and backward. It is of note that when the Family Ministry released its study on forced marriage all the four analyzed newspapers covered the issue both in their print as well as in their online edition, thus reaching out to a broad audience, hence shaping opinion about the sensitive issue of forced marriages in Germany. Strikingly, without exception all newspapers uncritically referred to the presumed religious correlation between Islam and forced marriages, thus giving the reader the impression that the issue of forced marriage is intrinsically connected with Islam.

Bearing in mind how widely the issue was covered in the newspapers after the release of the study, the coverage of the advisory board's statement criticising the interpretation of their report was rather marginal (only two online articles were published, one in the SZ and one in the FR). While the FAZ completely ignored the statement, *Die Welt* launched a second phase of its sensationalist coverage of the issue at hand.

Strikingly, at no point were representatives of the Muslim community cited. The SZ cited Aydan Özoguz (a Member of the German Parliament with Turkish background) just once, who warned of the stigmatizing effects on the Muslim community. However, this does not automatically imply that the Media coverage included no further minority voices. A preferred strategy was to let female victims of forced marriage, in the manner of a crown witness, speak in order to support pre-existing racist arguments.

Not only the texts but also the pictorial presentations, mostly in the form of portraying "veiled" women, were stereotypical and stigmatizing. Even when there was no explicit reference to Islam or Muslims in the texts, but rather talk about 'immigrants', 'Turks' or 'Arabs', the sole pictorial representation of a "veiled" women easily established the connection between the forced marriage and Islam. By portraying "veiled" women from behind or with their faces fully covered, an insurmountable distance was established and 'otherness' perpetuated.

The report demonstrated some reoccurring framing patterns of Muslim women in the discourse on forced marriage, in which they are primarily presented as victims of violent Muslim men but not as victims of discriminatory practices by the majority society, such as in employment. These framing patterns seem to support Schooman's observations on the representation of Muslim women in the Media:

Anti-Muslim racism is characterized through its reference to emancipative discourses. Often, anti-Muslim positions are legitimized by defending women's human rights. In the context anti-Muslim racism sexism is cited as one of the main cultural features of Islam (...). From a psychoanalytical perspective the perception of the other can be understood as a foil of the self-image. Through the projection on the other, ones own negative elements can be

externalised (...). In this pattern of perception the suppressed Muslim women serves as the other side, the opposite of the emancipated Western European women. This topos is framed from a discourse, which portrays the European free-democratic culture and tradition of the enlightenment in opposition to a non-integrable, backward and violent Islam (...). As from a Media-analytical perspective not only the represented but also the not-represented is of significance, the impression is given that patriarchal structures are unique characteristics of Islam (Schooman, 2012: 56).

Finally, drawing on van Dijk's words, we can state that "both in the strategies of news production as well as in their discursive consequence in the news and the opinion articles themselves, we find a consistent pattern of racist bias, exclusion, and the overall polarization between Our good things and Their bad things" (van Dijk, 2007: 107).

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