

# **Negotiating intersecting forms of oppression: Female genital cutting (FGC) and cultural change after migration**

Emmaleena Käkälä

University of Strathclyde

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

School of Social Work and Social Policy

This thesis is presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2021

## **Author's Declaration**

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author under the terms of the United Kingdom Copyright Acts as qualified by University of Strathclyde Regulation 3.50. Due acknowledgement must always be made of the use of any material contained in, or derived from, this thesis.

Signed: 

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2021

## Statement of previously published material

Käkelä, E. (2020). Rethinking Female Genital Cutting: From a Culturalist to a Structuralist Framework for Challenging Violence against Women. In S. Johndotter (Ed.). *Female Genital Cutting: The Global North and South*. (pp. 79-102). The Centre for Sexology and Sexuality Studies, Malmö University.

This publication draws on some of the findings presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

Signed: 

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2021

## Abstract

Global instabilities, the resulting international displacement and rising inter-cultural tensions within Western societies have relocated gendered cultural practices at the heart of contemporary debates on multiculturalism, social cohesion and migration. In this context, female genital cutting (FGC) has re-emerged as a symbol of savagery, Otherness and global violations of women's rights. While the increasing attention given to these practices is a testament to reinvigorated feminist activism, FGC has also been harnessed for the purposes of reproducing colonial discourses about the "Third World", which have been integral to the revival of assimilationist policies and the creation of the "Fortress Europe". This thesis contributes to new knowledge by illuminating how cultural change and FGC-affected women's experiences of trauma are shaped by state policies on asylum, migrant incorporation and cultural diversity.

In locating inclusion, co-production and power as core issues in both anti-FGC activism and research in this area, I utilised a participatory approach through recruiting a Community Advisory Board made up of FGC-affected women who informed the different stages of the research process. The findings presented in this thesis are based on thematic and narrative analysis of qualitative data from in-depth interviews, focus groups and feminist zine-making with 12 FGC-affected women and 34 participants from communities and organisations working with African and Middle Eastern migrants in Scotland.

By tracing migrant women's experiences of departure, displacement and resettlement, this thesis demonstrates the intersecting social, cultural, political and economic conditions which sustain women's continuums of violence before and after migration. The findings illustrate how the collision of anti-FGC and anti-immigration discourses creates barriers for women to remake their lives after violence and displacement. I illuminate how these discourses materialise to perpetuate further trauma and to constrain women's spaces for action to challenge FGC and other forms of gender-based violence within their communities.

## **Dedication**

To my mum, who told me I could become anything if it made me happy; and to my son, to whom I wish to teach the same lesson in turn.

## **Acknowledgements**

I want to thank both my supervisors, Professor Daniela Sime and Dr Melanie McCarry for their endless support, guidance and patience. Your continuous encouragement has enabled me to become the researcher I am today.

I also express my sincerest gratitude to all my research participants, and especially to the women who shared their most difficult and personal experiences with me. I only hope I have done them justice.

This research would not have been possible without the advice and insights of the community advisers who I have had the privilege to work with. Your commitment to social justice, and the resilience which you have displayed in the face of adversity is truly inspiring.

My sincerest thanks will also go to DL. It has been a privilege to collaborate with you and learn from your expertise and experiences. After all these years of working together I am lucky to call you not just a colleague, but also my friend.

I would like to thank the FOKO Network for the intellectual community, and the wonderful organisations and individuals who supported my recruitment and fieldwork. I am also grateful for the ESRC and the Annette Lawson Charitable Trust for funding my research and subsequent work to disseminate the findings together with the Community Advisory Board.

Last, I would like to thank my partner Luke, who has shown endless patience in supporting me throughout this process, even at times he has had no idea of what I was doing. This thesis has been a third wheel in our relationship for far too long, and I apologise for that.

# Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
1.1 Context and focus of this thesis.....	1
1.2 Situating the study in the context of previous research .....	3
1.3 Research questions .....	5
1.4 Structure of the thesis .....	6
Chapter 2: Current debates on female genital cutting.....	9
2.1 Overview.....	9
2.2. What is female genital cutting.....	9
2.2.1 Definition.....	9
2.2.2 Choice of terminology.....	11
2.2.3 The health consequences of FGC .....	12
2.2.4 Global and national prevalence.....	13
2.2.5 Justifications for FGC .....	17
2.3 International campaign and key debates.....	19
2.3.1 FGC as a health problem .....	19
2.3.2 FGC as a human rights violation .....	21
2.3.3 Recent developments.....	24
2.4 Challenging FGC in the UK.....	26
2.4.1 From multiculturalism to zero tolerance to FGC.....	27
2.4.2 Laws against FGC.....	28
2.4.3 Prevention and support provision .....	29
2.4.4 The Scottish anti-FGC approach.....	30
2.5 Conclusion .....	33
Chapter 3: Literature review.....	34
3.1 Overview.....	34
3.2 FGC in the Global South .....	34
3.2.1 From universal sisterhood to sisterarchy.....	35
3.2.2 Representations of savages and saviours.....	39
3.2.3 Cultural vs. structural explanations of women’s vulnerability .....	44
3.3 FGC in the Global North .....	49
3.3.1 FGC as grounds for asylum.....	49
3.3.2 Gender-based violence and immigration control.....	53

3.3.3 Multiculturalism, nationalism and gender-based violence.....	56
3.3.4 FGC as an issue of, and for migrant incorporation.....	60
3.3.5 Continuation of FGC after migration.....	67
3.3.6 State approaches to FGC.....	69
3.4 Conclusion.....	73
Chapter 4: Theoretical framework.....	75
4.1 Overview.....	75
4.2 Intersectionality.....	75
4.2.1 Crenshaw’s articulation of intersectionality.....	76
4.2.2 The perils and promises of intersectionality.....	80
4.3 Political economy perspectives.....	82
4.3.1 Cross-border dynamics.....	82
4.3.2 Continuum of violence.....	85
4.3.3 Conducive contexts.....	86
4.3.4 Patriarchal bargains.....	88
4.4 Conclusion.....	92
Chapter 5: Methodology.....	94
5.1 Overview.....	94
5.2 Positioning the research within the feminist paradigm.....	94
5.2.1 A way of being in the world: Critical feminist ontology.....	96
5.2.2 Situating knowledge: Feminist epistemologies.....	98
5.3 Methodological approach.....	101
5.3.1 Narrative approach.....	102
5.3.2 Using a participatory approach.....	104
5.3.3 Community Advisory Board involvement.....	106
5.4 Ethical considerations.....	108
5.4.1 Feminist reflexivity and power.....	108
5.4.2 Informed consent.....	111
5.4.3 Risk of harm.....	115
5.4.4 Confidentiality.....	116
5.5 Recruitment and sampling.....	118
5.6 Data collection.....	124
5.6.1 Stages of data collection.....	125
5.6.2 Individual interviews.....	126



5.6.3 Focus groups.....	128
5.6.4 Zine-making.....	129
5.7 Data analysis .....	134
5.8 Conclusion .....	138
Chapter 6: Conducive contexts for female genital cutting before migration .....	140
6.1 Overview.....	140
6.2 Social constructions of FGC and other forms of gender-based violence .....	140
6.2.1 Contexts of state-sanctioned gender subordination .....	141
6.2.2 FGC as a private matter and a “women’s issue” .....	144
6.2.3 Normalising FGC and other forms of gender-based violence .....	147
6.3 Intersectional vulnerability and women’s barriers to help-seeking.....	153
6.3.1 “Suffering in silence”: Victim-blaming, cultural taboos and cultural continuity.....	154
6.3.2 “I take the pains for pride”: Social hierarchies, social cohesion and the ostracism of uncut women .....	160
6.3.3 “Nobody else can help you”: Economic inequalities and women’s reliance on the family unit.....	165
6.3.4 “There is no protection”: Corruption as a mechanism for male domination .....	169
6.4 Conclusion .....	172
Chapter 7: Safe at last? Women’s experiences of structural violence in the British asylum system .....	174
7.1 Overview.....	174
7.2 Silencing women we intend to defend: culture of disbelief and erasure of women’s agency in the asylum process.....	174
7.2.1 “I don’t think you are in any danger”: Women’s experiences of the culture of disbelief during asylum interviews.....	175
7.2.2 “The UK is choosing to protect women just when it suits their own agenda”: The “three planets” of anti-FGC work .....	185
7.3 Women’s lived experiences of liminality and gendered harm in the British asylum system.....	192
7.3.1 “Living like a prisoner”: Destitution and uncertainty as state strategies of corrosive control.....	192
7.3.2 “Trapped in a limbo”: Liminal spaces between belonging and participation .....	197
7.4 Conclusion .....	203
Chapter 8: Ending female genital cutting in Scotland .....	204

8.1 Overview.....	204
8.2 Migration, diaspora and transnationalism: Women’s experiences of cultural change and the abandonment of FGC in Scotland .....	204
8.2.1 “It takes a lot of patience and accepting to let go”: Precarious identities, disrupted allegiances and cultural (dis)continuities in diaspora.....	205
8.2.2 “We can talk to her”: Transnational dynamics of the continuation of FGC .....	213
8.3 The politics of protection, prevention and recognition: Community perspectives on the Scottish strategic approach to ending FGC .....	217
8.3.1 “There should be no stretching, there should be no cutting”: Protection of women from FGC and other forms of gender-based violence .....	218
8.3.2 “Be white, be Black, we are all strong”: Women’s views on representation and redistribution through community-led approaches to FGC prevention .....	225
8.3.3 “I know I’m not the only one going through this”: The role of peer support and structural integration in supporting FGC-affected women.....	232
8.4 Conclusion .....	237
Chapter 9: Discussion and concluding remarks .....	239
9.1 Overview.....	239
9.2 Original contribution to knowledge.....	239
9.2.1 Research question 1: How do experiences of migration and resettlement influence attitudes and the abandonment of FGC?.....	239
9.2.2 Research question 2: How does the Scottish anti-FGC approach influence migrant women’s empowerment? .....	242
9.3 Theoretical contributions .....	246
9.4 Methodological contributions .....	249
9.5 Limitations of the study .....	251
9.6 Recommendations and concluding remarks .....	254
9.6.1 Recommendations for research.....	255
9.6.2 Recommendations for practice and policy .....	257
Bibliography .....	262
Appendices .....	319

## Glossary of key terms

**Acculturation:** Refers to dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their members (Berry, 2005, p. 699). Although the different terms describing migrant incorporation are often used interchangeably, Berry's (2005) articulation conceptualises integration and assimilation as possible outcomes of acculturation which can also lead to separation or marginalisation of minoritised groups.

**Assimilation:** Refers to a one-way process of socio-cultural adaptation until migrants become indistinguishable from the mainstream society (Brubaker, 2001).

**Asylum seekers and refugees:** Asylum seeker specifically refers to an individual who is seeking international protection and whose status is still to be determined. In legal terms, refugee refers to asylum seekers whose status has been recognised under the 1951 Refugee Convention. In more general terms, refugee also refers to a forcibly displaced person. In this thesis, the use of the term refugee covers both instances.

**Black feminism:** Refers to feminist thinking and politics of liberation that seek to challenge racism, racialisation and white-dominated social and knowledge systems. Central to Black feminism is the recognition of Black women as knowing agents of social change (Emejulu, 2019).

**Elongation:** Type of FGC involving pulling or stretching to lengthen the labia minora.

**Female genital cutting (FGC):** encompasses all practices involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. These practices are also often referred to as *female genital mutilation* (FGM) or *female circumcision*, both terms which also appear in parts of this thesis (see Section 2.2.2 for discussion on my chosen terminology).

**Integration:** In contrast to assimilation, integration implies a state of balance between preserving one's culture and involving oneself in the culture of the host country (Bhatia & Ram, 2009).

**Multiculturalism:** Refers to an ideology celebrating ethnic, racial, cultural and religious diversity and to state policies addressing the recognition and accommodation of cultural minorities (Bloemraad et al., 2008).

**Orientalism:** Refers to essentialising depictions of primitive, backward and inferior Orient (Asia, Africa, Middle East) which are harnessed to justify Western domination and colonisation.

**Postcolonial feminism:** This strand of feminist thinking addresses the complexity of experiences of oppression caused by not only patriarchy but also the consequences of colonialism (Tyagi, 2014). Postcolonial feminists critique the framing of women as a homogenous group, seeking to challenge these depictions through drawing attention to the indigenous voices, ideas and movements which have been overlooked by dominant discourses.

**Potentially affected communities:** This term encompasses not only FGC-affected women, but also members of their communities who may be indirectly affected by the consequences of FGC practices. This thesis predominantly refers to *potentially* affected communities to avoid presumptions about the continuation of FGC which may be inaccurate following cultural change and migration.

**Radical feminism:** A strand of feminism thinking which emerged in the 1960s and which emphasised patriarchy as the root cause of women's experiences of oppression. While some authors also refer to second-wave or Western feminists, these labels can be misunderstood to separate the perspectives opposing FGC along simple geographical lines (Malmström, 2013; Mohanty, 2003b). My use of radical feminism includes authors and activists from both the Global North and Global South who have theorised FGC in similar terms.

**Third World:** I use this term not to denote a geographical location, but the ways hegemonic, colonising representations of the non-Western world, cultures and people are operationalised to further the oppression of marginalised women and their communities.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Context and focus of this thesis

Since female genital cutting (hereafter FGC) entered the wider Western consciousness in the 1970s, these practices have sparked extremely divisive debates over human rights, multiculturalism, gender inequality and neo-colonialism. The issue of FGC has been characterised as a “global political minefield” (Malmström, 2013, p. 306), as the anti-FGC discourse continues to be “filled with conceptual oppositions... science/superstition; medical knowledge/tradition; healthy bodies/un-healthy bodies; normal sexuality/abnormal sexuality; civilized/barbaric; modernity/backwardness; expert/non-expert; educated/ignorant, and the list goes on” (Njambi, 2004, p. 283). These dichotomies not only play out in the debate over the right to practise FGC fought between two irreconcilable standpoints, universalism and cultural relativism, but they also pertain to the pressing debates concerning how the opposition to FGC should be articulated. Although the continuation of FGC remains a global concern, much of the contemporary debate has now moved away from being chiefly about the question of whether FGC should be opposed, to disagreements over the language and means employed in doing so (Dustin, 2010; Wade, 2011). This thesis is largely concerned with the latter. In the past, many of those critiquing the dominant approach to the opposition of FGC have been wrongly accused of defending these practices (Gunning, 1995). While I unequivocally oppose FGC in all its forms, my thesis nevertheless problematises the hypervisibility and hypervigilance which have characterised the treatment of FGC in the UK policy and media discourses over the last two decades. In doing this research, both my opposition to FGC, and my stance on the importance of adopting a sensitive approach to engaging with FGC-affected women have only been strengthened by listening to the accounts of trauma shared by the women I have interviewed.

As a result of global instabilities, the “refugee crisis”<sup>1</sup>, and increases in Islamophobia and intolerance since 9/11, FGC has re-emerged as an epitome of “cultural savagery”, Otherness

---

<sup>1</sup> Describing increased international displacement in terms of crisis has been critiqued for constructing migrants both as a threat and victims who lack agency, enforcing the image of West as their saviour (Khoja-Moolji, 2020). Throughout this thesis, I use the term “refugee crisis” specifically to refer to the alarmist discourses which dominate public and policy discussions on increased migration in Europe.

and violations of women's rights. With the rise of right-wing populism and public concerns over Islamic extremism, FGC and other gendered cultural practices have been located at the heart of ongoing debates over forced migration, multiculturalism and social cohesion. In this context, FGC has become entangled with two distinct moral panics<sup>2</sup>. First, the wider loss of public trust and panic over failures of child protection to safeguard children from child abuse, which is reflected in the sustained critique against social work complacency and inaction to protect girls from FGC in the UK. Second, representations of FGC as a widespread problem have played a part in the formation of the moral panic over forced migration, which has constructed refugees and refugee cultures as a threat to the nation, economy, British values and identity. In the UK, both far-right and centre-right politicians including Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson and David Cameron have harnessed FGC to make a case that multiculturalism and integration policies have failed (Cameron, 2015; Johnson, 2014b; Mason, 2015). Crucially however, although political actors in Britain have made vocal claims about their renewed commitment to end FGC by introducing further punitive and safeguarding measures (Cameron, 2015; Javid, 2018; May, 2014), both FGC prevention and social work have been subject to severe funding cuts during the last decade of austerity (Hastings et al., 2015; Merrick, 2020a).

This thesis examines how FGC-affected migrant women's position at the collision of anti-FGC and anti-immigration discourses influences the process of cultural change and women's vulnerability to FGC and other forms of gender-based violence and abuse (hereafter GBV). My initial interest in researching FGC was sparked in 2009 by Waris Dirie's famous autobiographical book *Desert Flower*. The book tells Waris Dirie's story of fleeing forced marriage from Somalia to London, and her remarkable journey of going from a housemaid to a supermodel and UN goodwill ambassador campaigning against FGC. Like many other readers, I was taken aback by her experience of undergoing FGC at the age of five, which I viewed as an act of unimaginable violence. A few years later, I was disappointed after being told that the topic was beyond the realms of an undergraduate dissertation project. I was encouraged to direct my research interests to less controversial topics, which led me to explore Somali refugee women's gendered and religious identity negotiation. One of my research participants brought up the issue of FGC, expressing her frustration over how

---

<sup>2</sup> Moral panic refers to a societal overreaction to a perceived threat to common values (Cohen, 1972). Typically, the extent of this threat is exaggerated and simplified by the mass media, leading to heightened public concerns and pressures for the authorities to act.

Somali women's voices had been left out of public conversations and media representations over gendered cultural practices. This not only furthered my interest exploring refugee women's perspectives on FGC and FGC prevention, but it also sparked my interest in problematising the incomprehensible nature of FGC which underpins the taken-for-granted perceptions of these practices as being informed by "perverse" and deleterious belief systems.

The focus of this thesis has considerably evolved as a result of my ongoing engagement with FGC-affected women who have advised me during this project. My initial research proposal drew from the sustained criticism against the perceived failures of multicultural policymaking and the statutory service complacency in preventing FGC over fears of accusations of racism (Adams, 2013; Hedley & Dorkenoo, 1992; Moorhead, 2017). This context informed my interest in exploring cultural relativism as a barrier to FGC prevention and protection in Scotland. Yet, the findings which I present in this thesis show a different side to this story. In contrast to the prevailing narratives of statutory inaction and state commitment protect girls and women from FGC, my thesis illustrates how the convergence of exclusionary anti-FGC and anti-immigration discourses perpetuates continued subjugation and ongoing trauma in the lives of FGC-affected refugee women.

## **1.2 Situating the study in the context of previous research**

FGC research in the Global South has been largely concerned with four key areas: the prevalence of FGC (United Nations Children's Fund, 2013; World Health Organisation, 2020b); the health consequences of FGC (Obermeyer, 2003; Reisel & Creighton, 2015); the cultural intricacies and justifications of FGC (Ahmadu, 2005; Lightfoot-Klein, 1989; Shell-Duncan & Hernlund, 2000b); and attitudes, prevention strategies and dynamics of change in relation to FGC (Gillespie & Melching, 2010; Gruenbaum, 1982; Lejeune & Mackie, 2009; Shell-Duncan et al., 2011). In addition to empirical research, the issue of FGC has also provoked a wealth of theoretical contributions concerning Western and Black feminist perspectives on bodily rights, cultural rights and global relations of power (Wade, 2011). More recently, the increased international migration from FGC-practising countries to Europe has led to a proliferation of research into FGC in the Global North. In addition to examining changing attitudes and continuation of FGC after migration (Gele, Sagbakken, & Kumar, 2015; Isman, Ekéus, & Berggren, 2013; Johnsdotter, Moussa, Carlbom, Aregai, & Essén, 2009; Norman, Belay Gegzabher, & Otoo-Oyortey, 2016), research has been particularly

concerned with FGC detection, criminalisation and the health care provision for FGC-affected women (Berer, 2015; Ortensi et al., 2015; Palm et al., 2019). Crucially however, while FGC has been subject to intensified academic and public interest across Europe, FGC-affected women's perspectives on FGC prevention, protection and support continue to be underrepresented in public debates and research on FGC (Connelly et al., 2018; Johndotter et al., 2009).

This thesis addresses two pressing gaps in FGC-research: the role of asylum in FGC protection, and the framing of FGC as an integration issue. Paradoxically, although the renewed hypervisibility of FGC practices can be attributed to increased international migration, the processes of migration have been largely overlooked in FGC research. FGC research has predominantly examined the dynamics of cultural change at the level of culture and community, which have been commonly identified as the main culprits of FGC (see also Chapter 3). Although a significant proportion of migrants who come from FGC-practising contexts have been forcibly displaced, research has neglected to address the role of asylum and displacement in influencing cultural change and the lives of potentially affected migrant communities. While the international anti-FGC discourse has been loudly criticised for its top-down mission to “save” women from FGC (Mutua, 2001), research on FGC-related asylum applications, FGC-affected women's experiences of seeking protection and the impacts of asylum on FGC-affected women and the abandonment of FGC remains sparse (see Section 3.3.1). Nevertheless, wider research on the treatment of GBV-related asylum claims suggests that the norms which underpin Western asylum systems create considerable obstacles to women's access to protection (Freedman, 2008a; Zeigler & Stewart, 2009). This fact, together with the rise of right-wing populism which has harnessed gendered cultural practices to justify anti-immigration sentiments, and the emergence of “Fortress Europe” in the form of increased use of border controls and migrant detention, highlights the pertinence of this area of study.

The recent developments in relation to forced migration and growing diversity in Western societies also feed into the increasingly popular academic and policy framing of FGC as an issue of, and for, integration. Integration has the makings of a buzzword for FGC research; although the concept appears frequently in FGC research along with “acculturation”, these terms are rarely defined (see Section 3.3.4). FGC research has tended to treat integration in taken-for-granted terms, even though there is considerable variance between interpretations of integration in migrant incorporation policies across Europe. Furthermore, research on the



continuation of FGC rarely acknowledges the wider conceptual minefield of migrant incorporation that characterises integration literature (Favell, 2010; Martiniello, 2006; Robinson, 1998; Strang & Ager, 2010). Most often FGC research has employed integration as a shorthand for referring to cultural exposure and increased social connections, with little analysis of structural dimensions of integration. This further reflects the long-standing trends in FGC research to mainly focus on the cultural determinants of FGC and women's vulnerability to these practices (see Chapter 3). Although researchers have recognised the different socio-cultural and legal contexts in the West as a foundation for cultural change, there has been little attention to the role of the resettlement context and policies in influencing the vulnerabilities and agency of FGC-affected women and women at risk of FGC.

### **1.3 Research questions**

In focusing on these key gaps in FGC research, this thesis has examined refugee women's vulnerabilities and experiences of FGC throughout their migration trajectories. This research has sought to explore two research questions:

1. How do experiences of migration and resettlement influence attitudes and the abandonment of FGC?
2. How does the Scottish anti-FGC approach influence migrant women's empowerment?

This thesis builds on the limited research on FGC practices among newly arrived African and Middle Eastern migrant communities in Scotland (Mhoja et al., 2010; O'Brien et al., 2016, 2017). In locating inclusion, coproduction, and power as core issues for anti-FGC activism and also for research in this area, this study has been grounded on a participatory approach. At the beginning, a Community Advisory Board made up of FGC-affected women was created to inform the different stages of the research process. This was followed by fieldwork which recruited key informants from community and third sector organisations, FGC-affected women and community participants living in Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, where most of the potentially affected communities reside in Scotland (Baillot, Murray, et al., 2014). The data collection employed qualitative narrative and semi-structured interviews, focus groups and collaborative feminist zine-making methods to address the research questions.

The thematic and narrative data analysis was informed by the Black feminist and anthropological call for a structural analysis of FGC (see Section 3.2.3) to conceptualise refugee women's changing vulnerabilities and resistance to FGC and other forms of GBV in migration contexts. In adopting a migration perspective which compared women's experiences before and after migration, this thesis problematises the colonial representations of patriarchal and violent Global South and the emancipatory and liberating Global North which pertain to the international anti-FGC discourse. By locating FGC in the context of immigration law, dominant migration discourses and the wider structures which condition migrant incorporation, the findings illustrate how the ongoing moral panics surrounding FGC and immigration intersect to perpetuate the continuities of state-sanctioned subjugation, control and silencing in the lives of FGC-affected migrant women in Scotland.

#### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

Chapter 2: *Current debates on female genital cutting*, provides an overview of FGC practices, their global and national prevalence and the justifications which underpin the continuation of FGC in different contexts. This is followed by a discussion of the international anti-FGC campaign and the key debates concerning the opposition to FGC, with a focus on how trends in the international anti-FGC discourse are reflected in the Scottish and UK approaches to ending FGC. This chapter will also contextualise the recent developments in the UK and Scottish FGC legislation and provisions for ending FGC in relation to the shift from multiculturalism to an increasingly punitive approach to addressing GBV within minoritised communities.

Chapter 3: *Literature review*, examines the different academic perspectives on conceptualisations of FGC, FGC-affected communities and strategies for ending FGC. The first part of this chapter reviews research and theoretical contributions on FGC in the Global South, with a focus on contrasting cultural and structural perspectives on FGC, which have divided radical feminism and Black feminism, and mainstream anti-FGC activism and anthropological research. The second part of this chapter reflects on how these debates continue to play out in approaches to FGC and other culturalised forms of GBV in the Global North. Throughout this chapter, I illustrate key gaps in relation to community perspectives on FGC prevention and the emergent positioning of FGC as an issue of migration and integration.

Chapter 4: *Theoretical framework*, builds on the research recommendations discussed in Chapter 3 in outlining the theoretical background of this research. The chapter discusses the applicability of the concept of *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991) in researching FGC in the context of structural inequalities. This chapter also draws from transnational feminist theory, and introduces related key theoretical concepts which I have drawn from to develop a more nuanced understanding of FGC-affected women's agency and vulnerabilities, including the concepts of *conducive contexts* (Kelly, 2016) and *patriarchal bargains* (Kandiyoti, 1988).

Chapter 5: *Methodology*, begins with a discussion on the feminist ontological and epistemological foundations of this research, before discussing my rationale for adopting a participatory narrative methodology to address the complex practical and ethical challenges in researching FGC as an "outsider". This chapter also provides an overview of the sampling, recruitment strategy and qualitative methods of data collection. Throughout this chapter, I reflect the role of the Community Advisory Board in informing the research focus, design, methods and key ethical considerations in relation to refugee women's barriers to participation, community engagement and the sensitive nature of the research topic. The final sections of this chapter provide an overview of the data analysis and the involvement of the advisers in reflecting the key findings and developing recommendations for future policy and practice.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 map FGC-affected women's trajectories of vulnerability through their migration journeys by discussing the key findings from the interviews, focus groups and visual zine data. Chapter 6: *Conducive contexts for female genital cutting before migration*, locates women's vulnerabilities in the context of intersecting socio-cultural, political and economic inequalities in their countries of origin. In contrast to the dominant cultural framing of FGC, this chapter provides an alternative viewpoint in illustrating how wider societal inequalities and state inaction sustain women's barriers to resistance and help-seeking from FGC and other normalised forms of GBV. Chapter 7: *Safe at last? Women's experiences of structural violence in the British asylum system*, illustrates the detrimental consequences culturalisation of FGC in the Global South has on refugee women's barriers to asylum and treatment by statutory services after migration. In doing so, this chapter illustrates how the convergence of anti-FGC and anti-immigration discourses makes Western states complicit in sustaining FGC-affected women's *continuums of violence* (Kelly, 1987). Chapter 8: *Ending female genital cutting in Scotland*, examines how the dominant anti-FGC discourse continues to materialise during resettlement in ways that are counterproductive to FGC-affected

women's scope to challenge violence within their own communities. This chapter addresses the pressing gap in researching community perspectives on experiences of cultural change and approaches to FGC prevention, highlighting FGC-affected women's intersectional struggles and perspectives on resisting the gendered cultural norms and values which underpin FGC practices.

Chapter 9: *Discussion and concluding remarks*, summarises the key findings of this research in relation to the research questions. This is followed by a discussion of the theoretical and methodological contributions of this research related to the participatory design and novel approach to examining FGC from a migration perspective. This chapter then reflects on the limitations of the current study and proposes recommendations for future research and changes to policy and practice for ending FGC in Scotland.

## Chapter 2

### Current debates on female genital cutting

#### 2.1 Overview

This chapter begins with an overview of female genital cutting (FGC) practices, including a discussion on types of FGC, reported health consequences, prevalence of FGC and the common justifications for practising FGC among different ethnic groups. As part of this, I outline and justify my choice of terminology. This will then be followed by an introduction to key debates and strategies for ending FGC internationally and in the UK, which serves as a point of departure for the discussion on theory and research on the continuation of FGC in the Global South and Global North, as covered in the following chapter.

#### 2.2. What is female genital cutting

##### 2.2.1 Definition

Female genital cutting (FGC) refers to a range of practices “that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons” (World Health Organisation, 2020a). FGC practices have been categorised into four different types:

Type I (clitoridectomy): Partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce/clitoral hood.

Type II (excision): Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora.

Type III (infibulation): Narrowing of the vaginal opening with creation of a covering seal formed by cutting and repositioning the labia minora/labia majora, sometimes through stitching or holding cut areas together for a period of time, with or without the removal of the clitoris.

Type IV (unclassified): All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes including pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterisation.

(Johnsdotter, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2020)

In addition to these four types, some women are also affected by de-infibulation, whereby infibulated genitalia are cut open to enable childbirth or intercourse, and re-infibulation to stitch the labia minora/majora back together after childbirth. Around 90% of all worldwide FGC cases are believed to fall under Types I, II and IV (World Health Organisation, 2020b). The inclusion of labia elongation under the Type IV continues to be debated. It has been argued that elongation does not constitute mutilation due to its perceived benefits to women's sexual health and wellbeing in contexts where elongation is normalised, and thus, should not be targeted as a form of violence against children and/or women, bodily harm or as a form of child abuse (Bagnol & Mariano, 2008; Pérez et al., 2014). It has also been argued that including elongation under the Type IV ignores the diverse motivations and consequences of elongation (Bagnol & Mariano, 2008), although the same can be said about cutting practices that are informed by complex socio-cultural motivations. Prior to 2008, WHO guidelines included elongation under Type IV, after which these practices were removed from the official definition. In contrast to much of FGC research, my research has included elongation under the umbrella of FGC practices. The justification for this is two-fold; first, my research privileges the perspectives of the participants who disclosed experiencing elongation, and who viewed themselves as being affected by FGC. Second, as illustrated by the findings in Chapter 6, the purposes of elongation, as well as the wider conditions underpinning women's sustained vulnerability to elongation bear considerable similarities to the factors that influence the continuation of cutting practices in various contexts.

Although the WHO typology is cited in virtually all academic and policy pieces on FGC, the international anti-FGC discourse and campaigning have frequently been criticised for reducing diverse FGC practices to infibulation (Ahmadu, 2000; James & Robertson, 2002). It has been argued that:

*To lump together the diverse forms of the practice into a single term... obscures the diverse geographic locations, meanings and politics in which such practices are embedded and rhetorically constructs a generic "they" who conduct such practices and a generic "we" who do not. (Walley, 2002, p. 45).*

The trend to homogenise FGC practices has been argued to manifest the sharp contradictions between representations of the international anti-FGC discourse and women's diverse realities of living with FGC (Shell-Duncan, Obiero, & Muruli, 2000). As I further illustrate in the next chapter, the international emphasis on challenging FGC under the umbrella of

gender-based violence (GBV) as a global phenomenon has been argued to overlook the socio-cultural complexities underpinning FGC. These tensions are also reflected in this thesis, as I both problematise the generalisations which permeate the anti-FGC discourse and locate FGC in the context of diverse forms of violence and harm which characterise women's lives across cultural contexts.

### **2.2.2 Choice of terminology**

The long-standing tensions over how to name FGC practices embody the broader disagreements in relation to how FGC practices should be constructed, framed and challenged. Although the terminology has been debated since the 1980s, academics and activists are yet to reach a resolution over what these practices should be called. Crucially, none of the commonly used terms are unproblematic (Johnsdotter, 2020). Initially, FGC was referred to as *female circumcision* by Western explorers, a term which was derived from the common similarities between the local names used for cutting practices performed on both girls and boys (Johnsdotter, 2020). Although this term is still sometimes preferred as a more sensitive alternative, it has been criticised for creating a parallel between male and female genital “modifications” and thus undermining the potentially far more damaging consequences of cutting practices performed on women (James & Robertson, 2002; La Barbera, 2009).

Since Hosken's presentation at the Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1980, international organisations and activists have come to largely favour the term *female genital mutilation* (FGM). This term has signified the crucial shift from viewing FGC as a traditional practice to a human rights violation. Although those advocating for the use of FGM argue that there is a need to emphasise these practices as an extreme form of violence against women, mutilation has also been said to be too extreme for describing practices that fall under type IV (Johnsdotter, 2020). Referring to FGC as *mutilation* is befitting to infibulation due to the severity of the practice; however, this accounts for only 10 percent of worldwide FGC procedures (Dustin, 2010). It has also been argued that emphasising the potentially drastic health consequences is of little use in encouraging the abandonment of FGC, if these consequences are too far removed from affected women's lived realities to encourage lasting social change (Ipinyomi, 2015; Shell-Duncan et al., 2000). In addition to limited descriptive potential, it has been said that referring to diverse, culturally informed practices as *mutilation*

can be seen as ethnocentric, alienating and offensive (Johnsdotter, 2020). This framing can be counter-productive to ending FGC, because it can stigmatise FGC-affected women and provoke a defensive response from practising communities (Ipinyomi, 2015; Johnsdotter & Essén, 2010). In invoking representations of barbarity, FGM has been argued to stand in opposition to the feminist vision by denying any possibility of participating women's agency and the socio-cultural complexities in their lives (Mugo, 1997; Obiora, 1997). This critique of the widespread representations of "mutilated women" aligns with bell hooks' (1989) argument against the term "battered woman", with which she has called for the need to make the distinction between employing terms that enable us to name the violence against women, and of using labels which define the woman's identity solely through her experience of violence.

In efforts to balance the need to recognise the potential drastic health consequences of FGC without stigmatising practising communities as deviant or framing FGC-affected women as being "no longer fully women" (Talle, 2008), I have chosen to use the term *female genital cutting* (FGC) in this thesis. This term has been increasingly used by both researchers and professional organisations (Johnsdotter, 2020). Although FGC is also problematic when it comes to describing type IV practices, FGC is more descriptive and does not carry the same judgemental and sensationalist connotations as "FGM" (Johnsdotter, 2018a; Robertson, 2002). Although my research strives to contribute to ending FGC, my decision to use less sensationalist terminology has been informed by my findings which exemplify the negative consequences that the discourse on barbarity can have on FGC-affected women (see Chapters 7 and 8). In emphasising the importance of sensitively addressing lived experiences of FGC, during the fieldwork I flexibly adapted to using participants' preferred terminology. At the beginning of all fieldwork, I recognised that the term which I used to introduce the research did not correspond to the diverse local names given to FGC practices in different contexts. Although in this thesis I use FGC as an overarching term, I also refer to both cutting and elongation to distinguish different practices and participants' differing experiences of violence, and to clarify the applicability of different findings (see Chapters 6,7 and 8).

### **2.2.3 The health consequences of FGC**

FGC practices can lead to a range of immediate, short-term and long-term psychological, gynaecological, sexual and reproductive health complications. The physical and sexual



complications include but are not limited to intense pain, haemorrhaging, blood borne, urinal and vaginal infections, fistulae, vaginal scarring, keloid and reduced sexual function and desire (Reisel & Creighton, 2015). Complications from FGC practices can also cause menstrual difficulties, pain during intercourse, infertility and difficulties during childbirth, and in extreme cases death (World Health Organisation, 2020a). FGC practices are also associated with adverse mental health consequences; although the physical impacts of FGC are more well-documented, emergent research has linked FGC to post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, emotional trauma, anxiety and depression (Abdalla & Galea, 2019; Mulongo et al., 2014). Although some women may experience these impacts to a lesser degree due to cultural normalisation or lack of memory of cutting, the psychological consequences of FGC can also be further compounded by women's experiences of other forms of GBV and additional stressors linked to acculturation and socioeconomic hardship faced by refugee women (Lever et al., 2018).

The complications of FGC greatly vary depending on the type, conditions and the background of the person performing the procedure. Complications are generally more severe with Type III, while conversely, elongation and pricking have been found to have relatively limited and short-term physical health complications (Pérez et al., 2014; Wahlberg et al., 2019). The risk of physical health complications is greater when FGC is practiced by traditional practitioners in unsanitary conditions, by using non-medical and unsterile instruments and traditional herbal medicines, although in some contexts FGC has been highly medicalised<sup>3</sup>. Medicalisation does not however completely remove the risk of long-term and short-term health consequences, and international organisations including the WHO are unequivocally against it (World Health Organisation, 2020a). Although there has been a proliferation of research into the health consequences of FGC, there remains considerable variance in the reported complications of FGC between different studies (Andro et al., 2014).

#### **2.2.4 Global and national prevalence**

FGC has been traced as far back as Ancient Egypt (Johnsdotter, 2012). While in many contexts FGC is an entrenched tradition, some communities have only adopted the practice recently (Leonard, 2000). Regardless of decades of international campaigning against FGC, it

---

<sup>3</sup> Medicalisation of FGC involves the use of health care providers to perform the practice either at healthcare facilities or at home (Obianwu et al., 2018).

has been estimated that over 200 million girls and women continue to be affected by these practices worldwide, with approximately 3 million girls and women undergoing FGC every year (World Health Organisation, 2020b). UNICEF (2020a) estimates that over two million more girls and women are currently at risk of FGC due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 has increased the barriers for girls and women to access FGC prevention, health and support services (Orchid Project, 2020). The heightened risk of FGC is also further explained by school closures and other lockdown measures which can bring the “cutting season” forward, lead girls to stay at home, which make it easier for communities to practise FGC undetected (Orchid Project, 2020; UNICEF, 2020a). Covid-19 restrictions have also increased economic hardship, which can lead traditional cutters who have abandoned FGC to return to these practices (Orchid Project, 2020).

FGC practices are mainly concentrated to 31 countries in Africa and the Middle East. Although FGC is often mistakenly framed as an “African problem”, FGC practices are also found in countries in South America and Asia, including Indonesia and Malaysia. The rates of FGC vary considerably between countries; while in Somalia over 90 per cent of girls undergo FGC, under 5 per cent of girls and women are cut in Ghana and Uganda (World Health Organisation, 2020b). There is also considerable variance in the types of FGC practised between ethnic groups within countries, although generally infibulation is most often practised in the Northeast Africa, while Types I and II are more frequently found in West African countries (World Health Organisation, 2020b). However, the prevalence of FGC is more clearly determined by ethnicity than nationality, which is exemplified by the prevalence of FGC among same ethnic groups living across national boundaries (Shell-Duncan & Hernlund, 2000b).

The international anti-FGC discourse has tended to construct FGC as an alien practice to Western countries, failing to critically reflect the history of clitoridectomies in the West. Clitoridectomies were performed during the Victorian times by medical professionals in the UK and the U.S. to encourage passive female sexual behaviour and to treat so-called “female hysteria”, “insanity” and “frigidity” (Gruenbaum, 2020; Johnsdotter, 2012; Malmström, 2013). In addition to geographical generalisations, FGC is also frequently misconstrued as an Islamic practice. While some Muslim communities in countries like Somalia largely perceive FGC as a religious requirement, 80% of the Islamic world, including some of the most orthodox Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia do not customarily practise FGC (Johnsdotter, 2003). Some studies have also found that social interaction with non-FGC

practising Muslims and perceptions about FGC as a violation of Islam can encourage the abandonment of FGC (Isman et al., 2013; Johnsdotter, 2003). Although some of the countries with the highest FGC prevalence rates are predominantly Muslim, FGC is also found among Christian and animist communities in Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan and Kenya. In addition to crossing national, religious and ethnic boundaries, FGC practices are found in both urban and rural communities, and across different socio-economic groups.

With the increased international migration and displacement, FGC is no longer confined to the Global South; it has been estimated that half a million girls and women are affected by these practices within the European Union (European Commission, 2017). In 2017, it was estimated that 66,000 women and girls originating in FGC-affected countries applied for asylum in Europe<sup>4</sup> (UNHCR, 2018). Although not all of these women and girls will have applied for asylum on the grounds of FGC, it has been estimated that over 24,000 of them could have been affected by FGC based on their country of origin (UNHCR, 2018). While asylum claims on the grounds of FGC are not recorded by most countries, EU countries have been estimated to receive thousands of claims relating to FGC every year (Middelburg & Balta, 2016). The UK is among one of the top receiving countries for asylum seekers from FGC-practising countries along with Germany, Sweden, France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, Norway and Denmark (Novak-Irons, 2015). Although the data on national prevalence of FGC in the Global North are still emerging, England and Wales have been estimated to have the highest number of FGC-affected women in Europe, with around 137,000 women and girls affected by FGC (End FGM, 2019; Macfarlane & Dorkenoo, 2014). In the period between April 2017 to March 2018, 4,495 new cases of FGC were identified in England, 86% of which had taken place in African countries (NHS Digital Clinical Audit and Registries Management Service, 2018). Out of the FGC cases recorded as having taken place in the UK, at least 88% are known to be piercings (NHS Digital Clinical Audit and Registries Management Service, 2018). Genital piercings are included in the WHO typology of FGC and recorded by NHS for the purposes of identifying piercings done under abusive circumstances. However, as discussed in the following sections, the UK FGC law is problematic in making an exception to practices which align with the definition of FGC when the woman is of a white ethnic background.

---

<sup>4</sup> This figure is based on Eurostat data on female asylum applicants and their countries of origin. However, as my thesis highlights, the often-cited list of FGC-practising countries which informs these estimates is not exhaustive. Furthermore, these statistics do not capture irregular migrants or the women and girls who come to Europe through family reunion.

It was estimated that, in 2013, there were 23,979 people potentially affected by FGC in Scotland (Baillot, Murray et al., 2014). This figure is based on comparisons between self-reported UK Census data on country of origin and UNICEF estimates on prevalence of FGC in FGC-practising countries. The same scoping study identified that the largest communities from FGC-practising countries in Scotland were from Nigeria, Somalia, Egypt, Kenya, Sudan and Eritrea, most of whom are concentrated in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee (Baillot, Murray, et al., 2014). Although these estimates can guide prevention and awareness-raising work, the authors have emphasised the need to interpret the overall figure with considerable caution; because the research utilised 2011 Census data on nationality, the estimate not only includes girls and women, but also men who are not directly affected by FGC (Baillot, Murray, et al., 2014). Furthermore, the data excludes second-generation women and girls who may be affected by FGC (Baillot, Murray, et al., 2014). The authors have noted that the inability to control for ethnicity and the influence of migration which are key determinants for FGC means that the figure does not represent a prevalence estimate for FGC (Baillot, Murray, et al., 2014). Lastly, as exemplified by the inclusion of FGC-affected research participants from Malawi, which is not considered in the Scottish estimates (see Section 5.5), inferring national estimates from international figures exposes the gaps in understanding the global prevalence of FGC.

Regardless of limited evidence, there has been a growing narrative of new cases of FGC being on the rise in Scotland over the last decade. This trend can be seen in the media representations of FGC; for instance, BBC has reported that “Female Genital Mutilation [is] ‘rising in soft-touch Scotland’” (Adams, 2013), while *The Scotsman* columnist<sup>5</sup> has argued that “Scotland has to wake up to reality of FGM abuse” (Monteith, 2017). Similar representations have also been identified in the public discourse on forced marriage, constructed by sensationalised headlines as a growing problem (Anitha & Gill, 2011b). What makes the media discourse sensationalist is the reliance on anecdotal evidence about the continuation of FGC after migration. In the UK and many other countries in Europe, the representations of FGC as an ongoing issue are yet to be backed by data or prosecutions (Johnsdotter & Mestre i Mestre, 2017). Findings on the continuation of FGC in Scotland and Europe have primarily been derived from second-hand accounts (Isman et al., 2013; Norman

---

<sup>5</sup> Brian Monteith is a former Conservative MSP and Brexit Party MEP. While this only further exemplifies the right-wing framing of FGC practices, as highlighted later in this chapter, the representations of FGC as barbarity are conveyed across the political spectrum.

et al., 2016; O'Brien et al., 2017; Wahlberg, Johnsdotter, et al., 2019). This issue is further complicated by the lack of consensus on how to measure the prevalence of FGC (Connelly et al., 2018). Headlines on FGC also frequently fail to recognise that a significant proportion of new recorded cases can be attributed to rises in the numbers of refugee women who have undergone FGC before their arrival to Scotland. These trends are not unique to Scotland, but can also be identified in the political and media discourse elsewhere in the UK; for example, David Cameron referred to 4,000 yearly FGC cases in arguing for the need to challenge inaction on FGC on the basis of multicultural sensitivities, without making the distinction between new cases and the increased numbers of FGC-affected refugee women (Cameron, 2015).

### **2.2.5 Justifications for FGC**

There are no universal motives for FGC. Instead, these practices are underpinned by a range of social, cultural, aesthetic and psycho-sexual justifications depending on the ethnic group and context. FGC is an entrenched social and cultural tradition commonly associated with life transitions related to birth, initiation to womanhood and marriage. FGC is most commonly practised on girls aged between 0 and 15, often soon after birth or upon reaching puberty, although in some communities FGC is also performed on adult women before or after marriage, during pregnancy or after childbirth (Shell-Duncan & Hernlund, 2000a). When FGC is performed near puberty, the practice symbolically marks the transition from a girl to woman and to an adult member of the society (Ahmadu, 2000; Johnson, 2000). For some communities FGC can also signify women's strength and endurance in preparation for childbirth (Shell-Duncan & Hernlund, 2000b). In some contexts, FGC and male circumcision rituals take place concurrently, signifying the social and cultural constructions of male and female (Ahmadu, 2000). FGC is often preceded and followed by elaborate celebrations and rituals, although this is not always the case even within the same ethnic group (Hernlund, 2000; Johnson, 2000). FGC practices are deeply intertwined with individual and collective ethnic identity, signifying group boundaries and belonging (Ahmadu, 2005; Coyne & Mathers, 2014; Gruenbaum, 2001). As such, FGC functions as a means of social control (Berg & Denison, 2013). In contexts where FGC is a social norm, the practice is often sustained by strong social pressure, whereby resistance to FGC can lead to bullying and ostracism (Shell-Duncan, Wander, Hernlund, & Moreau, 2011).

FGC can also hold aesthetic value (Behrendt, 2011; Johnsdotter & Essén, 2016; Onyima, 2015). Some FGC-practising communities associate the clitoris with masculinity, or believe that uncut clitoris will grow to “unsightly” proportions (Ahmadu, 2000). FGC is also associated with hygiene, as some communities perceive female genitalia in their natural state as unclean (Behrendt, 2011; Isman et al., 2013; Norman et al., 2009; O’Brien et al., 2017). These beliefs are connected to the perceived health benefits of FGC, either because of beliefs about increased hygiene (Berg & Denison, 2013) or enhanced fertility (Ahmadu, 2000). In addition to physical purity, FGC can also signify moral and social purity (Isman et al., 2013; O’Brien et al., 2017) and has been found to signal religious identity, purity and piousness (Alhassan et al., 2016; Isman et al., 2013; Johnson, 2000). Religious leaders in FGC-practising countries take varying positions on this; FGC is not mentioned in the Qur’an or the Bible, but whether Prophet Muhammad advocated for FGC as quoted in the hadith is still subject to ongoing debate among Islamic scholars (Johnsdotter, 2003). Nonetheless, religion is not enough to explain the continued prevalence of FGC; for example in Egypt, where FGC has been criminalised and vocally condemned both by religious scholars and political authorities, 54 per cent of 15-49-year-old women continue to support the continuation of the practice (UNICEF, 2020b).

FGC is strongly associated with religious and cultural beliefs related to chastity, marriage and “proper” relations between women and men (Alhassan et al., 2016; Johnsdotter, 2003). It is not only performed to achieve culturally normative, “perfected” female genitalia (Johnsdotter, 2018), but also to encourage women to assume culturally expected gender roles and culturally appropriate behaviours towards their peers, husbands and elders (Alhassan et al., 2016; O’Brien et al., 2017). In many contexts FGC functions as a prerequisite for marriage and motherhood through signalling virginity, appropriate female behaviour and women’s confinement to the private sphere (Alhassan et al., 2016; Isman et al., 2013; Johnsdotter, Moussa, Carlbom, Aregai, & Essén, 2009). These beliefs are further upheld by the higher status of married women, along with married women’s greater access to decision-making power, social capital and material resources (Behrendt, 2011; Shell-Duncan et al., 2011). The importance of marriage and motherhood cannot be over-stated; in many FGC-practising contexts, women derive their welfare primarily through their roles as mothers and wives (Gruenbaum, 1982).

Perhaps the most cited reason for FGC is its function in controlling girls’ and women’s sexuality (Berg & Denison, 2013). Some FGC-practising communities believe that uncut

clitoris leads to sexual insatiability and excessive masturbation (Ahmadu, 2000). Beliefs about sexuality and fertility can be inextricably intertwined, as some communities view masturbation as a deterrent to female fertility (Ahmadu, 2000) whilst other communities emphasise the purpose of FGC for curbing women's sexuality, whereby uncut women are viewed as promiscuous and as a threat to family honour (Berg & Denison, 2013; Isman et al., 2013; Onyima, 2015). However, curbing women's sexuality is not always the primary purpose or even the believed outcome of cutting (Ahmadu, 2000). Men's preference to marry women with FGC either due to perceived greater sexual enjoyment or the higher moral standards conveyed by FGC is also said to drive these practices (Berg & Denison, 2013). Conversely, elongation is often believed to enhance sexual enjoyment for both partners.

### **2.3 International campaign and key debates**

The earliest campaigns to end FGC date back to the colonial period. However, rather than being driven by concern over women's liberation, it has been argued that the early anti-FGC advocacy strived to promote population growth to meet the economic needs of the colonial Empires (Johnsdotter, 2012). It has been argued that even long before the landmark radical feminist campaigns initiated at the turn of 1970s and 1980s, white women self-appointed themselves as the advocates for FGC-affected African women to further the colonial agenda (Anderson, 2018). Following unsuccessful colonial efforts to end FGC, these practices gradually fell from focus during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The beginnings of today's anti-FGC movement can be credited to Fran Hosken and the radical feminist activism, which was pivotal in the re-emergence of FGC as an international concern (Wade, 2011). Radical feminists not only took the lead in mobilising the international community against FGC, but their framing of these practices continues to largely define the terms in which FGC continues to be condemned.

#### **2.3.1 FGC as a health problem**

At the beginning of the international campaign in the 1970s, FGC was framed as a "public health problem and impediment to development that can be prevented and eradicated much like any disease" (Hosken, 1978, p. 155). It was during this time the terminological shift from *female circumcision* to *female genital mutilation* occurred, as anti-FGC campaigners begun pairing this term with the word "eradicate", converting FGC "into a disease to be attacked,

rather than a social practice to be altered” (Gruenbaum, 2020, p. 42). The health framework which informed the initial opposition to FGC assumed that if affected communities were more aware of the complications, they would abandon FGC (Shell-Duncan, 2008). However, although FGC is often represented as an unquestioned tradition, researchers have argued that FGC is a rational practice whereby communities are weighing the costs and benefits of its continuation (Ahmadu, 2000; Coyne & Mathers, 2014; Gruenbaum, 2001).

In addition to overlooking the cultural significance of FGC, the health campaigning has been guilty of generalising the impacts of infibulation to diverse forms of FGC (Shell-Duncan, 2008b). Although the complications of FGC are rarely altogether denied, the medical evidence which has informed the opposition of FGC as a health issue has been problematised by the leading anthropologists in the field (Ahmadu, 2000; Gruenbaum, 2001; Johnsdotter, 2013; Obermeyer, 1999, 2003). The evidence on FGC, maternal death, obstetric ill-health and sexual pleasure is especially weak (Essén & Mosselmans, 2020; Johnsdotter, 2013). The generalising claims about total loss of sexual pleasure as a result of FGC have been questioned, as Johnsdotter has argued that the international opposition to FGC relies on “cultural constructions disguised as a medical science” (2013, p. 1), which are often exaggerated in favour of fuelling the moral panic surrounding FGC. Some anthropologists have argued that representations of loss of sexual pleasure disregard the internal parts of the clitoris, which remain unaltered by FGC (Ahmadu, 2000), while others have speculated if the discrepancies between representation and evidence on the impacts of FGC are a result of poorly-designed and poorly-executed studies (Obermeyer, 1999, 2003). It has been suggested that culturally specific constructions of abnormality and women’s fears of reporting complications of FGC due to possible legal repercussions underpin the lack of comprehensive data on the health effects of FGC (Shell-Duncan et al., 2000). In addition to the need for further data, researchers have called for more nuanced understandings of the subjective and culturally constructed nature of sexuality and sexual pleasure with regards to FGC-affected women (Bell, 2005; Johnsdotter, 2013; Palm, Essén, & Johnsdotter, 2019). Further research on subjective experiences of FGC is necessary for developing sexual counselling for FGC-affected women, whose body image is not only damaged by FGC, but also by insensitive professional responses that can evoke further feelings of shame and loss (Palm et al., 2019).



### **2.3.2 FGC as a human rights violation**

The failure of the health framework to mobilise large-scale social change led to a shift towards a human rights-based approach in the early 1990s (Shell-Duncan, 2008a). Today, FGC is internationally recognised to violate a number of human rights conventions, including *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, *The Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, *The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, *The Cairo Declaration for the Elimination of FGM* and *The Banjul Charter* (Malmström, 2013; Wood, 2001). These international human rights instruments have been utilised to oppose FGC as a violation of health and bodily integrity, right to life and right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The gendered nature of FGC as a mechanism for controlling women's sexuality and its potential health impacts underpins the opposition to FGC as a violation of women's sexual and reproductive health and freedoms. Under these conventions, FGC is also opposed on the grounds of children's rights to health, participation and development (Malmström, 2013). However, those adopting a cultural relativist position have also defended FGC on the grounds of rights to culture, although critics say that group rights should not take precedence over the rights of the individual (Harris-Short, 2003).

Although framing FGC as an international human rights violation has gained widespread support, the interpretation of individual rights for the purposes of challenging FGC continues to be problematised. Authors have noted the paradox inherent in opposing FGC due to its adverse health consequences, while simultaneously objecting to the medicalisation of these practices which could significantly reduce the risks arising from performing FGC in unsanitary conditions (Bell, 2005; Shell-Duncan et al., 2000). Medicalisation has been rejected as an intermediate step to end FGC because institutionalising FGC has been viewed to undermine wider efforts to end FGC (Dustin, 2010; Mcchesney, 2015). Nevertheless, researchers who have argued that cultural and attitudinal change towards the abandonment of FGC takes place over a long period of time have suggested that medicalisation should not be outright rejected as an intermediate solution for improving the welfare of women who do not yet have a choice to say no to these practices (Shell-Duncan et al., 2000). Framing FGC as torture has also been contested for being counter-productive to FGC prevention by demonising affected communities and giving rise to cultural resistance to abandon the practice (Wasunna, 2000). As it will be highlighted in Chapter 7, the recognition of FGC as

torture depends too often on whether these representations allow Westerners to exercise moral judgement against FGC-affected communities or whether this requires states to meet their obligation under international law to protect women at risk.

The opposition of FGC on the grounds of women's and children's rights to health has also been debated. The intentionality to harm implied by these violations has been challenged by research that shows that FGC is not principally practised in order to harm girls and women, but to advance women's cultural and socio-economic standing in the practising contexts (Johnsdotter & Essén, 2016). Likewise, the issue with framing FGC as a violation of children's opportunity to "develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner" as stated in the principle 2 in *The Declaration of the Rights of the Child* stems from different understandings of why FGC is performed. It has been argued that the reliance on Western constructions of childhood overlooks the fact that, in many cultures, a child undergoing FGC is more a rule than an exception; thus, in these contexts, a child's "normal" development includes undergoing FGC (Shell-Duncan, 2008). This issue highlights the importance of recognising and addressing cultural perceptions in challenging FGC on the grounds of human rights.

The issue of consent is particularly pertinent to framing FGC as a violation of women's and children's rights (Dustin, 2010). Although elongation is not considered to have the same potential risks as cutting practices, the fact that girls are instructed to stretch their own labia by elder women raises similar questions about consent and child abuse, which have been central to the opposition to FGC. The arguments in relation to FGC and reasoned and legal consent are also applicable to intersex surgeries and male circumcision, which are likewise commonly performed on infants (Bell, 2005; Delaet, 2009; Dustin, 2010). It has been argued that the juxtapositions between female and male genital "modifications" can both support legalising certain forms of genital modifications done to women (Shweder, 2002) or banning both practices altogether (Svoboda, 2013). Although FGC potentially carries far more detrimental health consequences than male circumcision, the reliance on health arguments as grounds for differentiating FGC from other practices performed on children leaves an opening for the continuation of less invasive type IV practices. Paradoxically, in countries like the UK, an adult Black woman is not allowed to consent to a genital modification procedure for cultural reasons, but she is allowed to make the same decision for her underage son (Darby & Svoboda, 2007). The opposition to FGC on the grounds of consent often neglects to address women's intergenerational participation in FGC. Although it has been

widely argued that patriarchal norms and men's preferences inform FGC, men are traditionally excluded from both the immediate decision-making and the act of performing FGC (Ahmadu, 2000; O'Brien et al., 2017). Women's complicity in culturally informed gendered practices and behaviours has led scholars to develop more nuanced analyses of women's participation in upholding the patriarchal social order (Gangoli & Rew, 2011; Kandiyoti, 1988; Shankar & Northcott, 2009, see Chapter 4).

The issue of consent also demarcates genital modifications between women from different cultural backgrounds. Although there are obvious parallels between labiaplasty, hymen repair and less extreme forms of FGC both in terms of some of the reasons for, and the extent to which, women's genitals are modified (Bell, 2005; Johnsdotter & Essén, 2010), the FGC definitions employed by the WHO and European countries explicitly exclude female cosmetic genital surgeries and Western genital piercings (Johnsdotter, 2020). In the UK, the law specifically states that if "any other person believes that the operation is required as a matter of custom or ritual", any determination of the operation as necessary for the girls' mental health is immaterial (Female Genital Mutilation Act, 2003). This has been done even though the government and medical bodies have recognised the difficulties in differentiating FGC from Western genital surgeries:

*The problem is that while the distinction between this legitimate surgery and the traditional practice of female circumcision is quite clear in common sense terms, there is no precise anatomical definition which would admit one and not the other. That is why we need the provision for surgery on mental health grounds together with the qualification [on custom or ritual] contained in subsection (2).* (Lord Glenarthur, Prohibition of Female Circumcision HL Bill, 23 January 1984, cited in Dustin 2010, p.15)

Although FGC is opposed on the grounds of universal human rights, the conscious decision to exclude Western practices is emblematic of moral relativism. The reference to "common sense terms" exemplifies the taken-for-granted notion of Western values as a universally representative moral standard in which the opposition to FGC should be grounded on, and which remains one of the key points of contention with regard to FGC. These inconsistencies in the opposition to FGC are not only of scholarly interest, but are also giving rise to community resistance to ending FGC (Dustin, 2010; Johnsdotter & Essén, 2010).

The scholarly critique of framing FGC as a human rights violation has, by and large, not been about justifying FGC, but a call to rethink the articulation and the practical application of human rights principles in the strategies for ending FGC. Despite good intentions, subjective interpretations of individual rights and the non-binding nature of human rights declarations undermine the effectiveness of human rights in the global efforts to end FGC. Further, the entire human rights corpus as a foundation for the opposition to FGC has been increasingly problematised; scholars have highlighted the lack of meaningful participation from the non-Western countries in the development and dialogue on international human rights (Merry, 2003; Mutua, 2001; Shell-Duncan, 2008). FGC-discourse has been argued to rely on Western knowledge production as a means of exercising power and dominance over FGC-affected countries and communities (Njambi, 2004, see Chapter 3). This issue of inclusion is not only a concern between states, but also pertains to the position of FGC-affected women:

*Both sides of the debate have made the bodies of Nigerian women and girls into a battleground on which the battle lines of universalism and cultural relativism are drawn and have failed to engage with the desires and aspirations of the people they claim to speak for and protect. (Ipinyomi, 2015, p. 4)*

In reflecting the polarisation of FGC debate in relation to the Nigerian context, Ipinyomi (2015) has argued that both universalism and cultural relativism have overlooked the voices of FGC-affected women in approaching the issue from top-down. This critique has also been echoed by others who have for long argued that a collaborative approach to challenging FGC needs to be multi-directional, as opposed to a one-way transfer of knowledge from the West to FGC-affected countries (Lewis, 1995). However, despite this critique, as discussed in-depth in Chapter 3, the limited inclusion of community perspectives remains an issue for anti-FGC activism.

### **2.3.3 Recent developments**

Feminist campaigning has been widely credited for transforming GBV from an individual to a global social issue (Adelman et al., 2003). The contemporary human rights discourse and organisations have increasingly framed FGC as a *harmful cultural practice* (hereafter HCP) which reflects the role radical feminism played in the pivotal shift in viewing FGC as a tradition to recognising these practices as a serious form of harm and gender inequality

(Longman & Bradley, 2015; Withaekx, 2017). Much like the radical feminists who located FGC in the context of other gendered discriminatory practices affecting women in the Global South (see Chapter 3), HCP has come to encompass a range of practices including FGC, forced marriage, sati, forced sterilisation and breast ironing (Longman & Bradley, 2015; Longman & Coene, 2015). HCPs are distinguished on the basis that: they are harmful to women's and girls' physical and mental well-being; these practices are viewed as normal and morally good, often unquestioned among the practising communities; and they function to reproduce patriarchal oppression (Withaekx, 2017). Crucially, the framing of HCPs largely excludes discriminatory gendered practices affecting men, such as groom-flogging and scarification which perpetuate cultural constructions of gender, as well as cultural practices affecting Western women, such as breast implants and labiaplasty. This reflects the sustained influence of radical feminist constructions about the intertwined nature of Global South cultures and patriarchy (see Section 3.2).

The approach to challenging FGC under the umbrella of HCPs has been subject to considerable contention. The concept of HCPs has been argued to rely on generalising and simplified conceptualisations of harm, and the abstract attribution of static culture as the source of the said harm (Longman & Bradley, 2015). Paradoxically, the international human rights movement has largely represented HCPs as an issue of the Global South cultures, while simultaneously building momentum through drawing from the radical feminist emphasis on GBV as a universal problem (see Section 3.2.1). Although emphasising GBV as a universal phenomenon can deliver the gravitas needed to challenge the entrenched normalisation of violence and subjugation in the lives of women across the globe, the way such generalisations are articulated has been critiqued for framing culture in static terms, reproducing racist, Orientalist and colonial constructions of the countries and cultures of the Global South (Longman & Bradley, 2015; Withaekx, 2017). In being rooted in Western institutions and frequently mobilised to challenge cultural practices in top-down terms, the concept of HCPs has also been argued to be susceptible for misuse for the purposes of neo-colonial control and exploitation (Withaekx, 2017)

FGC has also increasingly been identified as a form of “honour”-based violence<sup>6</sup> by researchers and UK and Scottish Governments (Gangoli et al., 2018; Julios, 2020). Although

---

<sup>6</sup> There is nothing “honourable” about these forms of violence; rather, this labelling relates to the cultural notions of honour and shame which perpetrators use as an excuse for their actions and which increase women's vulnerability to abuse and violence (Cowburn et al., 2015; Meeto & Mirza, 2007).

the concept of “honour”-based violence encompasses a range of practices underpinned by culturally diverse and subjective meanings of honour, the term is intended to refer to violence that is used to control women’s behaviour for the purposes of protecting cultural and religious beliefs and sense of honour (Gangoli et al., 2018; Gill, 2014). “Honour”-based violence is most often perpetuated by men as a display of patriarchal power, although it also often involves extended family or community members, setting it apart from most other forms of domestic abuse (Gill, 2014; Julios, 2020). The framing of FGC as “honour”-based violence aims to draw attention to the justifications of violence (Gangoli et al., 2018). As highlighted in the earlier sections, the ostracism of uncut women and the purpose of FGC for controlling women’s sexuality exemplify the integral part beliefs about honour in relation to family, community and culture play in the continuation of FGC. However, the popular use of “honour”-based violence has been subject to similar critique as HCP; It has been argued that media and political discourses employ the concept of “honour”-based violence to reproduce and validate Western superiority through essentialist, racialised and stereotyping representations of other cultures (Abu-Lughod, 2011; Bhanbhro, Chavez, & Lusambili, 2016; Gill, 2006; Gill, 2014). Much like HCPs, the concept of “honour”-based violence risks over-emphasising culture over other forces underpinning women’s vulnerability to these practices (Bhanbhro et al., 2016; Gill, 2006, 2014).

## **2.4 Challenging FGC in the UK**

In the last two decades, the growing concerns over forced migration, cultural diversity and social cohesion have accelerated the public and political debates over GBV against women and girls from minoritised communities across Europe<sup>7</sup> (Longman & Coene, 2015). With the rise of Islamophobia, far-right populism and anti-immigration sentiments, FGC, forced marriage and veiling have increasingly been tied to Islamic extremism and concerns over national security following 9/11 and 7/7 (Gill & Anitha, 2009; Gruenbaum, 2020; Longman & Coene, 2015, see also Section 3.3.3). It has been argued that this context has also fostered essentialist discourses and policy approaches to GBV affecting Black and other minoritised women (Gill & Anitha, 2009). The next sections outline the UK Government approach to FGC, with a focus on the recent U-turn in policy approach from emphasising

---

<sup>7</sup> I will predominantly use the term minoritised as opposed to minority to refer to women and communities who have been positioned as minorities on the account of socio-historical processes rather than owing to their inherent religious, cultural or ethnic qualities or the size of these communities (Burman et al., 2004).

multiculturalism to promoting increasingly punitive measures for addressing gendered cultural practices. The final section will discuss the Scottish context and anti-FGC approach.

#### **2.4.1 From multiculturalism to zero tolerance to FGC**

The shift from state multicultural policymaking to championing a zero tolerance approach to FGC in the UK has taken place as a response to sustained critique against failures to protect women from FGC, forced marriage and “honour”-based violence (Dustin, 2016; Gill & Anitha, 2009). Prior to the increased political attention on FGC, Scottish social services were criticised for being “too politically correct to want to do anything” (Adams, 2013) with Scotland described as taking a “soft touch” approach, enabling FGC to continue undetected (Adams, 2013). Around this same time, some media outlets provided anecdotal evidence about migrants from elsewhere travelling to UK and Scotland to perform FGC, sometimes arranging “FGM parties” (Lloyd-Roberts, 2012). This criticism only intensified as a result of comparisons to the neighbouring France, which, although does not have a separate law for FGC, has been described as shining example of FGC protection following around 40 FGC trials and 100 prosecutions (Baillot et al., 2018; Berer, 2015). This may be explained by the fact that France has traditionally adopted a more assimilationist position; in contrast to the previously prevailing British multiculturalism, the French approach to migrant incorporation is based on a clear division of public and private spheres, where the public sphere is to remain culturally “neutral”, but in which cultural practices can be maintained in the private sphere if these do not contradict the fundamental values and norms of the society (Simon, 2010).

As a result of these criticisms, the last decade has witnessed considerable political pressure and public outrage to prosecute perpetrators of FGC in the UK. This has led to a shift in policy, whereby GBV affecting minoritised women has become hyper-visible in the public and political discourse (Patel, 2014). This has coincided with the growing public interest in GBV as a social issue over the last few decades, which has further encouraged the UK Government to implement various initiatives to address GBV (Gill & Anitha, 2009). In 2005, FGC, forced marriage and “honour”-based violence were included in the UK definition of domestic abuse. Although this signified the shift in framing FGC as GBV as opposed to a cultural practice, the changes made to the definition of domestic abuse in 2013 have been criticised for again downgrading forms of violence that disproportionately affect minority women (Kelly & Westmarland, 2014). These forms of violence are no longer specifically

mentioned in the 2013 definition but demoted to a footnote (Kelly & Westmarland, 2014). The broadened 2015 definition of domestic abuse has been criticised for being a “symbolic recognition of an ‘integrated approach’ at the cost of accuracy” (Kelly & Westmarland, 2014, para 12). This reflects on one hand, the tendencies to overlook the specificity of the needs of ethnic and religious minority women in European policymaking (Gill & Anitha, 2009) and on the other hand, the criticisms laid against radical feminist activism and the international anti-FGC discourse, which have conflated FGC with other forms of GBV at the expense of recognising the distinct dynamics of these practices (see Chapter 3).

#### **2.4.2 Laws against FGC**

Much like elsewhere in Europe, the UK response to FGC has primarily focused on punitive measures (Dustin, 2010). FGC was initially outlawed in the UK through the *Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985* and was then replaced with *The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003* which strengthened the legal protections with regards to extra-territorial offences, the offence of helping someone commit FGC and by raising the maximum penalty from 5 to 14 years in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The corresponding legislation in Scotland followed in 2005, with the passing of *The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Act 2005*. In 2015, the UK Parliament established further provisions to intervene against FGC through *The Serious Crime Act 2015*, which introduced Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders (FGMPOs), mandatory reporting and recording duty for health and social care professionals. Scotland has recently followed suit by introducing FGMPOs through *Female Genital Mutilation (Protection and Guidance) (Scotland) Act 2020*. The UK Government also launched Operation Limelight in 2014 for the police and border force to identify girls in airports at risk of being taken out of the country for the purposes of FGC and forced marriage.

It has been argued that in the UK, “it is difficult to think of a comparable area of social or health policy where a problem has been identified based on so little research to identify the level and type of problem (as FGC)” (Dustin 2010, p. 18). Although NHS now publishes annual statistics on new recorded cases of FGC, evidence identifying new cases of FGC which have occurred after migration to the UK remains largely anecdotal. Despite of FGC being outlawed since 1985, the UK did not secure its first successful prosecution until 2019. In this case, a mother was convicted for 11 years for cutting her three-year old daughter



(Dyer, 2019). Prior to this, three trials in England resulted in acquittals, one of which was a highly controversial case where a doctor was prosecuted for stitching an FGC-affected woman following an emergency delivery and bleeding (Dyer, 2014). The prosecuted doctor had received no training on FGC as part of his medical training, nor was he familiar with the patient's FGC-status before being called to deliver her baby. It has been argued that the doctor was scapegoated amid growing pressures to prosecute the first UK FGC case 29 years after the law was passed (Dyer, 2014). To date, there have been no FGC prosecutions in Scotland. Much like in Scandinavia (Johnsdotter, 2019), the failures to prosecute have been widely taken to reflect the hidden nature of FGC and the complacency of statutory services, with limited recognition of the possibility that the lack of evidence could also indicate possible cultural change among migrant communities. The lack of successful prosecutions in the UK prior to 2019 has largely been attributed to girls' and women's unwillingness to testify against family members and a lack of statutory service professionals' knowledge about FGC (Malik et al., 2018). In addition to difficulties in detecting FGC, proving that cutting has occurred is in reality much more difficult than the extreme representations of the anti-FGC discourse make it out to be; not only are compulsory genital examinations a contested issue (Johnsdotter, 2019), but as highlighted by recent high-profile FGC cases in the U.S., Sweden and Ireland, separate expert witnesses have come to completely opposing conclusions on whether FGC had occurred after performing genital examinations on suspected victims (Essén, 2020).

### **2.4.3 Prevention and support provision**

The heavy reliance on criminal justice responses to FGC across Europe has been criticised for being more responsive to the consequences than the causes of violence through emphasising prosecution over prevention (Mestre i Mestre & Johnsdotter, 2019; True, 2012b). The 2003 FGM Act was preceded by 47 recommendations from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population Development and Reproductive Health. Although the recommendations on preferred terminology and extra-territorial offences were acted on, it has been said that the recommendations for further funding for groups and research to prevent FGC were taken up less enthusiastically, if at all (Dustin, 2010). Since then, the UK Government has implemented more support provisions and educational awareness resources for FGC prevention, including introducing a National FGM helpline, specific FGC services and safeguarding guidance for professionals (Dustin, 2016; Home Office, 2020a). The UK's Code

of Practice for Victims of Crime now identifies women affected by FGC, forced marriage and other “honour”-based violence as “priority victims”, who should receive rapid needs assessments and enhanced support (Gill, Cox, & Weir, 2018).

Despite the hypervisibility and hypervigilance to prosecute perpetrators of FGC, the UK Government austerity programme has had fundamental implications for FGC prevention. Although the UK government pledged substantial funding for FGC projects in Africa under Theresa May’s Prime Ministership, since 2015, National FGC funding has been reduced by 76 per cent, going from £2.7 million in 2015 to £432,000 in 2019-2020 (Merrick, 2020a). This has included the recent £700,000 funding withdrawal from the only dedicated National FGM Centre which supports FGC-affected women and works to secure FGM Protection Orders for girls at risk (Merrick, 2020b). Despite these cuts, the current Home Office minister Victoria Atkins defended the Government’s commitment to ending FGC by reasserting the UK Government’s emphasis on punitive measures (Merrick, 2020b). The UK Government has also been criticised for failing to ratify the Istanbul Convention, which would require the UK to implement measures to protect women from GBV regardless of their immigration status. This includes enabling women to apply for residence permits independently from spouses who perpetuate abuse, ensuring gender-sensitive interpretation of the Refugee Convention, gender-sensitive asylum procedures, and enabling asylum-seeking women to access necessary support services. As it will be highlighted in Chapters 7 and 8, these provisions are central to addressing FGC which primarily affects asylum-seeking and refugee women.

#### **2.4.4 The Scottish anti-FGC approach**

The Scottish opposition to FGC dates back to 1920s, when Church of Scotland missionaries embarked upon a campaign against FGC practised by Kikuyu<sup>8</sup> in Kenya. This campaign was consequently met with considerable resistance and backlash against the Church of Scotland (Mchesney, 2015; Thomas, 2000). The contemporary Scottish anti-FGC discourse has re-emerged during the 2010s to challenge FGC as a fundamental and extreme violation of the human rights of women and girls. In addition to media and increased migration, community

---

<sup>8</sup> Kikuyu are a Bantu ethnic group native to Central Kenya and Tanzania.

organisations and activists have played a leading role in drawing attention to FGC in Scotland over the recent years.

Much like elsewhere in Europe, the Scottish approach to challenging FGC is largely derived from the wider international anti-FGC discourse that chiefly frames FGC in terms of cultural deviance and backwardness (James & Robertson, 2002; Obiora, 1997, see Chapter 3). MSPs across parties in Holyrood have spoken against FGC through polarised language, describing FGC as “horror” (Kenneth Gibson, SNP) and as “barbaric” (Margaret McDougall, Labour) (Scottish Government, 2016a). The Scottish framing of FGC also shares similarities to the international anti-FGC discourse when it comes to conceptualising the dynamics and motivations underpinning FGC; the Scottish FGC policy asserts that FGC will continue until practising communities *choose* to abandon the practice and those who *choose* to perpetuate FGC are held accountable (Scottish Government, 2016b).

Regardless of the increased public and policy attention, evidence on the continuation of FGC in Scotland remains sparse. Apart from two national and local authority scoping studies on the potential prevalence of FGC (Baillot, Murray, et al., 2014; Ford et al., 2018), FGC research in Scotland has been limited to two qualitative studies focusing on potentially affected communities’ experiences, beliefs and views on FGC (Mhoja et al., 2010; O’Brien et al., 2016, 2017). Between October 2014 and February 2016, 33 possible FGC incidents were reported to Police Scotland, out of which 28 related to children, 2 concerned adults and 3 unborn children at risk of FGC (Malik et al., 2018). Furthermore, between April 2013 and September 2016, a total of 52 referrals or child welfare concerns were made to the police regarding FGC, but investigations revealed that cutting had not occurred in any of these cases (Police Scotland, 2018). In its response to a 2019 Freedom of Information request, the Scottish Government (2019b) admitted that it was unable to produce figures for the number of FGC related arrests, prevented FGC incidents, number of women protected from FGC or the numbers of FGC-affected women who have been provided support in Scotland since the 2005 legislation was introduced. The Government stated that this information was not being collected, which exemplifies the continuing pattern where the political discourse and policymaking on FGC are often guided by representations over evidence (Dustin, 2010).

In 2016, the Scottish Government produced a *National Action Plan to Prevent and Eradicate FGM* (Scottish Government, 2016b) followed by national multi-agency guidance for frontline staff (Safer Scotland, 2017). The National FGM Action Plan is structured around a dual

approach to “prevent/protect” and to “provide services/support”, with a focus on the provision of appropriate guidance for professionals, multi-agency protocols for child protection, awareness-raising and provision of health services to FGC-affected women (Scottish Government, 2016b). Notably however, despite the emphasis on community engagement, the Scottish Action Plan does not outline any specific action points for potentially affected communities. Although the Scottish policy approach has emphasised bringing together stakeholders, statutory services and potentially affected communities through public consultations, the limited community engagement in the development of Scottish anti-FGC policy has been criticised (Connelly et al., 2018; O’Brien et al., 2016).

The current Scottish approach for ending FGC is positioned under *Equally Safe*, the Scottish strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women, which in turn sits under a broader national performance framework that strives to build a sustainable economy, tackle inequality and pass power to people and communities (Scottish Government, 2016). In contrast to the UK Government definition of domestic abuse, FGC is explicitly mentioned in the *Equally Safe* strategy and the Scottish Government definition for violence against women and girls (Scottish Government, 2018a). *Equally Safe* prioritises the need to ensure that “women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically” (Scottish Government, 2018a, p. 38). However, the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity and immigration status which shape migrant women’s rights and participation are not clearly addressed with regard to FGC in either of the policies.

In addition to these policies, the Scottish Government has produced a community information leaflet, FGC awareness-raising postcard and a dedicated *FGM Aware* website intended to raise awareness about FGC and FGC legislation in Scotland. Over the last three years, the Scottish Government has allocated £427,500 for FGC focused projects (Scottish Government, 2019a), with a further £1,550,000 to organisations working to end “honour”-based violence (Scottish Government, 2019b). Although the Scottish Government funding allocation has not been subject to direct cuts, the UK Government austerity agenda has nevertheless had an impact through cuts made to statutory services, especially social work, which plays a prominent part in FGC prevention and protection work.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of FGC practices, the ongoing key debates surrounding the opposition to FGC and the UK and Scottish anti-FGC approaches. In doing so, this chapter has shown that while FGC has been internationally condemned for decades as a fundamental violation of human rights, the means by which these practices are challenged remains contentious. The next chapter will build on this background by discussing the academic research and ongoing debates over contrasting constructions of FGC and strategies for ending FGC in the Global South and Global North. Chapter 3 reflects the academic perspectives on the re-emergence of FGC as a pressing social problem in the context of increased forced migration, global instabilities and the shift in UK policymaking from multiculturalism to forced civic integration and assimilation. In doing so, the chapter will problematise the existing knowledge gaps pertaining to FGC prevention and protection in relation to asylum and migrant integration.

## Chapter 3

### Literature review

#### 3.1 Overview

The scholarly debates over FGC have been described as a “battle at an impasse” (Lane & Rubinstein, 1996, p. 31). The tensions over the terms by which FGC is condemned cannot be analysed as divisions between “West and the Rest” or even along racial and ethnic lines. Rather, as this chapter demonstrates, the opposition to FGC has been articulated from a range of positions and perspectives (Malmström, 2013). In focusing on the opposition of FGC, my intention is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of the debate between cultural relativist and essentialist positions on the right to practise FGC. Instead, this chapter illuminates the key debates and gaps in knowledge surrounding FGC-affected women’s agency and vulnerability in both practising and non-practising contexts. The first part of this chapter reviews the radical feminist framing of FGC, which I argue continues to characterise the contemporary anti-FGC discourse to the detriment of structural and intersectional analysis of women’s vulnerability. I then move on to reviewing the key issues in approaches to FGC and other forms of GBV affecting refugee women in migration contexts. These sections illuminate the tensions between representations of FGC and lack of research in areas of FGC and asylum, integration and community participation.

#### 3.2 FGC in the Global South

Key radical feminist figures have been widely credited not only for mobilising the initial feminist opposition to FGC, but also for their crucial role in persuading the wider international community to take action against these practices (Obiora, 1997; Wade, 2011). It was Fran Hosken who called for the terminological shift from *female circumcision* to *female genital mutilation*. Along with Hosken, Mary Daly, Gloria Steinem, Robin Morgan and Alice Walker all played part in drawing the international attention to FGC. Although much of the initial debate was fueled by Western feminists, African activists and thinkers including Nawal El Sadaawi, Olayinka Koso-Thomas, Waris Dirie, Nahib Toubia and Efua Dorkenoo also advocated constructing FGC in broadly similar terms to Western radical feminists (Njambi, 2000). Regardless of the pivotal role of radical feminists in initiating the

international campaign against FGC, not all scholars and activists have joined in to applaud radical feminists' eagerness to do so. Since the 1970s, Black and postcolonial feminists and anthropologists have advocated, evidenced and theorised contrasting conceptualisations of women's agency and dynamics of FGC. In the next sections, I contrast these differing schools of thought to illustrate key gaps in relation to research and interventions in FGC-practising contexts.

### **3.2.1 From universal sisterhood to sisterarchy**

Regardless of the variety of reported motivations underlying FGC, radical feminists largely framed FGC practices in terms of patriarchal hegemony and sexual politics (Obiora, 1997). The role of male sexual pleasure and female sexual servitude held a central role in radical feminist analysis. FGC was said to convert a woman into the husband's property, turning women into abject objects (Daly, 1978). Daly argued that FGC was intended for "tightening them (women) up for their masters' pleasure" (1978, p. 104). Likewise, Hosken emphasised the detrimental effects of FGC on women's sexuality by referring to the practice as "sexual castration" (1993, p. 20).

It has been argued that these representations of FGC are more telling of "us" than "them" in mirroring Western ideological and scholarly trends around evolutionism, psychoanalysis and radical feminism (Johnsdotter, 2012, p. 14). These representations reflect the wider Western second-wave feminists' endeavor to challenge suppressive conceptualisations of female sexuality that prevailed at the time (Bell, 2005). As a response to the work of Sigmund Freud, second-wave feminists reconceptualised the clitoris and female orgasm as ideological symbols of women's sexual independence (Gerhard, 2000; Malmström, 2013). This context explains why radical feminists largely framed FGC in terms of male control, as cutting practices in Western countries had in the past primarily been used for the purposes of controlling women's sexuality (La Barbera, 2009). Against this backdrop, FGC represented both the symbolic and actual destruction of women's sexual and social empowerment.

Although evidence suggests that the impacts of FGC on women's sexuality are not as clear-cut as the radical feminists claimed (Johnsdotter, 2013; Obermeyer, 2003), the influence of these depictions remains significant, as statements about destroyed female sexuality continue to occupy a central stage in today's anti-FGC discourse (Palm et al., 2019). While the focus on sexual mutilation has been one of the main discursive strategies in the international

opposition of FGC, these representations have been critiqued for objectifying women by reducing them to their genitalia (Janice Boddy, 1998). The anti-FGC discourse has been argued to rely on conceptualisations of the “racialised feminine body as ontologically dirty, incomplete and an imperfect representation of full humanity” (Khoja-Moolji, 2020, p. 66). Nevertheless, despite of this long-standing critique, research has only begun on examining the impacts of these representations on FGC-affected women (Lien & Schultz, 2013; Talle, 2008).

Radical feminists located FGC under an umbrella of diverse cultural customs including footbinding, child marriage, sati and polygamy which they viewed as manifestations of the planetary patriarchy (Daly, 1978; Hosken, 1993; Okin, 1999). Daly argued that FGC was sustained by the “almost universal hatred of the clitoris” and “cross-cultural hatred of women” (Daly, 1978, pp. 103–104). However, anthropologists have critiqued the radical feminist explanations based on universal patriarchy for failing to explain why FGC is only concentrated to specific geographical areas, and why some of these practices such as footbinding have been abandoned (Mackie, 1996). It has been argued that the radical feminists’ abstract conceptualisation of patriarchy as the cause of FGC is not sufficient to explain the prevalence of these practices, because communities where FGC is not practised are also patriarchal (Lejeune & Mackie, 2009).

Although cultural expectations around virginity and fidelity have also played a central role in the anthropological conceptualisations on the dynamics of FGC, researchers have strived for more contextual analysis in arguing for the role FGC plays in affirming culturally normative, valued and celebrated constructions of womanhood and motherhood: in different contexts, FGC is celebrated as a ritual for initiating girls to womanhood (Njambi, 2004), unmarried women to married life (Shell-Duncan, Obiero, & Muruli, 2000) and women to becoming recognised members of their own communities (Vissandjee et al., 2003). These transitions are associated with the attainment of female identity, entry to women’s social networks and access to women’s social capital, marriage and motherhood (Shweder, 2002). This exemplifies gender as inherently a socio-cultural concept, which has led African writers to question the usefulness of applying Western feminist theories in understanding gender, family and social order in Africa (Oyewumi, 2002). Regardless, Hosken went as far as to assert that the understanding the meanings underpinning FGC was not important (Njambi, 2000). This standpoint continues to influence interventions to FGC and other culturally informed gendered practices including forced marriage and veiling, which favour top-down



approaches to protection and prosecution over community engagement and dialogue (Adelman, Erez, & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003; Njue, Karumbi, Esho, Varol, & Dawson, 2019; Dustin, 2016).

The radical feminist rejection of the need to understand the complex dynamics of FGC went hand in hand with their emphasis on the unity of women: “Beyond racism is sisterhood, naming the crimes against women without paying mindless respect to the ‘social fabric’ of the various androcratic societies, including the one in which we find ourselves imprisoned” (Daly, 1978, p. 111). This focus on FGC as a manifestation of patriarchy drew from the radical feminist commitment to global sisterhood (Daly, 1978; Morgan, 1984; Wade, 2011). The radical feminist calls for action were saturated with romanticised accounts of the bond of women. Daly (1978) began her analysis of FGC by citing Audre Lorde, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Pat Parker. However, while Lorde recognised the need to challenge FGC, she critiqued Daly for co-opting the words of Black women for the purposes of advocating the primacy of white European herstory and the notion of universal sisterhood:

*As an African American woman in white patriarchy, I am used to having my archetypal experience distorted and trivialized, but it is terribly painful to feel it being done by a woman whose knowledge so much touches my own... .. Did you ever read my words, or did you merely finger through them for quotations which you thought might valuably support an already conceived idea concerning some old and distorted connection between us? (Lorde, 1979, para 8 and 11)*

Lorde’s letter highlights the long-standing critique by Black feminists who have accused radical feminists of furthering racial hierarchies through conveying “a sense of entitlement to define African women’s interests, intervene on their account and dismiss their resistance” (Wade, 2011, p. 39). This has led African feminists<sup>9</sup> to reconfigure global sisterhood as a form of “sisterarchy” by which Western feminists’ self-claimed authority to speak for other women has been argued to uphold the historically rooted oppression of Black women and women of colour (Oyewumi, 2003). Postcolonial feminists have likewise challenged Daly, and her contemporaries’ claims about the unity of women by stating that “beyond sisterhood there is still racism, colonialism and imperialism” (Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991, p. 68). This statement calls for a more nuanced analysis of power; or as asserted by bell hooks, that

---

<sup>9</sup> Labelling the diverse movements as African feminism is in itself a point of contention for many women who are active in advocating for women’s rights in Africa. I use this term in the absence of better terminology.

“patriarchy has no gender” (2009, p. 170). Nevertheless, both Hosken (1993) and Daly (1978) defended their right to speak for FGC-affected women by arguing that a failure to advocate against FGC amounted to racism in itself. Other leading anti-FGC activists have likewise later asserted that failures to protect Black children from FGC represent a perverse form of racism (Hedley & Dorkenoo, 1992). These arguments prevail in the contemporary discourse, as it has been argued that accusations of racism can inhibit services from preventing FGC (Moorhead, 2017).

The reliance on global sisterhood was grounded on the radical feminist vision of shared oppression of women. Although radical feminists had not experienced FGC, they saw striking similarities in women’s conditions:

*These words are painful to read. They describe facts of life as far away as our most fearful imagination – and as close as any denial of women’s sexual freedom. (Morgan & Steinem, 1980 in Chase, 2006, p. 311)*

Radical feminism has been questioned for its reliance on a vision of gender inequality which transcends historical and cultural boundaries (Oswin, 2001). The anti-FGC discourse has been criticised for fitting women into pre-fashioned, globalised categories which rid themselves of particular histories (Njambi, 2000). As argued by Kandiyoti: “Patriarchy often evokes an overly monolithic conception of male dominance, which is treated at a level of abstraction that obfuscates rather than reveals the intimate inner workings of culturally and historically distinct arrangements between genders” (1988, pp. 274–275). The assumption of the homogeneity of gender oppression has been argued to discursively colonise the fundamental complexities in women’s lives (Mohanty, 1984). Reducing the continuation of FGC to universal patriarchy disregards how convergence of multiple identities determines the role and extent of sexism, misogyny and other forms of oppression in the lives of women across borders (Abusharaf, 2000).

Radical feminists not only neglected to analyse women’s intersectional struggles, but unapologetically viewed patriarchy as paramount to other systems of domination: “Racism is a deformity within patriarchy... ..it is unlikely that racism will be eradicated as long as sexism prevails” (Daly, 1973, pp. 56–57). Critics have argued that privileging patriarchal domination as the root of women’s inequalities constructs other forms of oppression are a “mere offspring” of patriarchy (hooks, 1989). Black and African feminists have called for the need to address women’s situations not only from a feminist, but also from an anti-racist and

anti-imperialist standpoint (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000; hooks, 1989). African women's movement speaks from the particular context of a continent weakened by globalisation, genocide, disease and underdevelopment (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2005). African feminism has re-centred issues of economic survival over the sexual liberties and bodily freedom which occupied a central point of radical feminist activism (Abusharaf, 2000; Crotty, 2009). However, although the Black feminist critique of the intersectional erasures has been well-established, the radical feminist influence continues to underpin the wealth of studies which analyse the dynamics of FGC solely in relation to gender. Since FGC primarily affects Black and communities of colour, contemporary research has largely neglected to problematise the role of racial power imbalances in shaping the continuation of FGC and the agency of FGC-affected women.

### **3.2.2 Representations of savages and saviours**

Radical feminist framing of FGC was characterised by a paradox by which radical feminists both asserted the universality of women's oppression and distinguished FGC as a manifestation of essentialised difference. The common perceptions of FGC as an African problem derive from the work of Hosken (1993) who argued that FGC was likely to be practiced in some tribal groups in all countries of Africa, although research on the prevalence of FGC contradicts these findings (Shell-Duncan & Hernlund, 2000). Hosken's identification of FGC as an African practice was not just down to its presumed geographical spread, but this also reflected her perceptions about African cultures and societies. In describing FGC as African "savagery", Hosken (1993) argued that FGC manifested the violent nature of the whole African continent. Such generalisations have been critiqued for forging "a single decontextualised fact out of diverse practices and meanings and imbues it with specific moral and ideological significance" (Boddy, 1998, p. 80). These generalisations also permeate scholarship and contemporary public discourse, as social sciences literature and media have been argued to frequently overlook the complexity and cultural diversity in favour of more generalising representations of FGC practices (Johnsdotter & Mestre i Mestre, 2017; Malmström, 2013). Gunning (1992) has asserted that Western opposition to FGC exemplifies an "arrogant perception", by relying on expressions of racial and cultural superiority. Framing GBV as an African problem allow the West to represent itself as civilised, modern and superior (Champenois, 2010).

While both radical feminists and health educators have viewed FGC as a relic of past primitivity, Black and postcolonial critics have argued that the opposition to FGC resonates with a different violent past. Western feminism has been criticised for locating FGC “not only elsewhere in Africa, but elsewhere in time” (Chase, 2006, p. 311). Radical feminist analysis has been critiqued for removing FGC practices from their specific locations and histories, thus enforcing imperial perceptions of the savagery of the “Third World” (Ipinyomi, 2015; Moruzzi, 2005). Generalisations about GBV in the Global South are central in “making the ‘other’” (Abu-Lughod, 1991, p. 470; Chowdhury, 2009). Critics have argued that the modern day anti-FGC discourse reinscribes colonial interference and relations of power (Khoja-Moolji, 2020; Njambi, 2000, 2004):

*The history of colonialism and neo-colonialism has afforded the more powerful West the right to intervene in the lives of its “Third World” others; a right which is not reciprocal. And through the anti-FGM movement, the West has acquired yet another chance to gaze at African women’s genitals. (Njambi, 2004:284)*

*That kind of help, which they think of as solidarity, is another type of colonialism in disguise. So, we must deal with female circumcision ourselves. It is our culture, we understand it, when to fight against it and how, because this is the process of liberation. (El Sadaawi, 1980 in Gruenbaum, 2001, p. 204)*

Black feminist scholars, even those who otherwise endorsed descriptions of barbarity in relation to FGC, positioned the radical feminist and consequential wider Western interference as an extension of colonial continuities of power. Representations of gendered cultural practices like FGC and sati have been argued to have been central in the legitimatisation of colonising missions (Njambi, 2000; Spivak, 1988). El Sadaawi’s quote locates the opposition of FGC in the context of wider liberation of communities who have been subjected to colonialism. It has been argued that the continuation of FGC and the approaches to oppose these practices need to be analysed in the context of historical colonial control of FGC-affected communities’ freedoms and reproduction rights (Abusharaf, 2000; Van Bavel, 2019). Generalisations based on the discourse of African sexual mutilation and torture have been suggested to be counter-productive in evoking resistance within the practising communities to abandon FGC, who may see top-down interventions against a backdrop of decades of colonial and racially motivated control and interference (Esho et al., 2011; Malmström, 2013; Wasunna, 2000). As argued by Van Bavel (2019), the negotiation of FGC

takes place in relation to ongoing concerns about social status and ethnic marginalisation, which trace back to colonial struggles of cultural and ethnic survival. Abusharaf (2000) has likewise criticised the radical feminist framing of FGC for the lack of attention to the neo-colonial women's rights violations arising from structural adjustment policies which have damaged women's economic activities, socio-political mobility and sexual division of labour in FGC-affected societies.

The influence of radical feminist representations prevails in the international human rights discourse, which constructs FGC through simplistic binary constructions of West as the protector and Global South as the violator of women's rights (Mutua, 2001). Ironically, these binary constructions overlook the extreme violence within Europe which gave rise to the international human rights legislation in the first place (Mutua, 2001). Critics have denounced not only the means, but also the motives of Western preoccupation with GBV in the Global South; McKinnon (2016) argues that the spatialisation of FGC and other forms of GBV to Africa shape the imaginary of the continent as a "problem" and an "anachronistic space" which the U.S. needs to simultaneously distance itself from, and intervene in. It has been argued that Western governments use women's issues to impose their own forms of patriarchy, morality and militarism on non-Western countries as and when it suits their geopolitical agendas (McKerl, 2007). Globally, women's rights and issues including veiling have come to be increasingly employed to justify neoliberal defence projects which postcolonial scholars have argued contributes to the further masculinisation and militarisation of the globe (McKinnon, 2016; Mohanty, 2003; Mohanty, 2011). The top-down approach to campaigning against FGC also plays out in the politics of international development aid, which Western countries have threatened to withhold if African countries do not embrace the Western approach to ending FGC (Shell-Duncan et al., 2000). This resonates with the views of Hosken, who suggested withholding international development aid as means of applying pressure on states to prevent FGC (Women's Caucus of African Studies Association, 1983). The Western standpoint of moral superiority has been argued to fuel a civilising, liberating mission to rescue African women (McKinnon, 2016; Mugo, 1997).

The binary between modernised Western rescuers and violent "Third World" (Chowdhury, 2009) traces back to radical feminists who positioned themselves as the vanguards of women's emancipation, viewing it as their responsibility to liberate women of Global South from practices like FGC, polygamy and sati (Njambi, 2000): "We are able to teach those who cling to distorted beliefs and damaging practices some better way to cope with themselves,

reproduction and sexuality” (Hosken, 1993, p. 10, also Lightfoot-Klein, 1989). This has been criticised for producing an image of a woman who, for the reasons of her gender is sexually constrained, and for her position as coming from, and being of “Third World”, is traditional, poor, and “still-not-conscious-of-her-rights” (Mohanty, 1984, p. 352). In making sense of women’s role as decision-makers and cutters, radical feminists framed FGC-affected women as being so overpowered by the patriarchal system that they were unable to articulate the same needs and wishes as women in the West (Ipinyomi, 2015). Patriarchy was argued to have turned women into “prisoners of ritual” (Lightfoot-Klein, 1989), too “brainwashed” to resist FGC (Hosken, 1993, p. 13):

*The apparently “active” role of the women, themselves mutilated, is in fact a passive, instrumental role. It hides the real castrators of women. Mentally castrated, these women participate in the destruction of their own kind – of womankind – and in the destruction of strength and bonding among women. The screaming token torturers are silencing not only the victim, but their own victimised Selves.* (Daly, 1978, p. 106)

As explicitly conveyed by Daly, radical feminists placed blame on FGC-affected women whose complicity they saw to give rise to the disintegration of the universal sisterhood of women. These radical feminist constructions have been criticised for victim-blaming and objectifying FGC-affected women (Mugo, 1997). Obiora has argued that disregarding the diverse voices of women colludes with patriarchy, reinstating “the very silencing and stigmatization of women which feminism was supposed to challenge” (1997, p. 49).

The radical feminist emphasis on their duty to speak for African women has been criticised for failing to recognise the history of indigenous African “feminist” activism which predates colonialism (Abusharaf, 2000; Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000; Lewis, 1995). As argued by Adeleye-Fayemi, “African women have always lived in deeply patriarchal societies, and have therefore always found ways and means of resisting patriarchy” (2000, p. 6). Anthropologists have likewise questioned the representations of FGC-affected women and FGC as an unquestioned tradition by arguing that these practices are subject to ongoing negotiation as Africans are “arguing this one out for themselves” in village meetings, media and internet, signifying the leadership of African rural women (Gruenbaum, 1996, 2000). Nevertheless, the radical feminist rhetoric of its mutilated sisters has had far-reaching implications for legislation in many Western countries, which sets widely different standards for genital modifications depending on women’s ethnicity (Johnsdotter & Essén, 2010). Although

neither modern genital cosmetic surgeries nor culturally informed cutting are free of potential complications, women undergoing FGC are perceived as casualties of patriarchy, whereas Western women's genital procedures are viewed as women's right to make choices over their own bodies (Johnsdotter and Essen, 2010). Critics have argued that the lack of attention to the negotiations, ambiguities, complexities, and contradictions which play out in the continuation of FGC have led to failures to see the differences in the representations of women's agency based on the colour of their skin (Dustin & Phillips, 2008; Njambi, 2004). It has been argued that the anti-FGC discourse "directs a 'horrified gaze' towards its colonial and post-colonial subjects, rather than looking at the complexities surrounding the issue" (Volpp, 1996, p. 1579). The ongoing debates surrounding FGC-affected women's agency exemplify the need to further interrogate how women themselves perceive their own location in relation to multiple social hierarchies and relations of power.

The saviour mission embedded in modern human rights discourse has also been argued to overlook women's often-times conflicting positions in relation to their families and community (Chowdhury, 2009). Anthropologists have examined the strategic role FGC plays in ensuring biological continuity and maintenance of ethnic community identity (Coyne & Mathers, 2014; Gruenbaum, 2001; Mackie, 1996; Shell-Duncan, Wander, Hernlund, & Moreau, 2011). FGC has been framed as a binding force which enhances social cohesion within practising communities (Gruenbaum, 2001; Salad, 2016). The role of FGC in group boundary making is manifested by the bullying and exclusion of uncut women (Shell-Duncan et al., 2011). Researchers have also conceptualised FGC as a peer convention which is enforced by women themselves (Ahmadu, 2005; Shell-Duncan et al., 2011). Although FGC is intertwined with suppressive cultural and religious notions of appropriate womanhood, female bodies and sexuality, researchers have cautioned against reducing the power relations which sustain FGC to a simple gender binary; anthropologists have illustrated the role FGC plays in women's strategic manipulations of power against prevailing gender asymmetries, ideologies and hierarchies (Ahmadu, 2005; Shell-Duncan et al., 2011). FGC has been tied to intergenerational power relationships through signalling younger women's subordination to not only their husbands, but also to their mothers-in-law (Shell-Duncan et al., 2011). The role of FGC in enhancing older women's standing in communities that are otherwise structured around traditional gender roles and hierarchies can explain women's complicity in the continuation of FGC (Ahmadu, 2005; Shell-Duncan et al., 2011; Thomas, 2000).

Outside of the radical feminist movement, FGC has frequently been explained as an unquestioned tradition which reflects the prevailing assumptions about modernisation as the solution to ending FGC in Africa (Mackie, 1996; Shell-Duncan & Hernlund, 2000). However, studies have problematised these assumptions by illustrating that in some communities FGC continues to be practiced even when the negative health consequences are well-known (Akinsanya, 2011; Shell-Duncan et al., 2000). Scholars have cautioned against “representations that suggest that African mothers are bad mothers, or that First World mothers have a better idea of what it means to be a good mother” (Shweder, 2002, p. 202). Researchers have asserted that FGC is not commonly practiced to harm, but with expressed intentions to optimise the girls’ and women’s future prospects (Coyne & Mathers, 2014; Heinonen, 2001; Johnsdotter & Essen, 2016; Mackie, 1996). Anthropologists have located FGC in the context of economic, ethnic, family and religious stratification which has a profound bearing on how women act on their subordination in FGC-affected contexts (Gruenbaum, 2000). It has been argued that women’s participation in sexist cultural practices is motivated by their necessity to “inform their daughters of how to succeed in a world authored by men” (Blake, 1994 in Abusharaf, 2000, p. 153). FGC can improve younger women’s social standing by ensuring marriageability (Shell-Duncan et al., 2000). Cultural beliefs in relation to culturally normative understandings of womanhood, cleanliness, respect and strength make FGC integral to women’s access to social capital, which refers to “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 22). These perspectives highlight how reductionist representations of FGC mask the agency which women can (or have to) exercise within patriarchal social and societal structures (Volpp, 2001, see also Chapter 4).

### **3.2.3 Cultural vs. structural explanations of women’s vulnerability**

The radical feminist portrayal of reductionist narrative of barbaric Africa and its helpless women continued to persist in contemporary anti-FGC and human rights discourses (James & Robertson, 2002; Khoja-Moolji, 2020; Obiora, 1997). International attention has been primarily directed to practices which are seen to mark out the “other” women’s lives, including FGC, sati, dowry death, veiling, female infanticide, “honour” killings, breast ironing, purdah, polygamy and forced marriage (McKerl, 2007). In this context, it has been argued that FGC has become the “poster child” of the human rights agenda (Merry, 2003). As



women's bodies have become the defining site and a measure of modernity, these practices have come to represent backwardness and barbarity of not only those who are practising FGC, but also their entire cultures (Dustin & Phillips, 2008; Volpp, 2001). It has been argued that culture is selectively employed to explain violence against Black women and women of colour (Dustin, 2016; Longman & Coene, 2015; Narayan, 1997; Peroni, 2016). Dominant discourses essentialise Black and women of colour as facing "death by culture", as cultures of the Global South are attributed the compelling power to drive abusive behaviours (Dustin & Phillips, 2008; Narayan, 1997). By contrast, masculinity is rarely identified as the root cause of FGC and other forms of GBV affecting Black and women of colour (Dustin, 2016). The over-emphasis on culture as perpetrator of violence within the communities of Global South sustains the representations of the West and whiteness as neutral and free from cultural influence (Khoja-Moolji, 2020; Njambi, 2004; Peroni, 2016). Rather than viewed as an integral part of culture, violence against Western women is often framed to be the result of secularised patriarchal norms or the behaviours of bad men (Dustin & Phillips, 2008; McKerl, 2007; Volpp, 2001).

The culturalisation of GBV perpetuates a perception of cultures of the Global South as static and backward entities, and GBV as integral part of culture (Anitha & Gill, 2011; McKerl, 2007; Volpp, 2001). However, critics note that women's vulnerability to GBV within particular cultural groups does not mean coercion and violence are cultural qualities (Dustin & Phillips, 2008). It has been argued that culturalisation masks the prevalence of gender-based oppressions both within and outwith the group in question (Adelman et al., 2003). The hypervisibility of certain forms of GBV can work against Western women's advocacy against all forms of GBV through reinforcing representations of GBV as a problem which predominantly affects communities of the Global South (McKerl, 2007; Peroni, 2016). The problematic representations of the hierarchy of women's oppressions are rooted in the radical feminist constructions of women's emancipation. Although the feminist commentators who challenged FGC did not altogether deny the patriarchal history of Western countries, they argued that the West had departed far further from these pasts than the countries of the Global South (Daly, 1978; Hosken, 1993; Okin, 1999).

Abu-Lughod argues that "any diagnosis of gender violence that attributes it to timeless cultures distracts us from local, national, and international political, institutional and cultural dynamics that are essential to an analysis of violence and responsible efforts to mobilise against it" (2011, p. 50). Critics have drawn attention to the role of wider historical and

contemporary power imbalances in perpetuating the oppression of women (Merry, 2003). The preoccupation with culture and religion as the main drivers of abuses of women has been said to detract from political explanations and the examination of global interconnections which are at the root of human suffering in the Global South (Abu-Lughod, 2002; McKerl, 2007). African feminists likewise argue that African women's struggles for survival are symptomatic of a global grid of patriarchal power, and the social, political and economic injustices that delivers to women and to their communities (Salo, 2011, p. 60).

Radical feminism has been criticised for mobilising against the cultural and religious forms of GBV without recognising the part they themselves play in the unequal global distribution of wealth, women's socio-economic subordination and the silencing of women in Global South (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Gruenbaum, 2000; Merry, 2003). Both Merry (2003) and Gruenbaum (1982, 2000) have argued that discourses on GBV in the Global South create a smoke-screen to hide and shift blame away from international injustices and capitalist exploitation which contribute to the subordination of women. When it comes to countries where FGC is more commonly practised, states have also been argued to employ culturalist representations to deflect attention away from government policies and actions that are harmful to women and children (Harris-Short, 2003). It has been argued that FGC cannot be separated from a range of factors affecting poverty and ill health in the Global South, including centuries of political interference and economic exploitation of FGC-affected communities (Gruenbaum, 2000). African feminists have argued that the historical and contemporary Western economic exploitation has further enabled the continuation of FGC (Association of African Women for Research and Development 1983 in Lewis, 1995, p.33; also Abusharaf, 2000). Regardless, approaches to FGC rarely critically reflect the role of Western societies in perpetuating the subordination of FGC-affected women. This is evident in the overwhelming policy, research and activist emphasis on cultural beliefs underpinning FGC, with little attention to the histories and conditions from which such beliefs emanate (Abusharaf, 2000). It has been argued that the failure to reflect the social relations and structures which influence FGC represents a refusal to "see the sun in the middle of the day" (Association of African Women for Research and Development 1983 in Lewis, 1995, p.33). This same pattern has also been identified in the wider human rights discourse, which has been argued to overlook the need for structural changes to prevent human rights violations from occurring the first place (True, 2012b).

In contrast to radical feminists, African feminists have reconfigured FGC as “a symptom rather than a cause of women’s troubles in a society” (Abusharaf, 2000, p. 156). In framing FGC as a social convention, Mackie (1996) has argued that FGC is maintained by social norms and expectations underpinning marriageability. He argued that in contexts of extreme resource polygyny, local conventions of modesty emerged to enable un-married women to signal their fidelity to improve their chance of finding a partner with economic resources (Mackie, 1996). This practice then spread across classes as a way of improving girls’ chances to marry into higher strata, and over time developed into a symbol of chastity (Lejeune & Mackie, 2009; Mackie, 1996). To change the social norm, enough members of the community need to reject FGC, reaching the “tipping point” for the practice to be eventually fully abandoned (Lejeune & Mackie, 2009). However, although research has paid considerable attention to these group dynamics that can influence the continuation of FGC, attention to women’s constrained resistance and help-seeking in relation to wider state structures remains limited.

In contexts of poverty and underdevelopment, the intersection of cultural, economic and political conditions makes FGC a matter of survival in a very different sense than the radical feminist representations have put forward. As a social convention and a pre-condition for marriage, FGC is intertwined with women’s status, access to economic resources and opportunities for participation (Gruenbaum, 2000; Lejeune & Mackie, 2009; Shell-Duncan et al., 2011). Gruenbaum (1982) has argued that women’s resistance against the abandonment of FGC necessitates analysing the continuation of these practices in relation to women’s weaker social position. She has asserted that tackling social inequalities concerning economic dependency is crucial in promoting social change through separating FGC from women’s basic economic survival (Gruenbaum, 1982). This is supported by more recent findings on the positive role mothers’ employment and education have on their access to knowledge and power over household decision-making with regards to FGC (Afifi, 2009; Farina & Ortensi, 2014; Hayford, 2005). Children of women with higher levels of autonomy have a lower risk of undergoing FGC (Farina & Ortensi, 2014). Similar arguments have also been made about other culturally informed forms of GBV, including forced marriages and bridal price which play part in ensuring family security and welfare (Otoo-Oyorotey & Pobi, 2003).

Regardless of the complexities of FGC, radical feminists like Hosken explicitly rejected attempts to locate the prevalence of FGC in the context of underdevelopment (Lewis, 1995). African feminists have critiqued Western feminist urgency to “save” African women for

selectively focusing on FGC and other forms of GBV at the expense of African women's basic needs and structural violence perpetuated through neo-colonialism (Mutua, 2001; Association of African Women for Research and Development, 1983 in Lewis, 1995, p.33). Abusharaf has gone as far as to assert that African women face struggles as a result of capitalism and colonialism, which are "far more mutilating" than FGC (2000, p. 162). Western obsession with FGC has been challenged as an inadequate response to women's complex situations:

*I have visited villages where, at a time when the village women are asking for better health facilities and lower infant mortality rates, they are presented with questionnaires on family planning. In some instances, when the women would like to have piped water in the village, they may be at the same time faced with a researcher interested in investigating power and powerlessness in the household. In yet another situation, when women are asking for access to agricultural credit, a researcher on the scene may be conducting a study on female circumcision. (Pala, 1977 in Carby, 1982, p. 123)*

Black feminists have argued that research on FGC should be founded on a "multifaceted analysis of the lives of women whose genitals have become the subject of study" (Abusharaf, 2000, p. 164). As asserted by Women's Caucus of the African Studies Association, "concerns about clitoridectomy and infibulation as the sole issue affecting the status of women may be a luxury that only the West can afford" (1983, p. 2, also Amos & Parmar, 1984). Black feminists locate the continuation of FGC in the context of women's wider struggles over access to food, water and healthcare and control over means of food production and financial independence (Women's Caucus of African Studies Association, 1983). In line with Pala's experience, more recent research has found that the Western attention to FGC at the expense of the very survival of African women can in fact make the women these interventions are targeting more reluctant to engage (Khaja et al., 2009). As I illustrate in the next sections, these issues also pertain to the Global North, where the hypervisibility of FGC continues to serve as a smokescreen to distract from the political and economic realities of the potentially affected communities. As argued by Gruenbaum (2020), the implications of the contemporary anti-FGC discourse entail researchers to not only contribute to ending FGC, but also to challenge the ways in which FGC can be harnessed as a tool for fear and cultural hatred.

### **3.3 FGC in the Global North**

In addition to shaping the international human rights and development discourses, radical feminist works have also informed conceptualisations of, and approaches to FGC and other forms of GBV within migrant and other minoritised communities in Western countries (Sinha, 2001). Much like radical feminists, the contemporary media and political discourses tends to epistemologically lump FGC together with other gendered cultural practices (Longman & Bradley, 2015). Authors have located the hypervisibility of bodies of Black women in the context of wider political debates on cultural difference and diversity, the rise of Islamophobia since 9/11 and the entrenched socio-economic disadvantage experienced by migrant communities (Longman & Coene, 2015; Meeto & Mirza, 2007; Razack, 2004). In the UK and across Europe, forced marriage, “honour”-killings, veiling and FGC have become increasingly entangled with debates on immigration and social cohesion (Dustin & Phillips, 2008; Longman & Coene, 2015). While it is beyond the scope of this review to provide a detailed analysis of different cultural practices, in the next sections I locate FGC in this context to critically reflect the scholarly perspectives on how gendered cultural issues and practices have been positioned as issues of migration and integration. Throughout the next sections, I will illuminate the discrepancies between representation and evidence, highlighting pressing gaps in knowledge on FGC in migration contexts.

#### **3.3.1 FGC as grounds for asylum**

Although I have problematised the radical feminist framing of FGC for undermining the complexities which underpin these practices, my thesis nevertheless frames FGC as a form of GBV and persecution on the account of the health and social consequences of these practices. Furthermore, as I illustrate in the next chapters, my findings on FGC as state-sanctioned violence satisfy the definition of torture (Shell-Duncan, 2008). Whilst there is no universally agreed definition, the Refugee Convention infers that persecution refers to a threat to life or freedom on the account of membership of a particular social group. The Refugee Convention makes specific provisions as to who, why and in what circumstances an individual has the right to international protection, all which need to be met to gain asylum. Article 1(A) defines a refugee as a person who:

*Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group, or political opinion, is outside the*

*country of his [sic] nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside of the country of his former habitual residence is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it.* (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, p. 153)

Crucially, the Refugee Convention does not single out gender as a social group warranting international protection from persecution. Asylum legislation has been widely criticised for reducing persecution to male experiences of violence (Freedman, 2010; Oswin, 2001; Oxford, 2005). It has been argued that “the myth that the ‘private’ is not political, while successfully contested in other areas of the law, remains central in the application of refugee law” (Sinha, 2001, p. 1577).

Despite dominant representations of women and children as the most deserving and vulnerable refugees, the entrenched perceptions of GBV as a private matter, disconnected from wider structures that perpetuate gendered subjugation, continue to inhibit women’s rights to international protection (Freedman, 2010; McKinnon, 2009; Shuman & Bohmer, 2014; Sinha, 2001; Zeigler & Stewart, 2009). Paradoxically, the widespread global prevalence of GBV works against women who are required to prove they are being targeted as members of a specific sub-set of women facing persecution (Freedman, 2008a; Zeigler & Stewart, 2009). Both the landmark FGC asylum cases of Fauziya Kassindja in the U.S., and Zainab Esther Fornah in the UK where initially denied on the grounds that these women were not singled out for FGC because the practice was widespread in their communities (Freedman, 2008a; Musalo, 2010; United Kingdom: Court of Appeal, 2005). The floodgate discourse surrounding international migration has been argued to underpin states’ sustained reluctance to recognise GBV as a form of persecution (Freedman, 2008a). The requirement to evidence membership to a particular social group exemplifies this, as the deliberation of FGC-related asylum claims continues to be done in such a way as to gatekeep against a perceived future outpour of asylum claims (Coffman, 2007; Middelburg & Balta, 2016).

Regardless of the hypervisibility of FGC in policy and public discourses across Europe, FGC remains contested grounds for asylum. Women at risk may be successful in applying asylum on the basis that FGC has been increasingly recognised as a form of persecution and torture (Wikholm et al., 2020). It is worthy however to note that none of the international instruments on torture explicitly names FGC, leaving room for interpretation. Torture is

distinguished from private acts of violence by being sanctioned or tolerated by the state (Broussard, 2008). Although FGC is perpetuated by private actors, the failure of states to protect women from FGC has been argued to satisfy this condition (Shell-Duncan, 2008). Additionally, opposition to FGC can also provide grounds for asylum if the cultural norms and gender roles which women challenge with their activism, refusal to undergo FGC or refusal to act as cutters are closely tied to the dominant political ideology (Middelburg & Balta, 2016; Wikholm et al., 2020). However, although the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has recognised that the pain inflicted through FGC lasts a lifetime, women who have already undergone FGC cannot receive refugee status on the grounds of past persecution (Middelburg & Balta, 2016; Wood, 2001).

Women who are affected by FGC have the option of claiming asylum if they fear re-infibulation or if their daughters are at risk of FGC upon return to their country of origin (Middelburg & Balta, 2016). However, regardless of evidencing well-founded fear, FGC asylum cases can still be denied if women cannot make a case for lack of state protection or their inability to relocate elsewhere in the country of origin (Coffman, 2007; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2015). Decisions on cases involving the threat of FGC have been criticised for perceiving internal relocation through a Western lens, disregarding the cultural norms and roles which influence women's differential abilities to survive independently in European and African societies (Middelburg & Balta, 2016).

The asylum determination process relies on Eurocentric conceptualisations of persecution and vulnerability (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013; Kynsilehto & Puumala, 2015). Women fleeing FGC have been argued to engage in strategic essentialism to re-produce their status as victims to negotiate a system that seeks to reject their claims (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013). Sinha has critiqued the asylum process for being “an inquest for cultural explanation”, reflecting the legacy of radical feminist activism (2001, p. 1598). In order to be recognised as a person in need of protection, women become “willing subjects of a particular discourse” through representing themselves through the stereotype of a “Third World” woman (Coffman, 2007; Mahmood 2001 in Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013, p.97; Smith, 2017). Coffman (2007) has argued the perpetuation of essentialising representation of the “Third World” is precisely what made Fauziya Kasinga's landmark FGC case in the U.S. winnable in 1996. Both Kassindja's and Zainab Esther Fornah's cases framed the claimants' vulnerability to FGC in dichotomous terms between the traditions, primitivity and barbarity facing women in Africa, and emancipation which the women would be afforded in the West (Njambi, 2004).

Regardless of the disadvantages arising from the interpretation of asylum law, some scholars have argued that FGC offers an exception to refugee women's persistent struggles to gain asylum on the grounds of GBV (Oxford, 2005; Razack, 1995; Wettergren & Wikström, 2014). It appears that women who narrate their vulnerability according to imperial stereotypes, constructing themselves as victims of extremely patriarchal cultures and repressive practices have been more successful in claiming asylum on the grounds of GBV (Razack, 1995; Shuman & Bohmer, 2014; Sinha, 2001). The way FGC has come to symbolise extreme barbarity and cultural "otherness" means that women are sometimes actively encouraged to disproportionately emphasise FGC in their asylum claims (Oxford, 2005). The binary between emancipated West and patriarchal Rest has been argued to support women's cases for asylum on the grounds that deportation would result in extreme hardship (Gunning, 1995). Fleeing FGC has been argued to symbolise women's desire for rescue and modernity, making the liminal figure of an asylum seeker less like "them" and more like "us" and thus, less likely to be viewed as a threat to the nation (Coffman, 2007). Nevertheless, the overall research on FGC and asylum is very limited; beyond legal analysis of landmark FGC cases, only one study has examined FGC-affected women's experiences of the asylum determination process (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013). In the context of increased state and public hostilities towards asylum seekers, there is a pressing need to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the treatment of FGC-related asylum claims.

It has been argued assessments of women's asylum claims are influenced by the converging effects of gender stereotypes, cultural preconceptions and "broader evidential, procedural and political constraints of the asylum context" (Baillot et al., 2014, p. 4). The British asylum determination process has been argued to be characterised by a culture of disbelief that is made up of a combination of physical and performative elements which create a negative decision-making environment (Jubany, 2011; Anderson, Hollaus, Lindsay & Williamson, 2014; Canning, 2017). The adversarial environment in which asylum interviews take place has been found to be inappropriate for facilitating disclosure of personal and sensitive experiences, amplifying women's experiences of violent continuums (Baillot et al., 2009, 2012; Baillot, Cowan, et al., 2014; Canning, 2017a). The shame and community ostracism resulting from a refusal to undergo FGC can also inhibit women's disclosures (Middelburg & Balta, 2016; Zeigler & Stewart, 2009).

The credibility of women who face the threat of FGC is considerably undermined by their inability to evidence cutting that is yet to occur (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013; Zeigler &



Stewart, 2009). In addition to the high expectations on women's ability to evidence of the threat of persecution, women are also disadvantaged by the subjective judgements made by immigration case officers and judges that are grounded in Western cultural contexts (Anderson et al., 2014, p. 9, also Jubany 2011). Although research on the treatment of FGC related asylum cases is lacking, a study on the culture of disbelief has highlighted an example where an immigration judge dismissed the socio-cultural significance of FGC even though this has been extensively documented (Anderson et al., 2014). It has been suggested that women's claims on the grounds of FGC have also been challenged because of their limited information about FGC (Middelburg & Balta, 2016). This illuminates the tensions between Western anti-FGC discourse and practice, as Western countries have traditionally explained the continuation of, and women's complicity in FGC with women's disadvantaged social position and lack of knowledge. These issues suggest a need to develop further understanding about the treatment of FGC-related asylum claims.

### **3.3.2 Gender-based violence and immigration control**

In Western countries, the issues of FGC, forced marriage and veiling have been increasingly harnessed to justify anti-immigration sentiments (Dustin & Phillips, 2008; Patel, 2014). GBV within, and perpetuated by migrant communities has become a discursive tool for defining the parameters of the nation (Ticktin, 2016a). In countries like the UK and Sweden, the urgency to address FGC has been intertwined with the perceived threat of increased international migration (see for example Johnson, 2014; Wiklund, 2018). In the U.S., research has found that media strategically employs the issue of FGC to enforce binary constructions of liberal West/backward Rest to justify cultural intolerance and arguments for furthering immigration control (Wade, 2009). In Europe, the award-winning "28 Too Many" campaign which depicts infibulated European flags has been critiqued for promoting an anti-immigration standpoint, by positioning a backward migrant culture as a threat to the white nation (Khoja-Moolji, 2020). Interestingly, some of these campaign images were reused by FGC-affected women who took part in this research; however, rather than to depict themselves as a threat, women employed these images to assert their right to protection in Scotland, which they viewed as their home (see Chapter 7).

In addition to media and political actors, some Western feminists have also been criticised for their complicity in the deployment of gender issues for the purposes of advocating for more

stringent border controls, to keep out the “unassimilable Muslims who have no regard for women” (Razack, 2004, p. 130). Razack has argued that this emphasis on solidarity and sisterhood which traces back to radical feminists can work against refugee women, as the insistence on commonality of patriarchal oppression encourages imagining asylum seekers as economic migrants rather than as individuals fleeing foreign persecution (Razack, 1995). It has been argued that co-opting GBV for the purposes of advancing anti-immigration agendas has only further marginalised already vulnerable women (Dustin, 2016).

Racialised nationalism has been argued to permeate immigration law through the reinvigorated imperialist imagery (Gunning, 1995). States have been criticised for instrumentalising the issue of GBV against migrant women for the purposes of furthering border control and perpetuating exclusionary practices (Patel, 2014; Ticktin, 2016a). UK and several other European countries have introduced measures to prevent forced marriage, including an increase in the age requirement for entry for non-European spouses and their sponsors, which has been criticised for protecting borders over women at risk (Chantler et al., 2009; Razack, 2004). A recent French law on prostitution introduced to explicitly target migrant women has contributed to the policing of undocumented migrants through giving police further powers to conduct identity checks (Ticktin, 2016a). Similarly, the change in U.S. legal categorisation to recognise FGC as a felony has been linked to increased state powers to deport immigrants (Gunning, 1995).

In contrast to the hypervisibility of gendered cultural practices, other harms faced by migrant women including structural inequalities and detention of women who have been traumatised by violence have received little media and public attention (Anitha & Gill, 2011b; Razack, 2004). The glaring disparity between state framing of GBV and state approaches to affected women was highlighted in the treatment of Kassindja, who endured a prolonged period of detention before gaining asylum, during which she was humiliated and repeatedly mistreated (Martin, 2005). Detention also remains a pressing issue for asylum seeking women who have experienced GBV in Britain (Canning, 2014, 2017a; Esposito, 2021). Furthermore, while Western states have been making public declarations of their commitment to protect migrant women from GBV, migrant women’s rights to protection, family reunification and welfare have been increasingly eroded (Patel, 2014). Since 2012, the UK Government has operated a hostile environment policy involving a range of measures to reduce the numbers of immigrants in the UK, including extending powers to identify and remove undocumented immigrants, limiting rights to appeal, posing criminal sanctions to deter illegal working and

proposals to complicate family reunion for children (Canning, 2017a; Grant, 2019). Most recently, the conflict between immigration control and state approaches to GBV has been manifested in the Home Secretary Priti Patel's attempt to deport an 11-year old girl from an FGC-affected family to an area of Sudan with a FGC prevalence rate of 97.7% (Summers, 2020).

The asylum provision in the United Kingdom has been characterised by measures of deterrence, including forcing asylum seekers to rely on £39.60 weekly financial support and basic dispersal housing which has been criticised for widespread issues affecting asylum seekers' health and wellbeing (Glen & Lindsay, 2014). While the asylum system which denies claimants' key civil rights makes them extremely vulnerable, this also comes with gendered consequences (Stewart, 2005); the operation of restrictive immigration policies has been argued to compound the effects of gender inequality and patriarchal control (Patel, 2014). Emergent research has highlighted the gendered harms perpetuated through the asylum system, including how the system exposes women to further violence and compounds women's experiences of existing traumas (Baillot & Connelly, 2018; Canning, 2017b, 2019; Freedman, 2008b). The immigration law has been argued to produce a "double whammy for abused migrant women: they are not only excluded from state protection but are actually subject to state complicity in the violence that they experience, since the immigration system becomes a useful weapon of control in the hands of abusers. The result is a blurring of the distinction between domestic and state violence" (Patel, 2014, p. 230). Asylum-seeking women can become trapped in abusive situations, facing considerable barriers to accessing both formal and informal provision of support due to the policy of "no recourse to public funds", fears of deportation and the risk of discrimination from cultural communities where divorce is stigmatised (Bloch, Galvin, & Harrell-Bond, 2000; Burman, Smailes, & Chantler, 2004; Freedman & Jamal, 2008; Patel, 2014). When it comes to FGC, asylum dispersal can also create barriers to access to specialist services and support which have been established in selected cities (Dustin, 2010).

Despite these emerging issues, there is a lack of FGC research interrogating the role of immigration control in shaping the experiences of FGC-affected women. Although research has begun to address FGC in relation to asylum-seeking women, these studies have focused on addressing women's trauma and mental ill-health in relation to their experiences of interpersonal violence, overlooking the possible impacts of an often prolonged and adversarial asylum process (see for example Akinsulure-Smith & Chu, 2017; Lever, Ottenheimer, Teysir,

Singer, & Atkinson, 2018). The increasing number of women with FGC encountered by health professionals in dispersal cities like Glasgow (Wilson, 2017) points to a pressing need to explore how the structural inequalities embedded in the asylum process influence affected women's ongoing experience of FGC. Furthermore, research has primarily focused on socio-cultural barriers to women's engagement with FGC prevention (Ziyada et al., 2020). Little is still known about how insecure immigration status and the consequences of asylum restrictions influence women's engagement with FGC protection, prevention and support provision.

### **3.3.3 Multiculturalism, nationalism and gender-based violence**

Rising global instabilities, Islamic radicalisation and religious-cultural tensions in Western societies have refuelled long-standing debates on multiculturalism, gender equality and gendered cultural practices (Lépinard, 2011). Although the debate between feminism and multiculturalism has predominantly been concerned with the question of the right to practise FGC over the means of opposing these practices, the key arguments continue to influence approaches to prevention and protection of women within minoritised communities. The present day debate traces back to Susan Okin's (1999) famous essay *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* in which she positioned multiculturalist respect for diversity in opposition with feminist goals. Okin's work (1998, 1999) largely aligned with that of radical feminists who had interpreted GBV affecting women in the Global South predominantly in cultural terms. Okin argued that women from minoritised communities:

*May be much better off if the culture into which they were born were either to become extinct (so that its members would become integrated into the less sexist surrounding culture) or, preferably, to be encouraged to alter itself so as to reinforce the equality of women—at least to the degree to which this is upheld in the majority culture.*  
(Okin, 1999, pp. 22–23).

Much like radical feminists before her, Okin's (1999) reproduced colonial notions of cultural superiority in framing human rights, feminism and gender equality as Western ideals (Volpp, 2001). These arguments have been criticised for overlooking the feminist thought and anti-FGC activism originating from the cultures of the Global South (Gunning, 1995; McKerl, 2007; Volpp, 2001). Critics have drawn attention to the conceptual tensions which characterise Okin's argument: While Okin (1999) critiqued multiculturalism for framing

cultural groups in monolithic, male-normative terms, she herself reduced minority cultural attitudes towards women to male articulations of gender subordination (McKerl, 2007). While Okin (1998) challenged Black feminists who had criticised Western feminists for essentialism, she framed GBV as integral to the cultures of Global South through advocating the eradication of minority cultures (McKerl, 2007; Singh, 2016; Volpp, 2001).

Although Okin's arguments are dated, her influence can still be seen in the public discourses on FGC, forced marriage and "honour"-based killings which frame migrants through essentialised gendered and racialised categories (Anitha & Gill, 2011; Gill & Anitha, 2009; Longman & Coene, 2015; Mestre i Mestre & Johnsdotter, 2019). These categories construct migrant men as a threat, and migrant women as helpless victims who are awaiting for the West to rescue them (Gill & Anitha, 2009; Longman & Coene, 2015; Morokvasic-Müller, 2014; Wilson, 2007). Such constructions have been argued not only to reflect the colonial mission to save women, but also reproduce colonial relations of power through reinforcing the narrative of GBV as an attribute of "inferior" cultures of the Global North (Gill & Anitha, 2009; Korteweg, 2017; Montoya & Agustín, 2013). Framing GBV in this way serves to exoticise the "other", disconnecting specific forms of violence from women's continuums of harm and abuse (Patel, 2014).

Regardless of the critique, contemporary scholars have also built on Okin's work in continuing to challenge multicultural policies as harmful to women. State multiculturalism refers to policies accommodating and celebrating ethnic, racial, cultural and religious diversities (Bloemraad et al., 2008). It has been argued that cultural survival often necessitates internal restrictions to be placed on group members, especially women through coercion in their marital and family choices (Lépinard, 2011). Multicultural approaches have been argued to ignore the prevalence of GBV within minoritised communities (Meetoo & Mirza, 2007). The multicultural policy emphasis on respect for diversity and community consultation has been said to silence women through relying on dialogue with self-styled community leaders, raising them into gatekeepers of communities (Beckett & Macey, 2001; Meetoo & Mirza, 2007; Patel, 2014). While some critics have aligned with Okin (1999) to position multiculturalism as altogether incompatible with the enhancement of human rights (Beckett & Macey, 2001), others have instead advocated for a better balance between protection of women and inclusion of minoritised cultural communities to prevent women from "slipping through the cracks" (Guiné & Moreno Fuentes, 2007; Meetoo & Mirza, 2007, p. 6; Montoya & Agustín, 2013; Patel, 2014).

It has been argued that multiculturalism poses a threat not only to women's rights, but also to Western liberal democracy (Beckett & Macey, 2001). In Europe, certain cultural practices are not only opposed, but also deemed incompatible with the perceived emancipatory nature of Western countries (Longman & Coene, 2015; Vieten, 2016). For example, in France, public debates on FGC, polygamy and wearing niqab and burqa constructed these cultural practices as symbolic threats to the ideals of the secular state (Gill & Engeland, 2014). Likewise, Swiss debates culminating in the law criminalising FGC constructed FGC as a threat to the Swiss nation, while simultaneously asserting Western genital surgeries as part of Swiss identity (Bader & Mottier, 2020). The issue of GBV within migrant communities has also been increasingly woven into concerns over national security (Patel, 2014). Rising inter-cultural tensions and Islamic radicalisation have led some European leaders in Germany and the UK to declare state multiculturalism a failure (BBC News, 2011). Multicultural policies have been scapegoated for the way global instabilities have been manifested on British soil, for allowing extremism to "grow and prosper" (Meer & Modood, 2014, p. 664).

Against this backdrop of changing state approaches to cultural diversity, GBV perpetuated against migrant women has been increasingly harnessed to define the nation in exclusionary ways (Khoja-Moolji, 2020; Ticktin, 2016a). Far-right actors in particular, although not exclusively, have employed a quasi-feminist rhetoric in challenging GBV in order to distinguish progressive "us" from backward "them" (Gedalof, 2007; Gill & Anitha, 2009; Montoya & Agustín, 2013; Vieten, 2016). This binary narrative has extended to wider public consciousness and mainstream politics, as ethicised women and the issue of GBV have become intertwined with the fear of Islamic "others" (Meetoo & Mirza, 2007). The way the then London Mayor, and now Prime Minister Boris Johnson connected FGC to Islamic radicalisation exemplifies how representations of GBV within migrant communities have become increasingly entangled with Islamophobia:

*There are still Left-wing academics protesting that the war on FGM is a form of imperialism, and that we are wrong to impose our Western norms. I say that is utter rubbish, and a monstrous inversion of what I mean by liberalism. On the contrary: we need to be stronger and clearer in asserting our understanding of British values. That is nowhere more apparent in the daily job of those who protect us all from terror – and who are engaged in tackling the spread of extremist and radical Islam. (Johnson, 2014, para 2-3)*

The present-day discursive treatment of FGC, veiling and other gendered cultural practices bears uncomfortable resemblance to the Christian missionaries' Orientalist fantasies which positioned the West as the rescuer of oppressed women of colour (Njambi, 2000; Ticktin, 2016a). Johnson's framing of anti-FGC measures through the language of war is telling of the essentialised representations of backward/modern, civilised/barbaric and violent/emancipatory that continue to characterise Western opposition to FGC (Njambi, 2004). David Cameron (2015) likewise directly linked FGC to Islamic extremist ideology. Johnson's critique of the Black and postcolonial scholarship has also been echoed elsewhere in Europe; for instance Swedish far-right critics have labelled postcolonial and intersectional analysis of FGC, forced marriages and "honour"-killings as a form of "sharia-feminism" (see, for example, Westerholm, 2018). These examples highlight how generalisations of FGC as an Islamic practice function to reproduce notions of Western cultural superiority and the presumed inherent barbarity of Islam and cultures of the Global South (Wade, 2009). Instead of helping women, such polarising reactions to FGC present migrants with a constrained choice between assimilation or stigmatisation and criminalisation (Kaplan-Marcusan et al., 2010).

Although the opposition to FGC may be masked as liberating, the dominant representations are telling of the wider political pursuits to erode difference through anti-immigration policies and structural exclusion of migrant communities (Ticktin, 2016a). This is not to say that GBV within migrant communities should not be challenged; but rather to question the usefulness of, and motives for doing so in a manner which fails to recognise the "sociological complexity" of cultural practices and the communities affected by them (Bullock & Jafri, 2000, p. 37). Scholars have argued for the need to condemn violent practices without condemning entire cultures and communities (Anthias, 2002). They have advocated for the need to challenge FGC through a reconceptualisation of citizenship to encompass representation, redistribution and recognition in ways that simultaneously resist both gendered and racial domination (Guiné & Moreno Fuentes, 2007). Rather than viewing minoritised women and men through the binary of victims/perpetrators, recognising minoritised members as full citizens has been argued to facilitate pragmatic solutions and encourage people in taking responsibility in addressing violence within their own communities (Longman & Coene, 2015). Nevertheless, while Black feminists have long advocated for the necessity to enable women to take the lead in promoting cultural change,

there is still a lack of research on the role of community and FGC-affected women in the development and delivery of anti-FGC measures in Western countries.

### **3.3.4 FGC as an issue of, and for migrant incorporation**

In Britain, multiculturalism has made way for policies of forced civic integration, assimilation and citizenisation (Longman & Coene, 2015; Meeto & Mirza, 2007). It has been said that everyday bordering has come to replace multiculturalism as the hegemonic governance technology for controlling diversity through securitisation and racialised discourses of belonging (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019, p. 16). Britain has shifted from emphasising cultural respect to framing migrant incorporation largely as the responsibility of migrants whose culture and faith pose a potential threat (Patel, 2014). Despite the use of the term integration, it has been argued that the Westminster migrant incorporation policies operate from an assimilationist stance through framing cultural diversity as an oppositional category to Britishness (Mulvey, 2015; Patel, 2014; Phillimore, 2012). Integration has become increasingly synonymous with assimilation, which reflects a one-way process of adaptation whereby migrants become indistinguishable from the mainstream society (Ager, Strang, O'May, & Garner, 2002; Berry, 1997; Brubaker, 2001). The overarching goals through which the UK Government claims to promote migrant incorporation stem from the underlying aim to mould the "other" to be more like us (Mulvey, 2015, p. 366). This is also evident in the contemporary political emphasis on the importance of "core British values" and shared national identity (Dustin & Phillips, 2008).

The contemporary discourse on migrant incorporation has been criticised for masking issues stemming from the host society (Korteweg, 2017). It has been argued that cultural explanations construct GBV against minoritised women as "frozen in time and separate from systems of domination", overlooking the intersecting economic, political, historical and social forces that disadvantage migrant communities and women (Adelman et al., 2003; Peroni, 2016; Razack, 2004, p. 131). The culturalisation of GBV within migrant communities has been said to obscure the very structural inequalities which are at the root of GBV (Gill & Engeland, 2014; Montoya & Agustín, 2013; Volpp, 2001). It has been argued that migrants coming to Britain arrive to a "space of power relations that is already informed and constituted by coloniality" and racial hierarchies (Grosfoguel et al., 2015, p. 641). As stated by Gill and Anitha, the experiences of GBV of Black and women of colour are "inseparable



from the wider structures of racism in the UK” (2009, p. 259). Authors have argued for the need to further interrogate gendered issues in relation to racism and other forms of exclusion, including socio-legal frameworks and Western capitalist and cultural hegemony (Anthias, 2002; Guiné & Moreno Fuentes, 2007). Researchers argue that future work should resist these trends through an intersectional approach that examines the processes which form barriers to women’s full economic, political and social participation (Anthias, 2002; Korteweg, 2017).

The renewed emphasis on assimilation as the solution for cultural tensions is also evident in FGC research from migration contexts. A study among Somali migrants in London measured attitudes towards FGC against indicators of social assimilation, including traditional dress, language and social connections with non-Somalis through interactions, going to pubs and living with non-Somalis (Morison et al., 2004). Although socialisation and through that, increased exposure to mainstream values and norms has been suggested to influence the abandonment of FGC (Berg & Denison, 2013), framing social exposure in terms of visiting pubs indicates a limited recognition of religious-cultural norms (whereby the majority of Somalis are Muslims and generally refrain from consuming alcohol<sup>10</sup>). Exploring the connections between GBV, alcohol consumption and dress code is particularly problematic; in the case of the first two, research suggests a positive relationship between GBV and alcohol use, which complicates the assumption that the regular visiting of pubs would lead to more favourable attitudes towards women’s rights (Jewkes, 2002). Although the dynamics of FGC are not comparable to other forms of GBV, framing social exposure in terms of visiting places which have for long been linked to predatory behaviour and women’s heightened vulnerability sexual harassment and violence is questionable (Quigg et al., 2020).

Measuring traditional dress code against attitudes towards FGC also reflects Orientalist assumptions about a veiled, oppressed Muslim woman, which have been widely criticised (Hoodfar, 1992; Bullock and Jafri, 2000; Abu-Lughod, 2013). This has also been contradicted by qualitative research with Somali women who were found to abandon FGC while taking up Islamic veiling following religious reflection after migration (Talle, 2008). The assumption about rejection of other cultural customs and social bonds as part of the abandonment of FGC mirrors radical feminist perceptions of not just FGC, but whole cultures as oppressive to women. While these issues are pertinent to this particular study, other

---

<sup>10</sup> While visiting pubs does not always equal alcohol consumption, it is fair to assume that there is a strong relationship between the two.

scholars have since then interpreted its results by treating integration and assimilation as synonymous terms (Barrett, Bedri, et al., 2020; Johnsdotter et al., 2009).

The continuation of GBV within migrant communities has increasingly been explained in terms of failed social integration (Gill & Engeland, 2014; Wilson, 2007). The UK Department of Health guidance for professionals outlines that if “a woman and family have limited integration in UK community”, this should be considered as one of the indicators of risk of FGC (UK Department of Health, 2016, p. 29). Likewise, the Scottish Government multi-agency guidance for responding to FGC outlines that families that are not “well integrated in the UK” may be at risk (Safer Scotland, 2017, p. 23). However, both of these policies leave it up to the professionals to assess the level of risk based on their subjective understandings of integration. Outside of the UK, FGC has also increasingly been framed as an issue of, and for, integration:

*Comprehensive integration measures aimed at inclusion, intercultural dialogue and empowerment of women, are key in abandoning FGM. (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2015, p. 4)*

*FGM and its attendant consequences can impede women's and girls' efforts to integrate into the host society, since poor health impacts on their ability to attend and succeed at school and therefore, integrate into the labour market. (International Organisation for Migration, 2009, p. 4)*

Although integration has become the most widely used term for conceptualising migrant incorporation across Western Europe, integration continues to be “a word used by many, but understood differently by most” (Favell, 2010; Martiniello, 2006; Robinson, 1998, p. 118). This persistent conceptual unclarity around integration is evident from the lack of definitions of integration in UK policies and international literature on FGC. Although integration and acculturation feature increasingly in FGC research, these terms are rarely clearly or comprehensively defined (see, for example, Barrett, Bedri, & Krishnapalan, 2020; Johnsdotter, Moussa, Carlbom, Aregai, & Essén, 2009; Vissandjee et al., 2003). For instance, FGC research has previously conceptualised acculturation narrowly as language proficiency (Wahlberg et al., 2017), although key theorists in the field have explained this as a broader process of cultural and psychological change in relation to identity and social connections (Berry, 2005). When it comes to public discourse and FGC research, integration is most often framed in terms of socio-identificational adaptation (Johnsdotter et al., 2009; Vissandjee et

al., 2003). Opportunities to develop new social networks have been argued to support the abandonment of FGC through reduced social pressure (Wahlberg, Johnsdotter, et al., 2019). However, FGC research in migration contexts has paid little attention to the socio-economic elements which are now included in most if not all theoretical attempts to map the dimensions of migrant integration (Bakker et al., 2014; De Haas & Fokkema, 2011; Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018; Penninx, 2005).

Perhaps the most comprehensive conceptualisation of migrant integration, which also informs the Scottish Government's approach to refugee incorporation (Scottish Government, 2018b), brings together social connections, opportunities, rights and expectations (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, see Figure 1). *The Indicators of Integration* framework, originally developed by Ager and Strang (2004), conceptualises integration as a multi-directional, multi-dimensional and context-specific process (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, see Figure 1). Crucially, although the framework provides the bedrock for the Scottish Government *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018b), the "Foundation" of the framework which is comprised of rights and responsibilities is conditioned by the UK Government policies on asylum and citizenship (see Figure 1). The policy divergence on integration matters between the UK and Scottish Governments is exemplified by the contrast between the Scottish Government standpoint on supporting refugee integration "from day one" (Scottish Government, 2018b, p. 6) and the UK Government position that integration only begins when refugee status has been granted (Mulvey, 2015). In contrast to Westminster, the Scottish Government grants asylum seekers access to further education, free secondary healthcare regardless of status and flexibility for refugees to apply social housing outwith the local authority area where asylum seekers are initially housed. Nevertheless, it has been argued that UK Government's anti-integration measures including the removal of right to work and the policy on asylum dispersal negate the positive effects of devolved integration policies and support provisions (Mulvey, 2015).

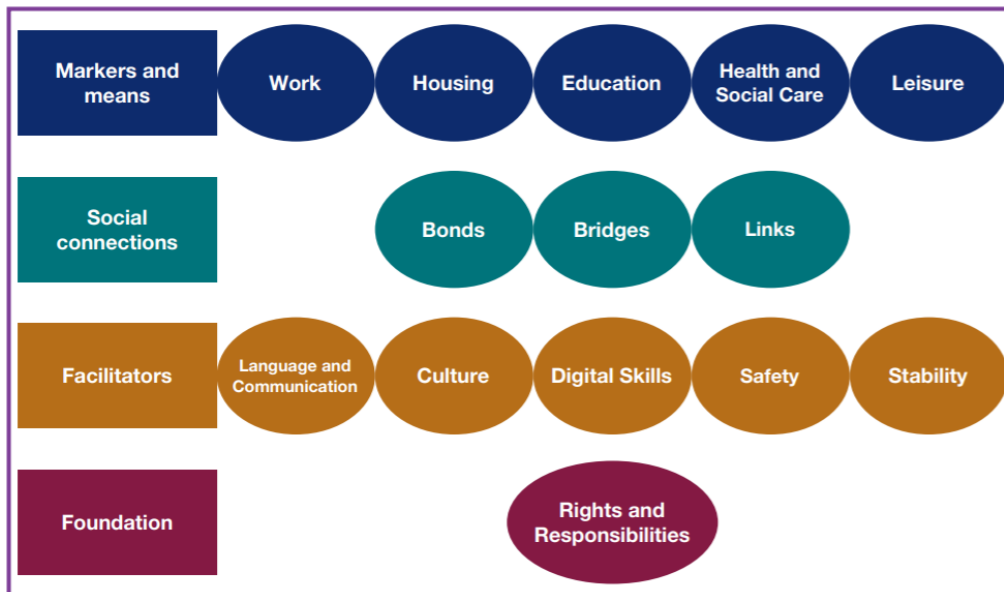


Figure 1. *Indicators of Integration framework* (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, p. 15)

Although researchers have argued that the abandonment of FGC requires “migrants’ willingness to ‘open up’ to the host society” (Mesplé-Somps, 2016, p. 3), there has been limited attention to the potential constraints influencing migrants’ ability to adopt new values and norms. In Scotland, integration is defined as “a long-term, two-way process, involving positive change in both individuals and host communities, which leads to cohesive, diverse communities” (Scottish Government, 2018b, p. 10). Nevertheless, it has been argued that “it occurs rather often that an important factor is not taken into account when the integration of migrants is discussed: the host society” (Council of Europe, 1997, p. 10). Regardless of the anthropological and Black feminists’ call for structural analysis of FGC, virtually no studies from migration contexts have interrogated how migrant women’s vulnerabilities and experiences of FGC are shaped by structural aspects of integration, including access to employment, education, and civil participation. Although recent Scottish study on FGC reported participant perceptions about employment, education and social isolation, these were not theorised in relation to FGC (O’Brien et al., 2017). This remains a pertinent gap, as it has been suggested that cultural change in relation to FGC requires an environment which supports changing attitudes and access to information through social mixing, language proficiency, literacy and access to media and services (Mesplé-Somps, 2016).

In addition to navigating the conceptual minefield of migrant incorporation, the framing of integration as a contextual and evolving process (Castles et al., 2002; Sigona, 2005) and the

debates on *who* should be integrating (Favell, 2010) create further challenges for research and policymaking in this area. For instance, second and even third generation migrants are sometimes included in the risk estimates of FGC, reflecting the policy framing of FGC as an entrenched issue (Johnsdotter et al., 2009). The question of when someone is no longer migrant is pertinent to issues of belonging, rights and citizenship which are central to state approaches to cultural diversity and immigration. The UK approach to growing cultural diversity draws from a construction of nationhood and belonging which stems from a broader identification with the West; the collective European national identity has, on one hand, been tied with an assertion of a distinct European culture and historical past, and on the other, with progress and universal rights (Wieviorka, 2010). In challenging both these central tenets of a European identity, FGC demarcates a symbolic boundary of nationhood and belonging. Critics have however argued that the discourse which ties cultural practices to integration also creates a pressing issue whereby migrant women are not seen to belong (Korteweg, 2017). These acts of boundary making are instrumental in the process by which forms of inclusion and exclusion come to be institutionalised (Keith and Pile, 1993; Newman, 2006).

Migrant belonging is shaped by the host societies' "welcoming capacity" which is expressed through interaction, policies and legislation (Simonsen, 2016). It has been argued that in situations where integration is difficult, communities can resist abandoning cultural practices including FGC as a form of maintaining their cultural identity (Barth, 1969; International Organisation for Migration, 2009). Racial hostility and the threat of imposition of other cultural values can encourage migrants to "stay within their own", encouraging migrants to reaffirm their cultural practices, further limiting the exposure to other values and information (International Organisation for Migration, 2009; Isman et al., 2013; Norman et al., 2016; Whitehorn et al., 2002). The integral role FGC plays in ethnic and cultural identity also complicates the abandonment of these practices; FGC can connect women to their culture and country of origin, creating a "feeling of completeness" (Isman et al., 2013, p. 96). In contrast, migrant parents who view their children as belonging in their new country and would not allow FGC for their daughters have been shocked to find out that the state perceives their daughters as being at risk of FGC (Johnsdotter et al., 2009; Vissandjee et al., 2003). Although research has begun problematising the role of belonging and social connections in the continuation of FGC, race as an analytical category continues to be largely overlooked in research on FGC after migration.

In addition to the emergent theorisation on the relationship between belonging and the continuation of cultural practices, cultural practices themselves can function as markers of inclusion and exclusion. Migration confronts FGC-practising communities with largely opposing perceptions of womanhood and sexuality (Palm et al., 2019). In contexts where FGC symbolises a loss of female sexuality, FGC-affected women are faced with an existential dilemma: “How is it possible then for Somali women, and others, to craft an identity as a woman in a context in which you are by definition not a woman?” (Talle, 2008, p. 65). Western discourses confront FGC-affected women with a realisation that the pain inflicted through FGC no longer yields moral or material merits (Malmström, 2013). Emergent research has described migrant women’s experience of questioning FGC and identity in terms of mourning and loss of pride (Lien & Schultz, 2013). Although the dominant representations of FGC-affected women have been widely problematised by anthropologists and Black feminists, it remains that there is a lack of knowledge about the way mainstream perceptions of FGC-affected women shape affected women’s empowerment and sense of self after migration.

Women who have undergone FGC can also be stigmatised in contexts where their bodies are at odds with dominant constructions of womanhood and female sexuality (Norman et al., 2016; Talle, 2008; Vissandjee et al., 2003). The lower social status which FGC conveys in non-practising contexts has been found to support attitudinal change among affected migrant communities (Gele, Kumar, et al., 2012; Lien & Schultz, 2013; Vissandjee et al., 2003). Not having FGC appears to confer women with higher social status within their communities after migration (Gele, Kumar et al., 2012). The decision to abandon FGC can become a source of pride and prestige for migrants (Gele, Kumar, et al., 2012). However, being faced with different values about womanhood and female sexuality can also lead to a rejection of the host societies’ values or a position of ambivalence (Vissandjee et al., 2003).

In addition to considerations of race and gender, developing a further understanding of the changing relationship between FGC and belonging is particularly pertinent to research with refugees whose lives are characterised by discontinuities arising from displacement, loss of home and disintegration of families (Talle, 2008). It has been suggested that in migration contexts, FGC may function as a way of preserving continuity with past lives (Dustin, 2010). Talle has argued migration can initiate a contradictory process of negotiation and renegotiation, as relocation posits practicing people and the practice of FGC in “shifting contexts of meaning and power relations” (Talle, 2008, p. 64). Refugees’ identities are being

challenged from multiple directions as a result of the confusion, turmoil and uncertainties arising from displacement (Whitehorn et al., 2002). This highlights the need to interrogate how refugees from FGC-practising communities negotiate and experience the abandonment of FGC in the context of intersectional identities and the multi-layered loss that characterises the refugee experience.

### **3.3.5 Continuation of FGC after migration**

The influence of radical feminists and the work of Okin continues in the way Western media and policy discourses reproduce cultural explanations of GBV against migrant women (Dustin & Phillips, 2008; Gill, 2014; Gill & Anitha, 2009; Razack, 2004). It has been argued that Western debates on GBV enforce cultural otherness through principally condemning violence when it is attached to readily recognised tropes of alterity (Ticktin, 2016a, p. 285). Despite the lack of evidence, Western media and authorities represent FGC as a pervasive, although hidden, practice (Johnsdotter et al., 2009). Johnsdotter and colleagues argue that the public debate still largely frames those continuing FGC as “bearers of tradition” who blindly adhere to the practice (Johnsdotter et al., 2009, p. 130). Gruenbaum (1996, 2000) has argued that these assumptions fail to recognise the dynamic nature of cultural patterns and the complexity of decision-making processes within cultures. Representations of FGC as a persistent problem that are not backed by evidence can in fact be counter-productive to the abandonment of FGC, as this may lead parents to opt for FGC under the false belief that everyone else in the community has continued the practice (Johnsdotter & Mestre i Mestre, 2017).

Although there is a need for further research to establish the scale of the issue, researchers have suggested that the lack of evidence on the continuation of FGC reflects the wider impacts of migration (Johnsdotter & Essen, 2016; Johnsdotter & Mestre i Mestre, 2017). Migration has been argued to create new possibilities for reflecting and negotiating cultural strategies (Gele, Johansen, & Sundby, 2012; Johnsdotter et al., 2009). Age on arrival and length of stay have been found to influence attitudes towards FGC (Morison et al., 2004; Wahlberg, Johnsdotter, Selling, Källestål, & Essén, 2017). Studies from a range of national contexts have found that exposure to the host country culture and norms through interactions and access to information can give rise to cultural reflection, facilitating the abandonment of FGC (Alcaraz, González, & Ruiz, 2014; Berg & Denison, 2013; Fabos, 2001; Gele,

Johansen, et al., 2012; Johnsdotter & Essen, 2016; Johnsdotter, 2018; Vissandjee et al., 2003). Studies have explained the change in attitudes in terms of absence of meaning (Johnsdotter et al., 2009). Anthias (1998) has argued that women may quickly abandon cultural practices if they no longer function as strategies of survival. Likewise, FGC researchers have argued that:

*Mothers choosing female circumcision for their daughters in a specific situation are doing this to optimise their daughters' future prospects. This means that mothers will refrain from having their daughters circumcised, when the option to give it up will lead to a better life, all aspects regarded, for their daughters. (Johnsdotter & Essen, 2016, p. 20)*

The attention to the role of FGC in influencing women's future prospects relates to the underpinning cultural constructions of marriageability and social status which are influenced by migration. For instance, Ethiopian and Eritrean families have been found to be placing less emphasis on virginity after migration (Johnsdotter et al., 2009). However, other groups such as Somalis have been found to continue valuing virginity after migration on the grounds of religion (Johnsdotter, 2002). Nevertheless, studies have reported Somali communities abandoning FGC after migration (Gele, Johansen, et al., 2012; Johnsdotter, 2002; Wahlberg et al., 2019). This possibly reflects the influence of migration in the reassessment of religious imperatives; for instance, Johnsdotter (2003) found Swedish Somalis who previously considered FGC as a religious duty had increasingly abandoned FGC after interactions with Arabs who do not practice FGC. In contrast to popular representations of FGC as an Islamic problem, other researchers have likewise suggested that religious enlightenment and reflection after migration can facilitate the rejection of FGC (Gele et al., 2015; Gele, Kumar, et al., 2012; Talle, 2008).

Despite the emerging evidence on the influence of migration, researchers contend that it is too simplistic to assume that a mere relocation to environments where FGC is not a social norm is sufficient to bring about social change (Lien and Schultz, 2013):

*According to the modified stages of change theory, people abandon the practice when they find a motivation to do so and have the ability to act upon their decision, i.e. when their social context supports, promotes or at least accepts abandonment. (Gele et al., 2012, p. 3)*



Research from Europe has suggested that FGC interventions need to go beyond the individual to encouraging community attitudinal change due to the status of FGC as a social norm within the practising communities (Alhassan et al., 2016; Connelly et al., 2018). Reduced peer pressure has frequently been cited to support the abandonment of FGC after migration (Berggren, Bergström, & Edberg, 2006; Fabos, 2001; Gele, Johansen, et al., 2012; Johnsdotter et al., 2009). However, migrants can still experience social pressure to practise FGC, particularly if they live in inter-generational households, isolated communities or when they visit their countries of origin (Gele, Kumar, et al., 2012; Isman et al., 2013; Jinnah & Lowe, 2015; Norman et al., 2009). Research has found that women who speak against FGC can face rejection from their own communities, reporting “being laughed at, harassed, having stones thrown at them, being excluded, accused of spying for the government, and destroying their culture” (Connelly et al., 2018; Lien & Schultz, 2013, p. 7). These issues suggest a need to further examine community perceptions and experiences of FGC interventions and cultural adaptation after migration.

### **3.3.6 State approaches to FGC**

Media narratives encouraging moral panics surrounding FGC and forced marriage in Western countries have been criticised for stigmatising migrant communities and marginalising the voices of women who have been affected (Gill & Anitha, 2009; Johnsdotter & Mestre i Mestre, 2017; Patel, 2014). Although the dominant representations reflect the Western moral outrage surrounding FGC, it has been suggested that racialised and culturalised framings of GBV perpetuated by the media and state actors can backfire by alienating women at risk (Montoya & Agustín, 2013). The homogenising categorisations of “us” and “them” which characterise contemporary discourses on migration and FGC disregard migrant women’s subjective positions at the crossroads of often conflicting identifications. In Anthias’ words, “the bonds that tie” are multiple and fluid (1998, p. 570).

FGC-affected women’s encounters with the state are entwined with women’s ongoing negotiation of gender, race, culture, religion and immigration status (Gangoli et al., 2018). Researchers have highlighted how professionals’ perceptions of FGC and other forms of GBV affecting migrant women can lead both insensitive statutory responses (Abdelshahid et al., 2021; Chalmers & Omer-Hashi, 2002), and to lack of interventions when women are in need of protection (Adelman et al., 2003; Gangoli et al., 2018; Meeto & Mirza, 2007;

Razack, 2004). At the same time, the culturalisation of GBV can turn into a double-edged sword whereby women's situations are worsened by both the cultural explanations that overlook women's complex vulnerabilities, and professionals' efforts to respect cultural differences (Proudman, 2017). While literature has increasingly problematised how GBV affecting minoritised women has been framed in the public debate, there is a need to further tease out how dominant constructions of FGC and FGC-affected women influence women's help-seeking and engagement with statutory services. Although there has been an increased emphasis on capacity building for health and social care professionals, training across statutory providers within the European Union engaged in FGC prevention continues to be haphazard (Njue et al., 2019). Health services have been argued to still often be unprepared to support women with FGC (Jordal & Wahlberg, 2018). Recent research from Scotland and England also shows FGC-affected women continue to face barriers in accessing specialist support services due to lack of knowledge and trust, and fear of being criminalised (Connelly et al., 2018; Norman et al., 2016; O'Brien et al., 2017).

In the West, top-down legislative and policy measures have been employed as the primary intervention strategy against FGC and forced marriage (Berg & Denison, 2013; Chantler, 2012). Research suggests that legislation prompts communities to question FGC as a normalised practice and supports some migrants in their decision to abandon FGC (Berggren et al., 2006; Norman et al., 2009, 2016). However, it has been argued that legislation may be more successful in initiating behavioural than real attitudinal change if communities refrain from practising FGC out of fears of social work intervention or possible prosecution (Gele, Johansen, et al., 2012; Norman et al., 2009). UK legislation on FGC has been criticised for infantilising women and perpetuating the division between "us" and "them" through its distinction between unacceptable cultural forms of cutting and permissible Western genital surgeries (Dustin, 2010). The differential treatment and generalisation underpinning legislative and multi-agency approaches can stigmatise FGC-affected communities (O'Brien et al., 2017).

Although states have emphasised the need to send a powerful message to the perpetrators of violence, in the case of both FGC and forced marriage which are influenced by cultural notions of honour, criminalisation can push these practices further underground (Alcaraz et al., 2014; Gill & Engeland, 2014; Johansen, Bathija, & Khanna, 2008). There is a lack of evidence that implementing specific FGC and forced marriage legislation would be more effective in preventing these practices than legislating against them under general criminal

laws (Gangoli & McCarry, 2008; Njue et al., 2019). Researchers have argued that addressing GBV within migrant communities under policies aimed more widely against all different forms of GBV may better support women who are caught between two allegiances when gender equality is positioned against their culture (Dustin & Phillips, 2008; Gangoli et al., 2018). The adversarial nature of the criminal justice system, the difficult position of victims of violence that is perpetuated by their own families and women's pressing needs for safety and welfare may deter women from viewing specific legal provisions as their primary resort (Dustin & Phillips, 2008; Gangoli et al., 2018; Gangoli & McCarry, 2008; Gill & Engeland, 2014). FGC legislation can also be poorly communicated to potentially affected communities (Berggren et al., 2006; O'Brien et al., 2017; Salad, 2016). This has been affirmed by recent findings from Scotland which show that many FGC-affected communities remain unaware of the law on FGC (O'Brien et al., 2017).

It has also been argued that FGC legislation should be coupled with a clear strategic plan for implementation (Connelly et al., 2018; Leye et al., 2007). Legislation and prevention of FGC have been described as "two sides of the same coin", which are both central in the abandonment of FGC (Connelly et al., 2018, p. 6). Much like the public discourse on FGC, interventions to prevent GBV within migrant communities have tended to exist in isolation from the wider strategies for ending GBV, suggesting an underlying assumption that the causes of these forms of violence are different (Dustin, 2016; Narayan, 1997). Separation of FGC from other forms of GBV has been identified as an obstacle to effective community participation in FGC prevention (Connelly et al., 2018). This has been the case for Scotland, where community voices are generally absent from the policy discussions on FGC (Connelly et al., 2018).

In line with the international anti-FGC discourse (Shell-Duncan, 2008), the Scottish Action Plan frames FGC as a health and human rights issue (Scottish Government, 2016b). Although states have placed strong emphasis on awareness-raising and health education, these have yielded mixed results in different contexts, especially when delivered by professionals from outside the affected communities (Lien & Schultz, 2013). Critics have also argued that the international human rights discourse is better suited for framing problems than preventing them (Merry, 2001, p. 94). Human rights centred approaches to the abandonment of FGC have been criticised for framing FGC in too narrow terms, failing to address the cultural significance, strategic functions and the social consequences of the abandonment of FGC (Shell-Duncan, 2008). Instead, it has been argued that FGC interventions should be grounded

on a “multifaceted response that encompasses socio-economic, physical and environmental factors, education and learning, services and facilities, and community activities” (Njue et al., 2019, p. 16). Researchers contend that FGC should not be treated as separate from issues of wider gender equality and community empowerment (Farina & Ortensi, 2014).

It has been suggested that non-judgemental interventions to ending FGC should be based on engagement and dialogue with affected groups (Harris-Short, 2003; Obiora, 1997). In practising contexts, intervention programs such as Tostan have approached FGC as a social custom to avoid demonising the affected communities (Easton et al., 2003). Tostan regards communities as the primary action-takers and conceptualises women’s and community empowerment through critical awareness and collective action (Easton et al., 2003; Gillespie & Melching, 2010). Female leadership and the involvement of men and religious leaders have been identified as critical in facilitating the change in community attitudes around FGC (Connelly et al., 2018). The recently-developed EU-funded REPLACE Programme directly addresses FGC as a social norm, encouraging this to be challenged through collective community actions (Barrett, Brown, et al., 2020). Community-based interventions can also be effective in both enabling discussion and collective approach to dealing with the shared pain caused by FGC (Lien & Schultz, 2013).

However, despite the successes of participatory approaches like Tostan and REPLACE, the majority of prevention activities in the UK and across Europe continue to be characterised by prescriptive or top-down forms of social intervention (Njue et al., 2019). Authors have argued that there is a discrepancy between the increased attention and funding given to change migrants’ attitudes, and the way community-based efforts and change continue to be overlooked (Johnsdotter et al., 2009). Although communities have been argued to play a key role in FGC prevention, existing state attempts to engage with communities have been described as tokenistic and piecemeal (Connelly et al., 2018). Furthermore, it has been said that when it comes to FGC research in the West, “empowerment, engagement and participation are frequently mentioned, but rarely critically examined, with little discussion about how to move beyond rhetoric towards putting these concepts into practice” (Connelly et al., 2018, p. 10). Although authors have questioned the usefulness of top-down Western interventions for ending FGC in the practising contexts (Shell-Duncan, 2008; Wasunna, 2000), research on empowerment-oriented activities that engage FGC-affected women remains limited (Barrett, Brown, et al., 2020; Njue et al., 2019; O’Brien et al., 2016).

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In this review, I have addressed the key debates surrounding the opposition to FGC which reflect the broader theoretical schisms between Black/radical feminism, anthropology and feminism, and research and anti-FGC activism. I have contrasted the dominant representations of anti-FGC discourse with anthropological research and Black feminist perspectives which have provided a more nuanced analysis of women's participation, agency and vulnerability in relation to FGC. Nevertheless, despite the longstanding critique, the legacy of radical feminist representations of barbarity and backwardness continues to define the parameters of the Western anti-FGC discourse. As argued by Crenshaw, "although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices" (1991, p. 1242). As I have highlighted in this review, although intersectional and structural perspectives are today readily applied to the analysis of women's diverse struggles around the world, these approaches remain in their infancy when it comes to anti-FGC interventions and research. While researchers have illustrated the cultural and social barriers to women's resistance to FGC, there is a need to build on this research by examining women's help-seeking and resistance in relation to wider state structures.

In analysing research, state interventions and dominant representations of FGC, this chapter has highlighted the role of present-day global instabilities, international displacement, Islamophobia and inter-cultural tensions within Western countries in shaping the public and state opposition to FGC. The pressing tensions between political pressures to curb migration and to protect migrant women indicate a need to further explore the experiences of FGC-affected women, who are positioned in-between changing power relations and cultural norms. Anthropological and Black feminist perspectives on FGC, along with the increasingly popular framing of these practices in terms of migrant integration, acculturation and assimilation suggests a need to further examine how the continuation of FGC comes to be reassessed in relation to changing social, cultural and structural conditions after migration. The critique against top-down FGC interventions, along with the gaps in research on community engagement and women's role in FGC prevention necessitate analysing women's changing opportunities and barriers in challenging violence within their own communities after migration.

The following chapter will build on this review by presenting the theoretical framework which has informed my approach to addressing these gaps. I will discuss the usefulness of analysing the dynamics of FGC in relation to Crenshaw's (1991) three-fold conceptualisation

of *political, structural and representational intersectionality*, Kelly's (1987, 2007) concepts of *continuums of violence* and *conducive contexts* and Kandiyoti's (1988) work on *patriarchal bargains*. By drawing from these concepts, I outline my research approach to analysing FGC-affected women's vulnerability, agency and empowerment in relation to changing social, cultural and structural conditions.

## Chapter 4

### Theoretical framework

#### 4.1 Overview

Since the 1970s, the international anti-FGC discourse has grappled with the tensions between recognising the specificity of women's experiences of oppression and challenging GBV as a global phenomenon. These tensions have also been a central concern for my research, which both critiques the universalist framings of FGC and addresses these practices in relation to various other forms of GBV experienced by my participants. In seeking balance between these two positions, my research builds on the recommendations from researchers who have advocated for an intersectional lens for conceptualising GBV affecting minoritised women (Adelman, Erez, & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003; Anitha & Gill, 2011; Anthias, 2002; Van Bavel, 2019, see Chapter 3). This chapter begins by discussing the usefulness of Crenshaw's (1991) three-fold articulation of *intersectionality* as an analytical tool for locating FGC-affected women's vulnerabilities at the intersection of changing political, economic and cultural constraints after migration. I then address some of the key limitations of intersectional theorising and outline feminist political economy perspectives as a complementary framework to understanding FGC-affected women's vulnerabilities. In doing so, the second part of this chapter introduces concepts which have been central in encouraging scholars to rethink both conceptualisations of agency and the grounds to which feminist coalitions and solidarity should be built. I argue that the concepts of *conducive context* (Kelly, 2007), *continuum of violence* (Kelly, 1987) and *patriarchal bargains* (Kandiyoti, 1988) provide useful tools for analysing FGC by redirecting our attention to the conditions and contexts of cultural negotiation and to the politics of cross-cultural knowledge production.

#### 4.2 Intersectionality

Although Crenshaw (1989) has been credited for coining the term *intersectionality*, the notion of mutually constitutive inequalities has a long history in both Western and African Black feminist thought. In the West, intersectional theorising emerged to challenge the erasures of Black women across different facets of society. As epitomised by the title of a

landmark anthology in Black Women's Studies: *All the women are White, all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave* (Hull et al., 1982). Black feminist tradition emerged to call for the analysis of interlocking systems of oppression, countering the separation of race and gender that was prevalent within both the American civil rights movement and second-wave feminist activism (Combahee River Collective, 1986). Likewise, although in itself diverse, African Black feminist thinking has been intrinsically grounded on the historical and contemporary marginalisation, racialisation and oppression of Black people, making it by its nature holistic, intersectional and critical of Eurocentric feminism which has been accused of objectifying and exoticising African women (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000).

The Black feminist thinking on the gender-specific forms of racialised violence has given rise to more sophisticated and flexible theorising of solidarity and vulnerability, and the tensions between the two (Collins, 2017). Intersectional analysis attends to the ways gender is racialised and race is gendered, along with other social divisions (Davis, 2008). Intersectional theorising has built from the double jeopardy conceptualisation of gender and race, first approaching identities as new categories of vulnerability before increasingly shifting to examining how identities interact with women's material and social realities to reproduce or transform relations of power (Davis, 2008). Collins (2019) has identified six core constructs which are foundational to intersectional inquiry: relationality, power, social inequality, social context, complexity and social justice. Intersectional theorising attends to the way interdependent systems of power which produce complex social inequalities are maintained through relational processes (Collins, 2019). This form of theorising, along with intersectional politics, is grounded in the pursuit of social justice and the effort to dismantle the systems which perpetuate oppression (Cho et al., 2013; Collins, 2019).

#### **4.2.1 Crenshaw's articulation of intersectionality**

In her landmark paper *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, Crenshaw (1989) introduced intersectionality as a framework for problematising the single-axis thinking in the applications of U.S. antidiscrimination law. In describing Black women's position as being at a crossroads, Crenshaw argued that feminist theorising, antiracist activism and prevailing policy and legal frameworks failed to take into account the experiences where discrimination did not originate from a single source:



*Consider an analogy for traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happened in an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149)*

Crenshaw's (1989) work highlighted the compounding nature of Black women's oppression. In doing so, she called for attention to the way Black women's needs were placed at the margins of both feminist and Black liberationist agendas (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw (1989) argued that Black women's needs fell in between these two agendas, as race discrimination was perceived on the basis of the experiences of Black men, while conceptualisations of sex discrimination relied on white women's experiences as the frame of reference.

In critiquing the radical feminists' framings of GBV (see Section 3.2), Black and postcolonial feminists have questioned the presumption of women as a coherent group with identical interests and experiences of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Mohanty, 1984; Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991; hooks 1989). For many Black women, supporting the radical feminist assertion of patriarchy as the root cause of their oppression was not a straightforward choice to make (hooks, 1989). Crenshaw also contributed to these critiques; in building on her conceptualisation of intersectionality in *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*, Crenshaw (1991) examined the intersectional erasures which characterised media representations of Black sexuality and Black women's barriers to support and justice. In her work, Crenshaw (1991) proposed intersectionality as a means of examining how racism and patriarchy play out in the dominant conceptualisations of rape, women's heightened vulnerabilities within converging systems of domination, and their marginalisation within communities, institutions and the antiracist and feminist discourses. Although Crenshaw's (1991) analysis did not specifically address FGC, I will outline how her three-fold conceptualisation of structural, political and representational intersectionality can facilitate the development of more nuanced understandings of FGC-affected women's vulnerabilities, access to support and protection in different contexts.

*Structural intersectionality* is concerned with the way women's position at the intersection of race and gender shapes Black women's vulnerabilities to violence (Crenshaw, 1991).

Crenshaw argued that protecting Black women required not only addressing the incidences of violence, but also confronting “the other multi-layered and routinized forms of domination that often converge in these women's lives, hindering their ability to create alternatives to the abusive relationships” (1991, p. 1240). In illustrating the workings of structural inequality, Crenshaw (1991) analysed how the material consequences of gender, class, race and immigration status converged to constrain aspects such as: Black women’s resources to obtain temporary shelter through informal social networks; their access to formal support services that are structured on the basis of the needs of white American women; and Black women’s abilities to evidence abuse as a necessary precondition for residence in cases of separation where women relied on spousal visas. Crenshaw (1991) analysed how exclusionary legislation, poverty and discriminatory employment and housing practices perpetuated Black women’s intersectional subordination, and how this was further compounded by non-intersectional institutional assumptions that created barriers to support and protection for Black women. Crenshaw’s emphasis on immigration status as an explanatory category for women’s vulnerabilities remains pertinent to examining the positions of FGC-affected women, whose migration to the West takes place in the context of increasingly exclusionary immigration and migrant incorporation policies (see Section 3.3). As argued by Collins (2017), routinised forms of violence are not limited to physical acts and hate speech, but they also become embedded in the institutions, rules and regulations of society. These dimensions have been largely overlooked in FGC research in migration contexts, despite the proliferation of literature identifying institutional racism and structural violence as integral features of asylum provision in the UK and across Europe (Canning, 2017a, 2019; Malloch & Stanley, 2013).

*Political intersectionality* addresses how strategic silences and mutually exclusive feminist and antiracist politics marginalise Black women’s vulnerabilities to GBV (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectional theorising illuminates the workings of power that frame what is counted as violence, and who are its normalised targets and culprits (Collins, 2017). Crenshaw (1991) exemplified this by analysing how the police refusal to release statistics on domestic abuse within Black communities was rooted in the fears of reinforcing racial stereotypes. She further argued that such single-axis thinking also prevailed within some communities who viewed the recognition of GBV as a pressing issue as incompatible with furthering the interests of minoritised cultural communities (Crenshaw, 1991). These issues clearly resonate with both the long-standing critique against UK statutory service inaction against FGC due to

professionals' fears of accusations of racism (Chapter 1), and community perceptions of anti-FGC measures as a continuation of colonial relations of domination (Chapter 3). In addition to illustrating how anti-racist strategies dismissed patriarchy, Crenshaw (1991) further argued that mainstream feminist advocacy was overlooking Black women's needs. In framing gender as the primary ground for coalition, feminist anti-GBV advocacy disregarded the way "women of color are differently situated in economic, social and political worlds" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1250). When it comes to FGC and feminist activism, the workings of political intersectionality are epitomised by the radical feminists who co-opted of the issue of FGC and framed it as an *extreme* form of violence for the purposes of championing universal sisterhood (see Section 3.2). As argued by Crenshaw, "the effort to politicize violence against women will do little to address Black and other minority women if their images are retained simply to magnify the problem rather than to humanize their experiences" (1991, p. 1240). The notion of political intersectionality offers a useful tool to examine how the single-axis thinking in relation to gender and race can amplify women's vulnerabilities to FGC. Further, Crenshaw's attention to how stereotypical cultural constructions of Black womanhood and sexuality may lead legal systems and services to overlook Black women's vulnerabilities offers a useful direction for conceptualising FGC-affected refugee women's potential barriers to statutory services and FGC prevention.

The third and final strand of intersectionality, *representational intersectionality*, examines how cultural constructions and representations of Black women act as a source of intersectional disempowerment (Crenshaw, 1991). In failing to acknowledge the existence of one another, antiracist and feminist strategic representations of race and gender contribute to the very oppressive power relations which they each in turn strive to challenge (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw's conceptualisation of representational intersectionality bears high relevance to FGC. As described in detail in the previous chapter, the mainstreamed production of racialised images of FGC and FGC-affected communities has been subject to considerable critique from Black, African and postcolonial feminists and anthropologists who have argued that these representations reflect the persistent failures to recognise Black women's agency and diverse forms of resistance (Abusharaf, 1995; Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000; Gruenbaum, 1996; Mohanty, 1984). While much of this critique addresses the dominant constructions of FGC-affected women in the practising contexts, representational intersectionality also provides a way to conceptualise how dominant racialised and gendered

tropes can materialise to reproduce FGC-affected women's subordination in migration contexts.

Altogether, these three stands of intersectionality can inform the examination of how FGC-affected women's needs and agency can be marginalised by compounding dominant discourses, institutions and practices embedded in anti-FGC activism and provision. As argued by Collins, "seemingly disparate forms of violence (sexism, religious intolerance, racism and nationalism) constitute a malleable conceptual glue that both structures the forms that violence takes within distinctive systems of power and that facilitates their smooth interaction" (2017, p. 1464). Thus, not only does intersectionality lend itself well for mapping the complex interactions of power which perpetuate violence, but violence as a focal point of intersectional analysing also provides fruitful grounds for further theorising of political domination as a saturated site of intersectional power relations (Collins, 2017).

#### **4.2.2 The perils and promises of intersectionality**

Since Crenshaw's (1989) initial articulation, intersectionality has come to feature dominantly in analyses of oppression across disciplines. Although intersectionality is now regarded as one of the most important contributions to feminist scholarship, the concept has been critiqued for its inherent ambiguousness (Davis, 2008) and its vague and superficial applications (Carastathis, 2014). Crenshaw herself has argued that intersectionality has become both an over-used and under-used concept, diverting at times so far from its origins that it has become virtually unrecognisable (in Carastathis, 2014, p. 305). Crenshaw (2016) has problematised the proliferation of iterations of intersectionality which frame *identities* as additive, rather than as constitutive categories (see also Yuval-Davis, 2006). Additive approaches presume that attending to more identities leads to more sophisticated analysis (Falcón & Nash, 2015). In responding to critics who conceptualise *identities* as the focal point of intersectional analysis, Tomlinson has aptly noted that if intersectionality is conceptualised as "a matter of identity rather than power, they (critics of intersectionality) cannot see which differences make a difference. Yet, it is exactly our analyses of power that reveal which differences carry significance" (2013, p. 1012, see also Mohanty 2013). Despite the frequent misconceptions, Crenshaw has asserted that intersectionality is not even primarily about identity per se; rather, intersectionality is concerned with the ways "structures make certain identities the consequence of, and vehicle for vulnerability" (Crenshaw, 2016;

also Cho, Crenshaw, & Mccall, 2013). Others have likewise argued that intersectionality should be employed both as an individual and structural concept (Cho et al., 2013; Montoya & Agustín, 2013).

It has also been argued that intersectional theorising should, instead of being preoccupied with identity categories, examine how identities interact and interrelate in the specific contexts where identities are constructed and performed (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Although FGC practices distinctly affect Black women and women of colour, much of existing research has neglected to examine women's vulnerabilities at the intersection of race and gender. While recent years have witnessed emerging studies which have applied an intersectional lens in the analyses of FGC to illuminate the complexities surrounding the meanings of practices (Connolly, 2018; Strid & Axelsson, 2020), these approaches have been largely divorced from the structural roots of intersectionality. Structural and contextual conceptualisations of intersectionality remain largely absent in the studies on FGC in migration contexts, which have been preoccupied with the cultural determinants of FGC as a practice and as a dimension of women's lived experience. This illustrates a gap by which research has examined FGC closely in relation to identity politics, at the expense of foregrounding the analysis of women's vulnerabilities to the wider political and economic inequalities.

The very purpose of intersectionality has also been problematised; several authors have questioned whether intersectionality is a metaphor, theory, concept, heuristic device and/or a tool for social change (Carastathis, 2014; Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 2008). However, key intersectional theorists argue for the importance of attending to what intersectionality *does*, rather than to what *it is*; crucially, intersectional analysing is not defined by the use of the term, but by “an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 795). Despite its inherent ambiguities (Davis, 2008), the elasticity of intersectionality makes it well-suited for being “mobilised to describe structure, subjectivity, identity, marginalization, multiple-marginalization, oppression, and agency at once” (Falcón & Nash, 2015, p. 4). Applying intersectionality as an analytical tool has been argued to offer four distinct benefits: simultaneity, complexity, irreducibility and inclusivity (Carastathis, 2014). In focusing on co-constitutive categories of identity, intersectionality offers an alternative to the radical feminist hierarchical conceptualisations of oppression of women (see Section 3.2). In doing so, intersectional analysis counters the exclusionary hegemonic white feminist theorising (Carastathis, 2014), which can reinforce the colonial constructions of FGC-affected women

and communities (see Section 3.2.2). In centring simultaneity and irreducibility (Carastathis, 2014), intersectional analysis can capture the concurrent and complex workings of oppressive forces in the lives of FGC-affected women whose experiences cannot be uprooted from the social world which gives rise to their sustained vulnerabilities to violence.

### **4.3 Political economy perspectives**

Historicity, contextuality and dynamic conceptualisations of culture have been said to be of central importance in the understanding the complexity of FGC (Withaeckx, 2017). It has been argued that applying an intersectional lens in the analysis of FGC can decentre representations of static “Third World” cultures as the only explanatory factor in explaining FGC and women’s role in the reproduction of these practices (Withaeckx, 2017). While culture has an obvious role to play in the perpetuation of FGC, scholars have called for a more dynamic analysis of culture which examines local systems in the context of national and transnational processes resulting from particular historical trajectories (Chowdhury, 2014; Kandiyoti, 1988; Merry, 2003). In drawing from contemporary anthropological understanding of culture as fluid, contested and connected to relations of power (Merry, 2003), this thesis conceptualises culture as an ongoing process through which people and society produce and exchange meanings and make sense of the world (Hall, 1997; Lister & Wells, 2001). Culture brings together identity, emotions, attachments and everyday symbolic and expressive practices which both manifest and guide the ways individuals comprehend the world around them (Hall, 1997; Lister & Wells, 2001). Conceptualising culture as a process resists the dominant representations of FGC-practising cultures as static, homogenous entities (Gruenbaum, 1996; Volpp, 2001, see Chapter 3). The recognition of how cultural practices become affirmed, negotiated and contested as a response to changing situations provides a starting point for contextualising women’s sustained vulnerabilities and the factors that enable men’s abuses of power. The next sections address the feminist political economy perspectives which seek to illuminate the broader local and global contexts which are conducive to FGC and other forms of GBV (True, 2012b).

#### **4.3.1 Cross-border dynamics**

It has been argued that, despite its potential, “applications of intersectionality continue to be shaped by the geographies of colonial modernity” (Patil, 2013, p. 853). Intersectional

theorising and feminist analyses of GBV have been criticised for their disproportionate focus on local and national level, at the expense of examining cross-border dynamics and the global economic and political order (Patil, 2013; True, 2012a). This limited scope of analysis sustains the feminist failures to move beyond unidimensional and universalist theorising of gender oppression (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Patil, 2013). Yuval-Davis has called for situated intersectional analysis which attends to: *translocality*, that is the way social divisions have different meanings and power in different spaces in which social relations take place; *transcality*, the different meanings and power of social divisions have depending on scale (household, neighbourhood, state, global...); and *transtemporality*, the way these different meanings and power can change historically and at different stages of the individual's lifecycle (2015, p. 95). These three concepts have informed my analysis, which has attended to the role of migration in shaping the way FGC is negotiated at an individual, family, and community level.

In bringing together micro social encounters and macro global structures, Yuval-Davis' (2015) articulation of situational intersectionality bears similarities to transnational feminism. By addressing the tensions between global manifestations and local specificities of women's oppression, transnational feminism offers "a radical framework with an ability to speak to connections and inequalities between the Global North and South" (Hundle et al., 2019, p. 121). Transnational feminist analyses merge anti-racist theorising with transnational perspectives in the pursuit of undoing both race and nation (Chowdhury, 2009). As argued by Patil, "patriarchy—and thereby gender—is always already imbricated within multiple axes of power that are advanced by, complicit in, and often the vehicle for various border crossings" (Patil, 2013, p. 848). Similarly, attending to connections and interconnections has also been proposed as a strategy for "writing against culture" as a bounded entity which is frozen in time and space (Abu-Lughod, 1991). When it comes to exploring FGC practices which both respond to and reflect the impacts of global discourses and relations of power (see Section 3.2), it is necessary to critically question the usefulness (or even the feasibility) of developing a nuanced understanding of culture simply by examining its local and national manifestations.

The transnational feminist emphasis on analysing power across different scales is particularly pertinent to research with displaced communities. Scholars have asserted that restricting the analysis to a national level is not on its own enough to develop an understanding of the complex relations that shape refugees' lives (Favell, 2010; Hyndman & Walton-Roberts,

2000). Crucially, crossing borders does not free individuals from their consequences or remove the ethnic and cultural affiliations which demarcate refugees' belonging (Newman, 2006). Transnational scholarship illuminated how refugees "take actions, make decisions, feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously" (Schiller et al., 1995, p. 5). Refugees' social relations play out in precarious ways, as displacement reconfigures connections and allegiances into "ruptures and sutures" of identity and belonging (Hyndman, 2010, p. 455). Therefore, not only the physical borders but also imagined social and cultural boundaries form sites for on-going struggle, reaffirmation, cooperation and coexistence (Newman, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2010). Bordering constitutes a principal mechanism in constructing and controlling social order and maintaining established hierarchies (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). It has been said that the production and reproduction of social inequalities needs to be understood in relation to four interrelated domains which are implicated in contemporary bordering processes: state governance; economic zones in which different levels of resources are produced and distributed to individuals living within these boundaries; different projects of the politics of belonging (such as nationalism and racism); and the intergenerational, familial and interpersonal networks which work to reproduce social, biological and symbolic boundaries (Yuval-Davis, 2015, p. 98-99).

It has been argued that notions of normativity and resistance, both which are central concerns for my research, depend on the discourses of belonging that shape individuals' lives (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). As discussed in detail in the previous chapter, FGC symbolically marks the boundaries between communities through the key function of these practices in signifying ethnic and community belonging and normative womanhood, which have real material consequences (Coyne & Mathers, 2014; Gruenbaum, 2001; Shell-Duncan et al., 2011; Talle, 2008). As refugees, potentially affected communities and women are also subject to exclusionary bordering policies, practices and discourses which contribute to increasing inequalities and hierarchies of belonging (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). The way FGC is entangled with access to resources and belonging points towards the importance of analysing not only changing attitudes towards FGC after migration, but also the social and material consequences of multiple borderings (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019), which shape FGC-affected women's vulnerabilities and experiences of FGC in migration contexts.



### 4.3.2 Continuum of violence

Transnational and postcolonial feminists have critiqued the feminist treatment of patriarchy as both an overused and an undertheorised, totalising concept which obscures the cultural and historical specificities embedded in gender relations in different contexts (Kandiyoti, 1988). As argued by Spivak, “the academic feminist must learn to learn from them, rather than simply correcting the historical experiences of disempowered women with our superior theory and enlightened compassion” (1987, p. 135). Rather than to rely on pre-conceived registers of patriarchal “Third World” violence, transnational feminists have called for further feminist accountability to women’s complex and interconnected struggles of survival (Chowdhury, 2009; Mohanty, 2003b). This critique has been echoed by both Black feminists and leading anthropologists working in the field of FGC:

*It is the task of scholars working on the topic of female genital cutting not only to provide perspectives to reduce ethnocentrism, but also to offer ideas for generating acceptable changes for immigrants and their new countries, informed by reasonable approaches that do not rely on inflamed rhetoric or distorted science. (Gruenbaum, 2020, p. 25)*

In re-centring spatial and historical analysis of gender oppression, transnational feminism offers an alternative to the reductionist attributions of patriarchy to colonial and nationalist constructions of static culture, tradition and religion (Mohanty, 2013; Narayan, 1997; Patil, 2013). In contrast to radical feminists who positioned modernity as the route to women’s liberation (see Chapter 3), transnational feminists have examined the role of colonialism, imperialism, global capitalism and neoliberalism in perpetuating gender oppression (Chowdhury, 2009; Mohanty, 2013; Patil, 2013). Transnational and Black feminists, along with leading anthropologists have argued for the need to further examine FGC in relation to the brutality of colonialism and the connections between FGC and anticolonial struggles (Abusharaf, 2000; Gruenbaum, 2000; Merry, 2003; Njambi, 2007).

In locating GBV at the crossroads of intersecting “isms” which characterise global relations of power, transnational feminists emphasise GBV as structural and systematic, as opposed to single incidents taking place within intimate relationships (Chowdhury, 2014). This approach of framing GBV has also been championed by other feminist theorists. In proposing the concept of *continuum of violence*, Kelly has argued that women’s experiences of violence should be recognised as part of a “continuous series of elements or events that pass into one

another and cannot be readily distinguished” (1987, p. 48). As argued by Kelly (1987), women’s experiences of sexual violence are part of a continuum of abuse and coercion used to control women. Despite these perspectives, FGC research has largely addressed FGC practices in isolation from other forms of GBV. I argue that this focus has been fuelled on one hand by the substantial attention given to the cultural intricacies that are invoked to justify FGC in different contexts and on the other hand, by the dominant narrative about FGC as an “extreme” form of violence and discrimination against women (World Health Organisation, 2020a). However, Kelly (1987) has problematised “seriousness” of violence as a benchmark for conceptualising the extent of violence in women’s lives. Instead, the concept of the continuum draws our attention to the extent to which all women experience sexual violence during their lives, thus resisting the simplistic distinctions between victims and other women (Kelly, 1987). This is of particular relevance to analysing FGC, which radical feminists framed as a manifestation of ultimate violence and overpowered victimhood (see Section 3.2). Kelly’s (1987) concept connects specific forms of violence with everyday forms of abuse and control, facilitating more nuanced understandings of women’s vulnerabilities and experiences of violence.

Although my research began initially with a key focus on women’s experiences of FGC, in the early stages of the fieldwork it became evident that these experiences could not be treated in isolation from the wider patterns of control and abuse experienced by FGC-affected women. As I discuss in detail in the coming chapters, many women I interviewed had not only experienced a variety of forms of violence, abuse and control, but they also narrated these experiences as a series of interlinked events that had manifested and sustained their wider subordination within their communities and societies of origin. As a result, my thesis addresses FGC in the context of different forms of gender-based and structural violence which have shaped the lives of my participants.

### **4.3.3 Conducive contexts**

In addition to emphasising the interconnected nature of violence and abuse, transnational feminists conceptualise GBV within a broader structural inequality framework which “maps the vulnerability of the victims onto their life trajectory shaped by complex forces of globalisation, neoliberal development, patriarchy and poverty” (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 79). In contrast to the radical feminist framing of GBV in the Global South (see Section 3.2), a focus

on structural inequality frameworks extends the scope of analysis on women's trajectories of suffering beyond family and community to also considering the broader societal and global structures and capitalist system (Chowdhury, 2014). Transnational feminists have critiqued the reliance on hegemonic notions of culture and patriarchy for overlooking the structural violence which is embedded in violence within intimate relationships (Chowdhury, 2014; Merry, 2009). Galtung defines structural violence as "the cause of the difference between the potential and actual, between what could have been and what is" (1969, p. 168). Others have likewise argued that "it is the invisibility of human culprits, rather than the presence or absence of intention to cause harm, that best defines structural violence" (Weber & Pickering, 2011, p. 94).

The concept of structural violence draws our analytical attention to state facilitated suffering, broadening our focus from action to inaction to alleviate avoidable harms (Canning, 2017a). It has been argued that recognising how gender becomes embedded in institutions provides a foundation for analysing the ideological and structural roots which condition gender relations in different contexts (Pessar & Mahler, 2003). These structural inequality perspectives offer a new direction for FGC research which has largely been characterised by attempts to culturalise FGC, as opposed to contextualising women's vulnerabilities to these practices. Crucially, although FGC research has predominantly concerned itself with populations whose lives are frequently marked by poverty and political suppression either on the account of underdevelopment, corruption or asylum policies, my thesis addresses the gap whereby these forces have largely been left unaccounted for in analyses and representations of FGC.

The transnational feminist emphasis on structural inequalities has also been championed by other feminist scholars whose work attends to the historical, economic, political and social conditions which give rise to women's heightened vulnerabilities to GBV (Kelly, 2005, 2016; True, 2012a). As argued by True (2012), social, political and economic issues not only increase women's vulnerabilities, but it is women's disadvantaged positions relative to men that is at the root of GBV. It has been argued that "addressing culture defences of violence against women must include a political economy perspective that lays bare the material foundation and underlying vested interests of many cultural norms and practices" (True, 2012a, p. 6). In proposing the concept of *conducive contexts*, Kelly (2005) has argued for the necessity of analysing how interconnected social, political and economic conditions create fruitful conditions for women's exploitation. In analysing human trafficking in Central Asia, Kelly (2005) illustrates how women's vulnerabilities are rooted in the lack of sustainable

livelihoods, ethnic stereotypes, women's reduced status, crime and corruption. Kelly's (2016) work connects with intersectionality, as she describes Black women's intersectional positioning as a conducive context for both experiencing violence and women's constrained resources in its aftermath. This provides a useful direction for comparing FGC-affected women's experiences and responses to FGC before and after migration.

Previous research which has been influenced by Kelly's work has conceptualised forced marriage as a *process* as opposed to a singular event in developing a more nuanced understanding of women's experiences of violence (Chantler & McCarry, 2020). In employing the concept of *conducive contexts*, Chantler and McCarry (2020) have illuminated the instrumental role of normalisation and long-term socialisation in shaping women's vulnerabilities to forced marriage. This attention to the conditions which precede the act of being forcibly married illuminates the longevity of the impacts forced marriage has on women's lives (Chantler & McCarry, 2020). This suggests that the concept of conducive context can also provide a valuable analytical tool for mapping women's vulnerabilities and experiences of FGC beyond the initial act of cutting. When paired with intersectionality, conducive context not only facilitates examining how the surrounding conditions and constraints underpin women's vulnerability to FGC, but also how women's FGC status itself can give rise to further resource constraints for dealing with the aftermath of complex, overlapping effects of trauma.

#### **4.3.4 Patriarchal bargains**

Transnational feminists have not only pointed to the limited scale of intersectional theorising, but also to the sustained feminist failures to apply multi-axis thinking in conceptualisations of women's oppression and agency in the Global South:

*While the intersecting axes of race/class/gender are readily applied to analyze the conditions of women's lives in the United States, in discussions of women's lives 'elsewhere' that critique is often lost as women in the USA become a singular individual with freedom to choose in opposition to her victimized singular third world counterpart. (Chowdhury, 2009, p. 60)*

Transnational feminist scholars have argued that cross-cultural feminist analysis needs to simultaneously attend to "the micropolitics of context, subjectivity, and struggle, as well as to the macropolitics of global economic and political systems and processes" to account for the

colonial and racist legacies which continue to shape feminist knowledge production and politics of difference and commonality (Mohanty, 2003b, p. 501; 2013). While transnational feminism strives to think across borders, it is not borderless (Falcón & Nash, 2015). Central to both transnational and postcolonial feminist scholarship is the critique of the limited hegemonic feminist attention to colonialism and neo-colonial and neoliberal abuses of power, as well as the critique of discursive colonialism that underpins dominant feminist analyses of “Third World” women’s experiences of oppression (Hundle et al., 2019; Mohanty, 1984, 2013; Mohanty et al., 1991; Tyagi, 2014). Cross-cultural feminist knowledge production has been argued not only to necessitate attention to the material and historical complexities of women’s oppression, but also to the historical and contemporary feminist complicity in the marginalisation of Black women and women of colour (Amos & Parmar, 1984; Mohanty, 1984; Spivak, 1988). Critics have argued that hegemonic white feminist scholarship has relied on highly problematic ethnocentric and Orientalist representations of “Third World” womanhood and sexualities (Mohanty, 1984; Tyagi, 2014). In reproducing the colonial binaries between “the West and the Rest”, dominant feminist cross-cultural knowledge production has been criticised for adopting an “add women as global victims or powerful women and stir” approach to examining sexist cultural practices (Mohanty, 2003b, p. 518). These benevolent yet overly simplistic representations have dominated not only feminist scholarship, but also the historical and contemporary feminist and wider human rights engagement with women in Global South (Amos & Parmar, 1984; Chowdhury, 2009; Coloma, 2012).

In working against the stereotypical representations of “Third World” women, postcolonial and transnational feminists have re-visioned the radical feminist notion of planetary patriarchy into locally manifested patriarchies in order to make visible the material complexities that shape the lives of Black women and women of colour (Chowdhury, 2014; Kandiyoti, 1988; Mohanty, 2003b). As argued by Kandiyoti, different manifestations of patriarchy present women with “different rules of the game” (1988, p. 274), which shape women’s gendered subjectivities and strategic responses of active and passive resistance in the face of oppression. As such, attending to the specificities of patriarchy opens the hegemonic feminist conceptualisations of agency up for questioning. It has been argued that feminist scholarship has been constrained in its ability to map women’s agency onto acts that “further the moral autonomy of the individual in the face of power” (Mahmood, 2006, p. 31). In analysing the women’s mosque movement in Egypt, Mahmood (2006) has examined the

tensions where pious women assert their presence in male-defined spheres through the very idioms of female passivity and submissiveness that are employed to sustain their subordination. In doing so, she has argued that agency must be contextualised “within the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment” (Mahmood, 2006, p. 42). Others have likewise argued that agency and structures need to be recognised as interrelated and reflective of wider hierarchies of power (Charrad, 2010). Recognising the context-specific nature of agency can illuminate how agency can be manifested at times as either progressive and regressive (Charrad, 2010).

Narayan (1998) has cautioned against the dangers of replicating colonialist, totalising assumptions about essentialist “Third World” cultures in research which examines women’s different situations across contexts. She argues that examining cultural change is central to resisting cultural essentialism and for developing an understanding of how traditional practices like FGC can become upheld for the purposes of cultural preservation, even when the surrounding contexts are subject to ongoing transformation (Narayan, 1998).

Anthropologists who have advocated for adopting a political economy perspective for understanding FGC have argued for the need to move away from the preoccupation with the functions FGC serves to asking the question of “who benefits?” to develop more nuanced understandings of the dynamics of change (Gruenbaum, 1996). As argued by Njambi, FGC practices involve “negotiations, ambiguities, complexities, and contradictions that must be addressed and not dismissed, even as we problematize them” (2004, p. 299). Although the dynamics of FGC and other cultural manifestations of GBV cannot be easily compared, issues including forced marriages and domestic abuse have similarly to FGC challenged researchers to examine women’s active participation in forms of violence which contribute to their subordination (Chantler & McCarry, 2020; Gangoli & Rew, 2011).

Kandiyoti’s (1988) concept of *patriarchal bargains* provides a useful tool for examining the often seemingly contradictory manifestations of women’s responses to violence and inequality. In contextualising arranged marriages in South East Asia and the Middle East, Kandiyoti (1988) explains women’s complicity in enforcing patriarchal norms as a means of improving their own positions; in patrilineal contexts, older women’s collusion with arranged marriages reflects their pressing need to guarantee their old-age security through ensuring that the bond between the husband and wife stays secondary to that of the mother and son. Kandiyoti (1988) argues that in doing so, women are “bargaining with patriarchy” through enforcing sexist cultural practices in order to negotiate the complex constraints imposed on

them by the prevailing political, economic and cultural conditions. The concept of patriarchal bargains can also explain women's resistance to abandoning misogynist practices, if change prevents women from cashing in their earlier bargains or offers them no feasible alternatives for guaranteeing their socio-economic survival (Kandiyoti, 1988).

The notion of bargaining with patriarchy offers a guidepost for moving past the well-critiqued hegemonic feminist assumptions about the false consciousness of "Third World" women (see Section 3.2.2), aiding the development of more complex understandings of women's responses to violent and sexist practices. Since Kandiyoti's initial articulation of patriarchal bargains, this notion has been applied in the analyses of women's participation in forced marriages (Chantler & McCarry, 2020), intergenerational coresidence practices (Yount & Yount, 2005), marriage migration and intimate partner violence (Chaudhuri et al., 2014) and Islamic veiling (Atasoy, 2006; Khan, 2014). Although the concept of patriarchal bargains is most often invoked in the analyses of women's participation in sexist practices in the Global South, recent works have also shown its applicability to migration contexts where insecure immigration status, integration barriers and restricted access to public funds emerge as new constraints to women's options and freedoms (Chantler & McCarry, 2020; Chaudhuri et al., 2014; Shankar & Northcott, 2009).

In line with scholarly applications of *patriarchal bargains*, rather than beginning from the preconceived notion of women as passive victims, research with asylum seekers has likewise emphasised the importance of constructing vulnerability through the institutionalised and cultural constraints facing asylum seekers in their new contexts (Cortvriend, 2020; Smith & Waite, 2019). Essentialising vulnerability of certain groups can deprive people of agency, reproduce relations of subordination and produce borders and spaces of reduced citizenship through contributing to the discourses on deserving and undeserving asylum seekers (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013; Smith & Waite, 2019). When it comes to refugee women, reducing women to powerless victims has been argued to disregard the resilience which women display in fleeing and enduring the asylum process (Canning, 2017a; Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013). Migration researchers emphasise the importance of reconfiguring vulnerability from an individual quality to a process whereby individuals are rendered vulnerable by their wider social and political contexts (Cortvriend, 2020; Peroni, 2016; Smith & Waite, 2019). This change in conceptualising vulnerability and agency not only facilitates developing more nuanced understandings of individuals' experiences of violence, but also their responses to the intersecting constraints placed upon them.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined intersectionality and feminist structural inequality perspectives as a roadmap for analysing women's changing experiences of FGC across their migration trajectories. The intersectional and transnational feminist emphasis on contextualising the complex relations of power which give rise to women's vulnerabilities to GBV offers a route for avoiding the pitfalls of getting caught between cultural essentialism and cultural relativism, neither which has on its own been able to move the FGC debates beyond the impasse these continue to occupy. Intersectional theorising emphasises the process of discovery, stimulating creativity to re-examine the complex and contradictory nature of the world and the subjects of our inquiry (Davis, 2008). This same emphasis on re-examining the contradictions and complexities in women's experiences and responses to violence can also be found in transnational feminist analyses of GBV. In making reference to the intersectional erasures encompassed in Lorde's (1984) famous declaration that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house", Narayan has argued that:

*Third World feminist political struggles are often painfully aware that there are a number of "master's houses". Some of these houses are owned not by "Western" masters, but are part of the local real estate, while others have deeds so intricate that it is difficult to unravel how much they are the properties of "local" or "Western" masters. (1998, p. 101)*

In this chapter, I have argued that the transnational feminist attentiveness to cross-border dynamics and structural inequalities complements intersectionality by highlighting how locally manifested oppressions and women's strategising both respond to and are reflective of transnational relations of power. I have outlined *structural, political and representational intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991), *continuum of violence* (Kelly, 1987), *conducive contexts* (Kelly, 2007, 2016) and *patriarchal bargains* (Kandiyoti, 1988) as key conceptual tools for my approach to mapping the changing dynamics and experiences of FGC. Crenshaw's (1991) and Kelly's (1987, 2005, 2016) theoretical concepts encourage a more nuanced exploration of how FGC-affected women's vulnerabilities are shaped by converging gendered and racialised inequalities. Transnational feminist perspectives and the concept of patriarchal bargaining have further guided my research in attending to the temporal and spatial dimensions of FGC and structural violence which shape women's agency, resistance and help-seeking behaviours in both pre-migration and post-migration contexts.



This chapter has discussed the key concepts which have informed my research. On the basis of the gaps in knowledge identified in Chapter 3, my research has formulated the following research questions that are addressed in the following chapters:

- 1 How do experiences of migration and resettlement influence attitudes and the abandonment of FGC?
2. How does the Scottish anti-FGC approach influence migrant women's empowerment?

By examining these questions, my research refocuses the attention to FGC-affected women's agency, contexts and voices which have frequently been left unquestioned by the anti-FGC discourse and research. As discussed in Chapter 3, the widespread scholarly recognition of the multi-faceted nature and structural components of refugee integration suggests the relevance of applying intersectionality and transnational structural inequality perspectives in conceptualising the abandonment of FGC in resettlement contexts. In the next chapter, I discuss the influences that intersectional and transnational feminist epistemologies have had on the research design, ethics and process of data collection and analysis in my study.

# Chapter 5

## Methodology

### 5.1 Overview

This chapter outlines and justifies my research methodology and discusses the participatory research process in detail. The fieldwork was preceded by the development of a Community Advisory Board (CAB) made up of FGC-affected asylum-seeking and refugee women. My collaboration with the CAB informed the research focus, ethical considerations, data collection and analysis. The first part of this chapter positions my research within the feminist paradigm through discussing the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of my research. This is followed by a discussion on how my approach to integrating participatory and narrative methodologies was guided by my efforts to connect my methodology to my theoretical framework and to address the complex ethical and practical challenges in engaging refugee women and communities in FGC research. The following sections discuss the sampling and recruitment strategy and methods of data collection, which involved individual interviews, focus groups and collaborative zine-making. The final part of this chapter provides an overview of my approach to textual and visual data analysis through integrating narrative and thematic data analysis techniques.

### 5.2 Positioning the research within the feminist paradigm

Although it has been said that paradigm is perhaps one of the most contested terms in qualitative research, this term broadly refers to a set of metaphysical beliefs and systems of ideas that inform our understanding of the nature of the reality and the ways in which it can be known (Lincoln & Guba, 2007; Willis, 2012). These are generally divided into three paradigms: postpositivism, constructivism and critical theory (Willis, 2012). These paradigms differ in the ways they approach the interconnected, fundamental questions around the nature of reality, the researcher's relationship with the process of knowledge production and the approach for acquiring knowledge. The postpositivist ontology assumes reality as independent from the observer and consequently, aligns with an epistemology which considers the researcher and the subject of the study as separate entities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The constructivist worldview perceives reality as subjective and socially constructed, therefore framing research as a process of co-construction of knowledge (Guba & Lincoln,

1994; Willis, 2012). More recently, critical theory has emerged as a third research paradigm in social research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Much like constructivism, the critical epistemology is transactional and subjectivist (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). However, critical ontology conceptualises reality as one which has been “shaped by a congeries of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender factors, and then crystallised into a series of structures that are now inappropriately taken as ‘real’” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Critical theory considers that positivist and constructivist positions overlook the political and ideological contexts of research which are imbued with uneven relations of power (Cohen et al., 2011). Instead of simply discovering or constructing knowledge, critical theory is underpinned by an explicit transformative aim and an ethical social justice framework that strives towards the emancipation of individuals and communities (Cohen et al., 2011; Collins, 2019). Therefore, critical theory not only rejects the researcher’s neutrality, but asserts that this assumption can in fact create further power imbalances (Cohen et al., 2011).

Following the proliferation of critical theory, feminist research has been gaining popularity since the 1960s when it emerged to critique the dominance of positivist androcentric research which feminist researchers claimed was inadequate for conceptualising women’s lived experiences (McCormack, 1981; Stanley & Wise, 1993). With the mainstreaming of intersectionality, the scope of feminist research has since expanded to interrogating “layers of sexist, racist, homophobic, and colonialist points of view” (Hesse-Biber, 2011, p. 4). Being grounded in the critical tradition, feminist research rejects the split between both ontology and politics and epistemology and politics, asserting that the personal is political (Ahmed, 2017; Caplan, 1988a, 1988b). Ramazanoglu (1992) has argued that domestic violence cannot be studied apolitically, as theorising normalised domestic behaviour as violent conveys a particular view of social relations and of social justice. This perspective also applies to FGC which is normalised in practising contexts, but which many researchers including myself explicitly frame as a form of GBV as opposed to a cultural practice. Having reflected on the research problem and my own ideological position, it became clear to me that to question the dominant discourses around FGC, migration and culture, my research was best served by adopting an emancipatory and reflexive lens of inquiry. I arrived at my choice of alignment with the feminist paradigm through considering the existing scholarly critique of the international anti-FGC movement, the research problem under investigation and my own ideological position. The last of these has been largely shaped by my previous education on

postcolonial theory and earlier research with refugee women, whose lives and perspectives defied the dominant representations of them.

Some still question whether feminism is its own paradigm or whether it sits within constructivist or critical paradigms (Cohen et al., 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Further, regardless of its increasing popularity, what feminist research is or what it should involve has for long been subject to considerable contention (Maynard, 1994). Although few would argue there are definitive, set parameters for feminist “research-ologies”, feminist scholars have asserted that there are nevertheless shared elements which are embraced by all feminist researchers (Dankoski, 2000; Doucet & Mauthner, 2006; Edwards, 1990). In discussing the ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings of feminist research, the following sections make a case for both recognising feminism as a paradigm in its own right and for its appropriateness for my research.

### **5.2.1 A way of being in the world: Critical feminist ontology**

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality (Willis, 2012). Feminist scholars rarely render their ontological position explicit, at times fusing considerations about the nature of reality into discussions on feminist epistemologies (Haraway, 1988; Lawson, 1999). Much of feminist scholarship does not engage with the ways feminists position themselves in the truth/reality continuum (Haraway, 1988). While feminist researchers reject the positivist assumption about an objective reality by concerning themselves with the mechanisms by which people become “beings” in relation to gender, race and other social divisions, feminists are also cautious about embracing absolute relativism in so far as it implies that nothing is real, thus invalidating the credibility of feminist knowledge production (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006; Haslanger, 1995; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Haslanger (1995) has proposed modestly realist ontology as a way for feminists to vision what might be and what should be, arguing for the need to recognise our points of view of the world as socially conditioned, rather than the world itself. Haslanger’s (1995) articulation of modestly realistic ontology recognises reality at “face value”, without placing epistemic conditions on what it means to be real. While Haslanger takes a realist ontological position, she nevertheless cautions researchers to recognise the ways judgements and classifications which we employ in theorising “may not be capturing differences already there, but may be responsible for creating them” (Haslanger, 1995, p. 118). This also ties feminist ontology to constructivism, as a feminist way of seeing

the world emerges from the experiences of, and acts against oppression which are grounded on dominant social constructions of women (Stanley, 2013). I consider that critiquing imperial practices of knowledge extraction (Falcón, 2016) necessitates recognising that while knowledge production is conditioned by the researcher's interpretations and interactions with the participants, research can not only co-create, but also expose knowledge that already resides independently from the researcher within the marginalised communities.

The distinction between feminist and positivist and constructivist ontologies is ultimately one of focus. Feminist commitment to social change implies recognising the nature of reality as inherently unequal (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006). Thus, integral to a feminist way of viewing the world is the feminist commitment to social justice and the transformative approach to knowledge production not only in terms of "knowledge what", but also "knowledge for" (Stanley, 2013, p. 15). As argued by Ahmed:

*To build feminist dwellings, we need to dismantle what has already been assembled; we need to ask what it is we are against, what it is we are for, knowing fully well that this we is not a foundation, but what we are working toward. (2017, p. 2)*

Along the same vein, Stanley and Wise (1993) have argued that feminism requires the researcher to develop a feminist consciousness. As argued by Stanley: "Feminism is not merely a perspective, a way of seeing; nor even this plus an epistemology, a way of knowing; it is also an ontology, or a way of being in the world" (Stanley, 2013, p. 14). Feminist consciousness is an expression of women's unique view of the reality, where embodied experiences of power provide the basis for our knowledge (Ahmed, 2017; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Women's experiences constitute a different ontology which is made available to us through the insistence of feminism on the importance of the personal experience (Stanley & Wise, 1993). However, it has been argued that feminist consciousness does not arise from women's specific location as some suggest (Caplan, 1988b), but is achieved through acting in feminist ways (Ahmed, 2017; Harding, 1996). Nevertheless, experience is central to feminist ontology which seeks to interrogate the cultural specificity of experience and the mediums of the body, mind and emotions through which all experience is channelled (Stanley & Wise, 1993). This makes feminist ontology particularly appropriate for examining women's experiences of FGC practices, which function to both physically and symbolically inscribe culture into the bodies and minds of women.

### **5.2.2 Situating knowledge: Feminist epistemologies**

Epistemology is concerned with how we can come to know reality, and what implications this has for our conceptualisations of objectivity and the relationship between the researcher and the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Willis, 2012). The feminist rejection of both positivist and constructivist ontologies has led them to occupy an intermediate position, which many feminists have in turn attempted to settle through theorising feminist epistemologies. Although Harding (1986) initially differentiated between three different feminist epistemologies (feminist empiricism, standpoint theory and postmodernism), she herself expected that these categories would begin to blur. Today, much feminist research occupies a space between these categories (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006). My research is no exception; while I strongly draw from feminist standpoint theory, my research has also been influenced by the postmodern feminist epistemological attention to deconstructing social categories.

It has been argued that “feminist theories commit feminist researchers to exploring absence, silence, difference, oppression and the power of epistemology” (Ackerly & True, 2008, p. 694). The relationship between knowledge and politics is central to standpoint epistemology which examines how political arrangements play out in the process of knowledge production (Harding, 1996). Standpoint is not merely a perspective, but requires both science and political struggle to illuminate the realities that structure social life (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004; Harding, 1996). Central to feminist epistemology is the notion of situated knowledge as a recognition of the inherent context-specificity, partiality and power in the process knowledge production (Bhavnani, 1993). As stated by Haraway, it is a “practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing” (1988, pp. 584–585). It has been argued that any attempt to divorce knowledge from power becomes complicit in reproducing the privileged knowledges which the feminist epistemological perspectives emerged to challenge (Collins, 1997).

Feminist standpoint theory goes beyond feminist empiricism which critiques the androcentric biases in the application of scientific methods, to rejecting the equal authority of all perspectives. Instead, standpoint theorists argue that all perspectives are socially situated and should be judged by their participation in the relations of power (Collins, 1997; Harding, 1996, 2008). In the way that the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house (Lorde, 1984), standpoint theorists contend that the master’s life should not serve as a starting

point for understanding the life of the slave (Harding, 1996). Feminist standpoint epistemology privileges and grounds the research in the subaltern experiences as more adequate and sustained accounts of the world (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1996; Landman, 2006). My research has done this through treating women's lives as grounds for knowledge to produce richer and more complete accounts of not only the women themselves, but also the lives of communities and the wider social order (Harding, 1993, 1996). Both intersectionality and transnational feminism which inform my theoretical framework are closely aligned with standpoint theory, as these have emerged from feminist concerns over converging relations of power and systems of domination (Falcón & Nash, 2015). Intersectional theory embodies the feminist commitment to privileging the voices of multiply-marginalised, validating their experiences as both knowledge and critical theory (Davis, 2008; Falcón & Nash, 2015). Likewise, transnational feminism seeks to counter the privileging of institutionalised knowledge over collective community-centred knowledge production in the research design and process of doing the research (Falcón, 2016).

My epistemological position also connects to feminist postmodernism, which centres the deconstruction of categories and the notion of universal truth (Haraway, 1988). In privileging the standpoint of epistemologically disadvantaged groups, feminist standpoint theory has been critiqued for assuming that women have shared universal experiences (Intemann, 2010). The postcolonial and Black feminist perspectives which have informed my research have worked to deconstruct the notion of global sisterhood, leading feminists to increasingly problematise if it is even possible to speak of "feminist ways of knowing" (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006, p. 38). I consider intersectionality as a key to reconciling the feminist tensions between the focus on women's experiences and deconstructing "women" as a unified category (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). The power which shapes marginalised lives functions in much more complex ways that the conventional "us" and "them" categorisations suggest, providing possibilities for examining marginalised experiences without homogenising them (Harding, 1996). In seeking this balance between the two positions, I side with Collins (1997), who contends that if feminists remain content only voicing individuals' misfortunes, the very institutions and structures sustaining forms of oppression will remain unchallenged (Collins, 1997). Although my interest in how power is maintained through discourse also aligns with feminist postmodernism, Collins' (1997) emphasis on structural oppression addresses the limits that theorising power solely through discourse pose in constraining our understanding of the ways power becomes institutionalised

and materialised in women's lives (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). As argued by Harding (1996), although starting from marginalised standpoints makes it easier to see how discourse constructs and legitimises dominant frameworks, we must also critically examine the dominant groups who shape marginalised lives in ways that are not always visible in those lives themselves.

Standpoint theory aligns with borderlands epistemology which “demystifies relationships between systems of knowledge production and of colonisation” through scrutinising the historical and social conditions to challenge the dominant gendered, racialised and sexualised narratives (Harding, 2008; Hudson, 2015, p. 107; Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006). Borderlands epistemology connects to transnational feminism which critically examines dominance and resistance in specific contexts and on multiple social and spatial scales (Hudson, 2015). The notion of “borderlands”, originally coined by Anzaldúa (1987), is concerned with multiple subjectivities and consciousness characterised by hybridity and contradictions. This also connects to intersectionality in illuminating how interconnected systems of inequality partake in the making of social, cultural and spatial boundaries (Hudson, 2015). It has been argued that conceptualising knowledge and the process of knowledge production as borderlands which are dynamic spaces can illuminate multiple and contradictory experiences of community and belonging, and the lived experiences that challenge dominant discourses (Hudson, 2015). The borderlands epistemology aligns with my interest in examining how FGC and the changing dominant representations of these practices are experienced and negotiated across time and space at the levels of the individual, community and wider society.

Borderlands epistemology also resonates with my aim to critique the dominant anti-FGC knowledge production through the process of conducting my research. Breaking down the boundaries between disciplines, private and public, researchers and participants and theorisation and practice has been a key pursuit for feminist research (Caplan, 1988a). Borderlands epistemological thinking occupies a space within and between different knowledge systems, asserting theoretical pluriversality over universality (Hudson, 2015; Mignolo, 2011; Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006). Mignolo (2011) argues that border thinking involves an epistemic shift from theo- and ego-politics of knowledge, that is, from the hegemony of the West which conceals local perspectives under false universalism, to thinking both “geo- and body-politically”, about one's epistemic location in relation to power and knowledge. In doing so, borderlands epistemology participates both in the processes of de-westernisation and decolonisation, dismantling the hierarchical epistemic ranks by



prioritising the thinking and knowledge which was denied by imperialism (Mignolo, 2011). Thus, borderlands epistemology aligns with the feminist research attention to research questions which are raised outwith dominant institutional environments and cultures (Ackerly & True, 2008). It has been argued that researchers need to proactively consider how they situate their research questions within dominant theoretical frameworks without losing sight of the underrepresented concerns that have motivated the research (Ackerly & True, 2008). Situating the study within existing literature is an unexpected moment of ethical consideration during the research process; feminist ethics signifies the researcher's commitment to destabilising and deconstructing our epistemology, calling the researcher to reflect the constraints of our imagination and responding by informing our inquiry with a range of perspectives (Ackerly & True, 2008). As the earlier chapters have highlighted, my thinking principally draws from Black, postcolonial and continental African feminist perspectives which continue to be often overlooked by literature and anti-FGC discourse. As I discuss in the next section, this conscious decision aligns not only with my commitment to privilege lived experiences in my approach to epistemology, but also with the methodological approach I have adopted.

### **5.3 Methodological approach**

Feminist methodologies serve multiple purposes in the process of knowledge production, in validating knowledge produced through feminist research and as a form of political commitment to empowering women and other marginalised groups (Ramazanoglu, 1992). The question of whether there are specific feminist methodological approaches has been debated for decades (Metso & Le Feuvre, 2006; Westmarland, 2001). Some feminist scholars have called for a clear distinction to be made between methodology and method: "methods are tools; a researcher's methodology determines the way in which a tool will be utilised" (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 456). For me, methodology is the overarching justification for the range of tools I employ; feminism, on the other hand, is the ideological framework which lays the basis for such justification, and a political commitment which holds my research accountable. The next two sections outline how I have merged narrative and participatory approaches from a feminist perspective to address both the research questions and the complex ethical and practical challenges in researching FGC with displaced populations.

### **5.3.1 Narrative approach**

Narrative research frames narratives both as producers and transmitters of constructions of reality (Moen, 2006). Further, narratives are also a means for the researcher to reflect the process of knowledge production and a method for collecting data (Moen, 2006). In utilising storytelling and narration which people naturally use to organise and render their experiences meaningful, narrative approaches examine how people draw from their social relations and cultural repertoires to negotiate and make sense of their everyday lives (Boonzaier & Van Schalkwyk, 2010; Eastmond, 2007; Moen, 2006). A narrative approach recognises participants as “experiencing subjects”, whose stories provide a site for the research to examine the meanings they ascribe to their experiences (Eastmond, 2007; Smith, 2017). Narrative research aligns with the feminist imperative of recognising and hearing women’s voices, bringing what has been private into the political sphere (Oke, 2008). I considered adopting a narrative approach particularly fitting for researching FGC because it facilitates examining human actions in their specific social and cultural settings (Boonzaier & Van Schalkwyk, 2010; Moen, 2006). Narratives research constructs stories not only as individual but also as collective accounts shaped by their cultural, historical and institutional settings (Moen, 2006). This makes a narrative approach particularly suited for researching FGC practices which not only have individual emotional and physical dimensions, but which also hold collective cultural and ethnic significance to the affected communities.

A narrative approach recognises human experience of the world and the narratives about these as constantly evolving as a result of interaction and dialogue (Moen, 2006). This is of particular relevance to research with refugees who are in the midst of also living the story that they are telling (Eastmond, 2007). A narrative approach has been argued to be particularly well-suited for exploring the radical discontinuities and marginalisation in the lives of refugees (Earthy & Cronin, 2008; Eastmond, 2007). Narrative approaches to forced migration research emphasise locating participants’ stories in their wider socio-political and cultural contexts to explore how “migrants seek to make sense of displacement and violence, re-establish identity in ruptured life courses and communities, or bear witness to violence and repression” (Eastmond, 2007, p. 248). Nevertheless, adopting a narrative approach to research with refugees requires recognising the contradictory relationship refugees have with storytelling. Asylum seekers who are forced to narrate their stories in making a case for asylum depend on their stories being heard and recognised, often by systems and individuals which seek to reject their claims (Eastmond, 2007). It has been argued that the process of

telling one's story can also be transformative and therapeutic (Hunter, 2010), which places increased responsibility on the researcher to not reproduce refugees' experiences of forced disclosures during adversarial asylum interviews during the research process.

A narrative approach can facilitate interrogating how women's experiences come to be silenced or contested by dominant discourses, but also how women's narratives in themselves can resist established structures of power (Squire et al., 2008). It has been argued that solidarity with refugees necessitates seeking ways of recognising and representing the diversity of their experiences (Eastmond, 2007). My choice of feminist narrative inquiry reflects my interest in hearing the stories of female refugees who are often excluded from the formation of the dominant representations about themselves as "passive victims" or "bogus" asylum seekers (Eastmond, 2007; Smith, 2015, 2017). Personal stories can be powerful in challenging essentialising and stereotyping descriptions of female refugees (Eastmond, 2007; Smith, 2017). A narrative approach has also been argued to be well-suited for researching GBV, as it allows women to represent their experiences of violence according to their own frames of meaning, thus reinforcing their agency over the authority of their own stories (Boonzaier & Van Schalkwyk, 2010; Oke, 2008). It has been argued that narrative approaches can have an inherent political dimension through playing part in the restoration of agency which acts of violence and dominant discourses seek to undermine (Boonzaier & Van Schalkwyk, 2010).

A narrative approach offers distinct possibilities in not only capturing the complexities and contradictions involved in the negotiation of FGC in diaspora, but also the ways in which women re-construct themselves through narrating their experiences of violence and displacement. It has been argued that narration can be a symbolic strategy to address the predicament in the lives of refugees, revealing both what people think they are and what they may yet become:

*Stories are important sites not only for negotiating what has happened and what it means, but also for seeking ways of going forward... Story-telling in itself, as a way for individuals and communities to remember, bear witness, or seek to restore continuity and identity, can be a symbolic resource enlisted to alleviate suffering and change their situation. (Eastmond, 2007, p. 251)*

Others have likewise emphasised the multiple purposes of stories in the processes of reconstituting the self, making sense of the present and hypothesising the future of

individual's identity and life (Boonzaier & Van Schalkwyk, 2010). In adopting a narrative approach to interrogating women's trajectories of vulnerability and experiences of cultural change, I have examined how the participants seek to establish continuity after violence and displacement by drawing connections between their past and present realities.

### **5.3.2 Using a participatory approach**

It has been said that feminist methodologies can be characterised by their underlying emancipatory aims, inclusive designs and attention to minimising any "harms" of the research (DeVault, 1996; Edwards, 1990; Maynard, 1994). It has been argued that "feminist research should be not just on women, but *for* women, and where possible, *with* women" (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006, p. 40). This should be done by working the feminist research considerations over power, inclusivity and reflectivity into the research design, data collection process and dissemination activities (Ackerly & True, 2008; Edwards, 1990). This pursuit is particularly pertinent to transnational feminist methodologies which seek to challenge Western and white-dominated top-down research practices (Falcón, 2016). Transnational feminist scholars strive to move their epistemology and methodology away from the imperial traditions of knowledge extraction, emphasising knowledge production as collective and collaborative through decolonising research practices which cultivate sustainable partnerships with the research participants (Falcón, 2016).

It has been argued that feminist theory and ethics have much in common with participatory action research (Frisby et al., 2009). The researcher's complicity in projecting power through knowledge claims is of central concern for both feminist and participatory research which strive to disrupt established hierarchies of power and ways of knowing (Ackerly & True, 2008). Both participatory and feminist methodologies privilege marginalised voices for transformative ends (Frisby et al., 2009). Feminism has been said to offer the intellectual tools for participatory research to examine experiences of injustice, while participatory research provides the means of doing so (Frisby et al., 2009). Participatory research aims to create inclusive spaces for generating and reflecting data (Lykes & Hershberg, 2012). In participatory research, the researcher assumes a position as a facilitator and a catalyst for change, as opposed to controlling the process of knowledge production (Cohen et al., 2011). In doing so, participatory research creates opportunities for the researcher and participants to learn from each other, mitigate the effects of researcher/participant power imbalances,

democratise knowledge and ensure the relevance of the research to the participants and the wider community (Cohen et al., 2011; Kara, 2020; Sullivan et al., 2005). Ensuring transparency involves active engagement with the participants both during and after data collection to shift away from research as an isolated process to one of building a research community (Falcón, 2016). This also aligns participatory methodologies with narrative research as dialogue, interaction and viewing research participants as collaborators who take part in the co-construction of knowledge are central to both methodologies (Boonzaier & Van Schalkwyk, 2010; Moen, 2006). Furthermore, much like narrative approaches, participatory research can provide means for the participants to defy representations about refugee women's passivity in the face of violence, increasing the empowering potential of the research (Kanuha, 1996).

Participatory designs and methods have been increasingly favoured by FGC researchers (Connelly et al., 2018; O'Brien et al., 2016, 2017). Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation Research (PEER) and community-based action research have been previously employed to address the research challenges arising from cultural stigma surrounding FGC, participant fears of self-incrimination and the power imbalances between the researcher and the participants (Barrett, Brown, et al., 2020; Norman et al., 2009; O'Brien et al., 2016). FGC research has increasingly opted for recruiting community-researchers to proactively address the barriers to collecting data on FGC due to language barriers, closed communities and the sensitive nature of these practices (Barrett, Brown, et al., 2020; Gele et al., 2015; O'Brien et al., 2016, 2017; Wahlberg, Johnsdotter, et al., 2019). Participatory research has also been identified as a valuable strategy in wider research addressing GBV and culture; it has been argued that GBV research designs and process should be informed by lived experiences in order to ensure the safety of the participants (Sullivan et al., 2005). When it comes to cross-cultural research, anthropologists have for long dwelled on the question of how researchers should represent other cultures and importantly, if they can and should do so (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Caplan, 1988a). In employing culturally appropriate methodologies and emphasising co-production, relationship-building and shared decision-making, participatory strategies have been argued to be beneficial for developing culturally competent research designs, methods and approaches to analysis (Mertens, 2012; Sullivan et al., 2005).

It has been argued that participatory research "makes the practical more political and political more practical" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 35). Participatory designs are particularly fitting to transformative critical research that focuses on the strengths that reside in communities that

experience discrimination and oppression on the basis of their cultural values and experiences (Mertens, 2003, 2012, p. 3). Collaborative community-based research acknowledges community as the basis of identity and builds on community strengths to facilitate co-learning, capacity building and community participation in the dissemination of the findings (Barrett, Brown, et al., 2020). I consider participatory research particularly fitting for researching FGC and cultural change from an anti-FGC perspective because this approach strives to engage participants to lead individual and collective action to improve their lives (Cohen et al., 2011; Lykes & Hershberg, 2012; Reid, Tom, & Frisby, 2006). The central role of community in the continuation of FGC highlights the importance of adopting approaches to research and FGC- prevention which go beyond addressing these practices at individual level (Barrett, Brown, et al., 2020).

### **5.3.3 Community Advisory Board involvement**

To ensure that my research was sensitive to the lived experiences of FGC-affected women, prior to data collection, I recruited a Community Advisory Board (CAB) to inform the research process. This strategy has previously been successfully employed in research on FGC and on mental health with refugee communities (Chu & Akinsulure-Smith, 2017; Ellis et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2009). The CAB comprised of eight FGC-affected asylum-seeking and refugee women from Malawi, Sudan, Nigeria and the Gambia. The advisers had resided in the UK between two and ten years, and their ages ranged from mid-twenties to late fifties. The CAB recruitment was advertised widely to refugee community groups and third sector organisations who address FGC as part of their work. This led me to form a long-standing partnership with a specialist Black minority ethnic women's organisation who invited me to embed the advisory sessions into their established group-work programme. This presented both ethical and methodological benefits; first, most of the women who took part were already familiar with each other and the community worker co-ordinating the group, which was reflected in the advisers' openness to discuss sensitive issues and personal experiences and their recognition of the importance of confidentiality. Second, by developing the CAB through an organisation that specialised in support provision and awareness-raising, I was able to ensure that most of the advisers had prior opportunities to discuss FGC. Making sure that the advisers had already begun making sense of their own experiences after arrival in a non-FGC practising context mitigated the risks of retraumatising women through confronting them unexpectedly with oppositional constructions of FGC (see Chapter 8).

However, it is necessary to recognise that tapping into a pre-existing group narrowed the range of perspectives provided by the advisers. The previous training the advisers had received had likely heavily informed their negative opinions and conceptualisations of FGC as GBV.

Lastly, entering an established group as an outsider, as opposed to building the group from the ground up was a useful strategy for destabilising traditional power imbalances in research. The advisers critically scrutinised my motivations and justifications for the usefulness of my research, after which they all made a collective decision to take part. Participation in the group was not compulsory; although the advisory sessions were embedded in existing group activities, the strength of working with an established organisation which provides a number of different activities meant that women were not losing out on the opportunity to socialise and develop themselves if they had decided not to take part in my research. This was also prioritised in designing the sessions to ensure that the advisers had the option of choosing which sessions to attend in order to accommodate their existing caring responsibilities, educational commitments and changing situations (see Appendix F). Research with young people who were undergoing a period of transition in their lives has argued that in order for participatory research to be emancipatory, research needs to be flexible and accommodating (McCarry, 2012). I considered this as a pressing consideration also for research with asylum-seeking and refugee women whose lives are similarly in a state of flux as a result of displacement, the asylum process, and integration as an ongoing process.

The purpose of the CAB was manifold. During the first stage, the CAB reviewed the research focus and methods, giving feedback on the appropriateness of the language, the relevance of issues covered and the suitability of planned data collection activities. This phase enabled me to draw from FGC-affected women's own understandings of ethical standards for research (Mertens, 2012). The advisers' input was crucial in supporting me to problematise my preconceived notions and framing of culture, ethnicity and community, and in recognising the historical and cultural specificities which influence FGC in different contexts. All the advisers also wanted to share their own experiences for the research and become participants, and therefore focus group discussion and zine-making were weaved into the advisory sessions. Pragmatically, this allowed us to make the best use of the advisers' time and to ensure that women had access to the crèche which was provided by the partnering organisation. Methodologically, this concurrent approach enabled me to pilot the interview schedules and zine-making activity to improve the clarity and flow for subsequent data

collection activities. The lived experiences of the advisers were both rich data and crucial in informing the decision to widen the research focus from FGC to addressing the interconnections between FGC and other forms of GBV. Advisers' participation also increased my awareness and preparedness to address the unprompted personal disclosures from subsequent participants.

## **5.4 Ethical considerations**

It has been argued that research with displaced populations requires addressing “a range of intersecting issues including those of power, consent and community representation; confidentiality; trust and mistrust; harms, risks and benefits; autonomy and agency; cultural difference; gender; human rights and social justice; and in the worst cases, oppression and exploitation” (MacKenzie et al., 2007, p. 300). This section outlines my understanding of, and approach to addressing these key ethical considerations in research with refugees and FGC-affected women. My approach has been informed by feminist research ethics which invite the researcher to interrogate the research relationships, power differentials and the situatedness of the researcher (Ackerly & True, 2008). The next sub-sections highlight my view of ethics as an on-going process of critical reflection that takes place at every stage of the research (Kara, 2020; Rice, 2009). Prior to undertaking fieldwork, this study obtained ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee at the University of Strathclyde (see Appendix D).

### **5.4.1 Feminist reflexivity and power**

Questions about the relations between knowledge and power are central to feminist standpoint epistemology (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004). Feminist standpoint theorists reject the positivist perception of researcher objectivity, arguing that this masks male epistemic privilege and overlooks how women and other subjugated groups have been excluded from research (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004; Harding, 1993; Hesse-Biber, 2010, 2012). Feminist epistemological contention on the situatedness of knowledge directs the researcher to critically reflect their own influence in the process of knowledge production (DeVault, 1996; Doucet & Mauthner, 2006; Stanley & Wise, 1993). It has been argued that reflexivity entails considerations around how “our subjectivity becomes entangled in the lives of others” (Denzin, 1997, p. 27). Alongside feminist research, culturally competent research has been



argued to necessitate researchers to recognise their own biases and role in shaping the research (Mertens, 2012). Cross-cultural reflexivity requires one to critically reflect whether the research and its findings reinforce relations of domination or forge collaborative cross-cultural networks (Adamson & Donovan, 2002; Hooks, 1989).

Although the importance of reflexivity has been widely acknowledged, the practicalities of being a reflexive researcher are rarely discussed (Doucet and Mauthner, 2003). Doucet and Mauthner argue that reflexivity requires the researcher to move beyond considerations of social location to rendering visible the “personal, interpersonal, institutional, pragmatic, emotional, theoretical, epistemological, and ontological influences on our research” (2006, p. 42). Withaekx (2017) has proposed an “intersectional checklist” to guide researchers who interrogate FGC to aid the reflection of how their position as “outsiders” plays out during the research process:

1. Is my research doing more than just portraying Black women and describing ‘their’ habits?
2. How does my research unveil the workings of systems of oppression that are responsible for their marginalised position?
3. How may my research itself be complicit in reproducing inequality; in the ways my respondents are represented and how my findings are represented, and how these may or may not empower the individuals and communities I have studied?
4. Does my research disproportionately focus on one or a limited number of structures of domination (culture, ethnicity, etc.) at the expense of other meaningful factors that might provide insight in the phenomenon at hand?
5. How do gender, race, class, age, heteronormativity... interact in specific manifestations of FGM/C?

(Withaekx, 2017, p. 117)

This checklist has guided me in using intersectionality not only as a theoretical lens, but also in integrating intersectional reflexivity in the process of doing research. Withaekx’s (2017) questions have held me accountable in incorporating ongoing reflexivity to question how my own preconceptions about FGC and FGC-affected women have shaped by my engagement with the participants and their narratives. Questions 1 and 3 above also guided my discussions with the advisers on the limitations and contradictions of my research, which has strived to critique the limited platforms FGC-affected women have for doing this work for

themselves. In doing so, I have practised feminist intersectional reflexivity as a means of questioning my complicity in the very discourses and practices which my research hopes to challenge. The legacy of radical feminism cautions Western feminists to question how our sincerity and vision may be clouded by our historical context and culturally situated perspectives (Gunning, 1995; Spivak, 1987). As argued by Boddy:

*Though her sex may grant her [the researcher] greater access to women in an alien society, it guarantees no privileged insight into what it means to be a woman in another cultural context; she and her informants may share a common biology: they do not share a common gender. (1989, p. 56).*

It has been argued that Black women who do not share the views of white feminists are often not seen as “credible witnesses” of their own experiences, which in turn reinforces the imperial double standards that assess women’s agency based on the colour of their skin (Carby, 1982; hooks, 1989). Ortega (2006) has argued that resisting what she identifies as “loving, knowing ignorance” requires researchers to be critical of their motivations to “give voice” to marginalised participants. The engagement with the words of Black women and women of colour necessitates ongoing intellectual curiosity to hear worldviews that are not like our own (Ortega, 2006). Understanding different versions of reality requires building research relationships that are conducive to recognising these power differences (Mertens, 2012).

Reflexivity necessitates critical awareness of our privileged positions as researchers (Ackerly & True, 2008). Transnational feminist epistemology invites us to reflect the researcher positionality in relation to citizenship and academic privileges (Falcón, 2016). Although increasing attention has been given to the ways in which the hostile environment is beginning to shape the experiences of EU migrants in post-Brexit Britain (Burrell & Schweyher, 2019; Guma & Dafydd Jones, 2018), as a white EU migrant, I enjoy classed and racialised privileges and structural benefits that are unattainable for my participants. This was exemplified by my ability to acquire a permanent right to remain through the EU Settlement Scheme in the space of only few months, in contrast to many of my participants who had endured the asylum process for years.

Researchers have proposed acts of redistribution and reciprocity as strategies for mitigating the effects of these privileges and resisting the imperial practices of extracting knowledge

from marginalised research participants (Falcón, 2016). I have strived to incorporate reciprocity in the research through compensating my participants financially for the time they have given to the research. I covered travel costs for all participants, as well as childcare for all community advisers, both of which were identified as being of crucial importance to enable participation. Despite (or perhaps, exactly because of) the research focus on highly sensitive topics of violence and trauma, I also emphasised the importance of making the research encounters enjoyable for the participants. In engaging with these women who frequently experience social isolation due to their positioning as displaced migrants, I strived to facilitate the social side of the data collection activities by setting time aside for informal socialising. The end of the first phase of working with the advisers was also marked with a lunch celebration and feedback session to give the women an opportunity to reflect upon their experience of taking part. In recognising the disproportionate amount of unpaid labour done by Black women (Falcón, 2016) and the considerable barriers faced by refugee women to evidence their experiences in order to access further education and employment opportunities, vouchers and “end of project” recognition certificates provided a meaningful way for me to compensate the advisers’ for their involvement. Although these may seem like small acts of reciprocity, the feedback from the advisors and the partner organisation suggests that these steps were central in making women feel included and that their contributions to the project were valued (Reid et al., 2006). I have since secured further funding from the Annette Lawson Charitable Trust to provide vouchers for the advisers who will support the dissemination of the research findings after the completion of this thesis.

#### **5.4.2 Informed consent**

Informed consent is a central principle in any research involving human beings. This requires providing participants detailed information about what the participation involves, the purpose of the research and about the individuals and organisations that are behind it (Crow et al., 2006). In addition to ensuring that the participants understood my role as a researcher, I considered that informed consent also necessitated making my stance on FGC practices explicit. Although some FGC researchers have been reluctant to do this in order to avoid conveying judgement, or confusion between the roles of a researcher and an activist (see for example Johnsdotter, 2012), I considered this necessary to give the participants a clear understanding of the motivations of my research. Rather than conceptualising the researcher’s role as dispassionate or objective, I view research as a politicised act which is situated in a

particular context and which is fuelled by my own ideological commitment to social justice (Cohen et al., 2011; Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012).

While I consider that FGC research does not necessitate researchers to express neutrality or respect towards all cultural practices, I argue that it does nevertheless demand the researcher to show respect and sensitivity towards those affected by them. Cross-cultural research must be sensitive to cultural differences and experiences of GBV to avoid further harm to the participants (Libling & Shah, 2001). This sensitivity not only warrants careful considerations over how we convey our opposition to FGC, but also transparency over for what is the purpose of asking our participants to share their insights and personal experiences. In researching bodies, the researcher not only needs to be aware of culturally inscribed meanings and experiences (Fonow & Cook, 2005), but also the position from which they interpret such meanings:

*For researchers from positions of bodily privilege, issues of interpretation intensify when researching and writing across physical differences is distorted by colonial and other hegemonic histories and legacies. (Rice, 2009, p. 245)*

While I chose to use the term female genital cutting in describing these practices in this thesis, during the data collection I flexibly adapted to using the terms which the participants were comfortable with. In analysing the data, I critically reflected the extent to which my readings of women's narratives of violence and body are influenced by my whiteness and position as a Westerner. The widespread critique of the international anti-FGC discourse exemplifies the need to scrutinise how the dominant language and representations of FGC can be counter-productive to research and for supporting women at the aftermath of violence. While I made my position on FGC clear to the participants, during the fieldwork, I was careful not to convey my preconceptions about how women experienced living with FGC.

Voluntary participation requires considerations of how power is exercised over participants in the research encounters and within the wider society, and how this may lead participants to feel a sense of obligation to participate (Crow et al., 2006; MacKenzie et al., 2007).

Considerations around power and coercion are central to research on forced migration and GBV in order to ensure the research does not reproduce the disempowerment the participants have experienced through their experiences of interpersonal and structural forms of violence (Oke, 2008; Smith, 2017). The lack of control forced migrants have over the fate of their own stories necessitates increased attention to questions of power, confidentiality and

accountability in research (Eastmond, 2007). For refugees, trauma and complex vulnerabilities can limit the scope of their self-determination and autonomy (MacKenzie et al., 2007). Research with asylum seekers who depend on state bodies for meeting their basic needs necessitates making clear separation between the research and other services that the participants may be accessing (Ellis et al., 2007; Zwi et al., 2006). During the fieldwork, I made it clear to participants that the data collection activities were independent from the organisations I collaborated with to recruit participants, and that declining to take part would have no consequences to their access to the support services provided by these organisations. Although focus groups and zine-making activities were embedded into existing group sessions for pragmatic reasons, these were done in addition to, as opposed to replacing the support and training programmes provided by the organisations, to ensure that the participants did not have to take part in the research to access these services or the social support the groups provided.

Although research with refugees involves detailed considerations around vulnerability, research should also resist reproducing the representations of this group as uniformly powerless and lacking agency. These stereotypes underpin Eurocentric constructions of deserving and undeserving asylum seekers, and the process of asylum determinations which researchers argue expects the claimants to become complicit in reproducing essentialist and disempowering victim identities (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013; Smith & Waite, 2019). Taking part in research can be welcomed by the participants as a means of having their voices heard (Kirmayer et al., 2004; MacKenzie et al., 2007). This was mentioned by several of the FGC-affected women who said that their motivation to participate was to challenge the persistent silence around FGC. As highlighted in the following chapters, women were highly critical of the representations of powerless refugees, and how these representations fed into practices that undermined their agency by statutory providers and FGC prevention (see Chapters 7 and 8). Women's attention to agency and their right to be heard highlights the importance of recognising research in itself as a site of complex power relations (Thapar-Björkert & Henry, 2014). Whilst the researcher and the participants have an unequal power in relation to the process of knowledge production, viewing power in and around the research as being constantly negotiated is central to resisting the colonial constructions of Black women as passive victims (Thapar-Björkert and Henry, 2004).

It has been argued that written consent forms can often be intimidating, culturally inappropriate or insensitive to individual capacities in terms of literacy and language

proficiency when working with displaced groups (Ellis et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2009; MacKenzie et al., 2007). Refugees' experiences of hostile bureaucratic practices during the asylum process also mean that the detailed information statements and consent forms commonly used in research can undermine participants' confidence in the voluntary nature and motivations of the research. This confidence can be further undermined by the lack of transparency over FGC risk assessments and mandatory reporting in the UK, which recent reports suggest have caused tensions and distrust between statutory providers and potentially affected communities (Abdelshahid et al., 2021; Kirkland, 2017). For these reasons, oral consent was offered as an alternative to written consent. In both instances, participants were provided with written and verbal details about: the purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of participation; the possibility of withdrawing consent at any time; and arrangements for data protection and storage to ensure confidentiality. When participants gave oral consent, details of this were recorded on the consent forms, along with any necessary information (See Appendix A).

Rather than a tick-box exercise, informed consent was thus approached as a process of on-going negotiation to ensure participants have a degree of control over their involvement in the research (Burman, Batchelor, & Brown, 2001; MacKenzie et al., 2007). It has been argued that interviewees cannot give full informed consent at the start of exploratory qualitative research encounters which can take unexpected directions (Miller et al., 2012). This issue, along with the research focus on how women make sense of their experiences of violence and trauma through narration underscores the importance of conceptualising consent as a process as opposed to a procedure. During the data collection, I carefully monitored participants' responses and facial expressions to offer to pause or end the interviews prematurely if the participants became too distressed. Although some participants did become emotional during the interviews, none of the women asked to end the interviews; instead, during the debriefing, women said that they perceived this as a cathartic opportunity to speak out about these experiences, sometimes for the first time, with a sympathetic listener. I emphasised building rapport with the research participants, which can be understood in terms of empathy and affiliation that require emotive and relational involvement from the researcher (Prior, 2018). It has been argued that rapport "validates the scholar as a feminist, as a researcher, and as a human being... it symbolises sisterhood, her research skill and her ethical standing" (Reinharz, 1993, p. 73). Although the influence of Black feminist literature has made me question the limits of feminist conceptualisations of sisterhood, I considered building rapport

nevertheless central to ensuring validity and access to data, and adopting an ethical conduct in researching sensitive topics (Dempsey et al., 2016; Guillemin & Heggen, 2009).

Researchers need to find ways to develop rapport without lapsing into a situation where the interview turns into therapy (Duncombe & Jessop, 2012; Guillemin & Heggen, 2009). When participants became emotional, I took time to respond sympathetically and gave the women an opportunity to share their experiences without prompting to retain empathetic distance (Dempsey et al., 2016).

### **5.4.3 Risk of harm**

The concept of “sensitive topic” is often taken for granted (Lee & Renzetti, 1990). I have conceptualised FGC, other forms of GBV and forced migration as sensitive research areas due to the potential cost that addressing these topics can have on the participants themselves (Lee & Renzetti, 1990). These potential consequences arise from examining FGC in a social context where these practices are not a norm, and from a context in which asylum seekers are forced to engage with a system that compounds and creates trauma (Canning, 2017).

Research with refugees requires sensitivity towards participants’ experiences of harm and their precarious realities of resettlement (MacKenzie et al., 2007). To prepare myself for this, the fieldwork was preceded by extensive reading of academic literature in this area, additional academic training on conducting forced migration research and gaining volunteering experience with a specialist refugee organisation to develop my understanding about key issues, support provision and challenges in refugee research.

In prioritising the need to avoid potential harm and distress, I made it clear from the onset that taking part in the research did not require participants to disclose personal experiences of FGC. During the data collection, the topic of FGC was introduced very broadly in the context of other gendered cultural issues which may be of concern to refugee women. Nevertheless, many women I interviewed did voluntarily disclose their experiences of FGC and other forms of GBV. In many cases, these disclosures were unexpected and sudden; on one occasion, I began by asking the focus group participants to introduce themselves, which immediately provoked several women to share their experiences of FGC, domestic abuse and forced marriage. I believe this can not only be attributed to their clear understanding of the topics my research focused on, but these responses also further exemplify the impact that safe spaces and peer support can have in enabling women to talk about their experiences (see also

Chapter 8). When women disclosed their experiences of FGC, I took their cue to ask about the dynamics of these practices more generally, while refraining from asking specific questions about their experience of undergoing FGC. Although this decision meant that some potential opportunities for collecting rich data were left unexplored (Guillemin & Heggen, 2009), my decision was grounded on both feminist research ethics and the criticism against Western gaze into FGC (Njambi, 2004, see also Chapter 3). I considered that the wealth of graphic data on women's experiences of undergoing FGC did not justify my intellectual curiosity to examine this further, potentially at the expense of distressing my participants; nor was the immediate experience of undergoing FGC ever the primary focus of my research.

At the end of the interviews and group activities all participants were given information on specialist FGC support services that they could access (see Appendix G). In many cases, the group activities were conducted in collaboration with organisations who already specialise in supporting refugee women. This meant that trained support was readily available to the participants if they had needed it. In further mitigating this risk, I made sure that the interview and group discussions never revolved solely around negative experiences. I made sure to direct the conversation away from these topics towards the end of the interviews, leading the discussion to women's aspirations, personal resources and the social capital that they had drawn from to counter the complex challenges they had experienced. This had the ethical benefit of giving women some distance to their disclosures, along with eliciting rich data on women's agency and experiences of "recovery". I also took time at the end to debrief the participants about their experiences of taking part in the interviews.

#### **5.4.4 Confidentiality**

Ensuring confidentiality is paramount in protecting the participants from physical, social and political risks (Fontes, 1998). Proactive considerations around the power dynamics between research participants, and also between participants and potential collaborating interpreters and organisations are of central importance to FGC research which can expose participants to community pressure, with potential risks to individuals who challenge prevailing social norms and violence (Mitchell, 2011; Reid et al., 2006). Previous research highlights how speaking out against FGC can expose women to bullying and harassment (Lien & Schultz, 2013). To address these risks, I made the decision not to use interpreters in my research. Although decolonising research and transnational feminist epistemology seek to destabilise



privileging English as the dominant language (Falcón, 2016; Kara, 2020), I viewed using interpreters with participants from small migrant communities as a risk to participant confidentiality. While this meant that the individual interviews largely excluded newly arrived asylum seekers, I mitigated these barriers to participation by also using creative visual methods as a data collection method to provide an alternative means of expression for a small group of participants who had limited English language proficiency.

To further ensure participant confidentiality, all collaborating organisations which provided spaces for data collection were chosen based on their established work in providing confidential support for refugee and FGC-affected women. In addition to third sector spaces, data collection was conducted in private rooms at the University or community centres. I refrained from conducting individual interviews in participants' homes to avoid situations where family members could overhear the interviews. Although I made it clear for the participants who took part in group activities that I could not fully ensure their confidentiality, at the beginning of these sessions, I outlined the importance that all participants refrained from sharing each other's experiences outside the group meetings. To further protect participant confidentiality, all identifiable recorded data were immediately transferred to storage to a secure University server. All data presented in this thesis have been pseudo-anonymised. The small size of communities and organisations that work to end FGC in Scotland meant that, in parts of this thesis, I have made the decision to omit demographic details to ensure that the participants are not identifiable to readers.

It has been argued that the commitment of confidentiality is both essential and problematic (Gibson et al., 2012). At times, private promises of confidentiality may stand in opposition to both researcher's own morals and the public interest (Finch, 2001). In the absence of clear legal guidelines or statute laws on research with humans, the decision on the limits of confidentiality lies with the researcher (Finch, 2001). In exploring FGC practices which are illegal in the UK, I made the decision to breach confidentiality if I needed to report imminent risk of harm to authorities. This would have included instances where the participants identified a person who was going to be subject to FGC or any other imminent harm, or a person who intended to practise FGC. At the beginning of all fieldwork, I established these boundaries of confidentiality, informing the participants that confidentiality could not be maintained if participants disclosed intentions to practise FGC or other activity that suggested themselves or others were at immediate risk of serious harm. However, no disclosures of imminent harm were made by any of the participants during the data collection.

## **5.5 Recruitment and sampling**

The tensions between the specificity of women's oppression and GBV as a global phenomenon discussed in the earlier chapters pertain to considerations over the research sample. My decision to recruit a culturally diverse sample was informed by the limited FGC research in Scotland, and my research interest in exploring the role of societal structures, as opposed to just the cultural factors which condition women's vulnerability to FGC. Nevertheless, in going against the more common approach to research FGC among one national group (Gele, Kumar, et al., 2012; Johnsdotter, 2002; Morison et al., 2004), I have been conscious about the risks of reproducing stereotypes about "Africa", which discursively colonise and undermine the cultural intricacies and diversity of the continent and African communities (Wainaina, 2005). Both the culturally diverse sampling and the research focus on the different practices that fall under the umbrella of FGC can lead researchers to overlook ethnic, national, and cultural specificities in favour of reproducing generalisations about FGC-affected communities. In addressing these issues, I incorporated member checking and drew from transnational feminist theorising in analysing the data, which has been argued to facilitate exploring parallels without minimising the differences by examining how multiple communities in different contexts are similarly situated (Falcón & Nash, 2015).

Attentiveness to the risks of perpetuating marginalisation, exclusion and silencing are central to feminist research (Ackerly & True, 2008). This necessitates critically reflecting the intended and unintended consequences of the sampling strategy and selection bias (Ackerly & True, 2008). Although I initially proposed that the inclusion criteria for my sample would be based on the Scottish estimate of the potentially FGC-affected communities (Baillot, Murray, et al., 2014), I made the decision to broaden this out after consultation with the advisers. The CAB itself included FGC-affected women whose countries of origin were not included in the Scottish or international FGC estimates, which exemplifies the incomplete picture about the global prevalence of these practices. Therefore, I made the decision to target the recruitment efforts on communities which are perceived to be potentially affected by FGC in Scotland (Baillot, Murray, et al., 2014), while being open to including interested participants from other communities who viewed the research topic relevant to their own experiences. This approach further aligns with my underlying research aim to question the dominance of Western generalisations and perspectives in FGC knowledge production. I considered that my openness to include participants whom I had not initially foreseen as

FGC-affected was important in destabilising the authority of the researcher to make decisions over who is invited to speak about issues affecting their lives.

The qualitative data collection approach and lack of fully representative data on the size of potentially affected communities in Scotland underpinned the decision to use non-probability sampling in this research. Following consultation with the literature and experienced researchers who have studied FGC in Nordic countries and the United States, I identified using gatekeepers and snowball sampling as the best pathway for navigating access to participants as an outsider. It became apparent that using gatekeepers was crucial for both gaining trust and for ensuring safe spaces and participant comfort during the data collection. Developing relationships with gatekeepers can enable the researcher to place the participants' needs at the forefront (Dempsey et al., 2016). Engaging with women's support organisations to recruit participants was particularly valuable for sense-checking that my data collection activities and approach were sensitive to the needs of the participants. Further, tapping into pre-existing women's groups for both focus groups and zine-making not only had pragmatic and ethical benefits, but was also of theoretical value in enabling me to examine the topics within an existing social context in which culture is negotiated (Kitzinger, 1994).

I identified and contacted potential gatekeepers through community and third sector organisations who worked with potentially affected communities across Scotland. The gatekeepers and subsequent participants were then encouraged to share a word about the data collection activities with service users and their social networks for further recruitment. While this strategy was successful in engaging participants in my research, I also experienced the commonly identified downfalls involved in negotiating access through gatekeepers (Dempsey et al., 2016). On one occasion, a gatekeeper refused access to their community due to my inability to provide financial incentives to all interviewed research participants. While in principle I had agreed on the importance of compensating the participants for their time, I considered that paying participants to take part in FGC research was both ethically problematic and financially unfeasible. In other occasions, potential gatekeepers never got back to me, which may have been reflective of third sector workloads, reluctance to facilitate sensitive research or their lack of trust in the motives of my research.

In addition to using gatekeepers and snowball sampling to recruit community participants for individual interviews, focus groups and zine-making sessions, I used purposive sampling to recruit key informants for interviews. Purposive sampling is particularly beneficial when

studying a particular cultural domain through recruiting participants who are reflective members of the community of interest (Tongco, 2007). Potential key informants were selected to access expert and insider perspectives based on their professional roles and position within communities. This approach to sampling supported me in gathering a range of perspectives from key informants who had first-hand experience of formally and informally supporting FGC-affected women and of witnessing the effects of cultural change within migrant communities. Notably, a number of key informants also disclosed their own experience of FGC, thus sharing not only their professional, but also personal perspectives for the research. In the following chapters, the countries of origin for the key informants who disclosed experiences of FGC have been omitted. While I recognise that this lack of clarity may conceal information, I consider it the best solution for giving the reader a good understanding of the overall sample without compromising the confidentiality of participants who are members of small migrant communities and who can be easily identified by the combination of their professional roles and nationality.

<b>Key informant</b>	<b>Organisation description and location</b>	<b>Gender and country of origin</b>
Key informant 1	Women's support organisation, Dundee	Woman, Britain
Key informant 2	Women's support organisation, Glasgow	Woman, Britain
Key informant 3	Women's support organisation, Glasgow	Woman, Britain
Key informant 4	FGC-affected key informant, Organisation details omitted, Glasgow	Woman, country of origin omitted
Key informant 5	FGC-affected key informant, Organisation details omitted, Edinburgh	Woman, country of origin omitted
Key informant 6	Religious organisation, Glasgow	Woman, Britain

Key informant 7	Religious organisation, Glasgow	Woman, Britain
Key informant 8	Community organisation, Glasgow	Man, Cameroon
Key informant 9	FGC-affected key informant, Organisation details omitted, Glasgow	Woman, country of origin omitted
Key informant 10	Community organisation, Glasgow	Man, Cameroon
Key informant 11	Religious organisation, Glasgow	Woman, Britain

Table 1. *Key informant sample*

The final key informant sample was comprised of community leaders, practitioners from Scottish and Black women’s organisations and religious organisations (see Table 1). The total sample included 46 key informant and community participants. Note that there is a discrepancy between the total number and the number of participants listed for each data collection activity (see Tables 1-4). This discrepancy is explained by the occasions where the same women took part in both focus groups and zine-making sessions. The overall research sample included both men (n=6) and women (n=40) in order to gather data on cultural change both from FGC-affected women and wider members of communities who traditionally have a role to play in the continuation of these collective practices.

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender and country of origin</b>
Joyce	Woman, Malawi
Star	Woman, Malawi
Isatou	Woman, The Gambia
Olufunke	Woman, Nigeria
Fara	Woman, Nigeria
Dalia	Woman, Sudan
Amina	Woman, Sudan
FGC-affected key informant, group co-ordinator	Woman, country of origin omitted

Table 2: *Focus group sample*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender and country of origin</b>
Chibundu	Woman, Nigeria
Awa	Woman, The Gambia
Adela	Woman, Cameroon
Maryam	Woman, Iran
Anita	Woman, Democratic Republic of Congo
Celine	Woman, Democratic Republic of Congo
Oumar	Man, Senegal
Abebe	Man, Ethiopia
Essau	Man, Malawi
Musa	Man, The Gambia

Table 3. *Individual interview sample*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender and country of origin</b>
<b>Session 1: Glasgow</b>	
Joyce	Woman, Malawi
Star	Woman, Malawi
Fara	Woman, Nigeria
Olufunke	Woman, Nigeria
Dalia	Woman, Sudan
<b>Session 2: Dundee</b>	
Helen	Woman, Democratic Republic of Congo
Sarah	Woman, Algeria
Imane	Woman, Algeria
Asma	Woman, Algeria
Zainab	Woman, Libya
Salma	Woman, Libya
<b>Session 3: Glasgow</b>	
Fahima	Woman, Sudan
Ella	Woman, Eritrea
Jaha	Woman, The Gambia
Sadia	Woman, Somalia

<b>Session 4: Glasgow</b>	
Leyla	Woman, Iran
Asha	Woman, Somalia
Sabrina	Woman, Somalia
Hadeel	Woman, Sudan
Zala	Woman, Ethiopia
<b>Session 5: Edinburgh</b>	
Selma	Woman, Algeria
Lisa	Woman, Syria
Hoda	Woman, Syria

Table 4: *Sample of participants who took part in zine-making*

Due to ethical complexities related to FGC and my primary interests in researching how refugees negotiate structural inequalities and exercise agency during their migration journeys, I only recruited adult participants for my research. The data collection was conducted in Glasgow (n=34), Edinburgh (n=5) and Dundee (n=7) where most potentially affected communities have been identified to reside in Scotland (Baillot, Murray, et al., 2014). Recruiting participants from around Scotland had both a pragmatic benefit and a theoretical justification; this strategy enabled me to access a more diverse sample, and to examine participants' experiences in relation to local resettlement contexts which offer differing provisions and support for newly arrived migrant communities. Most of the participants were asylum seekers and refugees, which reflects the dominant migration patterns from FGC-practicing countries to the UK. Most of the 12 interviewed FGC-affected women had applied for derivative asylum to protect their daughters from FGC. Derivative refugee status can be granted when an individual does not independently qualify for refugee status, but their child/children are at risk of persecution. At the time of the interviews, seven of the 12 FGC-affected women were still waiting on the decisions on their asylum claims. A small minority of the participants had also arrived in UK as economic migrants or through family reunion. The sample included both Christians and Muslims. Most of the participants had families, including single mothers and mothers who were currently separated from some of their children as a result of displacement.

Figure 2 displays the participants' countries of origins for all participants who were not native Britons. In total the research included community participants from 15 countries: Malawi,





### **5.6.1 Stages of data collection**

The decision to develop the Community Advisory Board (CAB) reflects my view of research as an evolving process. In emphasising flexibility to adapt the research focus, methods and recruitment strategies, I strived to ensure the relevance of my research to communities and FGC-affected women. I had originally planned to use a quantitative survey alongside qualitative methods to examine the relationship between integration barriers and attitudes towards FGC (See Appendix C). The questionnaire was comprised of demographic questions, questions on socio-economic elements of integration which were developed based on the Indicators of Integration framework (Ager & Strang, 2004, see Chapter 3) and questions on attitudes towards FGC which were informed by questionnaire items from previous FGC research (Wahlberg, 2017). The questionnaire was piloted with the advisers, after which changes were made to the individual question items and wording. Although after this I made moderate progress in collecting responses (n=40), this fell short of what I would have needed for meaningful regression analysis on the relationship between integration and the abandonment of FGC.

In reflecting the recruitment challenges with the CAB, the advisers suggested that the practical barriers around language and access to IT faced by many recently arrived asylum seekers and refugees were a likely explanation to the low response rates. Further, although the survey was widely promoted to community groups and organisations, this method did not offer the same benefit as the qualitative methods in enabling me to build trust with groups and organisations to bridge my position as an “outsider”. Although surveys have been previously successfully employed in FGC research, this has been done without exception through using community researchers and structured interviewing (Gele et al., 2015; Wahlberg, Johnsdotter, et al., 2019). This option was not a possibility due to financial constraints, practical barriers to training community researchers and the expectation for PhD candidates to conduct their own fieldwork as opposed to overseeing the research process. Following discussions with the advisers and my supervisors, I made the decision to focus on the qualitative data collection. The preliminary findings from the survey are not reported in this thesis. However, the quantitative responses on attitudes towards FGC were used during the analysis to further validate the qualitative findings on changing attitudes towards FGC gathered through interviews and focus groups (see Chapter 8). The open-ended survey questions also helped to inform the qualitative data collection; notably, several of the

collected questionnaire responses captured forced marriage as a concern within African communities, further confirming the need to address FGC in relation of other forms of GBV.

It has been argued that qualitative methodologies “offer a multi-layered view of the nuances of social reality, one that does not privilege the interests of those who occupy positions of authority and power within a given society” (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 456). This goal aligns qualitative methods with the feminist borderlands epistemologies. I adopted a concurrent design in which all the elements of the qualitative data collection occurred simultaneously (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). I utilised three different methods to collect both verbal and visual narrative data: individual face-to-face interviews, focus groups and collaborative zine-making. The choice of mixing these methods was underpinned by *expansion intent* to explore the research questions from different perspectives to extend the breath of the inquiry in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Greene et al., 1989).

### **5.6.2 Individual interviews**

FGC research has previously opted to use both individual interviews and focus groups to benefit from group discussion for facilitating shared solidarity and rich data, while also providing participants with an opportunity to discuss FGC in confidence (Alhassan, Barrett, Brown, & Kwah, 2016; Gangoli, Gill, Mulvihill, & Hester, 2018). My decision to use both individual interviews and focus groups rests on this same rationale. I conducted in-depth interviews with community participants from potentially affected communities and with self-identifying FGC-affected women. These interviews lasted around one hour and were conducted during daytime hours either at the university premises, third sector organisation spaces or private rooms within community centres.

Interviews with community participants and FGC-affected women took a narrative form that invited the participants to trace their experiences of vulnerability and the changing relationship with their culture through their migration journeys from their countries of origin to Scotland (See Appendix B). In contrast to asylum interviews which centralise the role of “truth”, narrative interviews explore socially produced representations of lived experience (Smith, 2017; Wernesjö, 2020). This is of key ethical importance, as retelling stories in a supportive space stands at odds with women’s experiences of the asylum interviews in which their “stories are either not deemed relevant or credible or, increasingly, not heard at all” (Eastmond, 2007, p. 261). Retelling these stories can play part in the process by which

refugees come to repair ruptured identities, recreate new self-identities, gain control and restore order and find meaning in their lives after displacement (Puvimansinghe et al., 2014). The interview focus on migration journeys and cultural change encouraged participants to draw comparisons between different contexts and to express in detail how they had experienced their changing positionalities and vulnerability post-migration.

Interviewing has recognised as relational, interactional and dynamic (Enosh, 2005). It has been argued that interviewing is increasingly being seen as a moral inquiry, necessitating the researcher to critically reflect on the researcher/participant power imbalances and participants' experiences of sensitive interview interactions (Creswell, 2014). An in-depth approach to interviewing has been argued to be beneficial not only to elicit rich data, but also for making the participants feel safe and at ease to discuss sensitive topics and personal experiences (Dempsey et al., 2016). I strived to further facilitate this through a relatively unstructured approach; although the interview schedules guided me to focus the conversations to the topics I was interested in, I approached the interviews as "conversations with a purpose" (Enosh, 2005, p. 1), emphasising dialogue and flexibility around the question order and extent to which participants would focus on the different topics of interest. I considered that this flexibility also aligned with my aims to question the Western framings of FGC practices and the dominant assumptions about the homogeneity of refugees' pathways to resettlement. The free structure gave the participants opportunities to reveal silences and the less visible levels of their stories that the dominant representations of refugees and FGC-affected women tend to obscure (Puvimansinghe et al., 2014). This approach supported me in assuming the role of active listener, giving the participants the opportunity to share their experiences of trauma and violence in their own terms, which led to a more sensitive approach to addressing deeply personal and difficult experiences (Dempsey et al., 2016).

In addition to interviews with community participants, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants from community groups, religious organisations and Scottish and Black women's organisations. The key informant interviews lasted around one hour and were conducted in the participants' workplaces. I utilised key informant interviews to develop a broad, informative overview of the research topic from expert perspectives (Lavrakas, 2008). Data from key informant interviews provided context to the individual narratives and experiences. The key informant interviews invited the participants to discuss community attitudes, changing gender roles, family dynamics, and cultural and resettlement challenges facing newly arrived migrant communities in Scotland in relation to the

participants' experiences of frontline practice and community engagement (See Appendix B). It has been argued that key informants can be "cultural brokers" whose special vantage point gives them insight into two different cultures (Mathison, 2011, p. 221). In many cases, the key informants discussed the topics by contrasting their professional and personal experiences, leading to rich data on the tensions arising from cultural change and approaches to FGC prevention.

### **5.6.3 Focus groups**

In addition to individual interviews with community participants who were recruited through gatekeepers and snowball sampling, seven advisers volunteered to share their own experiences for the research through taking part in five sequential focus groups (and one adviser through a one-to-one interview). Group discussion was also embedded in the zine-making, which I discuss in the following section. The sequential approach to focus groups was grounded on both ethical and practical considerations. Splitting the topics to several sessions enhanced the data quality through facilitating the research to uncover the complex "layers of subtlety and ambiguity" (Read, 2018, p. 4) in the participants' detailed discussions about the interconnections between culture, displacement and vulnerability. Further, I consider that the sequential approach was also key in developing rapport and creating safe spaces for the participants to discuss sensitive topics (Earthy & Cronin, 2008; Read, 2018).

It has been argued that despite their potential to draw from participant interactions, this is virtually absent in most focus group research which commonly treats the method in the same way as individual interviews (Belzile & Öberg, 2012). My decision to utilise focus groups was grounded in the value of free-flowing dialogue to stimulate participants' thinking and facilitate new ideas to emerge, leading to a richer data (Falcón, 2016; Upvall et al., 2009). Integrating focus group discussion and adviser group activities to review and pilot the planned questionnaire, interview topics and zine-making not only had the practical benefit in terms of covering all activities within a limited timeframe, but these activities also worked to promote participant interactions. The focus group participants readily led the discussion in unexpected directions, facilitating multiple voices over the authoritative voice of the researcher. This enabled my research to further prioritise participants' hierarchy of importance, language, concepts and their understanding of the world (Kitzinger, 1994; Liamputtong, 2011). Focus group participants engaged in both complementary and

argumentative interactions, illustrating both shared experiences and disagreements (Kitzinger, 1994). Especially the points of disagreement produced rich data, as participants were explaining, clarifying and justifying their differing points of view (Kitzinger, 1994). Although it was been argued that focus group participants are less likely to express views that deviate from that of the majority of the group (Kitzinger, 1994), the women who took part in the focus group did openly disagree over controversial practices, including smacking and lobola (bride price). I suspect that the culturally and nationally diverse sample encouraged these discussions, as the participants not only compared their own experiences before and after migration but were also keen to identified differences and similarities in women's positions across different contexts.

Although focus groups are often assumed to be inappropriate for researching sensitive subjects, it has been argued that group work activities can also facilitate the exploration of difficult and taboo experiences by providing a space for sharing and breaking away from stereotypical cultural constructions of stigmatised experiences (Kitzinger, 1994). Unlike interviews, focus groups also put less pressure on individual participants to contribute to the discussion. I found the traditional advice against using focus groups in researching sensitive issues to be of little relevance to my fieldwork; instead, I found that women were more open to disclosing personal experiences in focus groups, which they said provided a cathartic space for sharing experiences of violence and trauma. In my research, the focus groups created as a site of "collective remembering" (Kitzinger, 1994), which promoted dialogue and emergence of rich data. Crucially, the culturally and nationally diverse sample meant that the participants were not as exposed to within-ethnic group peer pressure which women often encounter when speaking out about FGC (Lien & Schultz, 2013). However, advisers said that the focus on shared experiences of FGC and structural inequalities nevertheless enabled them to foster a sense of belonging and cultivate peer support.

#### **5.6.4 Zine-making**

Zines are non-profit self-publications that have been used as a vehicle for grassroots social and political activism since the 1970s. It has been argued that zines are somewhere in between a personal letter and a magazine (Duncombe, 1997). While zines inherently defy any rules of production, they can be described as raw, cut-and-paste style pamphlets that commonly incorporate text, drawings and/or re-claimed visuals similarly to collages to

address a range of topics that occupy the intersection between personal and political (see Figure 3). The process of zine-making is rooted in DIY culture; as argued by Holdaway, “a person with access to a photocopier can be writer, publisher and printer” (2004, p. 1). Although researchers have increasingly recognised zines as a source of rich data on cultural production and social activism, zine-making itself remains underutilised as a research method. Nevertheless, it has been argued that zines provide distinct possibilities for emancipatory qualitative research through integrating community voices into the research process (Gordon, 2012). Zine-making, as a method, and its end products have served multiple purposes for my research as: an interactive tool to facilitate data collection and participant interactions; a source of rich data and as a means of disseminating the research findings.



Figure 3. Zine pages created by Selma, Lisa and Hoda (left) and Hadeel and Zala (right)

During the data collection I conducted five zine-making sessions with asylum-seeking and refugee women in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee lasting around 1.5 hours each (see Table 4). At the beginning of these sessions, the participants were shown examples of zines to introduce them to the activity which invited the different groups to create individual pages that I would collate into a complete zine at the end of the research. The sessions introduced zine-making as a creative exercise for women to highlight key issues and aspects of their experiences as migrant women. Participants were given broad prompting questions that their

pages could respond to (for example, “Are there any experiences you have had that you think we should raise more awareness about?”). However, the focus of these prompts was intentionally kept broad to avoid prescribing the issues and experiences which women should address in their zine-pages. I provided the participants with pens, scissors, glue, magazines, campaign flyers and photo bank images, with an effort to include re-claimed visuals that the participants would have some degree of familiarity with. Although I made effort to supply all groups with a range of visuals which the participants used in creative ways to convey their experiences, it is likely that my choices over the provided resources nevertheless shaped their creative processes.

The participants were encouraged to discuss their experiences during the zine-making process and identify ways to represent these visually, after which they were asked to share their pages with the rest of the group and summarise the key message they wished to convey, which I recorded and transcribed afterwards. Although on occasions women also created individual pages, in most cases they worked as one group or split themselves into two smaller groups to work collaboratively on zine pages. It has been argued that incorporating interactive elements in the research challenges the dominant ways of knowledge production and the traditional distance between the researcher and participants (Falcón, 2016). Collaborative zine-making aligns with decolonising research practices informed by transnational and postcolonial feminism, which privilege creativity, collaboration and the political commitment to communities over institutions (Falcón, 2016; Kara, 2020). Zines are by their nature transformative and oriented towards activism, and as such illuminative of the coalitional practices that are harnessed in the pursuit of social change, community building and community action (Licona, 2012). Zine-making facilitates interactions between like-minded participants, enabling an examination of subjective viewpoints and expressions of community which might not be apparent in people’s daily lives (Lovata, 2008). It has been argued that zines have a potential to be a space of shared understanding, meaning-making and consciousness-building (Licona, 2005; Schilt, 2003), which also aligns this method with the participatory research emphasis on co-production and democratising knowledge production. Despite their emancipatory potential, participatory creative methods do not inherently reduce the power imbalances in research (Foster-Fishman et al., 2005; Packard, 2008). Crucially, research needs to take into account the personal, cultural and structural barriers which might prevent participants from utilising these methods to communicate knowledge (Packard, 2008). I argue that the benefits for using zines specifically in research with refugee women



are two-fold: first, the creative potential and lack of “rules” for zine-making, along with the typical zine-making approach which includes cutting, pasting and drawing which most people have familiarity with, means that zine-making is accessible to people from different backgrounds regardless of skill level and resources. Second, not only does this group of women frequently experience barriers to expression due to limited language proficiency, but their experiences of displacement and violence often resist narrative ordering and verbal expression which interview methods rely on (Eastmond, 2007). It has been argued that sometimes sensitive and personal experiences reveal themselves not in what is said, but in what cannot be said or cannot be expressed coherently (Squire et al., 2008). Art-based methods are particularly suited to exploring sensitive subjects and for expressing cultural ways of knowing (Kara, 2020). Zine-making passes expressive and creative control to the participants, which I argue is of ethical importance in research with minoritised groups and displaced participants, who have been faced with the expectations to narrate their experiences according to Eurocentric notions of persecution and refugee-ness during the asylum process (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013; Kynsilehto & Puumala, 2015).



Figure 4. *Participants repurposed visuals from magazines creatively in zine-making: images from the British Vogue were repurposed for self-representation; World War II spitfires visualised the mother’s wish that her children would be recognised as refugees; images from abortion rights rallies became symbolic of FGC-affected women’s wider fight on bodily rights; and visuals from articles on endometriosis, miscarriage and mental ill-health were frequently repurposed for describing the experiences of being in asylum*



I consider that zine making as a method aligns with the narrative approach of my research. The collaboratively created zine pages have a narrative structure that simultaneously conveys individual and collective experiences. The visuals which the participants selected from various magazines/publications illuminate the processes of meaning-making and the construction of identities through mediating the ways individuals negotiate their past, present and future (Guest, 2016). Along with other visual methods, zine-making provides a means of retelling individual, social and cultural stories, capturing deeply personal feelings that also hold collective significance (Guest, 2016). In using found visuals in new ways, the participants employed images as vehicles of new knowledge that is not present in the images themselves (Collier, 2001, see Figure 4).

I argue that zine-making as a method reflects the strength of creative methods in resisting binary thinking to open spaces for new understandings, and the pursuit of creative research in crossing boundaries (Kara, 2020). Zines “offer a space from which to speak ambiguity and contradiction” (Licona, 2005, p. 109) that characterise refugee women’s experiences of displacement and individual, collective and cultural identity negotiations. It has been argued that zines are by their nature aligned with borderlands epistemologies; as noted by Licona, “borderlands rhetorical practices in third-space contexts reveal a shared understanding of nondominant experiences that can build coalition” (Licona, 2012, p. 10). Licona (2005, 2012) argues that as third-spaces, zines are both epistemological and ontological spaces that reveal the ways of knowing and being in the world that defy and contest the normative gaze. Zines respond to the ways dominant ideologies are experienced, rendering visible the underrepresented voices and practices of discursive resistance that work to generate alternative knowledges to replace oppressive and exclusionary discourses (Gordon, 2012; Licona, 2005, 2012). Although the topics which the zine pages cover are diverse, all the pages shared a focus on women’s shifting experiences of inclusion and exclusion. The zine pages created by the participants capture women’s collective voices to contest the physical and imagined borders that inscribed their lives, proposing new social and cultural configurations, re-creating subjective positions and revisioning futures (Licona, 2012). These pages re-imagine both past and future through unsettling the dominant representations of Black women and women of colour as victims of violence and as refugees, re-visioning women’s experiences of multiple harms through conveying subaltern women’s narratives of hope, survival and resistance.

## 5.7 Data analysis

The data analysis of the different data sources combined thematic and narrative analysis approaches, which have been argued to lend themselves well to research that recognises experiences, meanings and social structures as mutually constitutive (Shukla et al., 2014). Both analysis approaches also share a focus on the content of the data as well as the contexts in which data emerge (Shukla et al., 2014). Especially when it came to analysing focus groups and the key informant interviews with participants who also disclosed experiences of FGC, it was essential to analyse the data as situated talk to recognise how participants could constitute themselves in different ways in during the interviews as individuals, professionals or members of social groups (Belzile & Öberg, 2012; Hydén & Bülow, 2010).

In integrating the two analysis approaches, I placed simultaneous emphasis on generality and particularity to develop both cross-case and within-case understandings of what is happening in the data (Shukla et al., 2014). My rationale for using thematic analysis was to highlight the commonalities and differences across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis has been argued to be better suited for providing a rich overview of the full dataset, while narrative analysis is more well-suited for examining the particularities of individual experiences and the moments of narration (Squire, 2008). I first conducted thematic analysis to examine patterns of shared themes across the data, then moved onto narrative analysis to interrogate the ways these themes were uniquely constructed within individual narratives (Shukla et al., 2014). The thematic analysis of interview and zine data provided a contextual framing for understanding the complexities and tensions present in the individual cases (Shukla et al., 2014), enabling me to identify shared experiences while also attending to the heterogeneity of individual participants' trajectories of migration and vulnerability. To give an example, thematic analysis led me to recognise how the shared experiences of culture of disbelief and denial during the asylum process (see Chapter 7) influenced the ways in which individual women framed and narrated their vulnerability to GBV not only from a cultural, but also from a structural inequality perspective (see Chapter 6). Narrative analysis of these individual accounts then revealed the particularities in how women reconstructed their past experiences to make sense of their changing positionality along the continuum of vulnerability to resilience (see Chapter 8). These personal accounts were in turn illuminative of wider social and spatial processes on cultural change, integration and institutionalised exclusions (Wiles et al., 2005).

I began the data analysis process with verbatim transcription and familiarising and immersing myself in the data through listening to the recordings, examining the zine pages and reading and re-reading the transcripts and my field notes. I applied thematic analysis to interview, focus group and zine data, using NVivo 12 software to facilitate initial in-vivo and descriptive coding. At this stage, several of the interviews were double coded by another early career researcher, to provide an opportunity to review the codes and associated extracts of data to increase confirmability, rigour and reliability of the data analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). To aid the identification of themes and sub-themes, I used mind-mapping to visualise how the initial codes combined into wider overarching themes and to draw connections between the different codes and themes (see Figure 5). This was followed by several rounds of reviewing, refining and reworking of the themes to assess both the distinctness of the different themes and the overall coherence of the themes based on the scope and content of each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The zines pages were examined both individually and as a collection, beginning with open viewing to record my first impressions (Collier, 2001), followed by thematic analysis of both the visual pages and the accompanying transcripts. At this stage, visuals from the zines were included in the thematic mind map to bridge the gap between different data sources.

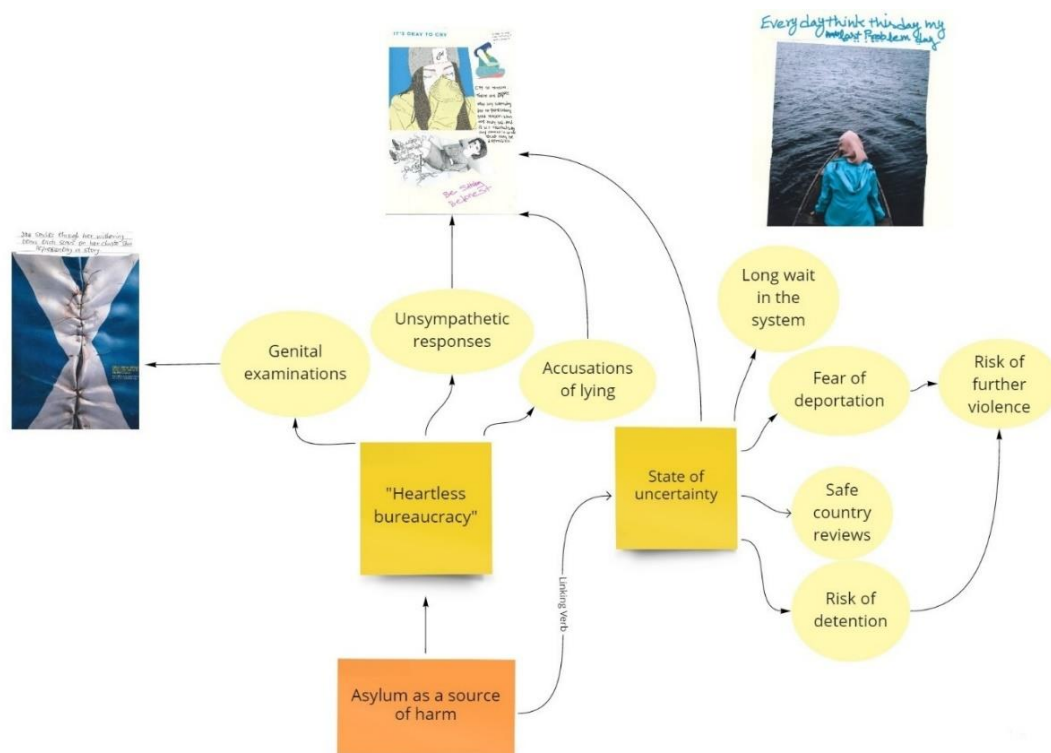


Figure 5. Part of a mind map created during the coding process to visualise connections between initial codes, sub-themes and overarching themes

The process of identifying themes in the data focused on finding repeated patterns of meaning across the data set, with an emphasis on the centrality of the meaning as opposed to the frequency of the theme (Boonzaier & Van Schalkwyk, 2010; Braun & Clarke, 2006). I adopted an inductive approach to thematic analysis to provide rich description of the overall dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is reflected in the disconnect between the identified themes and the questions which I asked the participants (See Appendices B and E). I consider that this exemplifies the importance of ongoing reflectivity on the researcher's preconceptions when the research is conducted from an outsider-position.

The themes were identified at a latent level, whereby the process of identifying the themes goes beyond description to theorising the underpinning socio-cultural contexts, structural conditions and meanings articulated in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this process, I also kept in touch with my contact at the partner organisation who co-ordinated the CAB, and later with the advisers to assess the credibility of my interpretations to address the "fit" between respondents' views and my representation of them (Nowell et al., 2017). These forms of member checking also enabled me to seek clarification over geographical and cultural specificities which were central to understanding some of the nuances in the data, thus mitigating the limitations posed by my position as an "outsider".

The thematic analysis was followed by narrative analysis of individual cases. In addition to individual interviews, I was able to put together individuals' narratives from the different data sources for the participants who took part in both focus groups and zine-making. Experience-centred narrative research conceptualises personal narratives as "encompassing all sequential and meaningful stories of personal experience that people produce within accounts of themselves" (Squire, 2008, p. 17). Experience-centred analysis attends to the sequencing and progression of themes within the data, their transformation and resolution (Squire, 2008). Narrative analysis makes the distinction between "life as lived", "life as experienced" and "life as told", interrogating how experiences give rise to narratives and meaning (Bruner, 1988; Eastmond, 2007). The analysis process also includes a further fourth level, "life as text", to reflect the researcher's and the audiences' interpretation of the participants' stories (Eastmond, 2007). Narrative analysis focuses on analysing both narrative content and the interactional context of the storytelling (Moen, 2006; Squire et al., 2014). When it comes to assessing the validity of narrative research, the answer lies in the centrality of the moment of storytelling; rather than assessing the "truthfulness" of the participants' accounts, narratives

are recognised as context dependent, partial versions of the reality (Eastmond, 2007; Hunter, 2010).

Both feminist and narrative approaches to research recognise the interviewer's role as a co-creator whose participation shapes the interview data (Ackerly & True, 2008; Duncombe & Jessop, 2012; Shukla et al., 2014). In conducting narrative analysis, I centred the importance of recognising narratives as reconstructions of experiences which are influenced by the particular moment of telling and their audience. I analysed the data interrogating the key questions of why the participants had shared their stories in a particular way, how mine and other women's presence had influenced their narration and lastly, how the individual accounts were situated in relation to the key themes that were identified through thematic analysis (Earthy & Cronin, 2008). Narrative analysis not only enabled me to interrogate individuals' stories, but also the role of storytelling itself in playing part in the process by which the participants were making sense of their own experiences and identity; sharing experiences and points of agreement and disagreement were illuminative of how the groups that took part in focus groups and zine-making collectively constructed a narrative about refugee women's vulnerability and agency.

Reflexivity can help researchers to do analytic work more ethically (Kara, 2020). Throughout the analysis process, I kept notes on my initial observations on what I was reading in the data, as well as on my reflections on how my own positionality and preconceptions were influencing my interpretations. In utilising Withaecx's (2017) intersectional checklist, I used this diary to keep myself accountable of the ways my preconceptions could lead me to overlook structures of domination that played part in the participants' trajectories of vulnerability. It has also been argued that reflective research practices are central to analysing visuals which raise questions around subjective interpretations and multiple layers of meaning (Guest, 2016). Reflexivity in analysing visual data necessitates recognising our way of seeing as historically, culturally, socially and geographically specific (Rose, 2016). I strived to address these issues by analysing: the *context* of the zine pages through triangulation between interview, focus group and zine data; the *content* of the zine pages, with an emphasis on their intended focus through examining the visuals alongside the accompanying transcripts; and the *process* of zine-making by drawing from my field notes and observations on how participants collaborated to identify issues and made creative decisions to visualise these onto the pages. The visual analysis of the zine pages bridged both narrative and thematic analysis strategies to interrogate how the participants reclaimed visual

media, which often holds the power to represent the assumed realities of refugees, minoritised women and victims of violence, to convey their own experiences.

Building trust with the participants and learning their culture has been argued to enhance the quality of the data by supporting the researcher to examine their possible misunderstandings and misinterpretations (Moen, 2006). After the researcher-led data analysis, I re-engaged with the advisers to validate and check the accuracy of my interpretations of the key findings as a form of member checking (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004; Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). This step was crucial in mitigating the impacts of my own social position and whiteness, which undoubtedly influenced my reading of the women's narratives. Member checking is also a useful strategy to mitigate against the risk that the researcher's biased interpretations would contribute to further stigmatisation of women who have been affected by GBV (Lutz, 1999). The disruption caused by Covid-19 meant that original plans for involving the advisers in the data analysis phase had to be scaled back. The practical barriers faced by refugee women in accessing IT for attending consecutive online meetings and finding the time for doing this when balancing care responsibilities and other commitments during the lockdowns meant that the original plan to involve them in analysis had to be reduced to a single session, which invited the advisers to reflect critically on my interpretations of the findings. This decision was further justified by safety considerations after consultation with the partner organisation, which had had to downscale their own FGC-focused work to ensure women's safety and confidentiality when taking part in these discussions from their own homes. Nevertheless, engaging the advisers at this stage was of particular benefit in confirming and adjusting my interpretations, identifying which of the findings the advisers prioritised as key areas for collective action, and for identifying gaps that could be explored through further research. At the time of writing, the advisers remain engaged in planning the research dissemination activities.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have made the case for recognising feminism as a distinct research paradigm and justified its suitability for my own research. The transformative pursuit towards social justice which underpins feminist research has been central to informing the decisions I have made regarding the research methodology, approach to ethics, data collection and analysis. Throughout this chapter, I have illuminated the influences that my theoretical framework,

which centres intersectionality and transnational feminist epistemologies, has had on my decisions to use narrative and participatory methodologies and creative methods.

The following chapters provide a thick description of the data to illuminate the key findings. Although these chapters privilege the narratives of FGC-affected women, I will also extensively draw from the other data sources to discuss the key themes of my research. In approaching participants' narratives not only as stories of the past and present, but also as a means of carving potential futures (Boonzaier & Van Schalkwyk, 2010; Eastmond, 2007), the three data chapters have been structured chronologically to trace the participants' trajectories of vulnerability from their countries of origin, through the asylum process to the process of settling in Scotland. By reinforcing this narrative structure in retelling the participants' stories, I strive to draw attention both to the parallels between the past and present contexts which shaped the participants' vulnerabilities, and to the role of narration as a way for the participants to make sense of these experiences, recraft their identities and move forward with their lives.

## Chapter 6

### Conducive contexts for female genital cutting before migration

#### 6.1 Overview

The following three chapters present the findings from the qualitative interviews, focus groups and zine-making sessions conducted with FGC-affected women, community participants and key informants. These three chapters reflect women's trajectories of vulnerability throughout their migration journeys from the Global South to the Global North. This chapter begins by analysing women's position of intersectional vulnerability in their countries of origin. I have argued that the anti-FGC discourse has placed a strong emphasis on the cultural and social determinants of FGC, at the expense of the analysis of the wider societal contexts and relations of power in which the violence is situated (See Chapters 3 and 4). To address this, my research has applied an intersectional lens in analysing how converging cultural norms, societal structures and social orders influence women's vulnerability to FGC and other forms of GBV. The first half of this chapter examines how FGC and other forms of GBV experienced by the participants are constructed in women's countries of origin. The second half of this chapter analyses the consequences of these constructions by critically analysing the barriers to women's resistance and help-seeking. Throughout this chapter, I will articulate the possibilities that a political economy perspective (see Chapter 4) can offer for developing more nuanced understandings of women's vulnerability and limited spaces for action in FGC-practising contexts.

#### 6.2 Social constructions of FGC and other forms of gender-based violence

It has been argued that "cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization, and the marginalization or delegitimation of alternatives are widely documented features of socially dominant masculinities" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846). The next three sections demonstrate how masculine social orders underpin the ways women's needs are erased and overlooked in the participants' societies of origin. I begin by discussing women's accounts of institutionalised gender hierarchies which legitimise FGC and other forms of GBV in their countries of origin. I will then analyse how this trickles down to the family and community



level, where dominant cultural constructions of gender roles and cultural consent surrounding GBV as a private matter sustain women's ongoing vulnerability to violence.

### **6.2.1 Contexts of state-sanctioned gender subordination**

GBV in sub-Saharan Africa cannot be fully understood without considering the system of family laws that intersects the private and public spheres of life (Crotty, 2009). As argued by Gruenbaum, "the fact that it is women who carry out the practice (FGC), and who are its strongest defenders, must be analysed in terms of their weaker social position" (1982, p. 5, see also Section 3.2.3). Women's subordination within the family is not only based on cultural norms, but mandated by patriarchal family laws; many of the FGC-practising contexts have laws in place to restrict women's inheritance, ownership rights and freedoms to work outside of home (Council on Foreign Relations, 2018; Crotty, 2009). While FGC is underpinned by cultural justifications, I argue that wider legislative contexts can nevertheless uphold women's dependency on the family and community that perpetuate violence.

In many contexts, male-headed and male-centred legal systems legitimise culturally normative constructions of men as decision-makers both within and outside the family unit; as described by one of my participants, Maryam (Iran): "*Courts decide for women, all the time, they are on the men's side and they will say something that is not good for women*". The laws which legitimise GBV most clearly illustrate how women's subordination within the family unit is justified from the top down. As one of the last remaining countries which has not signed *The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), marital rape, domestic abuse and polygamy remain legal in Sudan (UNDP, 2018). Sudanese law attributes different roles to men and women, whereby the wife "owes a duty of obedience to her husband" (UNDP, 2018, p. 9). This duty of obedience was reflected in the Sudanese participants' accounts of women's vulnerability and lack of voice and rights:

*When you get married, they say you can't come back until you die. You need to stay with your husband. Now it's changed a little bit, before you couldn't come back, you had to stay with your abuser. In my country, the man is allowed to marry four women.*  
(Dalia, Sudanese woman)

*There, as a woman, if you raise your voice, they will just shut you up. You're a woman, you're not supposed to do this, you're not supposed to say this. You always*

*have to listen to men, for example, if I want to divorce, no. My parents have to decide, or my elders decide for me. You don't have power, you don't have a voice. It's everywhere; she's from Sudan, she's from Eritrea, she's from Gambia and she's from Somalia - it's everywhere. Women don't have power. (Fahima, Sudanese woman)*

These accounts reflect the legal and social orders that normalise women's subordination both within intimate relationships and in the wider society. Laws which inhibit divorce, criminalise adultery and enforce segregated conjugal duties legitimise cultural expectations which position younger women as subordinate to their husbands and to older women. As stated by Fahima, most of the interviewed women drew parallels between different national contexts; women from Iran, Malawi, The Gambia, Nigeria and Sudan described how men could use women's limited rights as a means of control, pressuring women to stay with abusive husbands or placing them at an economic disadvantage if the husband refused divorce regardless of separation. This exemplifies how women's limited rights reproduce their vulnerabilities to coercion and economic, physical and sexual forms of violence and abuse.

In many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, religious law prevails over civil laws in matters concerning the family (Crotty, 2009). In these contexts, conservative religious norms around appropriate female behaviour and marital relations shape legislation and community attitudes towards GBV. However, participants also emphasised how religion could be misinterpreted to justify the control of women:

*In my country, women and men are treated differently, even in the Holy Quran, we are equal. (Hoda, Syrian woman)*

Surprisingly, in contrast to dominant perceptions (see Chapter 2), only two community participants (Dalia and Musa) and three of the key informants (1, 2 and 9) discussed FGC as a religious requirement<sup>11</sup>. During the research, I interviewed both Christian and Muslim women who had undergone FGC, most of whom viewed FGC as a cultural as opposed to religious practice. Migrant women's lack of religious explanations of FGC may reflect the process of cultural change after migration by which the women had rejected some aspects of religion, although faith nevertheless continued to play an important role in their lives (see

---

<sup>11</sup> Practising communities sometimes misinterpret FGC as a religious requirement which is mandated by holy scriptures and religious leaders. FGC predates the Abrahamic faiths in which these practices are found, although the practices are nevertheless still often supported by the cross-religious expectations about female chastity, fidelity and purity.

also Section 8.2.1). Even when FGC was less frequently directly linked to religion, the values and norms which participants described as oppressive to women are connected to both Christian and Islamic religious morals. Participants said that the beliefs underpinning FGC, including the stigma surrounding pre-marital sex and divorce, were both enforced by and grounded on religious belief systems:

[In my country] *religion plays a big role as well in terms of wanting to promote virginity and seeing sexual acts before marriage as a sin.* (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted)

In contexts where religious belief systems place a great emphasis on virginity and fidelity, FGC becomes justified by perceptions of uncut women as “*promiscuous, sexually very active and unsatisfied*” (Musa, Gambian man). In some countries, these religious beliefs are not only enforced by religious authorities but are also embedded in the legal system; even Sudan has recently criminalised FGC, laws criminalising pre-marital relationships and adultery can still support the continuation of FGC as a means of controlling women’s sexuality. The expectation for Sudanese wives to fulfil conjugal duties in marriage (UNDP, 2018) exemplifies how state-mandated hierarchical gender roles continue to justify beliefs about women’s sexual servitude and loyalty to their husbands which also underpin FGC (see Section 2.2.5). This highlights the importance of locating the cultural and religious beliefs which underpin FGC to their specific legal-political contexts. The intertwined relationship between religion, law and GBV in many countries in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa illustrates a need for a holistic approach that not only addresses FGC, but also examines women’s wider subordination as a societal issue.

In addition to legal and religious systems, women emphasised how FGC and other forms of GBV persisted through state disregard and inaction. The national failures to recognise FGC as a public issue are evident from the lack of FGC legislation in many of the countries where the practice prevails, despite decades of international pressure. Participants described the lack of national (and in some cases, international) recognition of FGC as a pressing issue for women who were seeking protection:

*In Malawi, they don’t accept that FGM is being practised. It is being practised in the villages where we come from, but the police will tell you no, it’s not done here, but it’s happening.* (Star, Malawian woman)

Star's statement reflects how excluding FGC from the political agenda leaves women without recourse to police protection. FGC-affected women said that state actors widely ignored FGC and other forms of GBV as ongoing issues in their countries of origin. When it comes to countries like Malawi, international actors including UNICEF (2013) and WHO (2011) omit Malawi from their estimates of global prevalence rates of FGC. The incomplete picture of the global prevalence means that, in these contexts, women's local efforts to resist FGC are not supported by wider campaigns and legislative measures.

Participants nevertheless cautioned against viewing criminalisation as an easy answer to women's struggles. Even in countries that had criminalised the practice, women said FGC was too normalised to be taken seriously: *"In Nigeria, FGM is a lesser crime, it's as if it's nothing"* (Chibundu, Nigerian woman); *"You can't say no to it... we don't have the power to stop the tradition"* (Olufunke, Nigerian woman). Women described how the lack of enforcement of the law and established safeguards, including lack of training for teachers to recognise signs of FGC and lack of medical records of FGC, left women vulnerable to community pressure to practice FGC. Although some communities had abandoned FGC as a result of new legislation and increased sensitisation, participants also said that *"silently, behind the scenes, people are still doing it"* (Musa, Gambian man). While FGC had become less celebrated, the practice was still said to continue to play a part in marriage arrangements through indirect questions such as *"how's her personal life?"* or *"is there something down there?"*. Contrary to its aims, some said that the criminalisation of FGC without police protection was making FGC more dangerous for women through pushing the practice underground (Johansen et al., 2008). This illustrates the role of state inaction in facilitating the culture of secrecy and conformity that envelops FGC, which was said to make the FGC practices harder to detect and challenge. As further discussed in the later parts of this chapter, the state inaction not only sanctions the continuation of FGC, but also has direct implications for women's help-seeking and resistance (see Section 6.3.4).

### **6.2.2 FGC as a private matter and a "women's issue"**

The wider political disregard towards FGC was said to be rooted in the widespread perception of FGC as a trivial matter and a "women's issue":

*Why are you talking about FGM? You should talk about other things. Don't talk about FGM, you should talk about how people are hungry. Will you go and tell the*

*world you are menstruating? They believe you should talk about things that are happening, like, oh there's poverty, talk about poverty. Don't talk about someone is going to the toilet for loo, and you are talking about it. How does it concern you? You know, it's not a priority. I mean, nobody cares.* (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)

Equating FGC with menstruation and urinating conveys a perception of these practices as private, shameful matters and as taboo subjects. In comparing perceptions of FGC and poverty, Chibundu articulates the marginal location that women's issues occupy in the public health agenda. This aligns with previous findings on Nigerian health workers' perceptions of FGC as a minor procedure (Mandara, 2000; Obianwu et al., 2018). Disregarding FGC as a private matter reflects the failures to recognise how gender disparities and GBV contribute to the wider economic struggles of the continent. The disconnect between FGC and development connects to Crenshaw's (1991) argument that Black women fall between the cracks of two agendas, where Black men define the parameters of anticolonial struggles and white women's experiences define the feminist movement. This illustrates how the failure to comprehend the interconnected nature of oppression contributes to the way FGC is trivialised in the public discourse.

In addition to the neo-colonial struggles on the ground, demonising and colonising constructions of FGC and the affected communities have been argued to give rise to cultural resistance to abandon the practice (Wasunna, 2000). This was also suggested by some of the participants in this study; when Isatou (The Gambia) told her mother not to cut her daughters, she had replied:

*You're joking. You go to Europe and you listen to white people, they brainwash you, and you want to listen to them, this is why people don't want you to go to Europe, you change, even your religion, you forget about it. These two will be circumcised.*

The accusations of whiteness and loss of faith exemplify the part FGC plays in group identity formation and maintenance (Gruenbaum, 2001). Other participants also described a strong sense of cultural pride and belonging as barriers to resistance, as some communities viewed criticising FGC as "*letting-down*" and "*selling-out the culture*" (Chibundu, Nigerian woman). These tensions illustrate how community perceptions of FGC interventions are mitigated by not only gendered, but also racial and colonial divisions. In speaking for gender, FGC-affected women can inadvertently be viewed to speak against their race if their testimonies are seen to collude with the colonising discourse that demonises and reinscribes violence as

part of “Third World” cultures (McKerl, 2007, see Chapter 3). Women may be viewed as traitors for disclosing violence, if this exacerbates the racism and judgemental interventions directed at the practising communities at local, national or global levels (Adelman et al., 2003). These tensions highlight the usefulness of examining FGC through the lens of *political intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991) that addresses the way Black women are simultaneously located within two subordinated groups which often pursue conflicting agendas, forcing FGC-affected women to choose between two competing allegiances.

Downplaying FGC as a private issue further legitimises the culture of silence which sustains the continuation of FGC within the practising communities. All FGC-affected women said that women’s sexual and reproductive health was considered taboo in their cultures. FGC was viewed as a personal issue and a private matter within communities, and was rarely openly discussed even among women:

*We definitely don’t talk about it [FGC], you don’t even talk about it with your mum, your sisters... maybe younger ones, but nobody really talks about it. (Awa, Gambian woman)*

*I couldn’t tell her because she’s my auntie, I couldn’t say that I have it [elongated labia] under there. But she would send my grandmother to ask me is there anything under there, they just want to know does she do it. If there’s nothing under there, you are in trouble. (Joyce, Malawian woman)*

Participating women described the paradox by which FGC was both hidden and celebrated in the practising communities. For instance, Malawian women said that while initiation rituals were celebrated afterwards, girls were told to stay silent about what happened during the ritual itself. Although the celebrations were prominent public performances that included gifts, dancing, and animal sacrifice, these were said to function to obscure the potential consequences of FGC:

*You don’t realise how bad it is until you see it or read about it. You think it’s something nice, because you have a party for you, you are having a new dress, new shoes, new hair done, so you don’t realise it until you’re old enough to understand. (Awa, Gambian woman)*

*You know those kids, when they go to the bushes, they’ll stay there maybe a week or so, and then when they’re coming out, it’s like a village party, parents will be*

*dancing, they'll kill a goat giving it to the chief, there will be a celebration and you know, once the other children see that, they are like ooh, I would want to do that as well.* (Joyce, Malawian woman).

As highlighted by Awa, most of the FGC-affected participants recalled that they had not perceived FGC as unusual or harmful before migration to the UK. This lack of awareness about the complications was identified as a common reason for the continuation of FGC. Even when women had experienced complications, these were not always associated with FGC. Some of the women said that they had previously resorted to taking paracetamol, praying, and/or missing school because of the complications arising from FGC. These experiences of dealing with the complications of FGC are indicative of a wider context of underdevelopment where communities and women face limited access to information and healthcare. In some cases, FGC had been hidden to such an extent that three of the participating women had not even understood that they had been victims of FGC before learning about it in the UK:

*For me, I never heard about it [FGC] because I was just being by myself, and I never used to mingle with lots of people or anything... most of the Malawians, we think it's not performed in our country. But then when I came here, there was a lady who was saying oh so there's this practice and then I thought okay, this is what is happening to us... (Joyce, Malawian woman)*

The lack of survivor awareness that was described by Joyce, other FGC-affected women and key informants speaks volumes about the way FGC is hidden in the practising societies. I also witnessed this during the course of my fieldwork; although I interviewed several Malawian women from different ethnic groups from Northern and Central Malawi who had been victims of elongation and cutting, I also interviewed a Malawian man (Essau) who said he had never heard of the practice happening in Malawi. This lack of awareness, and denial within communities exemplify how the marginalisation of FGC in the public and policy arena reinforces the culture of silence and secrecy which surrounds FGC in many of the practising contexts.

### **6.2.3 Normalising FGC and other forms of gender-based violence**

The state approach to women's subordination was described to trickle down to the community level, where GBV was said to be viewed as a "normal" part of family life. Most

of the interviewed women described GBV as widespread and widely accepted in their countries of origin. In line with anthropological theory (Lejeune & Mackie, 2009; Mackie, 1996, see also Section 3.2.3), most participants who originated from FGC-practising communities conceptualised FGC as a social norm:

*It's just something that is just natural, it's a passage, something that one has to do. Girls, they would be subjected to go through that passage, there was no option. Boys also when they reach a certain age, you have to do it, there was no option. There used to be a big celebration in the community, so your age group, if they circumcised men, the girls would also be cut. If you don't go through it you are singled out, that is a taboo. (Musa, Gambian man)*

Musa's account highlights how FGC is rationalised as a cultural necessity which, along with male circumcision, was viewed as a natural transition point for girls and boys. Although FGC-affected migrant women said that they now saw the practice as damaging and traumatising, they said FGC was not viewed as abuse in their countries of origin. It has been argued violence cannot be solely understood through its physicality, as social and cultural dimensions give violence its meaning and power (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004). Two participants from Nigeria and The Gambia said that cutting signified beauty and cleanliness. Most of the FGC-affected women also described FGC as a marker of normative gender identity, suggesting that the cultural constructions of womanhood are closely tied to the way female reproductive organs should look like:

*If the women of my generation didn't have that [elongated labia], you weren't woman enough. (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted)*

*You're like a baby if you don't have something down there... They think when you are a full woman, you have to have that package [elongated labia]. (Joyce, Malawian woman)*

These meanings attached to FGC in the practising contexts stand at odds with the Western discourses of mutilation and sexual impairment (Khoja-Moolji, 2020; Palm, Essen, & Johnsdotter, 2019). Participants described FGC as an integral part of culturally constructed womanhood. The way FGC was normalised as a transition point into adulthood meant that not having FGC sometimes made girls feel self-conscious about not fitting in with their peers. As Vissandjee and colleagues have argued, in FGC-practising contexts “ironically, it is through removal of parts of her genitalia that the child can begin to feel complete” (2003, p.



118). This was highlighted by four Nigerian and Malawian women and one of the key informants (2) who said that in contexts where FGC was an established social norm, girls not only conformed to the practice, but in some cases, they also looked forward to it or arranged FGC to be done to themselves. This highlights the complexity of FGC practices which are normative, but which can be both concealed and celebrated depending on the context and the community.

Gender relations have been argued to hold central importance in constituting the essence of culture which is passed down to younger generations (Yuval-Davis, 2003). Discourses of naturalisation operate differently in different contexts, constructing boundaries between the self and the other, and through that, defining normality and entitlements (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Drawing from Butler's (1990) concept of *gender performativity*, scholars have argued that GBV partakes in the performance of culturally normative constructions of masculine and feminine identities (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Merry, 2006). Male violence contributes to constructing male domination as natural, reproducing women's subordination as integral to the family and the wider social order (Anderson & Umberson, 2001). FGC-affected participants' accounts suggest that FGC not only symbolised women's conformity with cultural expectations of what female bodies should look like, but that the practice also played part in wider rituals which guide women in assuming the subordinate position that was expected of them; women who had experienced elongation described the practice in the context of the tradition of sexual initiation, whereby girls are taught about sexual and marital matters by elder women. In countries like Malawi and Uganda, girls in rural areas would "visit the bushes" to practise labia elongation, and in cities, women from the extended family would visit girls at home during their first period to instruct them on how to elongate their labia. As part of these rituals, some families would also hire a man to have sex with the girls as part of their sexual initiation:

*They send them to a ceremony you know, when they're like 12 or 13, so it's like summertime and then they go to the bushes where they build small huts. And whatever is going on there, nobody tells anyone. Recently, there was this man from Malawi who is a "hyena" who goes to sleep with those kids. Like, once they are done, he sleeps with them just to know how it feels to sleep with a man. That man has to make sure the kids are doing the right thing... that man is like a teacher, and then they'll go tell the parents, oh she has learned, and she knows what she is doing. (Joyce, Malawian woman)*

Joyce's account paints a stark contrast between the cultural expectation to silence women's expressions of sexuality and the cultural customs which explicitly sexualise young girls. However, in these contexts, the initiation rituals are not for the purposes of celebrating a girl's sexuality, but to symbolise their upbringing into conformity with normative, restrictive gender roles. Initiation rituals form part of a wider cultural framework that is focused on female identity preservation and integration (La Barbera, 2009). The emphasis on transition from a girl to a woman demonstrates how gender is both "created" and enforced through culturally normative forms of GBV like FGC, as initiation rituals function to socialise girls into submissive wives and caregivers.

Other cultural customs were also said to play part in the social construction of culturally normative gender roles. Malawian and Nigerian women discussed the practice of lobola (bride price), whereby the man's family pays money and gifts to the bride's family. Even the practice of paying lobola has been increasingly contested in sub-Saharan Africa, the tradition remains part of the customary law among patrilineal communities in countries like Malawi (Mwambene, 2010). While the participants said that lobola was increasingly debated in their countries of origin, this did not necessarily reflect changing attitudes towards women:

*Men are fighting against the lobola thing, because if a man wants to marry me, he needs to pay a lot of money... but now they are saying, why should I pay a lot of money for her, when other men have had her for free of charge? And I'm the one getting her, she is not even virgin, I am not paying this. (Star, Malawian woman)*

FGC-affected women described lobola, along with FGC and forced marriage as misogynist practices that commodified women by placing them as their husband's property, and their virginity as for sale:

*I would, being who I am, I would have wanted to marry knowing what is involved in a sexual act and not to be, you know fully owned by this guy who thinks that because he's married me, I'm his property. (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted)*

*When I arrived here, I found many things different – now I am a person, now I have freedom, I can made decisions. For some women, the first decision they make is to divorce their husband, because her husband may not be her choosing. (Sadia, Somalia)*

This notion of woman as the man's property also underpins other gendered cultural conventions in other contexts; Olufunke (Nigeria) and Dalia (Sudan) also spoke of the practice of widow inheritance, whereby widows were forced to marry their late husband's brother. However, it is important to note that not all participants disagreed with lobola; Olufunke instead interpreted the custom in completely opposite terms as a sign of the groom's respect towards the bride, signalling that she had value. Nonetheless, both views defending and opposing lobola explain the practice through the notion of "value" attached to women. Those opposing the practice described how, by commodifying women and signalling their departure from their paternal family, lobola functioned as a "*ticket for abuse*" for husbands. In line with previous research (Matope et al., 2013), the custom was said to consolidate unequal power relationships and enforce men's sense of entitlement to abuse their wives. These examples illustrate how women's subordination becomes inscribed in cultural practices, creating openings for the normalisation of GBV.

All interviewed women said that women in their countries of origin were largely confined to the private sphere. Across the different cultural contexts, households were structured around differential division of labour:

*We have a lot of kids and we have big, big families. In our culture, the man works and woman looks after kids, we don't have 50:50 like here [the UK].* (Dalia, Sudanese woman)

*The most important is that you don't raise your voice to your husband. You need to respect him, because he's the chief.* (Anita, Congolese woman).

Participants described men as the sole decision-makers and heads of the household, while women were expected to perform the primary roles of caregiver and submissive wife. Although many African women are economically active, the husband and the children play an essential part in ensuring women's economic security in many FGC-practising contexts (Gruenbaum, 1982). The differential division of labour and women's double burden described by other participants are intertwined with women's lower social position. Both FGC-affected women and men from practising communities described men's participation in household work as a taboo, as sharing duties and partaking in "women's tasks" was viewed to signify men's reduced authority:

*Back home, if a man looks after the baby that it is like "oh, she's bewitched him! So, he becomes stupid and then he listens to the woman."* (Joyce, Malawian woman)

As Joyce's highlights, women's subordination was not only expected by husbands, but also by the wider community. In these contexts, men are not only socialised into exerting power over women (Matope et al., 2013), but women are also socialised into sustaining the very structures that oppress them (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000). The way FGC and other forms of GBV are normalised within families, communities and the wider society illustrates social orders that are founded on *hegemonic masculinity*, which asserts male domination and female subordination as normative and natural (Jackson, 1991). It has been argued that in sub-Saharan African countries, women continue to be vulnerable to GBV because of their differential status from birth to death (Matope et al., 2013, p. 193). In some cases, the gender hierarchies which characterised intimate relationships are consolidated with abuse:

*I used to cook fresh food for my husband when he came home from drinking at 3am, I had to start cooking. Because he'd be beating you up and all that. (Star, Malawian woman)*

All FGC-affected participants linked women's vulnerability to abuse and violence within intimate relationships to normative hierarchical gender roles. The rigid gender roles which convey a strict division between private and public spheres of life encourage an understanding of marital sex as transactional, increasing women's vulnerability to marital rape:

*I think it's dangerous to generalise, but because of the conditioning before coming here, that they (men) are the kingmakers at home, their job is to go out and there are still some men who will look at themselves as the sole breadwinners and that entitles them to then get the services from the woman. (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted)*

The key informant described men as the "*kingmakers in the household*", who contribute to the wider patriarchal order through enforcing gendered power imbalances at a family level. This illustrates how masculine social orders condone marital rape within intimate relationships through perceptions of marital sex as "male entitlement". Focus group participants described how, much like FGC, women's conformity to marital rape and domestic violence were constructed as a "normal" part of woman's role as a wife:

*Star (Malawi): Like here, I didn't know if you don't want to sleep with your partner... and he sleeps with you, it's rape. Back home they tell you that he is your husband, you can't say no.*

Joyce (Malawi): *It's your responsibility.*

Star (Malawi): *That's what you are here for.*

Star's account reflects participants' changing understandings of women's rights and roles after migration (see also Section 8.2.1). Malawi only criminalised marital rape in 2015, which exemplifies the long-standing state acceptance of women's obligation to meet their husbands' sexual desires. Men's role as breadwinners and kingmakers gives them a license to perpetuate GBV that is normalised by both legislation and cultural norms held by communities. This was also the case for FGC, which in the practising communities was said to be underpinned by expectations for women to meet their husbands' sexual desires as the subordinate partner:

*They see it as kind of domineering thing, it's one of the core benefits of FGM. To keep you, so that when the man comes, that is when you'll be ready for him. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman).*

Chibundu describes normative constructions of sex as an entitlement and as wife's service to her husband. FGC was described as a "*control mechanism*" which the participants said played a part in consolidating the rigid gender roles and constraining women's mobility outside of the family unit: "*You know if they've cut out everything, then there's no feeling there, they see themselves as only good for procreation and for keeping the home*" (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted). These examples illustrate how FGC both signifies and is used to ensure women's subjugation. Altogether, participants' accounts exemplify the role that culturally normative forms of GBV play in constructing the relationship between husband and wife as one of ownership and property, whereby the strict division between public and private spheres between genders maintains the transactional nature of intimate relationships.

### **6.3 Intersectional vulnerability and women's barriers to help-seeking**

Research on FGC has extensively mapped the cultural beliefs and norms that underpin the normalisation of FGC in the different contexts (see also Section 2.2.5). However, limited attention has been paid to women's help-seeking and constrained resistance in contexts where GBV is constructed as a private matter. The following sections will present findings on the consequences of cultural and institutionalised constructions of FGC and hierarchical gender roles. In utilising Kelly's (2016, 2005) conceptualisation of *conducive contexts* and

Crenshaw's (1991) three-fold articulation of *intersectionality* (see Chapter 4), I locate women's sustained vulnerability in the context of compounding cultural, social, economic and political conditions which limit women's abilities to resist and escape violence. I propose that analysing FGC through Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of *patriarchal bargain* enables a more nuanced analysis of FGC-affected women's participation through framing FGC as a strategic response to wider structural inequalities.

### **6.3.1 “Suffering in silence”: Victim-blaming, cultural taboos and cultural continuity**

Black women and women of colour are not only often denied rights and protection at state level, but they also face further cultural barriers to reporting and escaping abuse (Crenshaw, 1991). The cultural taboo of speaking out about GBV emerged as a key issue for women across cultural contexts before and after migration:

*What worries me is whether African women actually report when these things happen to them because African men, they wield a lot of power as far as being the dominant partner in a relationship. Luckily that doesn't apply to me anymore, but I think there are women suffering in silence... if you have bruises, you hide them with a polo or say, “I hit the cupboard”, when it's actually a blow from a punch. And that can be difficult, you know, so those kinds of taboos can shape the way people perceive certain things and I think it's in the same way that some communities have found it difficult not to practise FGM. (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted)*

This account constructs reporting acts of abuse as a cultural taboo. As the key informant suggests, the act of “*suffering in silence*” reinforces the cultural constructions of FGC and other forms of GBV as a private matter. As described by another key informant (1), staying silent was often viewed as “*noble and feminine*” and as part of culturally constructed appropriate womanhood and behaviour. Focus group participants also said they would cover abuse by saying that they “*just fell*” which reflects the way women internalise the silence surrounding GBV. It has been argued that “marriage as an institution in the traditional African society is a vital mechanism for social control and social stability” (Matope, Maruzani, Chauraya, & Bondai, 2013, p. 192). This was echoed by most women who also said women were often to blame for events that destabilised and broke down the family unit, including divorce, stillbirths, teenage pregnancies and the death of their spouse. The cultural

inclination to blame the women was said to justify culturally grounded forms of abuse; for instance, Olufunke and Fara described how in some Nigerian communities, widows were said to be forced to bathe their deceased partner and drink the bathwater in order to prove they were not behind their partner's untimely death. Women could also face further harm in contexts where the culture of victim-blaming extended from communities to the legal system; for instance in Sudan, women risk being charged with adultery if they report rape (Tønnessen, 2014).

Although the culture of victim-blaming was described as a barrier to help-seeking and reporting abuse, this should not be taken as indicative of women's lack of consciousness over their situations. This is exemplified in the zine page which women from Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia and The Gambia in this study created to mark International Women's Day (see Figure 6). This zine page visualises women's call for empowerment and freedom, which was sparked by a long discussion on forced marriage and women's lack of voice and rights in their countries of origin:



Figure 6. Zine page created by Fahima, Ella, Jaha and Sadia on the International Women's Day

It has been argued that we should “think of agency not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create” (Mahmood 2001 in Charrad, 2010, p.518). The zine page is comprised of collated images from national and international sources that represent Black women’s empowerment and voice; for instance, participants used a repurposed version of “We Can Do It” to reclaim an image which in the past was widely used in radical feminist activism that frequently excluded the voices of Black women. The page directly speaks against the “othering” radical feminist representations of Black and Muslim women by reusing an image from a third sector campaign “I Speak for Myself”. In doing so, the page conveys a more nuanced representation of refugee women that encompasses women’s intersectional location in relation to gendered and racial hierarchies (see also Section 8.3.2). The participants conceptualised women’s limited resistance not as an individual quality but as reflective of structural and cultural barriers:

*If you have a problem with your husband and you call the police, they will just, even the people from your community, they will just think you as a bad woman. They will just look at you, you will have no friends, no one to talk to. (Jaha, Gambian woman)*

*In my country if you get divorced, the husband will just kick you and your children out of the house. Divorce is like a scar, you shouldn’t do it. (Lisa, Syrian woman)*

Jaha exemplifies how women’s resistance is constrained by both cultural taboos and lack of state protection. Other participants also described how the prevailing culture of victim-blaming characterised women’s unjust treatment and sustained their vulnerability across cultural contexts. As further discussed in Chapter 8, women’s capacity to act in migration contexts is likewise shaped by intersecting cultural and structural transformations (Charrad, 2010).

In contexts where motherhood, procreation and family hold considerable cultural and socio-economic importance, conditioning not only women’s freedoms but also their sexuality becomes key to maintaining group boundaries. FGC was described as a means of preventing premarital sex either by physically inhibiting intercourse or by reducing female sexual drive:

*The way FGM is positioned is to kill your sexual being. When you are not sexually alive, you’re submissive. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)*

In cultures that place strong emphasis on family honour, the onus is on women to maintain



this by “behaving appropriately through deference, fidelity, modesty and chastity” (Gill, 2014, p. 6). In addition to undergoing FGC, women from Malawi, Cameroon, The Gambia and Nigeria said that they had been pressured to wear covering clothing, avoid friendships with the opposite sex and to prove to their mothers that they had monthly periods. Adela (Cameroon) also brought up her experience of breast ironing, which has a similar perceived function to FGC in terms of preventing premarital sex through limiting male attraction as girls reached puberty. These examples illustrate both the interconnected beliefs which underpin gendered cultural practices, and the role that cultural practices play in the making of culturally normative motherhood and socially sanctioned contexts for childbearing (Malmström, 2013; Shell-Duncan et al., 2000, see also Section 2.2.5). In contexts where marriage is the only socially acceptable context for childbearing, maintaining marriageability through ensuring virginity functions as a means for women to attain full personhood through motherhood which historically has been a source of power, companionship and protection for African women (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000; Jinnah & Lowe, 2015).

It has been argued that women are viewed as symbolic bearers and reproducers of collective identity, honour and group boundaries (Adelman et al., 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2003, p. 16). The findings illuminate how women’s symbolic and literal role in maintaining community boundaries through childbearing is used as a justification for punishment when women act against the cultural expectations of appropriate behaviour; Isatou (The Gambia) had been abused by her brothers and father for being caught using contraceptives in her marriage. She was belted and beaten for “disgracing” her family, who accused her of using contraceptives to “kill children” and supposedly for sleeping with white guests at the hotel she worked at. Other women had also experienced abuse that was sanctioned by efforts to maintain family and community boundaries:

*I went through a lot, so that’s why I was like, oh god, I need to get out of this nightmare. Your husband’s relatives give you a potion to eat, you don’t know what it’s made of, but because it’s tradition, you have to eat it because you’re pregnant to that family and their beliefs. If you don’t eat it, it’s taboo. If you don’t eat it, you are giving them the impression to believe that that baby or pregnancy does not belong to their family. (Olufunke, Nigerian woman)*

The suspicions about women’s unfaithfulness to their husbands which Olufunke described were also said to justify widow rituals in Sudan, whereby women would be confined in the

house for several months in the event of the death of the husband to ensure that any unborn child would belong to the deceased. These examples illustrate the role of not only FGC, but also other forms of GBV in gendered social control for the purposes of maintaining biological and symbolical cultural and family continuity in contexts where family honour is paramount.

In addition to preventing premarital sex, FGC also functioned as a means of preserving family honour and continuity through ensuring men's loyalty to their wives. The importance of lasting marriage was underpinned by beliefs about divorce as a taboo, and perceptions of divorced women as "*sluts or as very cheap*" (Adela, Cameroonian woman). Regardless of the type of FGC, the importance of pleasing men sexually was linked to lasting marriages:

*There was a time my auntie said, oh I need to do African juju, they cut with a razor blade, then they put the African medicine down there... And I asked, what is it for, auntie? Oh, so when the man is sleeping with you, he'll feel so sweet and he's not going to leave you. And I said, but you don't have a man... Now you want to do it to me, how is it going to work? You want to cut so that the man won't leave me, but you've had three men, why did they all leave? (Star, Malawian woman)*

*It's so you can please the man, to them, it's like, oh your man is going to be very happy for you to have those [elongated labia], if you don't have them that means your marriage won't even last a year, because the man will leave you for another woman who has got them. (Joyce, Malawian woman)*

Star's account exemplifies women's attempts to question the meanings and functions of FGC, which contradicts the radical feminist assumption that women in FGC-affected communities lack the capacity to question these practices. In addition to male sexual pleasure, women described how FGC was thought to prevent marital breakdown by stopping women from committing adultery. However, women argued that the impact of FGC on marriages was quite the opposite:

(FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted): *I actually see the proof of that it [FGC] doesn't help you, it doesn't help your marriage, it doesn't help anything.*

Amina (Sudan): *Making sore, every time you feel sore...*

Joyce (Malawi): *Someone who's never done it, she's happy, she's enjoying sex and everything. And the marriage...*

(FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted): *And they don't fight.*

Although two participants said that elongation was sometimes thought to enhance women's sexual pleasure, all women who had been victims of cutting said that the practice had impaired their ability to enjoy and want sex. This exemplifies how in FGC-practising contexts, women's active sexuality is constructed as a threat to family stability. The importance of long-lasting marriages needs to be located in the context of women's limited rights and place in the private sphere; women have a stake in safeguarding marriages in contexts where marital breakdown leads to social disapproval and women's increasingly constrained economic resources. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, men's decision to leave their wife without granting them divorce, or decision to take on other wives (Gruenbaum, 1982) weakens woman's economic position. In this context, women are invested in maintaining the longevity of the marriage to ensure their own socio-economic survival.

The findings illuminate how controlling women's sexuality not only strengthens cultural norms, but also functions as a strategy against stigmatisation. Focus group participants said that pregnancy outside of marriage often led unmarried pregnant women to become bullied, ostracised or forcibly married for disgracing their families. This was the case for Joyce who feared being deported back to Malawi, where she would face being forcibly married and separated from her daughter who had been born outside of marriage. Unlike in the West where reaching adulthood marks increased autonomy, independence and rights, the emphasis on respecting elders in African societies sustained Joyce's vulnerability to forced marriage. Despite being in her thirties, she said that culturally she remained "*her mother's child*" until married, which meant that her mother could decide for her to be married against her will. This illuminates how women's vulnerability to GBV is not only shaped by gender, but also their position within the family.

Previous research on forced marriage has argued that mothers' complicity in forced marriage reproduces patriarchal relations as a form of *patriarchal bargain* to improve mothers' own position (Chantler and McCarry, 2020, p. 105; Kandiyoti, 1988, see Chapter 4). Mothers and mothers-in-law have been argued to play a significant role in maintaining the social order through ensuring girls and other women uphold the family honour (Gill, 2014). Focus group participants said that fathers would blame the mothers for the daughters' behaviours, signalling their failure as a mother. This exemplifies mothers' vested interest in preventing premarital relationships through strict control of their daughters by enforcing cultural

practices like FGC; in bargaining with patriarchy, women mitigate the social consequences of victim-blaming which extend from daughters to their mothers.

Although the participants discussed a number of different forms of abuse in relation to victim-blaming and family honour, all these different forms of GBV were motivated by the cultural pressures to avoid shame which outweighed the value placed on women's lives (Gill, 2014). However, Gill (2014) has cautioned against solely relying on cultural explanations of "honour"-based violence, which she argues stems from the complex interplay of individual, family, community and social factors. This will be highlighted in the next sections, which illustrate how converging effects of cultural beliefs, social hierarchies, economic inequalities and political instabilities sustain women's vulnerability to different forms of GBV.

### **6.3.2 "I take the pains for pride": Social hierarchies, social cohesion and the ostracism of uncut women**

In line with existing research, all FGC-affected women described marriageability as a common justification for FGC (see also Section 2.2.5). Participants said that men's preference to marry women who had FGC played a key role in families' and women's own decisions to conform with the practice:

*In some parts of my country the practice is sort of dying down, but occasionally when younger men find someone with them [elongated labia], then the other one is not a woman anymore... (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted)*

Men's attitudes and expectations about womanhood were said to strongly influence the continuation of FGC regardless of the reducing prevalence of the practice. In addition to signifying women's observance of the role of a good wife, FGC-affected women said that cutting and elongation were associated with male sexual pleasure across the different cultural contexts. In the case of elongation, the length of the inner labia was said to determine "how 'wow' you are to your man" (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted). However, the continuation of FGC was not down to individual men; in contexts where FGC holds cultural significance, the wider community attitudes were also said to play a role in enforcing its continuation. Focus group participants said that even if their husbands opposed the practice, men would often be powerless in the face of family and community pressure:

Olufunke (Nigeria): *Sometimes men are looking for women that have been circumcised, like, done FGM on them.*

(FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted): *You remember the stories we heard, there was a man who said he didn't want to do it, it was their mother. There's pressure from the family.*

Star (Malawi): *If we go home, they will do it. He is saying no now because we are here, but there he's young, we've got chiefs, it's like a ceremony they do... There's no power to say no to them, he hasn't got a chance.*

The community pressure was also highlighted by Isatou (The Gambia), Chibundu (Nigeria), and one of the key informants (2) who described how children would sometimes be taken to be cut without their parents' consent. Rather than being seen as abuse, the community members were said to view themselves as doing the parents a favour. These issues highlight community perceptions of FGC not only as normal, but also as beneficial. Crucially, although FGC is often hidden, these practices are also viewed as “*everyone's business*”. Participants described the difficulties of resisting practices and customs which were enforced by women themselves; mothers-in-laws were said to have the power to decide for the new wives to give up their jobs and stay at home, steering young women to assume their culturally normative roles as caregivers and wives: “*Some women, their own life finishes once they're married*” (Selma, Algerian woman). Young wives were said to occupy the lowest level within the family hierarchy, and thus were expected to take care of elder relatives and unmarried sisters-in-law, and to cook and clean up after the rest of the family without help from other women. In addition to pressuring younger women to assume their role as submissive wives, older women directly participated in forced marriage and FGC as cutters, decision-makers and as adults who instructed girls on elongation.

Although the participants strongly emphasised the cultural dichotomies between dominant men and subordinated women, their emphasis on older women's participation in FGC contradicts the radical feminists who conceptualised gendered power relations in FGC-affected societies as a simple binary (Daly, 1978; Hosken, 1993, see Section 3.2.2). These findings add to anthropological theorising on how, as a symbol of younger women's subordination, FGC transforms older women as figures of authority (Shell-Duncan *et al.*, 2011). It has been argued that women's complicity in FGC reflects women's strategic manipulations of institutionalised gender asymmetries and entrenched patriarchal ideologies

(Ahmadu, 2005; Bettina Shell-Duncan et al., 2011). The way FGC functions as a cultural marker of strength and respect offers an explanation to why women and communities are so invested in the continuation of the practice:

*I thought it's a good practice. That, you know, regardless of the pains I took the pains for pride. I exchanged it to pride. I didn't think it was bad, I thought it was a pain-gain thing. The culture protects you. In my school of thought, I was like oh it's a transferable skill, it's something that is worth practising, that's what I thought... When other people do it, it's protection of the culture, some people tell you oh, have you done it to your little girl, you need to do it. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)*

*I was speaking to some women who'd been cut when they were that bit older you know, that they could all remember it. And they knew something was happening, they didn't know how painful it was going to be, but they were told in advance like, be brave and the village will be proud of you. You know, it becomes self-enforcing. So, if you make a big fuss then people cast it up, the day she got cut, you know years later, it will affect your reputation. Whereas if you're brave and endure it, they know you are a strong woman and you know like, it will enhance your reputation. (Key Informant 2, Women's organisation)*

These quotes about FGC as a source of cultural pride and sense of worth contrast the popular representations that explain the continuation of FGC simply as an unquestioned tradition. As Chibundu states, the cultural pride derived from FGC is seen to outweigh the pain caused by cutting in contexts where FGC is normalised as an integral part of culture. Conceptualising FGC as a “transferable skill” illustrates FGC as a symbol of inclusion and as a strategy for cultural continuation and social cohesion within ethnic communities. As highlighted by the key informant account, FGC also functions as a source of prestige, symbol of female bravery and as a strategy against stigma. The way uncut women become subject to rejection encompasses all three types of Goffman's (1963) stigma: abominations of the body, as uncut women were said to be perceived as unclean and as not being “*a woman enough*”; bad character, as uncut women were ostracised for being viewed as *solima*<sup>12</sup>; and tribal stigma, as FGC functions as a community boundary marker:

---

<sup>12</sup> Solima refers to a woman who is not only uncut, but who is also seen as rude, ignorant, unclean and lacking maturity and civilised behaviour. Solima is highly derogatory and considered as a loaded, serious insult (Shell-Duncan et al., 2011).

*I ask people to go and visit my kids. They say your children are bullied... Because in my country, if you're not circumcised, you are not allowed in the community. The community, they'll call you names, nobody will marry you. They call you solima. If they marry somebody from outside who is not cut, they ask for divorce because how they treat her. (Isatou, Gambian woman)*

*People insult you if you don't have it, you won't even have a husband. I would say that is one of the main reason people do it, the insults and the abuse. You get treated very bad, you get isolated, so people do it to their children even when they don't want to, because they want their child to be comfortable. (Awa, Gambian woman)*

These quotes illustrate how saying no to FGC goes against culturally normative constructions of femininity and female bodies. Awa's and Isatou's accounts highlight the consequences of ethnic boundary making, as uncut women face bullying and exclusion. As highlighted in Chapter 2, FGC is more clearly determined by ethnicity than nationality. The exclusion of uncut women exemplifies women's role as the reproducers of ethnic and cultural communities, as their resistance to FGC is interpreted as an act of going against the whole community.

Participants also described how FGC was sustained by peer pressure, which was derived from cultural notions of maturity, womanhood and cleanliness:

*Emmaleena: If a woman doesn't have it done, are they treated differently?*

*Joyce (Malawi): (laughs) Yes! Yes they are. If I just go in the group and they just start talking about this [elongation] and then you are just there like what, oh so you don't know, and at that moment when they realise that you don't know, you are no longer their friends.*

*Star (Malawi): They can't play with you...*

*Joyce (Malawi): Yes, we can't play with her, she doesn't know anything, she's too young. And then you're like oh, what's happening with my friends? I'm an outcast... You know when you go to boarding school, your friends will see and go oh, so you don't have them [elongated labia]? Because loads of girls will just do it, that puts pressure on you as well.*

*Before I came here, I saw myself as a goddess, because of FGM, that's what I thought. You know, because I had a sensitisation of who I am because of the FGM thing, I felt I was clean, some people are not clean, so I shouldn't even associate with people who are not clean. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman).*

Joyce, Star and Chibundu reflected the central role of FGC in shaping both women's self-image and how they are being viewed by others (see also Sections 7.3.2 and 8.2.1).

Participants' accounts of community and peer pressure support constructing FGC as a strategy for accessing social capital in contexts where women heavily rely on their social networks for resources and support (Shell-Duncan et al., 2011). Crucially, the exclusion of uncut women from marriage and social networks illuminates the social and economic conditions which can turn girls and women into the drivers of these practices.

It has been argued that violence within the family system responds to the wider social, political and economic exclusions which make violent behaviours seem like the only possible recourse (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004). This is illustrated by FGC, as parents are faced with a choice between two evils; although FGC often leads to life-long consequences, the detrimental impact of being excluded from the marriage market and social circles can lead parents to comply with the practice in contexts where marriage and social networks play a key role in ensuring women's survival in society. Especially if the long-term consequences of FGC are unknown, parents may view FGC as a smaller price to pay than a lifetime of ostracism and reduced social and economic resources. This supports conceptualising FGC as a patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988). FGC can serve as a bargaining tool with which women negotiate their subordinate status through ensuring gender complementarity and securing their survival in the society (Boddy, 1989). Crucially, the notion of patriarchal bargain cautions us from reducing agency to acts of resistance, as it makes visible how women's submission to cultural norms and practices like FGC manifests women's agency amidst multiple gendered constraints. Framing FGC as a bargain not only illustrates the social and material resources women gain through marriage and enforcing gendered expectations, but also the inequalities that become amplified in the lives of women if they do not tie the knot; in countries where a woman is perceived to be the property of her husband, these beliefs can be institutionalised whereby "property can't own property" (Pemunta, 2017, p. 69). The pervasive societal inequalities related to production, decision-making and land ownership mean women often have little choice but to comply with these practices to mitigate their unequal position in the society.



### 6.3.3 “Nobody else can help you”: Economic inequalities and women’s reliance on the family unit

Although there has been considerable attention given to the cultural beliefs that sustain FGC as a precondition for marriageability, anthropologists have also argued that there is a need to separate FGC from women’s basic survival through reducing women’s dependency on marriage and motherhood for economic and social capital (Gruenbaum, 1982, p. 10, see also Section 3.2.3). As exemplified by the participants, women’s weaker economic position in FGC-practising contexts is not only a matter of cultural beliefs but is rooted in the hierarchical family laws and gendered labour market inequalities which lead to women’s increased reliance on family unit for survival:

*At home, I cannot work. I can survive if somebody looks after me and feeds me. In Malawi, you need family, we help each other, nobody else can help you... If you have your family, they’ll keep you at home... They’ll feed you, but they’ll keep nagging you, so you are like a slave. (Star, Malawian woman)*

Star describes the crucial importance of family in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa where the family unit functions as one of the main sources of welfare for women (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000; Gruenbaum, 1982). All focus group participants and most of the individually interviewed women said that the household structuring and the narrow cultural constructions of womanhood reproduced gendered inequalities, as women’s responsibility for all unpaid household and care work curtailed their abilities to gain independence from the family through participating in the labour market. In these contexts, women are faced with a vicious cycle of physical and structural harm which continues beyond the immediate patriarchal bargain; the importance of the marriage underpins the continuation of FGC, which in turn plays a part in socialising girls into the restrictive roles of a caregiver and a wife that further consolidate women’s disadvantageous place in the private sphere.

While socio-economic status is not a clear factor distinguishing women who have been affected by FGC (Shweder, 2002), the findings suggest that access to resources is implicated in women’s help-seeking and resistance to FGC. Women’s dependency on the family unit explains women’s ongoing vulnerability to practices that are viewed as a normal part of cultural and family life:

*Back home, they tell you that he is your husband, you can’t say no [to marital rape]. That’s what you are here for. “I paid for you”. That’s what my dad did, he got money*

*off me to get married, so when my husband was mistreating me, hit me, he's the one that performed FGM with his family and sisters... I've got scars everywhere, they burned me and all that. My dad said go back, you can't come here, you need to go back.* (Star, Malawian woman)

Star had endured prolonged abuse, sexual violence and FGC after being forcibly married at the age of 14. In her case, lobola had marked her departure from the paternal family, leading her father to turn her away when she had tried to flee from her abusive husband. This was worsened by her low economic position which prevented her from surviving on her own without any family support. This highlights the compounding effects of cultural beliefs surrounding respectability, social orders and economic conditions, as cultural constructions of marital relations legitimise GBV, and the socio-economic importance of marriage sustains its continuation. This convergence of cultural and economic conditions was also described by other participants:

*When you have a problem with your husband, maybe you come out with a black eye, your parents will tell you that maybe it was you, they'll be like, you see why that happened? You have no support from your parents, nobody is standing up for you, all that they are telling is you to just endure. Back home, the husband is the breadwinner. The women, we stay at home. So, if your children are going to good schools, your husband comes at the end of the month and gives you monthly pocket money. You kind of establish a way of life, if you leave, you will have to start back from square one. Where are you going to start from? You just have to put up with it.* (Adela, Cameroonian woman)

Adela conveyed how the stigma attached to domestic violence and divorce, and the cultural assumption about marital difficulties as the woman's fault meant that women had little support from their families if they tried to leave their abusive husbands. Her account exemplifies how the lack of family support, women's disproportionate caring responsibilities and the man's position as the sole breadwinner curtail women's possibilities to re-arrange their lives if they leave their abusive husbands, forcing women to just "put up with it". Converging cultural and structural issues were also said to form barriers to other forms of support; both Joyce (Malawi) and Isatou (The Gambia) described how the lack of state havens for victims of abuse, women's limited financial resources and the culture of "everyone's business" meant women were often pressured by communities to pay for their

protection if they attempted to relocate away from abuse within their countries of origin. If women refused to pay, others were said to share their location with their abusers.

Regardless of the way FGC is concentrated globally, the dominant representations of FGC have been criticised for overlooking the consequences of colonialism, underdevelopment and poverty (Association of African Women for Research and Development 1983 in Lewis, 1995, p.33; Gruenbaum, 2000, see also Section 3.2.3). In addition to gendered labour market inequalities, the findings on women's concerns for survival and protection also reflect the limitations on state social security provision and high cost of welfare:

*Back home you need to have a man to have a nice life, because you don't work, so where else are you going to get money? (Celine, Congolese woman)*

*In schools in Malawi, they sit on bricks or under the tree. Good schools you need to pay, good hospitals you need to pay. Even if you go to school, sometimes jobs are hard to find. People have got their degrees and all that, but they still haven't got a job. (Star, Malawian woman)*

These quotes illustrate how the lack of alternative safety nets reinforce women's dependency on their husbands and the extended family for material and financial resources. As described by one of the key informants, limited state welfare provision increases women's reliance on children for old-age care, forcing women to comply with the cultural norms and practices that enable women to marry and establish a family:

*When I'm doing awareness training I tell that people believe that your daughter will have a better chance of getting married if she has had FGM if she comes from a certain community where that is normalised. And you can see on people's faces, they are kind of thinking, well, I'd rather that my daughter didn't get married than you know, risk dying and going through that pain and all the rest of it... but the fact of the matter is that if you come from a community where it's not really acceptable to have children outside marriage, and there's no social security and there's no pension, if you don't have children, who is going to feed you when you're old? So, getting married, even if it doesn't last so that you can say that you had a husband and you know, you had your children when you were married so, kind of in inverted commas respectable, it could actually be the difference between living and dying. (Key Informant 2, Women's organisation)*

As described by the key informant, limited state social security and welfare provision reinforces the importance of marriage and childbearing for women. The way FGC can be “*the difference between living and dying*” supports conceptualising women’s complicity in FGC as a patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988). Recognising women’s participation as a possible attempt to negotiate intersecting cultural beliefs and socio-economic inequalities resists the colonising and “othering” conceptualisations of FGC-affected women as being devoid of agency (Abusharaf, 2000; Mohanty, 1984, see also Section 3.2.2). I argue that situating FGC and other forms of GBV in the context of wider socio-economic injustices allows us to frame women’s compliance with FGC as a choice, but *not of their own choosing* (Kelly, 2007).

Altogether, the participants’ accounts about women’s limited resources and barriers to family and community support illuminate the dynamics of *structural intersectionality* which addresses the multi-layered and routine forms of domination that converge in the lives of women of colour (Crenshaw, 1991). The limited attention given to structural inequalities in Western representations of FGC signals a failure to consider how Black women are “differently situated in economic, social and political worlds” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1250). The way women are burdened by care responsibilities, economic inequalities and lack of state welfare is a consequence of intersecting gendered, classed and racial oppressions, as women are simultaneously battling with: the effects of gendered cultural norms which construct women as subordinate and women’s needs as unimportant; classed consequences of authoritarian regimes which sustain underdevelopment, limited welfare provision and heightened income inequalities; and Western, racially motivated exploitative interference during and after colonialism, which has pushed women further into the private sphere<sup>13</sup>. While it is crucial to challenge the community attitudes and cultural beliefs that normalise FGC and other forms of GBV, women’s emphasis on locating their vulnerability to violence in its specific contexts calls for further recognition of women’s constraints to resist, escape and challenge violence within their families and communities.

---

<sup>13</sup> It has been argued that the West has been complicit in women’s sustained subordination in sub-Saharan Africa through colonialism and macroeconomic policies. Crotty (2009) and Abusharaf (2000) have argued that Western institutions introduced during colonialism contributed to pushing women into the private sphere through enforcing and institutionalising Western ideals around marriage and family. This has been further exacerbated by neoliberal policies and structural adjustment programs, which have led to rising unemployment and cost of services, and which increased women’s barriers to employment and political participation in countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Crotty, 2009; Malmström, 2013).

### 6.3.4 “There is no protection”: Corruption as a mechanism for male domination

It has been argued that violence against women is more a consequence of patriarchies than the cause of them (Hunnicut, 2009, p. 561). Although the abuse and violence which the women had been subject to had been perpetuated in the private sphere, many participants located their experience in the context of the wider masculine political orders in their countries of origin:

*They don't care about the masses. They don't care about rough sleepers. They don't care about food on the table, they don't care about anything. They don't care about education, they don't care about infrastructure, they don't care about food security. They care about anything except themselves. People in power want control, that is all. Anything that will suit their masculinity, that's what's they cherish. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)*

Chibundu articulates how toxic masculinity characterises the wider political order, upholding the realities of underdevelopment, poverty and authoritarianism. As I argued at the beginning of this chapter (see Section 6.2.1), participants' emphasis on the way masculinity was ingrained in state institutions and laws exemplifies how male-dominated social institutions provide a model for gender relations, legitimising gendered power imbalances in the private sphere. The way women's needs are erased and GBV is normalised at the state level has direct implications for women's access to protection and justice:

*Joyce (Malawi): Because even if your husband beats you, you can't go to the police, they'll tell you it's a family matter, it doesn't concern the government or anyone, go back and sort it out yourselves. At the end of the day, somebody dies. That's part of life, that's part of the family.*

*Isatou (The Gambia): It's fine there, no problem. Domestic abuse in Africa is fine. It's part of the culture, it's okay. Your husband beat you, beats your children... My husband beat me, my son, my husband beat him too, my husband beat him, he collapsed, and he was taken to hospital. Collapsed totally. And nothing came out of it. We have no protection.*

The lack of state protection was identified as a key theme in the interviews and focus groups with the women who disclosed experiencing GBV in their countries of origin. Women's accounts illustrate the importance of locating women's barriers to help-seeking in the wider political context that is characterised by male domination. Both Joyce and Isatou reflect the

consequences of framing GBV as a private family matter which leaves women without recourse to police protection and justice. In saying “*at the end of the day, somebody dies*”, Joyce exemplifies the extent to which women’s lives are devalued by state actors and communities. This devaluation of women’s lives by communities and authorities serves to maintain women’s subordination within the family unit, reproducing women’s sustained vulnerability to GBV that is viewed as a normal part of family life.

Participants’ accounts illustrate how political, economic and cultural conditions converge to form a *conducive context* (Kelly, 2016) that both sustains women’s continued vulnerability to violence and abusers’ ability to get away with it:

*When there are poverty and the woman, sometimes they succumb because most times men have property, the land and all, so they are domineering, the main people that have a say... So, if your husband is telling you, you have to do it [FGC] or your in-laws are telling you, maybe your in-laws are rich, it comes with worth. Because this wealth is not evenly distributed in Africa. So, maybe one person in a big family is a little bit wealthy, so he controls everything. So, when he is more controlling and because police are bribe-able, you don’t want to call the police and say, oh my husband or my uncle are going to cut me... (Chibundu, Nigerian woman).*

Chibundu articulates how decision-making power over FGC is fundamentally tied to wealth in contexts that are characterised by underdevelopment, poverty and heightened income inequalities. The systematic devaluation of women’s lives intersects with cultural norms, gendered income inequalities and political instabilities, legitimising male entitlement to abuse women. In drawing attention to bribery, Chibundu articulates how abusers are able to manipulate political instabilities in contexts that are characterised by masculine domination. Other participants likewise asserted that power to continue FGC resided in the hands of those who held political and financial power:

*Back in Africa, you can’t resist it. Only if you have a parent that will stand behind you, look, this is not going to happen and if they’re rich and very powerful, maybe in the political arena or stuff like that. Anything aside that, my sister, just run.*  
(Olufunke, Nigerian woman)

Participants’ accounts illustrate why women’s sustained vulnerability to FGC cannot be understood by solely focusing on the cultural beliefs and norms which perpetuate community pressure to practice FGC. In framing wealth and political influence as a leverage against

community pressure to practise FGC, Olufunke describes how in contexts that are characterised by extreme wealth inequalities and power that is concentrated with a small elite, parents who have wealth and decision-making power are in a stronger position to resist the community pressures to conform to FGC. On the other hand, these political instabilities were also said to sometimes underpin families' decision to continue other abusive practices:

*You cannot call it [forced marriage] culture, it's an arrangement accompanied by material wealth, parents' situation, connections... like someone can say if your daughter does not marry my son then that is the end of your political career. (Essau, Malawian man)*

As Essau highlights, parents do not always have the power to resist cultural customs if their resistance endangers the family wealth and position in the society. This was also highlighted by Chibundu, who said that constrained resources meant that families would sometimes side with wealthy suitors regardless of the daughter's wishes, and if the woman objected to the marriage, the groom would use their wealth to bribe the police. These accounts further exemplify the usefulness of conceptualising women's sustained vulnerability through the lens of *structural intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991); in manipulating culturally sanctioned gender hierarchies, gendered income inequalities and political instabilities, abusers sever women's access to both family support and state protection:

*Government says don't do FGM. But when a rich person, you do FGM on your child, or you're a wife of a rich man and the husband wants you to do the FGM, you are not going to do it and you are going to call the police. Even the police will leave it, or you may be in prison at the end of the day. You may be victimised. It's actually lawless, there's no protection. It's just lip service. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman).*

Although research on masculinity and corruption is limited, it has been theorised that corruption is a “consequence and a symptom of toxic understandings of what it means to be a man” (Portillo and Molanon, 2017, n.d.). My findings illustrate corruption as a mechanism for male domination. Chibundu's accounts reflect the widespread fear and distrust of the police which many women described as a key barrier for women's help-seeking. Most of the participants said that corruption characterised the political landscape in their countries of origin, penetrating all state actors from the police to the judiciary. As articulated by Chibundu, police corruption and the prevailing perceptions about GBV as a private matter mean that women not only have little to gain in seeking help from the authorities, or by doing

so they can in fact expose themselves to further violence, imprisonment and victimisation.

Crucially, in explaining the continuation of GBV in relation to the wider political and economic conditions, the participants resisted the culturalisation of FGC and other forms of GBV (Narayan, 1997; Volpp, 2001, see also Chapter 3). Narayan (1997) has argued that women in the Global South are repeatedly reduced to suffer “death by culture”, whereas GBV affecting white women is contextualised in relation to structural inequalities and secularised patriarchal norms. Writers have criticised these decontextualised conceptualisations whereby GBV in the Global South is “collapsed into cultural constructions of gender that obscure and alienate the actual status of women and the actual conduct of men” (McKerl, 2007, p. 188., also Volpp, 2001). I argue that locating FGC in the wider socio-political contexts which are conducive to the continuation of violence facilitates developing a more nuanced understanding of women’s positionality and agency. Participants’ accounts illustrate how structural inequalities and cultural beliefs converge to form barriers to women’s help-seeking, providing a possible explanation as to why some women participate in FGC or at least will not openly resist the practice, if doing so will endanger them further.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

The experiences of FGC-affected women illustrate how FGC is part of a continuum of gender-based and structural forms of violence (Kelly, 1987). This chapter has emphasised the explanatory potential of structural analysis for understanding the continuation of FGC and other forms of GBV across cultures and state borders in the Global South. In this chapter, I have demonstrated how FGC is both justified by, and consolidates women’s subordinate position within the family and in the wider society. Throughout this chapter, I have illustrated how the dominant cultural constructions of FGC and womanhood are embedded in legal and religious systems, societal structures and social orders which form *conducive contexts* (Kelly, 2016) to GBV. This chapter has contributed to new knowledge by arguing that while culture plays a central role in the justifications of FGC, understanding women’s complicity and barriers to help-seeking necessitate examining the wider contexts which sustain women’s intersectional struggles for survival.

In the next chapter, I draw links to the social constructions of FGC and other forms of GBV discussed in this chapter by critiquing the ways in which the British asylum regime culturalises violence against migrant women, leading to failures to acknowledge the structural



conditions which stand in the way of women's internal relocation and access to state protection. In conceptualising asylum as a state in-between violence and protection, I problematise the binary of emancipated West/oppressive Rest by arguing that FGC-affected migrant women continue to be subject to multiple state-sanctioned gendered harms and inequalities that are perpetuated through the British asylum system.

## Chapter 7

### Safe at last? Women's experiences of structural violence in the British asylum system

#### 7.1 Overview

In recent years, researchers have increasingly drawn attention to the violence faced by refugee women before and during their migration journeys (Freedman and Jamal, 2008). However, violence against refugee women does not end on arrival to their destination; this chapter builds on the recent work which has challenged asylum as a sanctuary for victims of GBV (Canning, 2017a). As illustrated in the previous chapter, women's experiences of GBV are part of wider patterns of abuse and control within the family and community that are facilitated by institutionalised gender inequalities, state indifference and inaction. In this chapter, I argue that displacement shifts the control over women's lives from the family to the state. I firstly demonstrate Western complicity in sustaining women's *continuums of violence* (Kelly, 1987) by examining the workings of the culture of disbelief in the asylum determination process. I will then build on this by critiquing the conflicting professional assumptions held by service providers and agencies that participate in anti-FGC work. In employing Hester's (2011) *Three Planet Model*, I argue that the convergence of hegemonic discourses on FGC and forced migration places FGC-affected women in a near impossible position to protect themselves and their daughters. The second part of this chapter highlights the consequences of these discourses and women's lengthy stay in the asylum system by discussing strategies of "othering" and state enacted *corrosive control* (Canning, 2019) which re-traumatise FGC-affected women and constrain their abilities to re-make their lives in migration contexts.

#### 7.2 Silencing women we intend to defend: culture of disbelief and erasure of women's agency in the asylum process

As critiqued in Chapter 3, women who have already been victims of FGC are not eligible for asylum under the restrictive definition of the Refugee Convention. This narrow definition is unresponsive to women's *continuums of violence* (Kelly, 1987) described in the previous chapter, whereby the narrow gender roles enforced through FGC sustain women's

vulnerability to other forms of gender-based persecution. The next sections analyse women's experiences of the Home Office culture of disbelief, which manifests as interviewers' sustained attempts to undermine women's accounts of their experiences of violence and the threat of FGC facing their daughters. I argue that the hostile institutional environment, gender stereotypes and dominant representations of FGC converge to render women's lived experiences of persecution silent in the asylum process. I will then apply Hester's (2011) *Three Planet Model* to critically reflect how the problematic professional assumptions adopted immigration control and statutory services lead to failures to centralise the needs of both FGC-affected women and their children in FGC protection work. In doing so, I draw attention to the ongoing consequences of colonial constructions of FGC-affected women (see also Chapter 3).

### **7.2.1 “I don't think you are in any danger”:** Women's experiences of the culture of disbelief during asylum interviews

Refugee organisations and researchers have increasingly challenged the culture of disbelief that has been argued to characterise in the asylum process in Britain (Jubany, 2011; Anderson *et al.*, 2014; Canning, 2017). The culture of disbelief stems from the hostile environment policy to immigration, which constructs asylum seekers as a threat to the welfare system and the nation (Bhatia & Burnett, 2019). This culture of disbelief is manifest through a combination of physical and performative elements which create a negative decision-making environment (Anderson *et al.*, 2014). The interviewed community participants and key informants uniformly affirmed the findings from previous studies that have described asylum interviews as hostile and adversarial (Baillot *et al.*, 2012; Schuster, 2020). The asylum process places strong emphasis on the claimants' ability to recount their experiences in a credible, consistent and upfront manner (Baillot, Cowan, *et al.*, 2014; Jubany, 2011). However, the prison-like interview setting, confrontational questioning and the ongoing uncertainty embedded in the asylum process was said to make it harder for victims of violence to recount their experiences:

*It's traumatising. If you think of a woman who has experienced violence or persecution, and then fled her country, the journey to get here, then getting here and then having all that experience with trauma, and then having to go through the asylum process where everything is uncertain, you don't know when you are going to*

*be called for your interview, you don't know what the decision is going to be, you don't know how long it's going to take... and the culture of the Home Office is to disbelieve you. I'm working with women who are survivors of gender-based violence, and they have to explain that in detail, which is compounding the trauma because it's very difficult to talk about. They find it difficult to discuss, especially to a stranger in the Home Office whom they've never met before. And then the Home Office can just say, we don't find you credible, so we don't believe that you've experienced this violence, we don't believe what you're telling us. (Key Informant 3, Women's organisation)*

This key informant account exemplifies the “very serious consequences of subjecting already vulnerable individuals to a legal process in which their integrity and credibility are repeatedly subject to question and doubt” (Freedom from Torture, 2011, p. 5). The culture of disbelief compounds women's trauma from previous experiences of violent continuums (Canning, 2017a). This account, and all asylum-seeking participants' experiences of the asylum process contradicted the Home Office guidance which states that interviewers must “provide a safe and open environment to facilitate disclosure... through a sensitive, focused and professional approach to the claimant's oral testimony” (2015, p. 4). The interviewers were said to lack empathy, often accusing women of lying about their circumstances:

*They ask questions which you think to say, if you were in my position, what would you think? “You say you are in danger in Malawi, I don't think you are in any danger”. Sometimes you even think to say, have you ever been thrown to trouble? Have you ever been thrown to difficulties? Because they are so heartless. (Joyce, Malawian woman)*

Joyce conveys the sense of desperation women said they had felt in having to recount private and painful experiences to unsympathetic interviewers. The accusations of lying reflect the shift in the determination of asylum claims which has been argued to increasingly focus on the claimant's credibility over the content of their claim (McKinnon, 2009). The increased burden of proof and expectations on the coherence of the claimant's testimony stand at odds with asylum seekers' realities of displacement, loss and trauma (Baillot, et al., 2014; Cohen, 2001; Griffiths, 2012). As stated by Abebe (Ethiopia), “*Many of us don't know how to tell our story to convince the interviewer*”. This demonstrates the inherently performative nature of the asylum process, whereby the claimants are expected to narrate their experiences

according to the interviewers' Western perceptions of refugee-ness and persecution (Kynsilehto & Puumala, 2015, see also Section 3.3.1).

In contrast to previous studies which have argued that the cultural essentialism pertaining to the anti-FGC discourse offers an exception to women's sustained struggles to gain asylum on the grounds of gender-based persecution (Oxford, 2005; Wettergren & Wikström, 2014), all FGC-affected women had experienced Home Office interviewers' attempts to undercut their credibility. In operating from a position of disbelief, the interviewers had undermined women's experiences of trauma:

*It is a scar in every woman who has gone through FGM, it's not just this visible scar, it's a scar that is inside, something you feel within yourself for the rest of your life... I cannot watch my child being caught going through this pain for so long. People don't know the pain that I go through. But me telling them [interviewer] this, how can they say I don't think they do FGM in Nigeria, how can they say that when I'm telling them what they did to me? (Olufunke, Nigerian woman)*

Olufunke had used a campaign image of an infibulated saltire flag to visualise the consequences of FGC in her zine page (see Figure 7). Olufunke's quote and the image she had used in a zine-page exemplify the accounts of all FGC-affected women who described FGC in terms of life-long harm. Olufunke captures the impacts of FGC beyond the physical complications, highlighting the life-long emotional burden and pain which women said were closely felt during life transitions and periods of mental ill-health. Her use of this image in the context of asylum is telling of the women's calls for protection and their assertion of their belonging in Scotland. This pain was undermined by the asylum interviewer who had challenged her disclosure of the threat of FGC facing her daughter even though the widespread prevalence of FGC among Yoruba in Nigeria has been recognised by the Home Office (2019). This was also the case for Malawian women, who instead had struggled to evidence the threat of FGC because their country is rarely included in international estimates of the prevalence of FGC (see also Section 6.2.1). Although Star (Malawi) had produced letters evidencing the external family pressure for her to return to Malawi to have her daughter cut, this had made little difference to her long wait for asylum. These accounts call into question the presumed central role of written and external evidence in the determination of asylum claims (Home Office, 2015).



Figure 7: An image chosen by Olufunke for a zine-page created by a group of FGC-affected women. The caption reads: “She smiles through her withering tears, each scar on her chaste skin represents a story”

Even after making a case for the prevalence of FGC in Nigeria, the interviewer had questioned Olufunke’s account of the community and peer pressure which sustains FGC in the practising contexts (see also Section 6.3.3):

*They will tell you, we know they are doing FGM in your country, but you can say no to it. But it doesn’t really work, because we don’t have the power to stop the tradition.*  
(Olufunke, Nigerian woman)

Although Kea and Roberts-Holmes (2013) have argued that representations of community pressure contribute to the production of victim identities which enables women at risk of FGC to negotiate the heavy burden of proof placed on them in the asylum system, most women had struggled to convince the interviewers of their inability to challenge long-standing cultural traditions. The claim that women “*can say no to it*” reflects interviewers’ disregard for the overlapping gendered and age-based hierarchies which form the basis of social organisation in FGC-practising societies, sustaining women’s vulnerability to myriad forms of GB. Joyce’s experience further illustrates this:

*They [interviewers] don't understand, you can't say oh I'm now 35, but they'll force me to marry somebody, they say you are a grown up, so you can speak for yourself. But the moment I go there (Malawi), I have a child, they don't want to be embarrassed, so I have to marry somebody, or they will take my child away from me... (Joyce, Malawian woman)*

Participants' accounts demonstrate how the asylum process forces women to simultaneously negotiate contradictory institutional expectations and the interviewers' subjective and Western conceptualisations of victimhood and persecution. Researchers have argued that the judgements made by immigration officials are highly subjective, as they "grapple with contradictions between information presented and their understanding of 'truth' in one cultural context" (Anderson *et al.*, 2014, p. 9, also Jubany 2011, see also Section 3.3.1). In Joyce's case, the interviewer had relied on Western perceptions of her capacity for self-determination as an adult, disregarding the intersecting gendered and age-based hierarchies that influence women's vulnerability to GBV in their countries of origin. This exposes the downfalls of the interviewers' reliance on Country of Origin Information (COI) reports which play a central role in the asylum determination process; In the case of Malawi, the COI report only addresses forced marriage in relation to minors (Home Office, 2017). This exemplifies how women who do not mirror the stereotypical images of victims of cultural forms of GBV face further barriers in asserting their credibility. In the case of FGC and forced marriage, the dominant representations of child victims can mask the range of scenarios in which these practices are perpetuated.

Convincing the interviewers of the prevalence of FGC in women's countries of origin only represents the first hurdle women must go through in ascertaining the credibility of their claims. In addition to being questioned of the prevalence and threat of FGC, Olufunke had also had her experience of undergoing FGC undermined:

*Somebody has gone through a professional that says oh they did the FGM on her... how can they [interviewers] say that they did it on her, but it's not that deep? The fact that they did, that is something. (Olufunke, Nigerian woman)*

This was also the case for both Star (Malawi) and Chibundu (Nigeria) who had faced accusations of lying despite providing medical evidence of cutting:

*Emmaleena: So, as part of your Home Office application you have to go to the doctors?*

Star (Malawi): *It [FGC] is part of my case, I was telling them if my daughter goes to Malawi, it's going to be worse on her. So, they said you need to go to the doctors and get checked, so I went. But they said that the way the doctor described it was like she was just listening to me. But they told me to get checked! She was talking about what she saw down there. The Home Office is just something else, honestly...*

*Sometimes they say that you are lying, but in this case there shouldn't be any way of feeling that I'm lying because everything is there... even the health visitor knows what I've been through. The doctor's certificate is there. Everything is there, but it's just the way they want to feel about this. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)*

These experiences contradict previous assertions that evidence of FGC inscribes cultural difference into the bodies of asylum claimants, making their trauma more accessible to the interviewers (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013). In undermining the risk of FGC, the interviewers colluded with the silence and normalisation which sustains women's vulnerability to FGC in their countries of origin (see also Section 6.2.3). Questioning women's experiences of FGC is central to the interviewers' attempts to undermine the well-founded fear of persecution faced by women's daughters, as the mother's FGC-status and origin in a practising community are considered risk factors in the UK (Safer Scotland, 2017). As suggested by one of the key informants, there is a need to be increasingly critical of the harmfulness of the genital examinations that women are forced to go through:

*We've had women come here and say that my lawyer says I have to get medical examination to show that I've got FGM. And you kind of think, really? But often it's their own lawyer that we need prove that this has happened to you and that your daughter hasn't been cut, because otherwise when it goes to the tribunal, the tribunal might say well, can you prove that you've had FGM? And I mean the doctors don't like doing it. I've never come across this, but you know if that girl is five now, maybe she's going to be in the asylum system for ten years or five years, how many times are people going to ask has she been medically examined? That would be a form of abuse. (Key Informant 2, Women's organisation)*

Recent research in relation to criminal cases of FGC has highlighted the invasive and sometimes traumatising nature of genital examinations (Johnsdotter, 2019). Although bodily evidence of torture has been argued to play a crucial role in establishing the claimant's credibility (Eastmond, 2007; Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013; Puumala et al., 2018), FGC-



affected women's accounts illustrate the need to increasingly problematise the purpose of medical examinations in the asylum determination process; the heavy burden of proof on claimants pushes women to expose themselves to invasive medical examinations, without guarantees that this will aid their claims.

In addition to making a case for belonging to a particular social group that is subject to FGC, a successful claim requires women to evidence their inability to relocate or seek protection from FGC and other forms of GBV in their countries of origin (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2015, see also Section 3.3.1). The political pressure to reduce the numbers of asylum seekers has led to increased application of the Internal Relocation Principle (IRP) (Bennett, 2008), which permits states to reject refugee status if the claimant can relocate within their country of origin to find protection from persecution. The increased application of IRP was evident in how FGC-affected women's sustained vulnerability to GBV was questioned by the Home Office:

*Star (Malawi) Up to now, I am still with the Home Office, which to them it doesn't make sense, they say I can go back home and go stay in another city in my country where I can't get in contact with my partner's family [who perpetuate FGC]. But I say to them, in Malawi, you need family, family we help each other, nobody else can help you. Unlike here, here you can work and look after yourself. I did not go far with my school so I can't get a job, so it's hard for me.*

*Joyce (Malawi): They keep asking that question from me as well, they say that I can go and live in the other city. So, I told them that living in the other city is difficult, it's not like moving from Edinburgh to Glasgow and I'll be okay... In Malawi, if you decide to move to another city [to escape abuse], when you go there, there is a village head man and everyone else who would like to know your business. If you want us to protect you, you have to pay this... if you don't go along with them, then amongst them there will be someone who goes and makes people know where you are.*

Women's accounts exemplify how interviewers assess their possibilities for international relocation through a Western lens, overlooking the particularities of different cultures and the culturally and structurally constrained roles of men and women which shape women's abilities to survive independently from the family unit (Middelburg & Balta, 2016). Although poverty and underdevelopment do not qualify for grounds for asylum, international guidelines stipulate that the possibility of economic survival is a necessary precondition for

internal relocation (UNHCR, 2003). Crucially, the increased application of IRP illustrates how the culturalisation of FGC both sustains Western countries self-proclaimed position as the saviour of FGC-affected women (see also Section 3.2) and enables them to deny women protection when they need it most.

All FGC-affected women with on-going asylum claims described how the interviewers had dismissed the gendered realities in women's countries of origin. Razack has argued that "economic and social conditions are seldom part of the contextualising that ought to be done in order to fully assess an individual woman's vulnerability... a stereotypical view of the claimant's culture is often the only factor considered" (1995, p. 78). Although Razack's analysis is based in the Canadian context over 20 years ago, women's experiences suggest that this assertion remains pertinent to FGC-affected women's struggles for protection. The push for internal relocation disregards the way culture intersects with economic and political conditions to form barriers for women to live independently from families that perpetuate abuse.

Critics of the asylum law have argued that the gendered harms facing women in their countries of origin are often "erased, deemed unproblematic, and assumed natural when they occur in a sphere of privacy that renders such acts invisible" (Oxford, 2005, p. 30).

Participants' difficulties in evidencing the state disregard towards the continuation of FGC illustrate how interviewers become complicit in constructing GBV as a private matter:

Star (Malawi): *And the thing is like, if they believe your story you're safe, but they just tell you that you can go to the police.*

Joyce (Malawi): *The police in Malawi, they are all...*

Star (Malawi): *They are poor, they want money.*

Dalia (Sudan): *African police is not honest.*

*Why won't the Government of United Kingdom understand that I have been through a lot? They just say they don't know the culture of Nigeria, they don't know what a man can do if the police gets involved. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)*

Women's struggles to evidence barriers to state protection demonstrate how interviewers ignore the interconnections between private and public spheres of life (Oswin, 2001). These

accounts exemplify the interviewers' simplistic assumptions about how the existence of legal provisions and state declarations against FGC translates into the enforcement of the law on the ground. In reality, women struggle to provide evidence of corruption and police violence which create barriers to help-seeking. Women's accounts contradict the findings from previous research which has argued that cultural stereotypes and Orientalist tropes support their claims for asylum (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013; Razack, 1995). Instead, participants' experiences suggest that the Western tendencies to conceptualise the continuation of FGC in exclusively cultural terms undermine women's ability to meet the internal relocation and state protection criteria outlined in the Refugee Convention.

Previous research has found that immigration officials question women's credibility as victims of persecution if they do not conform to cultural expectations of motherhood by leaving their children behind (Shuman & Bohmer, 2014). This was the case for Star, who had fled to the UK to escape her abusive husband:

*When I said, if you send me home, my daughter is going to go through FGM and my husband is going to do this [abuse], they [Home Office] asked, "does your husband know you are here?" I said I don't know, but I never told him. Even my other kids don't know that I'm here. But if I go home, I would want to see my kids. And they ask: "Why would you want to see your kids?" I gave birth to them! I've got a lot of explaining to do. (Star, Malawian woman)*

Star's account demonstrates the extent to which interviewers dehumanise asylum seekers in an attempt to discredit their claims. Isatou and Awa (The Gambia) had likewise been separated from their children when seeking asylum in the UK, which was followed by years of waiting in the asylum system. It has been argued that gender labelling and stereotyping intersect with the institutional culture of disbelief, producing "complex and contradictory hurdles for women" in having their claims believed (Baillot, Cowan et al., 2014, pp. 71–72). Images of motherhood play a central role in the perceptions of female refugees as "deserving" victims (Freedman, 2010). In going against the representation of helpless female victims whose experiences are reduced to essentialist gender roles (Freedman, 2010), Star's credibility was put into question. Star described how the interviewer had constructed her as a "(M)other", who is deviant and uncaring towards her children. This strategy draws from the wider "othering" of refugees which strives to mark them as inferior and as a threat to the host society (Grove & Zwi, 2006). It has been said that "political asylum depends on neoliberal

premises of rescue and victimization that require applicants to conform to categories that obscure, rather than illuminate their credibility” (Shuman & Bohmer, 2014, p. 952). This is exemplified by women’s struggles to gain asylum, as their sacrifice of leaving their children behind is taken as a sign of deviance, rather than viewed to testify to the hopelessness of their situations.

It has been argued that dominant constructions reduce refugees to powerless victims, robbing them of their agency (Ghorashi, 2005). Although family separation is often merely the damaging consequence of persecution and conflict, Isatou’s experience highlights how family separation can also function as a means of resistance:

*My first daughter, she experienced it [FGC], I saw everything, she nearly lost her life, so that won’t happen, I won’t allow them to circumcise my children. So that is why I am here. (Isatou, Gambian woman)*

The pressure from her mother to cut her daughters prompted Isatou to seek asylum in the UK. Isatou’s mother would not cut her daughters without her being present because of the need for the mother to look after the girls in the likely event of complications. Although her daughters faced bullying as a result (see also Section 6.3.3), Isatou was able to protect them from by making the difficult decision to stay apart from them. Isatou’s resistance “inheres in the very gaps, fissures and silences of the hegemonic narratives” (Mohanty, 1991, p. 38) of the dominant anti-FGC discourse which disregards the agency and the power women strive to exercise within patriarchal social and societal structures. In fleeing violence and speaking against FGC, women go against the stereotypical epitome of powerless, silenced victims of FGC which they are expected to reaffirm to be viewed as “genuine” asylum seekers (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013, see also Section 3.3.1).

Overall, women’s accounts demonstrate how the interviewers simultaneously engage in multiple strategies to undermine FGC-affected women’s asylum claims. Star’s experience demonstrates the paradox by which immigration officials questioned her ability to internally relocate to protect her daughter from FGC, whilst denying that she had undergone FGC in the first place. In Olufunke’s case, interviewers had in turn strived to undermine the prevalence of FGC in Nigeria, her experience of undergoing cutting and her inability to resist the community pressure to have her daughter undergo FGC. These contradictions exemplify the extent of the culture of disbelief in the treatment of FGC-related asylum cases. The ever-moving goal-posts exemplify how, although consistency and the ability to produce evidence

have been argued to be central to a successful asylum claim (Sweeney, 2009), meeting these conditions no longer guarantees protection for FGC-affected women.

### **7.2.2 “The UK is choosing to protect women just when it suits their own agenda”: The “three planets” of anti-FGC work**

Systematic contradictions in the multi-agency anti-FGC work emerged as a pressing concern in the interviews with FGC-affected women and key informants. These tensions can best be described through Hester’s *Three Planet Model* (2011). Hester (2011) conceptualises professional responses to domestic abuse through three distinct professional “planets”: “domestic violence planet” involving advocates, refuges and justice agencies; “child protection planet” led by social work; and “child contact planet” involving the family court system. The different planets are characterised by their own professional cultures, policies and practices and are divided by different conceptualisations of threshold of harm and a different central focus. The “domestic violence planet” centralises victim/survivor support, the “child protection planet” primarily focuses on safeguarding children at the expense of their mothers and the “child contact planet” attempts to bypass the issue of domestic violence by prioritising parental rights (Hester, 2011).

Hester’s (2011) model invites us to examine the tensions between professional assumptions and institutional culture that shape everyday professional practices. She argues that conflicting professional discourses not only lead to a lack of co-ordinated approach, but also failures to ensure the safety and positive outcomes for both mothers and their children (Hester, 2011). Although Hester’s (2011) different professional planets do not directly translate to anti-FGC work, her analysis of the different professional assumptions and focus provides a model for unpacking the difficult position in which FGC-affected women find themselves in engaging with FGC prevention.

In line with Hester’s work, women and key informants identified similar “unintended fragmentation” (2011, p. 839) in approaches to addressing FGC with asylum-seeking women:

*There’s all this media about how FGM is horrendous child abuse, but say a Nigerian woman coming here with 3 daughters fleeing FGM, I would say that 99% of the time they’ll just say to her, just go back to a different part of Nigeria... I’ve had conversations with women who have been quite angry because they say oh my doctor asked me about it, my midwife asked me about it, everybody is asking me what I am*

*planning, the school has asked me about it. It makes people angry: “How come I am a suspect all the time, but when the one thing that I am trying to do to guarantee my daughters’ safety, then nobody can help me?” It is really a form of institutional torture really. (Key Informant 2, Women’s organisation)*

*The authorities or so-called child protection safeguarding officers choose to play double standards when it comes to women and girls. Despite medical evidence revealing that the woman or her older sister has gone through FGM, I see cases being refused by the Home Office and women can potentially face deportation. It is ironic that when this happens, none of the so-called safeguarding child protection officers come to the rescue of such child or women. The question is, why is the UK choosing to protect women just when it suits their own agenda, but not when women try to protect themselves through asylum? (FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted)*

These accounts provide a new perspective to the existing critique of statutory service responses to FGC, which thus far have primarily been argued to fail to protect women due fears of being accused of racism (Hedley & Dorkenoo, 1992). The key informants illustrated the converging effects of two political discourses which have given rise to two conflicting moral panics on FGC and international migration which underpins women’s exclusion and denial of protection. The disregard for the mother’s experience of trauma by child protection, and the daughter’s risk of FGC during the asylum determination process lead to failures to recognise FGC-affected women’s and their children’s simultaneous needs for protection.

The first account of how safeguarding processes are shaped by the discourse of barbarity that surrounds FGC aligns with Hester’s analysis of child protection work which she has argued constructs women as bad mothers (Hester, 2011; Humphreys & Absler, 2011). This quote demonstrates how the moral panic surrounding FGC leads statutory services to becoming complicit in constructing FGC-affected women as “(M)Others”, whose potential actions are primarily viewed in threatening rather than protective terms despite their derivative asylum claims. This approach to safeguarding is underpinned by the radical feminist constructions of FGC-affected women as “mentally castrated” victims who are complicit in the destruction of their own kind (Daly, 1978, p. 106, see also Section 3.2). However, unlike Hester’s (2011) analysis of responses to domestic abuse, women’s experiences suggest that the fragmentation between hypervigilant child protection and dismissive approaches to FGC-related asylum

claims is more likely to be intentional. While consecutive Home Secretaries have described FGC as a “devastating” and “barbaric” crime (Home Office, 2016a; Javid, 2018), Home Office interviewers are guided by the hostile environment policy to undermine women’s experiences of undergoing FGC. Both of these accounts illustrate the parallels in women’s struggles for protection across time and space, as the sense that “*nobody can help you*” characterises women’s experience of lack of support and state refusal to protect them before and after migration (see also Chapter 6). The tensions arising from the different responsibilities between the UK and Scottish Governments only exacerbated these feelings:

*Often women are asked to return home by the Home Office. But when we try to seek support from local politicians and authorities, we are told that immigration is a reserved matter, that it is up to the UK Government. (FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted)*

At the convergence of politics of deterrence and the increased public pressures to safeguard girls and prosecute perpetrators of FGC, FGC-affected women are doomed if they disclose FGC, and damned if they do not:

*A woman that I work with was asked at a Home Office interview whether she had experienced any gender mutilation or modification and she said well yes, I experienced this as a child, but I don’t think of it as anything weird or wrong... So, because she has a daughter, the Home Office was really concerned that her daughter was going to be at risk because at the time she didn’t see it as anything unusual. But she didn’t really understand the questions, she just had no idea that it was a negative thing. And then the police were at her door the next day, social work were at the door the next day, and she was really freaked out about it and she was really upset about it. I think especially because of the situation with the Home Office and not really understanding, she felt quite overwhelmed, scared and threatened. She was talking about like she was a bad mum and things like that. (Key Informant 3, Women’s organisation)*

The above key informant account further illustrates how the abuses of women and children are treated as separate issues by different professionals, “resulting in impossible choices about how they (women) might or should be acting in order to ensure safety for themselves and their children” (Hester, 2011, p. 850). While disclosing their experience of undergoing FGC can support women’s claims for asylum, this can also expose women to invasive multi-

agency safeguarding procedures because the mother's FGC-status is considered a risk factor in the UK (Safer Scotland, 2017). The immigration control has a central focus on the parent; as illustrated by women's experiences of asylum interviews, interviewers place a heavy emphasis on the woman's credibility even when her right to protection is derived from her children.

In contrast, much like Hester's "child protection planet" (2011), prevention of FGC led by police and social work in collaboration with health, education and immigration centralises the best interests of the child. The key informant highlights how this central focus on the child's welfare leads to disproportionate and punitive responses that can further traumatise women who are fleeing persecution to protect their children. The hurried multi-agency procedures that were triggered by the woman's answers had little consideration to how her responses to Home Office questioning were influenced by displacement, state of uncertainty and her lack of knowledge of the Scottish legal and cultural context (see also Chapter 8). Although the safeguarding procedures are in place to ensure the safety of children, these emergency responses from the police and social work can have a damaging impact on women who experience the converging effects of displacement, cultural change and immigration controls.

In Hester's model (2011), the "child protection planet" and "child contact planet" fail to hold perpetrators accountable, thus failing to support and ensure the women's safety. A reverse scenario plays out in anti-FGC work, where professionals across the statutory sector are so focused on finding perpetrators that they end up overlooking the need to sensitively address women's ongoing vulnerability and trauma of undergoing FGC. One key informant (3) said that the Home Office interviewers adopted a "tick box" approach for asking about FGC, which they said was insensitive and intrusive for women who were dealing with the consequences of displacement and gender-specific persecution. This type of questioning overlooks how sexual and physical violence perpetuated by the police in women's countries of origin underpins many asylum seekers' fearful reactions towards authorities. Other key informants also described disproportionate emergency responses adopted by health services:

*I've heard about a situation where a woman had just had a baby and the health worker raised the subject of FGM and the woman said that they'll probably arrange to get it done when she's older when they go back home, but she didn't know it was against the law. Her country did Type 1 when the girls were about 15-16. And so that became a child abuse investigation and the parents ended up feeling very hostile to*



*health [services], it was quite badly handled. I'm not saying the health worker was wrong, but it just shows you the difference that I do really believe parents and families need time to assimilate that information and their first response. If everybody in your community does it and you say yeah, we'll probably do it at some point, it's not like you actually have a plan at that moment necessarily, but it does mean that needs explored through safeguards.* (Key Informant 2, Women's organisation)

This key informant also describes how mothers' views that normalise FGC are interpreted as an immediate threat to their children. Although normalisation of FGC was said to justify FGC in practising contexts (see Section 6.2.3), the sense of urgency underpinning statutory responses to FGC arguably stems from "essentialist views of immigrants as being carriers of static "culture", and on essentialist views of vulnerability, disregarding completely the fact that migration per se might lead to cultural change" (Johnsdotter & Mestre i Mestre, 2017, p. 16). The informant argued for the need to support women in absorbing the different meanings FGC holds in their new host country. FGC needs to be addressed in a way that allows FGC-affected women to "*re-evaluate what is normal, and to provide the space and the scope to evaluate what has been done to them*" (Key Informant 2).

Hester (2011) has drawn attention to how different thresholds for intervention held by different professional groups can lead to lack of provision of support for children in cases of domestic abuse. Similar issues are at play in anti-FGC work, albeit this time women are the ones to lose out. The "tick box" approach to FGC prevention was not confined to the asylum system; several of the participants who had given birth to a girl in the UK had been made to sign a declaration that they would not make their daughters undergo FGC. Although FGC had been raised in encounters with the Home Office, sexual health nurses, midwives and social work, none of the women had been signposted to further support for dealing with their own experiences of FGC. Participants suggested that limited training may have been underpinning health professionals' lack of confidence to address FGC with affected women:

*Insecurities about women's bodies are not only felt by women, but also by others who they are cautious about addressing issues.* (FGC-affected Key Informant 5, country of origin omitted)

Health services have a dual responsibility in FGC protection and support provision. However, it is possible that the public pressures to safeguard girls from FGC, combined with heavy workloads and insufficient training can lead professionals to prioritise the mother's FGC-

status in risk assessments, at the expense of recognising women's experiences as victims of FGC. Although healthcare is devolved, recent research from England has similarly reported that Somali mothers feel that medical staff prioritise extracting information required for government statistics without considering the trauma of FGC-affected women (Karlsen et al., 2019). In the worst-case scenario, healthcare workers' reactions to FGC had left women traumatised:

Chibundu (Nigeria): *When there was another complication before I gave birth, everybody was running helter-skelter and documenting FGM. When they found out, oh my goodness, that it was FGM (says with a hushed voice).*

Emmaleena: *That must have been difficult for you.*

Chibundu (Nigeria): *It was difficult, very terrible one. When the nurses went "Oh!", I was like, what do you mean? The way they looked at each other, they felt something heavy, but because I had never heard it's something bad, I didn't even know the meaning of word circumcision. Why are they looking like if something drastically bad has occurred? So, I had to go back home and I had to look it up, because the way the nurses squeezed their faces and react to my circumstances, I thought it was close to maybe tuberculosis or HIV. I looked it up, and I saw it was illegal, I was like oh my god, this could even put me in trouble. They didn't even tell me it was illegal or anything, I didn't know.*

The Royal College of Paediatrics has questioned the UK approach to framing FGC as an extreme form of abuse, arguing that constructing violence in hierarchical terms can lead to unhelpful variation in response and care received by vulnerable people who are subject to different forms of violence and abuse (Boffley, 2015). This was experienced by women who had undergone elongation, who felt that the damage done to them was being overlooked in discussions on FGC (see also Section 8.3.1). In contrast, Chibundu's experience exemplifies the detrimental consequences of the discourse which constructs cutting as an unspeakable atrocity (See also Section 3.2). Her account illustrates how perceptions of FGC as barbaric can be fundamentally insensitive to the confusion, exhaustion and instabilities experienced by displaced refugee women (for similar findings see Chalmers & Omer-Hashi, 2002). Many FGC-affected women had only been confronted by the negative consequences of FGC for the first-time during childbirth. Giving birth to daughters, along with increased awareness had been a turning point for many women who had previously normalised FGC as a cultural

practice:

*Mothers now know the cruelty of FGM, so no mother want her child to go through that here. (Awa, Gambian woman)*

The role of childbirth as a turning point and a transformative experience underscores the importance of developing sensitive approaches to FGC-safeguarding, and the paramount need to proactively offer support for FGC-affected women.

The tensions in the anti-FGC work stem from different professionals' reliance on simplistic constructions of perpetrators and victims. The dichotomy between bad mothers and powerless victims of FGC disempowers FGC-affected women, who criticised the refusal to conceptualise seeking asylum as a means for the mothers to protect their daughters:

*They say this country goes against FGM, but when somebody has a case of FGM, they refuse to believe the person is going through that process... we try to escape to country that goes against it, and this country will tell us no. (Olufunke, Nigerian woman)*

*The Home Office, they talk about FGM, but they don't care about doing the right thing. They traumatise women that have been through FGM, that is what they do. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)*

Participants' experiences illustrate how the conflicting assumptions between child protection and immigration control come to silence FGC-affected women. Crenshaw's (1991) concept of *representational intersectionality* enables us to explain how the contrasting discourses which FGC-affected women become subject to ignore the intersectional location of women of colour. On one hand, the hostile environment to immigration that constructs asylum seekers as a threat dismisses FGC-affected women's victimhood on the account of their gender. On the other hand, the racialised discourse of barbarity makes child protection complicit in strengthening the power relations that suppress FGC-affected women on the account of their race. Altogether, the findings demonstrate how women are positioned at the intersection of two orbits, where the dominant discourses on forced migration and FGC that guide the different planets engaged in FGC prevention create a "black hole" for the mothers and their children to fall through (Hester, 2011, p. 850). Women are faced with the consequences of two moral panics, as the fortress mentality in the UK has contributed to the public pressures to condemn FGC and to the state reluctance to consider the practice as grounds for asylum.

### **7.3 Women’s lived experiences of liminality and gendered harm in the British asylum system**

It has been argued that the mechanisms of exclusion which “other” asylum seekers have become increasingly normalised in the asylum provision (O’Reilly, 2018). The next two sections reflect women’s wider experiences of structural and social harms in the asylum system. The next sections analyse how the lengthy asylum process, destitution and loss of autonomy compound the impacts of women’s violent continuums. I begin by analysing the mental and social harms which asylum-seeking women experience on the account of their location at the intersection of gender, race, culture and lack of immigration status. This will then be followed by a discussion on how the hegemonic discourses surrounding forced migration and FGC limit women’s abilities to re-make their lives in migration contexts. In highlighting the intentionality that underpins these institutionalised harms, these sections strive to destabilise the conceptual opposition of liberator/oppressor that characterises the Western anti-FGC discourse (Njambi, 2004, see also Chapter 3).

#### **7.3.1 “Living like a prisoner”: Destitution and uncertainty as state strategies of corrosive control**

All participants described the asylum process overwhelmingly in negative terms as “*exhausting*”, “*frightening*”, “*inhumane* and as “*torture*”. In contrast to the dominant representations of “bogus” asylum seekers who migrate to improve their standard of living (Alice Bloch & Schuster, 2002), FGC-affected women conveyed their experience of seeking asylum as a choice between two evils:

*My daughter was in hospital for one month, she lost too much blood (after FGC). We nearly lost her. So, how can I allow that to happen to my other children? I told my mother, I would sacrifice anything, I don’t mind Home Office taking me to detention, but I prefer that than my children to be cut. Even the Home Office would put me in jail for life, I am fine with that, but my children will not experience that, no. (Isatou, Gambian woman)*

*The asylum itself is like you are living like a prisoner. When they see you, they ask, why is she struggling instead of just going home? But they don’t know what problems wait for you back home. You would rather struggle here being in the asylum than going back. (Star, Malawian woman)*

FGC-affected women's experiences of asylum challenge the cultural essentialism which constructs their migration trajectories from Global South to Global North as journeys from oppression to emancipation. Star and Isatou articulate how women escape one form of torture only to be subject to another, as women become subject to institutional practices which are designed to weed out "bogus" claimants (Sales, 2002). The difficult decision to seek asylum represents women's exercise of agency amidst multiple structural constraints, which the political discourse that relies on a binary between inherently vulnerable "deserving" asylum seekers and strategic "undeserving" migrants (Wernesjö, 2020) renders invisible.

In addition to the risk of detention at any point of the asylum process, refusal of status and the loss of asylum support frequently leads to destitution. I witnessed this during the fieldwork, when one of the Eritrean women received a negative decision on her asylum claim. In Ella's case, language barriers had made it impossible for her to fully convey the facts of her case. She was told to move out of her Home Office accommodation, leaving her to couch-surf and walk across the city from one food bank to the next for essentials. She also had serious dental issues but had been wrongfully refused treatment due to her lack of address and immigration status. Her experience exemplifies how refusal of status often leads to compounding inequalities and the denial of the (limited) rights asylum seekers have (McKenna, 2019).

Women described how the lengthy process and restrictions prevented them from re-building their lives in Scotland. This was visualised in two zine pages made by an asylum-seeking woman who had endured the system for eight years (see Figure 8). In writing "*one day we are here*" and "*hope everyday*", Leyla (Iran) describes her attempts to remain positive while struggling with housing issues, lack of support, loneliness and difficulties with raising her children with limited resources. Leyla said she was "*fed up, sick and tired... They say I'm illegal, but I think this is my country. But I'm not settled here. Our quality of life is not good. My children have dreams, but I always have to say no to them*". Other women likewise described how their hopefulness was weighed down by the combined effects of multi-layered trauma and structural inequalities which they experienced. Leyla's use of images well captures this ambivalence, as she chose a dark image of WWII spitfires as symbols of freedom to represent the end of the asylum process: "*one day my children will have freedom... like birds flying*" (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: Two zine pages made by Leyla which represent the length and uncertainties of the asylum process

The ongoing uncertainty and diminishing hope give rise to poor mental health and compound existing mental health problems during the asylum process:

*I think maybe because in my country I did my best and after that nothing came out of it, maybe it's the consequences of my past [experiences of GBV], but most of the time I think that I'm not in a good situation. I don't have any hope for future. It's about my self-confidence, I don't have it anymore. I feel that no one really likes me and that I don't deserve to have a good life. (Maryam, Iranian woman)*

The way the lengthy asylum process and refugees' constrained resources heighten mental health issues illustrates the material consequences of the institutionalised culture of disbelief. It has been argued that asylum seekers become "sub-alternized and psychologically shredded by Britain's hostile immigration control machinery" (Bhatia, 2020, p. 278). All FGC-affected women and most of the community participants who had sought asylum disclosed experiencing depression, anxiety, sleeping difficulties, suicidal thoughts and feelings of shame during the asylum process. As argued by Canning (2019) and further affirmed by the

findings presented in this chapter, the asylum process subjects women to state corrosive control that strips women of their autonomy and humanity; the sense of hopelessness which Maryam conveyed bears similarities to the consequences of coercive control in intimate relationships, whereby dominance is exerted in a way that “erodes confidence and is corrosive of self-belief, including the belief that change is possible and that one deserves to be safe and treated with respect” (Sharp-Jeffs, Kelly, & Klein, 2018, p. 165, see also Canning, 2019). Nevertheless, women sought to resist the state corrosive control by holding onto their aspirations and dreams for future (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. Zine page created by Zala

As visualised in two zine pages (see Figure 10), asylum-seeking women simultaneously struggle with heightened mental health difficulties and systematic exclusion from the society, which leads them to increasingly rely on alternative coping mechanisms. These zine pages exemplify the sense of isolation felt by asylum seekers who face cultural and structural barriers to developing social connections and participating in the society. As highlighted in these pages, asylum seekers’ limited welfare rights and connections lead women to heavily depend on faith and third sector organisations for mental health support. Although some of



the participants felt disassociated from faith and their cultural communities, for most of the participants faith continued to play an important role in providing a sense of control, feelings of belonging and a sense of being anchored amidst uncertainty (see also Section 8.2.1). This represents another continuity in the lives of women, whereby women’s constrained access to state support and welfare both before and after migration increases their reliance on the family and community (see also Sections 6.3.2 and 6.3.3).



Figure 10: Zine pages focusing on mental ill-health during the asylum process made by Asha, Sabrina and Hadeel

The impacts of these welfare restrictions are worsened by the politics of immigration control, as being in the asylum system not only marks asylum seekers as different from the host society, but also from their own communities; focus group participants described how the hostile environment measures had left settled members of communities wary of supporting asylum seekers who were increasingly viewed as a “burden” or a “threat”. Settled migrants were said to fear that helping those without status would compromise their own limited resources, welfare entitlements or immigration status, highlighting the ongoing precariousness felt by migrant communities. At the same time, focus group participants said that asylum seekers were also perceived to be a burden by the Scottish communities. Participants referred to the entrenched welfare myths whereby refugees are accused of



“stealing our jobs” or “coming here for benefits”. These examples illustrate how labelling asylum seekers as a threat comes to constrain asylum seekers’ social relations simultaneously from multiple different directions (Witteborn, 2011)

The hostile environment was said to damage the sense of community that had previously characterised women’s cultures, contributing to “*breaking down families and friendship from the BME communities*” (FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted). This was further compounded by cultural stigma attached to trauma, mental ill-health and GBV:

*Women have certainly told us, “I don’t fit in with my own people here anymore”, because they’re saying oh just forget about depression, why can’t you just get on with it. They don’t necessarily feel that they’ve got their own network of support, they don’t have it within their own ethnic groupings, because it’s too distressing to talk about some of the things that they have experienced, and they don’t feel confident enough to develop new social networks as well.* (Key Informant 6, Religious organisation).

Participants’ barriers to social bonds illustrate how, in migration contexts, the boundaries of belonging become demarcated by lack of immigration status and mental ill-health, which the state is complicit in inflicting. These mental and social harms have gendered consequences, as social interactions play a central role in supporting women who have been affected by GBV (see Section 8.3.3). The limited access to both informal and formal support demonstrates the dynamics of *structural intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991), whereby women’s location at the intersection of gender, race, culture and immigration status constrains their resources to re-build their lives and cope with the aftermath of violence they have experienced (Crenshaw, 1991; Kelly, 2016). Asylum-seeking women are simultaneously subject to multiple forms of “othering” and exclusion: racialised “othering” underpins their state-sanctioned exclusions embedded in the asylum process; cultural stigma surrounding mental-ill health creates a divide between women and their communities; and the liminal asylum seeker status sets them apart from both the host society and their own communities.

### **7.3.2 “Trapped in a limbo”: Liminal spaces between belonging and participation**

Out of the 12 women who disclosed applying asylum on the grounds of GBV, only one had received a positive decision within a year. Most of the interviewed refugee participants had

spent years in the system, time which was marked by ongoing uncertainty. In describing their experience, several of the FGC-affected women spoke of their fear of “*the brown letters*”, which punctuated their long wait in the asylum system:

*The moment you go home, you are even scared to open your own door, because you don't know what letter is behind that door. You're there sleeping, but once you hear the postman on the door like, you just think oh god. What's that again. These people, they torture us.* (Joyce, Malawian woman)

Joyce articulates how the lengthy asylum process and arbitrary decision-making sustains asylum-seekers' fears of detention and deportation, which can expose migrant women to multiple harms (Canning, 2017a). Locating women's accounts in the context of prevailing politics of deterrence illustrates the intentionality of the lengthy process that strives to exhaust asylum applicants, in order to encourage them to voluntarily withdraw their applications (Hassan, 2000; O'Reilly, 2018). Liminality has been argued to characterise the experience of asylum seekers who are forced to occupy a position of “in-between-ness” in relation to time, space and legal status (O'Reilly, 2018). As described by one of the key informants, for victims of GBV, asylum represents a state of limbo in-between ongoing violence and protection:

*It is very difficult to recover from something if you don't know whether it's over. If you've come from a war situation or if you've come here because you've got three daughters and you know that your family or your village is going to insist that they have FGM, or you've been raped in a conflict situation, or you're fleeing forced marriage - it's very difficult to overcome the trauma of what's happened to you, if you think that you're going to go back to it. And the asylum process, it can easily take years and years. You are just trapped in limbo and you don't know how long the process is going to take, you don't know when you can start re-building your life.* (Key Informant 2, Women's organisation)

*I'm very worried and... I'm on medication, I don't sleep and all that, because I don't know what will happen next. I'm here, should I feel comfortable, but I don't know what the Home Office will decide, go back home, am I going to go through what I went through again.* (Star, Malawian woman)

In saying “*it is very difficult to recover from something if you don't know whether it's over*”, the key informant articulates how the uncertainties over status not only give rise to mental

health issues, but further sustain women's experiences of GBV as ongoing. Along with Star, many other women described how deportation would expose them and their daughters to the violence that they were fleeing from. This illustrates the damaging consequences of the lengthy asylum process, which sustains women's ongoing fears of GBV.

The asylum system has been criticised for inflicting structural violence through policies which promote social exclusion and force asylum seekers to live below the poverty line (Canning, 2017b; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006). Critics have argued that the asylum system deliberately perpetuates further harm to the lives of already-vulnerable migrants as part of the political agenda to reduce immigration, increase everyday securitisation and restructure the welfare state (Canning, 2017a; Sales, 2002; Souter, 2011). Most asylum seekers face restricted access to housing and education and have no right to employment, forcing them to depend on the differentiated "welfare" system which gives them £39.60 a week for food, travel and other necessities. The sense of frustration of being held back by these restrictions emerged as prominent theme from the interviews:

*I had eight years of lost productivity, if you like. When I talk about that phase of my life, I say that it was like being put in a cold storage and then taken out when time was right for me to be taken out. While I know that we remained productive because of volunteering and that's how I coped with the challenges that were facing me, including health issues... but had I been given the opportunity, a person who was employable, that had the skills so far, when I still had all the energy and the motivation... (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted)*

In saying she was "put in a cold storage", the key informant captures how the system forces asylum seekers to put their aspirations on hold. In contrast to the stereotype of asylum seekers who are viewed as a burden, many of the participants were eager to participate in education and employment. Participants critiqued the paradox between the stereotyping of refugees as "welfare scroungers" and the asylum system which is structured around forced dependency. Participants also felt that the Scottish integration approach which asserts "integration from day one" (Scottish Government, 2018b, p. 6) was tokenistic for "saying one thing on paper and doing something else":

*What is stopping them from equipping me to get my PhD, if that will make me happy? Education is a devolved matter. I have wasted all those years and they're telling me*

*about inclusion, cohesion and fairness? You have to define these words for me, maybe I don't understand what they mean. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)*

Chibundu's experience was shared by several other women whose aspirations had been suppressed by being told that their options were limited to volunteering, English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and college courses during the asylum process. Chibundu's frustration exemplifies the barriers created by converging anti-immigration policies and structural racism, which prevent FGC-affected women from exercising their agency over their own lives in migration contexts. This represents yet another continuity in FGC-affected women's lives, whereby structural violence and subjugation remain a "normal" part of women's lives after migration (see also Chapter 6).

Although the structural harms during asylum are felt by both men and women, the strategies of deterrence have gendered consequences for women who are fleeing from GBV:

*Having been through issue of domestic abuse, which was very terrible situation I went through, it really affected my overall wellbeing. This situation now adds, it makes it worse for me to do anything, except when I come out of this, that is when I can really move forward. But when you keep someone's hands tied, you tie the person's hands and legs and then you ask the person to jump and to walk, how possible is it? It's just impossible. Why would you accept a person being traumatised for this long?*  
(Chibundu, Nigerian woman)

*There's women and men who have been here the most extraordinary amount of time, including those who've become homeless and not been allowed to work. Initially, people don't understand that, they want to work and they feel that it would help them and it would help you know the country and it would make them feel better. (Key Informant 2, Women's organisation)*

Chibundu articulates how the structural violence in the asylum system further compounds the trauma arising from women's experiences of violent continuums (Canning, 2017a). Chibundu had been victim of FGC, domestic abuse and coercive control, after which she endured six years in the asylum system. In saying that the asylum process "*ties the person's hands and legs*", while expecting them to "*jump and walk*", Chibundu's metaphor critiques how asylum restrictions impede women who have been affected by GBV from regaining control over their own lives. This was also articulated by key informant 2 who emphasised the role of societal participation in supporting refugees in dealing with their experiences of trauma. The

converging impacts of the lengthy asylum process, asylum restrictions and trauma were said to prevent women from moving forward with their lives, leading to a “*stagnant way of life*”:

*I just don't think they [FGC-affected women] feel that they've got a life, and that's basically it, they don't have life, a good quality of life. Very isolated, some women, a couple of the women I know that they regularly go through clinics, blood tests... I think it's like they've come here and it's safe, but I'm not sure they feel all that safe. I suppose the word is thrive, I don't think they're thriving. And I think they know that they're not thriving. I don't think I'm exaggerating.* (Key Informant 7, Religious organisation)

This key informant account captures how FGC-affected women's ongoing experiences of trauma converge with barriers to integration, leading to a cycle of sustained sense of insecurity and social isolation during the asylum process.

It has been argued that asylum seekers' mobility is simultaneously restricted by laws and socio-political discourses which produce difference and freeze the forced migrant in place (Witteborn, 2011). The views of key informants and FGC-affected women highlight how women are both physically and mentally held back during the asylum process; at this juncture, women's lives are restrained by the converging effects of GBV and structural harms perpetuated through the asylum system which trap women simultaneously in two limbos that prevent them from feeling part of the society:

*The practice [FGC] is a determinant of failed living aliens. I mean, that is exactly what it is, because you are no longer a complete human, there's something that is in you, a full human that has been taken away for disadvantaging purpose. It numbs your very being, your very existence. It's like something is paused, you're just put in a static position.* (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)

*It's the judgement when you don't have status, you're just like an alien, and a very bad one... When you're an asylum seeker or refugee, you are treated less than human... And you know this situation, it's static, that's what it's doing to me. I feel here that the skin thing [skin colour] plays a big part here. You know, whatever is scaring them from the Black folks, they should break those barriers.* (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)

The language which Chibundu and other FGC-affected women used to describe the aftermath of FGC and the asylum process was strikingly similar. In addition to framing both as “torture”, both of these conditions made women feel “static”, preventing women from moving on with their lives. In describing herself as an “alien”, “no longer a complete human” and “less than human”, Chibundu reflects the negativity attached to both FGC and asylum seekers which she had experienced in encounters with health professionals and the general public. Other women likewise described how they had been excluded on the grounds of their immigration status. These experiences exemplify the process of “othering” which reinforces asylum seekers’ marginalisation, social exclusion and disempowerment (Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2002). These experiences demonstrate the consequences of converging discourses that dehumanise migrants and defeminise women with FGC. Migration positions FGC-affected women in “shifting contexts of meaning and power relations” (Talle, 2008, p. 64); as illuminated by these findings, women are confronted by opposing public perceptions of FGC and Blackness that are also embedded in the institutions that strive to exclude them. In practising contexts, FGC functions as a means of social integration for girls to be accepted within their own communities (see also Chapter 6). This becomes reversed in resettlement contexts, where FGC, race and immigration status marked women as inferior (Talle, 2008):

*Sometimes you are actually scared that people might look at you differently, people that don't know the way you like, look down below [because of FGC]. (Star, Malawian woman).*

It has been argued that cultural constructions of Black women can become a source of intersectional disempowerment (Crenshaw, 1991). FGC-affected women’s accounts illustrate the troubles they face in crafting an identity as women in contexts where the experience of FGC makes them by definition not women (Talle, 2008). Women internalise the Western constructions of their bodies as “mutilated”, with damaging consequences on their self-esteem and body image (Palm et al., 2019). Women’s feelings of inferiority illustrate how the discourses on barbarity attached to FGC come to alienate and “other” the women these representations were meant to defend. This exemplifies the importance of careful considerations around how the opposition to FGC should be articulated.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has contributed new knowledge by illuminating FGC-affected women's lived experiences of the asylum system. Although the asylum process plays such a defining role in migrant communities' experiences of settling in their new host country, much of research on FGC in migration contexts has overlooked this stage in women's lives (as reviewed in Section 3.3.1). Crucially, women's experiences of the asylum process and statutory responses to FGC highlight how dominant, cultural constructions of FGC mask FGC-affected women's intersectional vulnerability and experiences of trauma. Throughout this chapter, I have critiqued the consequences of the convergence of the prevailing discourses that characterise UK immigration policy and anti-FGC work. Participants' perspectives highlight the paradox whereby FGC-affected women occupy a position of hypervisibility in public and policy discourse, but their experiences are rendered invisible by contrasting professional discourses and practices. While immigration control overlooks women's intersectional vulnerability and experiences as victims, statutory safeguarding disregards women's position as survivors, and the agency which women exercise to protect their daughters through seeking asylum.

In her speech at the Girl Summit in 2014, the then Home Secretary Theresa May said that the Government measures to end FGM were "one more step on the road towards giving women a voice" (UK Government, 2014). Regardless, FGC-affected women's experiences illustrate how the hostile environment policy championed by consecutive Home Secretaries silences women who are seeking protection. The intentionality which is conveyed by the institutionalised exclusions suggests that despite the Home Secretaries' claims to protect girls and women from FGC, the Home Office continues to view women's attempts to find protection from FGC through seeking asylum as a greater threat than the practice itself. In the next chapter, I will build on this structural analysis by discussing the role of resettlement barriers, racial exclusions and top-down approaches to FGC in influencing FGC-affected women's vulnerability, participation and emancipation after migration.

## Chapter 8

### Ending female genital cutting in Scotland

#### 8.1 Overview

This chapter builds on the emerging global research on the process of cultural negotiation in relation to the abandonment of FGC after migration (as reviewed in Section 3.3.5). In addressing the growing framing of FGC as an issue of, and for integration (see Section 3.3.4), this chapter explores how feelings of belonging, social relations and socio-economic integration influence the negotiation of FGC and the cultural norms, values and hierarchies which influence these practices. The first part of this chapter specifically addresses the research aim to build on the previous research on cultural attitudes towards FGC in Scotland (Mhoja et al., 2010; O'Brien et al., 2016, 2017) by critically reflecting on the role of changing cultural and structural conditions in influencing women's vulnerabilities to FGC and other forms of GBV after migration. The second part of this chapter will then address the pressing gap in research on community participation and engagement of FGC-affected women in FGC prevention and support provision (Connelly, Murray, Baillot, & Howard, 2018; Njue, Karumbi, Esho, Varol, & Dawson, 2019, see also Section 3.3.6). These sections problematise how the dominant representations of FGC-affected women play out in the Scottish anti-FGC approach (as outlined in Section 2.4.4), giving rise to barriers to women's participation and abilities to challenge violence within their own communities.

#### 8.2 Migration, diaspora and transnationalism: Women's experiences of cultural change and the abandonment of FGC in Scotland

This chapter begins by analysing FGC-affected women's and communities' experiences of cultural change in relation to the abandonment of FGC. I demonstrate how not only FGC, but also FGC-affected women's self-image and cultural belonging become negotiated on multiple scales in migration contexts. I situate the process of abandonment of FGC in relation to the diaspora experience which is characterised by ongoing transformation (Hall, 1990), connection to the homeland (Brubaker, 2005), and identity that is bound up with negotiation, dislocation and conflict (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). In highlighting the role of diaspora identity, transnational connections and allegiances in the continuation of FGC, I argue for the need to



develop more nuanced understandings of risk through disrupting the persistent representations of refugees' peripheral locations and territorially marked realities.

### **8.2.1 “It takes a lot of patience and accepting to let go”: Precarious identities, disrupted allegiances and cultural (dis)continuities in diaspora**

In line with previous studies from migration contexts (Gele, Sagbakken, & Kumar, 2015; Johnsdotter et al., 2009; Vissandjee et al., 2003, see also Section 3.3.5), all participants said that relocation to non-FGC practising contexts encouraged communities to re-evaluate entrenched cultural beliefs and practices:

*Sometimes it [abandoning FGC] is very difficult and you have to understand that even us, I did not understand about FGM, like the complications and all that till I was here. So sometimes the changing of space, changing of environment and education helps. But if you're telling the people who are committed to their culture and their beliefs to stop, they can't just change their mindset like that. (FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted)*

*Most of them who come from Africa, they don't really understand why you should forget about the culture and do the right thing. You know, it's difficult for women, because discussing and outlawing FGM is like disgracing your culture. It takes a lot of patience and accepting to let go. It's almost impossible. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)*

The key informant and Chibundu articulate how, even in migration contexts, abandoning FGC requires women and communities to go against deep-seated beliefs and the sense of cultural pride which silence women in the practising contexts (see also Chapter 6).

Participants' emphasis on changing spaces and education illustrates how exposure to new values in contexts where FGC is not normalised creates possibilities for the negotiation of cultural strategies (Johnsdotter et al., 2009). However, as argued by key informant 2, ending FGC necessitates ensuring that “*communities get the information, get time to ask questions and adjust their heads*” in their new context. This aligns with the argument that people will abandon FGC when their social context supports, promotes or at least accepts its abandonment (Gele, Johansen, & Sundby, 2012, p. 8, see also Section 3.3.5).

It has been argued that interpretations of acculturation as a process of behavioural shift imply that “one can float in and out of cultures, shedding one’s history and politics... (this) overlooks the contested, negotiated and sometimes painful rupturing experiences associated with living between cultures” (Bhatia & Ram, 2001, p. 14). Rather than framing the abandonment of FGC simply as a “choice” (Scottish Government, 2016b, p. 21), participants described cultural change as an ongoing process of “*learning and unlearning*” in relation to cultural norms, gender and normalised forms of GBV:

*One interesting aspect of my job is explaining what FGM is to women who have experienced FGM. Because it’s so normalised to them and then they come to Scotland, they claim asylum and they’re asked by doctors, by nurses, by the Home Office: have you experienced FGM? And they’re like, what the hell is that? They are sort of having to re-evaluate what is normal... I don’t want to say that they are re-educating themselves, but they haven’t had the space and the scope to evaluate what has been done to them. All their life, it has been normal and they were told it’s positive and a rite of passage, and then they come here and are realising that it’s illegal and it’s child abuse. (Key Informant 3, Women’s organisation)*

Many of the interviewed FGC-affected women had only started questioning FGC after learning more about these practices after migration. The key informant quote articulates how migration leads FGC-affected women to “*re-evaluate*” their own experiences of violence. Women’s confused reactions to being asked about FGC illustrate the extent to which the Western discourse and terminology stands at odds with FGC-affected women’s cultural understandings of FGC. This, along with women’s negative experiences of addressing FGC with statutory services (see also Section 7.2.2), call for further sensitivity towards refugees’ experiences of displacement in cross-cultural encounters. Migration confronts FGC-affected women with oppositional constructions of womanhood, which disrupt the taken-for-granted normality that envelopes the practice of FGC (see Chapter 6).

Western discourse still constructs FGC-affected women as sexually and bodily imperfect (Palm, Essen, & Johnsdotter, 2019 see also Section 3.2.2). The realisation of the consequences of FGC in the context of dominant discourses of barbarity and mutilation can evoke a “new kind of hardship”, as FGC no longer yields moral merits or generates proper womanhood (Malmström, 2013, p. 317). The realisation of the negative consequences of FGC can be deeply unsettling; this was exemplified by Chibundu (Nigeria), who had gone

from viewing FGC as a “*transferable skill*” and herself “*like a goddess*” to feeling like a “*failed alien*”. This change was derived from the shifting meanings which meant that FGC no longer signified the exchange between pain and cultural pride after migration. Other women also described similar feelings of embarrassment and insecurity over their bodies after realising how FGC was being perceived in their new cultural context:

Emmaleena: *Did that [learning about FGC] change the way you were feeling about yourself?*

Joyce (Malawi): *You just feel silly, because I was so excited about it, thinking that this is going to make my marriage work. Only to find out that it has nothing to do about it. So, you just feel stupid.*

The findings highlight how, although ending FGC ultimately benefits women, this process of abandonment is not always experienced as empowering. Women’s accounts illustrate how migration into non-practising contexts leads women’s experiences of violence to become imbued with feelings of shame and a sense of loss (Lien & Schultz, 2013, see also Section 3.3.5). The findings illuminate how in migration contexts, FGC-affected women are faced with a challenge of composing their sense of self that has been dually fractured by both violence and the contestation of previously accepted conceptualisations of female bodies, womanhood and culture. This underscores the need for support for women beyond the immediate aftermath of FGC, sometimes even decades later:

*Going through a lot of workshop training, I have really learned a lot about how to live my life with FGM, how to live a good life... They’ve really helped me to pull through.* (Chibundu, Nigerian woman).

Chibundu described how she had been supported by a third sector provider in dealing with the complex trauma that had resulted from the overlapping effects of FGC, domestic abuse, the lengthy asylum process and health care professionals’ reactions towards her FGC-status during childbirth (see also Section 7.2.2). Other women likewise talked about how their mental health and self-image had been impacted by the compounding effects violence, displacement and the uncertainties of the asylum process. Brison’s (2002) notion of “re-making of self” describes well this process of identity negotiation for FGC-affected women, whose sense of self becomes contested in their new cultural contexts. Chibundu’s account of how women are faced with the task of figuring out how to live with the impacts of FGC

suggests that “moving on” for FGC-affected women is not about transcending or recovering from trauma, but about learning how to endure its lifelong impacts (Brison, 2002).

In realising the extent of the damage done to them, FGC-affected women were forced to renegotiate not only their sense of self, but also their relationship with their cultures and communities. Displacement and the realisation of the different meanings that FGC holds in Western contexts can lead women to becoming dually uprooted from their cultures and families, which have previously acted as a source of belonging:

*I heard about a woman who had accepted it [FGC] as part of her religion, because her parents had genuinely believed it was part of their religion, so they had arranged for it. And then through some awareness work at one of the organisations, she found out it wasn't part of her religion and that traumatised her, I mean she was in a really bad way for quite a few days. And she had to overcome that, because she was just so angry. She didn't know who to be angry with. (Key Informant 2, Women's organisation)*

*I have this scar on me that can't make me forget the stories that laid that cut. Some people say you need to forgive and forget - I can forgive you, but there's no way I will forget. I can never forget that you put my hand in the fire. I will always be looking at my hand and what happened to it. (Olufunke, Nigerian woman)*

These accounts illustrate how the realisation of the oppositional meanings of FGC can rupture the sense of belonging between women and their families, communities and culture. This loss of belonging can be further compounded by refugees' lack of familiarity with the language, religion and local customs in resettlement contexts (Talle, 2008). The findings suggest that women's social connections can become dually damaged; their FGC-status and position as asylum seekers marks affected women as the inferior “others” in relation to the host community (see also Section 7.3.2), but the process of rejecting FGC also fractures the bond between women and their communities. Some of the FGC-affected women had distanced themselves from their cultures by refusing to teach their children their cultural customs or by keeping members of their own community at arm's length, to avoid unsolicited advice that no longer resonated with their values. These examples demonstrate how migration leads to opposite effects of FGC, which in the practising contexts functions to socially integrate girls into their communities (see Chapter 6).

Although the tensions arising from the abandonment of FGC forced women to rethink their allegiances with their communities, most participants nevertheless continued to view aspects of community and faith as valuable sources of emotional and material support, especially during the asylum process. In line with previous research, faith was identified as a key coping strategy for individuals who dealt with intersecting effects of trauma, displacement and immigration control (Phillimore et al., 2018). The importance of community support was likewise accentuated by the limited access to welfare provision, the labour market and lack of connections to the wider society (see also Section 7.3.1). In the face of displacement, the participants viewed cultural celebrations, social customs and language as essential to maintaining one's identity and providing "a sense of direction" in their new context. This contradicts the essentialist representations of FGC-practising cultures and communities as fundamentally harmful to women (Volpp, 2001, see also Section 3.3.3).

In contrast to an earlier UK study that mapped attitudes towards FGC against signs of assimilation (Morison *et al.*, 2004, see also Section 3.3.4), my participants uniformly rejected assimilation as a prerequisite for the abandonment of FGC. Instead, both key informants and community participants conceptualised promoting cultural change and the abandonment of FGC as a task of finding a balance between two cultures:

*Perhaps like one of the things that you mentioned earlier in terms of genital mutilation, in some of the parts in Africa that exists because of the culture. Now, when you move here, every day is a learning lesson for us. We try to adapt to the new culture over here and combine that with our culture and we use that to teach our children. So, we are not losing our culture, but we combine the positivity from our culture and the positivity of the Western culture. (Key Informant 8, Community organisation)*

*It's a balance because we don't want people to sort of leave their culture behind. Unless you maintain your culture, you lose your history and your children lose something that is part of them. But rather than either having your own culture or being integrated, it's actually about trying to bridge those in one way or another. And their culture actually informs us as well, because why should it all be a matter of them integrating to us, why don't we try and learn from them. (Key Informant 11, Religious organisation)*

Participants' emphasis on finding balance between two cultures contradicts the prevalent representation of FGC-practising communities as "bearers of tradition" (Johnsdotter et al., 2009, p. 130, see also Section 3.3.5). As argued by Hall, the diasporic experience is characterised by hybridity, as "diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Ben-Rafael, 2013; Hall, 1990, p. 235). This is conveyed by the key informant who described cultural change as an intergenerational process, whereby communities are faced with the task of balancing the abandonment of FGC with retaining positive elements of their cultures. The fluidity which underpins Hall's (1990) conceptualisation of diasporic identities characterised participants' experiences of ongoing negotiation of culture, faith and family hierarchies after migration:

Star (Malawi): *Here (in Scotland) someone has got a twenty-year-old, she says oh my daughter will be waiting for me to cook for her, I make her bed... in my country, there's nothing like that. Twenty years old and she doesn't know how to cook!*

Fara (Nigeria): *My 8-year-old, when she wakes up, she tidies up her bed.*

Star (Malawi): *No, mum will do it. And she brings her boyfriend in the house... There's no boyfriends in my country. It's hard to control teenagers here...*

(FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted): *I've had that experience because I've got a teenager. And it was hard, by the time she was 12 or 13, all her friends had boyfriends and she didn't, she still doesn't have and she's 17. We made an agreement, I said you finish secondary school, then maybe you can... but sometimes she gets cheeky and asks, mum, when did you have a boyfriend? (laughter)*

These accounts are illustrative of the intergenerational tensions that African families can experience in passing their culture down to their children. Women frequently talked about the difficulties of balancing two cultures with children and especially with girls who became accustomed to increased freedom, social mixing and changing gender roles. Most women said that they valued the African<sup>14</sup> cultural emphasis on parental respect, single-sex friendships and expectations for daughters to be raised to learn to manage the household. This illuminates how, although participants uniformly rejected FGC, many of the FGC-affected women continued to enforce the age-based and gendered hierarchies that are often associated

---

<sup>14</sup> In describing these behaviours as "African", I do not intend to reject their prevalence in the Western cultures. Instead, I label them as such because many of the participants themselves viewed these behaviours and norms as being culturally grounded in the African traditions.

with its continuation. Cultural social arrangements can create a meaningful continuity in the lives of migrant women, which are otherwise characterised by displacement and discontinuities (Talle, 2008). Crucially, gender both organises and is negotiated in transnational contexts (Pessar & Mahler, 2001). While women strived to affirm cultural customs with their daughters, they simultaneously engaged in an ongoing negotiation of gendered hierarchies with their spouses. Most participants described changing gender roles and women's position as sources of ongoing tension for many African couples:

*Some of them find it difficult to accept that their wife is working and earning that money, because they think that then you are kind of going to climb over their head, and you'll stand up for yourself. You know, because they want that control when a man gives you money that he has earned. So, they know that in a way they've lost control... If you educate yourself and become aware of your rights and where to get help from, you become independent because you are earning. If something happens, some things are workable, but some are not, you can just get up and go. Get independent, so that he knows that without him, you still have a life. It gives you respect; it gives you confidence. (Adela, Cameroonian woman)*

Adela's emphasis on socio-economic empowerment was also shared by other women, who described financial independence as a leverage for negotiating gender roles and hierarchies within the household. The relationship between empowerment and employment was a reoccurring theme in the zine pages (See Figure 11). As stated by Asma's page: "*With my job, I am strong! I can fight!*" (Figure 11). These views align with research which suggests that strict division of gender roles can facilitate GBV in migrant communities through normalising abuse and enforcing men's economic control over women (Raj & Silverman, 2002). The same correlation between traditional gender ideologies and acceptance of GBV has also been well-established by research with majority communities (Simonson & Subich, 1999). Nevertheless, there is a lack of research on FGC in migration contexts, which situates women's vulnerability in the context of women's wider socio-economic position.



Figure 11. Zine pages focusing on employment barriers and empowerment, created by Sarah (left) and Asma (right)

Most interviewed women emphasised women’s access to rights, education and employment as a mechanism for balancing household hierarchies, or in some cases, as a way out of abusive relationships. This illustrates the central role socio-economic resources play in shaping women’s bargaining against gender subordination both before and after migration (see also Chapter 6). Nonetheless, the convergence of racial and cultural inequalities meant that access to these resources was rarely fully realised (see also Figure 11). In addition to the double burden of paid and household work, women described how structural inequalities were further compounded by the culture of victim-blaming and stigma surrounding divorce, which persisted after migration (see also Section 6.3.1):

*Within our communities, it’s kind of a taboo to separate or divorce your husband. You’ll be seen as a slut, or you’re very cheap...Even when you are going through difficulties, you’d rather stay with your husband just for the children’s sake, because if you go to a hostel, even if it’s like a bad situation, the way the community will look at you is like you are an outcast. They look at you that kind of way, like that this is not*



*the way Africans... If you want to leave violence in relationship, they don't like that.*  
(Adela, Cameroonian woman)

Adela articulated how cultural norms made it harder for women to resist abuse and violence within intimate relationships. The persistent cultural perception about divorce as taboo, and GBV as a private matter meant that women who resist domestic abuse can face rejection from their own families and communities. Adela's account illustrates how community pressure inhibits women from leaving their husbands. Community ostracism can have detrimental material consequences for women, who already face constrained access to employment, housing and education; it has been argued that restrictive immigration policies and intersecting cultural and structural inequalities sustain the power imbalances between women and perpetrators of violence, creating further barriers for refugee women to escape violent relationships (Anitha, 2011; Montoya & Agustín, 2013; Phillimore et al., 2018). Altogether, participants' accounts illuminate the contradictions between women's struggles for household gender equality and aspirations to maintain cultural patterns of gendered upbringing.

Although it has been argued that migrant women's choice to continue culturally normative family arrangements is often dismissed as false consciousness (Franz, 2003; Johnsdotter et al., 2009), participants' experiences illustrate how cultural hierarchies, values and practices are actively re-evaluated in response to their changing surroundings. These perspectives on cultural change paint a much more nuanced picture of the abandonment of FGC, highlighting the need to further problematise the extent to which "traditional" views, customs and gender roles can be used as an indicator for the continuation of FGC.

### **8.2.2 "We can talk to her": Transnational dynamics of the continuation of FGC**

While research from the Nordic countries has suggested that migration can sometimes lead practising communities to support less severe forms of FGC (Johnsdotter, 2003), all FGC-affected women and interviewed community participants were uniformly against all types of FGC. However, the lack of participants who supported FGC may also be reflective of the sampling approach (see also Section 9.5) or my status as an "outsider", rather than as evidence of the inexistence of these views in Scotland. FGC-affected women's accounts support this conclusion, as some of the women had come across favourable comments and individuals asking for advice for practising cutting and elongation on social media:

*Someone, in Facebook from my country, she said “I need to do FGM”, she needed advice. Because she needs to get married and the husband asked her, you need to do it before you get married. (Dalia, Sudanese woman)*

Women’s accounts suggest that in contexts where FGC is criminalised, views defending these practices may be increasingly expressed online due to the physical distance and potential anonymity these spaces provide. Some participants said that “*there is still a minority of people who are thinking that it [FGC] is right to do*” (Key Informant 8, Community organisation). Nevertheless, most of the interviewed participants said that FGC was no longer practised by their communities in Scotland. Women who had addressed FGC with their own communities said that most families had abandoned the practice after migration. Although further research is needed to develop a fuller scope of the prevalence of FGC in Scotland, this aligns with findings from elsewhere in Europe, which suggest that affected communities are increasingly abandoning FGC after migration (Johnsdotter et al., 2009, as reviewed in Section 3.3.5).

Migrants have been argued to “take actions, make decisions, feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (Schiller et al., 1995, p. 2). Regardless of the changing attitudes towards FGC, the community key informants and FGC-affected women who said that the small minority that “*would do whatever it takes*” to continue FGC would do so by taking children overseas to be cut. Most of the FGC-affected women said that they would leave their daughters in Scotland if they visited their countries of origin, to protect them from community pressure to practise FGC. Dalia (Sudan) was an exception to this for having successfully resisted the pressure from her mother-in-law to continue FGC when visiting Sudan.

Previous research has found that women are “fighting on two fronts” by resisting FGC and in persuading authorities in Scotland that they can protect their daughters when visiting their home countries (O’Brien et al., 2017, p. 33). Key informants 2 and 4 said that resources like the community information leaflet produced by the Scottish Government could provide a leverage for parents who took their daughters to visit their countries of origin. The key informant 2 said that the leaflet, which outlines that taking girls abroad for FGC can carry a sentence of up to 14 years, could convince extended family members to refrain from practising FGC if doing so posed a threat to the remittances which the families relied on for present and old-age survival. This exemplifies a structural understanding of the contexts in

which FGC prevails. However, in line with previous research from Scotland, participants said that migrant women often had poor awareness of these additional resources that could counter family pressures to practise FGC (O'Brien et al., 2017).

Despite their experiences of violence and abuse in their home countries, all the participants retained transnational allegiances and ties to their countries of origin (Ben-Rafael, 2013). Participants' transnational location was characterised by ongoing negotiation between "here and there, past and present, homeland and hostland, self and other" (Bhatia & Ram, 2001, p. 3). While the risk of extraterritorial offences with regards to FGC is being addressed through awareness-raising and Operation Limelight, these measures do not directly address FGC-affected women's difficult position between the two worlds. Although all women prioritised the need to protect their daughters, they expressed sadness for not being able to share their countries of origin with their daughters: "*You'd want the child to see where you came from. To feel the sun*" (Joyce, Malawian woman). Some of the women also felt sadness for not being able to visit their countries of origin as this would undermine the refugee status they relied on to protect their daughters from FGC. This illustrates the complexities of derivative asylum in cases where the mothers may no longer face the imminent threat of persecution in their countries of origin, to which FGC-affected women continued to retain strong transnational connections and sense of belonging.

Although none of the FGC-affected women considered their daughters to be at risk of FGC in Scotland, several of the women had experienced pressure from overseas to continue FGC:

*When I gave birth to my daughter, my partner's side, they practise FGM so, when they knew we had a baby girl, they started sending letters to say that they want her to come home when she's five, so they can perform that on her.* (Star, Malawian woman)

One of the FGC-affected key informants (4) also shared how people from her country of origin had asked her to send her daughter over. In suggesting "*we can talk to her*", members of her community had encouraged her to continue the tradition whereby women from the community would instruct her daughter on elongation. Although research has identified reduced peer pressure as a key reason for the abandonment of FGC after migration (Berggren, Bergström, & Edberg, 2006; Johnsdotter et al., 2009, as reviewed in Section 3.3.5), these findings add to the limited knowledge on continued transnational pressure to practise FGC after migration.

While previous studies have found that transnational connections can promote the abandonment of FGC in practising contexts (Diabate & Mesple-Somps, 2017), participants' experiences suggest that in an increasingly interconnected world, these connections can also sustain the pressures to continue FGC. Participants' experiences destabilise the common narratives of refugees' peripheral locations, illustrating FGC-affected women as transnational subjects whose experiences in resettlement contexts are shaped by allegiances and connections they retain across spatial scales (Massey, 1994). This can potentially complicate local efforts which attempt to challenge FGC as social convention through encouraging the community renunciation of the practice (Lejeune & Mackie, 2009; Shell-Duncan et al., 2011). Crucially, women's position in-between contrasting views on FGC illustrates how women's attempts to reconstitute their feelings of belonging, identity and culture in resettlement contexts are subject to ongoing contestation.

Public and political discussions on girls and women at risk of FGC have paid limited attention to girls' ongoing vulnerability to FGC in cases where mothers have been separated from their daughters. In contrast to Isatou who was able to protect her daughters from cutting by staying away from the Gambia (see also Section 7.2.1), family reunion remains one of the only means for many refugee mothers to protect their daughters from the community pressure to continue FGC:

*Women get trapped, if they do get Leave to Remain, they have to pay a huge amount of money if they're trying for family reunification. And a lot of the women who have got older children back home are desperate to get them out, especially if they come from FGM communities. Most often, the women who come here are saying "No, I would never do it and I'm not doing it, I'm not going to allow it to my daughter, but my mum wants it done, or my granny or my aunties want it done". The culture is such that you should listen to your elders and so on. And I've got women who are saying that my husband's family are very strong and sometimes their husbands give in to their mothers. So, women try to save up money, quite often they are working nightshifts, carers or cleaning, you know a considerable number have either living wage or minimum wage jobs. (Key Informant 2, Women's organisation)*

This key informant locates the continuation of FGC in the context of the realities of displacement that characterise the lives of many refugee families who have been forced apart by war and persecution. This example exposes yet another paradox whereby the UK claims to

protect FGC-affected women, whilst constraining their agency through increasingly restrictive anti-immigration policies (Patel, 2014). If women are successful in securing status after an often lengthy and traumatising asylum process, they are faced with the hurdles of yet another lengthy and costly application process to reunite with their families (Connell, Mulvey, Brady, & Christie, 2010). The extract above exemplifies how economic inequalities faced by FGC-affected women continue to form barriers to women's resistance to FGC even after migration. The cost of travel expenses can put women into a difficult position, whereby they attempt to protect their children from FGC at the expense of the children who they already have with them; refugee women's reliance on low paying work, combined with lack of extended family support and the high cost of childcare mean that some women are forced to leave young children alone in the early hours of the morning or at night, whilst working to earn money for costs involved in family reunion. Although economic inequalities were also identified as a prevalent issue for refugee men, the hierarchical gender roles that construct women as caregivers and men as breadwinners (see also Section 6.2.3) heighten these barriers for refugee women. Furthermore, the institutional racism, which the participants described as widespread in the Scottish society, can compound the barriers for refugee women's socio-economic empowerment, constraining FGC-affected women's capacity to protect their daughters from FGC.

### **8.3 The politics of protection, prevention and recognition: Community perspectives on the Scottish strategic approach to ending FGC**

The second part of this chapter analyses women's and communities' perspectives on the abandonment of FGC in relation to the Scottish approach to FGC prevention, protection and support provision (Scottish Government, 2016, see also Section 2.4.4). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Scottish approach places strong emphasis on holding perpetrators to account. Due to the lack of FGC prosecutions in Scotland, the next sections only discuss the role of legislation and law enforcement in relation to the Scottish strategic aim to protect girls and women from FGC. In locating the abandonment of FGC in the context of issues of integration, I demonstrate how barriers to community engagement and women's participation impede FGC-affected women's ability to challenge violence within their own communities.

### **8.3.1 “There should be no stretching, there should be no cutting”: Protection of women from FGC and other forms of gender-based violence**

In line with global strategies to end FGC, criminalisation holds a central role in the Scottish approach to ending FGC (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3). In contrast to women’s views on the ineffectiveness of criminalisation in their countries of origin (see also Section 6.2.1), most participants identified legislation as a key factor in the abandonment of FGC in Scotland. Most participants said that the potential penalties and enforcement of the law acted as deterrents for families who had considered practising FGC. However, FGC-affected women said that many people were still unaware of the law. This aligns with previous findings from Scotland and elsewhere in Europe (Berggren et al., 2006; O’Brien et al., 2017). All participants emphasised the importance of supporting language proficiency, social connections, access to services and participation in enabling migrants to become aware of the legislation and their rights and responsibilities in their new contexts. This exemplifies the importance of an integrated approach that combines legislation with awareness-raising and community engagement (Berggren et al., 2006; Isman et al., 2013, as reviewed in Section 3.3.6).

FGC-affected women also said that the law and multi-agency safeguarding procedures supported them in standing up against the practice:

*The most efficient way of tackling FGM is documentation. In the UK, if you do it, there’s proof. Like my child can go to school, but if there’s something wrong, the teacher will notice and there will be an alarm [raised]. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)*

Chibundu and other FGC-affected women said that the statutory services’ vigilance to protect girls from FGC made them feel that their daughters were safe in Scotland. Although this highlights the value of safeguarding strategies to protect girls from FGC, women’s experiences suggest a need to strive for better balance between child-centred safeguarding practices and the hyper-vigilant approaches which can further traumatise FGC-affected mothers (see also Section 7.2.2). These pressing tensions highlight the need to include further community and victim/survivor perspectives in the implementation of the national approach against FGC.

Although safeguarding measures meant that it was said to be practically impossible to practice cutting in secrecy in Scotland, FGC-affected women said that elongation and alternatives to FGC were more easily practised due to the lesser immediate health

complications. Participants critiqued the limited attention elongation and alternatives to FGC had received in the public and policy discussion on FGC in Scotland:

*Whatever they've done to you below there, it's something. If it was flat like this, then somebody has trashed it to a certain extent, are they telling me that's nothing? It's FGM, and it has to be taken seriously, no matter what. I know a woman who used to, every time she had a daughter she would just take Vaseline and rub it down there. She would just start rubbing it slowly. Why do you keep putting Vaseline on your daughter? It's not normal, nobody should be tampering down there. There should be no stretching, there should be no cutting. (FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted)*

The key informant refers to a practice of massaging infant girl's clitoris with an ointment that in some contexts has emerged as an alternative to FGC (Onyima, 2015). Although the health consequences of alternatives to FGC are not likely to be comparable to cutting<sup>15</sup>, these practices nevertheless raise similar questions about consent, sexual assault/child sexual abuse, bodily integrity and the ethics of altering children's bodies for beautification purposes (as discussed in Chapter 2). FGC-affected women's emphasis on how alternatives to cutting have been overlooked contradicts the findings of a recent consultation ran by the Scottish Government, which found that most respondents did not know or did not support implementing additional protections against elongation (Scottish Government, 2019a). Globally, the inclusion of elongation within the definition and strategies to end FGC remains contested (Bagnol & Mariano, 2008, see also Section 2.2). As I have critiqued in Chapter 2, the current estimate for the communities who are potentially affected by FGC in Scotland (Baillot, Murray, et al., 2014) is grounded on international estimates that overlook communities from countries such as Malawi, Rwanda, Congo and South Africa, where participants said that elongation and other alternatives to FGC were more commonly practised. Women's views on elongation and alternatives to cutting, along with the number of women who disclosed their own experiences of elongation as part of discussions on FGC (3 out of 12) not only suggest that women themselves identify elongation as an FGC issue, but also that there is a need to address diverse forms of the practice as part of the national prevention agenda to protect girls and women from FGC.

In addition to elongation, the majority of the FGC-affected women emphasised the need to

---

<sup>15</sup> The health consequences of such alternative practices remain unresearched (Nkeokelonye, 2015).

further protect African women from forced marriage which in the UK has primarily been viewed as an issue affecting South Asian Muslim communities (Chantler et al., 2009; Gangoli & McCarry, 2008). One community key informant (10) said that whilst forced marriage was not currently a pressing issue due to many families having very young children, forced marriage could, over time, emerge as a growing problem due to barriers to accessing information. Participants' attention to these issues highlights how reliance on dominant narratives can lead to policies which overlook the range of forms of GBV affecting migrant women.

Participants who had experienced GBV emphasised the importance of addressing refugee women's persistent barriers to help-seeking in the work to prevent and protect women from FGC and other forms of GBV. Recent study from England suggests that negative experiences and perceptions about police and the criminal justice system may prevent women from reporting FGC (Gangoli et al., 2018). Although negative experiences and perceptions were identified as a persistent barrier to engagement with social work, most women said that trust in the police was one of the main reasons they felt safe in Scotland. However, several key informants and women nevertheless said that many refugee women were still unaware of the police as a recourse to protection:

*You get women who have suffered domestic abuse where quite clearly the husbands have not been aware that there's any possibility of legal challenge or that the police might actually be proactive about this. You tend to find that some women, I mean obviously there's huge variation, but I'm talking about the women who don't know their rights and are surprised to realise that the police will protect them. And some of them would have been afraid or are still afraid to go to the police, because in their own country the police are responsible for a lot of sexual violence or the police require bribing, or just generally are not to be trusted. (Key Informant 2, Women's organisation)*

This key informant highlights the importance of understanding of refugee women's help-seeking behaviours in the context of their past experiences of corruption and police violence (see also Section 6.3.4) and further exemplifies the importance of incorporating a structural perspective in the protection of girls and women in migration contexts. Although key informants and women specifically highlighted the impact of violence perpetuated by authorities before migration, police brutality and institutional violence are not issues confined



to the Global South. For example, Sheku Bayoh's unresolved death which has now become subject to renewed attention following the Black Lives Matter protests shows that there is a need to be anything but complacent when it comes to the barriers migrant communities face in engaging with the authorities<sup>16</sup>. Refugee communities' and women's engagement (or lack thereof) with authorities also cannot be divorced from the context where asylum seekers' first encounters with authorities in Britain are characterised by intimidation, hostility and structural violence (see also Chapter 7):

*When I came here, I met someone who was very abusive and I said no way I'm going to submit myself to this. It happened once, but I chose not to report to the police, because I was still in the asylum and I didn't want everything to go the other way around and I wanted to protect my children. (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted)*

*I had a friend who came with her husband who was a trainee doctor, and she was quite young and there was a lot of domestic abuse going on. She used to wear long sleeves all the time because there was marks everywhere on her body as a result of the beating that she had received from the husband. And she was quite scared, because I don't know what he had said to her because she was on the spousal visa, so she was quite scared in case she would report to the police that they would have to send her back home. We told her that the next time he beats you, remember that you are not in Cameroon, here you have rights. So, one day she summoned the courage and she phoned the police and his license with the NHS was revoked and he was sent back to Cameroon. (Adela, Cameroonian woman)*

These accounts demonstrate how the anti-immigration agenda marginalises migrant women by making it harder for women to access support and justice (Dustin, 2016). These experiences illustrate fear of deportation as a barrier to women's help-seeking (Freedman & Jamal, 2008). This issue remains pertinent in the context of the recently passed Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which has been heavily criticised for lacking protections for migrant women whose help-seeking is constrained by having no recourse to public funds (Amnesty International UK, 2020) and the refusal by the UK government to ratify the Istanbul

---

<sup>16</sup> Sheku Bayoh was a Sierra Leonean refugee man who died at the hands of police officers after sustaining 23 different injuries during an arrest in Kirkcaldy, Scotland in 2015. The case was never prosecuted, but has recently become a subject of public inquiry.

Convention which leaves migrant women excluded from service provision (Peroni, 2016).

Adela (below) articulates how the hostile environment to immigration creates a conducive context to domestic abuse and ongoing coercive control whereby abusive men can threaten to report their partners' irregular immigration status (Kelly, 2016). As described by Patel, "in contexts in which women have insecure status as wives and partners, immigration controls perpetuate the physical, economic, sexual and psychological control of them by their abusers" (2014, p. 230). These barriers to escaping abusive situations are further heightened by experiences of isolation, language difficulties and limited knowledge of local resources and law (Gangoli et al., 2020). Although these issues are experienced across refugee populations, the converging cultural and structural barriers were most keenly felt by rejected asylum seeking women:

*Some of our women are in prostitution because in [area removed] there's a flat there, that's where our women go, because they have no recourse to public funds and when the appeals have been exhausted, they become destitute. And people take advantage of them... and they face pressure from back home also, maybe they've borrowed money to come here, or maybe their parents have sold properties for them to come here as a student and they need to pay back that money. So, they get into prostitution, and there's no way out and the money that they get is very little. Until one day there's a police raid and they are maybe sent back home. (Adela, Cameroonian woman)*

Adela's account highlights the gendered consequences of state perpetuated destitution, which leaves migrants with no access to state funds or safe accommodation. The combined operation of immigration and exclusionary welfare law traps women in abusive situations and relationships (Patel, 2014), exacerbated by transnational pressures which sustain women's vulnerability. This was further asserted by other participants, who said that negative asylum decisions and the often-resulting destitution exposed refugee women to other abusive situations, including rape and modern slavery. Although refugee women's heightened vulnerability to violence has been well-documented (Baillot & Connelly, 2018), women's accounts further demonstrate how national policies prioritise immigration targets over the protection of migrant women (see also Section 7.4).

Participants described how migrant women's barriers to protection extend beyond the asylum system, as women are faced with multiple strategies of "othering", which stereotype and marginalise them:

*I think that what does happen for pretty much all Muslim women is that they are encountering a misogyny in public that has a racist and an Islamophobic tinge and that affects how safe they feel in public spaces, which has a knock-on effect if they are in an abusive situation. I don't think that there's any higher number of abusive relationships within Muslim communities, but I do think that it's harder for women to get help because of the barriers that the society throws up for them. (Key Informant 1, Women's organisation)*

The key informant described how many Muslim women were reluctant to engage with some of the mainstream feminist support services because their faith was viewed solely in oppressive terms by service providers. This conveys the persistent rhetoric of salvation, which is counter-productive to women whose victimisation and position of intersectional disadvantage is not only sustained by misogyny, but also institutional racism and anti-immigration policies (Abu-Lughod, 2002). It has been argued that there is an inverse correlation between full citizenship and cultural visibility, whereby veiled Muslim women's heightened cultural visibility functions as a barrier to their inclusion in the society (McKerl, 2007). This was asserted by most of Muslim participants who believed that perceptions about their skin colour and choice to veil formed barriers to participation and employment opportunities (see Figure 12):



Figure 12: Pages created by Selma, Lisa and Hoda

Several zine pages problematised these dominant stereotypes, calling for change in attitudes to break down barriers to education, employment and participation. In all zine-making sessions, women visualised representations of themselves which challenged the Orientalist and racist constructions of migrant women (see Figure 13):



Figure 13: Sections from zine-pages created by Star and Joyce (left), and Fahima, Ella, Jaha and Sadia (top and bottom right)

Participants' accounts illustrate how Orientalist stereotyping, asylum restrictions and cultural hierarchies converge to subordinate women from multiple directions, creating multifaceted barriers to protection. These findings demonstrate how “dislocation and migration constitute contexts in which the vulnerability of women and girls is accentuated by external conditions over which they have little if any control” (Kelly, 2016, para 8). This illustrates yet another continuity in the lives of FGC-affected migrant women, whereby their exclusion from being full members of society, firstly on the account of their gender before migration (Chapter 6) and later on the account of their immigration status, race and religion forms barriers to state protection. Participants' attention to structural violence suggests that as long as women continue to be subject to legal and policy restrictions which constrain their independence, mobility and resources on the account of their race and immigration status, legislation continues to fall short in protecting women from abuse and violence they face owing to their gender and culture.

### 8.3.2 “Be white, be Black, we are all strong”: Women’s views on representation and redistribution through community-led approaches to FGC prevention

All participants said that the cultural perceptions about FGC as a taboo persisted after migration (see also Section 6.2.2). As argued by one of the FGC-affected key informants (5), ending these practices requires challenging the entrenched perceptions of FGC as a private matter to make “*communities see the practice as everyone’s business*”. The fact that many of the participants said that they had never engaged in public or private conversations about FGC exemplifies the silence that continues to surround these practices after migration:

*I think it doesn’t get discussed because it’s a negative thing, there’s a stigma attached to FGM. It’s like if I am going to speak publicly to everybody saying that I am a survivor, people will start labelling me and calling me names. So, people tend not to talk openly about FGM. So, at what point are women going to know that FGM is illegal? Because like I said, there’s no document to tell you the do’s and don’ts when you come to Scotland. (FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted)*

This key informant’s experience of cultural resistance to anti-FGC activism was shared by several other women who said that they had been judged for speaking out against FGC, having heard comments such as “*who does she think she is?*” and “*she’s turning too white*”. This aligns with previous research which has found that migrant women who become advocates against FGC can face bullying, harassment and exclusion from their communities (Lien & Schultz, 2013, as reviewed in Section 3.3.5). The association between whiteness and the abandonment of FGC illustrates how FGC practices are deeply entwined with ethnic identity (Gruenbaum, 2001; Mackie, 1996). Although most participants described both Scotland and their countries of origin as their home, migration had led them to occupy a liminal space between two worlds and described how they no longer felt they fully “fitted in” when visiting their countries of origin. However, the structural barriers to participation and social connections meant that most participants also felt that they were neither fully accepted in Scotland. These negative responses suggest that a positive view of FGC may be part of a wider strategy of maintaining culture and group solidarity in diaspora, which otherwise is characterised by hybridity and ongoing change (Isman et al., 2013, see also Section 3.3.5).

Crucially, the key informant quoted above highlighted the simultaneous workings of cultural silences and structural inequalities which form barriers to FGC prevention in Scotland. Many community participants were critical of the limited proactive efforts to inform new arrivals

about the law in Scotland. From practitioners' perspective, the compounding effects of cultural stigma and FGC-affected women's position of intersectional disadvantage made FGC-affected women harder to reach:

*When the women are in the asylum process, it's very stressful and they're not kind of wanting to be looking at other issues when you're trying to talk to women about FGM. Because people either think well, it's none of your business or you know, I've got more important things to worry about, that happened to me thirty years ago. (Key Informant 2, Women's organisation)*

*They come here to work with the women, but if they can't provide childcare or travel expenses for the women, how are you going to get the women involved? Because there are some issues that women don't feel comfortable to discuss in front of their children. If they're not being inclusive to ethnic minority, there's not going to be zero tolerance to FGM. (FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted)*

The first account illustrates the lengthy and mentally arduous asylum process as a barrier for engaging women in FGC awareness work. Similar views were shared by women who said that the asylum process was consuming all their attention. As highlighted by the second quote, the asylum restrictions and structural inequalities faced by refugees also create further barriers for women who also have disproportionate caring responsibilities. This account illustrates how prevention work overlooks FGC-affected women's position of gendered, racial and cultural disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1991). The lack of provision for travel and childcare expenses suggests that providers fail to proactively address women's precarious financial position and caregiving responsibilities. These structural barriers exemplify the need to actively facilitate both social and structural integration to support new arrivals in fully accessing and realising their rights and responsibilities in their new context.

Although criminalisation has been argued to communicate societal expectations to abandon FGC (Alcaraz et al., 2014), some participants suggested that legislation was more effective in changing behaviours than values: *"I think for some people abandoning FGM is more to do with the law than their own consciousness"* (Musa, Gambian man). The culture of secrecy which underpins FGC in the practising contexts (see also Section 6.2.2) was said to sometimes continue to persist after migration:

*Nobody talks about it [FGC]. They're hiding. Even some people say in front of other people, I don't want it done to my child, but in her heart, she wants to do it. (Dalia, Sudanese woman)*

Dalia described how, while migrants would not act on their preference to practise FGC, the beliefs that framed the practice in positive terms continued to persist under the culture of secrecy around FGC. Although participants were critical about the structural barriers experienced by refugees, they also emphasised migrants' responsibilities to adapt to their new context:

*Integration requires active citizenship from both sides. It's about being open and seeing each other as equals, we are all human. (FGC-affected Key Informant 5, country of origin omitted)*

Participants said that genuine social change required challenging the normalised status that FGC holds within the practising communities through the means of cultural dialogue:

*Listen to the person and try to understand their culture. Because some people have been following their culture for years and they have been happy about that. I won't use the word "wrong", because nothing is wrong and nothing is right in life, but what you perceive as bad and the other person will perceive as good... If you just say no, that is wrong, you see it will be like a fight. (Key Informant 8, Community organisation)*

The key informant highlighted cultural dialogue and understanding as a means to mitigate the way Western opposition of FGC can be experienced as an attack on culture (Malmström, 2013; Mutua, 2001). The way debates on FGC are positioned at the crossroads of individuals' rights and cultural rights calls for a careful approach that champions women's rights without alienating the practising communities. Guine and Moreno Fuentes (2007) have called for a reconceptualisation of citizenship to encompass recognition, redistribution and representation in ways that simultaneously resist patriarchal domination and marginalisation of migrant communities (as reviewed in Section 3.3.3). Although policy makers have consulted communities in developing the Scottish approach to FGC (Scottish Government, 2016b), community participants and community key informants said that Black communities still often remained as "*receivers of services rather than as active participants*" (FGC-affected Key Informant 9) in their implementation and delivery. Participants affirmed previous

findings of the state tendencies to engage with selected spokespeople over wider community engagement to prevent FGC (Connelly et al., 2018).

Beyond FGC interventions, potentially affected communities face further barriers to participation in policymaking and delivery; as asylum seekers and refugees, most members of FGC-affected migrant groups also lack the right to vote or stand for office, thus having limited representation from members of their own communities<sup>17</sup> (Guiné & Moreno Fuentes, 2007). Active participation was described crucial in addressing the challenges faced by women and communities; as argued by Anita (DRC): “*Where there is no representation, you don't really have somebody who is fighting for you*”. The lack of Black people in decision-making roles was also identified as a barrier for privileging community perspectives in service provision and policymaking. These issues exemplify how the wider exclusion of Black communities as political and social actors creates barriers for community engagement in Scotland.

Successful programs for challenging FGC in practising contexts have been praised for positioning communities as primary action-takers who empower themselves through critical awareness and collective action (Easton et al., 2003). FGC-affected women emphasised the role of personal testimonies in creating openings for dialogue to challenge the entrenched cultural beliefs on FGC:

*We need more awareness, more community meetings... there are a lot of people out here who have gone through it [FGC] who have really big scars. Maybe with help it would be easier for those people to come out and talk about it. Because the people who talk about FGM, they don't go through it. The survivors are down there, they don't talk about it. If you are talking about it, everyone will just sit and nobody will talk, they will just let you explain until you finish and then the meeting is over and you all go away. But it has not been solved, because it's just the lecturer talking about it, who thinks they know more than the people who go through it, they think they know more than we do. (Awa, Gambian woman)*

As highlighted by Awa, FGC prevention which is chiefly championed by members of the host society can become a barrier to disclosure and dialogue. Anthias (2002b) has argued that

---

<sup>17</sup> Refugees with status were recently granted the right to vote in the Scottish parliamentary and local authority elections. However, refugees still lack the right to vote in the general election for the UK Parliament, which holds the power over reserved matters, including immigration and asylum.



not only dialogue, but also the critical reflection of the premises upon which dialogue is built is central to transformative change. In a hierarchical colonising encounter, dialogue becomes monologue that enables power over the other (Anthias, 2002). In saying “*they think they know more than we do*”, Awa critiques the central role of Western knowledge production in the work to end FGC (see also Section 3.2). As argued by Olufunke (Nigeria), “*putting a white woman in charge was not going to work*”, because localised knowledge and lived experiences of FGC were said to be crucial for disputing the functions and meanings that FGC holds for the practising communities. Regardless, African communities who strived to organise themselves were said to be disadvantaged in comparison to more established Asian community groups who all competed for the same funds under the umbrella of “BME”. This highlights how community-led interventions to address culturally specific practices are hindered by policy approaches which conceptualise the white majority and migrants of colour as two homogenous groups (Sigona, 2005)

Although top-down attempts to challenge FGC make FGC-affected women visible to the public, they become complicit in reproducing colonial stereotypes in assuming that Black women cannot speak for themselves:

*The issue of letting Black minority women down happens a lot in this country. I think in this country, most white women believe that Black women are not strong enough to handle anything, they are looking down on Black minority women. They refuse to let us be in power, they believe we can't represent when it comes to politics. That shouldn't happen, every woman is strong, be white be Black, we are all strong.*  
(Olufunke, Nigerian woman)

*I've been to a workshop that was organised by unfortunately, don't get me wrong, Scottish people, white people, but it was about the issues affecting ethnic minorities. And it has reached the point where people feel infuriated, they were angry, because we keep repeating the same things. They were talking about “thinking about the ways we can work with you or what we can do to in order to support or to help you”. So, we said that you really need [is] to let ethnic minorities take charge of their own issues. Why is it that you can't build the capacity in us? If it's because of the language, why can you not teach us? We have women from Africa who were midwives back home, they were teachers back home, they were nurses back home... But when*

*they come here, they are just sitting on the back bench.* (FGC-affected Key Informant 4, country of origin omitted)

Across Europe, FGC prevention has favoured top-down interventions over participatory action (Njue, Karumbi, Esho, Varol, & Dawson, 2019, see also Section 3.3.6). Participants argued that, even though efforts have been made in Scotland to engage with communities to prevent FGC, there was still a lack of commitment to facilitate genuinely community-led interventions. These accounts locate the community barriers to participating in FGC prevention in the context of refugee women's wider exclusion from the political and economic spheres of society. In connecting women's participation to language barriers, lack of political representation, and barriers to capacity-building, these accounts exemplify community engagement in FGC prevention as an integration issue. The emphasis on primarily top-down interventions exemplifies how anti-FGC activism operates from a position of "loving, knowing ignorance" (Ortega, 2006). Ortega's (2006) has argued that the act of "giving voice" presumes and reinforces power over Black women. Participants' accounts highlight how mainstream activists' presumed duty to help "the other" works as a self-fulfilling prophecy, as the failure to recognise FGC-affected women as active subjects reinforces the very structural subordination that silences the women anti-FGC activism intends to defend.

Much like Ortega (2006), FGC-affected women called on majority groups to engage with the real flesh-and-blood women of colour, privileging their standpoints even when these contradict our own (see Figure 14). This zine page reuses an image from Sadia Rafique's piece "Game Face", depicting an FGC-affected woman with a poem written on her face by the young activist Ikram Nur. In using this image alongside other FGC awareness resources, FGC-affected women amplified its original purpose in challenging FGC simply as an African problem. The statement "*we need to tell them what they need to know, not what they want to know*", reflects the struggle in which FGC-affected women engage in two fronts; FGC-affected women are speaking against entrenched cultural taboos and beliefs within their own communities, while simultaneously confronting the structural inequalities in the wider society which constrain FGC-affected women's "spaces for action" at the aftermath of GBV (Kelly, 2003). This exemplifies FGC-affected migrant women's intersectional location, whereby they simultaneously struggle with Black men about sexism and with Black men against racism (Companhee River Collective, 1983; Crenshaw, 1991).



Figure 14: Zine page created by Olufunke and Fara

Despite these struggles, participants did not outright reject the possibility of unity between mainstream activists and Black women (see Figure 15). In describing the first zine page created under the theme “united we stand, divided we fall”, Helen said:

*I’m talking about togetherness and how, as women, if we stick together, we can basically overcome everything and do anything. So, just by helping each other we empower ourselves. We are stronger together as a team.* (Helen, Congolese woman)

Helen’s call for unity was shared by FGC-affected women whose zine page challenges the singular colonising constructions of Black women (see Figure 15). The caption in the bottom-left corner of the second zine page reads: “*The people who make that kind of distinction of whether you’re a feminist or not are already the problem. Everyone is equal, everyone is a human being*”. This reflects the continental African feminist critique which argues that Western feminists who operate from a position to save African women undermine the history of African women’s indigenous feminist activism (Abusharaf, 2000; Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000,

as reviewed in Section 3.2.2). In drawing parallels between Black and white women, the zine page echoes Olufunke’s (Nigeria) assertion: “*Be Black, be white, we are all strong*”. This emphasis on strength illustrates how the participants conceptualised feminist unity and solidarity not in terms of shared oppression, but in terms of women’s shared capacity to resist and speak against injustice. In locating FGC prevention in the context of intersecting inequalities, women conveyed a view that the unity of women was not the starting point for ending GBV, but it must be “something that has to be worked for and struggled toward” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 116).



Figure 15: Two zine pages addressing the themes of feminist unity and Black women’s underrepresentation created by Helen (left) and Olufunke, Fara and Dalia (right)

### 8.3.3 “I know I’m not the only one going through this”: The role of peer support and structural integration in supporting FGC-affected women

In Europe much of research on, and provision of, support for FGC-affected women has focused on medical interventions and the provision of psychosexual support. In Scotland, frontline professionals have been trained to address FGC in the provision of maternity

services and the delivery of trauma-informed care (Scottish Government, 2019a). As discussed in the previous chapter, FGC-affected women who had engaged with health services had experienced mixed reactions to their FGC-status from complete disregard to looks of horror (see also Section 7.2.2). While health services had often been the first point of information about the law on FGC in Scotland, only one of the women had briefly engaged with statutory services to access support for her experience of trauma resulting from GBV. All FGC-affected women emphasised the importance of peer support and the cathartic impact of sharing their experiences with others with lived experience of FGC. I also witnessed this during my fieldwork; although I was an outsider, many of the women readily spoke about their experience of FGC in a safe, familiar setting in a group that was mainly comprised of other FGC-affected women:

*Emmaleena: Thank you all for sharing these things with me.*

*Joyce (Malawi): It feels good. You know sometimes when you are by yourself, it's just like you have this heavy thing inside you, and then when you talk to someone and are sharing with everybody else, you feel like that heavy thing has been lifted off you. So, you feel happy, at least I know I'm not the only one going through this.*

Joyce articulates how speaking about FGC with other women with shared experiences helped her to relieve the burden of trauma and reassured her that she was not alone with her experience. This was also relayed by FGC-affected key informants and community participants who described sharing of experiences as crucial for “*learning, recovery and confidence building*” for FGC-affected women:

*It can be empowering to talk about it in your own space and laugh about the things that we have taken for granted. And come up with ways to empower people to acknowledge that it's wrong and it shouldn't be accepted. I think women who have experienced domestic violence and rape, or sexual abuse need to have a space of their own to acknowledge that that happened to them because that is a massive step as well, and two, having happened, however long ago, how does it impact on you today, how do you want it to impact you in five years' time, and what are you going to do to make it have a less negative impact on your life. (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted)*

This account exemplifies the usefulness of conceptualising women's experiences at the aftermath of violence in terms of “re-making lives” rather than as a process of medical

recovery (Brison, 2002). In saying women need space to “*laugh about the things that we have taken for granted*”, the key informant constructs peer support as an empowering tool against the feelings of embarrassment and loss which are triggered by the realisation of the opposing meanings FGC holds in Western countries (see also Section 8.2.1). Community-led campaigning has been argued to provide women with opportunities to share, and collectively deal with the psychological pains resulting from the realisation of the impacts of FGC (Lien & Schultz, 2013). As highlighted in the quote above, peer support can serve multiple purposes through facilitating women in learning their rights and saying no to violence, making sense of their own experiences and coming to terms with its continued impact on their lives. This was also shared by other women who said peer support facilitated mutual trust and collective action to challenge the culture of conformity which silenced women in their own communities.

As emphasised by one of the FGC-affected key informants (4) and further affirmed by my experience of interviewing other FGC-affected women, there is a need to recognise the range of positions FGC-affected women occupy along the continuum of vulnerability to resilience. Some of the women who took part in my research had only recently begun to make sense of their experiences of trauma and multi-layered loss, while others had over time transformed into vocal advocates for change:

*I've learned the importance of protecting myself and my daughter... Before I wouldn't advise someone not to do it, but now I strongly would. When I'm with our people, I tell them, I say “dear, don't even think of it, don't do FGM”. It's the confidence I've acquired from here, it has groomed me to become so strong. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)*

*Like me, I'm stubborn. I've been going out to these [women's] groups for so long, it gives me spirit to do my own thing. (Jaha, Gambian woman)*

Chibundu described how the support and training provided by a Black women's organisation had “*given her strength*” to protect her daughter. She now spoke against FGC to her community and to her family members who lived abroad. This was the case for several of the FGC-affected women, who said that they now raised awareness about the consequences of FGC in discussions with women from their own communities. These accounts support previous assertions that taking part in activism against FGC can give women new meaning to

substitute the feelings of loss triggered by the realisation of the effects of FGC (Lien & Schultz, 2013).

Although peer support and community-led provision played a central role in this transformation, this provision has been constrained by the recent cuts to women's services and community organisations in the UK; recently the UK Government funding to end FGC was cut by 76 percent (Merrick, 2020; Dustin, 2016, see Chapter 2). Although the Scottish Government has separately funded third sector organisations which support FGC-affected women, the increased competition for funding nevertheless disproportionately affects African community organisations that are less established and resourceful than mainstream providers. One of the key informants expressed her frustration as the organisation she worked for had lost out on funding to continue supporting FGC-affected women, which was instead awarded to a mainstream provider. This illustrates a failure to privilege Black organisations as specialist services for providing culturally appropriate and survivor-led support for FGC-affected women. In line with the views of FGC-affected women discussed in the previous section, this suggests that areas of FGC support provision overlook the capacity and agency that FGC-affected women can exercise in supporting women from their communities. Privileging Western knowledge production over survivor-led approaches represents a continuation of imperial interventions that fail to recognise African women's and communities' capacity to address their own situations (Gruenbaum 1986; Abusharaf, 2000, as reviewed in Section 3.2.2). As such, these funding decisions become problematic in reinforcing, rather than levelling out the disparities between the host society and African migrant communities.

Decisions to allocate funding for work on FGC support to a mainstream provider over Black women's organisation reflects the British colour-blind approach to multiculturalism that assumes that migrant groups will benefit from mainstream services to the same extent as the host population (Guiné & Moreno Fuentes, 2007). The stigmatisation of FGC-affected women and culturally insensitive care have been identified as barriers for women to engage with mainstream services (Kimani et al., 2020). Further, as described by one of the key informants (1), FGC-affected women's access to mainstream services is also hindered by limited language proficiency and lack of Black representation in the service delivery. These issues highlight the need to address the intersectional location of FGC-affected women, whose engagement with support services is not only conditioned by their gender but also race



and culture. Both FGC-affected women and key informants called for further provision of community-led and culturally sensitive support:

*The issue of having closure from traumatic events is not well attended to at the moment... I think what has been missing really in this country is a culturally appropriate intervention to address those traumatic events in our lives. You know I've been sent to counselling, for example, and the counsellor says "so, what happened?" And I find that is re-living the experience. So, I've gone to two sessions and said no, this is not for me. (FGC-affected Key Informant 9, country of origin omitted)*

The cultural silence surrounding FGC and other forms of GBV underpins FGC-affected women's hesitance to speak about their experiences both within and outwith their own communities (see also Section 6.2.2). Although previous studies have suggested that counselling services remain underutilised by FGC-affected women because of the continuation of socio-cultural norms underpinning FGC (Ziyada et al., 2020), my findings underscore the importance of questioning the extent to which women's reluctance to engage in counselling is explained by the reliance on Western models of support. Counsellor-led interventions may not be responsive to the issues of cultural taboos and cultural pride which women must go against in speaking out about their experiences of violence (see Chapter 6). Engaging with counselling services can also feel alien to women who come from contexts where informal networks of support have been central to their survival in society. Disclosing trauma to a stranger in an unfamiliar setting can be counter-productive to women who have already been forced to re-live their experiences of violence during the asylum interviews. This highlights the ways in which the invasive and intimidating nature of asylum interviews and the statutory service responses to FGC influence women's reluctance to engage with statutory provision and support for FGC (see Chapter 7).

In addition to mental health support, key informants and FGC-affected women emphasised the principal need to support women in moving beyond the immediate aftermath of violence:

*We are still coming across women who have been in the country for 10 years, but because of where they've come from, they've experienced extreme trauma for different reasons. And what I really do want to acknowledge is, for many of them they have received quite good quality care from agencies that deal with victims of torture and all the rest of it. But I think one of the things that is really kind of upsetting at times is women who have got their leave to remain, they've had some of this*



*reasonably good quality care, but once that's dealt with, there's nothing, there's not really any other input. They are not maybe confident enough to go to work, they're still suffering from depression and flashbacks and that makes it very difficult to try and live a life that you feel good about.* (Key Informant 7, Religious organisation)

This key informant account highlights the gap between the provision of trauma-related and integration support for FGC-affected migrant women. Women's inability to pursue their aspirations beyond mere everyday survival suggests that they are still far from thriving "socially, culturally, economically and politically", which the Scottish Equally Safe strategy to end GBV ultimately strives for (Scottish Government, 2016b, p. 8, see Section 2.4.4). This was also regarded as centrally important for enabling women to rebuild their lives, who described the importance of employment and education in offering them distance from their traumatic pasts. As stated by Lisa (Syria): "*When you have a job, is not just for money. It's therapy.*" Employment was described as a source of independence and self-respect, which for many of the women had for long been denied first by community control (Chapter 6) and then by the restrictive asylum system (Chapter 7). This highlights the role of structural integration in supporting women in re-making their lives after displacement and violence. This, together with the persistent barriers FGC-affected women face in taking the lead in FGC prevention and support provision suggests a need for further attention to supporting women holistically in re-creating their livelihoods and re-claiming their lives at the aftermath of violence.

#### **8.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have drawn attention to the ways diaspora and cultural change can lead to multiple dislocations in the lives of FGC-affected women, which can be simultaneously experienced as liberating and alienating (Talle, 2008). Crucially, the tensions, struggles and sense of loss felt by the participants who were experiencing the process of cultural change demonstrate the need to problematise Western tendencies to frame the abandonment of FGC as a simple "choice" (Scottish Government, 2016b). In the first part of this chapter, I have illustrated how the gender roles and norms which underpin FGC practices become subject to negotiation and contestation after migration. Participants' accounts construct FGC-affected communities as active cultural agents who engage in complex decision-making processes in relation to cultural practices and values (Gruenbaum, 1996; Johnsdotter et al., 2009).

Rather than comprehensively mapping out the different factors that influence the

abandonment of FGC, this chapter has focused on the issues arising from refugees' transnational realities which have received limited attention in the public discussion and research on FGC. Women's experiences of the ongoing risk and pressure to practise FGC problematise relocation as an easy answer to protecting women and girls from FGC. While migration may reduce the community pressure FGC-affected women experience in person, women can nevertheless continue to be subject to transnational pressures through retaining otherwise meaningful connections to their countries of origin. This finding, in addition to the continued risk of FGC through overseas visits and barriers to family reunion, points towards a need to further rethink the narrow nationally bounded lens for analysing FGC prevention and protection.

Throughout this chapter, I have reflected on the role of citizenship rights, structural inequalities and social connections in influencing women's vulnerability, cultural change and community empowerment. In discussing the converging effects of cultural issues and structural inequalities, I have illustrated the need to address FGC through a holistic approach which challenges the overlapping, gendered and racial social hierarchies which create barriers to women's help-seeking. Refugee women's barriers to protection and support provided by statutory services, and their negative experiences of statutory interventions disrupt the persistent representations of the West as the saviour of women who are framed as victims of their own cultures (see also Section 3.3.3). Although cultural considerations are essential for understanding the dynamics of FGC, addressing structural disadvantage is also crucial for enabling women themselves to challenge violence within their own communities.

Although the radical feminist conceptualisations of powerless FGC-affected women have been extensively critiqued by Black and postcolonial feminists (see also Section 3.2), this chapter has addressed the gap in knowledge about how women perceive and position themselves in relation to changing power relations. Participants vocally criticised the way their agency was rendered invisible by dominant stereotypes and top-down anti-FGC activism. In attending to the issues of agency and participation, in this chapter I have questioned if FGC-affected women are safe in their new contexts and, in the words of Abu-Lughod (2002), "if they really need saving". The findings suggest that anti-FGC activism continues to overlook women's intersectional location, excluding them as colonial subjects rather than recognising their potential as active participants and full members of society. This underscores the need to remain critical of the Western complicity in silencing the women whom Western activism intends to support.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Discussion and concluding remarks**

#### **9.1 Overview**

This concluding chapter summarises the key findings, discusses methodological and theoretical contributions of my thesis and proposes recommendations for future research and practice for ending FGC. I begin this chapter by outlining my original contribution to knowledge in relation to the two research questions which have driven my research. This is then followed by a discussion on the theoretical and methodological approaches which I have employed in my thesis. In these sections I argue that research practices and theorisation which are more grounded in the experiences of FGC-affected women provide means for moving beyond the impasse which has for long characterised the anti-FGC movement. Lastly, I will reflect on the research process and key findings in considering the limitations and possible implications for future research, policy and practice.

#### **9.2 Original contribution to knowledge**

These next two sections outline my original contribution to knowledge in relation to the two research questions which my study has addressed. The first section outlines how my research contributes to the limited knowledge on community perspectives on the abandonment of FGC in Scotland, and the changing dynamics of these practices after migration. The second section discusses how my approach to analysing FGC through an intersectional lens has illuminated the ways in which the Scottish approach to FGC prevention, protection and support provision can inadvertently constrain the agency and empowerment of FGC-affected refugee women. Altogether, these two sections discuss how my research contributes to new knowledge by addressing the pressing gaps in research on FGC, asylum and migrant integration (as reviewed in Chapter 3).

##### **9.2.1 Research question 1: How do experiences of migration and resettlement influence attitudes and the abandonment of FGC?**

My research findings build on the limited research on FGC in Scotland (Mhoja et al., 2010;

O'Brien et al., 2017, see also Section 2.4.4). In contrast to the public representations of FGC as an unquestioned tradition (as argued by Johnsdotter, Moussa, Carlbom, Aregai, & Essén, 2009), my findings suggest that FGC is a practice in transition in Scotland. My data indicate that communities from FGC-practising countries are, to a great extent, abandoning FGC after migration to Scotland (see Chapter 8). This aligns with previous research findings from UK and other European contexts (Gele et al., 2015; Johnsdotter et al., 2009; Norman, Belay Gegzabher, & Otoo-Oyortey, 2016, see also Section 3.3.5). Although the qualitative approach does not permit making wider conclusions about the overall prevalence of FGC in Scotland, my engagement with participants who were well-connected within different communities gives me confidence to assert a trend in changing attitudes in relation to FGC among settled migrant communities.

My findings on the participants' difficult positions spanning countries and cultures contribute to new knowledge on the transnational dynamics of FGC. Whilst increased distance to practising communities and a reduction in peer pressure have been frequently cited as the main factors supporting the abandonment of FGC after migration (Berggren, Bergström, & Edberg, 2006; Johnsdotter, Moussa, Carlbom, Aregai, & Essén, 2009, see also Section 3.3.5), the findings of my study advance knowledge of the ways in which transnational connections, allegiances and family separation can also maintain extended family pressure to continue FGC after relocation. In contrast to previous research which has considered transnational connections as a channel for contesting FGC in women's countries of origin (Mesplé-Somps, 2016), my data demonstrates the ways in which pressure to continue FGC can be facilitated through otherwise culturally and emotionally meaningful transnational connections. This, and the findings on family separation both as a protective measure against FGC and as a barrier to protection (see Chapters 7 and 8), exemplify the importance of identifying the factors which influence the continuation of FGC beyond local and national scales.

The factors which were said to encourage the abandonment of FGC align with findings from previous research from other European countries, including the exposure to different socio-cultural values and norms (Berg & Denison, 2013; Johnsdotter & Essén, 2016; Johnsdotter et al., 2009) and legislation, effective law enforcement and safeguarding (Berggren et al., 2006; Norman et al., 2016; Norman, Hemmings, & Hussein, 2009, as reviewed in Chapter 3). This thesis makes a further contribution to knowledge by illuminating the individual and community perspectives on FGC as an integration issue. In contrast to the renewed support

for assimilation and civic integration as the solutions to the perceived failures of multicultural policymaking (see also Section 3.3.3), my participants conceptualised cultural change as a process of finding a balance between two cultures. Rather than conveying the abandonment of FGC as a “choice” made by communities (Scottish Government, 2016b), participants’ experiences illustrate cultural change as a difficult process which requires individuals and communities to go against deep-seated cultural beliefs and norms. Acculturation was described as an intergenerational and all-encompassing challenge manifested through family conflicts, changing community relations and encounters with the host society and statutory services. This exemplifies how the abandonment of FGC does not take place in isolation, but is experienced in relation to changing gender roles, family relations, feelings of belonging and configurations of inequality.

My findings also provide new knowledge about the barriers to the abandonment of FGC in migration contexts. My thesis has enhanced understanding of how FGC becomes reassessed, rejected and reaffirmed at the levels of body and the self, family, community and the wider society. My thesis illustrates how the abandonment of FGC destabilises and ruptures establishes group boundaries and women’s allegiances to their communities and cultures (see Chapter 8). In absorbing the different meanings of FGC, FGC-affected migrant women are faced with a task of renewing their sense of belonging to their own cultural communities. This sense of being dually uprooted from pre-existing cultural identifications and social connections as a result of displacement and the realisation of FGC as violence is further complicated by compounding cultural and structural exclusions.

Although previous research has identified shame, taboos and bullying as key obstacles to community engagement in FGC-prevention, protection and support (Kimani et al., 2020; Lien & Schultz, 2013), my research suggests that the ending FGC also necessitates addressing barriers extending beyond cultural dynamics. Much like integration (Strang & Ager, 2010), participants conceptualised the abandonment of FGC as a process which requires both positive changes in communities and in the structures of the society. Facilitating integration was described as a necessary foundation for enabling communities to contest established cultural understandings, silences and the normalisation of FGC. Barriers to structural integration, and the “othering” of FGC-affected women and communities enacted through stereotyping and institutionalised exclusions inhibit opportunities for cultural reflection, societal participation and developing a sense of belonging, all of which have previously been connected to the abandonment of FGC (Gele et al., 2012; Johnsdotter et al., 2009; Wahlberg,

2017, see also Section 2.3.5). Overall, the findings support conceptualising the abandonment of FGC as an issue of integration, whereby social connections (social bonds, bridges and links), facilitators (language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability) and foundation (rights and citizenship) play a key role in enabling migrants to develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities in their new context (Ager & Strang, 2008, see also 3.3.4).

## **9.2.2 Research question 2: How does the Scottish anti-FGC approach influence migrant women's empowerment?**

### *FGC protection*

To my knowledge, this is the first study that has analysed the impact of the asylum process on FGC-affected women. After migration, participants' descriptions of torture changed from FGC (Chapter 6) to being tortured by a system that imprisoned them in a state of uncertainty (Chapter 7). In crossing borders, the control over FGC-affected women's lives shifted from their communities to the UK asylum system. The state *corrosive control* (Canning, 2019) enacted through strategies of deterrence strives to strip women of their autonomy and self-belief, compounding the impacts of violent continuums in the lives of FGC-affected women. Being in asylum was described as a "limbo" in-between violence and protection, which perpetuated ongoing trauma through women's sustained fears of deportation. These findings exemplify the importance of analysing women's experiences of FGC in the context of displacement and asylum, which until now have largely been overlooked by FGC research.

The findings presented in Chapter 8 further show that the hostile environment plays a key part in heightening the vulnerability of asylum-seeking women. FGC-affected women's sustained vulnerabilities exemplify the importance of analysing FGC in the context of other forms of GBV. The findings suggest that even though women may no longer be vulnerable to FGC after migration, intersecting cultural and structural inequalities continue to constrain women's abilities to live independently from abusive relationships after migration to Scotland. Refugee women's help-seeking is influenced by complex constellations of factors: divorce as a taboo, insecure immigration status, lack of financial resources and the fear of the authorities arising from previous experiences of police violence all factor into women's responses to GBV. Crucially, the state perpetuated destitution and asylum poverty which form a part of women's continuums of structural violence are conducive to the ongoing

exploitation and abuse of asylum-seeking women (Kelly, 2016, see Chapter 8). These findings illustrate the importance of developing more nuanced conceptualisations of FGC-affected women's empowerment beyond the abandonment of FGC.

In addition to women's experiences of the asylum process, my thesis contributes to new knowledge on the culture of disbelief as a barrier to protection and women's empowerment. My thesis adds to previous literature on the workings of culture of disbelief in the asylum system (Anderson et al., 2014; Jubany, 2011; Souter, 2011) through incorporating gender as a category of analysis. Regardless of the dominant representations of "women and children" as the most deserving and vulnerable refugees (Freedman, 2010), the findings illuminate the multiple, conflicting strategies Home Office interviewers employ in order to undermine FGC-affected women's claims for asylum (Chapter 7). The hostile and dismissive treatment of women's disclosures and provision of evidence contradicts the long-standing presumption that the nature of FGC as an "extreme" form of violence would make it easier for women to gain asylum on the grounds of GBV (Oxford, 2005; Razack, 1995; Wettergren & Wikström, 2014). My findings demonstrate how the tendency to culturalise FGC masks the contours of women's oppression; the disregard of the social, economic and political conditions in women's countries of origin (Chapter 6) prevents women's recognition as victims of persecution under the Refugee Convention (Chapter 7). In examining FGC from a migration perspective, my thesis has illuminated how state constructions of FGC as a private matter give rise to women's barriers to protection both before and after migration.

It has been argued that what becomes visible and what is being silenced in the asylum process depend on the dominant discourses and hegemonic narratives (Bohmer and Shuman, 2014). Although it has been said that constructing women's cultures in Orientalist terms can aid their claims for asylum (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013; Razack, 1995), my findings indicate that the imperial representations of cultural backwardness and barbarity can also work against women who are trying to negotiate the rigid categories of the asylum law. Subjective interpretations and a Eurocentric frame of reference work against women, whose attempts to protect their daughters from FGC through asylum contradict the stereotypical representations of uniformly powerless refugee women and women affected by FGC. Crucially, the findings presented in Chapter 7 illustrate how women are not only expected to represent themselves as powerless victims in order to gain asylum (Kea & Roberts-Holmes, 2013), but also how the asylum process itself works to undermine the agency of FGC-affected women who seek to protect their daughters and themselves from further violence.

Although literature has begun teasing out the possible implications of FGC for social work practice (Dustin & Davies, 2007; Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014), this thesis is one of the first studies to explore FGC-affected women's experiences of FGC protection and safeguarding practices (see also Abdelshahid, Smith, & Habane, 2021; Gangoli et al., 2018). My findings suggest that the discourse of barbarity which plays out in the determination of asylum claims also informs the hyper-vigilant statutory responses to FGC (Chapter 7). In contrast to the long-standing critique of statutory service inaction and complacency, my findings suggest that the moral panic on FGC has fuelled a safeguarding approach that is driven by a racist logic. Culturalisation of FGC not only can lead to inaction to protect girls from FGC under the guise of respecting cultural differences (Proudman, 2017), but it can also facilitate the multi-agency profiling of women as "(M)others" who are viewed primarily as a potential threat to their daughters. In applying Hester's *Three Planet Model* (2011) my thesis has illuminated how FGC-affected women can become trapped in the collision of anti-FGC and anti-immigration discourses, placing women in an impossible position; the rising benchmark of credibility which forces women to disclose and evidence their FGC-status to gain asylum risks self-incrimination as a result of the simplistic assessment of the mother's FGC-status as a primary risk factor to FGC. Crucially, in these situations, both immigration control and statutory services undermine the agency of FGC-affected women, whose protective behaviours are masked by the persistence of radical feminist representations of overpowered and deviant FGC-affected women (Daly, 1978; Koso-Thomas, 1987, see also Section 3.2). My findings exemplify how these hypervigilant safeguarding practices can be counter-productive to the empowerment of FGC-affected women; in disregarding women's intersectional disadvantage and experiences of trauma, these approaches risk re-traumatising FGC-affected women and alienating them from engaging with statutory services (Chapter 7).

### *FGC prevention*

My findings also contribute to new knowledge in advancing our understanding of the role of FGC prevention in supporting women's agency and empowerment. My thesis demonstrates the need to remain critical of the politics of knowledge production and exercise of power in the opposition of FGC (as reviewed in Chapter 3). Although recognising FGC-affected women's sustained vulnerability is paramount, stereotyping vulnerability as a group attribute risks stigmatisation and fuelling the imperial mission to save women from their cultures (Peroni, 2016). The reductionist representations of powerless refugee women can both mask and undermine the agency women exercise in fleeing violence and in dealing with its



aftermath (Canning, 2017a; Ticktin, 2016). Throughout my thesis I have problematised these stereotypes by demonstrating the changing and complex positionalities of FGC-affected women along the continuum of vulnerability to resilience and resistance.

My findings suggest that well-meaning mainstream anti-FGC activism comes to undermine women's capabilities through operating with the assumption that FGC-affected women need to be led to their liberation (Chapter 8). The elevation of mainstream providers at the forefront of Scottish anti-FGC work can constrain women's spaces for action to challenge violence within their own communities. The findings exemplify the importance of intersectional analysis, which illuminates how women's activism can become constrained from multiple directions in resettlement contexts. FGC-affected women simultaneously seek to carve spaces for themselves by challenging community ostracism, structural barriers to inclusion and the mainstream campaigners who assume the position of speaking for FGC-affected women. Crucially, my findings suggest that centring FGC-affected women in FGC prevention not only works to more effectively facilitate community dialogue, but also provides an antidote to the resistance to abandoning FGC which is rooted in the historical and contemporary Western invasion in the lives and cultures of Black communities (Malmström, 2013; Wasunna, 2000).

#### *FGC support provision*

My findings highlight the importance of enabling FGC-affected women to take the lead in not only FGC prevention, but also in the support provision for FGC-affected women (Chapter 8). The consequences of insensitive statutory responses to FGC, lack of culturally informed counselling and refugee women's barriers to engaging with mainstream feminist organisations exemplify the need to incorporate an understanding of FGC-affected women's intersectional identities in the service provision. Women's emphasis on the benefits of culturally-informed counselling and peer support provide a foundation for further exploration of the contexts that are conducive for undoing harms (Kelly, 2016). The findings suggest that peer support can work to heal the harms invoked by the realisation of different cultural constructions of FGC, empowering women to question and challenge the taken-for-granted norms and beliefs around FGC.

In addition to trauma-informed peer support, the findings demonstrate the importance of socio-economic empowerment in women's experience of "remaking of the self" (Brison, 2002). My thesis illustrates structural integration as a mechanism of resistance and

“recovery” for FGC-affected women who strive to re-gain their lives and independence after violence and displacement. The findings on asylum restrictions and gendered and racial inequalities as key barriers to FGC-affected women’s empowerment exemplify the need for holistic support provision. Examining FGC in the context of structural inequalities illuminates the continuums of violence and control which are central to understanding not only women’s vulnerability, but also their experiences of enduring the lifelong effects of FGC.

### **9.3 Theoretical contributions**

My research has examined how changing cultural, social and structural conditions influence migrant women’s vulnerabilities and experiences of FGC after migration. This focus draws from the structural inequality perspectives applied to theorising FGC and women’s participation in FGC-practising contexts, and on the critique against the culturalisation of GBV affecting minoritised women (as reviewed in Chapter 3). In building from the recommendations from previous research, my thesis adds to the limited studies that employ an intersectional analysis to understanding the dynamics of FGC (Connolly, 2018; Proudman, 2017; Van Bavel, 2019).

In drawing from intersectional and transnational feminist theories, my thesis has attended to the temporal and spatial dimensions of refugee women’s vulnerabilities to FGC and other forms of GBV. Theoretical concepts which illuminate the relationship between gender-based and structural forms of violence, including *conducive contexts* (Kelly, 2007) and *patriarchal bargains* (Kandiyoti, 1988) have been central in my development of more complex understandings of FGC-affected women’s sustained vulnerability, empowerment and exercise of agency amidst multiple constraints. In contextualising women’s agency within intersecting discourses and structures of domination (Mahmood, 2006, see also Chapter 4) I have also applied the notion of *corrosive control* (Canning, 2019) and the *Three Planet Model* (Hester, 2011) to conceptualise how women’s help-seeking behaviours and experiences of the aftermath of violence are influenced by immigration control and FGC safeguarding practices.

In approaching FGC from a migration perspective, my thesis has illuminated how women’s vulnerabilities and experiences of FGC interact with cultural constructions of gender which are central to individual and community identity negotiation and processes of exclusion (Chapter 6). Crucially however, my findings also unsettle culture and gender as the only

explanatory categories for understanding FGC (as critiqued in Chapter 3). Although culture and constructions of gender are central in understanding the distinct manifestations of FGC in different contexts, it is necessary to recognise that “culture exists simultaneously with, and is constituted by other structural inequalities” (Anitha, 2011, p. 1278). The culturalisation and radical feminist framings of FGC have masked the role of material inequalities in the continuation of GBV (see also Chapters 3 and 4). In tracing women’s vulnerabilities across their migration trajectories, my thesis has illuminated the constellations of cultural and structural factors which are conducive to men’s abuses of power in different contexts.

Although increased migration from FGC-practising contexts to the West has meant that FGC has become framed as a global concern, FGC research has been largely preoccupied with analysing FGC at local and national levels. In analysing FGC across spatial scales, my thesis has located FGC as part of interlocking systems of oppression which implicate global historical and contemporary power struggles in the continuation of GBV. The focus on women’s trajectories of migration illuminates the interconnected nature of FGC-affected women’s oppression. As highlighted in Chapter 6, the expectations surrounding womanhood and female sexuality that sustain FGC in women’s countries of origin are not only upheld by culture, but also by the wider social, political, and economic conditions and legal and religious systems. This maintains a vicious cycle of subordination for FGC-affected women, whose socio-economic and political subjugation is inextricably entangled with the consequences of colonial and neo-colonial politics of power and control. These conducive contexts continue to be overlooked by anti-FGC discourse, which continues to be guilty of dislocating culture from the contexts that govern it. As illustrated in Chapters 7 and 8, state-sanctioned and perpetuated forms of violence and control continue to circumscribe FGC-affected women’s lives a after migration. Despite the decreasing prevalence of FGC, FGC-affected migrant women continue to struggle over inter-personal, structural and discursive forms of violence that are connected to sexism, exclusionary feminism, racism, neo-colonialism and the politics of hostile environment. Crucially, these findings destabilise the colonial binaries between the violent “Third World” and liberating West that dominate the international anti-FGC discourse (as reviewed in Chapter 3).

Previous research has largely addressed FGC practices in isolation from other forms of violence, abuse and harm. However, as exemplified by the participants’ narratives of vulnerability, women’s experiences of FGC are part of “a continuous series of elements or events that pass into one another and cannot be readily distinguished” (Kelly, 1987, p. 48). In

line with previous research which has theorised forced marriage as a process and a pattern of behaviour (Chantler & McCarry, 2020), my thesis problematises the common framing of FGC as a singular event. The findings discussed in Chapter 6 illuminate how FGC is preceded by controlling behaviours, socialisation and traditions which work to instil culturally normative gendered identity and behaviours on girls and women. In enforcing women's submissiveness and place in the private sphere, FGC indirectly reinforces wider gendered economic and political inequalities. Further, for many of the participants FGC was not only done concurrently with other forms of GBV, but these practices also justified further sexual violence and coercive control. These findings underscore the importance of locating FGC on a *continuum of violence* and control over women's bodies and livelihoods (Kelly, 1987). However, as I have argued, FGC practices continue to be largely addressed in isolation of other gendered and structural forms of harm.

The longevity of the impact FGC has on women's lives further exemplifies FGC as a process as opposed to a singular act (see Chapters 7 and 8). FGC not only often leads to long-term physical health consequences, but also to profound trauma. Crucially however, women may only be faced with this trauma long after FGC has already been committed. My thesis has illuminated how migration to non-practising contexts initiates a process of sense-making and identity negotiation which forces FGC-affected women to re-evaluate established understandings of normality, belonging and sense of self in often unsettling ways (as discussed in Chapter 8). In encountering oppositional understandings of FGC, previously normalised practices and health impacts of FGC become reconfigured to lived violence and trauma. This process is only compounded by intersectional stigma (Turan et al., 2019), as the consequences of the hostile environment collide with dominant constructions of FGC-affected women's racialised and imperfect bodies (Khoja-Moolji, 2020). At this juncture, the aftermath of FGC becomes imbued with the ascription of women as being "less than human" on the account of their immigration and FGC status (see also Section 7.3.2).

To summarise, I argue that theorising FGC from a comparative migration perspective facilitates a more nuanced analysis of not only the contexts which are conducive to FGC, but also the contexts which afford women fewer resources to deal with trauma and the aftermath of violence (Kelly, 2016). Transnational and situational intersectional analysis (Yuval-Davis, 2015, see also Chapter 4) illuminates how FGC is entangled with the production and reproduction of wider social and structural inequalities across time and space. I argue that conceptualising both the perpetuation and experiences of FGC as processes illuminates how

women's vulnerabilities are sustained by both local and global operations of power that play out within particular temporal and spatial contexts. In attending to multiple complicities and struggles, transnational and intersectional analysis of FGC provides potential for moving the anti-FGC discourse beyond the impasse which prevents us from reconciling the tensions between the particularities and universality of women's oppression.

#### **9.4 Methodological contributions**

The feminist research goal of pursuing research *with* women (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006) has been central to informing my research design. My decision to pursue participatory research was further guided by my epistemological commitment to disrupting the dominant discourses and "ways of knowing" that disadvantage FGC-affected women (as reviewed in Chapter 3). This participatory approach has been fundamental in enabling me to proactively mitigate complex ethical and practical challenges arising from the sensitivity of the topic, language barriers and my position as an "outsider" (as discussed in Chapter 5). Collaboration with the community advisers to develop the research and member-check the findings has been central to ensuring the relevance of my research to the participants and in enhancing the data quality and credibility of the findings.

In addition to involving the advisers, this participatory focus was also incorporated in the methods of data collection, whereby focus groups and creative zine-making created opportunities for expressing collective voices, sharing and the negotiation of meanings. I consider that my proactive steps to address power imbalances during the data collection resulted in a more sensitive approach to exploring deeply personal and difficult experiences. The flexibility in using the different data collection methods afforded the participants more control over how, and at which stage, they chose to reflect on their personal experiences of violence, displacement, and loss. This was further supported by zine-making, which utilised visuals to redistribute expressive control to address language barriers and to counter the ways experiences of violence, displacement and mental health can resist verbal expression (Eastmond, 2007, see Chapter 5). My thesis illustrates the strengths of zine-making for gathering rich data on women's perspectives on their own positionalities and agency. The findings from zine-making counter the way migrant women are often silenced by dominant discourses, and respond to the gap in refugee women's voices in both public and policy debates and research on FGC (Connelly et al., 2018; Johnsdotter et al., 2009).

While my priority on participant welfare meant that, at times, I did not press participants for further detail if I believed this would have unduly upset or pressured the participants, I was nevertheless able to create a safe space which produced rich data capturing the complexities and ambiguities in participants' narratives. The narrative approach was particularly well-suited to exploring participants' experiences of radical discontinuities resulting from displacement, cultural change and identity negotiation (Eastmond, 2007, see also Section 5.3.1). The research focus on engaging with women's experiences and stories contradicts how refugee women are often rendered silent by the dominant narratives which reduce them to passive victims (Smith, 2017). As my findings highlight (see Chapters 7 and 8), the narrative approach facilitated the interrogation of how women's experiences come to be silenced or contested, and provided the participants with ways to share their own narratives which challenged dominant discourses (Squire et al., 2008). This has aligned with the underpinning transformative aims of my research, which has sought to problematise dominant understandings of FGC and to develop more nuanced understandings of FGC-affected women's agency.

Although research cannot transform participants' realities, feminist research practice can contribute to consciousness-raising and produce emancipatory knowledge (Lather, 1988). In feeding back their experiences of taking part in the research, some of the women said that the research contributed to challenging the culture of silence around FGC by providing them a safe space to discuss their experiences of FGC:

*It's a lovely opportunity because you normally wouldn't get this, it's rare for you to see someone from Nigeria to come out and say that she's a victim of FGM. So, I'm happy being in an environment where I can be proud to talk about it. (Chibundu, Nigerian woman)*

Women said that sharing experiences of violence and trauma in a safe space resulted in a feeling of "*having something heavy lifted off your shoulders*". Focus groups and zine sessions were also described as a source of peer support. This exemplifies how participatory and narrative research practices can positively contribute to the process by which the participants make sense of their experiences and reconstitute their identities after violence and displacement.

The benefits that the participants identified in taking part in the research need to be assessed in the context of the multi-layered barriers which characterise refugee women's experiences

of settling to Scotland (see Chapters 7 and 8). Participants described how the research approach which promoted dialogue and collaboration provided them with valuable opportunities for cultural sharing, learning and socialising. The opportunity to discuss cultural differences and women's positions in different countries was described as "*educational*" and as an "*enjoyment*". Women's feedback highlights how research can create social spaces which both facilitate data collection, and mitigate the impacts of social isolation, barriers to social connections and access to information and support experienced by refugee women. This both illustrates the transformative potential of participatory methodologies and offers lessons in how service providers can engage with FGC-affected women in ways that respond to women's positions of intersectional disadvantage.

To summarise, my study exemplifies the strengths of applying creative methods and participatory approaches in researching FGC. To my knowledge, this is the first study which has utilised art-based methods in FGC research. In proactively addressing barriers to participation and expression, I argue that collaborative zine-making counters the tendencies to privilege Western knowledge production in the representations of FGC-affected women. Further, the participant feedback and successes in data collection illustrate the complementary nature of feminist research ethics and participatory research (see also Chapter 5). The benefits of the research process to the participants highlight the power of research as a form of feminist practice, whereby the emancipatory commitment is not only enacted in the research focus and dissemination of findings, but also in all other stages of the research (Devault, 1996). My approach to developing a Community Advisory Board provides an alternative to the peer research designs which have gained increasing popularity among FGC researchers over the recent years (Gele, Sagbakken, & Kumar, 2015; O'Brien, Baldeh, Hassan, & Baillie, 2017, see also Section 5.3.2). While peer research can promote greater access to sensitive data through utilising community researchers, I argue that prolonged engagement and collaboration with community advisers has the strength of facilitating cross-cultural and feminist reflexivity throughout the research process.

### **9.5 Limitations of the study**

Several limitations should be recognised in assessing the findings of my study. The qualitative data collection methods and non-purposive sampling meant that the findings cannot be generalised to all African and Middle Eastern communities in Scotland. Further,

the extent to which the findings are transferable to other geographical and policy contexts should be questioned. The distinct Scottish approach to refugee integration (see also Section 3.3.4) and the specificities in the UK immigration system mean that my findings have been influenced by particular institutional and policy contexts. However, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the UK is neither completely unique in terms of the moral panic surrounding FGC, the “fortress mentality” towards migration nor the ongoing public and policy debates on multiculturalism, assimilation and women’s rights. Common features in many European countries in terms of the increases application of strategies of deterrence and lack of consistency in dealing with FGC-related asylum claims (Middelburg & Balta, 2016) suggest that similar findings may emerge from other contexts.

It is necessary to acknowledge that the sensitivities of the research topic, my position as an “outsider” and the participants’ realities of complex inequalities and trauma created challenges to the recruitment of research participants. To mitigate these, I took time to build professional relationships with the advisers, gatekeepers and participants, whilst working hard to recruit a variety of participants in terms of age, country of origin and position in relation to cultural communities and the wider host society. Nevertheless, my limited language skills in the languages spoken by the participants, and my decision not to use interpreters due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the nature of small, closed communities (see Chapter 5) mean that the sample is skewed towards participants with higher levels of acculturation.

It is possible that the sample which is skewed towards more established and connected refugees explains the lack of participants admitting agreement with FGC. However, researchers have also suggested that lack of findings on positive attitudes towards FGC may be a result of socially desirable responses arising from the participants’ awareness of the Western hard-line approaches and criminalisation of FGC (Gangoli et al., 2018; Wahlberg, 2017). It is possible that research with newly arrived asylum seekers would have generated different insights into experiences and attitudes towards FGC. However, accessing this group is both notoriously difficult, and would present further ethical issues related to the researcher’s inability to offer specialist support if participants are confronted with the realisation of FGC as violence for the first time during the research encounters. Although recruiting newly arrived asylum seekers was not feasible for my research, utilising narrative interviews provided a means of gathering data on experiences of encountering contesting



meanings of FGC, as the narrative focus encouraged participants to reflect the ruptures and dislocations which characterise refugees' experiences of arrival to new contexts.

Although my research did not recruit participants who would have expressed agreement with FGC, interviews with well-integrated community participants nevertheless yielded some secondary accounts of favourable attitudes towards FGC. While my research cannot provide definitive answers on the prevalence of FGC in Scotland, my study nevertheless makes a valuable contribution to knowledge through illuminating the relationship between the abandonment of FGC and the wider process of cultural change experienced by individuals and communities. Utilising narrative interviews with more established refugees encouraged the participants to reflect their experiences of coming to terms with their own experiences of FGC. This methodology and my sampling strategy also produced insightful and detailed reflections on communities' experiences and perspectives on the Scottish approach to ending FGC.

In terms of the research focus, it is necessary to recognise that the lack of inclusion of statutory providers engaged in FGC protection limits a more holistic analysis of some of the issues discussed in this thesis (see Chapters 7 and 8). For instance, the lack of health and social work perspectives means that the analysis has been limited in considering possible organisational and policy constraints which influence statutory responses and safeguarding practices. However, the decision to narrow down the recruitment to migrant communities was justified by the pressing gap of community and refugee women's voices in public and policy debates and FGC research (Connelly et al., 2018; Johnsdotter et al., 2009). Likewise, the retrospective focus on women's experiences of the asylum interviews means that this thesis has not been able to observe Home Office interviewers' responses to women's disclosures. Women's perspectives cannot shed light into the interviewers' thought processes, capturing only one side of the interview process (Souter, 2011). However crucially, it should be recognised that narrative research does not seek to uncover truths but socially produced representations of lived experience (Hunter, 2010). As I have highlighted in this thesis, the narrative approach has been particularly well-suited for the exploration of women's lived experiences of these institutional hostilities.

My position as a white woman with no lived experience of FGC has shaped the recruitment process, my interaction with participants, and their responses to me as researcher. Although some of the interviews gave rise to opportunities to find some common ground in our every-

day experiences of settling to Scotland, my lack of lived experiences of displacement and the hostile environment put me in a position of privilege in relation to my participants. Although the participatory design, and my decisions to utilise focus groups, creative methods and conduct fieldwork in safe spaces worked to destabilise some of these power imbalances, my position as an “outsider” nevertheless likely influenced participant disclosures and my interpretations of the data. As I have discussed in Chapter 5, I have sought to address these issues by prioritising building rapport, member-checking and ongoing reflexivity during the research process. My position as an “outsider” also meant that there were also occasions where overlapping focus group discussion and the use of native languages during zine-making meant that I was unable to fully capture what was said by the participants. However, a notable strength of conducting this research as an “outsider” was that the participants took time explain their cultural practices, customs and nuances to me in great detail, yielding valuable data on cultural change.

Last, the lockdown measures due to the Covid-19 crisis presented further obstacles where some of the planned meetings with advisors to discuss the research analysis and findings had to be cancelled (see also Section 5.7). This created additional constraints on my opportunities to check some of my interpretations of the data with the advisors. However, the continued contact through online communications and one dedicated meeting focusing on the data analysis nevertheless enabled me to member-check the key findings and supported me in critically reflecting my own influence and positionality throughout the research process.

## **9.6 Recommendations and concluding remarks**

The last two sections of this chapter outline my recommendations for future research, practice and policy to end FGC. In drawing from the key findings and theoretical and methodological contributions of my thesis, I emphasise the need to further include survivor perspectives in future practice and policy developments, and research on ending FGC. I also argue for the need to further attend to the FGC-affected women’s complex vulnerabilities, and the intersectional erasures which characterise the representations and treatment of women who are positioned at the collision of anti-FGC and anti-immigration discourses.

### 9.6.1 Recommendations for research

The findings in this thesis point to a number of areas for future research into FGC prevention and protection in migration contexts:

- This study explored the lived experiences of a small group of FGC-affected women and migrant communities in a particular geographical and policy context. Therefore, further research should build on the findings presented here in examining the role of structural inequalities and Western policy approaches in influencing cultural change and women's experiences of FGC in other contexts. This thesis has argued that the culturalisation of FGC has largely detracted from the examination of these practices beyond the relationship between women and their communities. There is a need to develop more comprehensive understandings of how different policy approaches to migrant integration can facilitate or hinder cultural change and migrant women's capabilities to challenge GBV within their own communities.
- Women's experiences of the hostile and dismissive treatment of FGC-related asylum claims indicates that further research is needed to establish the scale of this problem. Although women's lived experiences illuminated in this thesis provide a crucial starting point for research in this area, further research is needed to develop an understanding of how immigration interviewers evaluate FGC-related asylum claims. Research should also establish the extent to which gaps in immigration officials' knowledge and training about the complexities of FGC and women's vulnerability to GBV in their countries of origin inhibit the recognition of women as victims of persecution under the Refugee Convention.
- The limited research into FGC-affected women's activism reflects the continued influence of radical feminist representations of FGC-affected women's presumed lack of knowledge and consciousness. Although recent decades have witnessed a proliferation of scholarly criticisms of these framings of FGC-affected women, this critique has not been sufficiently accompanied with research on women's agency and barriers to help-seeking. As argued by Mohanty, "while discursive categories are clearly central sites of political contestation, they must be grounded in and informed by the material politics of everyday life, especially the daily life struggles for survival of poor people" (2003, p. 53). In addition to addressing the theoretical debates on the

opposition of FGC, future research should move beyond discourse as the terrain of struggle to attending to the material consequences that discourses have on FGC-affected women and their communities. Further, in addition to recognising the conditions that shape the positions and behaviours of FGC-affected women, there is scope for further exploration of how FGC-affected women survive and resist oppression in different ways in their every-day lives.

- In addition to building on these gaps in research, there is scope for future research to adopt a migration perspective in theorising the role of past experiences and migration in shaping cultural negotiation and women's vulnerabilities to FGC. As I have argued in this thesis, much of FGC research has overlooked the role of displacement, the asylum process and transnational connections in influencing acculturation and women's help-seeking behaviours. Furthermore, women's journeys of migration illustrate that even though they may no longer be as vulnerable to culturally normative forms of GBV after migration to the West, Western societies may nevertheless operate in violent ways that have profound implications to women's empowerment and engagement with FGC prevention.
- The methodological contributions of this thesis underscore the importance of applying participatory designs and methods to future FGC research. The contributions of the advisers illustrate the value of grounding research in the perspectives of FGC-affected women in order to ensure the relevance of the research to communities and to address complex ethical and practical barriers in FGC research. Future research should also further explore the potential of creative methods in proactively addressing barriers to expression, and in promoting shared meaning-making around culture and experiences of trauma.
- As the findings highlight (see also Section 8.3.2), future research should recognise and proactively address the cultural and structural barriers FGC-affected refugee women experience in participating in research and FGC prevention. Compensating participants for travel and childcare is essential in enabling women to participate and discuss their personal experiences and trauma uninterrupted in a safe space.

### **9.6.2 Recommendations for practice and policy**

This thesis has demonstrated that ending FGC requires both cultural and structural transformations. Rather than dismiss the cultural intricacies that inform FGC, I argue that our understanding of these practices should not be limited to cultural terms. The findings suggest that in both FGC-practising countries and resettlement contexts, women's experiences of GBV are intrinsically intertwined with structural and discursive forms of violence that they experience on the account of not only gender, but also race, socio-economic position, religion and immigration status. Although awareness-raising and education remain central to FGC prevention, the findings suggest further attention should be directed to recognising and addressing the legal, political and economic conditions which are conducive to the continuation of FGC and other forms of GBV.

The findings on the impacts of social and structural integration encourage broadening the scope of the current policy approach which primarily challenges FGC as a health and human rights issue. Although FGC was briefly mentioned in the earlier version of New Scots Strategy as a case study on refugees' rights and entitlements to healthcare (Scottish Government, 2017), integration as a mechanism for cultural change remains a largely unaddressed in research and policy. Strengthening women's access to resources is not only key in preventing abusive situations, but also in supporting women's resistance against culturally normalised patterns of abuse and control. Although power over immigration and asylum remains a Westminster reserved policy matter, the findings on what was perceived as tokenism in the Scottish approach to "integration from day one" (Scottish Government, 2018b) highlight the importance of addressing intersecting gendered and racial inequalities in devolved welfare provision. Overall, the findings suggest that while Scotland has amplified its efforts to end FGC, this work continues to fall short of fully engaging with migrants who experience complex intersectional barriers to inclusion, participation and belonging. These issues are more pertinent than ever, as the structural and social inequalities faced by refugee women are likely to increase as a result of the disproportionate effects of Covid-19 on ethnic minorities (Bentley, 2020).

To my knowledge, this is the first study that has addressed elongation among migrant communities in Scotland. Regardless of the differing potential harms, the findings show how elongation and other alternative practices are underpinned by similar restrictive expectations surrounding womanhood and female sexuality as cutting practices (see Chapter 6). The parallels between elongation and cutting demonstrated in this study point towards the need

for further attention to be given to the complexities of FGC practices, including the harmful effects of different manifestations of FGC. Having included elongation in the analysis of FGC practices, I argue that disregarding elongation on the basis of contested health implications (Bagnol & Mariano, 2008) relies on the yardstick of mutilation which works to obscure the very *intersectional vulnerabilities* (Crenshaw, 1991) and *continuums of violence* (Kelly, 1987) which my thesis has illuminated.

My findings exemplify the need to consider the dynamics of FGC beyond local manifestations of community pressure. Participants' experiences of being positioned in-between two countries and conflicting allegiances indicate the need to explore how migrant women and families can be better supported in resisting transnational pressures and communicating contesting constructions of FGC across spaces. The need to consider FGC protection beyond a purely local scale is further exemplified by the finding that exposes the gap in the protection of girls who have been separated from their mothers. The central role of the extended family in perpetuating FGC underscores the importance of breaking down barriers to family reunion in order to facilitate FGC-affected women's agency to protect their daughters from these practices. Advocacy in this area is paramount, especially in light of the recent developments in the UK Government's attempts to further undermine refugees' rights to family reunion (Safe Passage, 2020).

As conveyed by the participants, the asylum system which is fundamentally hostile, exclusionary and stigmatising is inherently unsuitable for protecting women who are at risk, or dealing with the aftermath of FGC. The unnecessarily lengthy asylum process and state of uncertainty which sustains the impacts of trauma needs to be addressed in the processing of asylum claims as a matter of urgency. It is crucial to recognise, however, that the uncertainties which characterise the asylum process do not end upon receiving status; the application of limited humanitarian protection status and the recently implemented safe return reviews (Home Office, 2016b) mean that the fear of being deported to FGC-practising contexts continues to loom over refugee women even after upon receiving status. Furthermore, although the details are only emerging, the current Home Secretary Priti Patel's plans to overhaul the asylum system through further measures of deterrence, rash deportations and criminalisation of asylum seekers (BBC News, 2020) are likely to increase the dehumanisation, traumatising and vulnerability of women and girls fleeing from FGC.

My research findings have the potential to inform further bottom-up approaches to FGC prevention and support in Scotland and beyond. After a decade of austerity, there is a pressing need to invest in community-led initiatives to address FGC and other issues affecting migrant communities. The findings suggest that creating contexts that are conducive to change necessitates a holistic approach combining legislation with opportunities for reflection, dialogue and community engagement. Although the Scottish Government has taken active steps to consult communities in the development of the national anti-FGC approach, my findings demonstrate scope for wider engagement to avoid reducing communities to selected spokespeople (Connelly et al., 2018).

My findings also exemplify the need for meaningful inclusion and recognition of the capabilities of FGC-affected women in decolonising the anti-FGC discourse and practice. In addition to proactively addressing the possible cultural resistance to the abandonment of FGC, survivor-led advocacy is better placed in reaching migrants who are experiencing multiple exclusions in participating in the society. Likewise, although Scotland has established provisions for FGC-affected women within the NHS, women's experiences of intersectional stigma highlight the need to facilitate and fund further survivor-led support mechanisms and culturally appropriate interventions for supporting FGC-affected women with complex experiences of violence and trauma.

The tensions and discomfort arising from changing gender roles and acculturation exemplify the need to proactively support migrants in bridging culture with changing rights and responsibilities in their new contexts. My findings on women's experiences of FGC safeguarding and prevention indicate a need for active measures to work towards a more mutual cross-cultural understanding and partnerships between communities and statutory services (see Chapters 7 and 8). Further, the findings show that failures to take into account FGC-affected women's limited exposure to Western understandings of FGC, coupled with lack of understanding about the unsettling effects of displacement and cultural change can lead to insensitive and stigmatising statutory service responses to FGC-affected women. This highlights the importance of developing approaches to FGC which are sensitive to the multi-layered experiences of loss, displacement and trauma of refugee women through further community involvement in designing training and measures of FGC prevention. Whilst sending a clear message against FGC is paramount, the demand for a hard-line approach to

FGC should not bypass FGC-affected women's needs for ongoing support in making sense of their experiences of violence.

Although participants welcomed the increased recognition of FGC as a public issue, the findings of this thesis expose how conflicting professional assumptions can lead to failures to recognise FGC-affected women's and their daughters' simultaneous needs for protection. There is a need to critically address how placing FGC-affected women under constant suspicion as potential perpetrators of FGC overlooks other possible risk factors beyond the mother's FGC-status, including the role of migration. On the other hand, the findings illuminate how the limited recognition of the multiple barriers FGC-affected women face in protecting their daughters from FGC in their countries of origin inhibits women's and girls' rights to asylum. Although the recently introduced FGM Protection Orders (FGMPOs) in Scotland can provide another form of leverage for women to resist pressure to practice FGC, the clear distinction made between FGMPOs and women's asylum claims only further exemplifies how FGC-affected women continue to fall in between the cracks of FGC prevention:

*The legal processes surrounding FGMPOs and asylum claims are separate...FGMPOs are not intended for the purposes of assisting asylum claims, which are made and considered separately under the Immigration Rules. (Victoria Atkins MP, Minister for Safeguarding and Vulnerability, 2019)*

The clear separation between FGMPOs and asylum claims can undermine women's confidence in the system. As the findings illuminate, the differing approach to safeguarding employed by immigration control and statutory services continues to undermine women's exercise of agency to protect their daughters from FGC. The lack of full recognition of FGMPOs as evidence leaves women with fewer options, pushing already vulnerable women to potentially expose themselves to invasive genital examinations and repeated disclosures, without guarantees that these will be addressed sensitively or that these will aid their situations.

To conclude, when it comes to the feminist emphasis on intersectionality, situatedness of knowledge and structural analysis of oppression, my thesis has demonstrated that the issue of FGC continues to challenge our ability to practice what we preach (Wade, 2011). My thesis has made a significant contribution to knowledge in interrogating women's vulnerabilities, agency and experiences of FGC in relation to their surrounding social, cultural, political and



economic conditions. In focusing on women's trajectories of vulnerability, this thesis has not only problematised the contradictions between women's realities and the representations of the anti-FGC discourse, but also illuminated the material consequences of the multiple exclusionary discourses that intersect in the lives of FGC-affected women.

## Bibliography

- Abdalla, S. M., & Galea, S. (2019). Is female genital mutilation/cutting associated with adverse mental health consequences? A systematic review of the evidence. *BMJ Global Health*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2019-001553>
- Abdelshahid, A., Smith, K., & Habane, K. (2021). *'Do no harm': Lived Experiences and Impacts of the UK's FGM Safeguarding Policies and Procedures*. Forward and University of Huddersfield.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (1991). Writing Against Culture. In T. Sanders & H. Moore (Eds.), *Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology* (pp. 466–479). Blackwell.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (2002). Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others. *American Anthropologist*, 104(3), 783–790. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2002.104.3.783>
- Abu-Lughod, L. (2011a). Seductions of the “Honor Crime.” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 22(1), 17–63.
- Abusharaf, R. M. (1995). Rethinking Feminist Discourses on Female Genital Mutilation: The Case of the Sudan. *Canadian Women's Studies*, 15(2), 52–54.
- Abusharaf, R. M. (2000). Revisiting Feminist Discourses on Infibulation: Responses from Sudanese Feminists. In B Shell-Duncan & Y. Hernlund (Eds.), *Female “Circumcision” in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change* (pp. 151–166). Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
- Ackerly, B., & True, J. (2008). Reflexivity in Practice: Power and Ethics in Feminist Research on International Relations. *International Studies Review*, 10(4), 693–707.
- Adams, L. (2013, November 15). Female Genital Mutilation “Rising in Soft-touch Scotland.” *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-24915967>
- Adamson, J., & Donovan, J. L. (2002). Research in Black and White. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12(6), 816–825.
- Adeleye-Fayemi, B. (2000). Creating and sustaining feminist space in Africa: Local-global challenges in the 21st century. *4th Annual Dame Nita Barrow Lecture*.

- Adelman, M., Erez, E., & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. (2003). Policing Violence Against Minority Women in Multicultural Societies: “Community” and the Politics of Exclusion. *Police & Society*, 7, 103–131.
- Afifi, M. (2009). Women’s empowerment and the intention to continue the practice of female genital cutting in Egypt. *Archives of Iranian Medicine*, 12(2), 154–160.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1442-2018.2007.00366.x>
- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2004). *Indicators of Integration: Final Report*. Home Office Development and Practice Report 28.
- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166–191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>
- Ager, A., Strang, A., O’May, F., & Garner, P. (2002). *Indicators of Integration: A Conceptual Analysis of Refugee Integration*. Report for the Home Office.
- Ahmadu, F. (2000). Rites and Wrongs: An Insider/Outsider Reflects on Power and Excision. In B. Shell-Duncan & Y. Hernlund (Eds.), *Female “Circumcision” in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change* (pp. 283–312). Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Ahmadu, F. (2005). *Cutting the Anthill: the Symbolic Foundations of Female and Male Circumcision Rituals Among the Mandinka of Brikama, the Gambia*. PhD doctoral dissertation. London School of Economics.
- Ahmed, S. (2017). Introduction: Bringing Feminist Theory Home. In *Living a Feminist Life* (pp. 1–18). Duke University Press.
- Akinsanya, A. O. (2011). Intergenerational attitude change regarding Female Genital Cutting in Yoruba speaking ethnic group of Southwest Nigeria: A qualitative and quantitative enquiry. *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality*, 14(1).
- Akinsulure-Smith, A. M., & Chu, T. (2017). Exploring Female Genital Cutting among Survivors of Torture. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 19(3), 769–773.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-016-0419-x>
- Alcaraz, R. M., González, S. J., & Ruiz, S. C. (2014). Attitudes towards female genital mutilation: an integrative review. *International Nursing Review*, 61(1), 25–34.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/inr.12070>

- Alhassan, Y., Barrett, H., Brown, K., & Kwah, K. (2016). Belief Systems Enforcing Female Genital Mutilation in Europe. *Ethnicity and Inequalities in Health and Social Care*, 9(1), 29–40. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJHRH-05-2015-0015>
- Amnesty International UK. (2020, June 4). *UK: domestic abuse survivors urge MPs to protect all victims. Press Release.* Amnesty International UK Press Releases. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-domestic-abuse-survivors-urge-mps-protect-all-victims>
- Amos, U., & Parmar, P. (1984). Challenging Imperial Feminism. *Feminist Review*, 17(1), 3–19.
- Anderson, D. M. (2018). Women missionaries and colonial silences in Kenya’s female “circumcision” controversy, 1906-1930. *English Historical Review*, 133(565), 1512–1545. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/cey325>
- Anderson, J., Hollaus, J., Lindsay, A., & Williamson, C. (2014). *The Culture of Disbelief: An Ethnographic Approach to Understanding an Under-theorised Concept in the UK Asylum System* (No. 102; The Refugee Studies Centre Working Paper Series). Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.
- Anderson, K. L., & Umberson, D. (2001). Gendering Violence: Masculinity and Power in Men’s Accounts of Domestic Violence. *Gender and Society*, 15(3), 358–380.
- Andro, A., Cambois, E., & Lesclingand, M. (2014). Long-term consequences of female genital mutilation in a European context: Self perceived health of FGM women compared to non-FGM women. *Social Science & Medicine*, 106, 177–184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.02.003>
- Anitha, S. (2011). Legislating gender inequalities: The nature and patterns of domestic violence experienced by South Asian women with insecure immigration status in the United Kingdom. *Violence Against Women*, 17(10), 1260–1285. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801211424571>
- Anitha, S., & Gill, A. K. (2011a). Reconceptualising consent and coercion within an intersectional understanding of forced marriage. In *Forced Marriage: Introducing a Social Justice and Human Rights Perspective*. Zedbooks Ltd.
- Anitha, S., & Gill, A. K. (2011b). The social construction of forced marriage and its “victim”

- in media coverage and crime discourses. In A. K. Gill & S. Anitha (Eds.), *Forced Marriage: Introducing a Social Justice and Human Rights Perspective*. Zed Books Ltd.
- Anthias, F. (1998). Evaluating diaspora: beyond ethnicity? *Sociology*, 32(3), 557–580.
- Anthias, F. (2002). Beyond feminism and multiculturalism: Locating difference and the politics of location. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 25(3), 275–286.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395\(02\)00259-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(02)00259-5)
- Anzaldúa, G. E. (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Atasoy, Y. (2006). Governing women's morality: a study of islamic veiling in Canada. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9(2), 203–221.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549406063164>
- Atkins, V. (2019) letter to Ruth Maguire MSP, Convenor of the Scottish Parliamentary Committee on Equalities and Human Rights, 31/10/2019. Available at [https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5\\_Equal\\_Opps/Homeoffice\\_to\\_Conv\\_20191031.pdf](https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5_Equal_Opps/Homeoffice_to_Conv_20191031.pdf) [Accessed 29/04/2021]
- Bader, D., & Mottier, V. (2020). Femonationalism and populist politics: The case of the Swiss ban on female genital mutilation. *Nations and Nationalism*, 26(3), 644–659.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12615>
- Bagnol, B., & Mariano, E. (2008). Elongation of the Labia Minora and use of Vaginal Products to Enhance Eroticism: Can These Practices be Considered FGM? *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration*, 32, 42–53.
- Baillot, H., & Connelly, E. (2018). *Women seeking asylum: Safe from violence in the UK?* Refugee Council and Asylum Support Appeals Project.
- Baillot, H., Cowan, S., & Munro, V. (2012). “Just a story?”: Rape narratives and credibility assessments of women seeking asylum. *Women's Asylum News*, 111, 15.
- Baillot, H., Cowan, S., & Munro, V. E. (2009). Seen but Not Heard? Parallels and Dissonances in the Treatment of Rape Narratives across the Asylum and Criminal Justice Contexts. *Journal of Law and Society*, 36(2), 195–219.
- Baillot, H., Cowan, S., & Munro, V. E. (2014). Reason to disbelieve: Evaluating the rape claims of women seeking asylum in the UK. *International Journal of Law in Context*,

10(1), 105–139.

- Baillot, H., Murray, N., Connelly, E., & Howard, N. (2014). *Tackling Female Genital Mutilation in Scotland: A Scottish Model of Intervention*. Scottish Refugee Council.
- Baillot, H., Murray, N., Connelly, E., & Howard, N. (2018). Addressing female genital mutilation in Europe: A scoping review of approaches to participation, prevention, protection, and provision of services. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 17(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-017-0713-9>
- Bakker, L., Dagevos, J., & Engbersen, G. (2014). The Importance of Resources and Security in the Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees. A Study on the Impact of Length of Stay in Asylum Accommodation and Residence Status on Socio-Economic Integration for the Four Largest Refugee Groups in the Netherlands. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 15(3), 431–448. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-013-0296-2>
- Barrett, H. R., Bedri, N., & Krishnapalan, N. (2020). The Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)-migration matrix: The case of the Arab League Region. *Health Care for Women International*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07399332.2020.1789642>
- Barrett, H. R., Brown, K., Alhassan, Y., & Leye, E. (2020). Transforming social norms to end FGM in the EU: An evaluation of the REPLACE Approach. *Reproductive Health*, 17(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-020-0879-2>
- Barth, F. (1969). *Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organization of culture difference*. Waveland Press.
- BBC News. (2011, February). *State multiculturalism has failed, says David Cameron - BBC News*. The BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12371994>
- BBC News. (2020, October 4). *Priti Patel pledges to fix “broken” asylum system in UK* . <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-54404554>
- Beckett, C., & Macey, M. (2001). Race, gender and sexuality: The oppression of multiculturalism. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 24(3–4), 309–319. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395\(01\)00185-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(01)00185-6)
- Behrendt, A. (2011). *Listening to African Voices Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting among Immigrants in Hamburg: Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice*. Plan International.

- Bell, K. (2005). Genital Cutting and Western Discourses on Sexuality. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 19(2), 125–148. <https://doi.org/10.1525/maq.2005.19.2.125>
- Belzile, J. A., & Öberg, G. (2012). Where to begin? Grappling with how to use participant interaction in focus group design. *Qualitative Research*, 12(4), 459–472. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794111433089>
- Ben-Rafael, E. (2013). Diaspora. *Current Sociology Review*, 61(5–6), 842–861. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392113480371>
- Bennett, C. (2008). *Relocation: The impact of internal relocation on women asylum seekers*. Asylum Aid.
- Bentley, G. R. (2020). Don't blame the BAME: Ethnic and structural inequalities in susceptibilities to COVID-19. *American Journal of Human Biology*, 32(e23478), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajhb.23478>
- Berer, M. (2015). The history and role of the criminal law in anti-FGM campaigns: Is the criminal law what is needed, at least in countries like Great Britain? *Reproductive Health Matters*, 23(46), 145–157. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rhm.2015.10.001>
- Berg, R. C., & Denison, E. (2013). A Tradition in Transition: Factors Perpetuating and Hindering the Continuance of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) Summarized in a Systematic Review. *Health Care for Women International*, 34(10), 837–859. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07399332.2012.721417>
- Berggren, V., Bergström, S., & Edberg, A.-K. (2006). Being Different and Vulnerable: Experiences of Immigrant African Women Who Have Been Circumcised and Sought Maternity Care in Sweden. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 17(1), 50–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659605281981>
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46(1), 5–68. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>
- Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(6), 697–712. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.IJINTREL.2005.07.013>
- Bhanbhro, S., Chavez, A., & Lusambili, A. (2016). Honour based violence as a global public health problem: a critical review of literature. *International Journal of Human Rights in*

*Healthcare*, 9(3), 198–215. <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/11838/>

- Bhatia, M. (2020). The Permission to be Cruel : Street - Level Bureaucrats and Harms Against People Seeking Asylum. *Critical Criminology*, 28(2), 277–292. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-020-09515-3>
- Bhatia, M., & Burnett, J. (2019). Torture and the UK’s ‘War on Asylum’: Medical Power and the Culture of Disbelief. In L. Zagato (Ed.), *Tortura e migrazioni / Torture and Migration*. Venice Ca’ Foscari Editions.
- Bhatia, S., & Ram, A. (2001). Rethinking “Acculturation” in Relation to Diasporic Cultures and Postcolonial Identities. *Human Development*, 44, 1–18.
- Bhatia, S., & Ram, A. (2009). Theorizing identity in transnational and diaspora cultures: A critical approach to acculturation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33, 140–149. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.12.009>
- Bhavnani, K. (1993). Tracing the contours: Feminist Research and Feminist Objectivity. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 16(2), 95–104.
- Bloch, A., Galvin, T., & Harrell-Bond, B. (2000). Refugee Women in Europe: Some Aspects of the Legal and Policy Dimensions. *International Migration*, 38(2), 169–189.
- Bloch, Alice, & Schuster, L. (2002). Asylum and welfare: contemporary debates. *Critical Social Policy*, 22(3), 393–414.
- Bloemraad, I., Korteweg, A., & Yurdakul, G. (2008). Citizenship and Immigration: Multiculturalism, Assimilation, and Challenges to the Nation-State. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34, 153–179. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134608>
- Boddy, J. (1989a). Part 1: The Human World. In *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Boddy, J. (1998). Violence Embodied? Circumcision, Gender Politics, and Cultural Aesthetics. In R. E. Dobash & R. Dobash (Eds.), *Rethinking Violence against Women* (pp. 77–110). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452243306.n4>
- Boffley, D. (2015, January 17). *Theresa May’s new FGM reporting rules ‘will stop families seeking help’*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/17/theresa-may-fgm-rules-doctors-stop-victims-seeking-help>



- Bögner, D., Herlihy, J., & Brewin, C. R. (2007). Impact of sexual violence on disclosure during Home Office interviews. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, *191*(July), 75–81. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.106.030262>
- Boonzaier, F. A., & Van Schalkwyk, S. (2010). Intimate Partner Violence Narrative Possibilities: Poor Women of Color and the Complexities of Intimate Partner Violence. *Violence Against Women*, *17*(1), 267–286. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801210397796>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brison, S. (2002). *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*. Princeton University Press.
- Brison, S. J. (2002). Violence and the Remaking of a Self. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *48*(19).
- Broussard, P. A. (2008). Female Genital Mutilation: Exploring Strategies for Ending Ritualised Torture: Shaming, Blaming, and Utilising the Convention against Torture. *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy*, *15*(19), 19–47.
- Brubaker, R. (2001). The return of assimilation? Changing perspectives on immigration and its sequels in France, Germany and the United States. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *24*(4), 531–548. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870120049770>
- Brubaker, R. (2005). The “diaspora” diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *28*(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000289997>
- Bruner, E. M. (1988). *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society*. Prospect Heights. Waveland Press.
- Bullock, K., & Jafri, G. (2000). Media (mis) representations: Muslim women in the Canadian nation. *Canadian Woman Studies*, *20*(2), 35–40. <http://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/cws/article/download/7607/6738>
- Burman, E., Smailes, S. L., & Chantler, K. (2004). ‘Culture’ as a barrier to service provision and delivery: domestic violence services for minoritized women. *Critical Social Policy*,

24(3), 332–357.

- Burman, M. J., Batchelor, S. A., & Brown, J. A. (2001). Researching girls and violence: Facing the Dilemmas of Fieldwork. *British Journal of Criminology*, 41, 443–359.
- Burrell, K., & Schweyher, M. (2019). Conditional citizens and hostile environments: Polish migrants in pre-Brexit Britain. *Geoforum*, 106, 193–201.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.08.014>
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.
- Cameron, D. (2015, July). *Extremism: PM Speech*. UK Government.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/extremism-pm-speech>
- Canning, V. (2014). Women, Asylum and Harms of Detention. *Criminal Justice Matters*, 98(1), 10–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09627251.2014.984535>
- Canning, V. (2017a). *Gendered Harm and Structural Violence in the British Asylum System*. Routledge.
- Canning, V. (2017b). The Multiple Forms of Violence in the Asylum System. In V. Cooper & D. Whyte (Eds.), *The Violence of Austerity*. (pp. 67–74). Pluto Press.
- Canning, V. (2019). Corrosive Control: State-Corporate and Gendered Harm in Bordered Britain. *Critical Criminology: An International Journal*, 28, 259–275.
- Caplan, P. (1988a). Engendering Knowledge: The Politics of Ethnography, Part 1. *Anthropology Today*, 4(5), 8–12.
- Caplan, P. (1988b). Engendering Knowledge: The Politics of Ethnography, Part 2. *Anthropology Today*, 4(6), 14–17.
- Carastathis, A. (2014). The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory. *Philosophy Compass*, 9(10), 304–314. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12129>
- Carby, H. V. (1982). White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood. In Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Ed.), *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in Seventies Britain* (pp. 110–128). Hutchinson.
- Castles, S., Moore, F., Korac, M., Vasta, E., & Vertovec, S. (2002). *Integration: Mapping the Field*. Home Office Online Report.

- Chalmers, B., & Omer-Hashi, K. (2002). What Somali women say about giving birth in Canada. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 20(4), 267–282.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0264683021000033183>
- Champenois, J. (2010). “The Power to Narrate”: Film Festivals, a Platform for Transnational Feminism? In *International Cultural Policies and Power* (pp. 194–202). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Chantler, K. (2012). Recognition of and Intervention in Forced Marriage as a Form of Violence and Abuse. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 13(3), 176–183.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838012448121>
- Chantler, K., Gangoli, G., & Hester, M. (2009). Protecting Victims of Forced Marriage: Is Age a Protective Factor? *Critical Social Policy*, 29, 587–612.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-009-9132-7>
- Chantler, K., & McCarry, M. (2020). Forced Marriage, Coercive Control and Conducive Contexts: The Experiences of Women in Scotland. *Violence Against Women*, 26(1), 89–109.
- Charrad, M. M. (2010). Women’s agency across cultures: Conceptualizing strengths and boundaries. *Women’s Studies International Forum*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2010.09.004>
- Chase, C. (2006). Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism. In S. Stryker & S. Whittle (Eds.), *The Transgender Studies Reader* (pp. 300–315). Routledge.
- Chaudhuri, S., Morash, M., & Yingling, J. (2014). Marriage Migration, Patriarchal Bargains, and Wife Abuse: A Study of South Asian Women. *Violence Against Women*, 20(2), 141–161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801214521326>
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K., & Mccall, L. (2013). Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis. *Signs*, 38(4), 785–810. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669608>
- Chowdhury, E. H. (2009). Locating Global Feminisms Elsewhere Braiding US Women of Color and Transnational Feminisms. *Cultural Dynamics*, 21(1), 51–78.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0921374008100407>
- Chowdhury, E. H. (2014). Rethinking Patriarchy, Culture and Masculinity: Transnational

- Narratives of Gender Violence and Human Rights Advocacy. *Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World*, 12(1), 79–100.
- Chu, T., & Akinsulure-Smith, A. M. (2017). Health Outcomes and Attitudes Toward Female Genital Cutting in a Community-Based Sample of West African Immigrant Women from High-Prevalence Countries in New York City. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 25(1), 63–83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2015.1081663>
- Coffman, J. E. (2007). Producing FGM in U.S. Courts: Political Asylum in the Post-Kasinga Era. *Africa Today*, 53(4), 59–84.
- Cohen, J. (2001). Questions of Credibility: Omissions, Discrepancies and Errors of Recall in the Testimony of Asylum Seekers. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 13(3), 293–309. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/13.3.293>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). Critical educational research. In *Research Methods in Education* (7th ed., pp. 31–47). Routledge.
- Cohen, S. (1972). *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. MacGibbon and Kee.
- Collier, M. (2001). Approaches to Analysis in Visual Anthropology. In T. van Leeuwen & C. Jewitt (Eds.), *Handbook of Visual Analysis*. Sage Publications.
- Collins, P. H. (1997). Comment on Hekman’s “Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited” Where’s the Power? *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 22(2), 375–381.
- Collins, P. H. (2017). On violence, intersectionality and transversal politics. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(9), 1460–1473. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1317827>
- Collins, P. H. (2019). *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Duke University Press.
- Coloma, R. S. (2012). White gazes, brown breasts: Imperial feminism and disciplining desires and bodies in colonial encounters. *Paedagogica Historica*, 48(2), 243–261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2010.547511>
- Combahee River Collective. (1986). *The Combahee River Collective Statement: Black Feminist Organizing In The Seventies And Eighties*. Kitchen Table.
- Connell, J., Mulvey, G., Brady, J., & Christie, G. (2010). “One Day We Will Be Reunited”

- Experiences of Refugee Family Reunion in the UK*. Scottish Refugee Council.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender & Society*, 19(829). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>
- Connelly, E., Murray, N., Baillot, H., & Howard, N. (2018). Missing from the debate? A qualitative study exploring the role of communities within interventions to address female genital mutilation in Europe. *BMJ Open*, 8, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2017-021430>
- Connolly, P. (2018). *Female Genital Cutting in the United Kingdom: A feminist phenomenological study of perceptions and lived experiences*. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). De Montfort University.
- Cortvriend, A. (2020). View of Coping with Vulnerability: The Limbo Created by the UK Asylum System. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 9(3), 61–74.
- Council of Europe. (1997). *Measurement and indicators of integration*. Council of Europe Publishing. [https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/migration/archives/documentation/Series\\_Community\\_Relations/Measurement\\_indicators\\_integration\\_en.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/migration/archives/documentation/Series_Community_Relations/Measurement_indicators_integration_en.pdf)
- Council on Foreign Relations. (2018). *Women's Workplace Equality Index: Leveling the Playing Field*. <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/legal-barriers/>
- Cowburn, M., Gill, A. K., & Harrison, K. (2015). Speaking about sexual abuse in British South Asian communities: offenders, victims and the challenges of shame and reintegration. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 21(1), 4–15.
- Coyne, C. J., & Mathers, R. L. (2014). The Identity Economics of Female Genital Mutilation. *The Journal of Developing Areas*, 48(2), 137–152. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jda.2014.0036>
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139–167.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>

- Crenshaw, K. W. (2016). *On intersectionality. Keynote speech at the Women of the World Festival*. <https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/blog/kimberle-crenshaw-wow-2016-keynote>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications Inc.
- Crotty, P. M. (2009). Family Law in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 30(4), 341–356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15544770903266566>
- Crow, G., Wiles, R., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2006). Research Ethics and Data Quality: The Implications of Informed Consent. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 9(2), 83–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570600595231>
- Daly, M. (1973). *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Beacon Press.
- Daly, M. (1978). *Gyn/ecology: the Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Beacon Press.
- Dankoski, M. E. (2000). What Makes Research Feminist? *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 12(1), 3–19. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J086v12n01\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1300/J086v12n01_02)
- Darby, R., & Svoboda, J. S. (2007). A Rose by Any Other Name? Rethinking the Similarities and Differences between Male and Female Genital Cutting. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 21(3), 301–323. <https://doi.org/10.1525/maq.2007.21.3.301>
- Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist Theory*, 9(1), 67–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700108086364>
- De Haas, H., & Fokkema, T. (2011). The effects of integration and transnational ties on international return migration intentions. *Demographic Research*, 25, 755–782. <https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2011.25.24>
- Delaet, D. L. (2009). Framing Male Circumcision as a Human Rights Issue? Contributions to the Debate Over the Universality of Human Rights. *Journal of Human Rights*, 8, 405–426. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754830903324795>
- Dempsey, L., Dowling, M., Larkin, P., & Murphy, K. (2016). Sensitive Interviewing in

- Qualitative Research. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 39, 480–490.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.21743>
- Denzin, N. K. (1997). *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*. Thousand. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Devault, M. L. (1996). Talking Back to Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 29–50.  
<http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.29>
- DeVault, M. L. (1996). Talking back to sociology: Distinctive Contributions of Feminist Methodology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 29–50.  
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.29>
- Diabate, I., & Mesple-Soms, S. (2017). *Female Genital Mutilation And Migration In Mali. Do Migrants Transfer Social Norms?* <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01617540/document>
- Donnelly, D. A., Cook, K. J., Van Ausdale, D., & Foley, L. (2005). White Privilege, Color Blindness, and Services to Battered Women. *Violence Against Women*, 11(6), 6–37.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801204271431>
- Doucet, A., & Mauthner, N. S. (2006). Feminist methodologies and epistemology. In C. D. Bryant & D. L. Peck (Eds.), *21st Century Sociology* (1st ed.). SAGE Publications Inc.
- Duncombe, J., & Jessop, J. (2012). “Doing rapport” and the ethics of “faking friendship.” In T. Miller, M. Birch, M. Mauthner, & J. Jessop (Eds.), *Ethics in Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Duncombe, S. (1997). *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*. Microcosm Publishing.
- Dustin, D., & Davies, L. (2007). Female genital cutting and children’s rights: Implications for social work practice. *Child Care in Practice*, 13(1), 3–16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13575270601103366>
- Dustin, M. (2010). Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in the UK: Challenging the Inconsistencies. *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 17(1), 7–23.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506809350857>
- Dustin, M. (2016). Culture or masculinity ? Understanding gender-based violence in the UK.

- Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 24(1), 51–62.  
<https://doi.org/10.1332/175982716X14525979706964>
- Dustin, M., & Phillips, A. (2008). Whose Agenda is it? Abuses of Women and Abuses of “Culture” in Britain. *Ethnicities*, 8(3), 405–424.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796808092451>
- Dyer, C. (2014). First UK prosecution for female genital mutilation raises concerns among doctors. *BMJ*, 348. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.g2424>
- Dyer, C. (2019). FGM: Mother is first person in UK to be convicted of female genital mutilation. *BMJ*, 364. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.l546>
- Earthy, S., & Cronin, A. (2008). Narrative Analysis. In N. Gilbert (Ed.), *Researching Social Life* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Eastmond, M. (2007). Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(2), 248–264.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fem007>
- Easton, P., Monkman, K., & Miles, R. (2003). Social policy from the bottom up: Abandoning FGC in sub-Saharan Africa. *Development in Practice*, 135, 445–458.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0961452032000125839>
- Edwards, R. (1990). Connecting method and epistemology: A White Woman Interviewing Black Women. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 13(5), 477–490.
- Ellis, H. B., Kia-Keating, M., Yusuf, A. S., Lincoln, A., & Nur, A. (2007). Ethical Research in Refugee Communities and the Use of Community Participatory Methods. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 44(3), 459–481. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461507081642>
- Emejulu, A. (2019). *To exist is to resist: Black feminism in Europe*. Pluto Press.
- End FGM. (2019). *FGM in Europe*. <https://www.endfgm.eu/female-genital-mutilation/fgm-in-europe/>
- Enosh, G. (2005). The Interactive Construction of Narrative Styles in Sensitive Interviews: The Case of Domestic Violence Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, X(X), 1–30.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405275054>
- Esho, T., Van Wolputte, S., & Enzlin, P. (2011). The socio-cultural-symbolic nexus in the



perpetuation of female genital cutting: a critical review of existing discourses. *Africa Focus*, 24(2), 52–69.

Esposito, F. (2021, January 1). *International Women's Day 2021: The Gendered Harms of Detention: Celebrating the IWD by Supporting Anti-Detention Struggles*. University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.1086/699344>

Essén, B. (2020). One Genital, Two Judgments: Why do “expert witnesses” draw different conclusions in suspected cases of illegal cutting of girls’ genitals? In S. Johnsdotter (Ed.), *Female Genital Cutting: The Global North and South* (pp. 259–288). Malmö University, Centre for Sexology and Sexuality Studies.

Essén, B., & Mosselmans, L. (2020). How to ensure policies and interventions rely on strong supporting facts to improve women’s health: the case of female genital cutting, using Rosling’s Factfulness approach. *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aogs.14059>

European Commission. (2017). *Questions and Answers about Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)*. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO\\_17\\_215](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_17_215)

European Institute for Gender Equality. (2015). *Clear Guidelines on whether FGM Justifies Asylum*. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/good-practices/united-kingdom/clear-guidelines-whether-fgm-justifies-asylum>

Fabos, A. H. (2001). Embodying Transition: FGC, Displacement, and Gender-making for Sudanese in Cairo. *Feminist Review*, 69, 90–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141778011007013>

Falcón, S. M. (2016). Transnational Feminism as a Paradigm for Decolonizing the Practice of Research: Identifying Feminist Principles and Methodology Criteria for US-Based Scholars. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 37(1), 174–194. <https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.37.1.0174>

Falcón, S. M., & Nash, J. . (2015). Shifting analytics and linking theories: A conversation about the “meaning-making” of intersectionality and transnational feminism. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 50, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.02.010>

Farina, P., & Ortensi, L. E. (2014). Mother to daughter transmission of female genital cutting

- in Egypt, Burkina Faso and Senegal. *African Population Studies*, 28(2), 1119–1131. <https://doi.org/10.11564/28-0-561>
- Favell, A. (2010). Integration and nations: the nation-state and research on immigrants in Western Europe. In M. Martiniello & J. Rath (Eds.), *Selected Studies in International Migration and Immigrant Incorporation* (pp. 371–404). Amsterdam University Press.
- Fawcett, B., & Hearn, J. (2004). Researching others: epistemology, experience, standpoints and participation. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 7(3), 201–218. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570210163989>
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, c31*.  
<https://doi.org/https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/31/contents>
- Finch, E. (2001). Issues of Confidentiality in Research into Criminal Activity: The Legal and Ethical Dilemma. *Mountbatten Journal of Legal Studies*, 5(1), 34–50.
- Fonow, M. M., & Cook, J. A. (2005). Feminist Methodology: New Applications in the Academy and Public Policy. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(4), 2211–2236. <https://doi.org/10.1086/428417>
- Fontes, L. A. (1998). Ethics in Family Violence Research: Cross-Cultural Issues. *Family Relations*, 47(1), 53–61.
- Ford, C. M., Darlow, K., Massie, A., & Gorman, D. (2018). Using electronic maternity records to estimate female genital mutilation in Lothian from 2010 to 2013. *The European Journal of Public Health*, 28(4), 661–663. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cky045>
- Foster-Fishman, P., Nowell, B., Deacon, Z., Nievar, M. A., & McCann, P. (2005). Using Methods That Matter: The Impact of Reflection, Dialogue, and Voice. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(3/4), 275–291. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-005-8626-y>
- Franz, B. (2003). Bosnian Refugee Women in (Re)Settlement: Gender Relations and Social Mobility. *Source: Feminist Review*, 73, 86–103.
- Freedman, J. (2008a). Women’s Right to Asylum: Protecting the Rights of Female Asylum Seekers in Europe? *Human Rights Review*, 9, 413–433. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-008-0059-1>

- Freedman, J. (2008b). Women Seeking Asylum: the Politics of Gender in the Asylum Determination in France. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 10(2), 154–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740801957521>
- Freedman, J. (2010). Mainstreaming gender in refugee protection. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 23(4), 589–607. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2010.523820>
- Freedman, J., & Jamal, B. (2008). *Violence against Migrant and Refugee Women in the Euromed region: Case Studies: France: Italy, Egypt & Morocco*. Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network.
- Freedom from Torture. (2011). *Body of Evidence: Treatment of Medico-Legal Reports for Survivors of Torture in the UK Asylum Tribunal*.
- Frisby, W., Maguire, P., & Reid, C. (2009). The “F” word has everything to do with it: How feminist theories inform action research . *Action Research*, 7(1), 13–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750308099595>
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167–191. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177%2F002234336900600301>
- Gangoli, G., Bates, L., & Hester, M. (2020). What does justice mean to black and minority ethnic (BME) victims/survivors of gender-based violence? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(15), 3119–3135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1650010>
- Gangoli, G., Gill, A. K., Mulvihill, N., & Hester, M. (2018). Perception and barriers: reporting female genital mutilation. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 10(4). <https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-09-2017-0323>
- Gangoli, G., & McCarry, M. (2008). Criminalising forced marriage: Geetanjali Gangoli and Melanie McCarry analyse criminalisation as a strategy to combat forced marriage. *Criminal Justice Matters*, 74(1), 44–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09627250802476874>
- Gangoli, G., & Rew, M. (2011). Mothers-in-law against daughters-in-law: Domestic violence and legal discourses around mother-in-law violence against daughters-in-law in India. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 34(5), 420–429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2011.06.006>
- Gedalof, I. (2007). Unhomely Homes: Women, Family and Belonging in UK Discourses of Migration and Asylum. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33(1), 77–94.

- Gele, A. A., Johansen, E. B., & Sundby, J. (2012). When Female Circumcision Comes to the West: Attitudes toward the Practice among Somali Immigrants in Oslo. *BMC Public Health*, *12*(697), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-12-697>
- Gele, A. A., Kumar, B., Hjelde, K. H., & Sundby, J. (2012). Attitudes toward female circumcision among somali immigrants in Oslo: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Women's Health*, *4*(1), 7–17. <https://doi.org/10.2147/IJWH.S27577>
- Gele, A. A., Sagbakken, M., & Kumar, B. (2015). Is female circumcision evolving or dissolving in Norway? A qualitative study on attitudes toward the practice among young Somalis in the Oslo area. *International Journal of Women's Health*, *7*, 933–943. <https://doi.org/10.2147/IJWH.S93217>
- Gerhard, J. (2000). Revisiting “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm”: The Female Orgasm in American Sexual Thought and Second Wave Feminism. *Feminist Studies*, *26*(2), 449–476.
- Ghorashi, H. (2005). Agents of Change or Passive Victims: The Impact of Welfare States (the Case of the Netherlands) on Refugees. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *18*(2), 181–198. <https://doi.org/10.1093/refuge/fei020>
- Gibson, S., Benson, O., & Brand, S. L. (2012). Talking about suicide: Confidentiality and anonymity in qualitative research. *Nursing Ethics*, *20*(1), 18–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969733012452684>
- Gill, A. K. (2006). Patriarchal Violence in the Name of “Honour.” *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, *1*(1), 1–12.
- Gill, A. K. (2014). Introduction: ‘Honour’ and ‘Honour’-Based Violence: Challenging Common Assumptions. In A. K. Gill, C. Strange, & K. Roberts (Eds.), *“Honour” Killing & Violence: Theory, Policy and Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137289568>
- Gill, A. K., & Anitha, S. (2009). The illusion of protection? An analysis of forced marriage legislation and policy in the UK. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, *31*(3), 257–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09649060903354589>
- Gill, A. K., Cox, P., & Weir, R. (2018). Shaping Priority Services for UK Victims of Honour-Based Violence/Abuse, Forced Marriage, and Female Genital Mutilation. *The Howard*

- Journal of Crime and Justice*, 57(4), 576–595. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hojo.12287>
- Gill, A. K., & Engeland, A. V. (2014). Criminalization or ‘multiculturalism without culture’? Comparing British and French approaches to tackling forced marriage. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 36(3), 241–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09649069.2014.933587>
- Gillespie, D., & Melching, M. (2010). The Transformative Power of Democracy and Human Rights in Nonformal Education: The Case of Tostan. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 60(5), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713610363017>
- Glen, V., & Lindsay, K. (2014). *The Extent and Impact of Asylum Accommodation Problems in Scotland*. Scottish Refugee Council.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Penguin.
- Gordon, J. A. (2012). Sexual Assault Support Zines as a Pedagogy of Hope: An exploration of zines as a method of integrating community voices into the research process. *UCLA Thinking Gender Papers*. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3j65b7v9>
- Grant, H. (2019, September 1). *Home Office planning to end family reunion for children after Brexit*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/sep/01/home-office-planning-to-end-family-reunion-for-children-after-brexit>
- Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a Conceptual Framework for Mixed-Method Evaluation Designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11(3), 255–274. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737011003255>
- Grewal, I., & Kaplan, C. (1994). *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Griffiths, M. (2012). ‘Vile liars and truth distorters’; Truth, trust and the asylum system. *Anthropology Today*, 28(5), 8–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8322.2012.00896.x>
- Grosfoguel, R., Oso, L., & Christou, A. (2015). “Racism”, intersectionality and migration studies: framing some theoretical reflections. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 22(6), 635–652. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2014.950974>
- Grove, N. J., & Zwi, A. B. (2006). Our health and theirs: Forced migration, othering, and

- public health. *Social Science and Medicine*, 62(8), 1931–1942.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.08.061>
- Gruenbaum, E. (1982). The Movement against Clitoridectomy and Infibulation in Sudan: Public Health Policy and the Women's Movement. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 13(2), 4–12. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1525/maq.1982.13.2.02a00020>
- Gruenbaum, E. (1996). The Cultural Debate over Female Circumcision: The Sudanese are Arguing This One out for Themselves. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 10(4), 455–475.
- Gruenbaum, E. (2000). Is “Female Circumcision” a Maladaptive Cultural Pattern? In B. Shell-Duncan & Y. Hernlund (Eds.), *Female “Circumcision” in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change* (pp. 41–54). Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
- Gruenbaum, E. (2001). *The Female Circumcision Controversy: an Anthropological Perspective*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Gruenbaum, E. (2020). Tensions in Motion: Female Genital Cutting in the Global North and South, Then and Now. In S. Johnsdotter (Ed.), *Female Genital Cutting: The Global North and South* (pp. 23–58). Malmö University, Centre for Sexology and Sexuality Studies.
- Grzymala-Kazłowska, A., & Phillimore, J. (2018). Introduction: Rethinking integration. New perspectives on adaptation and settlement in the era of super-diversity. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(2), 179–196.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341706>
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). SAGE Publications Inc.
- Guest, C. (2016). Cultivating Reflexive Research Practice When Using Participants' Photographs as Research Data. In D. Warr, M. Guillemin, S. Cox, & J. Waycott (Eds.), *Ethics and Visual Research Methods* (pp. 75–87). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Guillemin, M., & Heggen, K. (2009). Rapport and respect: negotiating ethical relations between researcher and participant. *Med Health Care Philos*, 12(3), 291–299.
- Guiné, A., & Moreno Fuentes, F. J. (2007). Engendering Redistribution, Recognition, and

- Representation: The Case of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the United Kingdom and France. *Politics and Society*, 35(3), 477–519.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329207304315>
- Guma, T., & Dafydd Jones, R. (2018). “Where are we going to go now?” European Union migrants’ experiences of hostility, anxiety, and (non-)belonging during Brexit. *Population, Space and Place*, 25(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2198>
- Gunning, I. R. (1992). Traveling and Multicultural Feminism: the case of female genital surgeries. *Columbia Humans Rights Law Review*, 23, 189–248.
- Gunning, I. R. (1995). Femal Genital Surgeries and Multicultural Feminism: The Ties That Bind; The Differences That Distance. *Third World Legal Studies*, 13(1), 2.
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Lawrence & Wishart.
- Hall, S. (1997). The Work of Representation. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practice* (pp. 1–1). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599.
- Harding, S. (1986). *The Science Question in Feminism*. Cornell University Press.
- Harding, S. (1993). Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is “Strong Objectivity”? In L. Alcoff & E. Potter (Eds.), *Feminist Epistemologies* (pp. 49–82). Routledge.
- Harding, S. (1996). Borderlands Epistemologies. In A. Ross (Ed.), *Science wars*. (pp. 331–340). Duke University Press.
- Harding, S. (2008). *Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities*. Duke University Press.
- Harris-Short, S. (2003). International Human Rights Law: Imperialist, Inept and Ineffective? Cultural Relativism and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 25(1), 130–181. <https://about.jstor.org/terms>
- Haslanger, S. (1995). Ontology and Social Construction. *Philosophical Topics*, 23(2), 94–124.
- Hassan, L. (2000). Deterrence Measures and the Preservation of Asylum in the United

- Kingdom and United States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13(2), 184–204.
- Hastings, A., Bailey, N., Bramley, G., Gannon, M., & Watkins, D. (2015). *The Cost of the Cuts: The Impact on Local Government and Poorer Communities*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Hayford, S. R. (2005). Conformity and Change: Community Effects on Female Genital Cutting in Kenya. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 46, 121–140.
- Hedley, R., & Dorkenoo, E. (1992). *Child protection and female genital mutilation*. Forward.
- Heinonen, P. (2001). *Report on Early, Forced Marriages, Abduction (efma) and Their Links to Custom/Tradition, FGM, Poverty and HIV/Aids, A Womankind Worldwide Background Document*.
- Hernlund, Y. (2000). Cutting Without Ritual and Ritual Without Cutting: Felame “Circumcision” and the Re-ritualisation of Initiation in the Gambia. In B. Shell-Duncan & Y. Hernlund (Eds.), *Female “Circumcision” in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change* (pp. 235–252). Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Hesse-Biber, S. (2010). Qualitative Approaches to Mixed Methods Practice. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(6), 455–468. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410364611>
- Hesse-Biber, S. (2011). *Handbook of Feminist Research*. SAGE Publications Inc.
- Hesse-Biber, S. (2012). Feminist Approaches to Triangulation: Uncovering Subjugated Knowledge and Fostering Social Change in Mixed Methods Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 6(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689812437184>
- Hester, M. (2011). Three Planet Model: Towards an Understanding of Contradictions in Approaches to Women and Children’s Safety in Contexts of Domestic Violence. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 41(5), 837–853.
- Holdaway, M. (2004). *A Student’s Guide on What a Zine Is and Tips on How to Make One*. [http://grrrlzines.net/writing/student\\_zine\\_guide.pdf](http://grrrlzines.net/writing/student_zine_guide.pdf)
- Home Office. (2015). *Asylum Policy Instruction: Assessing credibility and refugee status. Version 9.0*. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/397778/ASSESSING\\_CREDIBILITY\\_AND\\_REFUGEE\\_STATUS\\_V9\\_0.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/397778/ASSESSING_CREDIBILITY_AND_REFUGEE_STATUS_V9_0.pdf)



f

Home Office. (2016a). *Home Secretary hosts forum to end FGM*. Home Office.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-hosts-forum-to-end-fgm>

Home Office. (2016b). *Asylum Policy Instruction Settlement Protection*.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/497326/settlement\\_protection\\_v4.0\\_EXT.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/497326/settlement_protection_v4.0_EXT.pdf)

Home Office. (2017). *Country Policy and Information Note Malawi: Background information, including actors of protection, and internal relocation*.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/927960/Malawi\\_-\\_background\\_note\\_-\\_CPIN\\_-\\_v2.0\\_\\_GOV.UK\\_\\_2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/927960/Malawi_-_background_note_-_CPIN_-_v2.0__GOV.UK__2.pdf)

Home Office. (2019). *Country Policy and Information Note, Nigeria: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)*.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/825243/Nigeria\\_-\\_FGM\\_-\\_CPIN\\_-\\_v2.0\\_\\_August\\_2019\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/825243/Nigeria_-_FGM_-_CPIN_-_v2.0__August_2019_.pdf)

Home Office. (2020). *Female genital mutilation: resource pack*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-resource-pack/female-genital-mutilation-resource-pack>

Hoodfar, H. (1992). The veil in their minds and on our heads: the persistence of colonial images of Muslim women. *Resources for Feminist Research*, 22(3/4), 5–18.

hooks, B. (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. South End Press.

hooks, B. (2009). *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*. Routledge.

Hosken, F. (1978). The Epidemiology of Female Genital Mutilation. *Tropical Doctor*, 8, 150–156.

Hosken, F. (1993). The Hosken Report: Genital and Sexual Mutilation of Females. *Women's International Network News: Lexington*.

Hudson, K. D. (2015). Borderlands as a Critical Feminist Perspective for Social Work Research. In S. Wahab, B. Anderson-Nathe, & C. Gringeri (Eds.), *Feminisms in Social Work Research: Promise and possibilities for justice-based Knowledge* (pp. 103–119). Routledge.

- Hull, A. G., Bell-Scott, P., & Smith, B. (1982). *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave*. The Feminist Press.
- Humphreys, C., & Absler, D. (2011). History repeating: child protection responses to domestic violence. *Child & Family Social Work, 16*(4), 464–473.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2011.00761.x>
- Hundle, A. K., Szeman, I., & Hoare, J. P. (2019). What is the transnational in transnational feminist research? *Feminist Review, 121*, 3–8.
- Hunnicut, G. (2009). Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence Against Women Resurrecting “Patriarchy” as a Theoretical Tool. *Violence Against Women, 15*, 553–573.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801208331246>
- Hunter, S. V. (2010). Analysing and representing narrative data: The long and winding road. *Current Narratives, 1*(2), 44–54.
- Hydén, L.-C., & Bülow, P. H. (2010). Who’s talking: drawing conclusions from focus groups-some methodological considerations. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 6*(4), 305–321. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570210124865>
- Hyndman, J. (2010). Introduction: the feminist politics of refugee migration. *Gender, Place & Culture, 17*(4), 453–459. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2010.485835>
- Hyndman, J., & Walton-Roberts, M. (2000). Interrogating borders: a transnational approach to refugee research in Vancouver. *Canadian Geographer, 44*(3), 244–258.
- Intemann, K. (2010). 25 Years of Feminist Empiricism and Standpoint Theory: Where Are We Now? *Hypathia, 25*(4), 778–796. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01138.x>
- International Organisation for Migration. (2009). *Supporting the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation in the Context of Migration*. Geneva.  
[https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/projects/documents/fgm\\_infosheet.pdf](https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/projects/documents/fgm_infosheet.pdf)
- Ipinyomi, F. I. (2015). Where the Rubber Hits the Road: The Limitations of the Universalism vs Cultural Relativism Debate Impacting FGM Control in Nigeria. *NIALS Journal of Law and Gender*.
- Isman, E., Ekéus, C., & Berggren, V. (2013). Perceptions and experiences of female genital

- mutilation after immigration to Sweden: An explorative study. *Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare*, 4(3), 93–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SRHC.2013.04.004>
- Jackson, P. (1991). The Cultural Politics of Masculinity: Towards a Social Geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 16(2), 199–213.
- James, S. M., & Robertson, C. C. (2002). Reimagining Transnational Sisterhood. In S. M. James & C. C. Robertson (Eds.), *Genital Cutting and Transnational Sisterhood* (pp. 5–16). University of Illinois Press.
- Javid, S. (2018). *Policy for progress: ending FGM and forced marriage*. The Home Secretary Speech at the International Conference on Ending FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) and Forced Marriage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/policy-for-progress-ending-fgm-and-forced-marriage>
- Jewkes, R. (2002). Intimate partner violence: causes and prevention. *The Lancet*, 359(9315), 1423–1429. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(02\)08357-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(02)08357-5)
- Jinnah, Z., & Lowe, L. (2015). Circumcising Circumcision: Renegotiating Beliefs and Practices among Somali Women in Johannesburg and Nairobi. *Medical Anthropology: Cross Cultural Studies in Health and Illness*, 34(4), 371–388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01459740.2015.1045140>
- Johansen, E., Bathija, H., & Khanna, J. (2008). Work of the World Health Organization on Female Genital Mutilation: Ongoing Research and Policy Discussions. *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration*, 3(2), 83–89.
- Johnsdotter, S. (2002). *Created by God: How Somalis in Swedish exile reassess the practice of female circumcision*. (Doctoral thesis). Lund University.
- Johnsdotter, S. (2003). Somali Women in Western Exile: Reassessing Female Circumcision in the Light of Islamic Teachings. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 23(2), 361–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360200032000139983>
- Johnsdotter, S. (2012). Projected Cultural Histories of the Cutting of Female Genitalia: A Poor Reflection as in a Mirror. *History and Anthropology*, 23(1), 91–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2012.649270>
- Johnsdotter, S. (2013). Discourses on sexual pleasure after genital modifications: the fallacy of genital determinism (a response to J. Steven Svoboda). *Global Discourse*, 3(2), 256–

- Johnsdotter, S. (2018a). Girls and boys as Victims: asymmetries and dynamics in European public discourses on genital modifications in children. In M. Fusaschi & G. Cavatorta (Eds.), *FGM/C: From Medicine to Critical Anthropology*. Meti Edizioni.
- Johnsdotter, S. (2018b). The Impact of Migration on Attitudes to Female Genital Cutting and Experiences of Sexual Dysfunction Among Migrant Women with FGC. *Current Sexual Health Reports*, 10, 18–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11930-018-0139-4>
- Johnsdotter, S. (2019). Meaning well while doing harm: Compulsory genital examinations in Swedish African girls. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters*, 27(2), 87–99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26410397.2019.1586817>
- Johnsdotter, S. (2020). Introduction. In S. Johnsdotter (Ed.), *Female Genital Cutting: The Global North and South* (pp. 7–22). Malmö University, Centre for Sexology and Sexuality Studies.
- Johnsdotter, S., & Essén, B. (2010). Genitals and Ethnicity: the Politics of Genital Modifications. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 18(35), 29–37. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0968-8080\(10\)35495-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0968-8080(10)35495-4)
- Johnsdotter, S., & Essén, B. (2016). Cultural Change after Migration: Circumcision of Girls in Western Migrant Communities. *Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, 32, 15–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.BPOBGYN.2015.10.012>
- Johnsdotter, S., & Mestre i Mestre, R. M. (2017). ‘Female genital mutilation’ in Europe: Public discourse versus empirical evidence. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 51, 14–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcj.2017.04.005>
- Johnsdotter, S., Moussa, K., Carlbom, A., Aregai, R., & Essén, B. (2009). “Never My Daughters”: A Qualitative Study Regarding Attitude Change Toward Female Genital Cutting Among Ethiopian and Eritrean Families in Sweden. *Health Care for Women International*, 30(1–2), 114–133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07399330802523741>
- Johnson, B. (2014a). *The children taught at home about murder and bombings*. The Telegraph. [https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10671841/The-children-taught-at-home-about-murder-and-bombings.html?fbclid=IwAR3Uw9IzZTio8N5CQ1bE6zp8La3s78UEqoFI7wWim\\_naF5](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10671841/The-children-taught-at-home-about-murder-and-bombings.html?fbclid=IwAR3Uw9IzZTio8N5CQ1bE6zp8La3s78UEqoFI7wWim_naF5)

- Johnson, B. (2014b, March 2). *The children taught at home about murder and bombings*. Telegraph. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10671841/The-children-taught-at-home-about-murder-and-bombings.html>
- Johnson, C. E., Ali, S. A., & Shipp, M. P.-L. (2009). Building Community-Based Participatory Research Partnerships with a Somali Refugee Community. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 37(6 SUPPL. 1), 230–236. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2009.09.036>
- Johnson, M. C. (2000). Becoming a Muslim, Becoming a Person: Female “Circumcision”, Religious Identity, and Personhood on Guinea-Bissau. In B. Shell-Duncan & Y. Hernlund (Eds.), *Female “Circumcision” in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change* (pp. 215–233). Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Jordal, M., & Wahlberg, A. (2018). Challenges in providing quality care for women with female genital cutting in Sweden – A literature review. *Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare*, 17(June), 91–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.srhc.2018.07.002>
- Jubany, O. (2011). Constructing truths in a culture of disbelief: Understanding asylum screening from within. *International Sociology*, 26(74), 74–94. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580910380978>
- Julios, C. (2020). Safeguarding children and young people from honour-based violence. In J. Keeling & D. Goosey (Eds.), *Safeguarding Across the Life Span*. Sage Publications Ltd.
- Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender & Society*, 2(3), 274–290.
- Kanuha, V. (1996). Domestic violence, racism, and the battered women’s movement in the United States. In J. L. Edleson & Z. C. Eisikovits (Eds.), *Age series on violence against women, Vol. 3. Future interventions with battered women and their families* (pp. 34–50). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Kaplan-Marcusan, A., Del Rio, N. F., Moreno-Navarro, J., Castany-Fbregas, M. J., Nogueras, M. ., Muñoz-Ortiz, L., Monguí-Avila, E., & Torn-Monserrat, P. (2010). Female genital mutilation: Perceptions of healthcare professionals and the perspective of the migrant families. *BMC Public Health*, 10(1), 193. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-10-193>
- Kara, H. (2020). *Creative Research Methods: A practical guide*. Bristol University Press.

- Karlsen, S., Carver, N., Mogilnicka, M., & Pantazis, C. (2019). “Stigmatising” and “traumatising” approaches to FGM-safeguarding need urgent review. University of Bristol.
- Karnieli-Miller, O., Strier, R., & Pessach, L. (2009). Power Relations in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 19(2), 279–289.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732308329306>
- Katiuzhinsky A., & Okech D. (2014). Human rights, cultural practices, and state policies: Implications for global social work practice and policy. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 23, 80–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12002>
- Kea, P. J., & Roberts-Holmes, G. (2013). Producing victim identities: Female genital mutilation and the politics of asylum claims in the United Kingdom. *Identities*, 20(1), 96–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2012.758586>
- Kelly, L. (1987). The Continuum of Sexual Violence. In J. Hanmer & M. Maynard (Eds.), *Women, Violence and Social Control. Explorations in Sociology (British Sociological Association Conference Volume series)*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Kelly, L. (2003). The Wrong Debate: Reflections on Why Force is Not the Key Issue with Respect to Trafficking in Women for Sexual Exploitation. *Feminist Review*, 73, 139–144.
- Kelly, L. (2005). *Fertile Fields: Trafficking in Persons in Central Asia*. IOM International Organization for Migration.
- Kelly, L. (2007). A Conducive Context: Trafficking of Persons in Central Asia. In M. Lee (Ed.), *Human Trafficking*. Willan Publishing.
- Kelly, L. (2016). *The Conducive Context of Violence against Women and Girls*. Discover Society. <https://discoversociety.org/2016/03/01/theorising-violence-against-women-and-girls/>
- Kelly, L., Regan, L., & Burton, S. (1992). Defending the Indefensible? Quantitative methods and feminist research. In *Working out: New directions in women’s studies* (pp. 149–161). The Falmer Press.
- Kelly, L., & Westmarland, N. (2014). Time for a rethink – why the current government definition of domestic violence is a problem. *Trouble & Strife*.

<https://www.troubleandstrife.org/2014/04/time-for-a-rethink-why-the-current-government-definition-of-domestic-violence-is-a-problem/>

- Khaja, K., Barkdull, C., Augustine, M., & Cunningham, D. (2009). Female genital cutting: African women speak out. *International Social Work*, 52(5), 1–15.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872809342642>
- Khan, M. (2014). The Muslim Veiling: A Symbol of Oppression or a Tool of Liberation? *UMASA Journal*, 32.
- Khoja-Moolji, S. (2020). Death by benevolence: third world girls and the contemporary politics of humanitarianism. *Feminist Theory*, 21(1), 65–90.
- Kimani, S., Kabiru, C. W., Muteshi, J., & Guyo, J. (2020). Exploring barriers to seeking health care among Kenyan Somali women with female genital mutilation: A qualitative study. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 20(1), 1–12.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-020-0222-6>
- Kirkland, F. (2017, September 5). *Families left devastated by false claims of FGM in girls - BBC News*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41150621>
- Kirmayer, L. J., Rousseau, C., & Crepeau, F. (2004). Research ethics and the plight of refugees in detention. *Monash Bioethics Review*, 23(4), 85–92.
- Kitzinger, J. (1994). The Methodology of Focus Groups: the Importance of Interaction between Research Participants. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 16(1), 103–120.
- Korteweg, A. C. (2017). The failures of “immigrant integration”: The gendered racialized production of non-belonging. *Migration Studies*, 5(3), 428–444.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnx025>
- Koso-Thomas, O. (1987). *The Circumcision of Women: A Strategy for Eradication*. Zed Press.
- Kynsilehto, A., & Puumala, E. (2015). Persecution as Experience and Knowledge: The Ontological Dynamics of Asylum Interviews. *International Studies Perspectives*, 16(4), 446–462. <https://doi.org/10.1111/insp.12064>
- La Barbera, M. C. (2009). Revisiting the anti-Female Genital Mutilation Discourse. *Diritto & Questioni Pubbliche*, 9, 485–507.

- Landman, M. (2006). Getting quality in qualitative research: A short introduction to feminist methodology and methods. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 65, 429–433. <https://doi.org/10.1079/PNS2006518>
- Lane, S. D., & Rubinstein, R. A. (1996). Judging the other: Responding to traditional female genital surgeries. *The Hastings Center Report*, 26(3), 40.
- Lather, P. (1988). Feminist perspectives on empowering research methodologies. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 11(6), 569–581.
- Lavrakas, P. J. (2008). Key informant. In *Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods* (pp. 406–408). Sage Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963947>
- Lawson, T. (1999). Feminism, realism, and universalism. *Feminist Economics*, 5(2), 25–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135457099337932>
- Lee, R. M., & Renzetti, C. M. (1990). The Problems of Researching Sensitive Topics: An Overview and Introduction. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 33(5), 510–528.
- Lejeune, J., & Mackie, G. (2009). *Social Dynamics of Abandonment of Harmful Practices: A New look at the theory* (Innocenti Working Paper No. 2009-06; Special Series on Social Norms and Harmful Practices). <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/558-social-dynamics-of-abandonment-of-harmful-practices-a-new-look-at-the-theory.html>
- Leonard, L. (2000). Adopting Female “Circumcision” in Southern Chad: The Experience of Myabe. In B. Shell-Duncan & Y. Hernlund (Eds.), *Female “Circumcision” in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change* (pp. 167–192). Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Lépinard, E. (2011). Autonomy and the Crisis of the Feminist Subject: Revisiting Okin’s Dilemma. *Constellations*, 18(2), 205–221.
- Lever, H., Ottenheimer, D., Teysir, J., Singer, E., & Atkinson, H. G. (2018). Depression, Anxiety, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and a History of Pervasive Gender-Based Violence Among Women Asylum Seekers Who Have Undergone Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Retrospective Case Review. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 21(3), 483–489. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-018-0782-x>
- Lewis, H. (1995). Between Irua and Female Genital Mutilation: Feminist Human Rights Discourse and the Cultural Divide. *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 8(1), 1–55.



- Leye, E., Deblonde, J., García-Añón, J., Johnsdotter, S., Kwateng-Kluyitse, A., Weil-Curiel, L., & Temmerman, M. (2007). An analysis of the implementation of laws with regard to female genital mutilation in Europe. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 47(1), 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-007-9055-7>
- Liamputtong, P. (2011). Focus Group Methodology: Introduction and History. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Focus Group Methodology: Principles and Practice* (pp. 1–14). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957657>
- Libling, H., & Shah, S. (2001). Researching Sensitive Topics: Investigations of the Sexual Abuse of Women in Uganda and Girls in Tanzania. *Law, Social Justice and Global Development Journal*, 1(1).
- Licona, A. C. (2005). (B)orderlands’ Rhetorics and Representations: The Transformative Potential of Feminist Third-Space Scholarship and Zines. *NWSA Journal*, 17(2), 104–129.
- Licona, A. C. (2012). *Zines in Third Space: Radical Cooperation and Borderlands Rhetoric*. SUNY Press.
- Lien, I.-L., & Schultz, J.-H. (2013). Internalizing Knowledge and Changing Attitudes to Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation. *Obstetrics and Gynecology International*, 28(2), 194–211. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2013/467028>
- Lightfoot-Klein, H. (1989). *Prisoners of Ritual: an Odyssey into Female Genital Circumcision in Africa*. Haworth Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2007). Paradigms. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Lister, M., & Wells, L. (2001). Seeing Beyond Belief: Cultural Studies as an Approach to Analysing the Visual. In T. van Leeuwen & C. Jewitt (Eds.), *Handbook of Visual Analysis* (pp. 61–91). SAGE Publications Inc.
- Lloyd-Roberts, S. (2012, July 23). *Migrants from Europe bringing girls to tolerant Britain for genital mutilation*. The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/migrants-europe-bringing-girls-tolerant-britain-genital-mutilation-7965148.html>
- Longman, C., & Bradley, T. (2015). Interrogating the Concept of “Harmful Cultural Practices.” In C. Longman & T. Bradley (Eds.), *Interrogating Harmful Cultural*

*Practices: Gender, Culture and Coercion* (pp. 11–30). Routledge.

Longman, C., & Coene, G. (2015). Harmful cultural practices and minority women in Europe: From headscarf bans to forced marriages and honour related violence. In C. Longman & T. Bradley (Eds.), *Interrogating Harmful Cultural Practices: Gender, Culture and Coercion* (Issue January, pp. 51–66). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315589640>

Lorde, A. (1979). *An Open Letter to Mary Daly* .  
<https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/lordeopenlettertomarydaly.html>

Lorde, A. (1984). The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. (pp. 110–114). Crossing Press.

Lovata, T. R. (2008). Zines: Individual to Community. In G. J. Knowles & A. L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues* (pp. 323–336). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Lutz, K. F. (1999). Maintaining client safety and scientific integrity in research with battered women. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 31(1), 89–93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1547-5069.1999.tb00427.x>

Lykes, M. B., & Hershberg, R. M. (2012). Participatory Action Research and Feminisms: Social Inequalities and Transformative Praxis. In S. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *The Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Macfarlane, A., & Dorkenoo, E. (2014). *Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales: Updated statistical estimates of the numbers of affected women living in England and Wales and girls at risk*. City University London.

MacKenzie, C., McDowell, C., & Pittaway, E. (2007). Beyond 'Do No Harm': The Challenge of Constructing Ethical Relationships in Refugee Research. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(2), 299–319. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fem008>

Mackie, G. (1996). Ending Footbinding and Infibulation: A Convention Account. *Source: American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 999–1017.

Mahmood, S. (2006). Feminist Theory, Agency, and the Liberatory Subject: Some Reflections on the Islamic Revival in Egypt. *Temenos-Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion*, 42(1), 31–71.

- Malik, Y., Rowland, A., Gerry, F., & Phipps, F. M. (2018). Mandatory reporting of female genital mutilation in children in the UK. *British Journal of Midwifery*, 26(6), 377–386. <https://doi.org/10.12968/bjom.2018.26.6.377>
- Malloch, M. S., & Stanley, E. (2013). The detention of asylum seekers in the UK: Representing risk, managing the dangerous. *Punishment and Society*, 7(1), 53–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474505048133>
- Malmström. (2013). The production of sexual mutilation among Muslim women in Cairo. *Global Discourse*, 3(2), 306–321. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23269995.2013.804752>
- Mandara, M. U. (2000). Female Genital Cutting in Nigeria: Views of Nigerian Doctors on the Medicalization Debate. In B. Shell-Duncan & Y. Hernlund (Eds.), *Female “Circumcision” in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change* (pp. 95–108). Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
- Martin, D. A. (2005). Adelaide Abankwah, Fauziya Kasinga, and the Dilemmas of Political Asylum. In *Public Law and Legal Theory Working Paper Series* (No. 28). University of Virginia Law School.
- Martiniello, M. (2006). Towards a coherent approach to immigrant integration policy(ies) in the European Union. In R. Miles & D. Thränhardt (Eds.), *Migration and European Integration: The Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*. Pinter Publishers Ltd.
- Mason, R. (2015, January 14). *Nigel Farage criticises FGM and sharia courts in UK*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jan/14/nigel-farage-fgm-sharia-courts-interculturalism>
- Massey, D. (1994). A Global Sense of Place. In *Space, Place and Gender*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Mathison, S. (2011). Key Informants. In *Encyclopedia of Evaluation* (pp. 221–220). Sage Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412950558>
- Matope, N., Maruzani, N., Chauraya, E., & Bondai, B. (2013). Lobola and gender based violence: Perceptions of married adults in Gweru urban, Zimbabwe. *Journal of Education Research and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(11), 192–200.
- Mauthner, N. S., & Doucet, A. (2003). Analysis Reflexive Accounts and Accounts of Reflexivity in Qualitative Data. *Sociology*, 37(3), 413–431.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385030373002>

- May, T. (2014, July 22). *Home Secretary speech at Girl Summit on 2014*. UK Government. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/home-secretary-speech-at-girl-summit-2014>
- Maynard, M. (1994). Methods, Practice and Epistemology: The Debate about Feminism and Research. In M. Maynard & J. Purvis (Eds.), *Researching Women's Lives From A Feminist Perspective*. Routledge.
- McCarry, M. (2012). Who benefits? A critical reflection of children and young people's participation in sensitive research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15(1), 55–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2011.568196>
- Mcchesney, K. Y. (2015). Successful Approaches to Ending Female Genital Cutting. *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 42(1), 3–24.
- McCormack, T. (1981). Good Theory or Just Theory? Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Social Science. *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 4(1), 1–12.
- McKenna, R. (2019). *From Pillar to Post: Destitution among people refused asylum in Scotland*. Destitute Asylum Seeker Service.
- McKerl, M. (2007). Multiculturalism, Gender and Violence: Multiculturalism - is it bad for women? *Culture and Religion*, 8(2), 187–217. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610701424032>
- McKinnon, S. L. (2009). Citizenship and the Performance of Credibility: Audiencing Gender-based Asylum Seekers in U.S. Immigration Courts. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 29(3), 205–221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10462930903017182>
- McKinnon, S. L. (2016). Gender Violence as Global Phenomenon: Refugees, Genital Surgeries, and Neocolonial Projects of the United States. *Cultural Studies - Critical Methodologies*, 16(4), 414–426. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708616640002>
- Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies. (2015). *Factsheet: FGM and Migration*. <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/endFGM-factsheet-EN-online2.pdf>
- Meer, N., & Modood, T. (2014). Cosmopolitanism and integrationism: is British multiculturalism a “Zombie category”? *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*,

21(6), 658–674. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2013.875028>

- Meetoo, V., & Mirza, H. (2007). “There is nothing ‘honourable’ about honour killings”: Gender, violence and the limits of multiculturalism. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 30(3), 187–200.
- Merrick, R. (2020a, July 20). *Funding to stop female genital mutilation reduced by 76 per cent despite hundreds of new cases each month*. The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/funding-female-genital-mutilation-abuse-victims-uk-a9622916.html>
- Merrick, R. (2020b, July 26). *UK’s only centre for eradicating FGM faces closure after funding pulled by government*. The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/fgm-centre-closure-uk-government-pull-funding-a9636206.html>
- Merry, S. E. (2001). Women, Violence, and the Human Rights System. In M. Agosin (Ed.), *Women, Gender, and Human Rights: A Global Perspective* (pp. 83–97). Rutgers University Press.
- Merry, S. E. (2003). Human Rights Law and the Demonization of Culture (And Anthropology Along the Way). *Polar: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 26(1), 55–73. <https://doi.org/10.1525/pol.2003.26.1.55>
- Merry, S. E. (2006). *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice*. University of Chicago Press.
- Merry, S. E. (2009). *Gender violence: A cultural perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Mertens, D. (2003). Mixed methods and the politics of human research: The transformative-empowerment perspective. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research* (pp. 135–164). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Mertens, D. (2012). Transformative Mixed Methods: Addressing Inequities. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 20(10), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211433797>
- Mertens, D., & Hesse-Biber, S. (2012). Triangulation and Mixed Methods Research: Provocative Positions. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 6(2), 75–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689812437100>

- Mesplé-Somps, S. (2016). Migration and female genital mutilation. *IZA World of Labor*.  
<https://doi.org/10.15185/izawol.282>
- Mestre i Mestre, R., & Johnsdotter, S. (2019). Court cases, cultural expertise, and “female genital mutilation” in Europe. *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society*, 78, 95–113.
- Metso, M., & Le Feuvre, N. (2006). *Quantitative Methods for Analysing Gender, Ethnicity and Migration*. University of York.
- Mhoja, M., Azong, J., & Lawson, A. (2010). *Baseline Survey in Glasgow and Edinburgh on the Beliefs, Views and Experiences of FGC*. Dignity Alert and Research Forum.
- Middelburg, A., & Balta, A. (2016). Female genital mutilation/cutting as a ground for asylum in Europe. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 28(3), 416–452.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eew056>
- Mignolo, W. D. (2011). Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: on (de)coloniality, border thinking and epistemic disobedience. *Postcolonial Studies*, 14(3), 273–283.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2011.613105>
- Mignolo, W. D., & Tlostanova, M. V. (2006). Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(2), 205–221.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063333>
- Miller, T., Birch, M., Mauthner, M., & Jessop, J. (2012). Consenting to What? Issues of Access, Gate-Keeping and ‘Informed’ Consent. In T. Miller, M. Birch, M. Mauthner, & J. Jessop (Eds.), *Ethics in Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications Ltd.  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473913912>
- Mitchell, C. (2011). What’s Participation Got to Do with It? Visual Methodologies in “Girl-Method” to Address Gender-Based Violence in the Time of AIDS. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 1(1), 51–59. <https://doi.org/10.2304/gsch.2011.1.1.51>
- Moen, T. (2006). Reflections on the Narrative Research Approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(4), 56–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500405>
- Mohanty, C. T. (1984). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Boundary 2*, 12(3), 333. <https://doi.org/10.2307/302821>
- Mohanty, C. T. (1991). Cartographies of struggle: Third World women and the politics of

- feminism. In L. T. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo (Ed.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (pp. 1–47). Indiana University Press.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003a). Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism. In *Feminism Without Borders : Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke University Press.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003b). “Under Western Eyes” Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles. *Signs*, 28(2), 499–535. <https://doi.org/10.1086/342914>
- Mohanty, C. T. (2011). Imperial Democracies, Militarised Zones, Feminist Engagements. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 46(13), 76–84.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2013). Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique. *Signs*, 38(4), 967–991. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669576>
- Mohanty, C. T., Russo, A., & Torres, L. (1991). *Third World women and the politics of feminism*. Indiana University Press.
- Monteith, B. (2017, February 13). *Scotland has to wake up to reality of FGM abuse*. The Scotsman. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/brian-monteith-scotland-has-wake-reality-fgm-abuse-1456146>
- Montoya, C., & Agustín, L. R. (2013). The Othering of Domestic Violence: The EU and Cultural Framings of Violence against Women. *Social Politics*, 20(4), 534–557. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxt020>
- Moorhead, J. (2017, September 21). *Racism label should not deter British police from FGM fight, says officer*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/sep/21/fear-racism-label-deter-british-police-tackling-fgm-female-genital-mutilation>
- Morgan, D. (1984). *Sisterhood Is Global: The International Women’s Movement Anthology*. Anchor Press/Doubleday.
- Morison, L. A., Dirir, A., Elmi, S., Warsame, J., Dirir, S., & Morison, L. (2004). How Experiences and Attitudes Relating to Female Circumcision Vary According to Age on Arrival in Britain: A Study Among Young Somalis in London. *Ethnicity & Health*, 9(1), 75–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1355785042000202763>

- Morokvasic-Müller, M. (2014). Integration: Gendered and Racialized Constructions of Otherness. In F. Anthias & M. Pajnik (Eds.), *Contesting Integration, Engendering Migration: Theory and Practice* (pp. 165–184). Palgrave MacMillan. [https://link-springer-com.proxy.lib.strath.ac.uk/content/pdf/10.1057%2F9781137294005\\_9.pdf](https://link-springer-com.proxy.lib.strath.ac.uk/content/pdf/10.1057%2F9781137294005_9.pdf)
- Moruzzi, N. C. (2005). Cutting through Culture: The Feminist Discourse on Female Circumcision. *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 14(2), 203–220.
- Mugo, M. G. (1997). Elitist Anti-Circumcision Discourse as Mutilating and Anti-Feminist. Micere Githae Mugo. *Case Western Reserve Law Review*, 47, 461–479.
- Mulongo, P., McAndrew, S., & Hollins Martin, C. (2014). Crossing borders: Discussing the evidence relating to the mental health needs of women exposed to female genital mutilation. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 23(4), 296–305. <https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.12060>
- Mulvey, G. (2015). Refugee integration policy: the effects of UK policy-making on refugees in Scotland. *Journal of Social Policy*, 44(2), 357–375.
- Musalo, K. (2010). A Short History of Gender Asylum in the United States Resistance and Ambivalence May Very Slowly be Inching Towards Recognition of Women ’s Claims. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 29(2), 46–63. <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdq026>
- Mutua, M. (2001). Savages, Victims, and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights. *Harvard International Law Journal*, 42(1), 201–245.
- Mwambene, L. (2010). Marriage under African customary law in the face of the Bill of Rights and international human rights standards in Malawi. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 10(1), 78–104.
- Narayan, U. (1997). Cross-Cultural Connections, Border-Crossings, and “Death by Culture”: Thinking About Dowry-Murders in India and Domestic-Violence Murders in the United States. In *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminisms*. Taylor & Francis.
- Narayan, U. (1998). Essence of Culture and a Sense of History: A Feminist Critique of Cultural Essentialism. *Hypatia*, 13(2), 86–106. <https://about.jstor.org/terms>
- Ndofor-Tah, C., Strang, A., Phillimore, J., Morrice, L., Michael, L., Wood, P., & Simmons, J. (2019). *Home Office Indicators of Integration framework 2019*. Home Office Research



Report 109.

- Newman, D. (2006). The lines that continue to separate us: Borders in our “borderless” world. *Progress in Human Geography*, 30(2), 143–161.  
<https://doi.org/10.1191/0309132506ph599xx>
- NHS Digital Clinical Audit and Registries Management Service. (2018). *Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Enhanced Dataset: England, April 2017 to March 2018, experimental statistics, Annual Report*. [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice)
- Njambi, W. N. (2000). *Colonizing bodies: a feminist science studies critique of anti-FGM discourse*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.
- Njambi, W. N. (2004). Dualisms and female bodies in representations of African female circumcision: A feminist critique. *Feminist Theory*, 5(3), 281–303.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700104040811>
- Njambi, W. N. (2007). Irua Ria Atumia and Anti-colonial Struggles among the Gikũyũ of Kenya: A Counter Narrative on “Female Genital Mutilation.” *Critical Sociology*, 33, 689–708. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230116276\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230116276_9)
- Njue, C., Karumbi, J., Esho, T., Varol, N., & Dawson, A. (2019). Preventing female genital mutilation in high income countries: A systematic review of the evidence. *Reproductive Health*, 16(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-019-0774-x>
- Nkeokelonye, A. (2015). *FGM in Nigeria: Telling Stories, Raising Awareness, Inspiring Change*. (Vol. 3, Issue 2). United Nations Population Fund Nigeria.
- Norman, K., Belay Gegzabher, S., & Otoo-Oyortey, N. (2016). *Between Two Cultures: A Rapid PEER Study Exploring Migrant Communities’ Views on Female Genital Mutilation in Essex and Norfolk, UK*. Forward.
- Norman, K., Hemmings, J., & Hussein, E. (2009). *FGM is always with us: Experiences, Perceptions and Beliefs of Women Affected by Female Genital Mutilation in London. Results from a PEER Study*. Forward.
- Novak-Irons, F. (2015). Female genital mutilation: A Case for asylum in Europe. *Forced Migration Review*, 49(2), 2–3.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis:

- Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 160940691773384. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- O'Brien, O., Baldeh, F., Hassan, J., & Baillie, M. (2017). *My Voice 2: Women and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Scotland: A Participatory Action Research Project*. Institute for Global Health and Development, Queen Margaret University.
- O'Brien, O., Baldeh, F., Sivapatham, S., Brown, E., & O'May, F. (2016). *My Voice: A Participatory Action Research Project with Men, Women and Young People on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Scotland*. Institute for Global Health and Development, Queen Margaret University.
- O'Reilly, Z. (2018). 'Living Liminality': Everyday experiences of asylum seekers in the 'Direct Provision' system in Ireland. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 25(6), 821–842. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1473345>
- Obermeyer, C. M. (1999). Female Genital Surgeries: The Known, the Unknown, and the Unknowable. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 13(1), 76–106. <https://doi.org/10.1525/maq.1999.13.1.79>
- Obermeyer, C. M. (2003). The Health Consequences of Female Circumcision: Science, Advocacy and Standards of Evidence. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 17(3), 394–412.
- Obianwu, O., Adetunji, A., & Dirisu, O. (2018). Understanding medicalisation of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C): A qualitative study of parents and health workers in Nigeria. Evidence to End FGM/C: Research to Help Girls and Women Thrive. In *Reproductive Health* (Issue SBSR).
- Obiora, L. A. (1997). The Little Foxes That Spoil the Vine: Revisiting the Feminist Critique of Female Circumcision. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 9(46).
- Oke, M. (2008). The value of narrative in understanding Mongolian and Australian women's journeys of survival recovery and remaking of self, through and beyond domestic violence. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 31(6), 415–423. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2008.09.006>
- Okin, S. M. (1998). Feminism and Multiculturalism: Some Tensions. *Ethics*, 104(4), 661–684.

- Okin, S. M. (1999). *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Princeton University Press.
- Onyima, B. N. (2015). Infant-Female Genital Mutilation (IFGM) in Cities and the Role of Women in Perpetuating FGM: a Probe on Why FGM Persists in Urban Centers in Nigeria. *Mgbakoigba: Journal of African Studies*, 4(1), 1–12.
- Orchid Project. (2020). *Impacts of COVID-19 on female genital cutting*.  
<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/impacts-covid-19-female-genital-cutting>
- Ortega, M. (2006). Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant: White Feminism and Women of Color. *Hypatia*, 21(3), 56–74.
- Ortensi, L. E., Farina, P., & Menonna, A. (2015). Improving estimates of the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting among migrants in Western countries. *Demographic Research*, 32, 543–562. <https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2015.32.18>
- Oswin, N. (2001). Rights Spaces: An Exploration of Feminist Approaches to Refugee Law. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 3(3), 347–364.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740110078176>
- Otoo-Oyortey, N., & Pobi, S. (2003). Early marriage and poverty: Exploring links and key policy issues. *Gender and Development*, 11(2), 42–51.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/741954315>
- Oxford, C. G. (2005). Protectors and Victims in the Gender Regime of Asylum. *NWSA Journal*, 17(3), 18–38.
- Oyewumi, O. (2002). Conceptualizing gender: the Eurocentric foundations of feminist concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies. *Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*.
- Oyewumi, O. (2003). *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood*. Africa World.
- Packard, J. (2008). “I’m gonna show you what it’s really like out here”: the power and limitation of participatory visual methods. *Visual Studies*, 23(1), 63–77.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860801908544>
- Palm, C., Essén, B., & Johnsdotter, S. (2019). Sexual health counselling targeting girls and young women with female genital cutting in Sweden: mind–body dualism affecting

- social and health care professionals' perspectives. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters*, 27(1), 192–202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26410397.2019.1615364>
- Patel, P. (2014). 2 “Moral Panics” and “Social Evils”: Forced Marriage and Gender-Related Violence in Immigration Law and Policy in the UK. In F. Anthias & M. Pajnik (Eds.), *Contesting Integration, Engendering Migration: Theory and Practice* (pp. 221–241). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Patil, V. (2013). From Patriarchy to Intersectionality: A Transnational Feminist Assessment of How Far We've Really Come. *Signs*, 38(4), 847–867. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669560>
- Pemunta, N. V. (2017). When “property cannot own property”: women's lack of property rights in Cameroon Conservation and sustainable tourism among the Pygmies of Cameroon View project. *Economic and Sustainable Development*, 6(1), 67–85. <https://doi.org/10.1504/AJESD.2017.10003657>
- Penninx, R. (2005). Integration of migrants: economic, social, cultural and political dimensions. In M. Macura, A. L. Macdonald, & W. Haug (Eds.), *The New Demographic Regime Population Challenges and Policy Responses* (pp. 137–152). United Nations.
- Pérez, G. M., Tomás Aznar, C., & Bagnol, B. (2014). Labia Minora Elongation and its Implications on the Health of Women: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, 26(3), 155–171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19317611.2013.851139>
- Peroni, L. (2016). Violence Against Migrant Women: The Istanbul Convention Through a Postcolonial Feminist Lens. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 24, 49–67. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-016-9316-x>
- Pessar, P. R., & Mahler, S. . (2003). Transnational Migration: Bringing gender in. *The International Migration Review*, 37(3), 812–846.
- Pessar, P. R., & Mahler, S. J. (2001). Gender and Transnational Migration. In *Transnational Migration: Comparative Perspectives*.
- Phillimore, J. (2012). Implementing integration in the UK: Lessons for integration theory, policy and practice. *Policy and Politics*, 40(4), 525–545. <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557312X643795>
- Phillimore, J., & Goodson, L. (2006). Problem or opportunity? Asylum seekers, refugees, employment and social exclusion in deprived urban areas. *Urban Studies*, 43(10), 1715–

1736. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980600838606>

- Phillimore, J., Pertek, S., & Alidu, L. (2018). *Sexual and gender-based violence and refugees: The impacts of and on integration domains*. The Institute for Research into Superdiversity (IRiS), University of Birmingham.
- Police Scotland. (2018). *IM-FOI-2018-0716 Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002*. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/freedom-of-information-document-collection/>
- Portillo, H., & Molanon, S. (2017). *Approaching Corruption Through the Lens of Masculinities*. Henry J. Leir Institute. <https://sites.tufts.edu/ihs/approaching-corruption-through-the-lens-of-masculinities/>
- Prior, M. T. (2018). Accomplishing “rapport” in qualitative research interviews: Empathic moments in interaction. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 9(4), 487–511. <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2017-0029>
- Proudman, C. R. (2017). *The Impact of Criminalisation on Female Genital Mutilation in England: From the Perspective of Women and Stakeholders*. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Cambridge.
- Puumala, E., Ylikomi, R., & Ristimäki, H.-L. (2018). Giving an Account of Persecution: The Dynamic Formation of Asylum Narratives. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 31(2), 197–215. <https://doi.org/10.1093/JRS>
- Puvimansinghe, E., Denson, L. A., Augoustinos, M., & Somasundaram, D. (2014). Narrative and Silence: How Former Refugees Talk about Loss and Past Trauma. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 28(1), 69–92. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feu019>
- Quigg, Z., Bigland, C., Hughes, K., Duch, M., & Juan, M. (2020). Sexual violence and nightlife: A systematic literature review. In *Aggression and Violent Behavior* (Vol. 51, p. 101363). Elsevier Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2020.101363>
- Raj, A., & Silverman, J. (2002). Violence Against Immigrant Women: The Roles of Culture, Context, and Legal Immigrant Status on Intimate Partner Violence. *Violence Against Women*, 8(3), 367–398.
- Ramazanoglu, C. (1992). On Feminist Methodology: Male Reason versus Female Empowerment. *Sociology*, 26(2), 207–212.

- Ramazanoglu, C., & Holland, J. (2002). *Feminist methodology: challenges and choices*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Razack, S. H. (1995). Domestic Violence a Gender Persecution: Policing the Borders of Nation, Race, and Gender. *Canadian Journal of Women and Law*, 8(1), 45–88.  
<https://doi.org/Article>
- Razack, S. H. (2004). Imperilled muslim women, dangerous muslim men and civilised Europeans: legal and social responses to forced marriages. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 129–174.
- Read, B. L. (2018). Serial Interviews: When and Why to Talk to Someone More Than Once. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1), 1–10.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918783452>
- Reid, C., Tom, A., & Frisby, W. (2006). Finding the “action” in feminist participatory action research. *Action Research*, 4(3), 315–332. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750306066804>
- Reinharz, S. (1993). Neglected Voices and Excessive Demands in Feminist Research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 16(1), 69–76.
- Reisel, D., & Creighton, S. M. (2015). Long term health consequences of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). *Maturitas*, 80, 48–51.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2014.10.009>
- Rice, C. (2009). Imagining the Other? Ethical Challenges of Researching and Writing Women’s Embodied Lives. *Feminism and Psychology*, 19(2), 245–266.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353509102222>
- Robertson, C. C. (2002). Getting beyond the Ew! Factor: Rethinking U.S. Approaches to African Female Genital Cutting. In S. M. James & C. C. Robertson (Eds.), *Genital Cutting and Transnational Sisterhood* (pp. 54–86). University of Illinois Press.
- Robinson, V. (1998). Defining and Measuring Successful Refugee Integration. *ECRE International Conference on Integration of Refugees in Europe*.
- Rose, G. (2016). *Visual Methodologies* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Safe Passage. (2020, May 24). *Government plans end of family reunion from Europe as we know it*. Safe Passage. <https://www.safepassage.org.uk/news/2020/5/24/government->

plans-end-of-family-reunion-from-europe-as-we-know-it

- Safer Scotland. (2017). *Responding to Female Genital Mutilation in Scotland: Multi-Agency Guidance*. Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/responding-female-genital-mutilation-fgm-scotland-multi-agency-guidance-978-1-78851-364-7/>
- Salad, H. (2016). *Female Genital Cutting: Perspectives of the Somali Community in London on the discourse against FGC*. University of Georgia Press.
- Sales, R. (2002). The deserving and the undeserving? Refugees, asylum seekers and welfare in Britain. *Critical Social Policy*, 22(3), 456–478.
- Salo, E. (2011). Talking about feminism in Africa. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, 16(50), 58–63.
- Scheper-Hughes, N., & Bourgois, P. (2004). Introduction: Making Sense of Violence. In *In Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology* (pp. 1–27). Blackwell.
- Schiller, N. G., Basch, L., & Szanton Blanc, C. (1995). From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 68(1), 48–63.
- Schilt, K. (2003). “I’ll resist with every inch and every breath” Girls and Zine Making as a Form of Resistance. *Youth & Society*, 35(1), 71–97.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X03254566>
- Schuster, L. (2020). Fatal flaws in the UK asylum decision-making system: an analysis of Home Office refusal letters. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(7), 1371–1387.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1552827>
- Scottish Government. (2016a). *Meeting of the Parliament 10 February 2016: Female Genital Mutilation*. Official Report; The Scottish Parliament.
- Scottish Government. (2016b). *Scotland’s National Action Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) 2016-2020*. Scottish Government.  
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00493752.pdf>
- Scottish Government. (2017). *New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland’s Communities*.  
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00515713.pdf>
- Scottish Government. (2018a). *Equally Safe: Scotland’s strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women*.

<https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0053/00534791.pdf>

Scottish Government. (2018b). *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022* (pp. 1–81). Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy-2018-2022/>

Scottish Government. (2019a). *Scotland's National Action Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Year Three Progress Report* (Vols. 2016 – 202, Issue November 2019). Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-action-plan-prevent-eradicate-female-genital-mutilation-fgm-year-three-progress-report/>

Scottish Government. (2019b, November 20). *Female genital mutilation (FGM) questions and funding: FOI release*. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-19-02337/>

Shankar, I., & Northcott, H. (2009). Through my son: Immigrant women bargain with patriarchy. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 32, 424–434. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2009.09.004>

Sharp-Jeffs, N., Kelly, L., & Klein, R. (2018). Long Journeys Toward Freedom: The Relationship Between Coercive Control and Space for Action-Measurement and Emerging Evidence. *Violence against Women*, 24(2), 163–185. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801216686199>

Shell-Duncan, B. (2008). From Health to Human Rights: Female Genital Cutting and the Politics of Intervention. *American Anthropologist*, 110(2), 225–236. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1433.2008.00028.x>

Shell-Duncan, B., & Hernlund, Y. (2000a). *Female Circumcision in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change* (Bettina Shell-Duncan & Y. Hernlund (Eds.)). Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Shell-Duncan, B., & Hernlund, Y. (2000b). Female “Circumcision” in Africa: Dimensions of the Practice and Debates. In B. Shell-Duncan & Y. Hernlund (Eds.), *Female “Circumcision” in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change* (pp. 1–40). Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.

Shell-Duncan, B., Obiero, W. O., & Muruli, L. A. (2000). Women without Choices: The Debate over Medicalisation of Female Genital Cutting and Its Impact on a Northern



- Kenyan Community. In B. Shell-Duncan & Y. Hernlund (Eds.), *Female "Circumcision" in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change* (pp. 109–128). Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
- Shell-Duncan, B., Wander, K., Hernlund, Y., & Moreau, A. (2011). Dynamics of Change in the Practice of Female Genital Cutting in Senegambia: Testing Predictions of Social Convention Theory. *Social Science & Medicine*, 73(8), 1275–1283.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.07.022>
- Shukla, N., Wilson, E., & Boddy, J. (2014). *NOVELLA Working Paper: Narrative Research in Action. Combining thematic and narrative analysis of qualitative interviews to understand children's spatialities in Andhra Pradesh, India*. Thomas Coran Research Unit, University of London.
- Shuman, A., & Bohmer, C. (2014). Gender and cultural silences in the political asylum process. *Sexualities*, 17(8), 939–957. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460714552262>
- Shweder, R. A. (2002). "What About Female Genital Mutilation?" and Why Understanding Culture Matters in the First Place. In R. A. Shweder, M. Minow, & H. Markus (Eds.), *Engaging Cultural Differences. The Multicultural Challenge in Liberal Democracies*. Russell Sage Foundation Press.
- Sigona, N. (2005). Refugee Integration(s): Policy and practice in the European Union. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 24(4), 115–122. <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdi093>
- Simon, P. (2010). The mosaic pattern: cohabitation between ethnic groups in Belleville, Paris. In M. Martiniello & J. Rath (Eds.), *Selected Studies in International Migration and Immigrant Incorporation* (pp. 339–354). Amsterdam University Press.
- Simonsen, K. B. (2016). How the host nation's boundary drawing affects immigrants' belonging. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42(7), 1153–1176.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1138854>
- Simonson, K., & Subich, L. M. (1999). Rape perceptions as a function of gender-role traditionality and victim-perpetrator association. *Sex Roles*, 40(7–8), 617–634.  
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1018844231555>
- Singh, R. (2016). Importing Feminisms: Racialized Migrants and Anti-Violence Activism. *Social Politics*, 23(4), 508–530. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxw005>

- Sinha, A. (2001). Domestic Violence and US Asylum Law: Eliminating the “Cultural Hook” for Claims Involving Gender-Related Persecution. *New York University Laws Review*, 76, 1562–1598.
- Smith, K. (2015). Stories Told By, For, and About Women Refugees: Engendering Resistance. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14(2), 461–469.
- Smith, K. (2017). Women, Asylum and Resistance: A Feminist Narrative Approach to Making Sense of Stories. In J. Woodiwiss, K. Smith, & K. Lockwood (Eds.), *Feminist Narrative Research* (pp. 179–205). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-48568-7\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-48568-7_8)
- Smith, K., & Waite, L. (2019). New and enduring narratives of vulnerability: rethinking stories about the figure of the refugee. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(13), 2289–2307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1496816>
- Souter, J. (2011). A Culture of Disbelief or Denial? Critiquing Refugee Status Determination in the United Kingdom. *Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration*, 1(1), 48–59.
- Spivak, G. C. (1987). *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. Methuen.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). “Can the subaltern speak?” *Die Philosophin*, 14(27), 42–58.
- Squire, C. (2008). Approaches to Narrative Research. *ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper*, 1–60.
- Squire, C., Andrews, M., & Tamboukou, M. (2008). Introduction: What is narrative research? In M. Andrews, C. Squire, & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing Narrative Research* (Vol. 2, pp. 1–26). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Squire, C., Davis, M., Esin, C., Andrews, M., Harrison, B., Hyden, L.-C., & Hyden, M. (2014). *What is narrative research?* Bloomsbury.
- Stanley, L. (2013). Feminist praxis and the academic mode of production: an editorial introduction. In L. Stanley (Ed.), *Feminist Praxis (RLE Feminist Theory): Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology* (pp. 3–16). Routledge.
- Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1993). *Breaking out again: Feminist ontology and epistemology* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

- Stewart, E. (2005). Exploring the vulnerability of asylum seekers in the UK. *Population, Space and Place*, 11(6), 499–512. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.394>
- Strang, A., & Ager, A. (2010). Refugee Integration: Emerging Trends and Remaining Agendas. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(4), 589–607. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq046>
- Strid, S., & Axelsson, T. K. (2020). Involving Men: The Multiple Meanings of Female Genital Mutilation in a Minority Migrant Context. *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 28(4), 287–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2020.1786164>
- Sullivan, M., Bhuyan, R., Senturia, K., Shiu-Thornton, S., & Ciske, S. (2005). Participatory Action Research in Practice: A Case Study in Addressing Domestic Violence in Nine Cultural Communities. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 20(8), 977–995. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260505277680>
- Summers, H. (2020, July 3). *Priti Patel accused of “shameful” bid to deport girl at risk of FGM*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/03/priti-patel-accused-of-shameful-bid-to-deport-girl-at-risk-of-fgm>
- Svoboda, J. S. (2013). Promoting genital autonomy by exploring commonalities between male, female, intersex, and cosmetic female genital cutting. *Global Discourse*, 3(2), 237–255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23269995.2013.804757>
- Sweeney, J. A. (2009). Credibility, proof and refugee law. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 21(4), 700–726. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eep027>
- Talle, A. (2008). Precarious Identities: Somali Women in Exile. *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration*, 3(2), 64–73.
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2006). A General Typology of Research Designs Featuring Mixed Methods. *Research in the Schools*, 13(1), 12–28.
- Thapar-Björkert, S., & Henry, M. (2014). Reassessing the research relationship: location, position and power in fieldwork accounts. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 7(5), 363–381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557092000045294>
- Thomas, L. (2000). “Ngaitana (I will Circumcise Myself)”: Lessons from Colonial Campaigns to Ban Excision in Meru, Kenya. In B. Shell-Duncan & Y. Hernlund (Eds.), *Female “Circumcision” in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change* (pp. 129–150).

Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.

- Ticktin, M. (2016a). Sexual Violence as the Language of Border Control: Protecting exceptional difference. *Feministische Studien*, 34(2), 284–304.  
<https://doi.org/10.1515/fs-2016-0008>
- Ticktin, M. (2016b). Thinking Beyond Humanitarian Borders. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 83(2), 255–271.
- Tomlinson, B. (2013). To Tell the Truth and Not Get Trapped: Desire, Distance, and Intersectionality at the Scene of Argument. *Signs*, 38(4), 993–1017.
- Tongco, M. D. C. (2007). Purposive sampling as a tool for informant selection. *Ethnobotany Research and Applications*, 5, 147–158. <https://doi.org/10.17348/era.5.0.147-158>
- Tønnessen, L. (2014). When Rape Becomes Politics: Negotiating Islamic Law Reform in Sudan. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 44, 145–153.
- True, J. (2012a). From Domestic Violence to War Crimes . In *The Political Economy of Violence against Women* (pp. 1–14). Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199755929.001.0001>
- True, J. (2012b). What Has Poverty Got to Do With It? Feminist Frameworks for Analyzing Violence against Women. In *The Political Economy of Violence against Women* (pp. 17–35). Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199755929.001.0001>
- Turan, J. M., Elafros, M. A., Logie, C. H., Banik, S., Turan, B., Crockett, K. B., Pescosolido, B., & Murray, S. M. (2019). Challenges and opportunities in examining and addressing intersectional stigma and health. *BMC Medicine*, 17(1), 7.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-018-1246-9>
- Tyagi, R. (2014). Understanding Postcolonial Feminism in relation with Postcolonial and Feminist Theories. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 1(2), 2374–8869.  
[www.ijllnet.com](http://www.ijllnet.com)
- UK Department of Health. (2016). *Female Genital Mutilation Risk and Safeguarding: Guidance for professionals*. Department of Health.  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/525390/FGM\\_safeguarding\\_report\\_A.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/525390/FGM_safeguarding_report_A.pdf)

- Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Pub. L. No. 189, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189 (1951).  
<https://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html>
- UNDP. (2018). *Sudan: Gender Justice & The Law*.  
<https://sudan.unfpa.org/en/publications/gender-justice-law-sudan-0>
- UNHCR. (2003). UNHCR — The UN Refugee Agency 23 July 2003: Guidelines on International Protection: “Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative” within the Context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 15(4), 875–885.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/15.4.875>
- UNHCR. (2018). “*Too Much Pain*”: *Female genital Mutilation & Asylum in the European Union. A Statistical Update (August 2018)*.  
<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/women/531880249/pain-female-genital-mutilation-asylum-european-union-statistical-overview.html>
- UNICEF. (2020a). *Covid-19 disrupting SDG 5.3: Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation. Technical Note*. <https://www.unicef.org/media/68786/file/External-Tehcnical-Note-on-COVID-19-and-FGM.pdf>
- UNICEF. (2020b). *Egypt: Statistical Profile on Female Genital Mutilation*.  
[https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country\\_profiles/Egypt/FGMC\\_EGY.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country_profiles/Egypt/FGMC_EGY.pdf)
- United Kingdom: Court of Appeal, E. and W. (2005). *Zainab Esther Fornah v. Secretary of State for the Home Department, EWCA Civ 680, United Kingdom: Court of Appeal (England and Wales), 9 June 2005*. United Kingdom: Court of Appeal (England and Wales). [https://www.refworld.org/cases,GBR\\_CA\\_CIV,43fc2eb011.html](https://www.refworld.org/cases,GBR_CA_CIV,43fc2eb011.html)
- United Nations Children’s Fund. (2013). *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change*.  
<https://data.unicef.org/resources/fgm-statistical-overview-and-dynamics-of-change/>
- Upvall, M. J., Mohammed, K., & Dodge, P. D. (2009). Perspectives of Somali Bantu refugee women living with circumcision in the United States: A focus group approach. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 46, 360–368.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2008.04.009>

- Van Bavel, H. (2019). At the intersection of place, gender, and ethnicity: changes in female circumcision among Kenyan Maasai. *Gender, Place and Culture*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1615415>
- Van Houtum, H., & Van Naerssen, T. (2002). Bordering, Ordering and Othering. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, 93(2), 125–136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9663.00189>
- Vieten, U. M. (2016). Far Right Populism and Women: The Normalisation of Gendered Anti-Muslim Racism and Gendered Culturalism in the Netherlands. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 37(6), 621–636.
- Vissandjee, B., Kantiebo, M., Levine, A., & N'Dejuru, E. (2003). The cultural context of gender identity: female genital excision and infibulation. *Health Care for Women International*, 24, 115–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07399330390170097>
- Volpp, L. (1996). Talking “culture”: gender, race, nation, and the politics of multiculturalism. In *Columbia Law Review* (Vol. 96, Issue 6, p. 1617). Columbia Law Review Association. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1123327>
- Volpp, L. (2001). Feminism versus Multiculturalism. *Columbia Law Review*, 1181, 1181–1218.
- Wade, L. (2009). Defining gendered oppression in U.S. newspapers: The strategic value of “Female Genital Mutilation”. *Gender & Society*, 23(3), 293–314.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243209334938>
- Wade, L. (2011). Learning from “Female Genital Mutilation”: Lessons from 30 Years of Academic Discourse. *Ethnicities*, 12(1), 26–49.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796811419603>
- Wahlberg, A. (2017). *Continuity or Change? Improved Understanding of Attitudes Towards Female Genital Cutting after Migration from Somalia to Sweden*. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Uppsala. [https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203461969\\_chapter\\_4](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203461969_chapter_4)
- Wahlberg, A., Johnsdotter, S., Selling, K. E., & Essén, B. (2019). Shifting perceptions of female genital cutting in a Swedish migration context. *PLoS ONE*, 14(12), 1–13.  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0225629>
- Wahlberg, A., Johnsdotter, S., Selling, K. E., Källestål, C., & Essén, B. (2017). Factors

- associated with the support of pricking (female genital cutting type IV) among Somali immigrants – a cross-sectional study in Sweden. *Reproductive Health*, 14(92), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-017-0351-0>
- Wahlberg, A., Påfs, J., & Jordal, M. (2019). Pricking in the African Diaspora: Current Evidence and Recurrent Debates. *Current Sexual Health Reports*, 11(2), 95–101. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11930-019-00198-8>
- Wainaina, B. (2005). *How to Write About Africa*. Granta. <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>
- Walley, C. (2002). Searching for “voices”: Feminism, anthropology, and the global debate over female genital operations. In S. M. James & C. Robertson (Eds.), *Genital Cutting and Transnational Sisterhood: Disputing U.S. Polemics*. (pp. 17–53). University of Illinois Press.
- Wasunna, A. (2000). Towards Redirecting the Female Circumcision Debate: Legal, Ethical and Cultural Considerations. *MJM*, 5, 104–110.
- Weber, L., & Pickering, S. (2011). *Globalisation and Borders: Death at the Global Frontier*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Wernesjö, U. (2020). Across the threshold: negotiations of deservingness among unaccompanied young refugees in Sweden. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(2), 389–404. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1584701>
- Westerholm, J. (2018, June 4). *Shariafeminismen etablerad i Sverige*. Ledarsidorna.Se. [https://ledarsidorna.se/2018/06/shariafeminismen-etablerad-i-sverige/?fbclid=IwAR1ekSh5vkJGKtjHV9dd8E01dp8yngx7cGnKMrUxyn79YLy\\_NsjvtAxOc24](https://ledarsidorna.se/2018/06/shariafeminismen-etablerad-i-sverige/?fbclid=IwAR1ekSh5vkJGKtjHV9dd8E01dp8yngx7cGnKMrUxyn79YLy_NsjvtAxOc24)
- Westmarland, N. (2001). The Quantitative/Qualitative Debate and Feminist Research: A Subjective View of Objectivity. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 2(1).
- Wettergren, Å., & Wikström, H. (2014). Who Is a Refugee? Political Subjectivity and the Categorisation of Somali Asylum Seekers in Sweden. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 40(4), 566–583. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.830502>
- Whitehorn, J., Ayonrinde, O., & Maingay, S. (2002). Female genital mutilation: Cultural and psychological implications Multinational Teams View project Brain Fog Syndrome

- View project. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 17(2).  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14681990220121275>
- WHO. (2011). *An update on WHO's work on female genital mutilation (FGM): Progress Report*. World Health Organisation.  
[https://doi.org/http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/70638/WHO\\_RHR\\_11.18\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=9F5D5B8F375C2FEED60BB6F26F2CDC0A?sequence=1](https://doi.org/http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/70638/WHO_RHR_11.18_eng.pdf;jsessionid=9F5D5B8F375C2FEED60BB6F26F2CDC0A?sequence=1)
- Wieviorka, M. (2010). Racism in Europe: unity and diversity. In M. Martiniello & J. Rath (Eds.), *Selected Studies in International Migration and Immigrant Incorporation* (pp. 259–274). Amsterdam University Press.
- Wikholm, K., Mishori, R., Ottenheimer, D., Korostyshevskiy, V., Reingold, R., Wikholm, C., & Hampton, K. (2020). Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting as Grounds for Asylum Requests in the US: An Analysis of More than 100 Cases. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 22, 675–681. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-020-00994-8>
- Wiklund, E. (2018, August 6). *Fakta som krossar de som romantiserar massinvandringen*. NewsVoice. [https://newsvoice.se/2018/08/massinvandringen-fakta-2/?fbclid=IwAR1ekSh5vkJGKtjHV9dd8E01dp8yngx7cGnKMrUxyn79YLy\\_NsjvtAxOc24](https://newsvoice.se/2018/08/massinvandringen-fakta-2/?fbclid=IwAR1ekSh5vkJGKtjHV9dd8E01dp8yngx7cGnKMrUxyn79YLy_NsjvtAxOc24)
- Wiles, J. L., Rosenberg, M. W., & Kearns, R. A. (2005). Narrative Analysis as a Strategy for Understanding Interview Talk in Geographic Research. *Source: Area*, 37(1), 89–99.
- Willis, J. W. (2012). World Views, Paradigms, and the Practice of Social Science Research. In J. W. Willis (Ed.), *Foundations of Qualitative Research: Interpretive and Critical Approaches*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452230108>
- Wilson, A. (2007). The forced marriage debate and the British state. *Race & Class*, 49(1), 25–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396807080065>
- Wilson, C. (2017, March 10). *Glasgow midwife treats 12 women a month affected by female genital mutilation*. Glasgow Times.  
<https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/news/15146920.glasgow-midwife-treats-12-women-a-month-affected-by-female-genital-mutilation/>
- Withaecx, S. (2017). Researching Harmful Cultural Practices: Values and limits of an intersectional perspective. In E. Leye & G. Coene (Eds.), *Researching Female Genital*



*Mutilation / Cutting: Proceedings of the 2nd International Academic Seminar of MAP-FGM Project.* Brussels University Press.

Witteborn, S. (2011). Constructing the forced migrant and the politics of space and place-making. *Journal of Communication*, 61(6), 1142–1160. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01578.x>

Women's Caucus of African Studies Association. (1983). Position Paper on Clitoridectomy and Infibulation. In M. J. Stanley & C. Robertson (Eds.), *Genital Cutting and Transnational Sisterhood: Disputing U.S. Polemics* (pp. 1–4). University of Illinois Press.

Wood, A. N. (2001). A Cultural Rite of Passage or a Form of Torture: Female Genital Mutilation from an International Law Perspective. *Hastings Women's Law Journal*, 12(2).

World Health Organisation. (2020a). *Female Genital Mutilation: Fact Sheet*. World Health Organization. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>

World Health Organisation. (2020b). *Prevalence of female genital mutilation*. <https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research/key-areas-of-work/female-genital-mutilation/prevalence-of-female-genital-mutilation>

Yount, K. ., & Yount, K. M. (2005). The Patriarchal Bargain and Intergenerational Coresidence in Egypt. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 46(1), 137–164.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2003). Nationalist Projects and Gender Relations. *Narodna Umjetnost-Hrvatski Časopis Za Etnologiju i Folkloristiku*, 40(1), 9–36.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Intersectionality and Feminist Politics. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(3), 193–209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506806065752>

Yuval-Davis, N. (2010). Theorising identity: beyond the “us” and “them” dichotomy. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 44(3), 261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2010.489736>

Yuval-Davis, N. (2015). Situated Intersectionality and Social Inequality. *Raisons Politiques*, 2, 91–100.

Yuval-Davis, N., Wemyss, G., & Cassidy, K. (2019). *Bordering*. Polity Press.

Zeigler, S. L., & Stewart, K. B. (2009). Positioning Women's Rights within Asylum Policy:

A Feminist Analysis of Political. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 30(2), 115–142.

Ziyada, M. M., Lien, I.-L., & Johansen, R. E. B. (2020). Sexual norms and the intention to use healthcare services related to female genital cutting: A qualitative study among Somali and Sudanese women in Norway. *PLOS ONE*, 15(5).  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0233440>

Zwi, A. B., Grove, N. ., Mackenzie, C., Pittaway, E., Zion, D., Silove, D., & Tarantola, D. (2006). Placing ethics in the centre: Negotiating new spaces for ethical research in conflict situations. *Global Public Health*, 1(3), 264–277.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17441690600673866>

# Appendices

## Appendix A. Participant information sheets and consent forms

### Participant information sheet: Community participants

#### Resettling culture: project on migrant resettlement, cultural change and genital modifications/cutting in Scotland

##### Who am I?

My name is Emmaleena Käkälä and I am a postgraduate student at the University of Strathclyde. I would like to invite you to take part in an interview which is carried out as part of my postgraduate study.

##### What is this study about?

My study focuses broadly on migrants' experiences of living in Scotland. I am interested in finding out how moving to Scotland influences culture, social relationships, family and how people see themselves. I am also interested in finding out how moving here influences people's views on practices which are a custom in some communities as part of introducing girls to womanhood. I will refer to these customs as *genital modifications/genital cutting*, but you might know these practices by a different name. This study will give you an opportunity to share your views **confidentially**. Your views can help the study to encourage services and policy makers to better recognise communities' views and needs.

##### Why have you been invited to take part?

I am inviting people to take part who are 18 years or over and who have been born either in Africa or Middle East.

##### Do you have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary. You can stop the interview at any time, without having to tell me the reasons. You are also not required to answer any questions you do not wish to. Not taking part or withdrawing from the study will have no consequences and will not affect your right to stay in the UK.

##### What will you do in the project?

I'll first ask you to give consent to be interviewed. Then I will ask you questions about your experiences of living in Scotland and your views on what role culture plays in your every-day life. I will also ask your views on whether genital modification/cutting practices affect your community in Scotland. The interview will not last more than an hour. With your permission, I will use an audio recorder to record our discussion so I can make detailed notes later. Only I will have access to this recording. I will cover reasonable travel expenses for attending the interview.

### **What are the potential risks to you in taking part?**

The topic of our discussion may be sensitive, but I will not ask you to share your personal experiences with me. I will address all the interview topics non-judgementally and sensitively.

### **What happens to the information?**

All information will be kept confidential, stored securely, and then destroyed three years after I finish my degree. No individual will be named or identified in my written research report or any publications.

### **What happens next?**

If you are interested in taking part in the project, please contact me by email [emmaleena.kakela@strath.ac.uk](mailto:emmaleena.kakela@strath.ac.uk) or call or text me at []. We can arrange a time and place for the interview which best suits you.

When we meet, I will go through with you what the interview involves and give you an opportunity to ask any questions you may have. I will also ask you to give me a permission to interview you before I ask any questions.

If you do not want to take part, I would like to thank you for your time.

### **If you have any questions, you can get in touch with me, or contact my supervisor:**

Chief Investigator details:

Daniela Sime, Reader in Education and Social Policy

[daniela.sime@strath.ac.uk](mailto:daniela.sime@strath.ac.uk)

If you have any questions/concerns and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

Secretary to the University Ethics Committee

Research & Knowledge Exchange Services University of Strathclyde

Graham Hills Building, 50 George Street

Glasgow G1 1QE

Telephone: 0141 548 3707 / Email: [ethics@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@strath.ac.uk)

The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

This research was granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee.

## **Participant information sheet: Key informant interviews**

### **Resettling culture: project on migrant resettlement, cultural change and genital modifications/cutting in Scotland**

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Emmaleena Käkälä and I am a postgraduate student at the University of Strathclyde. I would like to invite you to take part in an interview which is carried out as part of my postgraduate study.

#### **What is this study about?**

My study focuses broadly on migrants' experiences of living in Scotland. I am interested in finding out how moving to Scotland influences culture, social relationships, family and how people see themselves. I am also interested in finding out how migration and integration influence people's views on practices which are a custom in some communities as part of introducing girls to womanhood. I will refer to these customs as *genital modifications or as genital cutting practices*, but you may prefer to use a different term. This study will give you an opportunity to share your views **confidentially**. Your views can help the study to encourage services and policy makers to better recognise communities' views and needs.

#### **Why have you been invited to take part?**

I am inviting you to take part because I believe you work with or know well one or more of the migrant communities in Scotland that come from African and/or Middle Eastern countries.

To take part, you have to be 18 years or over.

#### **Do you have to take part?**

Participation is completely voluntary. You can stop the interview at any time, without having to tell me the reasons. You are also not required to answer any questions you do not wish to. Not taking part or withdrawing from the study will have no consequences and will not affect your right to stay in the UK.

#### **What will you do in the project?**

I'll first ask you to give consent to be interviewed. Then I will ask you questions about your insights into the challenges and successes that communities experience in settling in Scotland. I will also ask your views on the role that culture plays in migrant resettlement. Lastly, I will ask your views on whether practices involving genital modifications or cutting affect communities in Scotland.

The interview will not last more than an hour. With your permission, I will use an audio recorder to record our discussion so I can make detailed notes later. Only I will have access to this recording. I will cover reasonable travel expenses for attending the interview.

### **What are the potential risks to you in taking part?**

The topic of our discussion may be sensitive, but I will not ask you to share your personal experiences with me. I will address all the interview topics non-judgementally and sensitively.

### **What happens to the information?**

All information will be kept confidential, stored securely, and then destroyed three years after I finish my degree. No individual will be named or identified in my written research report or any publications.

### **What happens next?**

If you are interested in taking part in the project, please contact me by email [emmaleena.kakela@strath.ac.uk](mailto:emmaleena.kakela@strath.ac.uk) or call or text me at []. We can arrange a time and place for the interview which best suits you.

When we meet, I will go through with you what the interview involves and give you an opportunity to ask any questions you may have. I will also ask you to give me a permission to interview you before I ask any questions.

If you do not want to take part, I would like to thank you for your time.

### **If you have any questions, you can get in touch with me, or contact my supervisor:**

Chief Investigator details:

Daniela Sime, Reader in Education and Social Policy

[daniela.sime@strath.ac.uk](mailto:daniela.sime@strath.ac.uk)

If you have any questions/concerns and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

Secretary to the University Ethics Committee

Research & Knowledge Exchange Services University of Strathclyde

Graham Hills Building, 50 George Street

Glasgow G1 1QE

Telephone: 0141 548 3707 / Email: [ethics@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@strath.ac.uk)

The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

This research was granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee.

**Consent form: Individual interviews**

**Resettling culture: project on migrant resettlement, cultural change and genital modifications/cutting in Scotland**

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any questions to my satisfaction.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences. If I withdraw from the study and I don't want my data to be used, any data which have been collected from me will be destroyed.	
3. I understand I can withdraw my statements up until the study has been completed.	
4. I understand that any information recorded in this study will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available or shared with the authorities. However, I also understand that if I disclose my own, or anyone else's intentions to cause imminent harm, including practicing genital modification/cutting practices, the researcher is ethically obliged to share this with the authorities.	
5. I voluntarily agree to take part in this project.	
6. I consent to being audio recorded as part of the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of the participant:

Date:

OR: Record oral consent below (date, time and your signature), as well as any other additional information:

--





## **Appendix B. Interview schedules**

### **Interview schedule for community participants**

#### *Opening*

Introduce yourself and the project. Explain the purpose of the study and the possible benefits of increasing our understanding of women's experiences of living in Scotland and their insights into FGC (Use the term that they are comfortable with). Explain that you would like to speak with the participant because her country of origin is currently considered to a country where these practices are customary or have found to be practiced, but that little is known what people think about these practices.

Outline the topics covered in the interview. Explain to the participant you will not ask about their personal experiences of FGC (if they have any), but that they are welcome to share these. Your questions are broadly about participant's views on how these practices and the meanings they have can change after migration.

Outline confidentiality and how the data will be used and stored. Instruct the participant that they can freely discuss these practices and individual and community attitudes towards the practices. If they want to, they can also disclose if they have themselves have experienced this. However, clearly inform the participant that you have an ethical obligation to inform the authorities if they disclose someone being at risk of harm. This includes if they identify individuals intending to practice FGC, or if they identify a girl or a woman who is at risk in UK or abroad. The participant will be instructed the researcher will not have to disclose general statements, such as "I know some people still practice FGC" but that if the person intending to practice these is identified in the statement such as "my sister is intending to take her daughter back to our country of origin to be cut", the researcher will have to share this information. The participant can also discuss about instances when this practice has already happened without the researcher having to report this to the authorities.

Clarify expected interview duration (no more than an hour). Before moving onto the interview questions, give the participant an opportunity to ask any questions about the study. The participant information form will be made available prior to the interview and this will be verbally explained before participants give consent to be interviewed. Ask participant's permission to record the interview. Participants will give their consent (written or verbal) before the interview will begin.

#### *Migration story*

- Could you tell me your story of how you came to the UK?

Prompt for reasons for migrating and the journey itself (if the participant stayed in other countries before coming to the UK)

- What was it like for you at the start when you arrived in the UK?

### *Resettlement and cultural change*

- Next, I would like to ask you about your experience of settling to Scotland. Could you tell me a little bit what that has been like for you?

Prompt for what has been helpful, what has been difficult

- Thinking about your culture, has anything changed since you came to the UK, and if so, in what ways? When I say culture, I use this word very broadly – you may think about things like how you express your own culture, cultural practices, values, celebrations and so on.
- Can you think of any situations in your every-day life when you have had to find balance between the culture from where you are from, and the culture in the UK?
- If your culture has changed, why do you think that is?
- [*If not come up from the previous question*] Since coming to the UK, have you felt any pressure to change your culture or express it differently?

Possible prompting questions: What particular aspects of culture has the pressure been aimed at? Where is the pressure coming from?

I mentioned at the beginning that one of the things I would like to ask you about is FGC. These practices have been talked about increasingly in the past few years, but we know very little about what people think about this practice.

- Are you familiar with these practices?
- If you were speaking to someone who did not know anything about the practice, why would you say they are meaningful to the people and communities who practice them?
- Is continuing or ending these practices a priority for women from your country living in Scotland?
- Are these practices something that women talk about amongst themselves? If so, how is it talked about?
- What would you consider are some of the reasons why some people stop practising these after moving to Scotland?
- Do you think there are any aspects about living in Scotland that might make it harder for people to abandon these practices?

- Possible prompting questions: Do these aspects relate to the meanings the practice has? Do people experience pressures to practice FGC? (from their family, own community, or family and friends in their home country) Does the pressure come from men or women?
- [Women only] Would you say life is in anyway different for women who have had FGC done who live in (participant's country of origin), and who live in Scotland?

Possible prompting questions: Are they being treated differently? Are they being perceived differently? Do they have access to the same opportunities?

- [Women only] Thinking about yourself, and the women you know from your country of origin, do you think you are ever being treated differently than Scottish women?

### *Migration and family*

- How does moving to another country influence family relationships? [prompt for relationships with partners, extended family and children]
- [*If not come up in the previous question*] How does moving to another country influence roles and responsibilities within the family?
- Is there anything else you would like to say about the topics we have been discussing, or about something else I have not asked about?

### *Debriefing*

Thank the participant for their time. Ask how they felt about the questions and the interview. Briefly outline the other on-going data collection activities and encourage the participant to share a word about these with their networks or ask if they would be interested in taking part in the focus group themselves. Give participant an information sheet outlining the available resources and support. Ensure they have your details if they have any follow up questions and ask if they are interested in receiving a summary of the findings after the research has been completed.

## **Interview schedule for key informants**

### *Opening*

Introduce yourself and the project. Explain the purpose of the study and the possible benefits of increasing our understanding of women's experiences of living in Scotland and their insights into FGC (Use the term that they are comfortable with). Clarify expected interview duration (no more than an hour) and the topics covered. Instruct the participant that even the study focuses on different nationalities, they can offer their insights on the specific communities they work with or know well.

Outline confidentiality and how the data will be used and stored. Instruct the participant that they can freely discuss these practices and individual and community attitudes towards the practices. If they want to, they can also disclose if they have themselves have experienced this. However, clearly inform the participant that you have an ethical obligation to inform the authorities if they disclose someone being at risk of harm. This includes if they identify individuals intending to practice FGC, or if they identify a girl or a woman who is at risk in UK or abroad. The participant will be instructed the researcher will not have to disclose general statements, such as "I know some people still practice FGC" but that if the person intending to practice these is identified in the statement such as "my sister is intending to take her daughter back to our country of origin to be cut", the researcher will have to share this information. The participant can also discuss about instances when this practice has already happened without the researcher having to report this to the authorities.

Before moving onto the interview questions, give the participant an opportunity to ask any questions about the study. The participant information form will be made available prior to the interview and this will be verbally explained before participants give consent to be interviewed. Ask participant's permission to record the interview.

Participants will give their consent (written or verbal) before the interview will begin.

### *Background information and participant's expertise*

- Could tell me a little about your role and responsibilities in your organisation?

Unless participant brings these up themselves, follow up with questions asking in what ways aspects of resettlement and FGC/GBV relate to the work that they do.

### *Participant's reflections on challenges to community resettlement*

- From your experience, what are the main challenges the individuals and communities you work with experience in resettling to Scotland?

Prompt for possible emotional and structural challenges, social and cultural challenges, asylum

- Are there any differences in the challenges men and women experience? If so, what?

- What would you say are the main priorities for supporting individuals and communities to settle in Scotland?

Prompt priorities in different levels; personal, social, structural... / if not stated, ask why these are the main priorities?

- Especially with the increasing migration in the past years, there has been a demand for migrants to 'integrate' into the Scottish society. I understand integration itself is debated. What does integration mean to you? What does successful integration look like?
- With growing diversity in Britain, various cultural practices and values have also been increasingly discussed alongside integration. There has also been growing pressures on migrants to abandon the values and practices which are not seen to fit in with the "British culture". Now when we have discussed your views on individual and community resettlement, I would like to hear your views on how individuals and communities experience cultural change after migration?

Prompt for the impact on community identity and the ways community and culture can be a resource / If not stated, ask do women and men experience cultural change differently?

#### FGC

- One of the cultural practices which has received increasing attention is FGC. While these have been increasingly talked about, currently there are no estimates on the number of people affected by these practices in Scotland. From your experience, is this a practice which affects the individuals and communities in Scotland you work with?

If NO:



- What are the reasons why these particular communities are not affected by the practice?

Prompt for origins in non-practicing areas and aspects that have led to abandonment of the practice after migration.

If YES:



- What would you consider are some of the reasons why some people continue these practices after migration? What are the meanings the practice holds for people?

In addition to any comments about knowledge, tradition and beliefs, prompt for the role of marriage, women's status, women's access to resources, cultural identity.

- Are there any particular aspects which make individuals and communities more likely to continue the practice after migration?

Follow up by asking do these relate to the resettlement challenges participant has previously discussed? In what ways?

- Are there any factors which stand in the way of the abandonment of FGC in Scotland?
- From your experience, are these practices a priority for the individuals and communities themselves?

Prompt for 'why's' – are there other, more prominent issues? Is there any community action taking place addressing the practice?

- Is there anything else you would like to say about the topics we have been discussing?

### *Debriefing*

Thank the participant for their time. Give the participant an opportunity to ask any questions they might have, and ensure they have the researcher's details if they have any follow up questions.

The researcher will also ask if they are interested in receiving a summary of the findings after the research has been completed. Briefly outline the other on-going data collection activities and encourage the participant to share a word about these with their networks.

## **Interview schedule for zine-making sessions**

### *Opening*

Introduce yourself and the project. Explain the purpose of the study and the possible benefits of increasing our understanding about women's experiences of living as a migrant woman in Scotland and the issues affecting migrant women. Explain that part of the project is specifically interested in changing attitudes towards GBV and FGC.

Outline confidentiality and how the data will be used and stored. Instruct the participant that they can freely discuss FGC and individual and community attitudes towards the practices. If they want to, they can also disclose if they have themselves experienced this. However, clearly inform the participant that you have an ethical obligation to inform the authorities if they disclose someone being at risk of harm. This includes if they identify individuals intending to practice FGC, or if they identify a girl or a woman who is at risk in UK or abroad. The participant will be instructed the researcher will not have to disclose general statements, such as "I know some people still practice FGC" but that if the person intending to practice these is identified in the statement such as "my sister is intending to take her daughter back to our country of origin to be cut", the researcher will have to share this information. The participant can also discuss about instances when this practice has already happened without the researcher having to report this to the authorities.

Specify expected focus group duration (no more than 90 minutes). Before moving onto the focus group questions and activities, give the participants an opportunity to ask any questions about the study. The participant information form will be made available prior to the group session and this will be verbally explained before participants give consent, either written or verbal, to be interviewed in a group.

Ask participants' permission to record the session. Participants will give their consent (written or verbal) before the session will begin.

Before moving onto the discussion, outline the ground rules:

- Everyone's views are important and valuable, so can we all please ensure only one person speaks at a time.
- Please respect each other's opinions. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I will ask.
- I will keep everything you say here confidential; however, I cannot guarantee other participants would not share what you have said here. I would ask you all to please respect each other's confidentiality. Once you leave the group, please do not share with others who took part or what did they say.

### *Participant introductions*

Ask participants to introduce themselves

## Zine-making activity

Explain that next you would like the participants to think more broadly on their experiences as a **migrant woman in Scotland**.

Possible prompting questions:

- Are there some common experiences you all share?
- Are there any experiences you have had that you think we should raise awareness about? (prompt for cultural and structural barriers and inequalities)
- You may also think about if your own experiences are different from the representations of migrant women you have come across. Are there any representations you would like to challenge through sharing your own views and experiences?

The aim for this activity is for participants to discuss and to visualise their conversation into a zine page. Before starting the discussion:

- Explain what is a zine and why we are making a zine-page
- Explain how the zine page will be used – after all pages are put together as one zine this will be shared with all focus group participants. These will also be used to communicate participants' self-representations about what it is like to be a migrant woman in Scotland when the research findings are shared with communities and policymakers. Advise the participants that because the zines will be used as another way of communicating their views and experiences confidentially, they should not write their names anywhere on the page.

For zine making, the participants will be provided with:

- A3 paper
- Magazines
- Visual prompts
- Scissors
- Glue
- Black and coloured pens

The researcher will observe the participant discussion and zine-making. Once the participants have finished their zine, the participants will be asked to explain their zine page to the researcher and outline the key messages.

### *Debriefing*

Participants will be thanked for their time and contribution. Researcher will affirm confidentiality and outline the next steps for the research. The researcher will mention the other data collection activities which the participants can share with their networks and what will happen once all the data has been collected. Participants will be given an opportunity to ask any questions they may have. Participants will also be given an information sheet outlining the available resources and support.



## Appendix C. Survey

Q1. What country are you from?

Q2. What area in your country of origin are you from?

Q3. What year were you born?

Q4. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other, please specify

Q5. How many years have you lived in the UK?

Q6. Have you applied asylum in the UK?

- Yes, and now I have leave to remain in the UK.
- Yes, I am still waiting for my decision.
- I have not claimed asylum in the UK.
- I don't want to say

Q7. What is the highest level of education you have completed either in the UK, in your country of origin or in any other country?

- I have not been to school
- Koranic school
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- High school

- College
- University

**Q8. If you are currently studying, what level is your course?**

- Secondary school
- High school
- Vocational training
- College
- University
- Community ESOL

**Q9. If you are currently in education, do you consider your course matches your skills and previous qualifications?**

- My course is below my educational or skill level
- My course matches my educational or skill level
- My current course is above my educational or skill level

**Q10. Please describe your English skills.**

How well can you speak English in every-day situations? (for example, speaking on the telephone or talking to a doctor or a teacher)

How well can you understand official letters in English? (for example, reading letters from the doctor or your local council)

How well can you write English in every-day situations? (for example, filling official forms)

Not at all

Not very well

Well

Very well

Q11. Please describe what you do at the moment (you may choose more than one)

- Working full time (30 hours or more per week)
- Working part-time (less than 30 hours a week)
- Looking for work
- Legally not allowed to work
- Unable to work
- Doing voluntary work
- Looking after home and family
- Retired
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Q12. **If you are employed**, what does the firm/organisation/business you work for mainly make or do? For example, retail, car repairs, primary education... *Please do not write down the name of your organisation.*

---

Q13. **If you are employed**, what is your (main) job? This could be a job like bus driver, civil engineer, primary school teacher, shop assistant...

Q14. **If you are employed**, please briefly describe what you do in your main job.

---

Q15. **If you are employed**, which of these options best describes your work?

- Permanent work
- Fixed-term work
- Seasonal work
- I have no guarantee of work each day.

Q16. **If you are working**, do you feel...

- Your work is below your educational or skill level
- Your work matches your educational or skill level
- You are employed above your educational or skill level

Q17. Do you have any of the following? (for this question you can choose more than one option, if they apply to you)

- No, I have no special circumstances
  - Yes, I have a physical health problem, such as illness
  - Yes, I have a mental health problem (for example, stress, anxiety, depression...)
  - Yes, I have a physical disability or impairment
  - Other, please tell me what
- 

Q18. Which local area do you live in Scotland?

---

Q19. What is your current housing situation?

- I live in temporary accommodation (including temporary flats, hostels and hotels)
- I live in permanent accommodation (either as a tenant or as an owner)
- I am currently homeless (including sleeping rough, couch surfing and shelters)
- I live in asylum accommodation (Home Office/Serco, any other)

Q20. If you have a place to stay, how satisfied are you with the following?

	Very dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Neither dissatisfied or satisfied	Quite satisfied	Very satisfied
Your accommodation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your neighbourhood?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q21. If you have a place to stay, how safe do you feel...

	Very unsafe	Unsafe	Quite safe	Very safe
In your home?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In your neighbourhood?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q22. Please state how strongly you feel you belong to each of the following places.

	Not at all belong	Not very strongly belong	Quite strongly belong	Very strongly belong
Your neighbourhood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The city in which you live	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scotland	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your country of origin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q23. In the past year, have you been treated unfairly because of your ethnicity, accent, religion or culture?

- Never
- Very rarely
- Occasionally
- Often
- Very often

Q24. In the past year, have you been a victim of crime? You may choose more than one option.

- No, I have not been a victim of crime
- Yes, I have been a victim of a physical abuse
- Yes, I have been a victim of a verbal abuse
- Yes, I have been a victim of some other kind of crime

Q25. If you could move, would you...

- Stay in your current area
- Move somewhere else
- I don't know

Q26. What are your future intentions?

- I want to settle permanently in Scotland
- I want to return to my country of origin
- I want to move to a different country
- I don't know

Q27. Do you have a religion? If so, could you tell me what.

Q28. The next questions ask you about your social relationships.

How often do you meet socially with people [other than your family], who share your culture and ethnic group?

How often do you meet socially with people who do not share your culture or ethnic group?

How often do you keep in touch with friends and family who still live in your country of origin? (this can be through online, phone or letter contact).

Never                  Rarely                  Occasionally                  Often                  Very often

Q29. Do you have a person who you can go for support...

	Yes	No	I don't know
who shares your culture and ethnic group?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
who does not share your culture or ethnicity?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q30. Please state how strongly you feel you belong to the following groups.

	Not at all belong	Not very strongly belong	Quite strongly belong	Very strongly belong
People who share your culture and ethnicity in Scotland	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People who share your culture and ethnicity in your country of origin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The local Scottish people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q31. What is your marital/relationship status?

---

Q32. In some countries, there are practices which involve altering female genital area in different ways, including pricking, stretching or cutting. Have you ever heard about these practices?

- Yes
- No

---

Here, I refer to these practices with a term 'genital modifications'. By this I mean all the different practices that alter female genital area, including ones which do not necessarily involve cutting.

Q33. Are any of these practices practiced in your own local community in your country of origin?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q34. Have you had any of these practices done to you?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

---

Q35. If yes, could you indicate what was done at that time:

- Pricking, but no flesh removed
  - Some flesh removed
  - Flesh removed and some stitching
  - Flesh removed and closed with stiches
-



Stretching of the labia

I don't know

Something else, please briefly explain:

Q36. Do you believe there any benefits if girls and women **have** genital modifications done?

Q37. Do you believe there are any benefits if girls and women **do not have** genital modification done?

Q38. Please read the following statements and indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with them.

*Genital modification is a religious requirement.*

*If a girl or a woman has genital modification done, she has a better chance of finding a good husband.*

*Genital modification prevents sex before marriage.*

*Genital modifications prevent adultery.*

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

Q39. Do you think any of these practices should continue? If so, please also say what practices.

## **Appendix D. Ethical approval**

Wednesday 20/12/2017 14:38

### **ETHICAL AND SPONSORSHIP APPROVAL**

#### **UEC17/69: Sime/Käkelä: Negotiating intersecting forms of oppression: Cultural change and Female Genital Cutting (FGC) after migration**

I can confirm that the University Ethics Committee (UEC) has approved this protocol and appropriate insurance cover and sponsorship have now also been confirmed.

I would remind you that the UEC must be informed of any changes you plan to make to the research project, so that it has the opportunity to consider them. Any change of staffing within the research team should be reported to UEC.

The UEC would also expect you to report back on the progress and outcome of your project, with an account of anything which may prompt ethical questions for any similar future project and with anything else that you feel the Committee should know.

Any adverse event that occurs during an investigation must be reported as quickly as possible to UEC and, within the required time frame, to any appropriate external agency.

The University agrees to act as sponsor of the above mentioned project subject to the following conditions:

1. That the project obtains/has and continues to have University/Departmental Ethics Committee approval.
2. That the project is carried out according to the project protocol.
3. That the project continues to be covered by the University's insurance cover.
4. That the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange Services is immediately notified of any change to the project protocol or circumstances which may affect the University's risk assessment of the project.
5. That the project starts within 12 months of the date of this letter.

As sponsor of the project the University has responsibilities under the Scottish Executive's Research Governance Framework for Health and Community Care. You should ensure you are aware of those responsibilities and that the project is carried out according to the Research Governance Framework.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you success with this project.

Kind regards  
Angelique Laverty  
Research & Knowledge Exchange Services (RKES)

## **Appendix E. Overview of themes and sub-themes**

### **Cultural reasons underpinning FGC**

FGC as a precondition for marriageability

Controlling women's sexuality

FGC as a rite of passage

    Becoming a woman

Men's expectations

    Perceived sexual pleasure

    Submissiveness

    Long lasting marriage

Religious requirement

Ostracism of uncut women

“Ensuring” cleanliness

Cultural pride

### **Cultural barriers for ending GBV**

Community pressure

Bullying

Traditional gender roles

    Man as the head of the household

    Man as a breadwinner

    Woman as a caregiver

    Submissive wife

Controlling women's sexuality

Controlling women's mobility

“Everyone's business”

    FGC without parental consent

    Respecting elders

    Celebrating FGC

FGC as a private matter

Normalising FGC

Mother's influence

Honour codes

### **Barriers to women's help-seeking**

Corruption

State inaction

Police violence

Financial dependency

Social isolation

Immigration control

Language barriers

Lack of support networks

Community control

GBV as a taboo

Asylum stigma

### **Asylum as a source of harm**

Asylum limbo

Safe country reviews

Fear of deportation

Fear of detention

Asylum as a choice between two evils

Asylum restrictions

Culture of disbelief

Accusations of lying

Questioning evidence

Genital examinations

Unsympathetic and hostile responses

Homelessness

Risk of GBV

Compounding trauma

### **Community perspectives on ending FGC**

Learning and unlearning culture

Lack of community involvement  
Lack of funds for community organising  
Need for awareness-raising  
Need for dialogue

### **Barriers to ending FGC**

Lack of knowledge about the law, rights and responsibilities  
Survivor stigma  
FGC as a taboo  
Transnational pressure  
Positive views on social media

### **Perspectives on supporting women**

Mental health support

- Need for safe spaces for women
- Importance of peer support
- Need for victim-centred responses
- Role of third sector support
- Aspirations a resource for recovery
- Barriers to accessing services
  - Islamophobia
  - Lack of culturally sensitive provision

Women's empowerment

- Barriers to participation
  - Lack of platforms of women
  - Travel and childcare
- Lack of representation
- Barriers to employment and education

### **Experiences of abandoning FGC**

Making sense of trauma

- Feelings of insecurity
- Questioning self-image

Damage to inter-personal relationships

Difficult to trust people

Withdrawal from culture

Childbirth as a turning point

Lack of support

### **Responses to FGC**

Emergency responses to FGC

Tic box approach

Shocked reactions to women's FGC-status

Lack of attention to elongation and FM

Contradictions between child protection and immigration control

### **Cultural change after migration**

Finding balance between two cultures

Tensions between couples

Marital breakdown

Disciplining children

Controlling girls

Importance of culture of sharing

Changing gender roles

## **Appendix F: Community Advisory Board Session Outline**

### Session 1

- Getting to know the project
- Role of CAB
- Narrative discussion on migration journeys

### Session 2

- Exploring key concepts with mind-mapping (integration, cultural change)
- Discussion on barriers and enablers

### Session 3

- Survey review
- Discussion: Balancing cultures after migration (family, gender roles, parenting, role of faith and community, women's vulnerability)
- Discussion: Changing rights and responsibilities

### Session 4

- Survey re-review
- Discussing FGC provision and support

### Session 5

- Zine making

### Session 6

- Feedback
- Lunch celebration
- Outlining next steps

## Appendix G. Support resources given to the participants in this study

### List of organisations and support which you can turn to for more information about female genital cutting

**Saheliya** provides mental health and well-being support for black, minority ethnic, asylum seeker, refugee and migrant women and girls (12+). Saheliya provides confidential counselling, support work, complementary therapies and learning centre courses.

<http://www.saheliya.co.uk/> [info@saheliya.co.uk](mailto:info@saheliya.co.uk)

Edinburgh Office: 125 McDonald Road Edinburgh EH7 4NW

Glasgow Office: St. Rollox House, 130 Springburn Road Glasgow G21 1YL

**Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre** offers a range of services for Muslim women, including a free helpline, employability support, refugee support and workshops.

<http://www.mwrc.org.uk/> [info@mwrc.org.uk](mailto:info@mwrc.org.uk)

Free Helpline (Monday to Friday 10-4pm) 0808 801 0301

**Shakti Women's Aid** provides help and advice to black minority ethnic (BME) women, children and young people who are experiencing, or who have experienced domestic abuse.

<http://shaktiedinburgh.co.uk/> [info@shaktiedinburgh.co.uk](mailto:info@shaktiedinburgh.co.uk)

24-hour domestic abuse helpline 0800 027 1234

**FGM Aware** has compiled a list of local organisations that provide help and support in several African countries.

[http://www.fgmaware.org/uploads/4/6/7/9/46792493/fgm\\_orgs\\_in\\_africa.pdf](http://www.fgmaware.org/uploads/4/6/7/9/46792493/fgm_orgs_in_africa.pdf)

**Your GP** can refer you to a specialist gynaecologist or FGC service if you are living with health consequences of female genital cutting. To find your local NHS provider who you can turn to, please go to <https://www.nhsinform.scot/national-service-directory/gp-practices>

**UK Law** Female genital cutting is illegal in Scotland. This includes taking someone abroad for the purposes of practicing female genital cutting. Find more about the Scottish law here

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/violence-against-women-and-girls/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/>

**FGM Aware** website also provides more information about ending female genital cutting in Scotland. <http://www.fgmaware.org/>

**Petals** is an online app for young people who want to know more about female genital cutting. <http://petals.coventry.ac.uk/#c>

Do you have concerns that someone might be at risk of female genital cutting? Contact NSPPC 24-hour helpline: 0800 028 3550 or email [fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk)

In case of an emergency, call the emergency number 999. If not urgent, you can still call the police on 101.