



The Power of International Organizations

The United Nations versus Female Genital Mutilation

Arna Þórdís Árnadóttir

Lokaverkefni til MA-gráðu í alþjóðasamskiptum

Félagsvísindasvið

Febrúar 2013



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

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Stjórnmálafræðideild
Félagsvísindasvið Háskóla Íslands
Febrúar 2013

Ritgerð þessi er lokaverkefni til MA-gráðu í alþjóðasamskiptum og er óheimilt að afrita ritgerðina á nokkurn hátt nema með leyfi rétthafa.

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260682-4159

Reykjavík, Ísland 2013

Útdráttur

Viðfangsefni þessarar ritgerðar er að varpa ljósi á hvort alþjóðastofnanir, í þessu tilfalli Sameinuðu þjóðirnar (SP), hafi völd innan alþjóðakerfisins, og þá hvers konar völd. Hér á að skoða hvort SP hafi vald til að breyta normum og/eða menningum innan ríkja og þá sérstaklega hvort hægt sé að eyða úr menningum ríkja afskurðum á kynfærum kvenna. Hugtakið vald er skoðað útfrá mismunandi kenningum fræðimanna og nokkrar fræðilegar hugmyndir sem hjálpa við að útskýra af hverju SP ættu að skipta sér af málefninu, kenningar um útbreiðslu og breytingar á normum og nokkrar kenningar innan femínisma. Þegar þessu er lokið eru nokkur verkefni skoðuð sem SP hafa komið að, hvort sem heldur sem stuðningsaðilar eða sem stofnendur sem stuðla að því að hætta afskurðum.

Í niðurstöðum ritgerðarinnar kemur fram að Sameinuðu þjóðirnar hafa völd í alþjóðakerfinu en þó ekki hervald raunhyggjunnar. Völdin sem SP hafa eru í formi áhrifavalds, vald þeirra kemur frá fjölda meðlimaríkja, sem þrýstingur og þvinganir til breytinga. Þær hafa líka vald í formi sannfæringarkrafts. Valdið sem þær hafa er samt þess háttar að það tekur tíma að koma breytingum í gegn. Þær hafa vald til að útrýma afskurðum á kynfærum kvenna, en ekki á einni nóttu.

Abstract

The subject of this dissertation is to seek an understanding on whether international organizations, in this case the United Nations (UN), have power within the international system, and if they do, what kind of power. Here it will be discussed whether the UN have the power to change norms and/or cultures within states and especially whether they can push for the elimination of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). The concept of power is considered from three different theories. Theories about norm changing/diffusion, and ideas within feminism are discussed to explain why the UN should interfere with this subject. Then a few programmes, which the UN has either implemented or helped with, that aim for the elimination of FGM/C, are discussed.

The conclusions of this dissertation claims that the UN has power within the international system, but it is not of the military kind. The power the UN has is influential. The power comes from the number of Member States and as pressure and coercion for change. They also have the power of persuasion. The power they have, however, does not work quickly. Changes aimed for will take time. The UN has the power to eliminate FGM/C, but not over night.

Preface and acknowledgements

This dissertation is the final assignment in the MA studies of International Relations at the University of Iceland. It corresponds to 30 ECTS credits and is written under the supervision of Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir, Adjunct Lecturer at the University of Iceland.

As a student of international relations and being a woman interested in women's issues I wanted to connect those subjects. During the course of my studies I often came across the subject of female genital mutilation/cutting. I had also encountered the issue during my BA studies and this was a subject I found I was deeply concerned about. This is why it was easy for me to choose the subject for my Masters dissertation. When I had found my subject all I had to do was to connect it to international relations which I found relatively easy. The conclusion I came to was to try and find out whether the United Nations really have the power to change things within the international system and whether they can change norms and behaviours within its' Member States, focusing on FGM/C. The reason I chose that is because the concept of 'power' is a contested one and people really disagree on what the concept entails.

There are many people I would like to thank for making this assignment possible. First and foremost I would like to thank my teacher and supervisor for this dissertation, Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir. Her advice, her patience and her optimism has been very helpful throughout my research, and without her professional supervision and critique this project would have been much more difficult to overcome. I would also like to thank my husband, Sigurpór Hjalti Gústafsson, and my children, Áróra Líf and Óttar Hjalti, for their patience, their love and support throughout my studies and especially during the time spent on this dissertation. Special thanks go to my mother-in-law, Guðrún Gerða Sigurþórsdóttir, for her invaluable help taking care of my children. Without her, I don't think I'd be finishing my research now. I would also like to thank my mother, Kristín Þóra Kristjánsdóttir, for her encouragement and her endless belief in me. I have also had endless support from both my family and my husbands'. Siblings, grandparents, the whole lot, and I would love to name them all but that would take up too much space. I'd also like to thank my dear, dear friends. These people around me have all been so supportive and helpful. I would also like people to know the supporting comments I got through Facebook really helped. Lastly I would like to thank my friend, Candice Michelle Goddard, who took the time to read over my dissertation with helpful comments and critique.

For Árni Stefán Árnason (1958-2006).

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1 Introduction

With increased globalisation states concern themselves more and more with what other states are doing. To enrich their possibilities, economically and for their own security, they align and interconnect their interests. A good example of this is how most states are now members of the United Nations (UN). States see their interests (economy/security) best served being in this alignment. Because of the number of states belonging to the UN, states that are not members of the UN risk becoming outsiders in the international society. But to become a member in alignments/organizations like the UN, states have to agree to abide to the rules and regulations the majority of Member States have made.

Some of the main issues on the UN's agenda are human rights issues. Agreements are made by the UN Member States on what should fall under the category of human rights and all states have a vote. The issue looked at in this dissertation is the issue of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). The United Nations have twice signed statements declaring the eradication of FGM/C in the world, in 1997 and 2008. They have furthermore defined FGM/C as a form of violence against girls and women because of both the physical and emotional effects. It harms their well-being and thus violates their human rights as defined by the UN (OHCHR, et al., 2008). The latest news on the subject, from the 20th of December 2012 (when research for this dissertation was in its final stages), said that the UN has passed a resolution banning the practice of female genital mutilation. The UN's website states that:

This significant milestone towards the ending of harmful practices and violations that constitute serious threat to the health of women and girls was taken by the 194 UN Member States, who approved five General Assembly resolutions today on advancing women's rights, including one on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations (FGM). (UN Women, 2012).

The number of states who signed the resolution means that the states where the cutting is performed are agreeing to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting. One can hope that this resolution means that the governments involved will place emphasis on the elimination of the practice and this will be a huge step towards the end of it in the world.

Female genital mutilation/cutting has been performed in various different countries over the centuries. Today it is estimated to occur mostly in 28 African countries, but there is also evidence of cases in the Middle East and Asia as well. Beyond this there are reports of the procedures being performed in migrant countries all over the world. The United Nations estimate that over 130 million girls and women have undergone some kind of FGM/C, and that there are three million girls living in Africa who are at risk of being cut annually (UNICEF, 2010, pp. 4-5). These staggering numbers are one of the reasons I started this research. I think it is necessary to keep the discussion of FGM/C alive in the Western countries since it is easy for us to remain oblivious to the harms and violence people undergo in the developing countries, and elsewhere. I believe in the need to constantly remind people of unhealthy practices in the world, which we in the West would not accept in our own societies, such as activities that violate human rights. This dissertation aims to serve that purpose as well as contributing to the studies of international relations (IR).

Because of the UN's efforts to eliminate FGM/C and discussion I had seen on whether the UN has the power to do something in the matter, looking at power and defining what power is was inevitable. Scholars have written about the concept of power and wondered who has it and who can possibly get it. In this dissertation the ideas of three scholars will be regarded; Hans J. Morgenthau, J. Ann Tickner, and Antonio Gramsci. Realists like Morgenthau believe that power is in the hands of the strongest states. Power, according to him, is in the hands of the states that have the most weapons, the biggest military, the strongest allies etc. Feminists like Tickner think that power isn't as simple as that, although one form of power is certainly of the military kind. Tickner believes that we can also find power in the form of cooperation and alliances. Then there are others like Gramsci who think perhaps power lies in the art of persuasion. According to Gramsci, it is when a state convinces its' citizens of something being good (when in fact its acts are debateable) is when it achieves its greatest power. I find that by looking at these three scholars I can reach a conclusion on what I think of power and how I should define it. I think it is necessary to look at all the factors and define power in accordance to what is being discussed each time. In the case of whether the United Nations has power to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting it is clear that its' power is not of the military kind, but I think one cannot deny the UN's power within the international system. The UN has power with

peer pressure for example, with alliances, with conviction and the ability to change people's minds on norms and behaviours.

Norm changing and norm diffusion in the international system has been increasingly studied over the last few years. I cite Krook and True (2010) in this dissertation, but they studied how norms spread throughout the international system. They present norms as processes and not something that is constant and unchangeable. According to them, and others, norms can be changed through discourse for example, and through discussions and regulations. They claim that considerable norms and traditions have changed over the years and they mention slavery as one example. Norms diffuse over the international system, and ideas change in accordance. In this dissertation the idea is considered if it is possible to diffuse the norms which look at FGM/C as a violation of human rights over to the states where they're seen as good (sometimes they're even seen as an act of love).

As I mention in the dissertation, there was no way to avoid feminism in a dissertation concerning feminine issues. Feminism is a vast topic though, so I limited myself to three schools within feminism that I thought would help me in answering my research questions. I chose to focus on Post-structural feminism because, like the ideas of norms diffusion, these feminists believe that subjectivity is neither fixed nor unified so one should always question social meanings and fixed signs (Weedon, 1987, pp. 24-25). I also chose to look at postcolonial feminism because I believe that we have to take into account that African women (and others subjected to FGM/C) live under different conditions than Western women and we have to take that into account. We can't apply the same rules for everyone. When we interfere with societies different from ours we have to be careful not to be condescending and demand that people conform to the Western way in everything. Postcolonial feminism helps to explain how the United Nations has chosen to approach the subject of eliminating FGM/C. It has through learning and experience come to the conclusion that norms need to be changed to fit the existing culture and not just to fit Western expectations. Finally chose to look at feminism from an international relations perspective (IR feminism) because it emphasizes the need to criticise key concepts in international relations; such as sovereignty, the state and security. IR feminists wonder about the place of the woman in international relations and ask whether it makes any difference in the world that most policy-leaders and military personnel are

men. Because I am looking at international relations I believe I have to include critique on the subject.

Why I chose to use the concept ‘female genital mutilation/cutting’

Before heading on to the next chapter, I believe it is essential to explain why I use this concept (female genital mutilation/cutting) for the procedures discussed in this dissertation, and not for example female genital circumcision. It is my belief that this concept is most explanatory of all the concepts used over this procedure. I want to stress the severity of the procedures and I want the reader to bear this in mind throughout the dissertation. When using the word circumcision it is easy to compare female genital cutting to boys’ genital circumcision but the procedures that boys undergo are far less invasive. Some people use the term female genital surgery, and this concept is in my mind a misleading one for it is very rare that the procedures are done in a hospital environment. In most cases they are performed at home with unhygienic instruments etc. I believe that female genital mutilation is the most appropriate concept but decided on using cutting as well as it is less offensive to those who perform the procedures. I believe that the cutting is mostly done with the best intentions. Therefore no blame should be assigned. Consequently the word ‘cutting’ will be used here as well.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to examine whether the United Nations has the power to change things in the international system, focusing on the subject of female genital mutilation/cutting. If the United Nations have power, then to find out whether or not it has the power to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting in the world, or if they should interfere with the subject at all.

The subject of FGM/C was popular amongst scholars around the year 2000 but since then not much has been written on the subject. One of the purposes of this dissertation is to bring the subject back to the surface to be further discussed and to make sure it is not forgotten. If the discussion dies down the issue is forgotten and states performing the procedures are left alone to continue the practice. If one really wants female genital mutilation/cutting to be eliminated from the world it is important that international society is not given the chance to forget or put the issue aside. It is

common that certain issues become a trend for a little while but then discussion slowly but surely dies out. Poverty and hunger in Africa, equal rights for women and marginalized groups, and female genital mutilation/cutting are just a few examples of trends that get popular for a while, but in between, the discussion always dies down. Until someone pulls the subject back up.

Many scholars and specialists have wondered whether international organisations have the power to change things in the world and written different theses on the subject. Some argue that international organizations should not interfere in inner-state activities and other say that it is their duty. In the research done for this dissertation no studies were found asking whether international organisations, the United Nations in particular, can influence states' norms or get them to change their behaviour; or can eliminate FGM/C from the world.

The research questions are thus the following:

Should the United Nations try to change state norms and/or cultures?

Does the United Nations have the power to change state norms and/or cultures?

Does the United Nations have the power to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting in the world?

1.2 Methodology

This dissertation is an analytical thesis. I chose this method because collecting data on the subject I chose is difficult; the research material is in Africa mostly, and I had no way of getting there at this time. There were, however, case studies and reports that I could get my hands on that had not been put in theoretical context. An analytical thesis works in the way that the author focuses on breaking down and thoroughly explaining the topic at hand. The goal is to provide a specific claim, as well as to demonstrate a deeper understanding and knowledge of the topic. An analytical thesis requires the author to perform many tasks; such as devising a thesis, collecting sources, accessing them, and utilize them to support the original ideas. To analyze something is to ask what something means. An analytical essay answers how something does what it does or why it is as it is (Brobbe, 2002). In an analytical thesis a research is conducted so that the author becomes proficient on a topic so he/she can restructure and present the topic from his/her own perspective.

The main object of the analytical thesis is to help the reader understand the topic discussed in it. In order to make sure the topic is understood it is important to choose the research questions carefully. The topic should be clear and cannot be built on vague or broad research questions. When a specific thesis idea and clear research question is used the reader will understand what says in the thesis and what is supposed to be gathered from it. If the thesis is clear the reader should be able to know clearly what it is about by reading the introduction. The purpose of an analytical thesis is to explain something to the reader and help him understand and accept the author's explanation. There are four main steps for doing this; analysing, interpreting, persuading and arguing. When analyzing a subject one takes an object, breaks it apart and examines the parts closely. If a problem is to be analyzed one should study the parts of the problem and the interconnections of those parts, then one should draw conclusions of them (thesistown.org, 2010).

This dissertation was written in Reykjavik, Iceland from the beginning of September 2012 until January 2013, although research for it started early in the spring semester of 2012. The goal of this dissertation is to find out whether the United Nations has the power to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting in the world or not. In order to do that data was collected and the topic was approached by examining the data and understanding it. The data collection for this dissertation was through books, reports, journal articles and other subjects mostly gathered over the internet but also from the public library. The aim is to contribute and collect knowledge about the subject of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and the power of international organizations.

In summary, this dissertation aims to explore what power the United Nations has with regards to eliminating FGM/C. In order to do that the dissertation has three main chapters followed by a conclusion. In the first chapter the subject at hand is introduced. Female genital mutilation/cutting is defined and explained, why the cutting is performed and what complications can arise from the cutting and why the United Nations should interfere. The second chapter covers the theoretical context. Three scholars' ideas on power are contemplated and I shall draw conclusions on what I think should be defined as power. Then ideas on whether norms can be changed or diffused will be looked at because in order to eliminate FGM/C the idea is that norms will have to change in the states that perform the cutting. After that some

feminist ideas will be looked at; one cannot study a feminine issue without taking feminism into account. Post-structural feminism, postcolonial feminism and IR feminism are specifically looked at in relations to this subject. In chapter three a few of the United Nations programmes that it has either implemented itself or partaken in, will be looked at to see what approach it emphasizes and what possible progress has been made.. A special emphasis will be on the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme because it seems that the United Nations has put emphasis on this programme since its origin in 2007. Finally in the fourth chapter a short discussion will be on the power of the United Nations to change existing norms and cultures. Conclusions will then follow.

In the spirit of strong objectivity and to clarify my standpoint in this research, I have to situate myself in context to the subject. I am a married woman, thirty years old, I have two children and I am a native Icelander. I am a feminist academic and very interested in equal rights of women and matters of feminist issues. This dissertation will be coloured by this and I will be taking the activist stance.

1.3 Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) has been defined as a form of violence against girls and women by the international society. The reason for this is that it violates their physical, as well as their psychological wellbeing, and thus their human rights. The United Nations (UN), or some of its sub-organizations, has twice signed statements stating that Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting must be eradicated in the world. In 1997 three UN organizations signed such a statement and by the year 2008 the organizations had increased to ten (OHCHR, et al., 2008).

In the former statement (from 1997) it is stated that the organizations are not trying to criticize or condemn nations or societies as such, rather it is pointed out that even though cultural rituals and traditions are seen to be pointless, or even harmful from some points of view, they have meaning and purpose for those who practice them. At the same time the organizations point out that culture is not a constant phenomenon. Culture is constantly flowing, adjusting and renewed, and therefore can be affected and changed. "People will change their behaviour when they understand the hazards and indignity of harmful practices and when they realize that it is possible to give up harmful practices without giving up meaningful aspects of their culture." (WHO,

UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997). In this statement FGM/C is defined by taking all the procedures that entail removal, whether it is partly or wholly on the outer female genital, or other harmful procedures that have no medical reason. In this same statement female genital mutilation/cutting is divided into four types:

Type I Excision of the prepuce, with or without excision of part or all of the clitoris.

Type II Excision of the clitoris with partial or total excision of the labia minora.

Type III Excision of part or all of the external genitalia and stitching/narrowing of the vaginal opening (infibulation).

Type IV Unclassified: includes pricking, piercing or incising of the clitoris and/or labia; stretching of the clitoris and/or labia; cauterization by burning of the clitoris and surrounding tissue; scraping of tissue surrounding the vaginal orifice (angurya cuts) or cutting of the vagina (gishiri cuts); introduction of corrosive substances or herbs into the vagina to cause bleeding or for the purposes of tightening or narrowing it; and any other procedure that falls under the definition of female genital mutilation given above (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997, p. 3)

FGM/C is most commonly performed on girls between the ages of 4 and 12. The ages vary between countries; in some places it is practiced right after birth and in other places the procedures aren't performed until right before marriage or even after pregnancy (UNICEF, 2010, p. 4). Most of the girls and women that have undergone these kinds of procedures live in one of 28 African countries but there is evidence of cases in the Middle East and Asia as well. There are also reports of the procedures being done in migrant countries in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and North America as well. However, proof of those procedures being performed is very difficult to obtain (UNICEF, 2010, pp. 4-5). The United Nations have estimated that over 130 million girls and women in Africa have undergone some sort of FGM/C (OHCHR, et al., 2008, p. 4) and that three million girls living in Africa are at risk of being cut annually (UNICEF, 2010, p. 4).

The joint statement from 1997 says that these three organizations; the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have the role to support projects against FGM/C in all stages, whether the projects are international or they are in the hands of individual nations or communities. In order to achieve health and wellbeing of women, girls, their families and communities these organizations have to take some responsibility (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997, p. 2).

Although these statements were published with the intent to eliminate FGM/C, these aren't the first times statements have been made against FGM/C. It is definitely worth mentioning that it wasn't many years before that the concept of FGM/C was used in agreements or statements from the United Nations (UN). It is indicated in the statement from 1997 that it wasn't until 1993 that the concept was used in an international statement from the UN. At the same time it is pointed out that it can be read between the lines in other agreements and statements that came before, that FGM/C falls under what the UN have vowed to work against (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997, pp. 10-11).

Even though the number of girls and women affected by FGM/C is staggering, data shows that the prevalence of FGM/C has declined slowly over the past decades. A report by UNICEF from 2009 says that:

“[G]irls and younger women are less likely to have undergone any form of FGM/C than older women, and fewer daughters are cut compared to mothers. The pace of reduction varies widely, however, and millions of girls remain exposed to the risk of genital cutting in the future” (UNICEF, 2009, p. 12).

It also says that even where the prevalence is high it is noticeable that not all women support FGM/C. In fact the data indicates that increasing numbers of women oppose to the practice (UNICEF, 2009, p. 12).

1.3.1 Why female genital mutilation/cutting

People have often wondered about the origins of female genital mutilation/cutting and many believe religion is fundamental cause. Scholars have come to the conclusion that it is not religion that is the reason FGM/C began but the pragmatic role of FGM/C in attenuating sexual desire in women. They say that by removing the drive for sexual satisfaction the likelihood of women falling into temptation before marriage is reduced, and likewise the possibility of women surrendering their virginity voluntarily before marriage. It also reduces the demands they could possibly have on their husbands that they wouldn't or maybe could not meet (Cook, Dickens, & Fathalla, 2002, p. 284). Many societies offer religious reasons for cutting women, the

justification of religious duty has for example sometimes been offered in Muslim communities. Some of the readings of the hadith¹ suggest that Islam requires female genital cutting. People debate the meaning of those interpretations, however, and contemporary religious leaders disagree on whether Islam requires, encourages, permits or discourages the practice (Hayford & Trinitapoli, 2011, p. 255).

It has to be taken into account when fighting to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting that it is practiced in the belief that it's in the women's/girls best interest. "[I]t will ensure a girls' or woman's marriageability, chastity or beauty or family honour" (UNICEF, 2009, p. 12). The procedures are being held out by such powerful social norms that even when families are aware of the harm that can result, they are still willing to have their daughters cut. Seen from their perspective it is understandable because not conforming to this obligation would probably bring greater harm to the girl and the entire family because of shame and social exclusion that results (UNICEF, 2009, p. 12). As Black and Debele point out in their article on female genital mutilation in Britain, some understanding is required of the cultural background FGM/C has. "From the family's point of view the operation ensures a satisfactory bride price; an eligible man would not consider marrying a girl who had not had the operation." (Black & Debele, 1995). FGM/C is associated with cultural ideals of femininity and modesty and a belief that girls become clean and beautiful after the removal of body parts that are considered male or unclean (WHO, 2012). There are also various myths that help perpetuate the FGM/C practice and one is if that the female genitalia are not cut they will grow to the size of a penis. Another myth is that FGM/C actually enhances fertility and promotes child survival (UNFPA, n.d). With people believing in these myths it is understandable that they keep on undergoing these practices. Many people see the practice of FGM/C as a quest for male control over women. "Women's sexuality is seen to endanger social order and

¹ Hadith, Arabic Ḥadīth ("News" or "Story"), also spelled Hadīt , record of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, revered and received as a major source of religious law and moral guidance, second only to the authority of the Qur'ān, the holy book of Islam. It might be defined as the biography of Muhammad perpetuated by the long memory of his community for their exemplification and obedience. The development of Hadith is a vital element during the first three centuries of Islamic history, and its study provides a broad index to the mind and ethos of Islam (Britannica, n.d).

virtue, and morality requires that women's sexual and other empowerment must be suppressed." (Cook, Dickens, & Fathalla, 2002, p. 284).

It has been observed that where there is little economic viability for unmarried women, ensuring that their daughters undergo FGM/C is a loving act to make certain of their marriageability. The practice is common where premarital virginity is required for example and serves often as an indication of the family's honour (Cook, Dickens, & Fathalla, 2002, pp. 283-284). The economic factor plays a vital role in the ongoing practices of FGM/C. According to UNFPA FGM/C is for example sometimes a prerequisite for the right to inherit and FGM/C is in many cases a major income source for practitioners (UNFPA, n.d).

The reasons people and communities give for practicing FGM/C varies. Some people say they do it for the marriageability of their daughters, some say it comes with their religion, and other people talk about the purity that comes from the procedure. Whatever the reasons are they are integrated into their societies and it is not enough to tell people that their traditions and customs are wrong and that they have to change them. In order to bring about change, programmes need to change the beliefs of the people, changing the traditions from within.

1.3.2 Complications

It is estimated that more than 5500 young girls a day undergo genital mutilation and more than 100,000 teenagers die from complications of genital mutilation during pregnancy and childbirth every year. (Momoh, Ladhani, Lochrie, & Rymer, 2001, p. 186).

Cook, Dickens and Fathalla address the complications surrounding FGM/C in their article Female genital cutting (mutilation/circumcision): ethical and legal dimensions. They claim that all types of female genital mutilation/cutting have possible complications, immediate and long-term. The consequences of FGM/C vary on the type and severity of the procedure performed. The severest complications arise in Type II and Type III (see table in Chapter 1.3) procedures but complications can arise from all types of FGC/M (Cook, Dickens, & Fathalla, 2002, p. 283).

Cook et al. say that the immediate complications can include bleeding, severe pain and shock. Serious sepsis may also occur, especially under circumstances where unsterilized instruments are used for cutting, as well as haemorrhage, tetanus, ulceration of the genital region and injury to the adjacent tissue. Acute urine

retention can result from the swelling and inflammation around the wound. If the genital area becomes contaminated with urine or faeces, infection is also likely to develop within a few days of the procedure. Infection can possibly lead to septicaemia if the bacterium reaches the bloodstream. Infection and haemorrhage can be of such magnitude that it can lead to death (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997, p. 7; Cook, Dickens, & Fathalla, 2002, p. 283). The joint statement from WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA from 1997 to eliminate FGM/C in the world also voices a concern regarding possible transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in FGM/C procedures where the same instrument is often used in multiple operations. The statement also points out that in some cases where infibulations prevents or impedes vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse may be used as an alternative. The resulting damage to tissue is also a possible route of infection by HIV (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997, p. 7).

Long-term complications can “include cysts and abscesses, keloid scar formation, damage to the urethra resulting in urinary incontinence, dyspareunia (painful sexual intercourse) and sexual dysfunction” (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997, p. 7). Common complications of Type III FGM/C (infibulation) include repeated urinary tract infection and chronic pelvic infections that can cause irreparable damage to the reproductive organs and result in infertility. Growth of scar tissue can be so excessive that it can be disfiguring (Cook, Dickens, & Fathalla, 2002, p. 283). Infibulation can cause difficulty in urinating and during menstruation. It can cause recurrent bladder and urinary tract infection. Infibulation can make sexual intercourse difficult and sometimes it can be necessary to cut open the bridge of skin created by the labia majora. Cutting might also be necessary during child birth. (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997, p. 7). The previously mentioned joint statement by WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA says that it is likely that the risk of maternal death and stillbirth is greatly increased, especially in the cases where skilled medical professionals are not available and where appropriate facilities are lacking. During childbirth it says that the risk of haemorrhage and infection is greatly increased.

Several complications arise during pregnancy and childbirth with women who have undergone FGM/C. Complications can happen before, during and after delivery. In many cases the women need to be de-infibulated and that procedure is far from painless. De-infibulation means that anterior incision of the vulva is needed to

enable delivery to take place. The most severe complications are because of Type III FGM/C. Cook et al. wrote about complications around childbirths:

Antenatal complications and complications in early labour, prolonged or obstructed labour, obstetric fistulae (holes or tunnels between the bladder and the vagina and between the rectum and the vagina) are complications that arise particularly with this type of FGM. Foetal distress and fatal death (stillbirth and early neonatal death) may also result. Foetal deaths appear to be related to the obstruction to delivery posed by the vulva scarring that occurs in Type III procedures or the extra scarring that can happen with complicated Type I or II procedures. (Cook, Dickens, & Fathalla, 2002, p. 283).

Cook et al. go on to say that postpartum haemorrhage is significantly more common in women who have undergone FGM/C and usually because of the extra incisions made and the perineal tears experienced as a result of the scarring that can occur in all types of FGM/C. They say that FGM/C has been reported as a contributing or causal factor in maternal death which most often occurs when obstructed labour, caused by the vulvae scarring, is unattended or inappropriately treated. They also mention that systematic studies to investigate the harmful effects of FGM/C are lacking and particularly about the sexual and psychological effects (Cook, Dickens, & Fathalla, 2002, p. 283).

The UN joint statement from 1997 talks about the psychosexual and psychological health aspects and speculates on the effects FGM/C has on women:

Almost all types of female genital mutilation involve the removal of part or all of the clitoris, which is the main female sexual organ, equivalent in its anatomy and physiology to the male penis. The more severe types, such as infibulations, remove larger parts of the genitals and close off the vagina, leaving areas of tough scar tissue in place of the sensitive genitalia, thus creating permanent damage and dysfunction. Sexual dysfunction in both partners may result from painful intercourse and reduced sexual sensitivity following clitoridectomy and narrowing of the vaginal opening (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997, p. 8).

FGM/C is a part of many cultures around the world and the UN has decided they want to take part in eliminating these procedures. In order to do just that they have to keep in mind all relevant factors that have been listed here above. The procedures are being done for various reasons, there are consequences and complications from them and the next chapter will be about why the international community wants to involve itself in what might be seen as interference of national rituals and customs. From some points of view it might be seen as none of their business.

1.4 Why interfere

Many have asked why international organizations such as the United Nations feel the need to interfere with what might seem to be a domestic affair. Female genital mutilation/cutting is performed on indigenous girls and women in tribes and societies that people might say have nothing to do with the international society. But why international organizations interfere varies. One of the reasons is that FGM/C is not based on a requirement of religious observance but is directed to the social control of women's sexuality, to ensure virginity and family honour. The United Nations and other international organizations have sought to fight for women's rights and therefore one might say it's their obligation to fight against FGM/C for this reason.

Another reason for organizations interfering is the feminist discourse against FGM/C. Hope Lewis (1995) cites Fran Hosken, a leading Western anti-FGM/C activist who stated that she felt her personal sense of dignity was under attack by these mutilations, as well as her sense of worth as a woman and a human being. She said she couldn't tolerate that these practices are inflicted on helpless children for no other reason than them being female. According to Lewis, Hosken's words express what the feminist human rights discourse stands for. Hosken also said she believed that all of the people who have access to information and who are aware of the biological and sexual facts have an obligation to share that knowledge and to make it available to all who need it so desperately. Everyone has an obligation to face up to their responsibilities and act in accordance. According to Lewis most anti-FGM/C writings identify that there is an ethical obligation for those from non-practicing cultures to act because of the damaging consequences, both physical and psychological, of FGM/C for a large number of women. The discourse also seeks to legitimize the position that certain traditional practices, FGM/C being an example, should be seen as a violation of international human rights standards. Lewis says that the discourse also tends to frame the role of cultural outsiders as one of 'enlightenment', which entails exposing and challenging the patriarchal underpinnings of FGM/C (Lewis, 1995, pp. 10-12).

Cook, Dickens and Fathalla (2002) say that even if FGM/C didn't present the risk of physical and psychological harm, it would still be a violation of women's rights. They say sexuality is inherent in human status, and its compromise for purposes of social control of women is an oppressive denial of women's dignity. They state that

sexuality refers to a core dimension of being human. That includes sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, eroticism, attachment/love, and reproduction. According to Cook et al. it is experienced through and expressed in thoughts, desires, beliefs, fantasies, values, attitudes, practices, activities etc., and suppressing women's sexuality through any kind of FGM/C is demeaning to women by denying them an aspect of their humanity (p.286).

The simplest answer to the question why interfere is that most if not all, of the countries, where these procedures are performed are a part of the United Nations (UN). The states belonging to the UN has signed international covenants and laws on human rights. Within those agreements on human rights, the UN has agreed upon the rights to non-discrimination, to integrity of the person and to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, for example. Several conventions and declarations have been made within the UN, signed by most governments where FGM/C is practiced, for the promotion and protection of the health of girls and women, including eliminating the procedures of female genital mutilation/cutting (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997, p. 10). Human rights Universalists say that human rights standards need to apply to everyone equally, across cultural and national boundaries so that they have meaning and force. These people argue that the international society needs to protest whenever human rights violations occur; this obligation was what formed the basis for the human rights system (Lewis, 1995, p. 19). Many countries have forbidden the practice within their judicial system, countries where the practice is traditional and where they come with immigration (Cook, Dickens, & Fathalla, 2002, p. 281).

1.4.1 International human rights

According to Bettina Shell-Duncan, who wrote an article in 2008 called *From Health to Human Rights: Female Genital Cutting and the Politics of Intervention*, the international campaign to eliminate FGM/C has actively been trying to divorce itself from a health framework perspective and instead been trying to focus on working from a human rights perspective. She says that even though the human rights approach is promising, there are pitfalls to beware of and careful deliberation is required to develop action strategies that offer both protection and respect for the

culture, and autonomy for the women and the families involved (Shell-Duncan, 2008, p. 225).

International resolutions and articles of association have been made with concerns for human rights. These resolutions entail, amongst other things, that individuals have the right to control his or her body. They also say that all human beings should be able to live in conditions that allow them to enjoy good health and healthcare. Within the international society some resolutions have also been made that condemn discrimination based on sexes and the reason the UN and their sub-organizations have decided to fight to eliminate FGM/C in the world is because these procedures are thought to maintain the injustice girls and women live with, in the societies where these procedures are performed (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997, p. 1 and 10; OHCHR, et al., 2008). The joint statement from UN organizations in 1997, declaring to work to eliminate FGM/C from 1997, states that international human rights covenants underscore the obligations of United Nations Member States to respect and ensure the protection and promotion of human rights (WHO, UNICEF, & UNFPA, 1997, p. 10). Campaigns to eliminate FGM/C can be traced back several centuries, but the current wave of opposition was brought “forcefully into the international arena” (Shell-Duncan, 2008, p. 225) by a series of conferences that honoured the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985). An international movement was launched with the aim of creating and enforcing universal norms that defied alternations of the female genitals as fundamentally intolerable (Shell-Duncan, 2008, p. 225).

The initial phase of what can be called the current wave of opposition posed opposition on FGM/C by calling it a health issue. This opposition has labelled FGM/C a ‘harmful traditional practice’. However, the health approach gradually fell from favour because of several unintended consequences, for example because health based campaigns failed to motivate large-scale behaviour change. People were aware of most of the health issues arising from FGM/C but felt the risk was worth taking because of the social and cultural importance of the practice. That, and, as Shell-Duncan points out, the warnings given by campaigns, reports and articles, about the health issues are often exaggerated, and therefore easily ignored. As a result, since early 1990s, the campaign has actively attempted to step away from the health perspective and gone into adopting a human rights framework for justifying opposition of FGM/C. Shell-Duncan points out that by adopting this approach the

problem has been that the international human rights instruments don't have a specific way to address FGM/C. She says that nonetheless, there has been a growing consensus with aligning FGM/C with other forms of violence against women and that has placed FGM/C "firmly in the expanding global 'culture of human rights'". A number of scholars have issued critiques of the human rights approach, particularly in how to balance the universalization of human rights and then multiculturalism (Shell-Duncan, 2008, pp. 225-226).

Hope Lewis wrote about the feminist discourse and the involvement of Western feminists in FGM/C in 1995. Although her writings are almost twenty years old they are still very relevant. The same issues are still occurring and the same questions put forth on the involvement of Western feminists. There is still the question on how much the international society should get involved in fighting to eliminate FGM/C and whether or not the issue pertains to anyone else besides those who perform or undergo the procedures. The issue of human rights laws and regulations seem to be never ending and quite the same. Lewis wrote: "Human rights scholars have generated a substantial and growing body of literature on the potential role of human rights law in the eradication of [FGM/C]. Much of this work adopts feminist perspectives, arguing that [FGM/C] should be eradicated as a violation of the human rights of women." (Lewis, 1995, p. 8). The UN has issued FGM/C to be a violation of the human rights of women but without the cooperation of the countries and/or the people in them they are just words on paper. Lewis also points out that feminist scholars have, for a long time now, challenged the distinction in traditional human rights and called artificial on one hand "the violation of human rights through direct governmental action in the 'public' sphere" and on the other hand "the violation of rights through less direct state participation in, or countenancing of, abuses perpetrated by individuals in the 'private' sphere." She writes that according to these scholars this distinction between public and private spheres has been upheld by a patriarchal notion, that "the promotion of human rights in the public realms dominated by men deserves higher priority than the drive to further respect for the human rights of women in the private spheres of home and family." (Lewis, 1995, pp. 15-16). The feminist discourse has been unyielding in the fight against patriarchy in societies but it is as old as time and so the fight continues and goes on in circles, or so it seems. The battle is also far from being restricted to developing countries. Feminist scholars have worked on implementing the recognition of women's rights as human rights.

They have called for attention to the violations of human rights with special impact on women, (for example rape as a form of torture of women political prisoners), “advocating recognition of refugee and asylum claims based on gender-based persecution, and arguing that human rights violations that take place in the context of home or community... ..should be placed on the international legal agenda.” Violations like female genital mutilation/cutting and domestic violence should be placed on the international legal agenda. According to Lewis several Western feminist scholars believe that FGM/C violates the standards set out in the major international human rights instruments. These feminists argue that FGM/C violates the rights to “equal protection and non-discrimination, the rights of children, the rights to corporal integrity, the right to life, the right against torture, and the right to health” which are all internationally agreed as human rights (Lewis, 1995, pp. 15-16). These arguments are all still being used today.

In Lewis’s article she goes on to say that the feminist analysis of FGM/C as a human rights violation is complicated because it exists at what can be called the crossroads of complex cultural, gender, and racial questions in human rights jurisprudence. This might be one of the explanations on why it’s taken so long to eliminate FGM/C in the world. For example Lewis points out that the procedures of FGM/C are mostly done by women on women and she asks how the international law should respond to that? Would prosecuting the women be a solution in eliminating the procedures or would that further the problem? She asks whether the women affected by FGM/C have access to the international human rights system or whether that is just a collection of “irrelevant theoretical constructs?” (Lewis, 1995, pp. 8-9). Lewis is not wrong there, and though the international legal system has surely gotten better over the years, it is still a colossus bureaucracy and it isn’t simple for an individual, or a society even, to get through and ask for help or even just for information.

1.5 Summary

In summary of this chapter organizations have to tread carefully in acting against culture’s existing norms. Existing cultures need to be respected and protected and also the autonomy of girls and women and the families involved. Covenants have been made internationally on human rights where it is stated that individuals have the right to control their bodies but the fact of the matter is that in many places they don’t

have the control. In these cases, of FGM/C, the procedures are done on girls as young as infants and they have no say in the matter of whether they undergo the cutting or not. With these covenants made it is a fact that where girls are being cut here is a clear violation of their human rights. It says here above that there is no specific way of addressing FGM/C through the international human rights system. Hopefully that is about to change since the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution banning the practice of FGM/C the 20th of December 2012.

In chapter 2 the theoretical framework will be put forward that will help me explain whether or not the United Nations have the power to change existing norms within states.

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter I will outline the theoretical framework for the thesis. I start out by discussing three different ideas on power and what the concept means. This will help me rationalise whether or not I believe the United Nations has 'power' in the international system. After this I will look into the theories of norm changing and norm diffusion that rationalises why the UN and others try to work on changing beliefs and rituals that it beliefs harmful. Finally, I'll conclude with three different ideas within feminism. These ideas will help explain how ideas and norms are structured in the world, and are not natural. They explain the different situations women live in and how the school of international relations, and knowledge really, has been created by men and that women's perspective should also be taken into account..

This provides the foundation for the thesis. In conjunction with these theories, I will argue what 'power' the UN has in the international system and why the other ideas help to rationalise its' work.

2.1 Power or powerlessness

This dissertation seeks to find out whether international institutions (in this case the United Nations) have the power to change the way states behave. In order to find that out it is necessary to look at the schools and theories of power. I decided to limit myself to three ideas of power. Firstly, I chose to examine the realist Hans J. Morgenthau and his ideas on power in international politics; how he believes that interests can be defined as power for example and how states see their best interests served with having as much power as possible. Morgenthau was a realist and believed that every state is a potential enemy and therefore seeking power is a logical way to behave. After Morgenthau I thought it logical to take a look at J. Ann Tickner's ideas that challenge those of Morgenthau. She uses ideas from feminist theory to show how Morgenthau explains the world from a masculine perspective and suggests some ways in which feminist theory might help form a feminist epistemology of international relations. According to Tickner, power can be seen in the human ability to work together, making alliances etc. Lastly Antonio Gramsci's ideas on power will be examined. He thought hegemony could be reached with the power of ideas. He thought the power of persuasion was great and without having the public behind the government hegemony would not be fully gained. According to

Gramsci the greatest achievements of governments is gained when convincing their people on something being good, when the facts of the matter can be debateable.

2.1.1 Realism and power

Hans Joachim Morgenthau (1904-1980) was one of the leading twentieth-century figures in the study of international politics. He believed that states' (and individuals) interests can be defined as power. According to him 'the political man' is a being constantly seeking power. He also said that a real man is put together of an 'economic man', 'political man', 'moral man', 'religious man', etc. A man who is nothing but a political man would be a beast for he would be lacking in moral restraints completely (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 16). His writing in *Politics Among Nations*, first published in 1948, discusses power as tools for people/states to control the thoughts and behaviour of others.

The way Morgenthau defines power is well defined on a website for students of international relations by Arash Heydarian Pashakhanlou. He says that according to Morgenthau power can consist of anything that establishes and maintains power of man over another man. From physical violence to the most subtle way a man can influence another psychologically. Pashakhanlou says that Morgenthau sees the most important material aspect of power to be armed forces, but even more significantly a nation's character, morale and quality of governance. Military strength is material but far from the only thing that matters when power is concerned (Pashakhanlou, 2009). Morgenthau said that all politics, including international politics, are a struggle for power. He said that no matter what the ultimate aim is, power is always the immediate aim. Morgenthau sees power as a psychological relationship between those in control and those being controlled. "When we speak of power, we mean man's control over the minds and action of other men." (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 32). The impact of power comes from three sources; when one expects benefits, when one fears disadvantages, and from love or respect for men and/or institutions. "It may be exerted through orders, threats, the authority or charisma of a man or of an office, or a combination of any of these". Morgenthau says that because of this definition it is necessary to make four distinctions: between power and influence, between power and force, between usable and unusable power, and between legitimate and illegitimate power. To have the power of influence means to have the trust of another person or institution. This person is able to

influence someone into making decisions of sorts. Morgenthau uses the example of the president's advisor. He has the power to influence the president but at the same time he can't be sure that the president will make decisions the way he wants but the advisor has the stance to put forward his opinions and therefore influence. The power of force means that the threat of violence is present. It can be in the form of police action, imprisonment, capital punishment, or even war. With usable and unusable power Morgenthau speaks of nuclear weapons. They are unusable because there are great likelihoods that they would bring a mutual destruction and therefore no good will come from them. Finally he speaks of legitimate power, "that is, power whose exercise is morally or legally justified". That, he says, must be distinguished from illegitimate power. As he said, the power of a policeman searching someone with a warrant is legitimate power but a burglar robbing someone under gunpoint uses illegitimate power. Morgenthau says that legitimate power has a better chance to influence the will of its objects than equivalent illegitimate power (Morgenthau, 1978, pp. 31-34).

Morgenthau said that the history of modern political thought is a history "of a contest between two schools that differ in their conceptions of the nature of man, society, and politics." One school believes that a rational and moral political order can be achieved here and now, deriving from "universally valid abstract principles." This school assumes that human nature is essentially good and infinitely malleable. This school "trusts in education, reform, and the sporadic use of force to remedy these effects" and says "the failure of the social order to measure up to the rational standards of knowledge and understanding, obsolescent social institutions, or the depravity of certain isolated individuals or groups is to blame (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 3). The other school however, believes that the world, although imperfect, is "the result of forces inherent in human nature." This school says that if we want to improve the world we must work with those forces, not against them. This is the school that Morgenthau himself adheres to. "This school, then, sees in a system of checks and balances a universal principle for all pluralist societies. It appeals to historic precedent rather than to abstract principles, and aims at the realization of the lesser evil rather than of the absolute good." Morgenthau says that this theoretical school sees human nature as it actually is and looks at historic processes as they have actually happened and this school is realism (Morgenthau, 1978, pp. 3-4).

Morgenthau explains realism and how it works in international and domestic politics. He says that there are six principles of realism and for the purpose of explaining his stance on realism I will go through them one by one. The first principle says that objective rules, with roots in human nature, rule in politics. "For realism, theory consists in ascertaining facts and giving them meaning through reason." (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 4). The second principle of realism says that interests defined as power is the main foundation of realism. Political realism stresses the rational, objective and unemotional. "The concept of interest defined as power imposes intellectual discipline upon the observer, infuses rational order into the subject matter of politics, and thus makes the theoretical understanding of politics possible." (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 5). The third principle says that defining power (interests) can be objective and universally valid, but also recognizes that a concept doesn't have a fixed meaning, it can change over time (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 10). Principle number four is about awareness on moral importance of political actions. "It is also aware of the ineluctable tension between the moral command and the requirements of successful political action" says Morgenthau and "both individual and state must judge political action by universal moral principles, such as that of liberty". He also says that the state has no right to let its moral disapproval of the violation of liberty get in the way of successful political action, that being inspired by the "moral principle of national survival" while at the same time the individual has a moral right to sacrifice himself to defend a moral principle like that if he so chooses (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 12). The fifth principle of realism refuses to take moral standards of one state as universal or absolute. "As it distinguishes between truth and opinion so it distinguishes between truth and idolatry." Morgenthau says that most, if not all, states get tempted to make other states see their own particular aspirations and actions towards a moral purpose as the right way to go, and he says most states can't resist the temptation for too long and try in one way or another to enforce their beliefs and opinions on other states. The last principle, number six, says that realism believes politics to be an independent field that asks what influence procedures or policies have on the power (interests) of the state (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 13).

In every political situation contradictory tendencies are at play. One of these tendencies is more likely to prevail under certain conditions. But which tendency actually will prevail is anybody's guess. The best the scholar can do, then, is to trace the different tendencies that, as potentialities, are inherent in a certain international situation. He can point out the different conditions that make it more likely for one tendency to prevail than for another

and, finally assess the probabilities for the different conditions and tendencies to prevail in actuality (Morgenthau, 1978, pp. 23-24).

Morgenthau believed that aspiring for power is a distinguishing element of international politics even though scholars and others have denied this when working towards cooperation, a united Europe being an example. He says that the struggle for power has been universal both in time and space and an undeniable fact of experience. States have, regardless of social, economic and political conditions, met each other in contest for power and Morgenthau says that the tendency to dominate is an element of all human associations. From the family, he says, through fraternal and professional associations and local political organizations, to the state (Morgenthau, 1978, pp. 37-39). According to him all politics, whether domestic or international, can be reduced to one of three basic types. "A political policy seeks either to keep power, to increase power, or to demonstrate power." (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 52).

Peter Gellman wrote an article on Morgenthau in 1988 and tried to explain why Morgenthau's ideas were still relevant. He said it was because of his frankness and his unwillingness to look past the political controversies of his day. Gellman wrote of Morgenthau's ideas on international cooperation and said that he had argued that such cooperation depended upon the common policies of the great powers, and while international institutions might host concerted action, they could not foster it. He said that "order in [an] international system of many sovereigns would not exceed the sum of its parts, and that sum might be zero." (Gellman, 1988, p. 250). Gellman explains Morgenthau's ideas of the balance of power and how he stresses on the permanence of power because it is intended to provide much of the content for interest in the formulation of interest defined in terms of power. He cites another article of Morgenthau's, *The Problem of the National Interest*: "The idea of interest is indeed the essence of politics and is unaffected by the circumstances of time and place." Gellman says that the problem is that Morgenthau doesn't say much more, and in fact the discussions of national interests are actually quite sparse. He asks himself what interest defined as power actually mean for international politics and says that it doesn't mean a hard and fixed concept but is rather a disposition that accepts that survival is the main interest of all states (Gellman, 1988, pp. 254-255). He points out that Morgenthau believed states to have moral standards, standards they would not step over if unnecessary; "Certain things are not being done on moral

grounds, even though it would be expedient to do them.” (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 237; Gellman, 1988, p. 258). Gellman explains how Morgenthau said that in order for states to co-operate they need to share common ideas, a similar morality. As long as a state remains outside such a system, at best indifferent and at worst hostile to it, the rest of the world has a vital interest in the character of such a country (Gellman, 1988, p. 259). Morgenthau spoke of the Soviet government in this particular example but it can be whatever state that chooses not to co-operate or undergo a common rule-of-morality.

2.1.2 Feminism and power

J. Ann Tickner is a feminist international relations (IR) theorist who has focused on getting feminist ideas into the international relation studies. She has for example focused on making women’s role in IR visible which is opposed to the traditionally masculine subjects including men, money and war. Tickner wanted to avert the political view from men and instead make visible the contribution women have made to IR. Tickner wrote an article in 1988 directly criticising Morgenthau’s ideas on politics called Hans Morgenthau’s Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation. She took Morgenthau’s six principles discussed before and changed them from a feminine perspective.

Tickner looks at why international politics have been perceived as a ‘man’s world’ and why women are so unrepresented in foreign policy establishments, the military, and the academic discipline of IR. She raises the question if there are primarily men working on these issues, constructing theories and explaining the workings of the international system, is it not to be expected to find a “masculine perspective in the academic discipline also?” (Tickner, 1988, p. 430). Tickner says she chose to focus on Morgenthau’s six principles of realism because “they represent one of the most important statements of contemporary realism from which several generations of scholars and practitioners of international relations have been nourished.” (Tickner, 1988, p. 430). She says that, although criticised, these principles have helped shape the way IR scholars and practitioners in the West have thought about international politics since Morgenthau first published his book in 1945. Tickner states that she is not saying that Morgenthau is completely wrong in his analysis of the international system but his assumptions are based on a view of human nature that are partial and privilege masculinity. She wants to change how the vocabulary used in IR upholds

masculinity and puts down femininity. She states that almost all feminist theorists say that “masculinity and femininity refer to a set of socially constructed categories that vary in time and place rather than to biological determinants” (Tickner, 1988, p. 431), and that in general they are “sceptical about the possibility of finding a universal and objective foundation for knowledge that Morgenthau claims is possible.” (Tickner, 1988, p. 432). Here after Tickner’s reformulation of Morgenthau’s principles will be cited as they appear in Tickner’s article. She thought the reformulation might help people begin to think differently and in multidimensional terms on international relations:

1. A feminist perspective believes that objectivity, as it is culturally defined, is associated with masculinity. Therefore, supposedly ‘objective’ laws of human nature are based on a partial masculine view of human nature. Human nature is both masculine and feminine: it contains elements of social reproduction and development as well as political domination. Dynamic objectivity offers us a more connected view of objectivity with less potential for domination
2. A feminist perspective believes that the national interest is multidimensional and contextually contingent. Therefore it cannot be defined solely in terms of power. In the contemporary world the national interest demands co-operative rather than zero-sum solutions to a set of interdependent global problems which include nuclear war, economic well-being and environmental degradation.
3. Power cannot be infused with meaning that is universally valid. Power as domination and control privileges masculinity and ignores the possibility of collective empowerment, another aspect of power often associated with femininity.
4. A feminist perspective rejects the possibility of separating moral command from political action. All political action has moral significance. The realist agenda for maximising order through power and control priorities the moral command of order over those of justice and the satisfaction of basic needs necessary to ensure social reproduction.
5. While recognising that the moral aspirations of particular nations cannot be equated with universal moral principles, a feminist perspective seeks to find common moral elements in human aspirations which could become the basis for de-escalating international conflict and building international community.
6. A feminist perspective denies the validity of the autonomy of the political. Since autonomy is associated with masculinity in Western culture, disciplinary efforts to construct a world view which does not rest on a pluralistic conception of human nature, are partial and masculine. Building boundaries around a narrowly defined political realm defines political in a way that excludes the concerns and contributions of women. (437- 438).

Tickner cites Hannah Arendt who defined power “as the human ability to act in concert, or action which is taken in connection with others who share similar concerns.” (Tickner, 1988, p. 434). It has been traditional in the West, she says, to tie the concept of national security to military strength and the role of militaries to protect

the nation state from external threats physically. Tickner says that goes well with Morgenthau's ideas on power but she also says that this definition is partial at best in the world as it is today. "When advanced states are highly interdependent, and rely on, weapons whose effects would be equally devastating to winners and losers alike, defending national security by relying on war as the last resort no longer appears very useful." (Tickner, 1988, p. 435). She points out that today it is equally useful for a large part of the earth's population to look at security in ways of satisfying basic material needs as well as military threats. Tickner talks about how Morgenthau encourages people to "try to stand back from the world and think about theory-building in terms of constructing a rational outline or map that has universal applications." (Tickner, 1988, p. 436). She says that in contrast the feminist literature she reviews in her article emphasises connection and contingency. Her goal is to point people towards constructing "epistemologies which value ambiguity and difference qualities that could stand us in good stead as we begin to build a human or ungendered theory of international relations containing elements of both masculine and feminine modes of thought." (Tickner, 1988, p. 437).

2.1.3 Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian writer, a politician, a political theorist, sociologist and a linguist. He was one of the founding members of the Communist Party of Italy and was imprisoned by Mussolini's fascist regime (Lawner, 1989). Gramsci, like Morgenthau and Tickner, also wrote about power. But his ideas on power are different because he wrote about achieving hegemony with persuasion for example. Gramsci wrote his most famous work from prison so his ideas are somewhat coloured by his appalling mental and physical conditions. Critics point out that his situation and the way he writes causes his texts to be open to interpretation in many ways (Germain & Kenny, 1998). Many scholars have dedicated their work to interpreting Gramsci and some have tried to put his ideas into the context of international relations, although Gramsci purely wrote about hegemony within states. Some of the ideas will be portrayed here.

According to Gramsci one of the best ways to achieve the power of states is by convincing the people, the proletariat, that they (an individual or a party) are what they want as authority. Putting ideas into people's heads and making them see things the way you want them to see them is a sure way to achieve power. Gramsci's ideas

on hegemony are somewhat different from other scholar's ideas; he associates the term exclusively with civil society "as opposed to political society, when he wants to emphasize above all the great task of cultural, 'ideal' direction as something necessarily complementing and accompanying the seizure of state power in all of its phases." (Lawner, 1989, p. 42). According to Lynne Lawner's introduction in *Letters from Prison* by Gramsci it is when Gramsci insists on the necessity of achieving hegemony "through all of the organs of civil society *before* as well as after taking over the structure of the state" (Lawner, 1989, p. 42), he is most original. By this he means that in order to gain full hegemony it is not enough to have hegemony at the top of the state but all classes have to be convinced of the authority a party or a person has gained. "If "dominance plus direction" can be seen... as really no more than an extension of the notion of "dictatorship of the proletariat," this new concept of hegemony and the crucial role it gives to intellectuals on all levels of society is something quite unique in the history of Marxist thought." (Lawner, 1989, pp. 42-43). Gramsci emphasizes the need to study historically the development of civil society and to analyze the development of it rather than of political society in the present. That is, look at the problems of culture as well as of power. Lawner explains some of the main concepts Gramsci uses in accordance to power as follows:

By civil society Gramsci indicates something much broader than what Hegel or Marx meant by it – namely, the entire complex of social, cultural, and political organizations and institutions in a particular society – everything, in other words, that is not strictly a part of the state. Hegemony, the Gramscian concept *par excellence* and the very fulcrum of his thought, is pictured as an equilibrium between civil society and political society – more specifically still, as an equilibrium between 'leadership' or 'direction' based on consent, and 'domination' based on coercion in the broadest sense. A 'historical bloc' – another key concept – is formed only when this equilibrium exists, that is to say, when a given class succeeds in maintaining hegemony over society through both direction and domination, persuasion and force. (Lawner, 1989, p. 42).

Rounding up, his idea on hegemony is very much based on the power of persuasion. Coercion in the broadest sense doesn't have to be violent or even direct. One can coerce another by persuasion too and that is the base of Gramsci's idea on power. Gramsci speaks about forming a new state and how doing that is entirely dependent on the ability of the ability of the "working-class party to interpret the will, and to organize the energies, of the majority of the labouring forces, hence of civil society". (Lawner, 1989, p. 49). Success therefore depends on the 'effectual hegemony' that the party comes to exercise over society as a whole. According to

Lawner “the modern state, first theorized by Machiavelli, is the creation of a party – that is to say, of a social class, a ruling class that is able to produce its own political personnel and a philosophy suited to its specific goals.” (Lawner, 1989, p. 50).

Robert W. Cox wrote about Gramsci and his ideas and tried to interpret them in accordance with IR. He noted that Gramsci didn’t have very much to say directly about IR but he found his thinking to be very helpful in “understanding the meaning of international organisation with which [he] was then principally concerned.” (Cox, 1993, p. 49). Cox points out that Gramsci took over an idea that was current in the circles of the Third International², which is that “the workers exercised hegemony over the allied classes and dictatorship over enemy classes.” (Cox, 1993, p. 50). He also looked at Machiavelli when developing his ideas of hegemony. How Gramsci perceived hegemony led him to enlarge his definition of the state according to Cox:

When the administrative, executive and coercive apparatus of government was in effect constrained by the hegemony of the leading class of a whole social formation, it became meaningless to limit the definition of the state to those elements of government. To be meaningful, the notion of the state would also have to include the underpinnings of the political structure in civil society. Gramsci thought of these in concrete historical terms – the church, the educational system, the press, all the institutions which helped to create in people certain modes of behaviour and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order. The hegemony of a dominant class thus bridged the conventional categories of state and civil society, categories which retained a certain analytical usefulness but ceased to correspond to separable entities in reality. (Cox, 1993, p. 51).

Cox says that Gramsci did not in any way “by-pass the state or diminish its importance.” (Cox, 1993, p. 58). For him the state was always the main entity in international relations and it is there that the social conflicts take place. It is also the place “where hegemonies of social classes can be built.” (Cox, 1993, p. 58). Cox says that in applying the concept of hegemony to IR and world order it’s necessary to determine when a period of hegemony begins, and when it ends. He says that “a period in which world hegemony has been established can be called hegemonic and one in which dominance of a non-hegemonic kind prevails, non-hegemonic.” (Cox,

² “In 1919, two years after forming the Soviet government in Russia, Lenin established the headquarters of the Third (Communist) International in Moscow. The Communist International (*Comintern* for short) is known as the “Third” because two other international socialist organizations of workers had previously been set up.” (historians.org, n.d).

1993, p. 60). Cox talks about four periods in history to illustrate this. In the first period (1845-75) Britain had world hegemony. Economic doctrines from that period are consistent with British supremacy though they have a universal form. In the second period (1875-1945) British supremacy was challenged and the balance of power in Europe became destabilized, leading to two world wars says Cox. In the third period (1945-65) Cox says that the United States founded a new hegemonic world order similar to the British one before. And he concludes with the fourth period (1965-?) when he said it became evident that the US world order was no longer working well and Cox says that in that period “three possibilities of structural transformation of world order opened up” (Cox, 1993, pp. 60-61), all having in common a more cooperation from states involved. Putting Gramsci’s ideas into an international context Cox says that in order to become hegemonic, “a state would have to found and protect a world order which was universal in conception, i.e., not an order in which one state directly exploits others but an order which most other states (or at least those within reach of the hegemony) could find compatible with their interests.” (Cox, 1993, p. 61). Cox says that international level of hegemony is not merely an order among states but an order within a world economy where there is a dominant mode of production “that penetrates into all countries and links into other subordinate modes of production.” (Cox, 1993, p. 62).

2.1.4 Conclusions

After looking at these different kinds of ideas on power it is possible for me to form an idea of what I think power is. One can look at power as force and one can look at power as the ability to persuade people/institutions/states to do things the way one wants. In the conclusion of this dissertation all of these ideas will be taken into consideration in order to answer the question on whether international institutions like the UN have the power to change norms or behaviours within the international system, or whether the UN has the power to eliminate FGM/C or not. Here it can be stated that all of these ideas are relevant because they explain that there are different ideas of power and one cannot conclude on anyone’s power without taking a look on at least a few different ideas of it.

2.2 Norm changing and norm diffusion

When it comes to eradicating FGM/C the United Nations policy is to try and change the norms and values concerning the procedures from within cultures. Rather than attacking the cultures and their belief systems the aim is to get the natives to change their views and thereafter beliefs and norms around them. FGM/C is in most cultures believed to be done in the girls' best interest and therefore the organizations need to change the cultures' view towards the procedures. The aim is to make people see that in reality the procedures are harmful and dangerous and it would be in everybody's best interest if the procedures would be eradicated and new norms and traditions would be taken up instead.

International norms are typically defined as ideas of varying degrees of abstraction and specification with respect to fundamental values, organizing principles or standardized procedures that resonate across many states and global actors, having gained support in multiple forums including official policies, laws, treaties or agreements (Krook & True, 2010, pp. 1-2).

When it comes to international relations (IR) norms have been a central research question. Krook and True (2010) studied how norms spread across the international system, looked at various reports and researches and argued that a discursive approach would offer a more promising way forward in theorization and analysis of the life cycles of 'international norms'. They presented a view of norms as processes and called attention to both 'internal' and 'external' sources of dynamism. Krook and True said that norms that have changed the behaviour of states and international organizations are diverse. They cover regulations, for example, associated with domestic politics, "such as suffrage, democracy, human rights, labour standards and prohibitions against slavery and apartheid." They can also include norms that govern inter-state relations, "like the expansion of cooperative security, humanitarian intervention and election monitoring, as well as restrictions on certain types of warfare and the hunting of endangered species." Although this list is not complete it indicates the effect international norms play in domestic and world politics (Krook & True, 2010, pp. 1-2).

Krook and True observed that norms continue to evolve after they have emerged and found that the reason for norms diffusing is that they don't necessarily mean the same in different states and for different people. Norms "may encompass different meanings, fit in with a variety of contexts, and be subject to framing by diverse

actors.” Krook and True came to the conclusion that norms that are spread across the international system tend to be vague and therefore appropriated for a variety of different purposes. They also concluded that norms are ‘processes’, works in progress, rather than finished products. Norms can be contested but tensions involving norms do not spring from internal contradictions or dissonance they say, but rather from competition with other norms, often opposing norms. According to their research norms are “anchored in language and revealed by repeated speech acts, leading to a semblance of permanence or institutionalization (Krook & True, 2010, p. 2).”

Krook and True talk about four main approaches to norm diffusion, the first one being the ‘world polity’ model. This approach suggests that states comply to enhance their reputation on an international level and their identities as ‘modern’ states. “According to this account, international norms are universalistic world models that are exogenously created and ‘not strongly anchored in local circumstances’”. World policy scholars focus on constructing theories on what they call ‘the social-structural frame that organizes, carries, and diffuses world cultural models’ but recognize at the same time that there may be inconsistencies and conflicts within the world culture as well as contradictions in what people might find to be cultural goods, a good example of that is what people think of liberty versus what they think of equality (Krook & True, 2010, p. 5).

The second approach to norm diffusion focuses on ‘norm cascades’ or as Krook and True put it “the occurrence of bandwagoning of states as increasing numbers of states adopt or internalize a new norm.” This theory says that international norms evolve in a ‘patterned life cycle’ where norms emerge, then gain the acceptance of a majority of states, “and then diffuse across the international community”, which causes states to converge increasingly around ‘a common set of principles’. When the norm has become widespread it moves into an internalization period where the norm gets to be taken for granted within both domestic and international politics. Krook and True say that this perspective recognizes that norms don’t just appear from thin air but are created actively by agents. Nevertheless these scholars do not explore the space within and among norms which has been contested, and how that space might “result in the fluidity or evaluation of norms themselves.” (Krook & True, 2010, p. 5).

Approach three seeks to understand how norm diffusion happens even though states actively try to ignore it, a 'boomerang effect'. This approach focuses on the influence domestic groups can have on states. Those groups are increasingly able to connect to transnational allies, "who use the power of principled ideas and norms to lobby their own states or international organizations to put pressure on the recalcitrant state from the outside." Krook and True say that this approach is mainly focusing on illuminating the role of transnational advocacy networks (TANs) as 'political entrepreneurs' but they also say that this leads to under theorizing of the dynamics of norms creation and it neglects the possibility of both hegemonic and subordinate norms. This view recognizes that "the shape that a norm takes depends upon strategic bargaining with advocacy networks." It says that once a norm is created it is no longer vulnerable to contestation; it simply becomes part of the broader political culture over time (Krook & True, 2010, pp. 5-6).

The fourth approach builds on the boomerang approach. It analyzes the impact domestically of international norms in relation to "a spiral pattern of transnational influence". (Krook & True, 2010, p.6). It observes similarities and differences across cases and the frameworks ties to identify conditions under which "international norms are internalized and applied domestically." (Krook & True, 2010, p. 6). According to Krook and True these stages are domestic repression, state denial, tactical concessions, prescriptive status and rule-consistent behaviour. They say that the focus on the spread and institutionalization of human rights indicates to these scholars that such standards are pre-given and, in some language, universal. This framework on its own cannot according to them conceive of how such discursive challenges might alter the meaning of norms themselves (Krook & True, 2010, p. 6).

Krook and True say that although different in some ways, these four main approaches to norm diffusion converge in explaining it; all of them say that norm diffusion embodies a "curious tension, combining relatively dynamic accounts of norm creation and socialization in rapidly changing external environments with more static and unitary conceptions of norms themselves". (Krook & True, 2010, p. 4). They argue a discursive approach focusing on norms as 'sense-making' practices would offer a greater leverage in analyzing patterns in their "origins, adoption and implementation" in various contexts. "Discourses shape what people *do* and what they *are* by fixing meanings and by opening subject positions from which to speak

and know.” (Krook & True, 2010, p. 6). This perspective highlights power as integral to the processes of social construction and determines what can and cannot be said, and with that who can and cannot speak as well. Krook and True say that a discursive approach therefore offers a number of important advantages over traditional constructivist framework but focusing on discourses, however, “does not mean that everything is possible.” (Krook & True, 2010, p. 7). Agents are constrained “not only by relations of power but also by existing field of norms, cognitive frames and meaning system already available for making sense of the world.” (Krook & True, 2010, pp. 6-7).

There are internal and external factors, when it comes to norms that interact in order to shape and develop individual norms. Debates surrounding one set of norms might give rise to a new set of norms, “while alignment with other norms may facilitate their broader resonance”. At the same time the environment can inspire other inspirations when supporters and opponents struggle to make out the meaning of a given norm. With that Krook and True say that the dynamism between internal and external factors is a ‘double edged sword’. They mean that although it promotes the creation of new norms it also increases possibilities for advocates to ‘lose control’ over the meaning of norms and how new norms are implemented. According to them the internal dynamism of norms emerges when there is a potential for competing meanings of a norm in question. These meanings might give rise to conflicts over definitions that can lead to revising new norms and in some cases the creation of new norms altogether. Krook and True say that the successful signing of international agreements often happens because they are imprecise: “the meanings of the norms to which they refer are left intentionally vague because detail is not necessarily conducive to agreement” (Krook & True, 2010, p. 7). The external dynamism of norms is generated by the broader universe of norms in process according to Krook and True. This offers a range of opportunities for inspiration, alignment and conflict as new norms are forming. Many scholars have pointed out that norms resonate and spread when they fit with pre-existing cultural values but they can also gain a foothold when they are associated with other widely accepted normative ideas (Krook & True, 2010, p. 9).

Agents are able to influence norms both nationally and globally. The United Nations believe that they can change the norms of those cultures that practice female

genital mutilation/cutting by giving the practitioners arguments that fit with their culture. Norms cannot be created with too much of a turnaround for the cultures but by fitting the new norms with the existing culture and changing it step by step, agents should be able to work on eliminating FGM/C. According to the norm diffusion theory a discourse on how harmful FGM/C is to girls and women should be created. Moreover a discourse should be implemented into these societies to change people's view on girls who do not undergo these procedures, making them marriageable even though they've not been cut. If scholars are right these measures are going to take time and be contested; they might even evolve in ways nobody can predict. But the possibility is at hand to change an existing norm because norms are ever-changing, a non-constant things that can be affected both from within and externally.

2.3 Feminism

Feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. These power relations structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become (Weedon, 1987, p. 1).

One cannot write about women's issues, such as female genital mutilation/cutting, without taking feminism into account. There are various ideas within feminism (as in other -ism's) and too many to account for in this dissertation but a few have been chosen in relation to the subject at hand here. The ideas that will be accounted for will be post-structural feminism, postcolonial feminism, and IR feminism. These ideas have in common that the situation surrounding women and FGM/C can be taken into account and looked at critically.

"For post-structuralist theory the common factor in the analysis of social organizations, social meanings, power and individual consciousness is *Language*." (Weedon, 1987, p. 21). It is in the language where political and actual consequences are defined and contested says Weedon and is yet also the place where the construction of how we sense ourselves and our subjectivity. Weedon says that language is not the expression of unique individuality, "it constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways which are socially specific." (Weedon, 1987, p. 21). For post-structuralism, subjectivity is not unified or fixed.

“Postcolonial scholars argue that, in international relations, constructions of ‘self’ and ‘other’ foster racial and cultural stereotypes that denote the other – in their case ex-colonial subjects – as inferior.” (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2007, p. 192). Postcolonial feminism also claims that Western feminists have constructed knowledge about non-Western women. They argue that a false universalism about women has been made from knowledge that has mostly been gathered from “relatively privileged Western women.” (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2007, p. 192).

IR feminists have re-examined some of the key concepts in the field, such as sovereignty, the state and security, and wonder whether it matters that most foreign-policy leaders, military personnel and head of international organizations are men and why women are still relatively powerless in matters of foreign and military policy. (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2007, p. 186).

2.3.1 Post-structural feminism

Chris Weedon wrote about structural feminism in her book *Feminist Practice and Post-structuralist Theory*. She points out that as feminists we take our starting point in the patriarchal structure of society and explains how the term patriarchal refers to power relations in which women’s interests are subordinated to the interests of men. Weedon explains that these power relations take many forms, “from the sexual division of labour and the social organization of procreation to the internalized norms of femininity by which we live.” (Weedon, 1987, p. 2). “Patriarchal power rests on the social meanings given to biological sexual difference. In patriarchal discourse the nature and social role of women are defined in relation to a norm which is male.” (Weedon, 1987, p. 2). Weedon points out that many of the social and political gains that women have made over the last century or so have been the result of struggles to include women into the rights and privileges that men had instituted to serve their own interests.

In theory almost every walk of life is open to us, but all the possibilities which we share with men involve accepting, negotiating or rejecting what is constantly being offered to us as our primary role – that of wife and mother. Whatever else we do we should be desirable to men, and, ideally, our sexuality should be given to one man and our emotional energy directed at him and the children of the marriage. This message comes to us from a wide range of sources, for instance children’s books, women’s magazines, religion, the advertising industry, romance, television, the cinema and current tax and social security arrangements (Weedon, 1987, p. 2).

Weedon says that while different forms of post-structuralism exist that vary in both their practice and political implications, they do share a fundamental assumption about language, meaning and subjectivity. As said above for post-structuralism, subjectivity is neither unified nor fixed so the answer for post-structuralists to the problems of the plurality of meaning and change, according to Weedon, is to question the location of social meaning in fixed signs. Post-structuralism instead speaks of signifiers “in which the signified is never fixed once and for all, but is constantly *deferred*.” (Weedon, 1987, pp. 24-25).

Weedon's book explains post-structuralism very well; she talks about the power of discourse for example and the power of language. She says that social structures and processes are in fact organized through institutions and practices “such as the law, the political system, the church, the family, the education system and the media, each of which is located in and structured by a particular *discursive field* (Weedon, 1987, p. 35). The French philosopher Michel Foucault laid groundwork in ideas of discourse and how effective it is on people's everyday's life. According to Foucault, it is through discourse that we are created and discourse can also be considered as ways to constitute knowledge; ongoing ideas, discourses create the vision that we have of the world and we constitute it as knowledge. According to Foucault, truth, morality, and meaning are created through discourse. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning, says Weedon, “[t]hey constitute the ‘nature’ of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern.” (Weedon, 1987, p. 108). The minds and bodies of individuals are always a part of a wider network of power relations, often with institutional bases. Nothing, not the body, nor thoughts or feelings have meaning outside their discursive articulation.

The concept of the discursive field originated with Foucault. He attempted to “understand the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power.” (Weedon, 1987, p. 35). Discursive fields, according to Weedon, consist of competing ways to give the world meaning and how to organize and understand social institutions and processes. These discursive fields offer individuals a range of modes of subjectivity. Weedon says for example that “[w]ithin a discursive field, for instance, that of law or the family, not all discourses will carry equal weight or power. Some will account for and justify the appropriateness of the status quo” (Weedon,

1987, p. 35), but others will challenge existing practices from within or challenge the grounds on which an organization has been built on and the selective interests it represents. The body is central to Foucault's analysis, says Weedon, he is not only concerned with how bodies have been perceived, given meaning and value, but with the 'manner in which what is most material and most vital in them has been invested'.³ The most powerful discourses in our society are built upon a strong institutional base, in the law for example or in medicine. Weedon names other examples, such as social welfare, education, and in the organization of the family and work. These institutional locations, she says, are under constant contest though as well as the dominant discourses that govern the organizations and practices of social institutions.

The plurality of the language and how it is impossible to fix meaning once and for all are basic ideas of post-structuralism. This does not mean that meaning disappears altogether, says Weedon, but that "any interpretation is at best temporary, specific to the discourse within which it is produced and open to challenge." (Weedon, 1987, pp. 85-86). How vulnerable meanings or ideas are at a particular moment will depend on how the discursive power relations are where they are located.

Susan Sellers (1991) wrote about language in her book *Language and Sexual Difference: Feminist Writing in France*. She says that because of the particular world-view the language "encodes, represses, excludes or appropriates all other construction; and thus it is in the repressed, feminine or unconscious 'other' of language – what language does not say – that the feminist revolution must find a base." (Sellers, 1991, p. preface xv). Sellers continues and says that because language is what encodes our experience in the world and because of the particular vision of which our language system depends, "the problem for women is that we can *only* express ourselves in the language that symbolizes the way man has perceived the world to be." (Sellers, 1991, p. preface xv). Because of this feminist writers have to focus on the processes in which language creates our meaning, and begin to

³ Cited from Foucault's *The History of Sexuality, Volume One (1981)*

change the way women are perceived by breaking these process 'laws'. The feminists Sellers writes about believe we can possibly end the stranglehold of the patriarchal system itself.

2.3.2 Postcolonial feminism

Those who adhere to postcolonial feminism have the particular concern that colonial relations of domination versus subordination are being established under imperialism. "They claim that these dominance relationships have persisted beyond the granting of independence to formerly colonized states and that they are built into the way the colonized are represented in Western knowledge." (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2007, p. 192). As said before the postcolonial scholars argue that, in international relations, construction of 'self' and 'other' foster racial and cultural stereotypes that puts the 'other' as inferior. Women of colour and/or third-world women demanded that differences among women and different social situations be acknowledged. That facilitated that there was universalism inherent in both the feminist arguments for equality and for difference. This resulted in feminist becoming more likely to address the intersectionality of various 'isms' with sexism (Mack-Canty, 2004, p. 158).

Postcolonial feminists challenge Western portrayals of Third World women as poor, undereducated, victimized, and lacking in agency. They see gender subordination as sitting at the intersection of gender, race, and culture. Recognizing this, they seem to redress these subordinations within their own cultural context, rather than through a universal understanding of women's needs (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2007, p. 192).

Postcolonial feminism rose from the so-called 'third-wave feminism' which emerged in the late 1980s and 1990's with the development of new considerations and emphases in feminism. Colleen Mack-Canty (2004), a feminist scholar, wrote that third-wave feminism particularly "refutes dualistic thinking in general thinking that divides the world into hierarchical dichotomies with one aspect regarded as superior and the 'other' regarded as inferior, recognizing instead the existence of multiplicities." (Mack-Canty, 2004, p. 158). Postcolonial feminism began by calling for the recognition of what feminism meant to women in non-Western cultures. "Today, however, the interrelationship of the local and the global, particularly the negative effects of the increasing globalization of capital on women and children, is more evident in postcolonial feminism." (Mack-Canty, 2004, p. 156).

2.3.3 IR feminism

Feminist theories entered the discipline of International Relations in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The beginnings of IR feminism are associated with a more general ferment in the field – often referred to as the ‘third debate’ (or sometimes as ‘fourth debate’). Early IR feminists challenged the discipline to think about how its theories might be reformulated and how its understandings of global politics might be improved if gender were included as a category of analysis and if women’s experiences were part of its subject matter (Tickner & Sjoberg, *Feminism*, 2007, p. 186).

Tickner and Sjoberg (2007) say that if we put on gendered lenses we get a very different view of international politics. They, along with other feminist scholars, point out that there is a clear relationship between knowledge and power and that people have to take into account who the people are, that create the knowledge. Most knowledge, they say, has been created by men and is about men. Feminists also like to point out that the idea of gender is a constructed idea, describing what men and women ought to be like. Tickner and Sjoberg say that it is necessary to introduce the gender idea into IR studies to fully understand the global economy on the lives of men and women. IR feminists they say “critically examined some of the key concepts in the field – concepts such as sovereignty, the state, and security.” They also began asking new questions, “such as whether it makes a difference that most foreign-policy leaders, military personnel, and heads of international corporations are men and why women remain relatively disempowered in matters of foreign and military policy.” (Tickner & Sjoberg, *Feminism*, 2007, p. 186).

IR feminist research can be divided into two generations according to Tickner and Sjoberg: “first generation, which is largely focused on theory formulation, and second generation, which approached empirical situations with ‘gendered lenses.” (Tickner & Sjoberg, *Feminism*, 2007, p. 188). The first generation of IR feminist theory concerned itself first and foremost with critiquing and bringing to light the gendered foundations of IR theories and how international politics was practiced. The second generation IR feminists however began to develop their own research programmes, they wanted to extend the boundaries of the IR studies by looking at different issues and listening to voices that had until then been unfamiliar. “These feminists use gender as a category of analysis in their studies of real-world events in global politics, incorporating feminist conceptual critiques into their analysis of specific situations.” (Tickner & Sjoberg, *Feminism*, 2007, p. 188). These feminists have studied the gendered nature is of the “global economy, foreign policy, and security” (Tickner &

Sjoberg, *Feminism*, 2007, p. 188), by looking into specific political and economic situations in “concrete historical and geographic contexts.” (Tickner & Sjoberg, *Feminism*, 2007, p. 188).

2.3.4 Conclusions

These three ideas within feminism help to found an understanding on why international organizations, like the UN, should or should not interfere with how states, and their citizens, act. If then organizations choose to interfere, it also sets certain ground rules on how to behave when interfering. These ideas will be used in this dissertations conclusion where the research questions will be answered. These specific ideas will help me explain how and why the UN should interfere with the subject of FGM/C.

2.4 Summary

The first section of the chapter discussed three different ideas on power and what the concept entails. First, the ideas of the realist Hans J. Morgenthau were considered, then how J. Ann. Tickner, a feminist scholar, challenged his ideas and finally how Antonio Gramsci thought it was best to achieve hegemony. The next section discussed theories of norms changing and norm diffusion. Lastly in Chapter 2, ideas within feminism were looked at; Post-structural feminism, postcolonial feminism and IR feminism.

The chapter found that ideas of power are various and to decide whether the UN has power in the international system one has to define what is meant by the concept ‘power’. One has to decide whether they mean power as realists, the power of force, military, weapons etc. I decided to limit myself on three ideas of power that are different enough so that I can come to an informed conclusion on what ‘power’ is.

The chapter discusses how Hans J. Morgenthau and realists believe that interests can be defined as power for example and how states see their best interests served with having as much power as possible. It discusses how Morgenthau and realists see every state as a potential enemy and how they see power seeking as a logical way to behave within the international system.

The chapter then discusses J. Ann Tickner’s ideas that challenge those of Morgenthau. It discusses how she uses ideas from feminist theory to show how Morgenthau explains the world from a masculine perspective and how she suggests

some ways in which feminist theory might help form a feminist epistemology of international relations. It is pointed out in this chapter that Tickner believes power can be seen in the human ability to work together, making alliances etc.

On theories of power the chapter finally discusses Antonio Gramsci's ideas on power. Gramsci wrote about hegemony and he thought hegemony could be reached with the power of ideas. Gramsci thought it could be reached through the power of persuasion and he thought that without having the public behind the government hegemony would not be fully gained. The chapter goes on to say that according to Gramsci the greatest achievement of governments comes with convincing their people on something being good, when the facts of the matter can be debateable.

The chapter then discusses ideas on norm changing and norm diffusion. The UNs policy today is to eradicate FGM/C by getting natives to change their views and beliefs and thereafter norms and culture around those views and beliefs. In the chapter it is discussed how norms are not a natural state and that they are ever-changing, non-constant things that can be affected both from within and externally.

Finally this chapter discusses feminism and specifically three ideas within feminism that fit with the subject at hand, FGM/C. Post-structural feminism, postcolonial feminism and IR feminism. Post-structural feminism talks about the power of discourse for example and the power of language. It is also stated there that social structures and processes are organized through institutions and practices, such as the law and the political system which is located and structured by a particular discursive field. Post-structural feminism believes in changing the societies' discourse to change the patriarchal system as it is now.

On postcolonial feminism the chapter discusses for example how different situations are for African women from Western women and that their needs are not the same as western women's needs. Those who adhere to postcolonial feminism have the particular concern that colonial relations of domination versus subordination are being established under imperialism. They claim that there are still dominant relationships persisting between formerly colonized states and their dominator states.

Finally, the chapter discusses ideas of IR feminism and how the international political system is built by men for men, and how it would benefit if feminist ideas would be adopted into it. IR feminism wonders on whether it would change anything if state-leaders, military personnel etc. wouldn't be mostly men.

These ideas found an understanding to why international organizations, like the UN, should or should not interfere with how states, and their citizens, behave. If then organizations choose to interfere, it also sets certain ground rules on how to behave when interfering.

Later in the dissertation I will use this theoretical framework in the analysis of my results in researching whether or not the United Nations have the power to change states norms and I will also use it to help explain why they should.

Chapter three will discuss some of the projects the UN has been involved with working towards eliminating FGM/C. These projects have the UN either as a supportive actor or as an implementing actor.

3. Working projects to end Female genital mutilation/cutting

FGM/C is a fundamental violation of the rights of girls and women. It is a discriminatory act which violates the rights to equal opportunities, body integrity, health, and freedom from violence, injury, abuse, torture and cruel or inhuman and degrading treatment, protection from harmful traditional practices, and to make decisions concerning reproduction. These rights are protected in most of the international conventions and laws (Bedri, 2012, p. 3).

The subject of this chapter will be specifically about three projects the United Nations sub-organizations have worked on in collaboration with each other, and with other NGOs and their possible progress in the matter. At first the goal was to find projects the UN had been directly involved in, with progresses and failures but reports on the subject were hard to find. These three projects indicate how the UN works methodologically speaking towards eliminating FGM/C today. The fact of the matter is, that there is not much of statistical evidence in regards of progress, but there is some, and there is other evidence that progress has been made. Female genital mutilation/cutting and its' harmful effects on girls and women were formally recognized in the nineties by the international frameworks, for example by the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, the International Conference for Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 and the Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995. Furthermore, the procedures were recognized by the Programme of Action of the ICPD in 1994 as a practice meant to control women's sexuality and a form of violence against women, and a violation of human rights (Bedri, 2012, p. 2). Ever since, the United Nations has sought to find ways to help eradicating FGM/C from the world.

The United Nations has been active in speaking against FGM/C and several of its organizations have been involved, in different degrees, in actively fighting against it. The most relevant of the UN's organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in the fight against FGM/C, according to The United Nations Economic and Social Council (2010), are the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). All of these organizations have issued their willingness to eradicate FGM/C from the world and have in one way or another

been part of programmes or activities working on just that (United Nations: Economic and Social Council, 2010).

The United Nations has called upon states to do better in their work to abolish FGM/C, for example by strengthening advocacy and awareness raising programmes, to engage communities and religious leaders, educational institutions, the media and families, by condemning all harmful traditional practices, in particular all types of FGM/C, by strengthening the level of education for women and girls and the capacity of health-care systems to meet their needs in line with the internationally agreed development goals. The United Nations have also urged states to take all necessary measures, including enacting and enforcing legislation in order to prohibit FGM/C, to protect girls and women from this form of violence, and to complement punitive measures with raising awareness and education activities that are designed to promote progress towards consensus in the societies against FGM/C (United Nations: Economic and Social Council, 2010, p. 4).

According to Dr. Nafisa M. Bedri, studies have shown that implementing changes into societies can be a slow process and results can be a long time coming. Efforts against FGM/C practices started in Sudan in the early 1940s with legislations banning the practice. Community efforts did not enter the picture until in the 1970s, but they have been persistent since then with more and more groups entering the campaign, including the government, UN agencies and other institutions. Studies have also shown that changes don't materialize everywhere and where they do, resistance and setbacks may follow as has been the case in Sudan. That is why it is necessary to have long-term programmes and a conducive environment with legal frameworks and policies (Bedri, 2012, p. 6).

Experience shows that Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have typically been key actors in designing and implementing successful programmes, and that is one of the reasons the United Nations see a need for help from them. According to different evaluations and assessment of how campaigns of various kinds impact societies in trying to get them to quit practicing FGM/C, all approaches have some element of success, either in reducing the prevalence, or in changing communities' knowledge and behaviour about FGM/C. According to Dr. Bedri the least effective approach is the medicalization approach, whose proponents try to see to it that FGM/C happens within hospitals and health care facilities, with proper equipment

and proper medication. According to Bedri an alternative rite of passage is more effective, a way to change the culture's ways without disrespecting its' beliefs and rituals, but making sure the women and girls emerge unharmed from them. But the most effective approach so far is the integrated approach, an approach that takes into account all of the factors that play a part in the continuing practicing of FGM/C (Bedri, 2012, p. 6). The integrated approach focuses on factors like health, education, finance, justice and women's affairs, and by focusing on advocacy and research, and guidance for health services and not focusing specifically on one factor over the others, but all together as a whole (Oloo, Wanjiru, & Newell-Jones, 2011, bls. 7).

In 1999 The World Health Organization, in collaboration with the Department of Women's Health and Health Systems and Community Health, wrote a review on the programmes to date regarding FGM/C which discussed what seemed to have worked until then and what had not. They saw that not enough attention had been given to the status of FGM/C programming, the types of behaviour change strategies that had been implemented, their successes and failures, what lessons could be learned and what kind of mistakes should be avoided. This review was to serve as a guideline for monitoring the evolution of FGM/C elimination efforts (WHO, 1999, p. 1). The review makes recommendations for governments, NGOs and other agencies that wish to work towards the elimination of FGM/C. Recommendations like; "Governments must enact, and/or use anti-FGM/C laws to protect girls and educate communities about FGM/C" (WHO, 1999, p. 14), "To sustain programmes, FGM/C elimination activities must be institutionalized or mainstreamed, primarily into relevant government ministries programmes." (WHO, 1999, p. 18). The review highlights the need for agencies to take into account the existing culture in the way that people have been brought up in believing in some things and that learned knowledge helps people place themselves in the world. This learned knowledge provides people with how they are to behave and interact with other people and determines the boundaries between men and women, young and old, powerful and powerless etc. If people from other belief systems barge in and expect other people to change their, it is very unlikely that any success will come from it. As the review says, the practice of FGM/C comes from complicated and varied belief systems and although it is tempting to simplify things by saying that FGM/C has negative health consequences the review

points out that it is crucial to look at the big picture and the connections among all aspects of the practice. The review emphasises that, in order to bring an end to the practice of FGM/C, a long-term commitment and the establishment of a foundation that will support a successful and sustainable behaviour change is needed. A foundation including a strong and capable institutions that would implement anti-FGM/C programmes at the national, regional and local levels, a committed government that would support FGM/C elimination with positive policies, laws and resources, mainstreaming of FGM/C prevention issues into national reproductive women's health and literacy development programmes, staff trained to recognize and manage the complications of FGM/C, coordination among governmental and non-governmental agencies, and advocacy that would foster a positive policy and legal environment, increased support for programmes and public education. These foundations have to be in place for successful interventions (WHO, 1999, pp. 6-8).

The review, from the World Health Organization and the Department of Women's Health and Health Systems and Community Health, especially warns about the pitfalls to avoid. In order to eliminate FGM/C some careful steps have to be taken because people are trying to change age-old customs that communities have relied on for ages. People may be shocked that this practice is ongoing, and be quick to judge societies that allow it to continue, but the review warns that condemning and judging is not the way to go if eliminating the practice is going to be possible. "[C]ondemnation, value judgment, disrespect for the community's cultural and traditional beliefs and a failure to involve excisors⁴ in all project phases" are things the respondents of a survey conducted by WHO et al. (1999) for this review warned against doing in all phases of implementation. Other pitfalls the review discussed would be using foreign concepts as key messages. It would be best if messages were implemented through the native languages, otherwise there is risk of alienation from the local public. The respondents also warned against making advocacy materials too complicated, the material should be in simple terms for everyone to understand. And it warns against relying too heavily on volunteers. But first and

⁴ Those who generally perform the cutting

foremost it says that all agencies and individuals working in this field should approach the issue with an open mind. They should leave behind their assumptions and beliefs, and therefore “avoid looking at these communities with their own filtered view of community reality” (WHO, 1999, p. 61).

Although there had been progress in working to eliminate the practice of FGM/C, in 1999, the review recognized some issues. Most of the organizations implementing anti-FGM/C activities were small, for example, and relied too much on the help of volunteers. Their activities did not reach out to most of the communities that still practiced FGM/C. Governments had not, for the most part, moved beyond policy support to fully incorporate anti-FGM/C activities into their work, and the before mentioned review specifically mentions that medical school curricula had not been revised to include protocols on the management of the physical and psychological complications of FGM/C. The biggest problem according to the review was that the programmes did not look at the big picture in order to change communities behaviour, most of the programmes focused only on the bodily harm coming from FGM/C and left out the community values that support the practice. “[P]rogramming must evolve to address the full set of issues that support the practice.” In its conclusions the review says that there were effective programmes working at the community level to protect girls and women from the practice of FGM/C. Four programmes are highlighted, MYWO⁵ an alternative rights project in Kenya, the community monitoring efforts of CEOSS⁶ in Egypt, the community support project of REACH⁷ in eastern Uganda and the community education and mobilization work of

⁵ “Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO) is a non-profit voluntary women's organization with a mission to improve the quality of life of the rural communities especially women and youth in Kenya.” (Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization, Kenya, 2007).

⁶ Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS). “The mission of CEOSS is to promote the sanctity, equity, and harmony of life. It seeks to contribute to the transformation of society by nurturing moral and spiritual awareness, enhancing a sense of belonging, promoting respect for diversity, addressing conflict, and advancing social justice for individuals and communities.” (CEOSS, 2005).

⁷ Rescue African Children (REACH),” is a registered non-profit Ugandan organization originated by Pastor Fred Tumwebaze as a means of rescuing the orphans, street children, and all of the disadvantaged young ones from the suffering of poverty and Aids. It is **the children's voice**. It is the bridge between those that provide support and the children and their families. It helps to create income generating projects through supporters to make it easier for a family member in poverty to bring an orphan into their home.” (REACH, n.d).

Tostan in Senegal (WHO, 1999, p. 124). Later on in this dissertation the work of Tostan will be examined further and the dealings that the United Nations have had with this organization.

In the next chapters of the dissertation some apparently successful programmes, which emphasize an integrated approach, will be examined. Programmes that both the United Nations and its sub-organizations have originated and programmes that were working beforehand and the United Nations have wanted to help grow and prosper, financially and/or professionally. First the Senegalese organization Tostan and its community education and mobilization work will be discussed, then the Saleema programme, that originated in Sudan, and finally the UNFPA and UNICEF Joint Programme which today is the most extensive programme the United Nations has been working on towards eliminating FGM/C. Apparently the UN places emphasis on helping and overseeing many programmes and activities and tries to take in as many factors into consideration as possible.

3.1 Tostan

Many organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental, are showing increased interest and commitment to reducing FGM/C through advocacy and behavioural-change communication programmes. A reflection of this commitment is shown for example by more and more African countries implementing laws against FGM/C and in numerous community-based programmes. The Government of Senegal has shown its support to actively end FGM/C. The practice was outlawed in 1999 and the government has shown a strong political commitment to ending FGM/C by mandating the Ministry of Family and Social Development to be the coordinating body to implement a national plan of action. Several NGO's are working within the country to raise awareness and encourage behaviour change and one of the most active ones is Tostan, which aim is to implement a "holistic community-based empowerment program[me] in the villages of the Kolda region" (Diop & Askew, 2009, p. 307).

According to this programme's website, www.tostan.org, the origins of the Tostan programme can be traced to the 1970s, when a young American exchange student saw the need for developmental programmes to address the realities and true needs of communities involved. This woman, Molly Melching, together with a team of

Senegalese cultural specialists, began developing a new type of programme that would respectfully engage communities in the process by working in their own language and using their traditional methods of learning (Tostan, n.d). They started in Senegal in 1988 with an experimental non-formal educational programme in 20 villages within the Kolda region (Diop & Askew, 2009, p. 308). Their efforts grew and by 1991 Melching had founded an organization around her work named 'Tostan', a word that stands for 'breakthrough' in Wolof, a West African language. The word Tostan also indicates spreading and sharing and that is the fundamental goal of the education programme, the Community Empowerment Program (CEP) The original idea Molly Melching had over 20 years ago has developed into a leading model for community-led change, a model that has been implemented in 22 languages across eight African countries (Tostan, n.d).

The Tostan website explains how the programme is structured: In the beginning a trained facilitator is assigned to the village that is going to be implemented in the programme. The facilitator has to be fluent in the local language and of the same ethnic group as the community members. During the three years the programme is running, the facilitator lives in the village, getting to know the members both within and out of the classroom. The facilitator gets paid by Tostan and the programme provides the curriculum. The community, however, provides housing for the facilitator and classroom space. This mutual commitment is according to Tostan encouraging for all participants to engage with the programme even if they cannot take part in the actual classes (Tostan, n.d).

The programme consists of three two-hour classes per week for six months, and discusses "the negative aspects of female genital cutting as part of a broader curriculum that covered human rights, women's health and basic hygiene" (Ball, 2010).

Tostan promotes an integrated approach to learning that offers a comprehensive curriculum in national languages, not only for reading, writing, and arithmetic but also for improving life skills and the socioeconomic conditions of participants. The use of innovative pedagogical techniques inspired by African traditions and local knowledge has contributed to making the sessions relevant, lively and participatory. Games, small group discussions, flipcharts, theatre, dancing, and a focus on other elements of traditional culture, including health-enhancing customs such as prolonged breastfeeding, as well as on culturally sensitive customs such as FGM/C, ensure that the participants enjoy learning in a relaxed, familiar atmosphere (Diop & Askew, 2009, p. 308).

The Tostan programme consists of two main parts; human rights-based education classes, and the establishment of a Community Management Committee that is responsible for implementing development projects designed by the community. Each village runs two classes consisting of 25-30 participants. One of the classes is for adults, and the other one for adolescents. These classes meet three times a week during the course of the programme, as stated above, and by holding classes separately for these age groups, Tostan makes sure that both the younger generation, and the older can participate comfortably and contribute in the classroom, while gaining confidence and the tools to apply what they learn actively in their community. Modern learning techniques are used as well as traditional African oral traditions; theatre, storytelling, dance, artwork, song, and debate. This combination is believed to be effective because information is presented in ways that are “relevant and engaging” and is believed to help participants take hold of new ideas quicker (Tostan, n.d).

To facilitate the dissemination of the programme’s material participants, especially the women, were encouraged to share the information they learned regularly with a close friend or relative. This approach is based on the traditional ways to share important information and was adapted to the programme to maximize its dissemination (Diop & Askew, 2009, p. 309; Ball, 2010, p. 49). According to the programme’s website the CEP classes have two phases; The Kobi and the Aawde. The Kobi, the first phase of the CEP, is structured to foster discussion and establish an open, comfortable class dynamic. This is to help participants feel at ease with the facilitator and each other during the class. “The goal of the Kobi is to promote positive traditions while encouraging discussion on how new ideas and practices can help build a healthier community.” In the Aawde phase participants get the chance to learn to read and write in their own language, study basic mathematic and gain management skills. Participants also learn to manage and implement small projects themselves. This helps them develop new practical skills that can be directly implemented to improve living conditions (Tostan, n.d).

Diop and Askew write about a pre- and post-test comparison group design that was used to evaluate Tostan’s effect on community member’s willingness to abandon FGM/C in rural areas of southern Senegal. As said before Tostan is an education programme that aims to empower women through a wide range of educational and

health-promoting activities. Diop and Askew find that information from the programme was diffused well and widely in the participating villages, as is indicated by the improvements in knowledge and attitudes on FGM/C among women and men who had not participated in the programme. They found that prevalence of FGM/C among daughters aged 10 years or younger had decreased significantly over time but not among daughters in the comparison villages. They believe this suggests that the programme had an impact on family behaviours as well as attitudes (Diop & Askew, 2009, p. 307).

Ball cites Diop and Askew's research and says that knowledge of FGM/C and its consequences has increased since Tostan. Ball says that the rationale for Tostan working as a strategy for changing behaviour can be explained by reference to the social convention theory. This theory, Ball says, suggests that FGM/C is considered to be such an integral part of the communities social expectations of appropriate parental behaviour in preparing girls for adulthood and family, that not practicing it would bring more harm than good to the girls and the family as a whole. Even though they understand the practice is harmful in physiological and physical ways. The stigmatization and the social isolation, that goes with going against the community, is too big of a cost. The Tostan approach therefore tries to change the social expectations of communities with education, community dialogue and debate, and public declaration, so the families can question and decline to participate in this social convention (Ball, 2010, p. 309)

Tostan has received support from the United Nations for many years, particularly and especially from UNICEF. Today Tostan works closely with UNFPA and UNICEF's Joint Programme. The Joint Programme believes in the vast experience Tostan has had in successfully promoting the abandonment of FGM/C. Despite, and maybe even because Tostan doesn't address the issue of FGM/C in isolation, or even as a first priority Tostan's work had in 2010 resulted in 14 years the organized abandonment of FGM/C in 4,625 communities in Senegal alone (UNFPA; UNICEF, 2010). Tostan's ideology has positively assisted in the United Nations choosing on working towards eliminating FGM/C. Another ideology that has helped is the ideology of Saleema that will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.2 Saleema

The Saleema campaign in Sudan is one of the biggest projects the Joint Programme supports, financially and hands-on. The campaign is nationwide and was officially launched in January 2010 (Helmore, 2012). As said in chapter 3.1 The Saleema campaign is about changing the public's view on female genital mutilation/cutting. After 30 years of efforts to ban and eliminate the practice of FGM/C in Sudan, there had been little progress made and people came to the conclusion that the stigma surrounding uncut girls was the main hindrance of getting the society to abandon the practice. The word Ghalfa, a word of shame, was used to describe girls that had not undergone the procedure (Niles, 2010). This word carries an implied suggestion of impurity of the girl/woman in question, promiscuity and even prostitution (Helmore, 2012; UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 18). After all this time trying to increase awareness on the harmful effects of FGM/C there was no positive term in common use in Sudan to refer to an uncircumcised woman or girl (Helmore, 2012). Sudan's National Council on Child Welfare (NCCW) and its National Strategic Planning Centre came up with the Saleema idea after the consult from various sources. The need for change in the language was clear and the word Saleema was suggested. Saleema is an Arabic woman's name that means whole, intact, and healthy in body and mind, unharmed, pristine, untouched, in a God-given condition, perfect, and therefore was suggested to replace the negative word that Ghalfa is (OHCHR, 2011; Helmore, 2012). The strategy by NCCW and others was designed to result in the abandonment of the FGM/C practice within a generation. With Saleema, the idea was to make people see that being uncut was a natural, desirable state. The idea is not to discredit a long-held tradition but to allow new social norms to take its place (Helmore, 2012).

This approach recognizes that mothers (or families) do not cut their daughters with the intention of harming them but to integrate them into society, to secure their prospects for marriage and they cut their daughters to preserve family honour. It is also recognized that FGM/C persists because it is a social norm and people's behaviour is conditioned on the behaviour of other people (OHCHR, 2011). "When an entire community shares a harmful social belief, it is almost impossible for an individual to defy it, even if he or she is aware of its danger." (Niles, 2010) That is why the campaign encourages communities to make decisions against FGM/C

practices in unison and make public declarations against them together. The campaign addresses FGM/C by moving the focus from individual behaviour towards discussion and debates in public venues on FGM/C and human rights principles. The campaign involves people and mobilizes them, their communities, religious leaders, families, and uses mass media to spread its message as widely as possible (OHCHR, 2011). The Saleema campaign stays visible for example by using a uniform. Those who support the campaign have clothing in the Saleema colours – mostly orange, red, yellow and green – both for men and women. The clothing enables people to be visible in their support of the cause and shows their commitment to abandoning FGM/C (OHCHR, 2011; UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 18). “As more and more people see others ‘becoming Saleema’ they too are more prone to follow suit” (OHCHR, 2011). There are promotional products like pottery, banners, tablecloths and posters, there are four radio scripts and an animated video (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012).

The Saleema initiative, “aiming to counter stigmatizations by creating a positive term to replace one sounding like a curse” started in Sudan by the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) with UNICEF support (UNICEF, n.d), so the United Nations have been involved in this programme from the start fulfilling a supporting role rather than an initiating one.

3.3 The UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme

The UNFPA and UNICEF Joint Programme, launched in late 2007, called ‘Accelerating Change’, is probably the most comprehensive project with regards to working on eliminating female genital mutilation/cutting. The United Nations came to the conclusion that it would be best to launch a joint programme that would oversee all or most of the anti-FGM/C programmes the United Nations is involved with, in order to have a better control in measuring and evaluating progress. The programme now covers 15 countries, most of them on the African continent, and aims to accelerate efforts to abandon FGM/C worldwide on the ground with and through various partners (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. v). The methodology the programme uses is generally to set in motion a dynamic in the societies for positive change. A core group is used to enlist others as a way of changing social norms, and with that improving the marriage prospects of girls who have not been cut. The belief is that

when the group is large enough to protect the social status of its members, the abandonment becomes self-sustainable and after a while change will become rapid and universal (UNFPA-UNICEF, n.d). From here on a report from 2011 on the progress of eliminating FGM/C published by the Joint Programme will be used. Its highpoints and what the report says has been well done and what it says needs to be improved, will be reviewed and analysed.

In the Joint Programme's annual report from 2011 it is stated that the programme has seven main goals; (1) To import laws and policies against FGM/C where it's deemed needed, (2) to get local commitment to abandon FGM/C procedures, (3) to spread the word with media campaigns and other forms of communication, (4) to integrate prevention and care of FGM/C into reproductive health services, (5) to make new partnerships and improve existing ones with religious and traditional leaders and other institutions, (6) to track the programmes benchmarks and (7) to strengthen regional dynamics for the abandonment of FGM/C (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012). This report shows the progress that has been made in 2011 and the ways that can be measured at the moment. It also states that there is a need for further measurements to see the full extent of the actual progress. The report states that it will take about 10-15 years for people to be able to measure the full extent of the programme's effect and the reason being that "the cohort of young girls cannot be deemed safe from cutting until late in their adolescence", so no one can be perfectly sure of the full results until the young girls now have reached a certain age (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 36). The next few chapters will review the seven goals in the 2011 report and see how and if the goals are being met, what has been done and how. I will from now on refer to this report as the 2011 report.

3.3.1 Laws and policies against FGM/C

The first goal in the 2011 report, towards eliminating female genital mutilation regards making laws and policies against FGM/C in participating countries. The Joint Programme tries to support national processes so that appropriate legal and policy measures can be developed and so an enabling environment for accelerated abandonment of FGM/C can be created. It also emphasizes the need to support actors at all levels so these provisions can be implemented effectively and enforced once they are in place. The national laws and policies are important when it comes to

the larger process of abandonment and social change. The 2011 report mentions good examples of this work, for example Kenya passed legislations on a national level in 2011 banning female genital mutilation/cutting. The report states that this is the result of over three years of work supported by UNICEF and UNFPA (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 1).

According to the 2011 report the Kenyan law mandates between three and seven years in prison or a fine of nearly \$6,000 for anyone practicing FGM/C. That includes traditional excisors, doctors, parents, nurses and even the person who supplies the premises or the knife. Anyone who brings a girl to Kenya from abroad to be cut can be subjected to the same penalty, also those who fail to report an incidence of FGM/C, those who hire a person to perform FGM/C and those who carry out an FGM/C on a Kenyan citizen in another country. Anyone who causes a death by performing FGM/C faces life imprisonment. The report states that by the end of 2011, five individuals had been charged and were awaiting trial under the new law. As it says in the report a new law is not enough, and in Kenya the law is accompanied by clear policy mandates and those who are responsible for upholding the new law are in training, and capacity-building is under way. Nearly 800 police officers, probation officers, community leaders and others were trained in 2011 to implement the new legislation (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 1).

There were also some countries that strengthened their laws in regards to FGM/C. Burkina Faso for example, with support from the Joint Programme, and others continued to raise awareness among lawyers, judges and the police about the effects of FGM/C. In 2011 some five excisors and 57 accomplices were sentenced to variety of jail time, between three months to three years, for cutting 88 girls. The report notes that this is nearly three times the amount of 23 cases brought against offenders in 2010 and some ten cases were brought to the attention through a toll-free anti FGM/C hotline (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 3).

Although making laws and implementing them that is far from being enough to eliminate the practice of FGM/C and the Joint Programme is well aware of this. That is why the Programme looks at so many other factors and goals. But making laws are a big step towards the final goal and definitely a crucial one.

3.3.2 When the people support abandoning FGM/C

The Joint Programme works adamantly at getting communities educated and involved with the work to eradicate FGM/C which is also the second goal of the 2011 report. It is considered one of the most important steps in this big project to change the public's view on FGM/C. Without the public's support it will never be possible to eradicate FGM/C in the world.

This work with the communities often ends with the communities standing up and declaring their commitment to abandon FGM/C. According to the 2011 report, that year over 2,700 communities in 13 Joint Programme countries made this kind of public declaration. These events do not go unnoticed and are more often than not attended by local officials and covered both by the national and international media. So it is an immense source of pride for the communities involved. These events are not organized by the Joint Programme or other organizations, but by the communities themselves and this indicates that real change is happening within the communities. And because they are collective declarations they serve to make sure that girls that have not been cut will from now on be seen as eligible brides by the families of prospective husbands within the village and not only there but also in villages nearby and intermarrying villages that also participated in the declaration (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 5).

The Joint Programme report speaks of Djibouti, a relatively small country of 0.9 million people. It says that the rate of FGM/C was 93 per cent in 2006. What activists from the Joint Programme and others did there was make a group of about 50 adults and 50 adolescents in 33 Djiboutian communities and gave them three years of non-formal education in literacy, human rights, democracy, conflict resolution, health, hygiene, and project management. These groups then each proceeded with sharing their new knowledge with their fellow villagers and people in neighbouring villages. Community dialogues were held and social mobilization meetings on many issues, including the harmful effects of all types of FGM/C. On 3 July 2011 representatives from 99 communities came together in the capital city and made a national public declaration abandoning the practice. This is by no means the final step but definitely a positive first step in the national push to end the practice (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 6).

Senegal has made the most rapid progress towards the eradication of FGM/C out of the 15 participating countries that are active in the Joint Programme. This progress can probably mostly be traced to the Tostan organization, discussed in a previous chapter. That resulted in the first community-led declaration to abandon the practice in 1997. Since then, the number of communities that have made this declaration has steadily grown. In 2011, 760 villages declared their abandonment of the practice, as well as of child marriage. “Communities share what they learn with their neighbours through a process called organized diffusion, thereby ‘adopting’ other communities into the process of abandoning FGM/C”. (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 8).

The Joint Programme report states that in Ethiopia’s Afar region, the most extreme form of FGM/C has generally been practiced on over 95 per cent of girls. In 2011, however, two entire districts in Afar declared their abandonment of the practice. Those districts have a total population of over 50,000. As of now the report says six of Afar’s 29 districts have declared abandonment. In these six districts the number of uncut girls has reached 7,000, up from 4,000 in 2010. This success can be traced to the community dialogues organized by local organizations with support from the Joint Programme (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, pp. 10-11).

Getting the communities involved and having them declare the eradication of FGM/C is a very positive way to go about things. It is quite simple that without the communities involvement and without the backup from the communities themselves the work against the practice of FGM/C could well be pointless, it would at least take a lot longer to get people to support the work.

3.3.3 Media Campaigns and Other Forms of Communication

Islam teaches that Allah created human beings complete. No one should harm the human body. There is nothing in the Holy Koran about female circumcision. Because of FGM/C, many children and women are dying while others endure lifelong suffering. The Afar region has passed a law banning FGM/C. We all are responsible for protecting our children, our sisters, our wives and our mothers. Together we will abandon FGM/C in the near future⁸. (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 14).

⁸ Text of a Radio Spot Broadcast for 100 days in the Afar region

The third goal of the 2011 report regards the media. All the countries in the Joint Programme used the media to some extent to increase awareness of the dangers of FGM/C and to encourage people to abandon the practice. The press, television, radio and sometimes film and electronic social media was used but at different levels in different countries (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 14). In Uganda more than 500 people watched videos that vividly portrayed the suffering girls have to endure when they undergo FGM/C. These videos made people angry and were the cause of many people rejecting the practice (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 16). In Senegal a bold and innovative course on FGM/C was created, which is probably the first of its kind anywhere. The course was developed by the NGO GEEP (the Group for Population Studies and Education) and is currently being integrated into high school and college curricula. The course is aimed at students between the ages of 10-19 and covers “the health and psychological effects of the practice, the human rights that apply to girls’ physical integrity”. Further it looks into the elements of reproductive health and also the link between development and reproductive health at the national, family and personal levels. It looks at the development of positive attitudes regarding relationships between the sexes and finally participation in community activities to improve reproductive health (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 17).

Another good example on using the media is the Saleema project, explained previously. As mentioned in Chapter 3.2, the Saleema project is based in Sudan and has been active since 2008. The general idea with the Saleema project is to change the perspective on how people see uncut girls. The general belief was that uncut girls were unclean and not eligible for marriage and in order to eliminate FGM/C people saw that this view had to be changed. Saleema is a Sudanese girls’ name that means whole, intact, healthy in body and mind, unharmed etc. and people wanted to connect that word to uncut girls. This would make uncut being a desirable state (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 18).

Today it seems obvious that if people want to spread ideas and opinions as widely as possible and as quickly the media is an essential tool. It helps tremendously if the word is spread fast and widely and it speeds up the process of eliminating FGM/C.

3.3.4 Integrating Prevention and Care of FGM/C into Reproductive Health Services and New and Existing Partnerships with Religious and Traditional Leaders and other Institutions

The fourth goal of the 2011 report regards the role of public health services in preventing FGM/C. The public health services role is thought to be very important and therefore the Joint Programme has emphasized the need to train medical staff to understand the negative consequences, and in how to treat medical complications that arise from it. The year 2011 showed a surge in activities to do just that in all Joint Programme countries. Much progress has been made, for example in Mauritania training courses in FGM/C has been put into the curricula for midwives and nurses focusing on how to prevent the medicalization of FGM/C and treating complications resulting from the practice (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 20). But although much progress has been made the report from 2011 uses the example of Uganda to show that there is still a long way to go in preventing the procedure and treating the consequences:

In 2011, the Joint Programme's implementing partners identified 96 survivors of FGM/C suffering from severe gynaecological conditions. Nine of them were taken to hospitals for treatment, with the Joint Programme providing partial funding for transport and medical bills. Two of the girls died from haemorrhage as a result of delays in reaching the hospital. The vast majority of the cases received no medical attention because they were not reported due to the fear of punishment since the passing of the national FGM Act in 2010 (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 22).

With the religious environment in Africa it is crucial to get religious leaders involved with the work to eradicate FGM/C, and that is the fifth goal of the 2011 report. The Joint Programme acknowledges this necessity and in every country participating religious leaders played an important part to further the campaign against FGM/C. Many Muslim clerics in Africa now accept it as a fact that FGM/C is not endorsed by the Koran, and therefore should not be a part of Islamic teaching. Mauritania hosted a historic conference of FGM/C in September 2011, where 61 Islamic scholars from eight countries in West Africa attended, as well as scholars from Egypt and Sudan. The conference reached its high point with participants unanimously issuing a sub-

regional fatwa⁹ condemning the practice of FGM/C. Most of the attending Mauritanian religious leaders went on to issue a national Fatwa against FGM/C (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 23).

The involvement of Muslim religious leaders has proved to be essential in Burkina Faso so the Muslim population can be convinced to abandon FGM/C. Therefore the authors of the 2011 report believe it to be highly significant that in 2011, 51 Imams and one Catholic priest made public declarations in order to support the abandonment of FGM/C. The support of local chiefs and traditional leaders has also resulted in several villages rejecting the practice. The Network of Islamic Organizations for Population and Development has produced a handbook in Arabic on Islam and FGM/C with the technical and financial support from the Joint Programme, and this handbook is used by Islamic preachers. Additionally a national conference was held on “Islam and FGM/C: the Role of Religious Leaders,” that attracted some 94 participants. 72 men and 22 women (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 26).

Including everyone has proven to be very effective. It has proven to be a necessity to implement the prevention and care of FGM/C into the Health Care System because otherwise there is danger of the medicalization of FGM/C. In order to fully eliminate the practice of FGM/C it is necessary to make everyone, including health care physicians and religious scholars and leaders, aware of the full impact the practice has on a woman’s body. Implementing the knowledge into health care systems and the religious community is therefore crucial for the anti-FGM/C cause.

3.3.5 Tracking of Programme Benchmarks and Strengthening Regional Dynamics for the Abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting

The sixth goal of the 2011 report is about tracking how programmes are progressing and the seventh one is to strengthen regional dynamics for the abandonment of FGM/C. Those who wish to eliminate the practice of FGM/C increasingly see the necessity of measuring and tracking the progress made. In 2011

⁹ a ruling on a point of Islamic law that is given by a recognized authority

all of the Joint Programme country offices improved their steps to track their programmes' success. Increased emphasis was placed on maintaining relationships with the ministries involved and implementing partners. Emphasis was also placed on regular reports and the organized review of coordination meetings. Visits were made to the field with government officials and/or NGO partners, to make sure that the technical help needed was being provided and that problems that arose were being corrected. In Egypt for example, the Joint Programme received 12 quarterly reports and four annual reports from its four implementing partners. In Sudan, the National Council for Child Welfare (the Joint Programme's main partner) monitors the implementing partners' reporting activities and holds quarterly meetings with them. It also supports UNFPA in establishing the link between FGM/C interventions and a decline in maternal mortality and morbidity through collaboration with the Ministry of Health Reproductive Health Unit (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 28).

The 2011 report states that the Joint Programme's campaign to eradicate female genital mutilation and cutting in 15 African countries continued to widen across national borders in 2011 and has accordingly become a 'truly regional movement'. It says that because in Africa ethnicity, social norms and language often exceeds nationality and because people marry between communities FGM/C will only end permanently if all the African communities reach a consensus to end it (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 29).

Although a lot is being done and progress is being made, the 2011 report also states that progress has not gone unhindered, or without challenges. Some challenges arise because of economic issues, like the one the world has been facing since the global financial crisis arose in 2008. Since then it has been difficult for the Joint Programme, and all other projects for that matter, to gain sufficient funding for their work. Some challenges are to be traced to political issues or disputes in societies. The 2011 report mentions a good example of this, Egypt. In 2011 there was a complete change of authority in Egypt. The previous government (the Mubarak regime) was very much in favour of eradicating FGM/C but because of the ill will between the new government and the old it is difficult for them to see eye to eye in supporting that cause. Finally the report mentions how effective a single rumour can be in damaging the work the Joint Programme has done and is currently doing. In Guinea a rumour was spread that uncut girls would contract a fatal sickness, and this

encouraged some people to proceed with the procedure (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 35).

Progress has been made and deterioration too. In order to fully eliminate FGM/C the work needs to be sustainable and it needs to be constant. People need to be aware of possible setbacks and deterioration and not be discouraged in spite of obstacles that arise.

3.3.6 Conclusions – Lessons learned and moving forward

The Joint Programme has been operational for five years now by the end of 2012. The 2011 report recommends that emphasis be put on getting national policies to confer key responsibilities to government actors. It is not enough to make national laws if the law is not abided by. Officials of the justice system need to be trained properly and given the necessary equipment to implement the law. The law should also be properly translated so that the general public can read it and understand (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 37).

Some religious leaders continue to link FGM/C with Islam hence, continued advocacy and respectful persuasion, are needed to correct this misconception. Religious leaders have a responsibility to provide guidance that promotes the health, well-being and dignity of all members of their congregations in matters affecting all aspects of their lives, including FGM/C. When groups of religious leaders – or others such as health professionals – form networks they can be even more effective in taking action, communicating and forwarding the campaign to end FGM/C (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, p. 37).

Getting traditional leaders involved with the campaign is an effective way to get communities to abandon the practice. Using spokespersons from within a community reinforces local culture and helps to gain the general public's support. The media has been used in more ways than ever, religious and community leaders are utilized to discuss FGM/C on the radio and other media. The media approach is considered especially effective when it uses the voices of community members themselves that truly believe in the abandonment of FGM/C. Nowadays role models are made by getting people involved who have said no to the practice, and they are believed to be of particular help in changing people's minds and in helping to reverse the stigma against girls who have not undergone the cutting (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2012, pp. 37-38).

Although making laws against FGM/C is important, it is far from being enough. When laws are made the practice tends to go underground. So it has to be kept in mind that without people's consensus the practice will remain, whether visible or not. The 2011 report states that an understanding of international human rights and people's responsibilities is the key to transforming societies. That is not to say that positive African cultures and rituals shouldn't be enforced but just the opposite, they should be celebrated and strengthened. The idea is not to enforce Western beliefs upon African cultures but to eradicate what is seen as violence and acts that go against international human rights law.

At the end of 2012 an evaluation of how well the Joint Programme has really been doing is intended for release. It is to assess the real extent of how or if the Joint Programme has really accelerated the abandonment of FGM/C over the last five years. It would have been wonderful to have those results available for this dissertation but even though the results have not yet been released, I believe that the emphasis the Joint Programme has placed on the cause is the correct way to tackle the issue. In order to eliminate the practice of FGM/C it is necessary to take into account as many factors as possible. Female genital mutilation/cutting will not be eliminated without considering all the factors of the culture and the rituals involved, and changing the view of the people in more ways than just by saying that it is physically harmful for the girls/women.

3.4 Summary

This chapter discussed a few projects the UN has been involved with, either as a supporting actor or as an implementing one. First the project Tostan was discussed, which is a programme that works to implement a holistic community-based empowerment in the villages. This programme respectfully engages communities in the process by working in their own language and by using their traditional methods of learning. This programme consists of classes where, for example, the negative aspects of FGM/C are discussed as a broader curriculum that covers human rights, women's health and basic hygiene.

Following Tostan, the Saleema project was discussed. The Saleema project/campaign works to change the public's view on FGM/C. The people behind the Saleema project wanted to change the language surrounding FGM/C. The word used for uncut girls was Ghalfa, a word of shame. This word carries an implied

suggestion of impurity of the girl in question, promiscuity and even prostitution. The Saleema activists want to change the word used to describe uncut girls and women to Saleema which is a word that means pure, whole, intact, perfect etc.

Lastly the UNFPA and UNICEF Joint Programme was discussed. This is probably the most comprehensive project with regards to working on eradicating female genital mutilation/cutting in the world. The United Nations decided it would be best to launch a Joint Programme that would oversee all or most of the anti-FGM/C programmes the United Nations is involved with, in order to have a better control in measuring and evaluating progress. The programme now covers 15 countries, most of them on the African continent, and aims to accelerate efforts to abandon FGM/C worldwide on the ground with and through various partners, including those behind Tostan and Saleema. The methodology the programme uses is generally to set in motion a dynamic in the societies for positive change. A core group is used to enlist others as a way of changing social norms, and with that improving the marriage prospects of girls who have not been cut. The belief is that when the group is large enough to protect the social status of its members, the abandonment becomes self-sustainable and after a while change will become rapid and universal. A report from 2011 on the progress of eliminating FGM/C, published by the Joint Programme, was used and its' highpoints and what the report says has been well done and what needs to be improved was reviewed and analysed.

In the next chapter, chapter 4, I will discuss my results and analyse them further.

4 Summary, conclusions and discussions

In this chapter, I will present the conclusions of my analysis on the subject matter and I will answer the research questions asked in the beginning of this dissertation. I will begin with repeating the research questions, followed by a summary of the previous chapters. Thereafter, I will have my conclusions and discussions on the United Nations versus female genital mutilation/cutting.

4.1 Summary of previous chapters

In Chapter 1 the subject matter was introduced and I explained why I chose to use the concept 'female genital mutilation/cutting'. The purpose of this dissertation was put forward and the research questions: Should the United Nations try to change state norms and/or cultures? Does the United Nations have the power to change state norms and/or cultures? Does the United Nations have the power to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting in the world?

In Chapter, I discussed the methodology I chose to use with my research, which is an analytical thesis. I then explained what female genital mutilation/cutting is, why it is being performed on girls and women, and the possible complications that can arise from the cutting. I closed the chapter with asking why the international society should interfere and discussed the idea of international human rights. I came to the conclusion, after this chapter that organizations have to be careful when acting against a culture's existing norm. Cultures need to be respected and protected as well as the autonomy of the people involved. In Chapter 1 I establish that although covenants have been made on international human rights in reality in many cases states do not monitor or enforce these covenants. With the covenants prepared and signed the FGM/C procedures are a pure violation of what has been defined as international human rights.

In chapter 2 I laid down the theoretical framework. In order to answer the research questions, on whether or not the UN has power, I first had to define what power is. To do that, I discussed three different ideas of power; realist ideas, feminist ideas and ideas on hegemony. These ideas, because how different they are from one another, helped me come to my own conclusion on what I believe power is. One can look at power as force, and one can look at power as the ability to persuade people/institutions/states to do things in the way one wants. One way or the other, all

ideas need to be taken into account when defining what a person means when they talk about power. I think all of these ideas are relevant and I will use them to answer that the United Nations has a sort of power, but perhaps not the kind of power realists prefer.

I discussed theories on norm changing and norm diffusion in the theoretical framework chapter as well. I discuss studies that claim how norms are not a natural state and that norms are ever-changing, non-constant things that can be affected both from within and externally. These ideas corroborate how the UN has chosen to work towards eliminating FGM/C. Norms can be changed according to these ideas and this is the ideology the UN, and others, has chosen to work by.

Finally this chapter discusses feminism. I chose to consider three ideas within feminism; Post-structural feminism, postcolonial feminism and IR feminism. These ideas are a foundation to understanding why international organizations, like the UN, should or should not interfere with how states, and their citizens, behave. If organizations choose to interfere, it also sets certain ground rules on how to behave when interfering.

This is the theoretical framework I will use in the analysis of my results in researching whether or not the United Nations have the power to change states norms and I will also use it to help explain why they should. In the next chapters I will discuss my conclusions on the research questions and discuss how I have reached them. I will work my way through the dissertation and take all factors into account.

Before I continue on to my conclusions I have to say that my research had its weaknesses. Weaknesses I could not overcome. What I realized when I started my research was that reports on projects towards eliminating FGM/C are scarce and those that are available don't have much statistical data. I had questions on what had been done, on what worked and what not and I wanted to show empirical evidence in answering my research questions. But the data I could collect didn't really have any statistical evidence. This is because not much statistical research has been done yet, but reading through my research material I saw that it is on the UN's agenda to improve in those matters, to gather more statistical evidence. Because of this I can't show any statistics to back my conclusions but I believe nonetheless that my conclusions are founded on a successful research.

4.2 Should the UN try to change norms and/or cultures?

I believe the first research question, on whether the UN should try to change state norms and/or cultures, can be answered from the coverage in the first chapter. When all the factors of FGM/C are taken into account, possible complications and overall the situations the girls and women are in when the cuttings are performed, one can't help but think that FGM/C may leave a lasting mark on the lives and minds on those who experience the cutting. In the joint statement from WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA from 1997 it says that perhaps the psychological complications might be buried deep in the subconscious mind of the child and could trigger behavioural disturbances. The child experiences the loss of trust in its caregivers, and in the long term women may suffer from anxiety, depression, and feelings of incompleteness, frigidity and chronic irritability. They might also experience several marital issues. But, because the mutilation/cutting is practiced in the belief that it is in the women's/girls' best interests (to secure their marriageability, family honour etc.), if the UN wants to eliminate FGM/C it not only *should* try to change state norms and/or cultures but *must* do so. While people still believe that it is in the best interests of the girls the cutting will continue, whether there are laws or no laws against the practice. The procedures are being held out by such powerful social norms, as said before, that even when the families realize the harm they can do, they are still willing to have their daughters cut. Otherwise, they risk social exclusion and shame within their societies. In order to eliminate FGM/C from the world, programmes, like the UN provides, there is a need to change the beliefs of people and their traditions from within. It is not enough to state their customs and traditions to be wrong and tell them to change, the societies need to be included from the first stages of all programmes.

FGM/C is a part of many cultures and the UN has decided it wants to partake in eliminating these procedures from the world. In order to do just that it has to take into consideration all factors that are relevant and have been listed in this dissertation. The procedures are being done for various reasons, there are consequences and complications that arise from them and these consequences are the reason the UN interferes with the matter. Some would say that this issue falls under domestic affairs which international organizations should not concern themselves with, but there are many reasons why they should. I have already listed them before but I will list some of them here as well to strengthen my conclusions. One of the reasons the UN

interferes is that, although there is common belief to the contrary, FGM/C has no basis in religious texts. Religious reasons are nonetheless often used to support the practice. Those against the practice believe that it is directed to control women's sexuality, to ensure premarital virginity and family honour. The second reason that the UN interferes that I mentioned is how the feminist discourse is against FGM/C. The discourse seeks to legitimize how some traditional practices, like FGM/C, should be seen as a violation of international human rights standards. This discourse also puts pressure on Western societies to perform the role of 'enlightenment'. This role entails exposing and challenging the patriarchal underpinnings of FGM/C. These are reasons why the UN interferes but does it answer if they should? I believe the same arguments apply to why they should, but not without taking the discussion on international human rights into account. It is also probably the simplest reason why the UN interferes with the matter. The procedures are being performed within states that are most, if not all, members of the United Nations and all of the members have agreed upon certain rules and regulations, covenants and agreements, on human rights specifically. Within those agreements on human rights and what defines them, the UN has agreed, for example, to rights of non-discrimination, to the integrity of the person, and to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health. Declarations have been made by the UN, for the promotion and protection of the health of girls and women, including eliminating the procedures of female genital mutilation/cutting. Many countries have, because of this, forbidden the practice within their judicial system, both countries where the practice is traditional, and where they come with immigration. The UN and their sub-organizations have decided to fight for the elimination of FGM/C, because the practice is thought to maintain injustice for girls and women in the societies where the cutting is performed. FGM/C violates several human rights internationally agreed upon. When all these reasons are taken into account I believe I can state without a doubt that the UN should certainly try to change norms and/or cultures when it comes to FGM/C. When asked out of context I would, however, probably say no. I believe, and I think the UN would agree with me, that cultures and norms should be protected as long as they bring no harm to the citizens living with it. But when it comes to practices as harmful as FGM/C I believe it is the UN's duty to work with the citizens involved, at changing the norms and cultures to the better. Careful steps have to be taken though in order to protect existing cultures, and I believe the work the UN, and others, are doing today shows

the willingness to do just that. The Saleema programme, discussed in chapter 3, is for me a perfect example.

In the next chapter I shall discuss the two latter research questions.

4.3 On the questions of power

I believe I can answer the remaining research questions together. Whether the United Nations have the power to change state norms and/or cultures, and whether they have the power to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting. To answer these questions I will discuss the theories of the three scholars I discussed previously in the dissertation. First, there are Hans J. Morgenthau's ideas. If we apply his ideas on power to the question of whether or not the United Nations have the power to change the way a state behaves, Gellman (1988) would say that international institutions might be the arena for concerted action but they are not able to foster them. Morgenthau sees states as the base entities in the international system and although they might see their interests best served with cooperation the power always lies within the entity of the state and not international institutions.

People behave in a rational manner, and in order to maintain stability and security it is rational for states to align themselves with other states. As Peter Gellman said "Survival is the irreducible interest of every state." (Gellman, 1988, p. 254). According to realism states live in a world of anarchy where security is not something to take for granted. To secure safety and stability states aim to build a balance of power and that can be done with states aligning together against other states etc. According to realism states are trying to secure their safety by not alienating themselves and making enemies.

Some realists might say that the fight to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting is a way for Western states to dominate over developing countries. The power of education and the power of wealth is mostly (although not solely) distributed between the Western states. This interference in FGM/C has certainly been seen by several scholars, indigenous or otherwise, as a way to force Western beliefs on African countries.

One might also say that the reason the UN interferes with FGM/C issues is while these countries have such different moral ideas on human rights and women's rights the UN should have a vital interest in their characters and attempt to change them.

But at the same time, because of the severe poverty in these countries one can argue that these states pose no threat to the international society. According to Morgenthau and realists, states do not act out of selflessness but to improve their stance in the international system, to make sure of their own safety.

Those states who agree to work towards eliminating FGM/C do so to comply with this idea. According to realism, states don't interfere with other states because of a disapproval of what's being done to the citizens there; it doesn't concern them, as long as their own citizens are safe. As it says here before Morgenthau said that the state has no right to let its moral disapproval of a violation of an agreed moral rule get in the way of successful political action. The moral principle of national survival should be stronger. Only individuals have the rights to sacrifice themselves to defend a moral principle. So I think that Morgenthau himself would say that unless states actually benefit from it, or are protecting their own interests in some way, interfering with FGM/C would not be a rational choice.

If we put J. Ann Tickner's ideas on power to the United Nations working towards eliminating FGM/C we can use the example she uses herself in her article. She cites Jane Jaquette who argued that, since women have had less access to power as coercion, women have had to rely more on power as persuasion. That is the idea behind the method the UN, and others, have decided to use in order to make as much of an impact as possible. The UN methods towards influencing societies to stop cutting their girls are according to Tickner's ideas a feminine way to approach a problem. Tickner quotes Carol Gilligan who said that "[s]ince women are socialised into a mode of thinking which is contextual and narrative, rather than formal and abstract, they tend to see issues in contextual rather than abstract terms." (Tickner, 1988, p. 433). Gilligan said that there is a tendency in IR to think about morality either in terms of abstract, universal and unattainable standards, or purely instrumental. Tickner says that this is exactly what Morgenthau does; he takes away people's ability to put aside cultural differences and build a community despite their differences. According to Tickner's reformulation of Morgenthau's rules a feminist perspective tries to find common moral elements in human aspiration that can be the basis for building an international community. One might ask him/herself whether the UN isn't working precisely towards this goal. Tickner seems to believe that states are

not the only entities in the international system that can yield power, and international institutions like the UN have as much of a chance of influence as other entities.

Finally to put the UN and its interference in the practice of FGM/C in relation to Gramsci's ideas of power we have to apply his ideas on an international level, like Cox (1993) did. Gramsci's idea on hegemony is very much based on the power of persuasion. He believed that coercion in the broadest sense does not have to be violent or even direct. One can coerce another by persuasion too according to Gramsci and this forms the basis of his idea on power. He says that 'effectual hegemony' only happens when a party has influential power over the society as a whole. That said, the UN seems to be trying to reach hegemony in the world, at least on an ideological level. States find the UN's laws and rules to be compatible with their ideas on the most part and those who disagree find themselves under pressure to change their ideology. This is being done slowly, although surely, and not only with ideas on FGM/C but on other issues as well, many falling under the category of human rights, other under economics etc. The question is whether the hegemony (UN) is trying to reach is by convincing states or by coercing them into cooperation.

These ideas about power, and more, are perfectly acceptable to me. But when I answer the research questions the readers need to know what I specifically mean with the concept of 'power'. It is clear for me that the United Nations has power to change state norms and/or cultures and the same goes for eliminating female genital mutilation/cutting but I know that realist ideas would not accept this too easily. I realise that the power the UN has is not of a military kind. But it has the power of numbers; it has the power to put pressure on states to abide by their rules, the power of coercion and the power of persuasion. With that I conclude that the United Nations does have the power to change state norms and/or cultures and it does have the power to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting. This however, will take time. The sort of power the UN has is not of the fastest kind. But if it really wants to eliminate FGM/C from the world I believe it to be capable of it if the effort and work is applied towards the goal of elimination. I do not think it should have taken this long, but methods have been developing and mistakes have been made along the way. In order to reach the goal I believe the UN is on the right track today. I think the ideas of norm changing and norm diffusion help as well as several other schools and ideas.

The feminist ones I discussed in the dissertation are just examples but I chose them because I believe them to be very helpful in the battle against FGM/C.

With the norm changing and norm diffusion the idea is that agents are able to influence norms on a both national and global level. The UN believes it can change norms of the cultures that practice FGM/C by giving the practitioners arguments that fit within their culture. Norms cannot be created with too much of a turnaround for the cultures, as I have said before in chapter 2.2, but by fitting the new norms within the existing culture and changing it step by step. That is how agents should be able to work towards elimination of FGM/C. According to the norm diffusion theory, a discourse on how harmful FGM/C is to girls and women should be created within the practicing societies. Moreover a discourse should be implemented to help change people's view on girls who do not undergo these procedures, making them marriageable even though they have not been cut. If scholars are right these measures are going to take time and be contested; they might even evolve in ways nobody can predict. But the possibility is at hand to change an existing norm because norms are ever-changing, a non-constant things that can be affected both from within and externally.

To put the ideas of discourse and language into perspective with feminism against FGM/C, post-structuralism is very convenient. Post-structural feminism points out how powerful language is and the prevailing discourse. Social structures and processes are organized through institutions and practices that are located in and structured by a particular discursive field. Using post-structural feminism towards the elimination of FGM/C one would, for example, want to change the discourse towards it and the language used within the societies where the cutting occurs. In the dissertation I presented examples of just that, examples like the Saleema project. The Saleema project aims to change the discourse within societies, the word Saleema (that means pure, whole, perfect etc.) is connected to girls that have not been cut, changing it from the word Ghalfa (which is a word of shame) that was used to describe girls that had not been cut before. The United Nations has taken part in this project and others similar to it, so they see a potential in changing the discourse, changing 'knowledge' and changing societies ideas of what should and should not be.

I think because FGM/C is mostly performed within African states, we have to take postcolonial feminism into account. Several Western humanitarian organizations have been burnt over the years trying to change civilizations into mini-western societies. We have to always wonder whether we are doing the right thing, whether we are being helpful or whether we are trying to be dominant, 'knowing what is best'. Postcolonial feminists have criticized the interference in FGM/C but arguments have also been made that because states that perform the procedures have signed agreements on human rights, the same must go for them as for others. According to agreements made, performing FGM/C is a pure violation. The United Nations seems to have learned to interfere by going within the culture, getting societies involved without enforcements and that seems to be in accordance to what the postcolonial feminists suggest. If we want to eliminate FGM/C, according to postcolonial feminism, we have to take into account the situations these women are living in and how the power relations are within the societies. The UN does that today, the women are encouraged to say no to FGM/C, but notably the men are also educated on the matter because of the patriarchal system that often prevails. Women are often dependent on men financially and if the men will not marry uncut women for example, there is no way of eliminating FGM/C.

Finally I have to discuss the UN and FGM/C in relations to the last feminism field I discussed, IR feminism. Feminists like Tickner and Sjoberg point out that there is a clear relationship between knowledge and power, and people have to take into account *who* created our 'knowledge'. Most knowledge according to these feminists has been created by men and is about men. They also point out that the idea of gender is a constructed one, describing how men and women should behave and what they ought to be like. According to Tickner and Sjoberg the gender concept is necessary within IR studies so that global economy can be fully understood, along with the lives of people within the international society. These feminists want us to view concepts like sovereignty, state and security from a feminist stand point and to ask ourselves whether it makes a difference that most foreign-policy leaders and heads of international corporations are men and why women are still relatively disempowered in matters of foreign and military policy. Using these ideas one can point out that it is of patriarchal hierarchies' construct how women are seen in the states where the cutting is performed. The ideas on how they should behave and how they should look are constructed and the ideas are constructed mostly by men.

Although the procedures are done mostly by women, on women, the idea is that they are on-going because men will not marry uncut women. These women are often economically dependent on men so even though they know that the cutting is bad for them they see no other way than to continue the practice. In this context one can also point out how the understanding of security depends on where people are talking about it. Security to these women might not involve the concept of violence at all, but the security that comes with having a roof over their head and something to eat is more valid. When we look at IR concepts we need to take into account various situations states and their residents are living in.

I believe all of these ideas help the UN towards their goal of eliminating female genital mutilation/cutting. The United Nations have chosen to proceed with programmes that try and change people's view from within their culture, without forcing a new belief upon them. The Saleema initiative and Tostan are examples of such programmes but certainly not the only ones'. The United Nations try to work with as many local projects and initiatives that are likely to help in eliminating FGM/C from the World. Today The UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme is the largest programme from the United Nations working against FGM/C practices and this programme oversees and helps with many other smaller projects, like Tostan and Saleema. I think it has taken the UN a long time to get where it is today on this matter and there is still a long way to go, but in all fairness I believe progress has been made over the last few years, and the newest development from 20th of December 2012 is a very promising one, the UN resolution banning the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting.

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Appendix: List of acronyms

CEOSS: Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services

CEP: Community Empowerment Program

FGM/C: Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

GEEP: the Group for Population Studies and Education

IR: International Relations

MYWO: Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization

NCCW: Sudan's National Council on Child Welfare

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

OHCHR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

REACH: Rescue African Children

TAN: Transnational Advocacy Networks

UN: United Nations

UNDP: the United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA: the United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF: the United Nations Children's Fund

WHO: the World Health Organization