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## Lost in Translation: Unpacking Monolithic Narratives of Girls Affected by Female Genital Cutting

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## **Abstract**

Narratives about female genital cutting (FGC) have socio-historically been told in the realm of nongovernmental organization (NGO) discourse. NGO discourse reproduces monolithic understandings about girls impacted by FGC. Previous research reveals how NGOs replicate the tune of neoliberal agendas due to the contributions of donors in the Global North prompted by narrative formulations concocted in the Global South. Interviews were conducted with girls aged 15-21 seeking safe shelter from child marriage and female genital cutting and a translator, at the Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM), an NGO in Moshi, Tanzania. Case study excerpts from NAFGEM's website, field notes, and observational analyses were also integrated into data analytics. The findings of the research revealed that due to the presence of the translator, who is also an employee at NAFGEM, the girls' voices were obfuscated so that the aims of the organization could be advanced. The translator's interjections during the interviews caused the girls' lived realities to be lost in translation. In the process of mistranslation, both the translator and the girls become reformed, recognizable others, recognizable in the NGO sphere, but unrecognizable to themselves.

**Lost in Translation: Unpacking Monolithic Narratives of Girls Affected by Female Genital Cutting**

by

Courtney Carr  
B.A., Cornell University 2018

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Pan African Studies

Syracuse University  
May 2020

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Female genital cutting<sup>1</sup> (FGC) is a practice that affects women worldwide. More than 300 million girls and women alive today have been cut in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, where FGC is concentrated (UNICEF, 2016). Specifically, in Tanzania, it is estimated that 7.9 million women and girls have undergone FGC. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been developed to reduce cases of female genital cutting. NGOs act as integral stakeholders in reducing cases of FGC because of their ability to move inside and outside the boundaries of the official and unofficial and public and private (Bernal and Grewal, 2014).

This insider and outsider capacity of nongovernmental organizations are employed by the Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM), a local NGO located in Moshi, Tanzania. NAFGEM is an association of individuals, groups, institutions, and other NGOs dedicated to ending female genital cutting and other harmful practices toward women through grassroots organizing in communities, where these customs are still being practiced (NAFGEM, 2017). Their grassroots organizing techniques include educational seminars, training workshops, and sensitization and awareness campaigns. The organization also has three safe shelters where girls can escape female genital cutting and child marriage.

In the summer of 2019, I conducted interviews at NAFGEM with girls seeking safe shelter and the assistance of a translator, who was also a social worker at the NGO. Through the interviews, I attempted to develop holistic narratives about girls impacted by female genital cutting. The translator's presence and involvement throughout the interviews convoluted the data retrieved, having a profound impact on the findings.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this research, the term "cutting" will be used as a means of being culturally cognizant of the humanity of the women and girls who still engage with the practice.

Through my research, the following **research questions** will be addressed:

1. How have narratives about black girls affected by female genital cutting been told sociohistorically?
  - 1a. In what ways do these narrative formulations produce monolithic understandings about both black girls and female genital cutting?
  - 1b. How are NGO's neoliberal agendas reproduced when the girls' stories become lost in translation?

It is my hope that this research will be valuable in causing researchers to understand how NGO discursive agendas can be reproduced when language barriers exist in the research context. Additionally, amidst language barriers, the presence of the girls is also lost through the predominance of the NGO's neoliberal agendas, which echo subaltern representations of women in the Global South. Therefore, it is hoped that the information analyzed within the transcripts will illustrate the importance of developing differential narratives for those developing content on NGO websites to avoid reproducing victimized positionalities of girls impacted by FGC and child marriage. Given all of the above, it is hoped that this research will be valuable for knowledge production relating to topics including feminism, NGO discourse, and Pan Africanism, while also shedding light on how linguistic barriers in research can result in the objectification of peoples in the global South.

## I. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Deciphering Terminology**

There have been many debates about the precise language to use when trying to describe the practice. Throughout this research, I will be using the term “female genital cutting.” The use of a term such as “mutilation” dismisses an entire heritage and is so extreme as to stifle dialogue. Perpetrators of systems such as capitalism and imperialism, which incapacitate people just as severely, are not depicted with such terminological extremes (Mugo, 1997). Micere Mugo identifies the double standard inherent in western discourse, which describes the cultural practice within non-Western contexts as mutilation but uses terminologies with constructive connotations such as mommy makeover, which results in Western equivalents not operating within the same realm of liability.

Drs. Shehida Elbaz and Angela Davis also emphasize how engaging with terminological extremes, such as mutilation, create the utterly false impression that genital mutilation is the main feature of women’s oppression, rather than male supremacy, which operates within imperialist and neo-colonial structures (Mugo, 1997). Therefore, it is essential to look at female genital cutting through a multi-faceted perspective because the practice is profoundly connected to other societal structures, such as imperialism and neocolonialism. Understanding the functionalities of these systematic structures that are correlated to the perpetuation of female genital cutting is instrumental because of how they reverberate in the schematics of nongovernmental organizations, such as NAFGEM.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The foundational theoretical framework that will be employed throughout this thesis will be Karl Marx's 'historical materialism,' in conjunction with its interconnected to multi-faceted conceptualizations of feminism and NGOization. Through historical materialism, "the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is directly interwoven with the material activity of individuals, the language of real-life" (Marx and Engels, 1972: 22). By grounding the work in transnational Black feminism and historical materialism, the ways in which lived experiences manifest into material realities will be substantiated. The manifestations of the girls' material realities and how it becomes 'lost in translation' will be deciphered based on the interviews conducted, my observational analyses, and an examination of field notes.

In concurrence with Marx's historical materialism, theorizations of transnational Black feminism will serve as a framework to illuminate the validity of the lived experiences of the girls affected by female genital cutting, which become convoluted by NGO neoliberal agendas that project narratives of monolithic Third World women. For example, Patricia Hill Collins' definition of feminism is cognizant of women's shared history of patriarchal oppression that is shaped by the material conditions of sexuality and reproduction (Guy-Sheftall, 1995: 344). The etching capacity of patriarchal oppression manifests in NGO's narrative formulations, which impact the conceptualizations of Black women's sexuality and reproduction.

Additionally, Beverley Guy-Sheftall and Johnetta Cole's correlation to the personal as political is essential when contextualizing and foregrounding my presence in the politicized space of a nongovernmental organization. Within Guy-Sheftall and Cole's extended analogy, the women's domain is correlated to the personal, while the public arena of power and action is

rendered a politicized space (Guy-Sheftall and Cole, 2003: 5). Since NGOs consider themselves to be spheres of power and action, they exist as the political, while neoliberalism renders both my and the girls' bodies as individualized and, therefore, personal through bodily commoditization that is symptomatic of neoliberal capitalism.

The individualistic implication of neoliberalism was replicated in the convolution of the interviews. Furthermore, the interviews reproduced problematized notions of the monolithic Third World Woman. Formulations such as the 'Third World Woman' ignore the complex and mobile relationships between the historical materiality of the women's sociopolitical bodies, which are impacted by oppression and the discursive representations of their bodies (Mohanty, 2003: 65). Through the perpetuation of notions such as the Third World woman, the complex realities of girls affected by female genital cutting becomes blurred. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze how NGO narratives project these monolithic narratives for their own neoliberal agendas.

Formulations of African feminism such as that of Pinkie Mekgwe in "Theorizing African Feminism(s)" are imperative when examining how Black girls' bodies are affected by female genital cutting. Through this postulation, elements of African culture can be interrogated, but they do not have to be denigrated because of the existence of different perspectives among different women (Mekgwe, 2007). Through the examination of the practice of female genital cutting in conjunction with an analysis of NGO discourse and its manifestations at NAFGEM, the nuances inherent within the cultural practice will be unpacked.

Conceptualizations of African feminism will be integrated throughout this work to ensure that stereotypical understandings about girls impacted by female genital cutting will not be reproduced. Destructive approaches to depicting FGC has perpetuated racist clichés about

Africa, particularly ideas about barbarity, perpetual female victimhood, and the refusal of enlightenment and modernity (Kaler, 2009: 178). By examining NGO discourse in the context of neoliberalism, monolithic narrative formulations about FGC will be interrogated.

The interrogation of NGO discourse and neoliberalism will reveal how girls impacted by FGC still retain their agency. As discussed in Patricia MacFadden's "Becoming Postcolonial: African Women Changing the Meaning of Citizenship," women become autonomous subjects, conscious of their rights and entitlements by virtue of them being members of society, regardless of their ethnicity, class or social location (MacFadden, 2005). By examining the positionality of women affected by female genital cutting in NGOized spaces, the self-determination and conscientious contributions of women have the potential to be further realized.

The self-determination and conscientiousness of women affected by female genital cutting contribute to a holistic knowledge economy. Within a knowledge economy, all work contains some tacit knowledge, but whether it becomes specific knowledge is dependent (Walby, 2007: 6). Specific knowledges' positionality in the knowledge economy is scaled to be configured into prevailing power dynamics. Therefore, by transcribing and contextualizing the interviews, the knowledge provided will be contextualized as a means of delineating the subjectified subject within the realm of NGO-ization.

## **Chapter One: NGO-ization and Neoliberalism in Contemporary Tanzania**

Neoliberalism's far-reaching capacity is depicted in David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. He details sexuality, culture, history, and nature as spectacted and commodified entities that were never produced originally as commodities (Harvey, 2007: 166). In neoliberal economies, the uncommodifiable, such as the girls' bodies and stories, become commodifiable.

This commodification is ‘on display’ through the context of NGO-ization evident in the convolution of my interviews.

Neoliberalization’s commodification had a variety of ramifications, resulting from the range of interventions introduced. These included the sale of state-owned parastatals to private-owned companies, often multinationals; the withdrawal of state support from social services like health and education; and the encouragement of individual and international investment in “profitable” industries such as mining, tourism, commercial agriculture, and production of export crops like flowers and seeds (Hodgson, 2017: 108). Commodified black bodies were also considered a source of profitability, and an export-oriented economy left Tanzania dependent on the global North.

In addition to profitable, the structural ramifications of neoliberalism also perpetuated the bodies of the Black girls as expendable, rooted in a colonial historicization. Neoliberalism’s integration into the capitalist global economy increased the people’s vulnerability to economic fluctuations and corruption existent within the larger financial infrastructure. (Aminzade, 2013: 252). People within neoliberal economies are not only vulnerable to its infrastructural corporatization, but also the hegemonic notions of governmentality that have become integrated into the ideological machinery.

A hegemonic conceptualization of governmentality is rooted in the process of NGO-ization. As Dip Kapoor defines in *NGO-ization: Complicity, Contradiction, and Prospects*, NGOs and the process of NGO-ization undermine local and international movements for social change and environmental justice and oppositional anti-colonial and anti-capitalist politics in complicity with state and private-sector interests (Kapoor, 2010:2). NGO’s positionality within the neoliberal

state overrides state involvement as a means to an end, subverting the capacity of the people themselves to produce their own forms of consciousness and resistances.

Sources of funding play a factor in the process of NGO-ization and the replication of capitalism. Through these slated funders, NGOs often become enmeshed and invested in maintaining webs of power and bureaucracy, which diverts energy and focus away from building social change (Kapoor, 2010: 15). The push to preserve sources of funding propels NGOs to construct their target populations as perpetually lacking, which ensures the consistency of their funds.

The sense of perpetual lacking propagated by NGOs is rooted in neoliberal conceptualizations of individualism, which undermines the structural implications of the socio-economic system. The notion of empowerment as a neoliberal conceptualization focuses on the individual capacities and needs of the poor, which minimizes the social and political causes of poverty (Kamat, 2010: 169). By depicting the girls as being the source of perpetual lacking, the political and social roots of the practice of female genital cutting are truncated, and the economic vulnerability that cast the girls into cycles of poverty is obfuscated.

In the process of the economic obfuscation, the people depicted by NGOs are thrust into downtrodden positionalities. The girls are written into rescue narratives, which allows the global North to find redemption in the interventions being implemented in the global South, due to the global North's failure to alleviate poverty, disenfranchisement, and inequality in their policies (Hodzic, 2014: 309). However, the structures that uphold poverty, disenfranchisement, and inequality are muddled by the salvation NGOs.

In addition to the image of the poverty-stricken girl that needs to be rescued, NGOs also promulgate that girls are also in need of saving. Sally Engle Merry elucidates how the

responsibility for violence against women is attributed to an intractable traditional culture rather than in the government's failure to provide schools, health clinics, and jobs for women (Merry, 2003: 961). Inherent within rescue narratives propelled by NGOs, female genital cutting is relegated as a backward practice, rather than governmental accountability for the delegation of inadequate resources to education, jobs, and health care, which further cloaks the puppeteering of the invisible hands of neoliberalism.

The hegemonic discourse produced by NGOs has re-posed notions of feminism. NGOs have enabled the depoliticization of social and women's movements and a neoliberal homogenization of feminism (Bernal and Grewal, 2014). NGOs have deprecated the potential of the women in the community by prioritizing their intervention schemas through rescue narratives over the voices of the women who they are meant to serve. This has resulted in the feminist ideologies embedded within these communities being synchronized to the tune of capitalistic societies.

In conjunction with the re-posed notions of feminism advanced by NGOs, problematized notions such as the monolithic Third World woman are also dramatized as captured by Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith in *Human rights and narrated lives: The ethics of recognition*. They emphasize how NGOs enlist stories from 'victims' that are sensationalized, sentimentalized, and charged with effect (Schaffer and Smith, 2004). Through the translations of the girls' words by the organizational social worker, the responses become synchronized with the NGO agenda.

The synchronization of the girls' voices with the NGO agenda reveals the regulatory nature of NGO discourse. Accounts by NGOs pay inadequate attention to questions of power, dependence, and complicity with the state, market, and multilateral/international institutions made evident in an era characterized by globalizing capitalist colonization of territories, nature,

peoples, and cultures (Choudry and Kapoor, 2013). Narrative impartiality is inherent within NGO discourse, and NAFGEM is complicit in presenting victimized narrative formulations about the girls to further their own monetizing agenda.

Slated narrative formulations can have far-reaching implications on the societies they depict. NGOs insert themselves into the regional body politic, producing new economies, social relations, and fields and forms of governmental activity (Hodzic, 2017). The insider-outsider navigational capability of NGOs has allowed the organizations to interweave itself within the inner functionalities of local governance and the communities they impact. As a result, NGOs affect economic policy formulations through the perpetual portrayal of FGC as culturally denigrative in tune with globalized capitalism narrative impartiality.

Alnoor Ebrahim details the intersecting relationships between NGOs and funders as an insider-outsider and product-process tension. In the product-process tension, the rhetoric of NGOs and funders emphasizes the importance of process issues, while standard reporting is heavily biased toward products; an insider-outsider tension occurs when funders are out of touch with ground realities (Ebrahim, 2003). In the case of NAFGEM, the girls seeking safe shelter at the organizational headquarters become the products due to their neoliberal commodification and the process by which these products become expendable when the girls are maneuvered out of their indigenous communities into the organizational headquarters. Since a dominant amount of the organization's funding comes from international sources, such as Australia and Canada, their funders remain external from the internal realities of the impacted demographic, and the information they do receive is erected from organizational representatives.

The narratorial effects that foreign agencies have on NGOs are highlighted in Issa G. Shivji's article, "Reflections on NGOs in Tanzania: what we are, what we are not, and what we

ought to be.” He highlights the greatest single limitation of NGOs as being ‘whoever pays the piper calls the tune’ (Shivji, 2004). Even though nongovernmental organizations construct themselves to be external from the government and empowered entities, their intermediary positionality within preexisting state structures leaves them susceptible to disharmonious governmental influence. NGOs’ susceptibility to governmental dissonance reveals the proliferation of neoliberal power structures and NGOs’ complicity in maintaining these preconstructed power dynamics.

The self-perpetual structure of NGO credibility acts as a contradistinction to the feminist movement that was its predecessor. NGOs are constructed as metaphorical unwanted children of the women’s movement, with neoliberal states and donors acting as the dominant fathers to whom the women’s movement has succumbed (Hodzic, 2014: 228). Although NGOs portray themselves to be powerful entities, their positioning amidst ideological structures, such as capitalism and patriarchy, suppress NGO’s capacity for holistic societal change because they are not only unwanted children of neoliberalism, but they are also unplanned, which funnels them into unexpected positionalities. The spontaneous positionalities of NGOs result in expeditious decision-making processes that sometimes disserves the population the NGO is presumably serving.

## **Chapter Two: Patriarchy, Sexuality and Desire in the Context of Female Genital Cutting**

Formulations of sexuality have played an instrumental role in defining the bounds of the sexual(ized) body. “To talk about sexuality, therefore, is to talk not only about the everyday lived experience of the sexual(ized) body, but also about the imagination, desires, and intentions of the sexual(ized) subject” (Allen, 2009: 83). Jafari Allen’s formulation highlights how socioeconomic

materializations, such as neoliberalism and its resultant consciousnesses, have impacted how the lived realities of Black bodies have been reimagined.

The rhetoric of social anthropologists and women's rights advocates from the global North further indicates how Black women's sexual(ized) bodies have been reimagined socioeconomically. Beginning with the first contact with African communities, researchers maintained a voyeuristic, ethnopornographic obsession with what they perceived as exotic and perverse African sexual cultures (Tamale, 2011: 28). The African women's bodies were considered exploitable, expendable, and explorable because of their conjectured relationship to European sexualities.

The exploitation of African women's bodies within African patriarchal societies is highlighted by April Gordon in *Transforming capitalism and patriarchy: Gender and Development in Africa*. She explains how African patriarchal institutions function to maximize the advantages of men at the expense of women and the economy, resulting in the unpaid or underpaid labor of women in the economy and in the household (Gordon, 1996: 33). The patriarchal capitalist ideology of maximal profitability extends to the cartography of women's bodies, which becomes a conquerable terrain.

The idea of women's bodies as a conquerable terrain burgeoned during colonialism and ensured the production of pious women. During their imperialistic entries into spaces, colonial ideologies such as, "no polygamy, no public displays of sexuality or desire" were ingrained (Tamale, 2011: 81). The colonial value of sexuality and desire being a private matter illustrates how female propriety was emphasized in colonized spaces, resulting in the proliferation of practices, such as female genital cutting.

The proliferation of the practice of female genital cutting and the colonial conceptualization of female propriety is reflective of how the female body becomes inscribed onto capitalistic power relations. The practice of female genital cutting involves complex definitions of masculinity and femininity that construct the clitoris and the male prepuce as vestiges of the opposite sex that must be eliminated (Lionnet, 2003). The clitoris' construction as an ideological trace of male power makes its elimination crucial to the continuance of gendered power constructions.

The societal necessity of women's propriety is motivated by their commodified labor positionalities in capitalist patriarchies. Capitalist patriarchy is a political economy that constructs a hierarchal sexual ordering of society for political control driven by the pursuit of profit stemming from the patriarchal ordering (Eisenstein, 1979: 28). Through the continuation of sexually suppressive practices, such as female genital cutting, women remain in economically subjugated locations that are constructive to the neoliberal economies, which rely on the exploitation of their labor.

Capitalism and neoliberal economies benefit from heteronormative constructions of sexuality. The institutionalization of heterosexuality is necessary for patriarchy since, without it, the patriarchal mode of production could not exist (Walby, 1986: 66). In this patriarchal mode of production, women are an extractable source of cheap labor or rely on their husbands as their main breadwinner; their continued exploitability relies on the subjugation of their empowerment and independence.

Patriarchy is inextricably linked to pleasure, as exemplified by Geraldine Finn in "Patriarchy and Pleasure: The Pornographic Eye/I." "Patriarchy requires such a regime and thrives on sexual incitement: on the identification of self with sex, sex with pleasure and pleasure

with potency (dominance and submission)” (Finn, 1985: 90). Patriarchy ensures that men’s dominance and women’s submissiveness transcend into zones of pleasure. Women’s sense of pleasure is rendered subservient in the context of female genital cutting, replicating the hierarchical understandings inherent in patriarchy.

Female genital cutting has caused Black women’s notion of bodily pleasure to be deconstructed. In the case of the Ketu of Nigeria, circumcision makes it clear that “sexual intercourse is not an end in itself but a means of begetting children who will continue the lineage” (Johnson, 2007: 218). Due to the patriarchy that perpetuates itself in societies such as the Ketu, the reproductive function of women is prioritized over their personal pleasure.

The preparation for cutting ceremonies includes engagement with societal respectability politics. Female initiation transforms girls into women by instructing them how to behave as respectful wives and daughters-in-law; and encourages maturity and sexual control (Thomas, 2003: 16). As a rite of passage, female genital cutting is a cultural entry point to womanhood, and within this entry point, girls are taught a value system that encourages their gendered submission and sexual propriety.

Not only does circumcision signal a rite of passage, but also access to social groups. All those initiated within the span of a few years belong to the same age-grade, fostering ties between people of the same age that counter kin-based loyalties (Thomas, 2003: 16). Beyond the transition to womanhood, girls gain ties to other girls in their community, which supplement their family connections.

The title of Lynn Thomas’ work *Politics of the Womb* elucidates how the reproductive process becomes politicized and female genital cutting’s correlation to this politicization. Reproductive processes were just as much about constituting and enforcing differences among

females as creating a shared sense of womanhood (Thomas, 2006: 17). Young girls, initiates, brides, mothers, grandmothers, and older women are hierarchically systematized according to their reproductive contribution, a systematization that is evocative of neoliberal scaling.

In addition to the hierarchical scaling based on reproductive contribution, female genital cutting is also linked to socioeconomic promotion for families that engage with the process of a brideprice. A brideprice is paid to the initiate's family, a process that usually extended over several years and is rarely completed before the birth of the first child (Thomas, 2003:30). The bride price perpetuates the practice of genital cutting because there is an economic promise for families who engage in FGC.

### **Chapter Three: Contextualizing the Maasai**

The political economy of the Maasai plays a significant role in their historical materiality. They are primarily pastoralists, herding cattle, sheep, and goats; livestock ownership remains an important marker of wealth and status (Cloward, 2016: 18). As livestock remains an integral signifier of wealth accumulation, a cow is typically a significant element in the accumulation of the bride price.

In addition to their pastoral-based economies, the Maasai are also situated within the political economy of neoliberalism, which has culminated as ecologically exploitative relationships with the state. Informed by a history of state society relationships, Maasai leaders have attempted to use their ability to negotiate directly with foreign investors, participating in commoditizing their landscapes, to create openings that they believe will help them realize the level of autonomous development which they have long strived (Gardner, 2016: 6). Within the neoliberal commodification process, land becomes a site of tourist extraction. Therefore, negotiation with

the ‘invisible hands’ of neoliberalism has been key to the Maasai attempting to maintain their autonomy.

Village spaces have also been integral sites of resistance and organization. The Maasai transformed the village from a site of state-led development and encompassment to a local, territorial claim to land and belonging (Gardner, 2016: 145). Although discourse has attempted to ‘villagize’ the Maasai people, further rendering them as others, the Maasai people themselves have reserved their village spaces as sites for indigenous dignity. Discursive villagization operates on the premise of divisiveness through distinction to discombobulate collectivity that is synonymous with Maasai communities.

The Maasai also employ an age-grade system. The age system creates a sense of structured time, geared to an awareness of the passage through life, but it is also linked to an orientation in space that unifies them as people (Spencer, 2003: 59). The unity advanced by the age-grade system defies space and time. Even though governmental bureaucratization has attempted to localize the nomadic spaces that the Maasai inhabit, they continue to defy space and time through their autonomous relationship with nature that cannot be fissured by colonial extractive practices.

Patriarchy also plays a significant role in the societal organization of Maasai communities. Women provide almost all domestic labor, and married women derive prestige from the number and accomplishments of their children; they don’t own livestock but instead are granted “milking rights” to an allotted number of their husband’s livestock (Cloward, 2016:19). Maasai women are ‘milked’ dry by their husbands through their increased contributions to the household, but their limited access to livestock, which holds power in their localized political economy.

Amidst the limited access to livestock, Maasai women engage in the practice of female circumcision. Female circumcision signals readiness to marry and the beginning of a woman's reproductive career with the concomitant regulation (by men) of her fertility (Cloward, 2016: 20). Once a girl is circumcised, she is 'ready' for marriage and her role as a wife, which is regulated by patriarchal structures.

#### **Chapter Four: Unraveling Global Health**

It is imperative to unravel global health as an imperialist entity because my global health background during my original trip contributed to my naivete while conducting my fieldwork. Global health is rooted in imperialism because it originated from poor countries that constitute a *threat* to wealthy countries (Levich, 2015). Through constructions of the Global South as other through conceptualizations of girls and women as powerless, discursive imperialism and colonialism are simulated.

The far-reaching implications of imperialism and colonization are described by Aime Cesaire in *Discourse on Colonialism*. He states that:

No one colonizes innocently, no one colonizes with impunity either; a nation which colonizes, a civilization which justifies colonization – and therefore force– is already a sick civilization which is morally diseased, which is irresistibly progressing from one consequence to another... (Cesaire, 1950: 39)

By constructing the colonizer as morally diseased and sick, the paradoxical nature of global health is uncovered, and the true *threat* sanctioned by the forces behind colonization is revealed.

Within the realm of global health, interventions are predetermined by the wealthy in the global North, limiting the voices of those primarily impacted in the global South. Overarching

health-care planning, policies, and programs for the people of poor countries are determined by the experts and financiers of wealthy countries (Levich, 2015). This happens within the context of female genital cutting and the nongovernmental organizations developing the interventions. Although nongovernmental organizations, such as NAFGEM, are developed by people within Tanzania, they rely on contributions from the wealthy in the global North as sustenance.

### **Chapter Five: The Translator as Colonial Subject**

In addition to my identity as an outsider-within, the translator, who acted as an insider-without, replicated cultural imperialism, evocative of the Global North. The translator's desire for self-realization was interlocked with her yearning for collective group emancipation, an aspiration which forms an oppositional, engendered identity (Hsiung, 2001). In a society that is rooted in capitalist patriarchy and misogyny, the woman who acted as the translator is othered. Throughout the interviews, the translator reinforces her status as an insider-without by interweaving NGO discourse into the girls' voices.

The effects of otherization on the Black women's psyche is depicted by Michelle Wright in *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora*. Her analysis of the negative aspect of recognition is useful in further understanding the translator as an insider-without. She cites Henderson's negative aspect of recognition as a useful point of departure: one can speak with, recognize, and be recognized by a variety of speaking subjects (whether inner or outer voices) (Wright, 2014: 142). While the translator speaks to the girls who are rendered as a subject, she attempts to resolve the inner dichotomy between her own self-realization as insider-without and collective emancipation. In the process of attempting to emancipate the girls who are

societally rendered as other and engaging in dialogue with them, the translator subjectifies both herself and the girls she depicts as escaping ‘mutilation.’

## II. METHODOLOGY

### **Chapter Six: Methodological Development**

As mentioned in previous sections, I was introduced to my fieldwork site, the Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM), as a global health minor at Cornell University. During my time there, I developed a global health case study with medical students, and I interned at NAFGEM for a month. During my time as an intern in the summer of 2017, I helped with applying for additional grants for the organization and interacted with the girls intermediately. Prior to coming to Tanzania, I read a lot about female genital cutting, seeing it often referred to as ‘mutilation.’ My interactions with the girls were paradoxical to everything I had read, so I found it imperative to elucidate this paradox through my work.

My initial trip to Tanzania impacted the way I approached my fieldwork and the subsequent data that I retrieved. While initially at the NGO as an intern, I developed relationships with the people running the organization, including the social worker who acted as the translator for the interviews. As a global health student at Cornell, I had been taught to trust nongovernmental organizations as an intellectual authority; it wasn’t until my coursework in Pan African Studies, which included learning transnational Black feminist frameworks that I began to question the implications of global health and its ties to neoliberalism.

My engagement with transnational Black feminist frameworks and deconstructions of neoliberalism began to illuminate how global health was an imperialist entity, and this

illumination continued while analyzing the data obtained from my fieldwork. Upon my return from Tanzania, while doing research for my undergraduate thesis, the ways in which global health depicted and positioned Black women's bodies were elucidated. In the midst of gathering sources for the literature review, I came across a link on the Human Rights Watch website that included one of the girls I met during my time at NAFGEM as a global health student. The website captioned the girl's picture: "Tigsi (not her real name), now 12, was forced to marry at age 9, but now attends a boarding school with the support of NAFGEM, a local organization" (Human Rights Watch, 2014). When I saw this as an undergraduate, I contemplated the simplistic construction of the girl and how it differed from the dynamic girls I had met during my time in Moshi. Given the following, I developed interview questions with the hope of better understanding the girls beyond the narrow interpretations circulated.

In order to gain a more holistic conceptualization of the girls' lived experiences, the following questions were asked during the interview:

- (1) Tell me about yourself;
- (2) What is one thing you wish people knew about you but do not?
- (3) What do you like to do for fun?
- (4) Why do you consider these activities fun?
- (5) What foods do you like to eat or cook?
- (6) Tell me about what made you come to the Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM)?
- (7) How has your experience been at NAFGEM?
- (8) Whom do you consider a source of safety or trust at NAFGEM, and why?
- (9) How has NAFGEM changed your future if at all?

The following open-ended questions were developed with the intent of gaining a multi-faceted understanding of the girls and their experiences, beyond what I had casually observed through my everyday interactions with them as an intern.

Through both a combination of the information collected from the interviews and my own observations, I will examine how the translator's convolution through her discrete interjections while translating the interview questions impacted the substantiality of the girls' responses. This method, which underscores the significance of life histories, yields a rich data set that allows probing of quintessential realist questions; captures subtle, hard-to-measure, and longer-term contextual factors and mechanisms; helps decipher individual and structural-level contexts (Richardson, Phillips, Colom, and Nichols, 2018). The lived realities of girls impacted by female genital cutting, who are the main focus of my thesis, are immeasurable and do not replicate archetypal understandings of girlhood or FGC. Therefore, qualitative data will be used to help embody the sounds and visualizations experienced during my fieldwork and illustrate the multitudinous experiences of the girls.

The intent to capture a multitudinous vision of the girls I interacted with throughout my fieldwork was influenced by transnational Black feminist frameworks. While conducting my interviews in Tanzania, it was hoped that the work would "produce facts and theories about the Black female experience that will clarify a Black women's standpoint for Black women" (Collins, 1986: 16). This project was developed with the transnational Black girl and woman in mind: by us, for us, and to us. However, intent does not always reflect reality as the open-ended nature of the interviews allowed the translator to curb the interviews to the beat of her own drum, which skewed the data in instructive ways.

## **Chapter Seven: Positioning the Outsider-Within**

Cognizance of my positionality as an outsider-within was imperative to my analytical process. Patricia Hills Collins defines the outsider-within as one who looks both from the outside and in from the outside out, understanding both (Collins, 1986). It was important to be able to look *outside* of the interviews to really *see* the girls who would ordinarily dance to Tanzanian music and tell dramatized stories with one another. Contrastingly, it also became imperative to look *within* the interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of how the translator instrumentalized the girls at NAFGEM to reproduce monolithic narratives.

In order to methodologically submerge within the lived realities of the girls depicted, transnational feminist methodologies were employed. These methodologies require that the mystification of the researcher and researched as ‘objective instruments of data production’ be replaced with recognition of personal involvement, which has the power to admit others into one’s life (Roberts, 1981: 58). By demystifying detachment as a researcher and being cognizant of my connections with the researched, conceptualizations of objectivity are dismantled, and observations made interweave themselves with data gathered to create differential knowledge production about girls affected by female genital cutting.

Connection to one’s positionality is a methodological approach also evocative of feminist ethnography. Feminist ethnography has the capacity to excite both conscious and unconscious realms of connectivity. It evokes individualized conventions, such as statements, everyday activities and concerns, and interpersonal relationships (Abu-Lughod, 1990). Ethnographic invocation was imperative to consider because it was through my informal interactions with the girls that I gathered my richest information. Their everyday presence within their material reality demonstrated agency and embodied ‘everyday acts of resistance.’

By stepping outside of the bounds of the interviews, the girls' lived realities as an everyday act of resistance are illuminated; however, the linguistic restraints on these illuminations due to my positionality must be holistically considered. While one may have the privilege of getting much more detailed and graphic information than white researchers, one also has to be aware of how one's position of relative privilege denies one the ability to fully appreciate their experiences (Carty, 1996: 133). The language barriers and the lingual interjections by the translator, incensed by my status as an 'outsider-within,' caused the experiences of the girls to be 'lost in translation.'

The translator was able to instrumentalize the girls' narratives for NAFGEM's neoliberal purposes because of the ways that Black women's bodies have been historically mystified. The historical mystification results in Black women's bodies being considered as the "Other of the Other, dangerously unspeakable, and resistant to theoretical articulation" (Wright, 2004: 136). This work will illustrate how Black women have been sociohistorically portrayed as theoretically resistant so that conceptualizations about Black women would remain ideologically desolate, leaving knowledge production about Black women vulnerable to convolution.

Through the analysis of the interviews juxtaposed with case studies featured on the NAFGEM website, I will be engaging in feminist critical discourse analysis (CDA). Feminist CDA is a political perspective on gender, concerned with demystifying the interrelationships of gender, power, and ideology in discourse, which offers a corrective to approaches that primarily favor one linguistic mode over another (Lazar, 2005:5). I will be employing a feminist critical discourse analysis to compare the congruence with NAFGEM's discourse and the information that the interviews with the girls revealed in an attempt to reveal how neoliberal linguistics is favored in NGO discourse.

It is imperative to acknowledge how the translator's involvement impacted the findings. A translator always makes a mark on research, whether this is acknowledged or not, and in effect, some kind of "hybrid" role emerges in that, at the very least, the translator makes assumptions about meaning equivalence that make her an analyst and cultural broker as much as a translator (Turner, 2010). Not only did the translator take on a hybrid role as a translator and employee of NAFGEM, but the data retrieved also evokes hybridity because it embodies the girls' lived realities and the translators' cultural consciousness, which impacted her conceptualization of the translation of the question as being in tune with NAFGEM's agenda.

The translator's positionality as the social worker at the Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM) impacted her engagement with the research questions. The relationships between languages and researchers, translators, and the people they seek to represent are as crucial as issues of which word is best positioned in a sentence in a language (Turner, 2010). Word placement and choice significantly impacts the interpretation of a sentence or text. When a translator is present, these spheres of judgment are left for them to decide, which can impact the accumulated data.

Accumulated data can be linguistically impacted in profound ways, as illustrated by Kathleen M. de Onís in "Lost in translation: Challenging (White, Monolingual Feminism's) <Choice> with *Justicia Reproductiva*." She emphasizes how linguistic translation shapes who and what is included/excluded and displayed/hidden (De Onís, 2015:9). As will be further uncovered by the translator's convoluted translations in the findings, the NGO discursive intention becomes included and displayed, while the experiences of the girls seeking safe shelter at NAFGEM are obfuscated.

### III. ANALYSIS/FINDINGS

#### **Chapter Eight: “Ndike Ngine (*Give me more*)”: Revealing the Translator’s Additives**

During the interviews, the translator consistently filled in the terms and phrases made by the girls with her own intentions and understandings of what she thought the girls should be saying. For example, in the first interview, in response to the first question, “Tell me about yourself,” the girl responded in Swahili: “Na asubuhi tuende shule. (*And in the morning, I go to school*).” To which the translator adds: “She will study until the road stops for education.” The translator constructs extensive metaphors that are non-existent in the girls’ original replies, which was illuminated upon my secondary and tertiary listening to the recordings.

No question was immune from the translator’s additive convolution. For the question asking the participant what she likes to cook (*Unapenda kupika nini?*), she responds, “Ninapenda ndizi (*I like bananas*).” The translator adds, “banana with meat,” reasserting an imagined refined taste to increase the ideological palatability of the girl within Global North formulations, rather reflecting her reality.

Although the organization ideologically disbands itself from the indigenous communities that perpetuate the practice of female genital cutting, they still engage with indigenous and heteropatriarchal understandings of value. For example, during male initiation (warrior) periods, at their meat feasts in remote forest areas, where small groups may be priming themselves for warriorhood at any time, the male initiates perceive their physical strength to be built through meat consumption (Spencer. 2003: 52). When the translator added that the girl likes banana with meat, she attempted to imply that her quality of life was greater because she consumes meat,

which reifies ideologies of indigeneity rooted in the Maasai society, which NAFGEM claims it diverges from.

Through her use of demands in Swahili throughout the interview, the translator replicates the embodiment of a colonizing entity. For example, throughout the interviews, she uses commands such as “Endelea (*Move on*),” “Ndike ngini (*Give me more*),” “Ubea mtu (*Pick someone*).” She directs the interviews in an authoritarian manner, extracting from the original purpose of the research and instead, replicating her own positionality of power within the NGO.

By implanting her own voice authoritatively throughout the interview, the translator replicates the model of global power, rooted in colonial relations. Within this model, the control of labor and its resources and products is relegated to the capitalist enterprise; in the control of sex and its resources and products, the nation-state; in the control of intersubjectivity, Eurocentrism (Quijano, 2000). The translator replicates a coloniality of power by crafting the girls’ narratives in tune with NAFGEM’s agenda. Her calculated formulation of the girls’ responses is a byproduct of globalized capitalism and illustrates how her subjectivities produced by her positionality within a Eurocentric, patriarchal, and capitalistic scape, is also projected onto the girls’ bodies through her interview additives.

Distinguishable examples of convolution by the translator appeared increasingly in regard to the girls’ experience at NAFGEM. For example, the question that initially was supposed to be asked to the girls was, “How has your experience been at NAFGEM?” Instead, the translator asked, “Unalinda NAFGEM? [*Are you being protected by NAFGEM?*],” which is a question that permits a particular response and leaves little room for the girl to form her own conscientiousness about her engagement with the organization, while also insinuating the idea that the NGO is the protector of the girls and women.

In addition to implicating the girls' responses through directive questions, the translator also added details that minimized the girls, but propagated NAFGEM. When describing her life now at NAFGEM, one girl states that "She got an education here at NAFGEM, and other things [*na vitu vitu*]," but the translator adds, "And she was [made] aware about FGM. Before, she was blind; she didn't know anything..." By stating that the girl was blind before coming to NAFGEM, the translator replicates the pseudoscientific articulations of Blacks' inferior intelligence perpetuated during slavery, while also suggesting that NAFGEM is a space where one can further recognize their sense of self. During slavery, scientific racism proved itself to be illogical because planters and doctors behaved in many contexts as though they held the abilities and judgments of blacks in high regard, employing slaves in responsible positions as nurses, cooks, herbalists, midwives, etc. (Washington, 2006: 42). Similarly, although the translator and NAFGEM employees constructed the girl as blind before having come to NAFGEM, when external funders enter the organizational space, they are quick to retrieve a girl to share their experience of being at NAFGEM to ensure the organization gets more donations, which reveals internal dissonance and lack of self-awareness from both the translator and the organization.

The translator's internal blindness and lack of self-awareness are further illuminated through her reframing of questions. For example, it was intended that she ask, "Whom do you consider a source of safety and trust at NAFGEM, and why?" She instead poses a series of questions, including, "Do I watch over you and why?" [*Na kulinda? Na kwa nini?*] She makes the question about herself and her contributions, rather than about the girl, which further subjectifies the girls and reproduces a coloniality of power.

Throughout the interviews, the translator's side commentary and whispering to the girls impacted how they responded to questions. For the question which asks, "What is one thing you

wish people knew about you but do not?” The girl responds in English, “I want them to know that I am educated.” Upon the translator’s intrusion in the interview and request that the girl elaborate, she goes on to add, “And I want them to know that I hate female circumcision, FGM...” The genuineness of this response is questionable, as it is only stated after the translator interjects. After her interjection, the girls’ sphere of logic becomes in tune with NAFGEM’s vehement opposition to the practice of ‘mutilation.’

For the participants who knew more English, the possibility of convolution by the translator was lessened as they could tell me their responses more directly. For example, during the same interview referenced above, when asked “what she liked to do for fun,” the girl replied, “To act like a teacher and play futbol (soccer). To help my mom and to help my fellow peoples because I am kind...” The girls’ propensity to help others was consistent with my time there. While there, she would ask if I wanted some of the food they would cook, which is a minor example of the kindness exhibited to me by the girls. The caring and compassionate spirits of the girls are something that could not be misconstrued, even with the persistent interjections of the translator.

When asking the participant how their experience has been at NAFGEM, the translator muddies the participant’s response by asking directive questions to attain a specific response. She adds, “Watoto wangapi? [*How many kids (would you have had?)*]” and “Waume wanapi? [*How many husbands?*]” Although the participant does not respond to the translator’s directives, she states, “When I am here, I am free, and when I am there at home, I am not free... There is a difference in security... [When I am here, I am eating good, but when I am at home, some days there is not food]”

It is imperative to consider how the girls' notion of security is impacted by food insecurity. Food insecurity can impact international security by weakening states, stoking regional insecurity, and potentially causing violent conflict between states (Stedman as quoted in Naylor, 2014). Not only does food insecurity impact international security and regional security, but also one's bodily sense of security. As the notion of freedom and security was stated paradoxically with food provisions, it can be inferred that the girl interviewed also correlates NAFGEM as a space with increased food security, rather than solely a salvation from female genital cutting as the organization posits itself.

The interviewee also linguistically utilizes a past *conditional* when the translator attempts to insert hyperbolic postulations in the interview. The girl interviewed recognizes, "When I am here, I am not married, and when I am there, I *could* be married..." By using the word "could," the interviewee is cognizant of the conditionality of her being married. Additionally, when the translator attempts to tell the girl she could be having ten kids if she were still at home, she corrects her, "And having like, one..." Contrary to the exaggerative statements made by the translator, the interviewee is cognizant of her lived reality and the importance of how she depicts her 'home' even though she is away, revealing her internalization of indigenous autonomy.

The interviewee's pushback on the translator's exaggerative statement embodies Pan Africanism as it illustrates her attempt to maintain self-defined dignity amidst oppressive ideological perpetuation by NAFGEM. Pan African self-definition has been most clearly articulated in the project of achieving the liberation of the continent of Africa and the dignity and self-respect of all Africans (Campbell, as quoted in Lemelle and Kelley, 1994: 285). By correcting the translator and re-asserting the truth about her home, the interviewee assures that the dignity of herself and her family is maintained.

The interviewee's cognizance of self-dignity is further illustrated through her conclusive sentences in the interview. In response to the final question, "How has NAFGEM changed your future, if at all?" She asserts, "They changed my future because now I know about human rights. Everybody has the right to be educated. Everybody has rights to work. Everybody has the right to be listened to. Everybody has the right to be respected. Everybody has rights to do something he or she wants." Although she describes human rights in a collective and encompassing manner – not using "I" statements – her statements also reflect her own consciousness about the rights that she herself deserves in the present and future: to be educated, employed, heard, and respected.

Through her statement, the girl demonstrates what encompasses dignity and integrity for her, beyond NAFGEM. Human dignity raises people above their class, ethnicity, nationality, and other conventional or narrower status, making them basic units of moral concern and respect for everyone everywhere (Gilbert, 2018: 119). Similarly, the girls' repetition of the clause "Everybody has the right to..." signals her awareness of her status as a unit of moral concern in all the spaces she occupies.

The translator's persistent interjections of neoliberal imprints into the girls' responses replicates her impetus to inscribe them as neoliberally infantilized 'NGO girls.' As Sahar Romani cites in reference to girls at an NGO in India:

Girls spent many of their childhood afternoons and adolescent evenings attending NGO programs for 'at-risk girls' such as self-defense training, workshops on reproductive health, and discussions on gender violence. They started working in their neighborhood as field-level NGO social workers managing the drop-in-center they once attended as children. They transitioned from being targets of NGO development to facilitators of NGO development (Romani, 2016).

The above description concretizes how NGO frameworks mirror one another globally because of the commonality in funding sources. The girls at NAFGEM also had self-defense instructors and

workshops about rights that would both be taught by external entities. Additionally, the girls who are being educated at the college level through the support of NAFGEM are also specializing in social work to return to the organization and engage in similar work.

The parallels between the work being done in Kolkata, India, and Moshi, Tanzania, illustrate the proliferation of NGOization. Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor, in *NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions, and Prospects* underline how the process of NGOization orients organizations to prioritize institutional survival and maintenance at the expense of mobilization (Kapoor, 2013:5). By transitioning girls from being targets of NGO development to facilitators, the intellectual hegemony of NGOs is also preserved.

When girls receive an education through NAFGEM and later become social workers, they also advance the organization's ideological inclinations. The organization's ideological inclinations are in tune with neoliberal dependencies on numerical formulations. This dependence for data, analysis, policy, and prescriptions and is a major ingredient in eroding sovereignty and marginalizing concerns in the Global South (Gosovic as quoted in Benin and Hall, 2000: 2). By transitioning NGO girls to be NGO facilitators, NGO discourse is concretized, and the girls who were once specters of data transition their prospective counterparts to be ideologically quantifiable.

By transitioning the girls to be ideologically quantifiable, the complexity of the individual girls is simplified. It is the capacity of numbers to provide knowledge of a complex murky world that renders quantification so seductive; numerical assessments appeal to the desire for simple, accessible knowledge and to a basic human tendency to see the world in terms of hierarchies of reputation and status (Merry, 2016:1). By transforming the girls to be ideologically quantifiable, the representational hierarchy of the girls as knowledge producers is reduced. When

the lived experiences of the girls are made ideologically palatable by NGOs, the material vulnerability of the girls is amplified.

The amplified vulnerability of girls when posited in NGO discourse is illustrated when the translator insinuates that the girls are enjoying their time in school, even though that may be disingenuous to their realities. She ends one of her ‘translations’ with “kwa unapenda shule [*because you like school*].” The girls’ perspective is stifled to ensure that the image of NAFGEM remains luminous. The translator’s insertions reveal the active role that NGOs play in crafting their own image. NGOs are not passive actors constrained by conditions but are active shapers of their own images, reputations, structures, and, thus, credibility (Gourevitch and Lake, 2012: 17). By constructing the perception that the girl is enjoying her education, the translator is attempting to substantiate the necessity for the intervention of NAFGEM and corroborate that funds are being used efficiently for the perceived betterment of the girls.

The translator’s attempt to cement the NGO’s credibility is further illustrated through her insertion of details into the girls’ responses, not stated by the girls themselves. In response to the question, “What is one thing you wish people knew about you, but do not?” the girl responds, “Unataka kami mwalimu... kusaidia... [*I want to be a teacher to help...*]” The translator deciphers, with her own clouded intentionality, “She wishes one day if she could study to become a teacher. She wants the society to know the importance of education...” Although it may appear that the translator added that detail for clarity, it is imperative to consider how she is also taking an active role in reproducing NAFGEM’s tenets. As featured on the website: “The most effective and sustainable way to ensure change among communities that practice FGM is through the proper education of girls. Unfortunately, girls’ education is regarded by many families and community members as unimportant and as a poor use of limited resources...”

(NAFGEM, 2017) Therefore, by stating that the girl wants her society to know the importance of education, it reinforces the sufficiency of the organization in juxtaposition to the de-emphasis on education perpetuated in the community.

By presenting the people in the community as poorly using their resources, it creates a space for NAFGEM to be portrayed differently, even if there is also mismanaging of their own resources. The information schematics formulated by NGOs regulates not only what counts as legitimate, but also how that information is collected, interpreted, and used (Ebrahim, 2003: 158). By mistranslating the girls' words, the translator takes an active part in denigrative knowledge production about the Maasai to keep the NGO's funding plentiful. The NGO's role in co-opting an inimical language about indigenous communities such as the Maasai is demonstrative of proliferating systems of intellectual hegemony that perpetually posit women and girls in the Global South as existing in a state of lack.

The translator completely fabricates an interviewee's answer to the questions, "What activities do you do for fun?" and "Why do you consider these activities fun?" The interviewee responds to the preceding question, "Ninafanya kufanya kazi kama kupakia, kubeki, kucheza, na kupiga stories... [*She likes to do work like loading, storing, dancing and making stories...*]" The translator completely mistranslates this, stating that the girl said, "she likes to do for fun: mop, clean, dance, and making stories," only two of which are accurate from the girls' responses, the dancing and making stories. She follows this mistranslation up with, "Kwa nini unazani kuambaa unafanya izi nani...? [*Why do you think you are doing what you are doing?*]" To which she replies, "Tumepewa hamda... kuziko pili..." [*We have been given a mission... a second home...*]. The translator incorrectly translates that, "She said she does that because it's her rest

time from school to refresh her mind instead of studying, so that's the time she uses to make those things."

The translator's mistranslation of the girls' real responses reflects her attempt to cover up how the girls have become intertwined with the NGO machinery. The girl conceptualizes herself to have been given a mission that one can infer is in tune with the mission of NAFGEM. On the home page of NAFGEM's website, they state:

Our main focus is to raise awareness among grass-root communities, where these customs are still being practiced, through holding educational seminars, training workshops, and sensitization and awareness campaigns at various community events. Through educating these communities about the serious effects of FGM, we aim to empower women and young girls to put an end to this practice.

Although the NGO presents itself as aiming to empower young women, they co-opt the girls' bodies and narratives to fulfill their mission, reflecting the proliferation of NGOization. The girls' implication that she has been given a mission is also reflective of how the NGO is using the girls as a tool to attract donors. NGOs compete in mission statements; NGOs with broader missions expect to execute higher-impact projects (Heyes and Martin, 2015). Not only are the mission statements used as a tool to ploy their donors, but the girls are crafted as living embodiments of the NGO's mission.

The translator ensures that the girls appear empowered, in line with the mission statement, through her insertions in the interview. For example, the question, "How has your experience been at NAFGEM?" the translator instead asks, "Gani hapa...? [*What is here...?*]" The way she formulates the question takes away from the experience of the girl and re-centers the NGO. The girl responds, "Kutoa... Na tunapata chakula na tukaenda shule... Na daktari... [*Give... And we got food and went to school... and doctors...*]" Similar to other girls' responses mentioned above, she does not correlate her experience at NAFGEM to be primarily correlated

to escaping FGC, but rather with the enhanced socioeconomic access that staying at the NGO provides her with.

The enhanced socioeconomic access that these girls have is predetermined by the financial institutions that actively play a role in their economic precarity. Financial institutions that, on the one hand, recommend the withdrawal of state support from the social sector also allocate aid to community-based NGOs for those very same social services, an indication that the expansion of the NGO sector has been externally induced by foreign policy decisions (Kamat, 2010:160). By providing aid to community-based NGOs, financial institutions appear as the white savior, even though they put working-class people in predicaments where they need ‘saving’ because of their withdrawing of social services, a byproduct of neoliberalism.

The translator cues the girls on when the right times are for them to talk and not to talk during the interview. For example, in response to the question, “How has NAFGEM changed your future, if at all?” the translator adds to her translation of the question, “Sasa kusema sana... na sababu... [*Now say a lot... and the reason...*] When it is time to speak in high regard about the NGO, the translator encourages them to speak, but they have little to say. The interview responds, “Wanatupenda... [*They love us...*],” to which the translator hastily adds, “NAFGEM changed her future because they brought her to school, they love her and like... protect her.”

The hasty addition of filtered words by the translator illuminates their role in what Laura Routley calls mimicry. NGO’s role as mimic men, translating from the international to the local and back again, demonstrating fluency in both, is performatively produced through the language, demeanors, and styles of the NGO workers (Routley, 2015: 122). The translator, who also works as a social worker for the organization, used performative and additive language to appease the funder’s international interests. While the interests of the NGO are being translated from the

local to the international level and back, so are the girls' voices and experiences, which get muffled in the process.

The girls' voices get muffled during the interview because when the girls made a more generalizable statement, the translator would translate the statement into something specifically correlated to FGC. For example, when asked, "What is one thing you wish people knew but do not," one of the girls responds, "Anatamani ajua nanili wajui kiketaje... [*She wishes that they knew what she knew...*]." Although this statement is poetic and can be interpreted in a multi-faceted way, the translator diverts the attention away from the girls and says, "She's saying she wants her community to know about the pains which are involving the FGM..." By assuming the girl was referencing FGC when she describes what she wishes people knew about her, the translator subtracts from the girls' actualized portrayal of her lived reality by inserting NAFGEM's interpretation of the girls' lives.

In response to the question, "How has your experience been at NAFGEM?" one of the girls interviewed replies, "Kngine kikuwa matiseka [*the other was laughing...*]" meaning in her life before NAFGEM she was laughing. The translator blurs her statement by saying, "If she was there at the community, she was suffering with life... there is a shortage of water, food..." This is contrary to what the girl is actually saying. As a means of obfuscating the girls' beliefs, the translator goes on to ask, "Unatoa wangapi? [*How many do you give?/How many children would you have had?*]" To which she replies, "Mbili [*two*]" and the translator clarifies, "Maybe she will have two kids..." The translator is eager to divulge information that synchronizes with the tune of NAFGEM but conceals anything to the contrary.

When the translator conceals the stories of the girls, she is also concealing the actualized agenda of the NGO. They frequently conceal their agendas and often control their clientele rather

than representing them; they claim and presume to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves, even define the interests of those they speak for (as if people are unable to do this for themselves) (Harvey, 2007: 177). By mistranslating the information that the girls are giving, the translator plays an active role in rendering the girls as subalterns by speaking ‘for’ rather than speaking ‘with’ to preserve the NGO’s neoliberal interests.

The speaking for is rationalized as necessary because society renders the girls as ahistorical remote beings. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak illustrates in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak; the subaltern is even deeply more in shadow (Spivak, 1988: 83). The girls’ bodies become a colonial production and are cast in the shadow when their stories were mistranslated by the translator. By speaking for the girls and deciding how their interests and future should be depicted, the translator mimics colonial relational discourse.

Within these composed depictions of the girls, the translator determines what trust and safety look like for the girls and redirects the question so that the interview becomes about her. In her translation of “Who do you consider a source of safety and trust?” she adds, “Yani nani mbona wa mimi...? [*Who do you have for me...?*] and “Mtu mbona wa mimi... [*Someone like me...*]” By centralizing herself as the source of safety and trust, she destabilizes the type of response that the girls give.

The translator attempts to insert the answers of other girls into the answers of later interviews to make NAFGEM appear refined and congruent. When she asks, “How has your experience been at NAFGEM?” she adds, “Kuna ufoti gani ukwa NAFGEM? Ukiwa shule? Na chakula nyumbani?... Unafutu kapa na kuru? [*What is there at NAFGEM? At school? And food*

*at home?... Are you having a meal?]* By utilizing this line of questioning consistently, she ensures that answers are harmonious to gain legitimacy for the NGO.

Consistent answers from all the girls questioned further the organization's credibility. NGOs undertake significant actions to establish and maintain their credibility because they are at the behest of their donors who rely on their valuable information and the services they provide (Gourevitch and Lake, 2012: 5). The NGO perceives the information that they have given me, which will be taken back to the U.S. to have ideological weight, so they ensure that it is artfully crafted. If the girls were to reveal anything to me contrary to organizational goals, they could be putting the organization's monetary gain at risk, and the translator is hyperaware of this.

When the girls respond to the translator, and they are unsure of what to add, "Sijui," she asks them questions to make them hyperaware of what NAFGEM has done for them, implying that they should be grateful. For example, she asks the interviewee, "Usharudi fa ada? [*Have we failed to pay a fee?*]" when the girl relays uncertainty about how her experience has been at NAFGEM. The girl verbally responds, "Mm-hmm," to affirm that they have paid her school fees, and the translator adds, "She is happy because everything at school is paid." However, the girl never relays that she is happy, only that her school fees have been paid.

By attributing the girls' happiness to her school fees being paid, the translator inscribes the girl unto an NGO discursive rescue narrative. Within these rescue narratives, the global North is allowed to find redemption in new kinds of intervention of various sorts in the global South (Grewal and Bernal, 2014: 309). The girls who are seeking safe shelter at NAFGEM are the ones who are perceived to be redeemed, but it is the Global North who is redeeming themselves from the sociohistorical extraction resulting from the exploitative connotations inherent in colonialism and neoliberalism. Additionally, the translator, who is Tanzanian but

perpetuates colonized narratives as an insider-without, is also in need of redemption from her internalization of neocolonial positionalities.

The translator substantiates her and her colleagues' roles as neocolonial figures in the NGO sphere. When she translates the question, "Who do you consider a source of safety and trust at NAFGEM and why," one of the interviewees originally responds, "Sijui [*I don't know*]." The translator tells her, "Sema umbe S, H, na I. [*Say something about S, H, and I*]." Although the names of the NAFGEM employees have been blocked out for confidentiality purposes, the translator subverts the girls' response that she doesn't know a source of safety and trust and overrides her truth with a more preferred response.

K. Nsari propounds how Tanzanian people themselves are maneuvered as pawns in the neocolonial process. In "Tanzania: Neo-Colonialism and the Struggle for National Liberation," he delineates how in order to facilitate colonial rule, the oppressing nation seeks out collaborators and traitors from the oppressed people who will serve and support colonial rule (Nsari, 1975: 110). The translator is complicit in the subjugation that she is purportedly trying to save the girls from because she is perpetuating stories of dependency and helplessness, further silencing the subaltern.

As a replication of this dependent economy, NAFGEM has crafted these girls as dependent on NGOs, even though their consciousness reveals realms of independence. In response to the translator's slated translation of the question, "How did NAFGEM change your future, if at all...?" one of the girls respond, "... Sa hivi kusoma, unaendelewa... [*Right now, reading, you are being promoted*]. NAFGEM has crafted the girl's consciousness to believe that they have taken a role in her intellectual promotion. This manipulation is clarified by the coercive language used by the translator at NAFGEM when she tells the girl, "Najila kuso nini

nitu gani meokupa... [*I know what I give you*]” and “Unaji loko sa nini...? [*Do you know what you have in store...?*]” To which the girl replies, “Haku lindi... Wanalinda na wanapenda... [*No wait... They love and protect us...*]” The translator then relegates this to me as “NAFGEM changed her life because now she’s studying, she understands herself... giving her protection, love...” The translator completely leaves out that this protection and love that the girls are offered is laced with coercion and corruptive convolution.

The translator’s use of coercive language is imbued by her desire to produce a reformed recognizable other. This reformed, recognizable other shapes national NGOs because their form and presentation are staged precisely to be other (to be local), but one which can be recognized and engaged with by international actors (Routley, 2015: 120). When the authenticity of the girls’ lived realities is smeared in the process of NGO descriptive formulation, the reformed, recognizable other becomes further othered. In the NGO’s attempt to portray the girls as loved and protected, they become recognizable in NGO discourse, but un-recognizable to their selves. Similarly, the translator as an insider-without recognizes her esteemed positionality within the NGO sphere, but does not recognize her complicity in reproducing the girls at NAFGEM as othered ‘NGO girls.’ Additionally, the ways in which the translator as a Black woman is also positioned in the same spheres of sociohistorical disenfranchisement that she is relegating the girls at NAFGEM to remains unrecognizable to her.

When the participants provided ambiguous answers to the translator, she supplemented those responses with her own fabrications. For example, in regard to the second question, asking, “What is one thing you wish people knew about you, but do not?” the interviewee replied, “Anasemani kutoka wanini?” which means “She is speaking to what?” The participant attempted to inquire more about the question being asked of her as the translator framed the question in a

manner completely tangential to the original. Rather than adding clarification to the girl's response, she inserts her own answer, "She wishes one day the society to know she has values." After her fabricated insertion, she provides clarification to the participant, "Unatamani nini kwa kiingereza...? [*What do you wish in English?*]" After the girl continues to be unresponsive because of the translator's lack of clarity in asking the question, she continues on her tangent, "She will be valued. And have feelings, like a man or like a boy." Afterward, she requests of the interviewee, "Na kingine [*and anything else?*]" To which the girl genuinely replies, "Wajui elimu iliyona... [*They know the right to education*]" The translator strives off of the discursive incongruencies that she fabricates herself. By asking the girls' a differential version of the question infiltrated by her convolution, she creates a space to insert her own answer that is more reflective of the NGO's intentions.

The translator's deception also manifests in questions that should centralize the girls, but do not, such as asking them what their favorite thing to do is. The girl replies, "Kwelisho kuhusu kwanta janeti... [*Updates about the internet...*]" The interviewee provides a general answer to the question. The translator adds, "On her fun time, she likes to educate fellow students about social issues like FGM, early marriage, and early pregnancy." Although the girl may have alluded to the importance of being informed about social issues, the translator adds on the tenets of NAFGEM (female genital cutting, early marriage and early pregnancy) as the social issues which she is concerned about. Yet again, this diverts the attention away from the girl and re-centers the NGO.

In the process of her diverting attention away from the girls, she reproduces slated power differentials of disenfranchisement. Although NGOs are conventionally understood to be a part of civil society, they are also a part of the remaking of state institutions and state processes, as

much as they are part of reconfiguring civil society (Kamat, 2010: 171). The NGO depicts the girls as disempowered entities that are in need of saving. By disrupting the girls' responses, the translator extinguishes zones of empowerment and replicates the institutional violence that landed them under the jurisdiction of NAFGEM.

When the interviewee mentions her home as a space of enjoyment in response to the question asking the participants something they like to do for fun, the translator and NGO employee silences her. She then replies, "Shanga basi.. [*the beads then...*] in reference to the bracelets that the girls spend their days weaving. When the translator asks why she replies, "Mpoteza mda ningiza... [*You lose track of time...*]," which the translator adds, "She said bracelets because it's not a lot of time, but it makes her a lot of money," which is incompatible with what the girl actually says.

The bracelets can actually be considered a site of oppression because the girls spend about 24 hours of their day making these bracelets, producing extractive labor for the organization. The organization has rationalized that it is important for the girls to learn how to make bracelets because it provides them with a skill that can result in economic sustenance. However, the money made from the bracelets, bags, purses, and wallets, which the girls also stitch helps to fill the pockets of the organization. The money that is culminated from the girls' labor may return to them through their school fees and other expenses which the organization covers, but the money does not travel directly to the girls, even though it is their bodies and hands providing direct labor to the organization.

The organization conceives itself to be saving the girls from challenging living conditions and water shortages, as mentioned in portions of the interviews, but they still have to produce innumerable amounts of bracelets at the NGO.

Tanzania ratified ILO Convention 138 (on minimum age) in 1998 and Convention 182 (on worst forms of child labor) in 2001. Twelve- to fifteen-year-olds may be employed on a daily basis but must have parental permission and return to their guardian's residence at night. Overall, formal employment opportunities are few in Tanzania, and most adults and children work in the informal sector, including rural agriculture, or the shadow economy, which is not regulated by the government (Porter, 2009: 279). Through my experiences, I saw the older girls (12-17), who were responsible for a predominant amount of the bracelet production teaching their younger counterparts (12 and under) how to do the bracelets, so that more could be produced. Although the girls are constructed to be saved, the terms and conditions of their salvation remain unexplored. By not examining the fine print on NGO's deliverance, the girls are cast further into the shadow and are further subaltern-ized.

During one of the interviews, the translator makes a hasty attempt to skip over the question that asks what foods the interviewee likes to eat and cook. She is instead eager to advance to the question that explains why she came to NAFGEM. When she translates that question in Swahili to one of the participants, she mentions the term "mkubwa husu mbaya [*bad memories*], so she is cognizant of the trauma that arises for the girls when they engage in these depictions, but the purpose it serves for the advancement of the organization is a priority for the translator.

Throughout the interviews, the translator repeatedly asserts that the girls learned values since coming to NAFGEM. However, this minimizes the values that the girls had prior to their engagement with the NGO. Values are often examined superficially in the literature on NGOs as the nature of the value is assumed to be self-determined, easily defined, and uncontested (Jakimow, 2010: 548). NAFGEM defines their notion of values based on the perceived efficacy of their interventions. By consistently reiterating that values were gained through NAFGEM during multiple girls' interviews, the translator hopes to concretize the weight of this fabricated ideology with the hopes that it can become uncontested based on convoluted corroboration.

The fabricated ideological constructions upheld by the translator is further evidenced when she dismisses an interviewee's answer to the question, "What is one thing you wish people knew about you but do not?" The girl responds with something correlated to her life before she came to NAFGEM, and the translator signals that her response was better for a later point in the interview by stating, "Hiyo utakuja kwa historia yako. [*That will come with your story.*] She references a preferable answer to this question, "Labda kuketa? [*Maybe cutting?*]" When the interviewee remains un-receptive to her suggestion, she fills in the gap by stating, "She wishes one day for the community to understand the importance of educating girls in the community so that they can deal with the issues of FGM and mutilation."

The gap-filling that the translator does during the interviews parallels the gaps that NGOs fill in relation to the state. NGOs identify certain gaps between the priority of the people and act as a facilitating buffer between private institutions and the State (Thomas, Muradian, De Groot, and De Ruijter, 2010: 368). Similarly, the translator, who is an embodiment of the NGO entity, overrides the gap in the girl's response and buffers it with the ideological priority of the organization.

The translator also attempts to override the girls' opinion when she asks her whom she considers a source of safety and trust at NAFGEM. She whispers the names of NAFGEM employees, narrowing the type of response the interviewee can give. The interviewee responds with one of the names provided; the translator transforms an open-ended question to be multiple choice, prompting linear data to be produced that furthers the intentions of NAFGEM.

In addition to transforming the open-ended questions to be multiple-choice, she also adds elements to some of the girls' responses, rendering what she perceives as incomplete to be completed. In response to the question, "How has NAFGEM changed your future?" which the

translator frames as “How has NAFGEM improved your future? [*NAFGEM kubalishaje?*] the girl replies, “Baalisho kitu elimu. [*Awareness of things such as education.*] The translator requests, “Anything else? [*Kingine?*]” to which the girl replies, “Malizo [*Completed.*]” Instead of acknowledging the completion of the girl’s answer, the translator adds, “NAFGEM changed her future by giving her education, protection, and care.”

Rendering the incomplete complete is in alignment with NGO ideological frameworks. In Amanda Woomer’s chapter, “The Anthropologist and the Conservation NGO: Dilemmas of and Opportunities for Engagement,” she explains the operationalization of completeness in conservation NGOs. She states:

Conservations NGOs operating internationally\_ hereafter referred to as conservation INGOs\_ function in diverse circumstances complete with technical experts, discerning donors, international discourses, local communities of humans and nonhumans, and the physical landscape (212).

Certain elements render the functionality of conservation INGOs as complete, such as experts, donors, discourses, local communities, and landscapes. Likewise, the addition of the facets of protection and care as components that NAFGEM provides contributed to the translator’s perception that the girls’ response was completed.

The correlation of NAFGEM as being the predominant construction to the girls’ identity is illustrated when the translator translates the question, “Tell me about yourself.” The translator includes directive questions, such as “Unasoma wapi? Darasa la ngapi? Shule gani?” [*Where do you study? How many classes? What school?*] She responds, “Unasema eye nyumbani [*You say...home*] As soon as the interviewee mentions home, the translator interjects with an “Ehhhhh, hapa [*Ehhhhh, here...*] which indicates that the translator only wants the girl to contextualize herself within the NGO context.

By implying that the girl's sense of self was primarily formulated when she came to NAFGEM, a hegemonic singularity is replicated. Hegemonic development discourse implies that NGOs operate according to a single discursive framework, which leaves no room to take into account that development organizations may be inspired by alternative ideological frameworks (Hilhorst, 2003:9). The translator reproduces these singularizing hegemonic frameworks by dismissing the girl's mention of home, suggesting that her consciousness was only construed based on her interactions with the NGO, which diminishes the girl's alternative forms of consciousness that she had prior to her interactions with NAFGEM.

The translator consistently directs the conversations to ensure that the girls' responses are in tune with NGO hegemonic discourse. For example, in reference to the girls' description of the school, the translator adds a supplemental line of questions:

Translator: Mazingira? Walimu? [*Environment? Teachers?*]

Participant: Walimu wanafundisha vizuri. [*Teachers teach well.*]

Translator: The teachers teach them very nicely.

Participant: Na mazingira ya shule vizuri. [*And the school environment is nice.*]

Translator: And the school environment is very nice... How...? [*Ki vipi...?*] Kinafanya mazuri? [*What makes it good?*]

Participant: Kuna mku, kuna maua, kuna jengo. [*There are trees, flowers, and buildings.*]

Translator: There are a lot of trees, flowers, nice buildings.

By asking the girl the above implicative questions, the translator perpetuates her role as a broker of meaning. She negotiates relationships by convincing the other parties of the meaning of events, processes, and needs and their own roles (Hilhorst, 2003:223). The translator worked to persuade me and perceived consumers of the project's findings that the school environment of the girls was enjoyable by swaying the direction of the question and posed the girls' responses as authentic to their experience through her unfaltering translation.

After beginning to describe what she likes about school upon the translator's requests, once enough aspects about the school are given, she tells the girl, "Basi [*Stop.*]. Next question."

The girl replies, “Tunaenda. [*We’re going.*] indicating she had more to say in regard to the question. The translator responds, “Maswali hapo namaliza wewe. Maswali tisa unaenda. [*The question there is finished. You have nine more to go.*] Contrastingly, when it is time to discuss NAFGEM and how it has assisted them, the translator asks inquisitive questions so that they will add further details. For example, she asks a series of supplemental questions in relation to how NAFGEM has changed her future, such as “Una mtoto? Una umume? [*Do you have a baby? Do you have a husband?*]” the girl replies, “Semaje [*Speak it.*], encouraging to the translator to continue on with her implications. The translator then replies, “Yani hapa. Nini umekufanya? [*Come here. What has NAFGEM done for you?*]” The translator’s inconsistent exchanges with the girls are reflective of the contradictions of neoliberalism and NGO discourse that purport to promote freedom, liberty, and independence, but infringe on them.

One of the contradictions of neoliberalism described in David Harvey’s *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* is the presumption of access to the same information. There are presumed to be no asymmetries of power or of information that interfere with the capacity of individuals to make rational economic decisions in their own interests; the contradiction lies in the fact that better informed and more powerful players have an advantage that can all too easily be parlayed into procuring even better information and greater relative power (Harvey, 2005: 68). In the context of NAFGEM, the translator perceives herself to be a more informed and powerful player because she is employed by the organization. However, she underestimates the information and power that the girls have, as elucidated through her disruptive prompts throughout the interviews, which evokes the girls’ distinguished consciousness.

The girls’ distinguished consciousness is illuminated through their affinity toward happiness, even amidst all of their lived experiences. In addition to my observations, the joy of

the girls can be heard in their interviews. When one of the girls is asked, “What do you like to for fun/ to relax? [*Unapenda kufanya nini... kumpumzika..?*]” She responds, “Unapenda watu wafrai... Napochea. [*I like happy people... When I play.*]. Even with the translator’s interjections, the girls’ happiness could not be distorted.

However, when one of the girls makes mention of the labor she performs to feed herself and the younger children, the translator alters this experience. She describes how, “Hapa naenda frai, naenda vizuri, na mimi endalisha nyingine. [*Here I am happy, I am well, and I feed another.*] The translator transcribes her words by saying, “And at NAFGEM, she is happy, she is proceeding well... she is studying... she believes one day she will help other girls in the community...” She eagerly regurgitated that the girl was happy and well, but when she mentioned assisting the other girls at NAFGEM, she scrambled her words. While I was there, I observed how the older girls helped to provide meals for their younger counterparts. Although I never saw a physical schedule of whose day it was to cook weekly, it was clear that some girls had certain days that they were supposed to cook for the younger children and themselves.

By cooking as they had traditionally done in their Maasai communities, they are still reproducing antiquated gender roles, which Westernized organizations such as NAFGEM have been ideologically critical of. Cooking in homes has traditionally been considered women’s work, yet paradoxically, cooking in the public sphere remains primarily the domain of men (Hendley, 2016: 220). Women have been utilized as forms of unpaid labor, while their male counterparts’ labor is always compensated for, perpetuating gendered exploitability.

The ideological structures that uphold gendered exploitability are examined by Chandra Talpade Mohanty in “Women Workers and Capital Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity.” Ideologies of domesticity, dependency, and

(hetero)sexuality designate women – in this case, Third World women – as primarily housewives/mothers and men as economic supporters and breadwinners due to the invisible nature of the women’s work (Mohanty, 1997: 21). Gendered domesticity relegates women to the house and renders the housework they do as unpaid, even though it is vital to the continued labor of men. The economy remains dependent on women’s bodies in the Global South to fulfill invisible spheres of labor, which paradoxically renders the work of men as further visible and works to actualize their hierarchical positionalities in the gendered oppression of women. Contextually, at NAFGEM, even though the girls may have escaped the early marriages in their communities and the gendered roles that come with wifehood, such as cooking, they still replicate these gendered roles by caring for the younger children seeking shelter at the NGO and the continued production of the beaded bracelets, both forms of invisible labor. When the translator omits the girls’ mention of ‘feeding’ the other girls, she renders the labor performed as doubly invisible.

In contrast to the silencing the translator engages in when the interviewee discusses the invisible forms of labor she performs, when it is time to talk about the change NAFGEM has had on the interviewee’s life, she instructs her to “Speak it [*Semaje*],” illustrating the NGO’s inclination to accentuate itself and its white savior donors. The girls’ positioning as being saved by NGO white savior donors is clarified in Kalpana Wilson’s “At Once the Saviors and the Saved.” She delineates how “developing world girls” are “fixed in place”: the sustainable development they are expected to fuel facilitates the containment of the global South and the consolidation of permanent inequality between North and South (Wilson, 2019). Analogous to NGO girls, the developing world girls serve a fixed purpose of epitomizing Global North rescue

narratives, while blanketing over inequalities in the Global South perpetrated by the Global North and its nongovernmental entities.

When the translator engages in blanketing the words of the final interviewee, the girl interjects and asks her in Swahili, “Why do you say that? [*Unasema kwa nini?*]” The interviewee responded that one thing she wishes people knew about her, but don’t is, “Napenda wa hivi tabu yangu mimi wasumisha watu. [*I wish my misfortune would serve the people.*]” The translator instead says, “She likes one day the community to learn from her so that they can send their girls to school.” The interviewee envisions her story as serving as a living embodiment for her people, but the translator instead uses her body as a tool to emphasize the NGO’s objectives of providing the girls with an education and sending them to school.

The continuity of secrecy in the NGO world is also elucidated in the interview. When the interviewee responds to the question, “What is something you like to do for fun?” she states something negative, which is contrary to the pattern that the translator attempted to develop. Therefore, she responds, “Kitu kisema kichitu [*Some things stay hidden*], and instead requests of her “[Say] Something fun. [*Kitu fun.*] Fun thing. Nichezo. [*I’m playing.*]” She responds to her conjectures, “Na panga baba yangu ya yada [*And arrange my dad’s yard.*]” The translator rejects the girl’s lived truth stating, “Baja wongo [*That’s a lie.*]” Congruent with other interviews, when the girl mentions their home as a space of fun, the translator rejects it and does not even bother to translate it, preserving the notion of the indigenous community as an incessantly darkened space.

By dismissing the girls’ positive perceptions of their home, she reaffirms the Western perception of spaces like Tanzania and Africa-at-large as a darkened space, which is interwoven in NGO discourse. Chinua Achebe unravels Joseph Conrad’s archaic postulations in *Heart of Darkness* as projecting the image of Africa as the other world, the antithesis of Europe and

therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are mocked by triumphant bestiality (Achebe, 1977). Within NGO discourse, indigenous communities such as the Maasai are positioned as otherworldly and unrefined, to validate the necessity of NGO interventions, such as NAFGEM's.

### **Chapter Nine: Synchronizing the Interviews and NAFGEM's Website**

As evidenced by the above findings, the translator played a profound role in influencing the information conveyed in the interviewees. This included the question that played a significant role in the interviews, "What made you come to NAFGEM?" For this question, the girls gave their most extended responses, and the answers they provided, as translated by the translator, aligns with the case studies produced on the organization's website. The interviews and website excerpts paired together reflected similar themes and are not reflective of the lived realities of the same person. Given that the site only featured five stories from the girls seeking safe shelter at the organization, some interviews remain unpaired as displayed below:

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Website</b>
<p><b>1.1:</b> When she was home, she was with her mother. They were preparing vegetables for their dinner. Suddenly, they saw the policeman arriving at the home and they arrested the mother together with her and they brought her to the police station. They left her mother at the police station. And the NAFGEM driver, together with the police brought her to the NAFGEM shelter and she stayed here for three months and then she went back with the police for the investigation. The police asked her different</p>	

<p>questions. They asked, is your mother, the one who mutilate you. The second day she was at the police station, the man who wanted to marry her brought food to her mother when she was in the police station and he's saying he's the son of her mother and she told them no.</p> <p>The kinds of question the police asked is, "Is your mother the one who mutilate you...?" And she replied, "Yes, her mother did that." And then she was sent to the hospital for the investigation. And the doctors recognized that she was already mutilated. And then they go back to the court to for the investigation. And then she came back to NAFGEM. And then the second day, she went back to the police station, and then the man who want to marry her after mutilation, he's still bringing the food to her mother while she was in the police station, and then he's saying he's a friend of the mother, and she tell them no...And she said, this man, I know, no he does not know my mom; he's the one who's supposed to marry me. Please, police officer, catch him and they caught him. And then, the guy was arrested by the police and they brought her to the court. They gave her parent like what they call it... You are in prison, but you are not going to stay in prison... They are doing the public works [community service]. Instead of being in prison.</p> <p>And then... we brought her to NAFGEM. She hadn't ever been to school. And NAFGEM help her to get a special school, which deals with the kids who are about twelve to fifteen who have never been to school. And then she studied in Class 1 and the teacher saw her performance and they jumped her from Class 1 to Class 4 and then this year she is in Class 5.</p>	
<p><b>2.1:</b> There was a grandmother who came to our house. She wanted to circumcise me. And I reported to the headteacher and they brought me here...</p>	<p><b>2.2:</b> S. says that she was going to school until her grandmother, who was supporting her, could no longer pay for her school and examination fees. It would, however, have been too dangerous for her to return home</p>

I report to the headteacher. He reported to the police station. I reported to Honorata. We made communication together. I move out from home up to the place known as Light of Africa. After Light of Africa, it was on this day, I reached here.

because her father would have used it as an opportunity to marry her off straightaway. So, she stayed at school, spending the nights in the dorm, but as she couldn't attend classes any longer, she had to spend the days out in the bush with some other girls who were also waiting for their parents to pay the school fees. In the evening they would ask their classmates what they had learned during the day in order to keep up with the syllabus. Still she could not take part in exams because the fee wasn't paid. She told her teacher about her desperate situation, and he helped her out with some money to buy soap and slippers. During the school holidays she would have to walk all the way home for eight hours, often crying because of her aching feet and back. In school S. had once heard a presentation by NAFGEM. So, when she got the chance to go to Moshi – she had been training for the Kilimanjaro marathon and as one of the best in her school, she was chosen to take part – she took the opportunity and contacted NAFGEM for help. She has been living at the Safe Shelter in Moshi since 2014.

S. has now completed secondary school and is waiting for her exam results. As soon as she has them, she wants to apply for university. In the meantime, she is doing a computer course organized by NAFGEM. She likes studying a lot and says she aims to achieve the highest education possible. Later she wants to return to her village to change the attitudes of both her parents and her community.

**“If I don't do it, nobody will. If you are a woman and have no education, nobody will listen to you.”**

S. says she is the last one in her family who was sent to school to receive an education. Now her father doesn't even send the boys to school anymore. But S. is convinced that her parents will change their minds when they see how she succeeds.

	<p><b>“They will realize I have something in my head and listen to me.”</b></p> <p>After two of S.’s sisters had been married off while she was at school, she decided to help her younger sister R. to get away from home in 2017. R. had been sent to school at first, but very soon her father had refused to pay the school fees any longer and took her home again. Consequently, she stayed at home herding the family’s cows and goats. When S. heard that the family had already received a marriage proposal for R. she realized that the situation was becoming increasingly dangerous for her and so she implored NAFGEM for help to go home and take her little sister to NAFGEM.</p> <p>Having gone through so many hardships, S. kindly asks the sponsors to continue their support.</p> <p><b>“Without NAFGEM I wouldn’t know where I was today. We girls need to know that there is someone behind us who is supporting us, so we can complete our education and plan our future. If NAFGEM didn’t pay for the costs, I wouldn’t be able to do any of this.”</b></p>
<p><b>3.1:</b> Her brother stayed at Zambia. He spoke [contacting] with her mother on her phone and heard her brother tell her mother I have a plan to send her to the man to marry and she heard and told her mother I want to go to my grandma. She was lying to her mother that she is going to take care of her grandmother because she is sick, and her mother say you have one day to go and return back, and she went there. And the next day, she told her grandma I am going to back home because her mother only wanted her to stay for one day. And suddenly on the way, she saw a daladala and she requested please can you help me because she don’t have money and she come directly to the police; she went</p>	<p><b>3.2:</b> J. was living with her mother and sister. When her father having passed away, J.’s elder brothers from her father’s first wife were making decisions for the family. Although her mother supported her in her wish to go to school, she was struggling to raise enough money for the school fees. Her brothers, on the other hand, refused to pay the fees for her as they would rather see her married; so, they kept her busy at home. Often, she was only able to attend school once a week; and, when she did, she ended up doing her homework late at night after finishing her household chores. When her brothers were about to marry off their sisters, both girls ran away. However,</p>

directly to the police station. She asked the public driver to direct her to the police station. She went directly to the police station and the police officers received her. The police officer asked what is your problem? What brings you here? What do you need? And she said I already completed Standard 7 and my parent does not want to help her for the studies anymore and her brother want to marry her off. And the police say okay you are in the safe hands so we will protect you. And after she finish, the police asked her, “Do you have any place to sleep for today?” And she replied, “No I’m new in this place; I don’t know anyone.” And then the police contact with NAFGEM and brought her to the NAFGEM shelter for protection while the case is in court. The day after, they contacted her mother and the mother went to the police station. They asked do you want to marry your girl off or you want her to study? And her mother said, she wants her to study and that the person that want her to be marry her off is her brother. And she said, please help her to have an education because if I bring her back, her brother, if he comes back, will send her to the man. Until now, the case in court.

one sister was caught by the brothers and brought back home. In her desperation, she swallowed poison; fortunately, she was rescued by the mother who took her back to her home. J. managed to escape her brothers and with the help of another woman reached the police station where she reported her situation. The police then contacted NAFGEM requesting a safe place in the Moshi Safe Shelter for J.

Although J. says she was well aware her brothers were acting against the law when they wanted to marry off the two underage girls, and despite the moral support from her mother, she felt very desperate because she knew they, as women, could not change the decisions of men.

**“At home I felt really, really bad”**, J. says. So, although it was hard for her to leave her mother and sister behind, she felt very happy when she finally arrived at the police station and was brought to NAFGEM. J. has been living with NAFGEM for eight years. With the support of the sponsors she is now receiving her education at a boarding school and feels very grateful for being able to attend school regularly and study in peace.

**“In school there is enough time to study and discuss topics with others. I like being together with students from so many different regions because we can learn a lot from each other.”**

Her favorite subjects are Biology, History, Civics and Languages. Later she wants to work as a civil worker and advise people in a bank.

After completing her education, J. also plans to return to her village, but – as she underlines – not to sit around but to bring about change in her community. She also strongly believes that Maasai men will eventually change their

	<p>attitudes towards FGM and child marriage. Moreover, she stresses that the key to changing people's minds is education: education in general but also and in particular about the harmful physical and mental consequences of FGM and child marriage. For the time being, the situation is still difficult, she says, because it's hard to break up deeply ingrained traditions. Admittedly, her brothers leave her alone now when she comes home for holidays, but – as she points out – they have changed their attitudes only seemingly: They know they will go to jail if they try to marry her off.</p> <p>J. says she is feeling very sad about the many girls who still are in the villages experiencing violations of their human rights, especially now in June and in December when most of the mutilations take place. So, she tries to inform the girls in her village about NAFGEM, but every time she returns home, she finds that some of them are no longer there as they have been married off to some other village. Girls are usually married off at the age of ten or twelve years and are sent with their husbands to live in remote villages where they don't know anybody at all, often starting their lives there as one of several wives.</p> <p>J. is very grateful for having the opportunity to stay with NAFGEM. She feels very much supported here and appreciates the fact that there is always someone there who will listen to the girls' thoughts and worries. She says they learn a great deal about life which they weren't aware of before and which will help them to live on their own later. She says that she hopes many more girls will get the chance to benefit from this supportive environment to give their lives a new perspective.</p>
<p><b>4.1:</b> When she was in Standard four, she was staying with her grandmother. One day her father told her grandmother he doesn't want her to be at school anymore and that he wants</p>	<p><b>4.2:</b> M. and K. who have arrived at the Safe Shelter in Moshi only recently were both attending Standard 6 of primary school. However, they both explained that classes in</p>

her to be out from school so that he can mutilate her and send her to the man. Her grandmother tells her father, “You should come alone and to drop her from school alone... I don’t want to be involved.” Her father gave her grandmother some money so that she can give her head teacher; so he gave her headteacher [the corruption], so that her headteacher will allow her to be taken out of school. And the head teacher did not receive the money because she was at that time doing good at school [having an average of A] and she promised to protect her, and he sent her grandmother back to call her father. Her father then arrived at the school, and the headteacher asked, “Are you coming to take her from school? And her father is running and send her grandma for the second time and asked them you are the one who sent her to school so you have to go there to drop her from school.

At the time of national examination, her grandmother went to the school and ask her, you have to go back home because your father needs you and she started crying and refused to go. And the headteacher at that moment he was not in the school. There is a Second Master. And she only know how to speak Swahili. And he asked what her problem is. Why are you crying? And she’s having a challenge to say in Swahili what is facing her. The Second Master, he didn’t even know how to speak KiMaasai; he only spoke a little. And he’s like telling her to say it in KiMaasai so maybe he can understand a little bit. She explained to the teacher that her grandmother wanted her to be out from school to send her to the father so that she can get married. And after she finished her Standard 4 national examination, she faced her teacher again and told the teacher I can’t go home because it’s in an unprotected environment. And her father already received her bride price so any time her father will send her to the man. So, the headteacher is like you go, I will protect you. I will be in contact with the

school were becoming increasingly difficult. As girls in Maasai society are not supposed to go to school, they received no support at home whatsoever. Rather than being able to concentrate on their studies after school, they had to help their parents with household chores before they could turn to their homework. Usually this was not before 9:30 p.m. or even 10:30 p.m. when they were tired from a long day and didn’t have any proper light to work in – actually they were using the glow from their mobile phones to study. Also, in the mornings they were supposed to complete their duties first before they were allowed to set off to school; very often they didn’t get there in time. In addition to the fact that they hardly ever managed to do all the exercises they were given by their teachers and missed classes regularly, they always attended classes over-fatigued, which meant they struggled to keep up during lessons. Both girls tell they were aware of their rights, i.e. that FGM and child marriage are prohibited by law in Tanzania, and K. had even attended a presentation by the NAFGEM staff at school. Still they felt very desperate about their situation because knowing about their rights did not help them in the least to avert their fate. They therefore decided to tell their teacher about the imminent marriages – actually in both cases the bride price had already been paid. It was this teacher who told them about the NAFGEM Safe Shelter and took them (to) the police station.

**“I don’t have a bad conscience because I left my family; they were doing bad things to me.” (K.)**

Of course, they were leaving their families with mixed feelings because they knew they were leaving them with all the work at home and did not know how their families and the community would react. But still they felt very happy to escape the harmful environment of their homes. They knew this

<p>grandmother to know what is going on. And then, her grandmother sent her to the father, and she start again crying on the way. And the time she reached home it was night and they formed some celebration there. And then they wait for the next day for the wedding... And at that moment, her headteacher was communicating with her grandmother, but her grandmother is refusing to pick up the phone. And then he realized that maybe she was being sent to the man. The day of the wedding the headteacher went there very early in the morning. And he took her and brought her back to the school. And then she continued her studies.</p> <p>And then the next day, they contacted the police officer. And then after speaking with the police, the following day NAFGEM went there. [And they bring her to the police station as well as Social Welfare Office]. And then they spoke with her father and asked if he wanted her to be married or to study. At that moment, her father said, he's like 50/50... He says, I don't want/ I want...And then at that time he ran again.</p>	<p>was their only chance to escape marriage and lead independent lives.</p> <p><b>“At the shelter house we feel safe. We can live in peace and nobody is disturbing us. We have time to play and laugh, and sometimes we feel happy.”</b> (M. and K.)</p> <p>Like J. they highly appreciate the company of the other girls who have gone through the same disturbing experiences.</p> <p>Now they are looking forward to going to school again. Their favorite subjects are Math and Science for K. and Math and Civics for M. They both dream of becoming an accountant or maybe an engineer later. They both feel confident they can reach these goals; they say if they only study hard enough they can achieve anything they want. Good jobs will enable them to lead independent lives, and they hope someday even their parents will be proud of them when they realize that also girls are capable of succeeding.</p> <p>Both girls see themselves as models for other girls in their communities because they can spread the message about NAFGEM and encourage them to follow their example. However, they also stress that for many girls the situation is still very difficult. Many of them do not dare to reveal their hardships to their teachers for fear of being overheard and punished at home. Moreover, it is very difficult to get a place in the Safe Shelter due to the lack of capacity and resources. Therefore, they would like to encourage sponsors to continue their support to open up a new perspective for more girls who are still experiencing hardships in their communities.</p>
<p><b>5.1:</b> One day, Francis visited there at her village and one lady and her mother explained the situation about her uncle wanting to marry her off (to send her to the man). Her mother does not want to send her to the man and that's what she asked Francis for help. And</p>	<p><b>5.2:</b> N. went to school against the will of her uncle who wanted her to get married as soon as possible. And although her mother was supporting her, she could not speak out openly because she was afraid of the uncle. As a woman she wasn't in the position to</p>

then the second day, they went to the police and the police contacted Francis again and Francis assigned the police and her mother to bring her to the shelter. At that moment she was supposed to be in Standard 3. But because of her bad education background she started Standard 1 when she was at NAFGEM [at the school called St. Anne Primary School].

make decisions anyway. N. told her teachers about the situation at home, but when they contacted the family to tell them they weren't allowed to marry the girl off, her uncle brought N. away from their village in Simanjiro to hide her in Arusha. After that, her mother was arrested and told she could only be released after the girl had been returned safely. So, N. was brought back by the uncle and has been staying with NAFGEM for four years now.

**“I am so grateful for the support from the sponsors because it gives me the chance to constantly learn new things which help me to change my life.”**

N. has only recently completed secondary school and is now waiting for her exam results. After university, she dreams of helping within her community and society more broadly. She says she is now changing her own life first and will later return to her village to change her community as well.

**“Only I as a Maasai will have a chance to bring about change in Maasai society because I know how it functions; the Maasai won't accept changes from the outside.”**

When she comes home for holidays, she now has the opportunity to speak to the girls and boys in her village to tell them about NAFGEM. The girls especially are always very impressed to hear about her way and want to become like her.

**“They weren't aware it was possible to reach this high. As long as they are in the village, their minds are in the dark. They get told what is right and wrong and, as they don't know anything else, they believe it.”**

	<p>She emphasizes that by supporting her and the other girls in the Safe Shelter, the sponsors are promoting these girls in the villages as well. When the girls from the Safe Shelter return to their home communities they function as torchbearers and ambassadors by spreading NAFGEM's message. Thus, they encourage other girls to change their lives as well.</p> <p>N.'s younger sister J. went to school as well, but when she was going up to the Standard 7 exams, her family told her not to perform well so she wouldn't be admitted to secondary education. She had been the best student in class, so the teachers were very surprised to see her bad results. They contacted the mother who denied having influenced her daughter. Hearing this, N.'s and J.'s uncle and J.'s future husband bribed the teachers to keep quiet.</p> <p>When N. heard about this, she asked NAFGEM for help to get J. out of this terrible situation. It took a lot of talking until the family finally agreed to let J. go with N. Together with the head teacher from her school, J. was brought to the NAFGEM Safe Shelter in Moshi in January 2018.</p>
<p><b>6.1:</b> She was at home. Her mother was not at home. And suddenly she saw a car arriving at her home. And Honorata, Francis, police went there. And they asked her a lot of questions, like are you studying? And she said, no I'm not studying. She's not studying because her father already received a bride price for her to be married. And her father was not there, and someone gave her information and he came to the home. And he said he was angry. And at that moment, he wanted to mutilate and send her to the man. Her mother ran to the police station and police station contacted NAFGEM and then NAFGEM went there and caught her father and they brought her father to the police station together with her. But her father is refusing and not accepting for her to study</p>	

<p>and then the police requested NAFGEM to take care of her. On the third day, NAFGEM brought her to the shelter while her father was arrested by the police. Her father was brought to the jail for three months.</p> <p>At that moment, she had never been at school and she was eight years old. She started studying at Kindergarten so that she could learn how to write and to read at that school I mentioned to you until today.</p>	
<p><b>7.1:</b> I will be very speedy. [Coming from participant] What makes her to come to NAFGEM. Her uncle wants to mutilate her and send her to the man so that she will be married. And the man who was supposed to marry her was 72 years old. And she ran away to report to the police and the police contacted NAFGEM. In that moment, she was in Standard 7 finishing the National Examination for her to complete that class. Then suddenly, surprisingly, she heard someone sitting on her house having a meeting about how she can be married, and her uncle is the one who organized that meeting. And her uncle already received the bride price which is 500,000 shillings and one cow. And she managed to escape to the police. And then the police contacted NAFGEM and she was brought to NAFGEM.</p>	
<p><b>8.1:</b> When she finished Standard 7, her mother was at home delivering a little baby... She was having a little baby. And her father was not there at home, he was very far. She was only staying home [taking care of the cows and cooking]. Before her father came back, her sister came from Moshi. And then her sister asked her why are you at home and other girls are at school at that moment. She told her because my father is not around [and my mom doesn't have the money]. And she asked so what should you do if your mother and father don't have money. Then, her grandmother suddenly came to her home and arrested her and mutilate her; her grandmother wanted her to be married... And her sister ran to the police station to report...</p>	

<p>And then the police contacted NAFGEM and together with the police we went there to pick up her... The case is on the court until now Her grandmother she stayed in jail for like five months until they released her.</p>	
<p><b>9.1:</b> Her father wanted to send her to the man to force her to early marriage and she don't want to be forced to marriage because she likes to study, and her age is like a child... like little... like a baby that moment... And then she escaped home ... From 8 pm until 1 am, she walked until she reached to the government leader. And the government leader sent her to the district officer. And the district officer contacted the social welfare officer at that district. And social welfare officer came there and picked her up... And then the social welfare officer contacted NAFGEM. And NAFGEM... we helped her and now she's at NAFGEM studying... And at that moment, she's Form 1... And the man who is supposed to marry her is like 92 years old [grandfather/bibi].</p>	
<p><b>10.1:</b> One day NAFGEM members were shared information that her aunt want to mutilate her and send her to the man and that member of NAFGEM, they hear that information and they went to her home and they found her uncle there at home and they talked with the uncle, but her aunt run away because they know what they want to do... She ran to Arusha. And her uncle said we don't want her to study, we want her to be mutilated and married... And then the members of NAFGEM made a report to the police station... So after that, they reported it to the police, Gender Based Violence Office, the police, and the Social welfare went to her home and took her and bring her to NAFGEM... Until now, she doesn't know where the aunt is.</p>	<p><b>10.2:</b> G.'s parents were quarrelling about her education. Her mother wanted her to continue school, whereas her father was against it. One day G. returned from school to find that her parents had separated, and her father had already left the family. Although she could set aside some time for studying, she couldn't concentrate on it because her mind was occupied worrying about the imminent marriage. Also, in her case the parents had already received the bride price (i.e. sugar, soda, cows).</p> <p>In school she got the opportunity to attend a presentation by NAFGEM and asked them for help. Although she knows her parents strongly dislike her leaving home, she says she feels very happy about being able to stay in the safety of the shelter house now. She has already applied to go to school again and will probably start in October. In the meantime, she is undertaking a computer course organized by NAFGEM. G. is especially fond</p>

	<p>of Geography and wants to work with animals or in a nature reserve when she is older.</p> <p><b>“At home I felt very sad about my future and prayed to God every day to help me. I am so grateful that he did.”</b></p> <p>She strongly believes that her parents will eventually change their minds when they see how she is succeeding with her education. She is sure that one day they will be happy and very proud of her.</p>
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Although the validity of the answers provided by the girls is contentious due to the interjections by the translator, each interviewee’s response and its paired website excerpt is reflective of FGC and NGO hegemonic discourse. For example, the first response given by the interviewee, though not paired with a website excerpt illustrates parents’ involvement in the circumcision of their children and how these parents become criminalized. In interview 1.1, the girl describes how she is at home when the mother is arrested, and the police interview her, asking whether or not her mother was the one who circumcised her. During initiation ceremonies, mothers have the capacity to heighten their own standing in the community (Thomas, 2003: 17). Not only do circumcision ceremonies represent a sphere of advancement for the girls who are interpreted to be advancing to womanhood, but also their parents.

The criminalization of the practice of circumcision has been amended through the signing of various international human rights conventions related to the practice in Tanzania. For example, the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (signed in 1985 and ratified in 1986) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified in 1991), explicitly criminalize traditional practices that harm children and discriminate against women (Bavel,

Coene, and Leye, 2017). Therefore, it is legally reprehensible to engage in the practice, particularly on girls under the age of 18.

However, the efficacy of the criminalization of the practice is debatable. Findings suggest that criminalization of female genital cutting and mounting social pressure not to circumcise influences behavioral change (i.e., practitioners hiding the continuation of female genital cutting), while education inspires changes in attitudes; Maasai culture in general, and more specifically the tradition of female genital cutting, are not static, but subject to critique, reinterpretation, and change (Van Bavel, Coene, and Leye, 2017). The Maasai are an ever-evolving indigenous group in Tanzania, which underscores the importance of community education as opposed to the criminalization of the practice, which could leave enhanced emotional lacerations etched onto the girls because of how their family members are portrayed maleficent beings.

Interview 2.1's recounting of what brought her to NAFFGEM underlines the critical role of teachers as a reference point for girls impacted by female genital cutting. Teachers are opinion leaders, role models, and persons of trust who can also seek to influence their parents not to circumcise their daughters (Docker, 2011: 8). Not only was the headteacher a source of trust for the girl, but also a useful resource to report to the police.

The NAFFGEM excerpt (2.2) reveals how educational roadblocks leave the girls susceptible to child marriage. When opportunity costs are high in relation to household costs, household income, and expected future earnings, the households may forego school (Anastasia and Teklemariam, 2011). The girl's grandmother was not able to afford the school fees, so she had to stay in the bush with other girls whose parents also could not afford the fees to avoid returning home and possibly undergoing marriage.

The lack of school affordability emerged with the advent of neoliberalism, during which everything became commoditized. Policy reforms of early neoliberalism included currency devaluation, trade, and capital market liberalization, the introduction of user fees for schools and hospitals, and the withdrawal of subsidies for basic food staples and agricultural inputs (Aminzade, 2013: 254). Neoliberalism signaled the bifurcation between economic and social, so individuals were expected to procure their education, medical care, and economic well-being. Lack of infrastructural provision due to neoliberal advances by organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF in Tanzania left the girl out in the bush with her peers to fend for themselves.

The girls' sexual(ized) bodies were also procurable in the commodifiable reality of neoliberalism, making early marriage inevitable if the girls were to return home. In Tanzania, the girl child is valued as an object for economic exchange as parents receive cash value or animals as dowry in exchange for their daughters given for marriage (Anastasia and Teklemariam, 2011). Nongovernmental organizations, such as NAFGEM that portray the girls as in need because of precarious life situations, are funded by institutions that landed the girls in the precarity, to begin with.

The website also features emboldened three-sentence depictions of the girls, which echoes the monolithic narratives displayed by the Human Rights Watch. In example 2.2, the website states:

Without NAFGEM, I wouldn't know where I was today. We girls need to know that there is someone behind us who is supporting us, so we can complete our education and plan our future. If NAFGEM didn't pay for the costs, I wouldn't be able to do any of this.

The following statement evokes a sense of helplessness and obscures the resilience and wit of the girls who depended on their peers while they were in the bush to keep up with schoolwork.

Based on my interviews and the above excerpt, it is evident how NAFGEM is an instrument in the neoliberal toolbox, capitalizing on the vulnerable depictions of girls.

In interviews 3.1 and 3.2, the brother's role in perpetuating the practice in hopes of retrieving a bride price further illustrates the role family members play in perpetuating patriarchy. Capitalist patriarchy benefits from a particular form of a family which ensures the cheap reproduction of labor power and the availability of women as a reserve army of labor (Walby, 1986: 58). The brother's willingness to marry his sister off underscores how women and girls represent a source of economic exchange and how if girls are too young to labor, their labor power is re-capitulated through their sexualized commodification.

The girl's use of poison in 3.2 as a means of averting her brother's attempt to marry her off mirrors the use of poison by slaves to resist the horrors of slavery. Slaves often killed themselves using poison before the state, or their masters had an opportunity to execute them (Snyder, 2010:58). The girl portrayed was hyperaware of her poison-induced suicide as an ultimate form of resistance and saw that as preferable to being married off and sexually commodified.

In NAFGEM excerpt 3.2, the girls' home is constructed as other: "At home, I felt really, really bad." The othering of the interviewee's perception of home is reflective of NGO and community relations. Many NGOs are engaging in educational interventions instead of confronting imported reform packages with local realities (Steiner-Khamsi, 1998). By formulating the girl's home as a negative space, NAFGEM disregards the Maasai's localized realities, and posits the NGO's interventions as an antithetical good. Despite how the bolded

words are posited to reveal the words of the girls, they more honestly reflect NGO ideologies that embolden the hearts and pockets of international donors.

To continue to embolden the hearts and pockets of international donors, NGOs use language as a means of embodying perpetual gratitude. The website states that “J. is very grateful to have the opportunity to stay with NAFGEM,” and the word grateful repeats itself four times on that single website page. NAFGEM not only envisions itself as a site of social and economic regulation but also moral regulation. NGO’s clients’ attitudes are evaluated with regard to their gratefulness and appreciation of advisors’ personal and institutional efforts (Codo, 2013: 51). Therefore, the NGO must present the girls as grateful to their donors, even if that is not enmeshed within their reality so that the donors feel appreciated and inclined to continue giving.

In example 4.1, the barriers between indigenous and national languages become evident through the girls’ depiction. She had trouble explaining to the teacher in Swahili how her grandmother wanted her to be out of school to send her to her father to be married. In Tanzania, indigenous languages such as KiMaasai are subverted for the preferable national language of Swahili (and English), which both represent sources of enhanced social mobility. The subversion of indigenous languages is rooted in colonialism and Eurocentrism. Language is central to a people’s definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe (Thiong’o, 1986: 4). Through the education that NAFGEM emphasizes, the girls become linguistic remnants of themselves from the enveloping of their indigenous language and are re-oriented as neocolonial entities whose universal ties are fissured.

Even though the girls are linguistically fissured from their indigenous language, NGOs such as NAFGEM continue to forge the girls as safe in institutionalized spaces. NGOs perceive

themselves to serve as critical safety nets where a politically challenged, indebted, or corrupt state is unable or unwilling to provide societal needs, and where global problems defy the conception of nation-state responsibilities (Yaziji and Doh, 2009:9). NAFGEM similarly discerns itself to be acting as a safety net against a challenging, indebted, and corrupt Tanzanian state, but they replicate these same challenges, indebtedness, and corruption through monolithic narrative production in an attempt to appease their international donors. Throughout the interviews and as evidenced explicitly by the emboldened words in example 4.2, NAFGEM fervently constructs its organizational space as a source of safety for the girls, concealing the ways that the NGO replicates state precarity.

During interview 5.1, the lack of quality education that the girl received before coming to NAFGEM takes center stage. By emphasizing the interventions of NGOs concerning education inadequacies, the state insufficiencies are subtracted. The propelling of the individual rather than the state is examined by Yihan Xiong and Miao Li in the context of an educational NGO in Shanghai, China. At this NGO, the individualized strategy to overcome societal constraints and institutional barriers is prioritized in order to place the children in better positions for local and global competition for education and work (Xiong and Li, 2017). Educational NGOs, like NAFGEM, replicate neoliberalism by focusing on individualized strategies to tackle systemic issues caused by ruptured social, economic, and political institutions.

Example 5.2 embodies NAFGEM's depiction of the Maasai as unreceptive to changes from the 'outside,' reproducing insider-outsider binaries. They portray the girls as being the sole sources of change. However, during my time at the organization, the organizational representatives discussed how they have been able to change the attitudes of circumcisers through community education, which elucidates the contradictory nature of nongovernmental

organizations. The recreation of the insider-outsider binary replicates violence upon the Third World woman as a monolith. It is an exercise of violence in creating a legitimate inside and an illegitimate outside in the name of identity (Mohanty, 2003:118). Based on the binaries that NAFGEM has constructed, the Maasai becomes a space of illegitimacy, while NAFGEM represents legitimacy.

When the binaries of legitimacy and illegitimacy are created, hegemonic images are perpetuated. Feminist analyses that perpetuate and sustain the hegemony of the idea of the superiority of the West produce a corresponding set of universal images of the Third World women, which exist in universal, ahistorical splendor, setting in motion a colonialist discourse that exercises a very specific power in defining, coding, and maintain existing First/Third World connections (Mohanty, 2003: 41). The girls that reside at NAFGEM are identified and coded as helpless victims, while NAFGEM is upheld as a source of their redemption.

The girls at NAFGEM as helpless is also demonstrated by the bolded statement in example 5.2, which depicts the girls as being in the dark before the intervention of NAFGEM. This is reminiscent of claims by colonizers that they rescued indigenous populations because of the darkness of their barbarianism. The final aim of colonization was to convince the indigenous population it would save them from darkness and that if the colonist were to leave, they would regress into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality (Fanon, 1961: 149). Given the messaging propagated by NAFGEM, it is evident that people were not only convinced, but they also internalized the rescuing ideologies of the colonizer.

Not only are people in indigenous communities considered ahistorical, but they also were posited as unknowledgeable without the intervention of nongovernmental entities. As illustrated in interview 6.1, the translator emphasizes how the girl learned to read and write after her time

with NAFGEM. African knowledges were historically used as a means of sustaining societies. However, with the advent of colonialism and its enlightenment science, African traditional scientific knowledges and technologies bequeathed from their forefathers were despised, labeled as irrational, void of logical thought, unscientific and anti-development (Mawere, 2015:1). The mislabeling of indigenous knowledges as irrational paralleled the onslaught of scientific racism, which deemed Blacks as less intelligent and inferior. African indigeneity as derogatory was exacerbated by neoliberalism, which commodified economies across Africa and reduced African knowledges to be purposeless because it could not fit into the individualistic conceptualization of knowledge formulation perpetuated by neoliberalism.

The translator's interpretation of interview 7.1 demonstrates NAFGEM's perception of how marriage and female genital cutting are interconnected. It is considered dangerous to delay the marriage of a mature girl after her circumcision because everybody's eyes are upon her, and the 'booking' of the girl generally takes place several years earlier (Cloward, 2016: 115). Cloward's reference to the booking of girls' bodies echoes how the economic exchangeability of the girls' sexual(ized) bodies and the colonial voyeuristic framework that their bodies are thrust onto.

The translator also acknowledges the disparate age difference between the bride and the bridegroom but does not contextualize why these age gaps exist. The bridegroom tends to be substantially older than the bride because he must have the financial means to pay the bridewealth, which is traditionally negotiated in multiple rounds and paid out over many years, both before and after the wedding (Cloward, 2016:116). The girl in interview 7.1 references how her brideprice was 500,000 shillings and a cow and how the man she was set to marry was 72 years old, even though she is a teenager.

Interview 8.1 underscores the role that grandmothers play in perpetuating the practice of female genital cutting. The presence of a grandmother in a household has a significant impact on the severity of a circumcision. Compared to grandmothers, mothers may prefer to forego the procedure, opting for a less drastic one (Yount, 2002). Grandmothers are torchbearers of archaic knowledge that modulates as time changes, and their daughters may honor these chronological modulations by deciding for their daughter not to be circumcised.

In interview 9.1, the translator also highlights the young age of the girl who is set to be married, in juxtaposition to the 92-year-old man who she is set to marry; it is essential to note how rhetoric surrounding child marriage evolved during the postindependence era. During the colonial period, there appears to have been no specific concern about or effort to regulate the age of marriage among the Maasai, and it was concluded in a survey circulated in 1930 that such marriage practices were not harmful to the girls and that the age of marriage did not need to be raised (Cloward, 2016: 122). After postindependence, which also signaled the transition to neoliberalism and NGOization, hegemonic ideologies emerged, configured with a moral compass slated to the West.

Amidst the era of neoliberalism, nongovernmental organizations began multipronged campaigns for the criminalization of FGC. To advance more awareness-raising, the Network Against Female Genital Mutilation was organized in 2004, composed of groups of women lawyers, legal rights centers, and others to coordinate and intensify intensive media campaigns, with almost daily articles in English and Swahili to rally an increased pressure on the government to enforce anti-FGC law (Hodgson, 2017: 112). By engaging in a dramatized moral appeal in an internationally competitive space, NAFGEM attempted to garner more support for the condemnation of the practice.

The role that government officials play in the criminalization of the practice is exhibited in interview 10.1. The translator details the girl's interaction with the police, the gender-based violence, and the social welfare office. The involvement of the government in the criminalization of the practice is intended to serve as a catalyst for social change to foster an enabling environment for the abandonment of the practice (Nabaneh and Muula, 2019). The amount of offices and bureaucratic institutions that the girl has to interweave through to get assistance is reflective of the governmental bifurcation initiated by neoliberalism.

Website excerpt 10.2 illustrates the illusion of educational advancement exhibited by the organization. NAFGEM admittedly reveals how the girl is currently undertaking a computer course organized by them, perpetuating a narrative of continuous productivity. Even if an NGO fails to meet its objectives, it need not lose donor support through an emphasis on program outcomes that sustains the illusion of institutional stability and success (Feldman, 1997). By emphasizing that the girl is taking a computer course, while away from school, the organization upholds its presence in sustaining her hyper-productivity, which aligns with neoliberal mechanization.

The statement in bold from website excerpt 10.2 illuminates how NGOs use religion as a mechanism for the promotion of their organizational messages. NGO groups are part of civil society and constitute an ensemble of private institutions that include NGOs as well as religious groups and organizations, schools, and other constituencies organized to meet the needs of the voiceless and excluded\_ women, the landless, and the urban poor (Feldman, 1997). By averting the liability for social needs to institutions such as religious groups and schools, the neoliberal state evades responsibility for their role in fabricating destitution. The girl relays how she prayed,

and she is grateful that God heard her prayer, which reduces the reality of mechanistic and institutionalized oppression.

The end of excerpt 10.2 underscores how a girl hopes her parents will change their minds when they see how she is succeeding. The hopes the girl has for her parents replicates the NGO and funder relationship: the NGO hopes that their funders will continue funding when they see how they are succeeding. NGO performance is determined by a supportive relationship with donors and service delivery, which helps to convince a skeptical government that there is a pay-off (Edwards, 1999). If efficiency is determined by the approval of the government and its invisibly handed donors, then the needs of the target population become further obscured.

### **Chapter Ten: Observational Analyses**

In addition to the formal interviews that were conducted while at NAFGEM, my informal observations while doing research contributed to my analytical constructions upon my return from Tanzania. Generally, during my time at NAFGEM, I saw about forty girls aged fifteen to twenty-one rotate in and out of the organization as their varying school breaks arose. Some activities they engaged in when they were at the organization headquarters, included cooking food on the firewood, assisting with the yard work at the headquarters, and playing games with one another. The cooking duties were assigned to the older girls, with each having a specific day of the week. During my time there, I played Uno with the girls when they had time away from their packets of schoolwork, and I would hear and see their exchanges in Swahili, attempting to find out what cards I had in my hand. Even with language barriers present, there was no mistaking their collaborative card game strategy and the joy that came from them when they won

the game and could exclaimorily claim “Tayari! (*Uno Out!*).” Beyond the network that NAFGEM had created with other local organizations in Moshi, Tanzania, it was clear that they were enjoying their own network that they had fostered at the organizational headquarters. Within this network, they could speak KiMaasai with one another freely, which acts as a stark contrast to the “Speak English” nailed to tress throughout boarding schools, which echoes the lingual continuity of neocolonialism and its attempted cultural erasure.

As summer sailed by, and the packets were further completed, it became time to send the girls off to their boarding schools. I saw as they lined up for their haircuts with their uniforms on. I asked my homestay sister whose hair had also been shaved and who also attended a boarding school why schoolgirls had to cut their hair. She responded that the school did not want them to get distracted with their hair; however, she told me that if ‘Wahindi (Indian)’ girls or other girls from international countries wanted to keep their hair, they could. Hair became yet another signifier of the echo of neoliberalism and neocolonialism.

NAFGEM is also known throughout Moshi, Tanzania, for these very intricate, detailed, and beautiful bracelets that they sell. Each bracelet contains a window with each windowpane representing the organizations’ tenets: girls’ education, ending FGC, early marriage, and early pregnancy. While I was there, I witnessed the girls spend hours of their day when they weren’t completing their schoolwork producing bracelets. They informed me how it takes about 24 hours or a whole day to complete one bracelet. Organizational representatives often depicted the importance of the bracelet as a source of liberation for the girls as they were learning a new skill and could earn money for their school expenses through the continued production of the bracelets. However, as time progressed at the organization, I discerned how the bracelets were more constricting than liberating. One of the organization’s workers would log the number of

bracelets they were producing weekly. As they handed completed bracelets in, they were given back beads, which re-inscribes exploitative capitalist modes of production.

The organization's ties to their capitalist donors and modes of production were further elucidated through the organization's eagerness to wish one of their German donors a Happy Birthday. In addition to having the girls stand in front of an organizational van while they were singing Happy Birthday, signaling to the donor the exact item that they were grateful for, they insisted on getting video footage of the girls talking about how their dreams had been fulfilled at NAFGEM. These predetermined images devised by the organization were fabricated to illustrate progress to their European donors.

### **Chapter Eleven: Examining Simanjaro Field Notes**

In addition to my observational analyses, I will also utilize organizational field notes from fieldwork in Simanjaro, Tanzania, to illustrate how NGO discourse reverberated in the organization's outreach. When the NAFGEM representatives went to a school, they talked to the Headteachers or Headmaster to tell them about NAFGEM and what NAFGEM is doing. Some teachers joined and listened. They would ask some of the female teachers if they wanted to accompany them while the questionnaires were being handed out, and the discussions were had. Some would come, and some would not. In one instance, there was a teacher who was passionate about helping and having discussions about FGC.

Two questionnaires were handed out by NAFGEM. One questionnaire asked general questions, such as the age, gender, school, and class; if any of the other students in their class had dropped out; if they know of students who dropped out and reasons; what is the cleanliness of

the school; if they were provided with lunch; and how long they had to walk to get to school; and whether or not they had siblings. In addition to this questionnaire described above, they also handed out pieces of blank paper and wrote questions on the board to be answered. Some of the questions asked include: (1) Had they been cut? (2) When? (3) By whom? (4) And the name of the cutter or where they lived? About half of the girls in each classroom visited disclosed they had been circumcised. When the names of the circumcisers were disclosed, some of the women disclosed were already known, and they had already been stopped or were already in a program. However, NAFGEM is working on finding some new names that were provided.

When they talked to the headmasters or teachers before disseminating the questionnaires, the teachers shared the challenges they faced at school and community level. Some of these challenges include water shortages, long distances to school, and the students who are married and do not have the energy to study while they are taking care of the husband and children. Additionally, while girls are menstruating, they do not go to school, and they miss a lot of classes. When debriefing the teachers, NAFGEM would emphasize how FGC affects them too because a lot of girls won't go to school anymore if they are cut. Some girls may have been married and are going to school, but when they go home, they have a lot of responsibilities, so that makes it hard. The NAFGEM staff also told them about the warning signals of FGC, such as family members cooking the girls pilau with meat, having a celebration, or giving them nice clothes to wear, so that the teachers could remain vigilant.

When the second questionnaire was disseminated to the girls, and the students were writing about whether or not they had been cut, the students covered their paper. Sometimes the teachers or NAFGEM staff would come looking around when they were filling out the papers, which may have affected the validity of the answers provided and the extent to which the girls

disclosed. Additionally, when they were collecting papers, the organizational representatives would look at the paper and talk to each other about what was on the paper in front of the girls, which may have made the disclosure process especially ostracizing. Similarly, when students were completing the questionnaire on the school conditions, the teachers would walk around while the students were filling out the paper, which also may have had an impact on the disclosure process.

As a part of NAFGEM's outreach, they utilize vagina models, which show an uncircumcised vagina and vaginal molds that represent the four different types of genital cutting. During the school visits, they would show the students the vaginal models as long as they consented to it. When they would show the plastic model of the vagina that was not circumcised, they would say things, such as "This is the way God made us." This highlights the religious imperative referenced by NAFGEM and the implication that those who are circumcised are ungodly, which is in tune with the Western-oriented moral compass.

One of the schools that were visited was the same school that one of the girls who were seeking shelter at the organization had attended, and she assisted them with outreach at the schools. She talked about her experience and the work that NAFGEM does. She talked to the kids in KiMaasai, which they identified with more, and they were subsequently more attentive when she spoke. Her sister was currently not attending school because the family said they were moving to another place. However, the organization interpreted this gap in learning as a warning signal that her sister may also be at risk of being circumcised or married.

Sometimes, during the school visits, they would do a reenactment of what discussions between the parents and children would look like. During the reenactment, the parents would tell the children that they are not going to school, and the kids were instructed on how to refuse and

say, “No! I want to go to school.” The girl seeking safe shelter at the organization who was helping with organizational outreach would also be in some of the reenactments, along with NAFGEM’s other staff members. The girl’s involvement in organizational outreach and the reenactments illustrate her identity as an NGO girl and her transition as a facilitator of NGO development.

In addition to school outreach, NAFGEM also sponsored the installation of a milling machine in a community with past circumcisers, and there was an opening celebration. They also brought kitenge (cloth) for the women during the celebration. A few politicians, district officers, and community leaders were in attendance. By installing the milling machine, the organization was participating in developing an alternative source of income for circumcisers, who typically depend on circumcisions for economic sustenance. The organization also bought corn for the milling machine so that the women have a supply of food to be processed in the milling machine. The necessity to install the milling machine and the accompanying supply of corn highlight the underlying economic deficiencies that perpetuate the practice of female genital cutting.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

This research contributes to NGO discourse because it encourages content and knowledge producers to be cognizant of NGO’s intentions, which impacts narrative formulations. By mistranslating the words of the girls, the translator who represented an embodied ideological byproduct of NAFGEM replicated victimized linguistic representations of girls impacted by female genital cutting. However, the mistranslation was consistent with monolithic IMAGES

that have sociohistorically portrayed Black girls and women as deficient and helpless globally. The interviews paralleled NAFGEM's case studies, my own observations, and field notes retrieved from organizational outreach that occurred while I was there. Although documented congruency is a means of attaining credibility for many NGOs, the patterns in the findings reveal NGO fabrication, evocative of neoliberal capitalist agendas. The lies constructed by NAFGEM mirror truths about NGO dependency.

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### **Vita (Biography)**

Courtney Carr was born and raised in Queens, New York. She is currently a graduate student at Syracuse University in the African American Studies Department. Courtney received her BA in Africana Studies cum laude from Cornell University in May 2018. Her Senior Thesis, “The Importance of Local Activism in Mitigating the Practice of Female Genital Cutting in Africa: The Case of the Network Against Female Genital Mutilation in Tanzania,” explores the importance of shared gender, racial and ethnic identity within the realm of local activism. Currently, Courtney’s research interests include nongovernmental organization discourse, transnational Black feminism, and narrative constructions of women affected by female genital cutting. Courtney plans on continuing on her graduate school journey and pursuing her PhD.