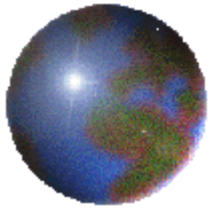




Female Circumcision

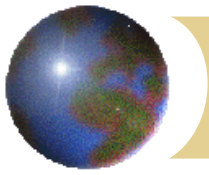


An issue of relevance for
students in the US?



Female Circumcision; Female Genital Mutilation: What is it?

- ✚ Surgical removal of external genitalia
- ✚ Practiced in ~ 26 C. & W. African, SE Asia and M. Eastern Countries
- ✚ ~84 million girls in Africa have been circumcised; maybe up to 120 million
- ✚ ~90% Egyptian girls circumcised before puberty
- ✚ 4-5 million undergo procedure each year



FC general facts

- ✚ Evidence of FC dates back to the 5-7th Century BC, but most data indicates religious ties
- ✚ Performed by midwives (daya), barbers, some doctors
- ✚ Most often performed without anesthesia; with razor, scissors, sharp stone, broken glass
- ✚ Female's legs bound together for 40 days to heal; not allowed to move, especially for first week or so



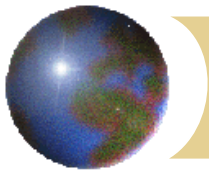
Why is it done?

- ✚ Religious ties-Muslim Prophet Mohammed made reference to it in the Koran (but some disagree)
- ✚ Some think Christianity supports it in book of Genesis "every man child shall be circumcised" (but some disagree)
- ✚ Believed to be a rite of passage into adulthood
- ✚ Preserves family honor
- ✚ In some groups, believed to minimize female sexual desire
- ✚ Done less in educated families (Saadwi says 66 v. 97%)



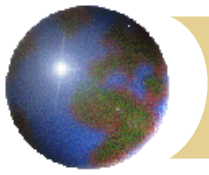
Types of Female Circumcision

- ✿ I. Sunna Procedure - removal of the clitoral prepuce (foreskin). Most common in Saudi Arabian countries
- ✿ II. Excision - removal of entire clitoris and part/all labia minora
- ✿ III. Pharonic or Sudanese Procedure - clitoris, labia minora and labia major removed. Raw edges often sewn together w/silk thread or thorns



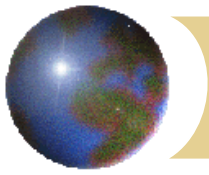
Why is it done?

- ✚ Some believe it is good hygiene, inhibit cancers
- ✚ Some believe clitoris will grow very large
- ✚ Many believe it preserves virginity and family honor
- ✚ Prevents promiscuity and immorality
- ✚ Cures melancholy, hysteria
- ✚ Smaller opening = greater male pleasure
- ✚ Ensures wife's monogamy



When is it performed

- ✚ Average age - 8
- ✚ Can be just after birth or in adulthood
- ✚ Senegal - a rite of passage into adulthood
- ✚ Nigeria - during pregnancy to prevent newborn from touching clitoris
- ✚ Deinfibulation occurs on wedding night or just before childbirth



Risks from the procedure

- ✚ Severe pain, shock
- ✚ Hemmoraging (sometimes to death)
- ✚ Abcesses
- ✚ Septicemia
- ✚ Gangrene
- ✚ Tetanus
- ✚ Dermoid cysts, neuromas
- ✚ Emotional depression, chronic anxiety



Legal and Political debates

- ✿ 1959 UN Convention of Rights of the Child - “abolish practices prejudicial for children”
- ✿ 1982 World Health Org. condemned it
- ✿ 1982 Swedish govt. passed law banning it
- ✿ 1985 British law; France, Belgium, Netherlands, on way to legislation
- ✿ 1983, 1985 Nigerian laws condemning it
- ✿ 1995-1997 Egyptian ban for state hosp. & private clinics



Legislative Action in the US

- ✚ In early-mid 1990s, several US states passed laws to criminalize the practice
- ✚ Delaware - law against alteration of a minor female's healthy genitalia
- ✚ Also in DE law- FGM required by ritual, custom, or standard practice not a valid defense
- ✚ 1996 FGM/FC illegal in all US states



Today FC affecting the US

- ✚ Not really new - 19th C. prescription for treatment of hysteria, melancholy, lesbianism, masturbation
- ✚ Legally, however, fairly new
- ✚ 1994 - Lydia Oluloro - Nigerian woman in Oregon with 2 daughters asked for political asylum
- ✚ 1995 - 2 women from Sierra Leone - one granted asylum, one denied

Small Group Exercise - The Circumcision Case of Fauziya Kassindja

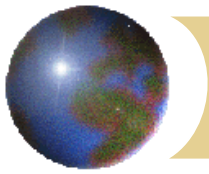
- I. If you were the judge, would you grant her asylum in the US? State your reasons for or against.
- II. How is female circumcision different from male circumcision?
- III. It is important to respect other cultures' traditions. Where do we draw the line between freedom of religion and/or cultural traditions and practices such as FC?



Issues in the Case

- ⊕ Freedom of Religion/Religious Practices
- ⊕ Cultural traditions form cohesive society
- ⊕ Rights of Parents
- ⊕ Expansion of asylum will open floodgates of immigration

- ⊕ Medical community is slow to act. Why?
- ⊕ Reinforces notion of limited value of women
- ⊕ Freedom from male domination
- ⊕ Freedom from inhumane treatment



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- ✦ Video *Fire Eyes*.