

RECENZJE/REVIEWS

Berg Rigmor C., Deninson E. (2013). *A Tradition in Transition: Factors Perpetuating and Hindering the Continuance of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) Summarized in a Systematic Review*. "Health Care for Women International", 34: 837–859. doi.org/10.1080/07399332.2012.721417.

Reviewed by: María Acevedo Limón

This article provides information about the situation of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) nowadays, focusing on the aspects that make these practices still a timely issue but also, researching the facts causing its decrease. It is important that this investigation was made, bearing in mind that, in addition to the main countries where FGM/C is common, there are also smaller communities elsewhere in which this is found.

First of all, it is important to know to what we are referring when we talk about Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting. According to the World Health Organization, it is "the partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons." There are four main types: clitoridectomy, excision, infibulations, and other (also harmful) procedures.

The contributions of this article are really important because it focuses on both sides of the problem. It offers an explanation to the question of why this is still a common practice in different places, but also notes that this does not provide any health benefits and violates human rights. The authors disclose a variety of factors obtained by research based on literature, quantitative studies about the topic, and their qualitative analysis. Their own study had 1741 participants, with a majority of women (78%) who were from northern Africa and the Horn of Africa but resided in Scandinavia (634), Canada (603), and other places like England, France, New Zealand, etc.

There are six factors mentioned as reasons that "provoke" this practice. The first one is that it is part of people's cultural tradition: as one of the interviewed said, "This is our tradition, it's something we should do." In addition, there is the negative sanction that is involved in not doing it. This is connected with another factor: religion, being Muslims, and having the thought that it is a practice of faith. Another aspect is the sexual moral, in the sense that it is believed that a "cut woman" would be more loyal to her husband (because she will not have the desire to be "sexual" with other people). Increased marriageability (because men prefer cut wives) was also often mentioned during the interviews. The final factors but less mentioned are male sexual enjoyment and health

benefits. The latter is really interesting because it is also a factor present in the opinion of people who disapprove this FGM. This shows us that there is a lack of information about the negative consequences that it can have for the health for the girls and women who undergo this procedure.

In contrast, other items mentioned by the interviewees were that it is illegal, so it would not be practiced anymore. This can be related to the fact that these women no longer lived in their origin country; maybe, having been in contact with another culture, they were more conscious about what the consequences. The health consequences are obvious: following the WHO (World Health Organization), these range from severe pain, bleeding, fever, infections, and shock to (in some cases) even death. The last explanation for hindering of this ritual would be the fact that it is not a religious requirement at all.

So, in essence, I think that the main contribution is that the authors clarify the factors that underlie this practice. It is also a way to know how we should act: to provide information and help these countries change this situation. But also, it is really important that these types of studies are done, because they create a debate and make people in Western countries conscious of FGM/C.

Perhaps one of my disappointments with the article is that, since there are so many interviewees and information, I would like to have more concrete numbers regarding the authors' opinions. Referring to the huge selection of topics mentioned and to identification of so many "general" factors, it would be interesting to have data about how many think a certain way. Also, another aspect that I think could have been done differently is that (as they have 1741 records), it would be nice to have direct quotations from their interviews. It is nice that they have done an interpretation of statements, but I think that it would be more interesting to have the literal words. The last thing I would like to mention is that the authors have an obvious majority of women (78%) and this is normal because it is an issue related with women's health and safety. However, having more male opinions in this case could be thought-provoking, so that we could also have the diversity of having their thoughts. It is a fact that men have a lot to do with this practice (e.g., the relation with marriage, a thinking that "cut" women would be better wives, etc.).

Overall, I am very glad I selected this article because it contains a lot of information and is very well disposed in the sense that it offers the two general opinions which are in favour or against and explains the why of both. Also, I think it is a good resource for those who do not know that much about FGM/C – a topic in which I am interested.

Picot A. (2016). *Understandings of Biological Kinship Ties in Social Workers' Accounts: A Cross-Cultural Study of Out-of-Home Placements in Norway and France*, "Qualitative Social Work", 15 (2): 247–262.
doi.org/10.1177/1473325015586247.

Reviewed by: Joanna Łabaj

The article under review concerns research carried out by Aurelie Picot from the Department of Social Studies at the Oslo and Akershus University College. The introduction provides a clear overview of biological ties and understanding them in the context of foster care placements. Drawing on qualitative data from many interviews with professionals in Norway and France, this article compares the meanings of such bonds when children are placed under external care. General analysis reveals that while a reference to biological ties underlies both the Norwegian and the French cases, such connections are expressed differently. Moreover, the varied senses of kinship impact on social work practice, for example with respect to parent–child contact.

The organization of the article is appropriate and transparent; the content is legible. The introduction emphasizes the relationship between the subject and social work. The maintenance of biological kinship ties has constituted a debated issue within child protective services since the 1960s. The research aim is twofold: (1) to compare the participants' perceptions of biological kinship ties, and (2) to underscore the implications of these perceptions for social work practice. The main issues described in the article concern the similarities and cross-national differences in how these social workers frame such kinship bonds, and how varied perceptions affect social work with children and their families. This is one of the reasons for adopting different ways and practices of working with biological and foster families.

The language of the article is understandable and the vocabulary is adapted to the subject. It applies the terminology of psychology, especially in the context of bonding and attachment. The article is understandable and suitable for a wide range of recipients: one does not need to have specialist knowledge to delve into the topic.

Thanks to the "theoretical frame" section, the reader has the opportunity to briefly familiarize him or herself with the history and contemporary theories regarding the development of biological bonds. Reference to current research gives a real picture of the situation and allows a better understanding of the context. Additionally, the theoretical section briefly recalls various other studies carried out within biological and foster families. Recalling even the concepts and views of Edward or Bestrad, it is emphasized that ties and kinship cannot be limited only to biological affect. The author also recalled Strathern's interesting research which shows the impact of intensive technology development on understanding the phenomenon of relationships and kinship.

The part clarifying the methodology presents the method of testing and the tools used. The study is based on qualitative interviews conducted in Norway and France, recorded on tape with social work professionals. Interviews seem to be an appropriate

tool for conducting this kind of research in which the key is the opinion and reflection of social workers on a selected topic. In all, 43 semi-structured interviews were conducted, including 20 in Norway and 23 in France. Interviews were carried out in 2011–2013 at local child welfare agencies in 2 Norwegian municipalities and 2 French departments. It seems, however, that 43 interviews are not much, because this is a fairly broad and contextual topic, especially examining the approach of social workers in two different countries. I think that research conducted on a larger number of people would have a chance to disclose new circumstances and nuances. This would be due to the different approaches that people raised in different social and cultural realities can present.

The big advantages of the article are familiarization of readers with the foster care systems in these countries and the fact that the author cites many quotes from interviews. Provided are descriptions of the systems as well as statements and positions of social workers in favor of varied approaches to biological ties (e.g. contact by children in orphanages with biological parents or not). There are numerous references to statements by social workers who have many years of experience in working with children and their families; these opinions enrich the entire article and lend a deeper understanding of the topic. It gives the subject real overtones thanks also to the recollection of real cases.

Interviews with social workers together with data analysis are subject to subsequent discussion. The research shows that Norwegian and French social workers treat biological ties in very different ways. While Norwegian participants clearly isolate attachment ties and biology, French participants use the term “draw” to designate both the emotional connection and biological connection. The authors point out that these differences translate into highly disparate approaches to contact with a child and disparate ways of working with biological and foster parents.

The article is a source of knowledge that has been delivered in a pleasant way in terms of organization and aesthetics. Thanks to the introduction, which outlines the theoretical framework, a reader without specialist knowledge of the concept of attachment and the development of bonds between child and parents can go on to analyze the interviews and understand the context. An additional facilitation is the presentation of the two foster care systems and the way social workers work in both countries. All important information is given in a concise manner.

In summary, the author points out that, despite the importance of the problem and the need to acquire and deepen knowledge in the field of relationships and kinship, there is not enough research, especially at the international level. This may evoke new interest in this topic. The study of these practices requires further research as well as alternative methodologies, such as the examination of case documents or ethnographic observations. Future research may also shed light on the broader cultural range and differences between different countries.