Challenges of Estimating Prevalence and Risk of FGC in US

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Purpose of Study

- Evaluate the studies available to date
- Correct misleading impressions related to US FGC estimates
- Clarify assumptions
- Consider lessons from European studies
Data sources of studies to date

- CDC study: Jones et al. 1997
  - Data sources: 1990 census with indirect method

- PRB study African Women’s Health Center 2004
  - 2000 census with indirect method

- CDC study Goldberg et al. 2016
  - American Community Survey with indirect method
### Indirect estimation techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US Data Source</th>
<th>Categories of Immigrant Women</th>
<th>Age-Specific Prevalence from COO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First gen.</td>
<td>Second gen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 Census</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Census</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 ACS</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Information not available in US databases on immigrants

- Ethnicity
- Region of residence in COO
- SES prior to migration
- ACS: specific country of origin missing for 10% of immigrants
## Results of studies to date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>&lt;18 years</th>
<th>≥18 years</th>
<th>Total women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1990 Census</td>
<td>48,000</td>
<td>168,000</td>
<td>271,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2000 Census</td>
<td>110,498</td>
<td>290,000</td>
<td>401,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>ACS 2012</td>
<td>169,000</td>
<td>344,000</td>
<td>513,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assumptions made by studies

Assumption 1:

FGC prevalence in the US is the same as that in countries of origin
Assumption 2:

Migrants are typical of the wider population in their country of origin
Assumptions made by studies

Assumption 3:

Girls are cut in the US at the same rate as girls in their home country.

That is, there is no change in FGC practices following migration.
Key problems with prior estimation methods

- Comparisons of estimates of the number of US girls and women at risk of or who have undergone FGC across the sequential studies creates the false impression that FGC is spreading.

- Combining figures on girls who may be at risk of FGC with estimates of the number of women who have undergone FGC distorts and exaggerates the US FGC risk estimates.

- Current estimation methods produce an upper estimate of women who have been cut and girls who may be at risk of being cut that is almost certainly an overestimate.
Importance of separating estimates of girls and women with FGC from “girls at risk” estimates

- Three categories of girls and women
  - Those cut before arrival in US (1ˢᵗ generation)
  - Those cut since arrival in US (1.5 /2ⁿᵈ generation)
  - Those not cut (2ⁿᵈ generation)
- Those already cut no longer at risk
- No data on those cut in US
Lessons from FGC estimation methods in the EU

- Sources of data limit the precision of FGC prevalence estimates
- Conducting research among immigrants a public relations challenge
- Estimates of number of women cut before arrival is useful for health system planning
- Cutting of girls in European countries is not common, so risk of cutting is relatively low
What we know now about FGC in US

- Only national source of data is American Community Survey
- From 8-10% of immigrants have no country of origin specified
- One-half of immigrants from FGC-practicing countries in Africa come from Egypt, Somalia or Ethiopia
- No data on cultural change following migration to the US
Considering girls at risk in the US

- Work with affected communities to improve education and awareness about the law
- Consult with affected communities about how to implement child protection measures
- Consequences of implementing legislation?
- Consequences of border surveillance to prevent "vacation cutting"?
Suggestions for further research

- Conduct an update of FGC prevalence among first generation immigrants
- Estimate the number of girls in 2nd and 3rd generation for 5-6 countries that provide the most immigrants
- Design qualitative research to be conducted Egyptian, Somali, and Ethiopian communities about what influences continuity or change in FGC
- Design studies of acculturation to be conducted among Egyptian, Somali, and Ethiopian communities