

“Using Role Plays to Enhance Deep Learning and Cognitive Sophistication”

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I. Outline of Presentation Coverage

A. Research on cognitive development, and role plays as effective pedagogy for this objective

B. Student learning objectives (selective) for role play assignment

1. Explain how female genital cutting reflects tensions between cultural relativism and universal human rights
- 2) Evaluate the authority of different ways of knowing about a controversial practice
- 3) Comprehend another culture on its own terms, using the categories of thought and behavior of that culture and applying this understanding in formulating a particular position in the female genital cutting (FGC) debates
- 4) Articulate your own position on FGC

C. Design and execution of role play assignment

Roles performed:

- 1 Sierra Leonian/American voluntarily circumcised woman and anthropologist;
- 2 and 3. Sudanese women and men who had experienced infibulation (intensive form of FGC), directly or through their sexual partners; as reported upon by an American journalist;
4. American anthropologist analyzing media coverage of U.S. political asylum petitions for two women who feared FGC if they remained in their countries of origin;
5. African public health activist for alternative rites of passage without genital cutting;
6. American anthropologist discussing tensions between cultural relativism and human rights regarding FGC
7. Palestinian/Swiss legal scholar comparing medical and religious rationales for female and male circumcision.

D.Direct and indirect assessment

1. PRETEST DATA (DIRECT)

“Please tell me what, if anything, you know at this time about female genital cutting, also sometimes called female circumcision or female genital mutilation,” and “Also, does the practice produce any emotional responses for you? Please describe.”

Minimal or nonexistent knowledge of FGC	More substantial knowledge of FGC
N = 11 (25)	N=14 (25)

Knowledge responses:

Used as punishment N= 5
Symbolizes men’s control over women N= 5
Found in developing country/Middle Eastern/North African context N = 4
Used as ethnic/tribal coming of age ceremony N=4
Used as sexual control of women N= 4
Used in religious context N=3
Can be harmful N=3
Must be respected for cultural reasons and due to participants’ acceptance N=3
Seen as unacceptable elsewhere N=2
Due to culture, practiced despite illegal, more severe than male circumcision, not medically dictated, done to prevent childbirth, practiced without consent (N= 1 for each response)

Emotional responses:

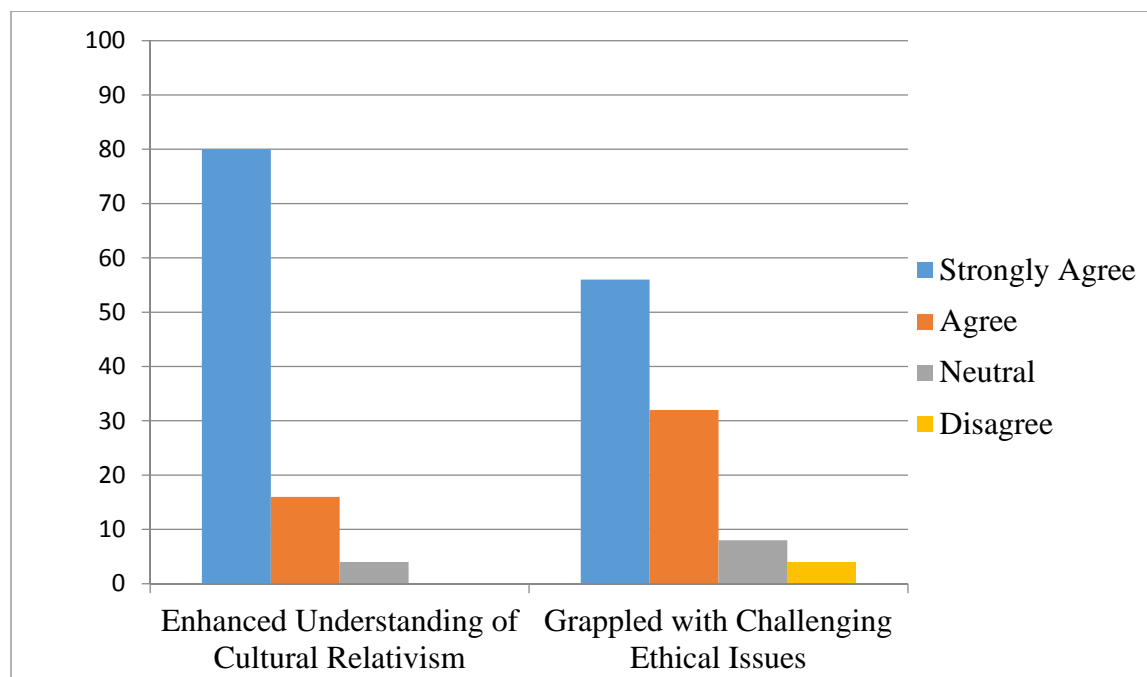
<p>Anger N=18. Subcategories: Due to inequality or oppression N=6. Causes emotional or physical pain N=4. Is against her will N=3. Is immoral or inhumane N = 3. No male equivalent N = 2</p>
<p>Squeamishness or sickness N=4</p>
<p>Sadness N= 2</p>
<p>Unacceptably risky, afraid of it, it is disturbing (N= 3, 1 in each category)</p>

2. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES IN STUDENT PAPER SECTION ON ELABORATION OF OWN POSITION ON FGC (DIRECT)

Theme	Illustrative quote
<p>Choice of girl or woman n=12 (25)</p> <p><i>Human right to bodily integrity</i></p>	<p>"Girls should not be forced to undergo the procedure by their future husbands or their mothers any more than they should be forced to not undergo the procedure by a group of people who do not know them. The girls should be the central decision makers in every choice that involves their bodies."</p>
<p>Cultural value of FGC practice n= 10 (25)</p> <p>Rite of passage, symbolizes female empowerment, parents' motivations are honorable and wishes to be respected</p> <p><i>Respect for cultural differences and relativism</i></p>	<p>"It was definitely very interesting to hear the views of this procedure from people in other cultures. It was interesting to see that it isn't only viewed to be a health benefit or for their God, but it is actually done to really become a woman or a man. It is a big deal for some people and a big moment in their lives ... It is a tradition to some people that brings them and their families joy."</p>
<p>Health concerns N=10 (25). Require education, require medicalization, ban intensive forms</p> <p><i>Acceptable measures or compromises to respect cultural practice but address human right to good health</i></p>	<p>"Performing FGC in a safe and sterile environment by a medical professional would greatly diminish virtually all risks associated with the practice. Those who oppose FGC believe that medicalizing the practice will allow FGC to continue in society and prevent it from being eradicated. I believe that it is more important to recognize the cultural importance of FGC in some societies where the practice serves as a coming of age ritual or as a symbol of personhood within a community."</p>
<p>Alternative rites of passage N=6 (25)</p> <p><i>Honor cultural socialization without the cutting (pain and health problems)</i></p>	<p>"Coming of age rituals exist in many manners ... In the United States, we see these rituals in the form of milestones ... (a driver's license, finding a job, dating, attending a college, marriage and children) ... These rituals do not include pain or suffering for the individuals. Genital cutting, unfortunately, does ... Their values are important and still priceless. However, they can express these values and teach them without altering the bodies of their fellow young women."</p>
<p>Inadequate data for conclusions N=4 (25) Need more complete and accurate</p>	<p>data to decide acceptability and formulate policies</p>

3. STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ASSIGNMENT'S LEARNING OBJECTIVES (INDIRECT)

N=25; data in percentages



Student comments in qualitative sections of supplemental and general course evaluation forms (indirect)

- “You helped us to see a very controversial and sometimes very uncomfortable social practice in a culturally relativist light; ”
- “I thought it was interesting and I am now more culturally relativist”
- “I think it’s important to learn about and important to realize that we shouldn’t immediately assume that the practice is bad simply because we don’t typically see it in America.”
- “The FGC role play section helped as I had to take a cultural relativist position, and set my opinions aside, to complete the assignment.”
- “This course forced me to step into the stereotypical roles of women across the globe & refrain from allowing my personal biases to dictate my understanding of controversial issues, ex. FGC role play”
- “The role play assignment allowed me to immerse myself in the FGC content in a way I otherwise wouldn’t have been able to.”
- “This has been a very educational and informative assignment, and I am glad to have had the opportunity to discuss, evaluate, and analyze genital cutting from numerous points of view, and to be able to develop my own educated opinion on the issue.”

E. CONCLUSIONS/LIMITATIONS OF ASSIGNMENT

F.YOUR COMMENTS