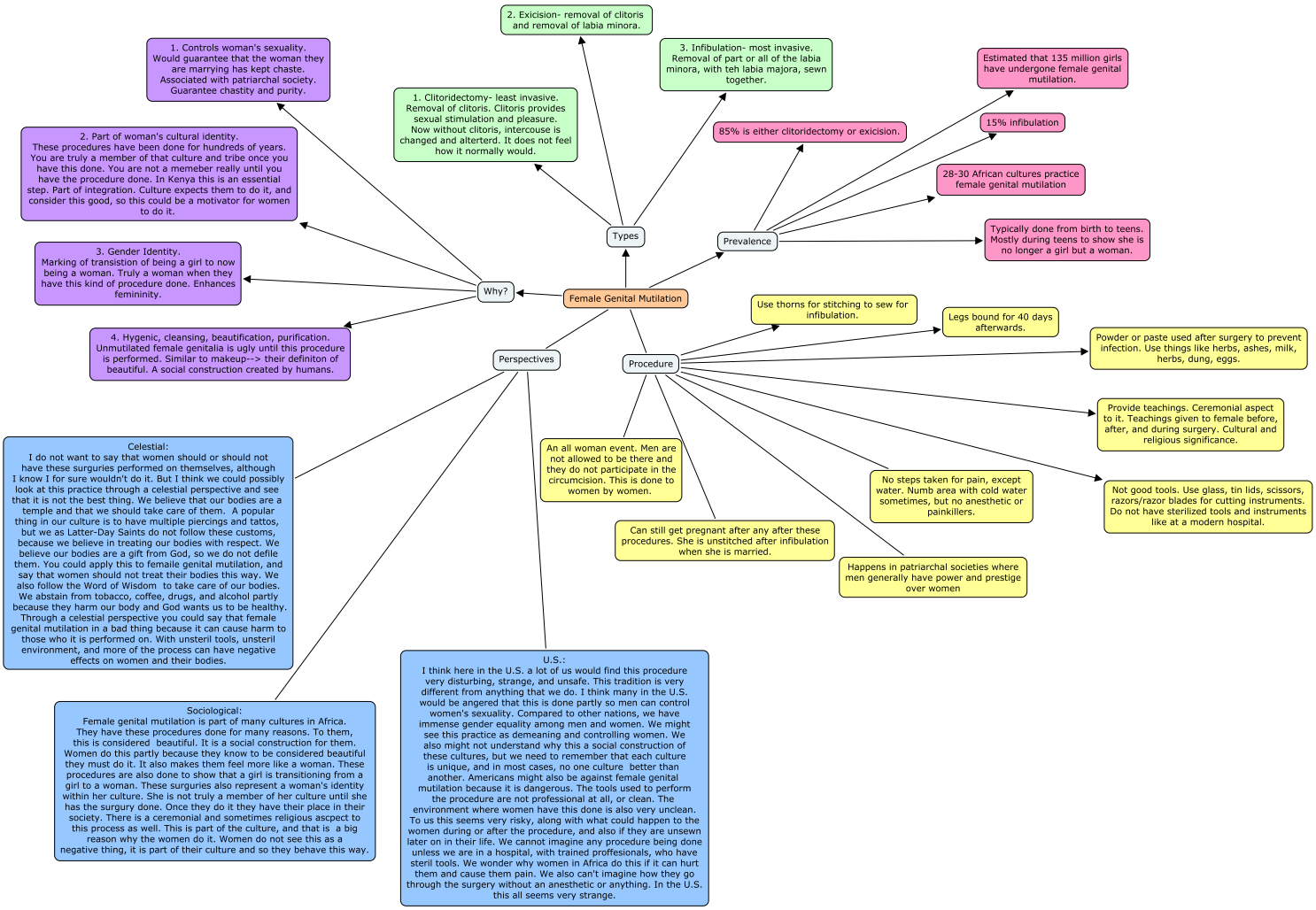
Female Genital Mutilation
Types
1. Clitoridectomy- least invasive. Removal of clitoris. Clitoris provides sexual stimulation and pleasure. Now without clitoris, intercouse is changed and alterterd. It does not feel how it normally would.
2. Exicision- removal of clitoris and removal of labia minora.
3. Infibulation- most invasive. Removal of part or all of the labia minora, with teh labia majora, sewn together.
Prevalence
85% is either clitoridectomy or exicision.
Estimated that 135 million girls have undergone female genital mutilation.
15% infibulation
28-30 African cultures practice female genital mutilation
Typically done from birth to teens. Mostly during teens to show she is no longer a girl but a woman.
Why?
1. Controls woman's sexuality. Would guarantee that the woman they are marrying has kept chaste. Associated with patriarchal society. Guarantee chastity and purity.
2. Part of woman's cultural identity. These procedures have been done for hundreds of years. You are truly a member of that culture and tribe once you have this done. You are not a memeber really until you have the procedure done. In Kenya this is an essential step. Part of integration. Culture expects them to do it, and consider this good, so this could be a motivator for women to do it.
3. Gender Identity. Marking of transistion of being a girl to now being a woman. Truly a woman when they have this kind of procedure done. Enhances femininity.
4. Hygenic, cleansing, beautification, purification. Unmutilated female genitalia is ugly until this procedure is performed. Similar to makeup--> their definiton of beautiful. A social construction created by humans.
Procedure
Use thorns for stitching to sew for infibulation.
Legs bound for 40 days afterwards.
Powder or paste used after surgery to prevent infection. Use things like herbs, ashes, milk, herbs, dung, eggs.
Provide teachings. Ceremonial aspect to it. Teachings given to female before, after, and during surgery. Cultural and religious significance.
Not good tools. Use glass, tin lids, scissors, razors/razor blades for cutting instruments. Do not have sterilized tools and instruments like at a modern hospital.
No steps taken for pain, except water. Numb area with cold water sometimes, but no anesthetic or painkillers.
Happens in patriarchal societies where men generally have power and prestige over women
Can still get pregnant after any after these procedures. She is unstitched after infibulation when she is married.
An all woman event. Men are not allowed to be there and they do not participate in the circumcision. This is done to women by women.
Perspectives
Celestial:
I do not want to say that women should or should not have these surguries performed on themselves, although I know I for sure wouldn't do it. But I think we could possibly look at this practice through a celestial perspective and see that it is not the best thing. We believe that our bodies are a temple and that we should take care of them. A popular thing in our culture is to have multiple piercings and tattos, but we as Latter-Day Saints do not follow these customs, because we believe in treating our bodies with respect. We believe our bodies are a gift from God, so we do not defile them. You could apply this to femaile genital mutilation, and say that women should not treat their bodies this way. We also follow the Word of Wisdom to take care of our bodies. We abstain from tobacco, coffee, drugs, and alcohol partly because they harm our body and God wants us to be healthy. Through a celestial perspective you could say that female genital mutilation in a bad thing because it can cause harm to those who it is performed on. With unsteril tools, unsteril environment, and more of the process can have negative effects on women and their bodies.
Sociological:
Female genital mutilation is part of many cultures in Africa. They have these procedures done for many reasons. To them, this is considered beautiful. It is a social construction for them. Women do this partly because they know to be considered beautiful they must do it. It also makes them feel more like a woman. These procedures are also done to show that a girl is transitioning from a girl to a woman. These surguries also represent a woman's identity within her culture. She is not truly a member of her culture until she has the surgury done. Once they do it they have their place in their society. There is a ceremonial and sometimes religious ascpect to this process as well. This is part of the culture, and that is a big reason why the women do it. Women do not see this as a negative thing, it is part of their culture and so they behave this way.
U.S.:
I think here in the U.S. a lot of us would find this procedure very disturbing, strange, and unsafe. This tradition is very different from anything that we do. I think many in the U.S. would be angered that this is done partly so men can control women's sexuality. Compared to other nations, we have immense gender equality among men and women. We might see this practice as demeaning and controlling women. We also might not understand why this a social construction of these cultures, but we need to remember that each culture is unique, and in most cases, no one culture better than another. Americans might also be against female genital mutilation because it is dangerous. The tools used to perform the procedure are not professional at all, or clean. The environment where women have this done is also very unclean. To us this seems very risky, along with what could happen to the women during or after the procedure, and also if they are unsewn later on in their life. We cannot imagine any procedure being done unless we are in a hospital, with trained proffesionals, who have steril tools. We wonder why women in Africa do this if it can hurt them and cause them pain. We also can't imagine how they go through the surgery without an anesthetic or anything. In the U.S. this all seems very strange.