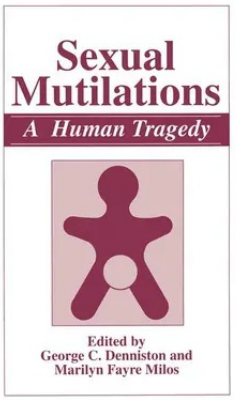
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Sexual Mutilations

A Human Tragedy

Sexual mutilation is a global problem that affects 15. 3 million children and young adults annually. In terms of gender, 13. 3 million boys and 2 million girls are involuntarily subjected to sexual mutilation every year. While it is tempting to quantify and compare the amount of tissue removed from either gender, no ethical justification can be made for removing any amount of flesh from the body of another person. The violation of human rights implicit in sexual mutilation is identical for any gender. The violation occurs with the first cut into another person 's body. Although mutilation is a strong term, it precisely and accurately describes a condi tion denoting "any disfigurement or injury by removal or destruction of any conspicuous or essential part of the body. " While such terms as "circumcision" and "genital cutting" are less threatening to our sensitivities, they ultimately do a disservice by masking the fact of what is actually being done to babies and children. Although the courageous example of the survivors of sexual mutilation indicates that humans can certainly live and even re produce without all of their external sexualorgans, this biological phenomenon does not, however, justify subjecting a person to sexual mutilation. The remarkable resilience of the human body is a testament to the importance nature places on reproduction rather than a vindication for surgical practices that compromise this function.

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