

The Interface of Tradition and Modernity in Black South African Women's Experiences of Menstruation

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Abstract : Menstruation signifies the transition to biological sexual maturity and culture-bound values influence its meaning and experience for women. In South Africa there is a paucity of research specific to the topic of menstruation. This study addresses this gap in the literature by exploring the experiences of menstruation among a group of women from the ama-Xhosa ethnic group, one of the largest ethnic groups in the country. Focus group and individual interviews were conducted with ama-Xhosa woman (n= 15). Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The study found that traditional knowledge systems and cultural practices associated with menstruation including virginity testing and intonjane (female right of passage) still exist and impact on women's subjective experiences. The study highlights the interface of tradition and modernity in the meanings ascribed to menstruation and women's experiences of it.

Keywords : menstruation, cultural belief systems, South Africa, ama-Xhosa

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