Title of thesis: \( \textit{Women's attitudes toward menstruation} \)

(1) (a) I give permission for my thesis to be made available to readers in the Massey University Library under conditions determined by the Librarian.

(b) I do not wish my thesis to be made available to readers without my written consent for ________ months.

(2) (a) I agree that my thesis, or a copy, may be sent to another institution under conditions determined by the Librarian.

(b) I do not wish my thesis, or a copy, to be sent to another institution without my written consent for ________ months.

(3) (a) I agree that my thesis may be copied for Library use.

(b) I do not wish my thesis to be copied for Library use for ________ months.

Signed \[Signature\]  

Date 22/2/90  

The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author. Readers must sign their name in the space below to show that they recognise this. They are asked to add their permanent address.

NAME AND ADDRESS  

DATE  

---

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY
WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD MENSTRUATION:
A QUANTITATIVE SURVEY AND
QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW INVESTIGATION

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in Psychology
at Massey University

Bridget Fitzgerald
1990
ABSTRACT

Menstruation plays an important role in the psychology of women. There is, however, little information about the nature of women's attitudes toward menstruation. The present study used a quantitative survey followed by a series of qualitative interviews to explore these attitudes in a sample of University women in New Zealand. The Menstrual Attitude Questionnaire (MAQ) was used to assess the attitudes and beliefs of 343 women. The psychometric properties of the MAQ and its underlying factor structure were examined using a range of factor analytic models. Responses were then used to select a sample of 10 women for interview. Interviews were conducted in order to elaborate upon the attitudes identified by the MAQ and to examine in more depth the nature of women's attitudes toward menstruation. Factor analysis of the MAQ yielded five orthogonal factors. Results suggested that these university women perceived menstruation as: Marginally causing physical, emotional and intellectual changes, a natural event, an inconvenience and slightly disrupting their usual performance and activities. Subjects accepted the existence of premenstrual tension. Similarly, interviews revealed that attitudes were multidimensional with each subject having an individual configuration of positive, negative and neutral beliefs about menstruation. No consistent pattern among the different beliefs was established. Furthermore, it would appear that attitudes towards menstruation may not be acquired from direct experience but may be learned through social expectations. Directions for future research are indicated, particularly the importance of qualitative research.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people who made this thesis possible. I would like to thank Jocelyn Grainger for believing that this was an area of women's psychology worth investigating. Her constant support and enthusiasm was invaluable. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to John Spicer for his patience and skill, particularly in regard to the statistical analyses.

Thank you to Regina Pernice for her friendship which I value immensely. Special thanks to my colleagues at Psychological Services, Justice, particularly for their assistance in the final stages of this document.

Finally, my sincere thanks goes to my co-researchers in this project - the women who allowed me the opportunity to explore this aspect of their lives.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements .................................................... iii
Table of Contents ...................................................... iv
List of Tables .......................................................... vii
List of Appendices .................................................... viii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ............................................. 1

CHAPTER 2: DEFINITIONS ................................................. 4
  Biological Aspects Of The Menstrual Cycle ................. 4
  Attitudes .............................................................. 8
  Historical Attitudes Toward Menstruation .................. 12
  Premenstrual Tension ............................................... 17

CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ......................... 21
  Attitudes of Menarcheal Girls Toward Menstruation ...... 21
  Attitudes of Women Toward Menstruation ................... 25
  Methodological Approaches ...................................... 30

CHAPTER 4: RATIONALE AND AIMS ................................. 36
  Methodology Rationale ............................................. 36
  Aims of the Present Study .......................................... 38

CHAPTER 5: METHOD ................................................... 40
  Subjects ............................................................... 40
  Measure: The Menstrual Attitude Questionnaire ............ 40
  Administration of the MAQ ........................................ 45
  Data Analysis of the MAQ .......................................... 46
APPENDICES

Appendix A ........................................... 128
Appendix B ........................................... 133
Appendix C ........................................... 133
Appendix D ........................................... 140
Appendix E ........................................... 143
Appendix F ........................................... 145
Appendix G ........................................... 156
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1  Summary of the factor analytic technique used in the study .......................................... 47
TABLE 2  Mean responses and standard deviation for each of the MAQ items .............................. 53
TABLE 3  Principal factors analysis: Communality estimates and factor loadings from a five factor solution using oblique rotation ................................................................. 62
TABLE 4  Principal factors analysis: Factor correlation matrix from a five factor solution .................. 63
TABLE 5  Items loading into composite scales ............................................................................. 70
TABLE 6  Mean scores and standard deviations on composite scales ............................................ 73
TABLE 7  Reliability values of factors and composite scales ......................................................... 74
TABLE 8  Standard deviations, maximum and minimum values of factor scores for all subjects .......................................................... 75
TABLE 9  Standard deviations, maximum and minimum values of factor scores for subjects volunteering to be interviewed ................................................................. 76
TABLE 10 Age of subjects and factor scores for interview subjects ................................................ 78
LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  The Menstrual Attitude
Questionnaire and consent
form ........................................... 128

APPENDIX B  Interview schedule and consent
form ........................................... 133

APPENDIX C  Correlation matrix for the 33 MAQ
items ........................................... 138

APPENDIX D  The composite factor scales obtained
by Brooks-Gunn and Ruble (1980) ........ 140

APPENDIX E  Principal components analysis:
Eigenvalues and percentage variance
for all components ............................ 143

APPENDIX F  Rotated factor matrices ................. 145
(1) Principal components analysis:
Factor loadings from a five factor
solution using varimax rotation
(2) Principal components analysis:
Factor loadings from a five factor
solution using oblique rotation
(3) Principal components analysis:
Factor loadings from an eight factor
solution using varimax rotation
(4) Principal components analysis:
Factor loadings from an eight factor
solution using oblique rotation
(5) Principal factors analysis:
Communality estimates and factor
loadings from a five factor solution
using varimax rotation
(6) Principal factors analysis:
Communality estimates and factor
loadings from an eight factor solution
using varimax rotation

(7) Principal factor analysis:
Communality estimates and factor
loadings from an eight factor solution
using oblique rotation

(8) Minres analysis: Communality
estimates and factor loadings from
a five factor solution using varimax
rotation

(9) Minres analysis: Communality
estimates and factor loadings from
a five factor solution using oblique
rotation

(10) Maximum Likelihood analysis:
Communality estimates and factor
loadings from a five factor solution
using oblique rotation

Factor correlation matrices from
the oblique solutions ............... 156

APPENDIX G

(1) Principal components analysis:
Factor correlation matrix from a
five factor solution

(2) Principal components analysis:
Factor correlation matrix from an
eight factor solution

(3) Principal factors analysis:
Factor correlation matrix from an
eight factor solution
(4) Minres analysis: Factor correlation matrix from a five factor solution
(5) Maximum Likelihood analysis: Factor correlation matrix from a five factor solution