

ABSTRACT

The thesis explores women's experiencing of menstruation and it compares the experiencing in two groups, one consisting of women who have attended women's circles, and the other of women who have not. In addition to experiencing menstruation, the thesis explores the women's circles themselves as a new social phenomenon. Data collected through interviews with ten women was analysed using grounded theory methods. Menstruation is examined on the level of personal experiencing as well as on the level of a social norm. These levels are seen to show mutual influence. To some degree, women adopt the social perception of menstruation, yet at the same time, it is their experiences and actions that form it. Therefore, women have the potential to change the social norms regarding menstruation. Women outside women's circles accept the social norm and experience menstruation passively. They consider not feeling well a natural side-effect and do not attempt to change it. Women who have attended women's circles counter the social norm and experience menstruation actively. They work with their experiences, both physical and psychological, while menstruating, and they actively adjust their surrounding conditions in order to feel better.

KEYWORDS:

menstruation, experience, women's circles, womanhood, taboo, gender