

Washington University in St. Louis

Washington University Open Scholarship

Spring 2018

Washington University
Senior Honors Thesis Abstracts

Spring 2018

Zulu Traditions during Pregnancy and Birth: A Preliminary Study of Intergenerational Differences in Mashta, South Africa

Momoko Oyama

Washington University in St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wushta_spr2018

Recommended Citation

Oyama, Momoko, "Zulu Traditions during Pregnancy and Birth: A Preliminary Study of Intergenerational Differences in Mashta, South Africa" (2018). *Spring 2018*. 96.

https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wushta_spr2018/96

This Abstract for College of Arts & Sciences is brought to you for free and open access by the Washington University

Senior Honors Thesis Abstracts at Washington University Open Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2018 by an authorized administrator of Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact digital@wumail.wustl.edu.

ZULU TRADITIONS DURING PREGNANCY AND BIRTH: A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN MASHTA, SOUTH AFRICA

Momoko Oyama

Mentor: Bradley Stoner

In Zulu culture, several traditions and rituals are practiced during a woman's pregnancy and perinatal period. However, as urbanization spreads and Western influences strengthen, these rituals risk being lost. This project aims to capture existing knowledge of these traditions and to assess intergenerational changes in practices and attitudes towards these traditions and rituals.

Information on Zulu traditions and rituals practiced during a woman's pregnancy and perinatal period was collected through two interviews and a focus group consisting of three elderly women in Masxha, a Black township in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Following the interviews and focus group, 32 Masxha residents were recruited to complete a survey aimed at understanding intergenerational changes in practice of the traditions.

For the purpose of this project, participants 18 to 35 were classified as "younger" and those over 35 as "older." The 35-year cutoff was determined by halving the age of the oldest participant, who was 68 years old, and rounding up. Survey results indicated that older Masxha residents believed in the importance of practicing the traditions more than younger residents. Statistical analysis revealed older people were significantly more likely to believe men should not be with a woman while she is giving birth and that a mother must refrain from cooking after she gives birth compared to younger people. Older mothers were also more likely to have practiced the traditions than younger mothers, suggesting a decrease in practice of Zulu traditions. Further study is needed to understand younger people's perceived importance of Zulu traditions and rituals, and why their practice is becoming less common.