THE PEDI WOMAN’S EXPERIENCES OF
CHILDBIRTH AND EARLY PARENTHOOD:
A SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS
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In recent years researchers have addressed themselves to the contrast between White’s and Black’s views on health and illness in Southern Africa (Barker, 1973; Cheetham and Griffiths, 1982; Gelfand 1977, 1980; Gumede, 1974, 1978; Manganyi, 1974; Menkazana, 1979; Munyaradzi, 1975). In essence, it appears that Black and White views regarding illness arise from two rather different standpoints. Empirical Western medicine has been concerned with the identification and manipulation of observable aetiological factors underlying illnesses. As this approach is concerned with the disease process itself the broad social and psychological concerns of the person with the disease have frequently been ignored (Cheetham and Griffiths, 1982). Relative to the history of medicine, it is only in recent decades that a more inclusive, holistic view of illness has been adopted by some (Lipowski, Lipsett and Whybrow, 1977). This holistic view takes account of the influences of social, psychological, cultural, religious, economic and behavioural factors in the aetiology and prognosis of disease.

In contrast to “high technology” medicine, the Black view of health and illness is set squarely into an holistic framework. To some extent this view overlaps with the move towards holistic medicine that has become evident in Western medicine. However, the Black view of illness goes even further towards viewing man as an integral part of his worldly environment. Not only are the psycho-social and physical aspects of his world influential in the aetiology and prognosis of his disease, but so too are the spiritual, magical or mystical aspects of the total ecology of relevance to health and disease. In fact, these extra-terrestrial forces are seen as primary agents in the causation of illness, even when the illness is directly observed as being caused by organic agents. In these situations the organic agent acts adversely on the individual in response to spiritual intervention. Within this framework, it becomes obvious that appeasement of ancestral or other spirits is an integral part of the process of remaining healthy. To this end individuals such as traditional healers who have the ability to communicate with the spirits are accorded high status in the community.

While Black views of illness incorporate a multivariate approach to the aetiology of illness, White philosophies traditionally tend to separate certain aspects from each other. In the middle ages based on a concept of mind-body dichotomy, man was divided into three aspects, mind, body and spirit. Medicine was administered by “bleeders” and “bile examiners” and was concerned with man’s physical welfare. Mind was attended to by the occult sciences such as magic and alchemy and the spirit was the concern of religion. Western civilization has tended to perpetuate this conception of man as a fragmented being rather than seeing him as an integrated whole. For instance today, physicians heal the body, psychiatrists and psychologists treat the mind and the clergy is still attendant on the soul. In times of illness in Southern Africa at least, the black man will approach the spirits to overcome physical or psychological ailments. The White man must appeal to his doctor, his psychologist if necessary and to his religious deity for help.

Pregnancy within the Black holistic framework of health

Traditional Black knowledge of the physical aspects of pregnancy and birth seems to be quite extensive. While some differences in knowledge of or practices concerned with birth are evident in the different tribal groups, many issues seem to have been commonly addressed. To a large extent, traditional practices concerning pregnancy and birth are congruent with a Western medical approach. However some practices do exist which by Western standards may be detrimental to the health of either the mother or her baby, e.g. routine repeated enemas in newborns to cleanse the baby (Brindley, 1985a) or blood letting of the vulva in the ante-partum mother to reduce oedema, or to minimize haemorrhage during delivery (Brindley, 1985a).

Details about birth practices in the various tribal groups are not readily available. Whether this is because these aspects of tribal life have not been regarded as important enough to document or whether it is because birth is a traditionally female experience from which men were excluded (and, by extension, male researchers) is not known. What follows is a summary of the major issues which have appeared in the literature. Where applicable practices peculiar to a particular tribal group have been specified as such. However, as Leedham (1985) indicates many of these practices are generalizable across groups.

Pregnancy

Amongst the Zuils at least, pregnancy is recognized by the cessation of menstruation, by enlargement and pigmentation of the breasts, by the presence of colostrum, by the appearance of food cravings and by chloasma (Gumede, 1978). In the same people, according to Larsen, Msane and Monkhe (1983) pregnancy is usually confirmed at according to Larsen, Msane and Monkhe (1983) pregnancy is usually confirmed at

Gestation is calculated according to the lunar cycle. Delivery occurs during the four weeks
following the completion of nine lunar cycles and calculation of these dates is fairly accurate (Gumede, 1978; Larsen et al, 1983).

Coitus is generally permitted during pregnancy and even encouraged in the early months to 'strengthen the embryo' (Brindley, 1983), but amongst Basuto, Pondo (Freedman, 1972) and Zulu (Larsen et al, 1983) at least it is restricted during the last few months. From a Western medical perspective the prohibition of intercourse during the later stages of pregnancy is beneficial as it results in a reduced incidence of chorio-amnionitis, and its associated complications. These incidents of maternal and neonatal mortality rate (Larsen et al, 1983). Further evidence supporting the benefits of prohibition of coitus during pregnancy in Blacks is provided by Ross, Macpherson, Naeye, Kharee and Wallace (1982). Ross (1983) report that the principle defence against coitus-linked infections — high levels of antimicrobial activity in the amniotic fluid — is absent in most Durban Blacks possibly due to low levels of zinc, needed for such antimicrobial activity, in the diet.

During pregnancy the traditional healer may be consulted for medications, e.g. isilhambze, which is believed to give quick easy confinements (Brindley, 1983; Gumede, 1978) to 'loosen the foetus in the womb' (Brindley, 1983) and to prevent oedema or the appearance of vernix on the newborn. It may also be regarded as a sign of inadequate continence of the husband during pregnancy (Brindley, 1985a; Larsen et al, 1983). There are numerous formulae for these medications, each 'nyanga' (traditional healer) preferring his own. In general they appear to be harmless (Larsen et al, 1983), although some questions as to their potential have been postulated. Mrpahlele (1982) has reported that amongst the Pedi it was customary to reduce total dietary intake from the early stages of pregnancy so as to prevent large babies which according to their understanding would lead to difficult deliveries or disproportion. Considering that cephalo-pelvic disproportion is a common problem amongst Blacks (Stein and Mouton, 1979; Stewart, Cowan and Philpott, 1979) this traditional practice seems to be most insightful.

Labour
Women are encouraged to remain ambulant and active during the first stage of labour. 'Nembe', may be given to stimulate contractions in difficult deliveries (Brindley, 1985a). Fathers are not permitted to be present. The infant's mouth is cleared so that its voice is clear, (Brindley, 1985a) as it is delivered (Gumede, 1978) and blood is milked from the placenta to the baby (Gumede, 1978). While Gumede (1978) and Brindley (1985a) report that amongst Zulus a knot is tied in the cord, Larsen et al (1983) report that the cord is not tied. Following delivery the placenta is buried (Gumede, 1978). According to Brindley (1983) all blood lost during the birth, in addition to the placenta or membranes are potential sources of witchcraft and must be buried after delivery, usually by the mother herself or by her mother-in-law. Only trusted women may handle these products of birth. Carelessness in this regard could enable a malicious person to use the substances to cause harm to the mother or her baby. Men are 'weakened' by contact and association with the birth experience.

In cases of delayed placental delivery, the mother is required to blow into a calabash or bottle to facilitate bearing down (Gumede, 1978). If essential, a manual removal may be performed but only very experienced birth attendants will attempt this procedure (Brindley, 1983; Gumede, 1978; Larsen et al, 1983a). Placental delivery problems, in fact, provide traditional birth attendants with the greatest anxiety as they are least able to handle this aspect of delivery (Brindley, 1985a).

Infant care
The dangers of hypothermia are acknowledged, and a fire is usually made in the childbirth hut (Larsen et al, 1983). Following birth the infant is usually cleaned, covered in vaseline (Gumede, 1978; Gelfand, 1980) or fat (Brindley, 1985a) to make sure it will 'grow up very quickly' and wrapped warmly. To rid the infant of meconium — believed to be the blood swallowed by the infant (Gumede, 1978) and to cleanse it, medicines are given to the baby or enemas are performed. According to Gumede (1978), amongst Zulus, the baby is put to the breast soon after birth while according to Larsen et al (1983) colostrum is viewed with revulsion and the first sucking is delayed until 12 to 24 hours after delivery. Colostrum in this case is expressed and discarded. Instead, babies are traditionally fed with the milk of a newly delivered cow. If this is not available, as is more often the case in recent times, the baby is fed a watery form of available porridge until the mother's 'real milk' comes in (Mazibuko, 1985). Meconium contaminated bodies made from prescribed parts of wild animals are also burned, while the infant is enveloped in the smoke to strengthen it (Brindley, 1985a). This practice is continued today for babies that are born in hospital, after their return home (Brindley, 1985a).

In traditional births mild abnormalities of the baby are tolerated e.g. squints and birthmarks, but more severe problems such as cleft palate, hare-lips, hydrocephalus, spina bifida, are not allowed to survive. In addition multiple birth babies are usually killed, with the exception of twins, where one baby was allowed to live (Gumede, 1978).

According to Larsen et al (1983) traditional birth attendants amongst the Zulus at least, have no or little knowledge concerning the dangers of antepartum or postpartum haemorrhage, and oedema, convulsions, weakness, dyspnoea or vomiting during pregnancy. They also do not recognise early rupture of membranes as a warning sign. They traditionally are not concerned with meconium in the liquor amnii, possibly because this would be difficult to recognise on the dung floor of a dimly lit birth hut. Lack of knowledge about these aspects of delivery possibly accounts for the high perinatal mortality rate amongst home births as compared to hospital deliveries (Larsen and van Middelhoop, 1982).

Stillbirths and miscarriages are not readily publicised because of the belief that adultery or forbidden practices may have been responsible (Freedman, 1972). Accurate comparative figures of stillbirths or rates of miscarriage in hospital or clinic and rural birth situations are not available in consequence.

Related practices
Coitus after childbirth is traditionally not permitted in some cultures (Pedi, Swazi and Venda) because her blood 'defiles'. It is particularly able to weaken men and subject them to danger. The result of these prohibitions coupled with polygamy in some cultures (Pedi, Swazi and Venda) is a natural spacing of children (Freedman, 1972). After an abortion, coitus is permitted once menstruation occurs. Coitus is not permitted by most tribal groups during menstruation (Freedman, 1972) due to the high values placed on pregnancy. Most cultures (Pedi, Swazi and Venda) consider menstruation as unclean. Considering that coitus during menstruation has been related to endometriosis (Freedman, 1972) this practice is again beneficial in the eyes of Western medicine.

Traditional Black birth practices appear to reflect a mixture of physical and spiritual activities. While some practices e.g. dietary restrictions during pregnancy and the position adopted for the delivery have direct physical implications for maternal-infant wellbeing, other practices seem to relate more to appeasing the spirits with observance and guidelines. For example, the burial of placental and birth products to avoid sorcery (Brindley, 1983), and the wearing of ankle, wrist, neck or abdomen strings to prevent harmful spirits from entering the body (Mazibuko, 1985).

Culture in transition: the rural to urban migration
While rural birth practices have been documented to some extent (Brindley, 1983; Gumede, 1978; Larsen et al, 1983) little is known about how these have been modified in the process of moving towards high technology medical approaches.
While rural births continue to take place, more and more Blacks are giving birth in hospitals and clinics in both urban and rural environments (Brindley, 1985a; Griffiths, 1981). The birth practices followed in these hospitals and clinics are based on high technology medicine which includes an emphasis on ante-natal care for the mother, delivery in a supine position with the aid of standard medical interventions whenever appropriate, and post partum care of mother and infant. Deliveries are conducted by Doctors or midwives and no family support is available for the mother during delivery. Traditional practices such as the burial of the placenta or membranes are not usually permitted.

No distinctions in treatment are made between the numerous tribal groups delivering in the hospitals or clinics. While time spent in hospitals is usually shorter post-natally than in white hospitals (due to the practical problem of space shortages to cope with the high volume of patients) technology available or applied is in most cases similar to white urban hospitals. Obstetric care in hospitals is usually fairly strongly oriented towards high technology interventions as in the U.S.A. (Chalmers, 1982). Clinics, however, tend to use a lower rate of interventions due to the lower need for them (complicated cases are referred to hospitals) and to the lack of available sophisticated equipment.

Comparisons of complications arising in hospital/clinic deliveries as compared to rural births are not readily available. However, research has suggested that in particular perinatal mortality rates may differ by as much as from 30/1000 births to 135/1000 (home deliveries) (Larsen and van Middelkoop, 1982).

Partially in consequence of the changed approach to childbirth experienced by Black women today, preparation for this is limited. Traditional forms of preparation for childbirth in the rural fashion were provided by initiation schools (Becker, 1979; Freedman, 1972, Netso, 1977) and the guidance of older girls in the society (Mazibuko, 1985). Today, however, these schools are not conducted as frequently as in the past, particularly in the urban areas. In addition, knowledge of Western medical approaches to childbirth is probably not readily available in the women who conduct these initiation schools or the older girls of the clan. Hence, whatever training for childbirth is given is quite probably not related to the technological approach that will be experienced by many Black women.

Other sources of preparation for Western birth procedures, traditionally used by White women in Southern Africa, are books, magazines or pamphlets (Chalmers, 1984). As these are not available in African languages even this source of information is unobtainable for the Black woman. It is not known as to what use is made of such sources amongst those Black women who are fluent in the language of these books (predominantly English).

It seems as though little knowledge of Western birth procedures is consequently available for the Black woman delivering in hospitals or clinics today. To ascertain the validity of this assumption a detailed interview protocol was drawn up to assess the attitudes and knowledge of pregnancy, birth and post-natal practices that occur in hospitals and clinics, amongst rural and urban Pedi women. The content of the interview protocol is described in detail in this paper. Analyses of the findings of this interview protocol were summarized briefly here and published in more detail elsewhere (Chalmers, 1987a, b, c, d).

Practical issues affecting the methodological approach adopted

Initially it was hoped that free-flowing interviews with Black women could be conducted, in which any and all areas of interest could be explored freely. For a number of practical reasons this approach proved to be unfeasible.

For instance, the interviews employed to conduct interviews found an open-ended structure too difficult to implement. Two interviewers were utilized, one in the urban area and one in the rural area. Both women were retired midwives from Baragwanath Hospital (a large provincial hospital on the outskirts of Johannesburg) who had each spent more than 20 years practising midwifery at this hospital. Both women were fluent in Northern Sotho and the rural language of Pedi origin. The urban interviewer was of the Southern Sotho group. Both women were "post-menopausal" which proved to be of invaluable aid in the eliciting of responses. Many answers to more intimate questions would probably have been withheld if younger interviewers had been employed. Post-menopausal women are regarded as pure and consequently not so likely to resort to witchcraft using the information revealed (Brindley, 1985b). Tribal customs traditionally prohibit the free discussion of intimate or sexual activities particularly amongst the young (Netso, 1977).

Associated with their post-menopausal status was the women's own high standing in their respective communities (Brindley, 1985). This seniority proved important in obtaining the cooperation of women to be interviewed. On a number of occasions women agreed to participate in the study because the esteemed family connections of the interviewer lent credence to the study. On the whole, though, women participated readily. Only two women out of the 173 approached refused to participate.

Both interviewers, although highly trained and extremely competent individuals expressed unwillingness and inability to conduct the interviews in a free-flowing manner with women. Both requested that structured guidance for the interviews be given. Consequently, a modification of the unstructured interview approach had to be adopted.

Based on numerous interviews with Black midwives, White obstetricians employed in Black obstetric hospital units, and Black women and researchers working in the area of Black childbirth experiences, a detailed interview protocol was developed. Contributing to this also, was research based on White experiences of childbirth in hospital and home situations. Resources were examined in depth as to their knowledge of past and present Black birth experiences. The final protocols were also given to some of these resource personnel (Black midwives, White-hospital personnel in Black hospitals) for approval before use.

The interview protocol was divided into two, one for use with women ante-natally and one for use post-natally (Footnote 1). Women were interviewed with either the ante- or the post-natal protocol as was appropriate. Both interview schedules contained approximately 170 questions each and interviews took between 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours to conduct. Although a structured approach was used with predominantly closed-ended questions, some were open-ended (e.g. 'describe ...', or 'give details ...'). Interviewers were carefully trained on the use of the interview protocol and were encouraged to elicit open-ended responses whenever possible. Such responses were freely transcribed and were used for anecdotal analysis only. Although the interview protocols were in English, the interviewers were required to ask the questions in Northern Sotho and to record the answers in English. This approach has been successfully adopted by Craig and Albino (1983). As with the Craig and Albino study, care was taken to ensure that the interviewers understood the English questions. They were instructed to convey the meaning of the questions to their subjects rather than to use a direct translation. The interviewers were allowed little or no leeway however, in transcribing, interpreting or recording the material obtained. In most cases subjects' responses were written down verbatim.

Whenever possible, tape recordings were made of the interviews. These tape recordings were checked against the completed interview schedule for errors of interpretation, translation or documentation of responses by an independent, Northern Sotho speaking social work graduate. Practical problems with the use of the tape recorder by the interviewers (e.g. difficulty inserting cassettes or changing batteries) were frequently encountered prohibiting the recording of many interviews. However, 41 interviews were taped. The number of errors recorded on these interviews was 51 resulting in a 0.73% error rate.

Format of the interview schedules

Questions on the two interview protocols were not rigidly categorized into sections applicable to pregnancy, or birth or infant care etc. Rather, items relating to the different topics explored were often intermingled with each other. This was done to promote a free flow of ideas on behalf of the interviewee.

On the whole, therefore, items were ordered chronologically. In addition, items of a non-personal, non-threatening nature were asked initially. Items regarding issues
relating to sexual activities or attitudes to abortion, for example, were included well into the latter parts of the interviews.

Interviewers were also instructed to allow the women to talk freely if they wanted to and to insert information revealed in these free flowing sections in the relevant part of the interview schedule. It was hoped, in this way, to approximate opportunities for free flowing ‘interviews’ to occur at times. In most instances the degree of trust and willingness to talk freely seemed evident. Interviewers reported very few cases of ‘difficult’ interviewees.

The objective of this research project was to design an interview protocol that would stimulate as much information as was to design an interview protocol that seemed evident. Interviewers degree of trust and willingness to talk to occur at times. In most instances the women to talk freely if they were equivalent of Western marriage rites), consequently be discussed separately.

婴幼期护理在农村和城市Pedi

知识的获得 conceivably was obtained was also investigated.

Knowledge about pregnancy
Awareness of many facets of pregnancy was explored. Examples of such issues are:
- the nature of the foetus as a ‘collection of cells that don’t look like a baby at all, but later change’ as opposed to a ‘small child who gets bigger’;
- the ability to determine the sex of the foetus, or to influence its sex;
- dietary knowledge and knowledge of beneficial dietary habits;
- practical issues such as attending antenatal care, or intercourse during pregnancy;
- sources of knowledge about pregnancy and infant care;
- knowledge of some common medical interventions employed during labour e.g. caesareans, forceps, epidurals, episiotomies, vacuum extractions, inductions.
- knowledge about infant feeding, e.g. the value of colostrum and breast or bottle feeding problems;
- knowledge of traditional customs such as placental burial, the meaning of intact membranes at birth, and disposal of the cord.

Attitudes
Attitudes regarding many aspects of the pregnancy and birth experience were explored including, amongst others, attitudes to foetal desire, to the pregnancy itself; to antenatal care; to the place of delivery; to previous obstetric experiences; to infant feeding practices; to birth attendants (Western or traditional); to medical interventions in labour; to abortion; to pain relief in labour; to maternal birth position; to social support in labour and to books as a source of information about pregnancy and birth.

Social influences
Social influences on the mother’s experiences of pregnancy and birth that were explored included the role of the husband; the woman’s family and in particular her mother and sisters; the hospital personnel and economic issues. Of the latter, the mother’s occupational behaviour formed the bulk of the issues explored.

The post-natal interview schedule
As the post-natal interview schedule was designed for a different sample from the ante-natal interview sample (for practical reasons) some items included in it were similar to those used in the ante-natal schedule. In particular areas of research common to both questionnaires were those described as ‘Biographical details’ above. Other areas explored by this protocol were: reactions to labour; attitudes to demand or routine feeding; beliefs and attitudes regarding the influence of infant feed advertising; attitudes regarding the relationship between feeding practices and ill health in the baby; attitudes to demand or routine feeding; beliefs and attitudes regarding the influence of infant feed advertising; attitudes regarding the relationship between feeding practices and health in the mother.

Contraceptive practices
The use of contraceptives following birth was explored. Of particular interest was the attitude towards breast feeding as an adequate contraceptive as well as restrictions regarding breast feeding and intercourse.

Economic considerations
This section explored occupational behaviours and practices following delivery. Issues such as the feasibility of breast feeding and working simultaneously were explored. Attitudes towards such an idea were examined. The availability of child caretakers other than the mother was also investigated.

Summary of findings
The data obtained is far too vast to be described in detail in a single paper. In depth analyses of various issues examined have been reported elsewhere (Chalmers, 1987, a; b; c; d). The present paper however, provides an overview of...
major findings in the various areas of investigation.

Biographical details of the sample
In all, 171 Pedi women were interviewed. Of these 89 were interviewed ante-natally and 82 post-natally. Approximately equal numbers of these women delivered in urban or rural, hospital or clinic environments (Urban hospital N = 45; Urban clinic N = 42; Rural hospital N = 37; Rural clinic N = 47). Ante-natal interviews were conducted in the hospital or clinic environs while post-natal interviews were conducted at home. Names of all Pedi women delivering in the hospitals or clinics during the period of study were obtained and interviewers were, in most cases, able to follow these up. Interviews were continued until the desired number of subjects in each group had been obtained.

Of the total sample 52.6% (90) were married by Western or tribal custom; 39.7% (68) had never been married and were living with their parents; 5.8% (10) had never been married but were living with their partners and 1.8% (3) were divorced.

The standard of education of mothers was fairly widespread with 8.8% (15) having no education or only the first two years of school completed. Twenty (11.7%) had had between 2 and 6 years of schooling, 32.2% (55) had obtained either 7 or 8 years of schooling while a further 42.7% (73) had completed between 9 and 12 years of schooling. Only 4.1% (7) had obtained some form of post school qualification.

The majority of the sample were unemployed prior to falling pregnant (65.5%, N = 112). Of those who did work, the majority (42.4%, N = 25) were employed in domestic work. Some few were employed in professional occupations such as teaching or nursing (20.3%, N = 12) while the remainder were employed in clerical (6.8%, N = 4) sales (11.9%, N = 7) or factory (5.1%, N = 3) positions. The mean salary of the total sample was R160.28 per month (Range = R22 - R992).

The mean age of the sample was 27.6 with ages ranging from 16 to 44. The mean number of children per woman was 1.75 with a range of 0 (primiparaes) to 10. There were 59 (34.5%) primiparous included in the study while 10 (11.2%) of the women had five or more children at the time of testing.

Results
For convenience, figures included in the text have been incorporated in Table 1. This table gives the percentage response to some questions as well as whether information on that question was obtained from ante- or post-natal interviews, or both. Because of the vast quantity of data obtained, many categories of response that were included in answers to these questions have been omitted. In addition, not all the questions asked are included. Only major issues of relevance to the introductory section are made available here.

| TABLE 1. PERCENTAGE RESPONSES TO SOME MAJOR ISSUES IN ANTE- AND POST-NATAL WOMEN |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Question asked               | Percentage responses |
| About Conception             | N = 89 | N = 82 |
| How are babies conceived?    | 77.5   | 79.8  |
| Through intercourse          | 11.2   |        |
| Without penetration          |        |        |
| What is the baby like in early stages of development? | 78.9 |
| A collection of cells that change and develop |                |
| Don't know                   | 16.9   |        |
| From whom did you learn about conception? | 58.4 |
| Traditional teacher          | 22.5   |        |
| Self taught through reading etc.| 8.9  |
| Mother                       |        |        |
| When can you fall pregnant?  | 10.1   |        |
| While menstruating           |        |        |
| Any time you're not bleeding | 39.3   |        |
| Two weeks before period starts | 28.1  |        |
| Two weeks after bleeding starts | 32.6  |        |
| Signs of conception          |        |        |
| Cessation of menstruation    | 96.6   |        |
| Stomach enlargement          | 96.6   |        |
| Confirmed by a doctor        | 78.7   |        |
| Dreams                       | 52.8   |        |
| Was this pregnancy planned?  | 54.0   | 53.7  |
| Yes                          | 88.8   | 87.8  |
| Are you happy about being pregnant? Yes | |
| You                          | 38.2   |        |
| Did you use contraception?   | 20.2   |        |
| Yes                          | 14.6   |        |
| What contraceptive? Pill     | 11.2   |        |
| Injection                    |        |        |
| IUD                          |        |        |
| Who taught you about pregnancy? Nurse | 77.5 |
| Your mother                  | 30.3   |        |
| Traditional healer           | 7.7    |        |
| Should you reveal your pregnancy to others? Yes | 29.2 |
| Who can you tell?            | 22.8   |        |
| Other family                 | 7.9    |        |
| Friends                      |        |        |
| Did you attend ante-natal clinics? | 97.8 |
| Caesarean section — No       | 75.3   |        |
| Forceps                      | 86.5   |        |
| Vacuum extraction — No       | 96.6   |        |
| Induction                    | 96.6   |        |
| Episiotomy                   | 73     |        |
| Should the placenta be buried?: Yes | 1,1  |
| Should the blood of birth be buried?: Yes | 1,1  |
| Is 'Isihlambezo' good in pregnancy?: Yes | 1,1  |
| Preference for place of delivery | 4.5  |
| Home                         | 4.9    |        |
| Clinic                       | 36.0   | 28.0  |
| Hospital                     | 59.6   | 64.6  |
| Preference for position of delivery | 91.0 |
| Lying flat on bed            | 1,1    |        |
| Kneeling or squatting        |        |        |
| Who would you like with you at delivery? Husband | 30.5 |
| Your mother                  | 19.5   |        |
| Sisters                      |        |        |
| Do you want to (or are you) breast feed(ing)? | 67.1 |
| bottle feed(ing)?            | 11.4   | 3.7   |
| mixed breast and bottle feed(ing)? | 21.6  |
| Is colostrum good for the baby? Yes | 48.3 |
| No                           | 27.0   |        |
| Don't know                   | 24.7   |        |
Conception
The majority of the ante-natal women appeared to be aware of how conception takes place although some striking misconceptions regarding conception without penetration, and timing of conception seemed evident (Table 1). Of most interest with regard to conception was the high proportion of women who learned about conception from traditional teachers (58.4%). Also interesting was the number of women who were self-taught i.e. from reading (22.5%). The lack of information giving performed by the woman's own mother is also striking (22.8%) while only a few (7.9%) told something else, e.g. to close family members, e.g. their mother (22.8%) while a few (7.9%) told friends.

The majority of ante-natal women believed that pregnancy must be kept secret. Only 29.2% said that their pregnancy could be revealed to others. Those that did reveal their pregnancies did so to close family members, e.g. their mother (22.8%) while a few (7.9%) told friends.

The majority of the total sample attended ante-natal clinics (96.5%). However, it appeared that such clinics were predominantly aimed at physical well being of the mother and baby, with very little information about birth possibilities being given. For instance the majority of the ante-natal sample did not know what various birth procedures meant: caesarean section (75.3%); forceps (86.5%); vacuum extraction (96.6%); episiotomy (73%). (In asking questions about these techniques technical terms were avoided as far as possible so that the words used by the mothers themselves for these techniques were always utilized, e.g. episiotomy = cut to bottom or lower parts; caesarean section = cut mother's tummy to take baby out, etc.)

Knowledge about traditional birth practices seemed to be equally lacking. For instance only 1.1% of ante-natal mothers believed that either the placenta or the blood of childbirth should be buried. About 16% of ante-natal mothers did, however, report that blood lost during childbirth is special, but did not know in what way. 'Ishlambezo' was in general not favoured by the women.

However, the vast majority of ante-natal women wished to adopt a supine position for delivery (91%). The major reason given for this was so that the staff could observe what was happening (48.3%).

Preferences in both ante- (89.6%) and post-natal (64.6%) groups was for a hospital delivery. Less than 5% in both groups would have preferred a home delivery. Only about a third of the sample would have liked their husbands with them at delivery, while more would have valued his presence after birth.

The post-partum period and infant care
As with knowledge about pregnancy, the major source of knowledge anticipated by ante-natal women was nurses (77.5%) with the woman's mother being looked to for such information as well (30.3%).

Most women wanted to (ante-natally) or were actually (post-natally) breast feeding. Expected and actual figures in the two groups with regard to bottle and mixed feeding preferences also appeared to be similar (Table 1). Less than half the ante-natal women believed that colostrum was good for the baby (48.3%). About 45% of mothers were 'routine feeding' their babies, and 53% 'demand feeding'. However, 79% of the sample thought routine feeding was the method of choice.

Few problems were reported in the post-partum period (Table 1). Only engorgement offered a problem to about one third of the post-natal sample.

Help in the post-natal period was offered largely by the woman's mother, particularly for help with nappy changing (40.2%); baby bathing (35.4%) and with other children (23.2%). Husbands helped less than 2% of mothers for all chores except with the mothers' own feelings of adjustment (23.2%) and with financial assistance (48.8%).

The majority of the mothers intended caring for their babies themselves (92, 1%). However, at least half the post-partum sample believed that a mother should work after having a baby (51.2%). Many mothers however, reported that jobs which allow for baby care and employment simultaneously are difficult to find (37.8%).

Discussion
The overriding trend which appears evident from the brief summary of some major findings of this study is the move away from traditional tribal birth customs towards a highly technological birthing process. Evidence for this comes from the lack of knowledge about traditional customs regarding, e.g. the handling of the placenta and blood of childbirth; the desire for hospital births in a supine position; the lack of desire for assistance or teaching about pregnancy, birth or the post-natal period from traditional birth attendants; and the increasing dependence on nurses and ante-natal clinics for information and assistance during this period.

Some customs which seem to be resistant to this trend are the persistent desire to exclude the husband from labour, the need to maintain secrecy about pregnancy for fear of bewitchment and the reasonably high rate of breast feeding in the sample.

Implications
The apparent move towards technological births may well be a mixed blessing in the sample studied. While health of infant and mother has benefited from this trend in places where it has occurred in terms at least, of lowered infant mortality rates (Larsen and van Middelkoop, 1982) some major benefits of the traditional birth procedure are being lost.

For instance traditional sources of knowledge and preparation for childbirth and parenthood are no longer being sought. However it appears unlikely that these have been replaced to any great extent by the technologically oriented hospitals and clinics as yet. (See findings regarding knowledge of birth techniques — Table 1). And yet, mothers are looking, in particular to nurses, to fill this gap.

In addition, much moral and social support given to mothers in a traditional birth situation is not available in hospitals and clinics. Excluding the father from a hospital or clinic delivery as is the custom does not appear to present a problem for the sample studied. However, excluding the woman's mother in the hospital/clinic situation as well as other women who may have attended the birth in the traditional setting is another problem which needs to be addressed.
situation (Brindley, 1985a) deprives the mother of her warm, supportive, familiar environment for birth. It is extremely unlikely that this support is provided by the nurses or doctors who are usually under extreme work pressures.

Childbirth and parenthood in the traditional environment are viewed as an ongoing continuous process in that preparation for this starts early in life, (at initiation schools for instance (Mazibuko, 1985)) and is continued through close supervision of the pregnant or new mother by trusted elders (Brindley, 1985a). In addition, in keeping with the Black philosophy of health and illness, the physical aspects of birthing are continually integrated with the spiritual, social and behavioural.

In a high technology system, however, this integration of function is lost. Instead, as with the rest of man's healing services, the pregnant woman or new mother is being forced to seek various, often unrelated, sources for assistance at each stage of the process. For instance she seeks antenatal care from strangers whose teachings can only be different from her own family's. She is delivered by a new set of strangers unrelated to the first and has no contact with her trusted, familial, support systems. After birth she is returned home again to seek advice from those whose experiences may be different from what she has been taught in the hospital. In essence, the traditional integrated transition to parenthood has become, as it is for Whites in South Africa, a disjointed experience.

Her home environment may also make it extremely difficult for her to observe the rules of hygiene she has been taught regarding, for instance, adequate bottle feeding practices. Access to fridges for storage of prepared bottles is limited; only 20,6% of the sample studied had such facilities for good bottle feeding, breast feeding must be overlooked in many instances.

Given the, in many instances, inadequate facilities for good bottle feeding, breast feeding needs to be strongly encouraged. Financial considerations also lend weight to the value of breast feeding in the sample studied (last salary earned = R160,28 per month, N = 81) (Table 1). Only a little over half the sample studied had access to a stove (59,5%) while most but not all had running water (85,5%) (Table 1). Given such reality, all ideals of healthy bottle feeding practices must be overlooked in many instances.

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Despite these, the problems facing those concerned with the implementation of adequate health care facilities throughout South Africa, are numerous. It has long been apparent that alternatives to hospital intensive medical approaches have to be explored. The area of education for childbirth and parenthood appears to be no exception.

FOOTNOTE
1. Copies of the interview protocols are obtainable from the author.

REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
The financial assistance of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) is gratefully acknowledged. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the HSRC. Thanks are due to Professor Mphahlele, Minister of Health and Welfare, Lebowa; and Doctors Beukes and van den Heever, Superintendents Soweto Community Health Centres and Baragwanath Hospital, for permission to conduct this study. Thanks are also due to Sisters F. Modise and F. Malatji for conducting interviews and to Mrs D. Koza for checking them.

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