The purpose of this research is to gather information about sex education (in particular, menarche) in Asian American communities. Sex education and the materials taught varies throughout the world. I am curious with the depth in which certain topics are explored, and our personal experiences with sex education outside the classroom, particularly amongst Asian American girls.

**Question**

Do taboos around menstruation affect girls’ self perception and comfortability with their own bodies?

**Introduction**

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**Why it is important**

- Asian American children receive less sex education from their parents compared to their white counterparts.
- Lack of communication stems from cultural emphasis on respect of elders and Confucian values such as obedience to parents.
- Asian American women have higher rate of reported discomfort with body image, lower self-esteem, and negative feelings towards menstruation and sex.
- Cultural myths surrounding menstruation lead to hatred and discomfort of body.
- Higher risk of mental health issues such as depression, and anorexia nervosa.

**Results**

- Sample collected from Asian American women in university.
- 70% reported to have had sex education.
- Among those reported to have education:
  - higher reported comfortability with self image.
  - Overall believe it is a “natural process”.

**Quotations**

- “I used to be embarrassed of letting anyone know I was on my period. I’d sneak the sanitary products into the bathroom, wait till it was empty to open the package or rip a pad off my underwear, and if there was no in-stall waste bin, I’d sneakily find ways to throw out the trash outside.”
  - Chinese American 2nd gen.
- “I just don’t think people in Chinese culture talk about menstruation that much. Especially not the men.”
  - Chinese American 2nd gen.
- “No using tampons because it will hurt you, violate you kinda”
  - Chinese American 2nd gen.
- “It is very shameful that female talk about menstruation in front of male.”
  - Japanese 1st gen.
- “Food with cold nature. Food that too spicy or salty. Touching cold water. Need to keep feet warm”
  - Chinese 1st gen on Chinese myths.

**Menstrual Myths in Asia**

- Japan: menstruation causes an “imbalance in taste,” so sushi cannot be properly prepared by a woman.
- Menstruating women should not be permitted to enter temple because they are “unholy” and “unclean”.
- China (Buddhism): menstruating women are “unlucky” and “unclean,” so they cannot stand in front of altar.
- China (Buddhism): menstruating women cannot participate in funeral rites.
- China: menstruation is a sign of imbalance in qi, so women cannot eat or drink “cold” things while on period.
- Girls should not wear tampons, because it will break hymen and destroy girl’s virginity.

**Website**

- Page on myths and taboos surround menstruation in Asia.
- Page dispelling such myths.
- Quotations from participants.
- List of resources.
- Forum for sharing experiences.
- Translation services for language barrier.
- Quiz upon entering website and exiting regarding common menstruation.
  - i.e “Virgins shouldn’t wear tampons” T/F
  - “All periods last exactly a week” T/F

**How can I spread the word?**

- #talkbloodytome: a hashtag to raise awareness.
- Games for young children to learn.
- Forum for people to share their stories.

**Stakeholders**

- Asian American parents.
- Teachers with Asian American students.
- Community Centers.
- Healthcare centers.
- Doctors with Asian American patients.

**Take the survey!**