Psychosocial and Cultural Factors Influencing Expectations of Menarche
A Study on Chinese Premenarcheal Teenage Girls

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This study explored how psychosocial and cultural factors influenced expectations of menarche among 476 Chinese premenarcheal teenage girls. Results showed that participants' expectations of menarche were largely negative and heavily influenced by cultural beliefs about menstruation. Findings of hierarchical regression analyses revealed that positive emotional expectations of menarche were best predicted by perceptions of menstruation as a natural event, possession of positive self-concept, and rejection of indigenous negative menstrual attitudes. Negative emotional expectations of menarche were best predicted by perceptions of menstruation as a negative event, by inadequate preparation for menarche, by endorsement of indigenous negative menstrual attitudes, and by older age.

Keywords: Chinese menarche; Chinese menstrual attitudes; menstrual anticipations

Menarche, the first menstruation, is an important transition event in the female life cycle. It represents a concrete symbol of a shift from a girl to a woman. Unlike other gradual pubertal changes, such as breast development and pubic hair growth, menarche usually occurs suddenly and without precise predictability (Golub, 1992; Graber, Brooks-Gunn, & Petersen, 1996). Studies across a variety of cultures on women’s emotional reactions to menarche have yielded mixed results. Although some women recall feeling more mature, grown up, proud, and excited; others report having various negative experiences, such as being scared, worried, anxious, moody, and