

1 Gender and the body

■ Bonvillain chapter 8

2 “Women’s Reproductive Illnesses”

■ Natural body processes are described as illnesses (e.g., menarche, menstruation, childbirth, menopause)

■ Normal events as disease

3 Mythology and mystic of feeling bad at menstruation

■ Much has evolved in the last 150 years

■ Medicine (doc were men) in 19th century linked women’s physical and mental health with their reproductive organs

■ If psychological problems, performed cliteroridectomies

4 Today, we blame hormones

■ New terminology “PMS”

■ Over 150 symptoms derive from from PMS

■ New in history

■ Not found cross-culturally

■ [current discourse to discuss a taboo subject]

■ Way to label women as emotional, unstable, unpredictable

5

■ Confusion of somatic (body) problems such as backache, headache, abdominal cramping, that are real (can affect some people all the time, some of the time, with some or all symptom)

■ With mood swings and feeling out of control

6 Becomes an easy reality

■ But.....Anthropologists always look for comparative data cross-culturally

■ If really so, should be found in a proportion of women cross-culturally, but there is no evidence for its universality.

7 Study in Samoa

■ Traditional women– no PMS

■ Samoan women in the US (Hawaii) have heard about it, and they now have it

■ Gives people a new symptom/illness vocabulary

■ So socialization of culture is important

8

■ However, many women have somatic symptoms

■ For all, the body is sloughing off the uterine lining

■ Some people can feel bodily processes more than others

■ It's the link to emotionality and irrationality and gender

9 **Menopause**

■ Is also going through a shift to a “disease”

■ Here again, because women experience this natural process, emotional symptoms are linked to it

10 **Anthropologists**

■ Study people's categories and world view

■ So if people say they have an illness, they are to be believed

■ World view is important, but not to be confused with science and universality

11 **Whose reality?????**

■ Women think they have PMS, (their world view and categories). Based on somatic changes.

■ But, personal and societal link with emotionality

■ Not all the world has this.

■ (Stay tuned for new scientific information in the future.....)