

Abilene Christian University

Digital Commons @ ACU

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Spring 4-2017

It's About 'That Time' to Break the Cycle: A Rhetorical Analysis of Challenging Menstrual Taboos

Audrey Marie Lamborn
amg11a@acu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lamborn, Audrey Marie, "It's About 'That Time' to Break the Cycle: A Rhetorical Analysis of Challenging Menstrual Taboos" (2017). Digital Commons @ ACU, *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 67.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ ACU.

ABSTRACT

Menstrual taboos exist around the world, and while new conversations are starting to address these issues, in many regions these taboos limit women's daily lives and can even lead to serious health problems. Artifacts around the world are starting to emerge to challenge these preconceived notions and bring menstrual hygiene awareness as well as products to women in need. While the origination of the menstrual taboo is not clearly defined, various literature discusses both the cultural and religious origin and perpetuation of menstrual taboos. This thesis examines various artifacts found in the regions of the United States and the United Kingdom, India, and South Africa, as well as the current views regarding menstruation in those regions. Utilizing the theoretical frameworks of media framing and linguistic theory, this thesis examines how artifacts in these regions are challenging menstrual taboos by relating to their audience. I analyzed each artifact using these theories in order to answer my three research questions. My findings illustrated that these artifacts relate to and educate their audiences to eradicate menstrual taboos in their regions.

It's About 'That Time' to Break the Cycle:
A Rhetorical Analysis of Challenging Menstrual Taboos

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Communication

By

Audrey Marie Lamborn

April 2017

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Council of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

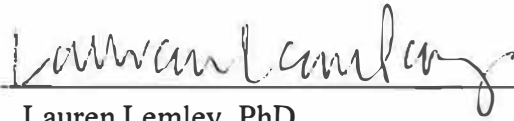
Master of Arts


Assistant Provost for Graduate Programs


Date

5-5-2017

Thesis Committee


Lauren Lemley, PhD


Lynette Sharp Penya, PhD


Suzie Macaluso, PhD

To my husband, Philip Lamborn, for your constant encouragement and suffering throughout my long research rants; to my family, especially my mom and sister, for their love and support; and lastly to all of my friends who regularly sent me menstruation articles and videos.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you to my super-hero of a committee chair, Dr. Lemley. Without your guidance and passion for teaching I would not have explored the field of rhetoric. Your dedication to students, including me, pushed me to not give up on those long nights of writing. I would like to also acknowledge my committee members, Dr. Macaluso and Dr. Sharp Peña, for exploring this topic alongside me and for being just as passionate.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	INTRODUCTION	1
	The Science of Menstruation	2
	Worldwide Conversations about Menstruation	4
	Menstrual Taboo Origins	7
	Religious Taboos	10
	Cultural Taboos.....	13
	Theoretical Frameworks	15
	Media Framing.....	15
	Linguistic Relativity.....	21
	Methodology	27
	Texts from United States/United Kingdom	29
	THINX	29
	Red.fit Campaign	30
	Free the Tampons.....	31
	Texts from India.....	32
	Breaking the Silence	33
	<i>Menstrupedia</i>	34
	#HappyToBleed	34
	Texts from South Africa	36
	Red Wings Project	37

	#WorthBleedingFor Campaign.....	38
	Seithi Campaign.....	38
	Conclusion	39
II	BREAKING TABOOS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE UNITED KINGDOM	43
	Menstrual Taboos in the United States and United Kingdom	43
	United States and United Kingdom Campaigns	50
	THINX	50
	Red.fit	54
	Free the Tampons.....	56
	Analysis.....	58
	Framing.....	59
	Positive Frames.....	59
	Negative Frames	60
	Informative Frames.....	61
	Shocking Frames.....	62
	Motivational Frames	63
	Framing to Blame the Government.....	65
	Framing Summary	67
	Linguistic Relativity.....	69
	Shifting from Vague to Specific Language	69
	Shifting from Powerless to Powerful Language	70
	Shifting from Language of Hiding to Language of Openness	72

	Linguistic Relativity Summary	74
	Conclusion	74
III	BREAKING TABOOS IN INDIA	76
	Menstrual Taboos in India	77
	India Campaigns	82
	Breaking the Silence	82
	<i>Menstrupedia</i>	84
	#HappytoBleed	86
	Analysis.....	88
	Framing.....	89
	Shocking Frames.....	89
	Negative Frames	90
	Informative Frames.....	91
	Positive Frames.....	93
	Activist Frames	96
	Framing Summary	99
	Linguistic Relativity.....	100
	Shifting from Shameful to Proud Language	100
	Shifting from Restricting to Open Language.....	101
	Shifting from Falsehoods to Truth.....	102
	Language of Avoiding to Language of Confronting.....	103
	Linguistic Relativity Summary	106
	Conclusion	107

IV	BREAKING TABOOS IN SOUTH AFRICA.....	109
	Menstrual Taboos in South Africa.....	109
	South Africa Campaigns.....	114
	Red Wings Project.....	114
	#WorthBleedingFor Campaign.....	116
	Serithi Campaign.....	118
	Analysis.....	120
	Framing.....	120
	Activist Frame.....	121
	Informative Frame.....	124
	Realistic Frame.....	127
	Positive Frame.....	129
	Blame the Patriarchy Frame.....	130
	Framing Summary.....	133
	Linguistic Relativity.....	134
	Shifting from Passive to Active Language.....	134
	Shifting from Language of Deprivation to Provision.....	136
	Shifting from Misleading to Informative Language.....	138
	Linguistic Relativity Summary.....	140
	Conclusion.....	141
V	CONCLUSION.....	142
	United States and United Kingdom Menstrual Taboos.....	143
	THINX.....	144

Red.fit	145
Free the Tampons.....	146
Media Framing.....	146
Positive Frames.....	147
Negative Frames	147
Informative Frames.....	147
Shocking Frames.....	148
Motivational Frames	148
Framing to Blame the Government.....	149
Linguistic Relativity.....	150
Shifting from Vague to Specific Language	150
Shifting from Powerless to Powerful Language	150
Shifting from Language of Hiding to Language of Openness	151
Chapter I Summary.....	151
India Menstrual Taboos	153
Breaking the Silence	153
<i>Menstrupedia</i>	154
#HappyToBleed	154
Media Framing.....	155
Shocking Frames.....	155
Negative Frames	155
Informative Frames.....	156
Positive Frames.....	156

Activist Frames	157
Linguistic Relativity.....	157
Shifting from Shameful to Proud Language	158
Shifting from Restricting to Open Language.....	158
Shifting from Falsehoods to Truth.....	159
Shifting from Avoiding to Confronting	159
Chapter III Summary	159
South Africa Menstrual Taboos	161
Red Wings Project	161
#WorthBleedingFor	162
Serithi Campaign	162
Media Framing.....	163
Activist Frames	163
Informative Frames.....	164
Realistic Frames.....	164
Positive Frames.....	165
Blame the Patriarchy Frames	165
Linguistic Relativity.....	166
Shifting from Passive to Active Language	166
Shifting from Deprivation to Provision Language.....	167
Shifting from Misleading to Informative Language	168
Chapter IV Summary	168
Conclusion	170

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Crimson wave,” “mother nature,” “Aunt Flow,” and “on the rag” are typical euphemisms both men and women use to refer to a woman’s menstrual cycle. The International Women’s Health Coalition in partnership with Clue, a company that creates apps to help women understand and track their reproductive health, conducted a survey asking “90,000 women from 190 countries about their attitudes towards periods, finding that women worldwide are too embarrassed to discuss the topic.”¹ In fact, the survey found that there are “over 5,000 euphemisms to refer to menstruation” that women prefer to use rather than the actual word “period.”²

Menstruation is a natural and inevitable process for women around the world. Females begin to menstruate “between the ages of nine and 12;” therefore, “during her lifetime, a woman will manage menstruation on an average of 3,000 days.”³ If menstruation is a naturally occurring and ubiquitous process, then why do women feel shame and embarrassment when discussing their periods? Women could be suffering from overwhelming shame and embarrassment because of their lack of knowledge on menstruation and because of menstrual taboos inflicted on them by their cultural regions.

1. “Talking About Periods: An International Investigation,” *Clue*, November 2015, <http://www.helloclue.com/survey.html>.

2. Ibid.

3. Rokeya Ahmed and Kabita Yesmin, “Menstrual Hygiene: Breaking the Silence,” *WaterAid Bangladesh*, 2008, <http://www.ircwash.org/sites/default/files/Ahmed-2008-Menstrual.pdf>, 283.

The Science of Menstruation

While a majority of the world's population experiences menstruation, there are still gaps in research aimed at understanding menstrual cycles. In fact, "much of the research in the early 1900s was coloured by deeply entrenched taboos against menstruating women, some of which persist even today."⁴ Biological anthropologist Kathryn Clancy recently created a podcast focusing on providing the general public with research and awareness about menstruation. Clancy interviewed Dr. Elizabeth Rowe, an anthropologist from Purdue University, about her work on the science of menstruation. Rowe explained that menstruation is not inherently feminine; it is not just something women do, there is more to it.⁵ There is a gap in what the population thinks they understand about the menstrual process and what is actually true. A significant segment of the population, specifically men, are uninformed about what it even means to menstruate. Notions such as "menstruating women excrete toxic substances from their skin that cause flowers to wilt" and that women menstruate to "flush out the dirtiness of men in order to reduce [their] chances of venereal disease," lead to misconceptions about the purpose of menstruation.⁶ Dr. Rowe explains that humans and other primates menstruate because of the unique connection between mother and fetus during pregnancy.⁷ The fetus digs deeply into the mother's womb for nourishment, which is potentially dangerous for the mother if the fetus is too aggressive. Dr. Rowe calls this

4. Shreya Dasgupta, "Why Do Women Have Periods When Most Animals Don't?," *BBC*, April 20, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150420-why-do-women-have-periods>.

5. Kathryn Clancy, interview with Elizabeth Rowe, *Period Podcast*, podcast audio, September 30, 2016, <http://kateclancy.com/page/3/>.

6. Dasgupta, "Why Do Women Have Periods When Most Animals Don't?"

7. Clancy, interview with Elizabeth Rowe.

interaction an “evolutionary tug-of-war” as the fetus is trying to get as much nutrition and energy from the mother as possible while the mother is also trying to fulfil her own body’s needs.⁸ To prevent the fetus from attacking the mother’s body, the uterus builds up special tissue that acts like a shield against the fetus. This defensive shield is “pre-gaming for pregnancy” or the body acting like a preemptive shield before a pregnancy even occurs.⁹ Then once a month, this shield is shed when the egg is not fertilized. Menstruation occurs when “the thickened uterine lining and extra blood” sheds through the vagina.¹⁰

Another possible reason for gaps in society’s understanding of menstruation could be that menstruation has not been studied. Dr. Rowe also talked with Clancy about the shame that comes with wanting to study menstrual cycles because it is not considered a “serious” science. Most of what society knows about menstrual cycles has come from a predominantly male perspective because it has only been in recent years that more women have been professionally accepted into the sciences. U.S. Census Bureau statistics state that in 2011, “women made up 26 percent of the science workforce.”¹¹ Thus, one reason women are misinformed about their periods is because most of what we know about our periods comes from the perspective of a gender that does not experience them. The lack of knowledge also creates a lack of understanding about what constitutes a “normal” period. Women have to rely on what they see in media and hear in superficial

8. Dasgupta, “Why Do Women Have Periods When Most Animals Don’t?”

9. Clancy, interview with Elizabeth Rowe.

10. “Menstruation and the Menstrual Cycle Fact Sheet,” *Women’s Health*, 2014, <https://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/menstruation.html>.

11. Marguerite Del Giudice, “Why It’s Crucial to Get More Women into Science,” *National Geographic*, November 8, 2014, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/11/141107-gender-studies-women-scientific-research-feminist/>.

conversations about menstruation to know if their menstrual cycle is “normal.” Hence, Clancy states that “understanding the origins of how our body works helps us realize that the boundaries of normal are much wider than we might think.”¹² Societies have an extreme lack of education regarding menstrual cycles, and, therefore, existing taboos cannot be challenged until there is sufficient knowledge to combat these misconceptions. While these taboos still exist around the world, recent conversations regarding menstruation have made the news worldwide.

Worldwide Conversations about Menstruation

With the resurgence of the feminist movement in its fourth wave, conversations are now trending in the media regarding women’s periods with the goal of changing society’s perceptions about menstruation. In the past, periods have been seen as embarrassing, or even dirty and shameful. Although periods are a natural occurrence for women, many women hide their periods. Even commercials advertising menstrual products do not actually show menstrual blood in their demonstrations; rather they demonstrate a product’s absorption “power” with a pretty blue liquid. Advertisements for “menstrual products remain conspicuously euphemistic, typically featuring women practicing yoga in white spandex, riding white horses along the beach, or airborne in cheerleader outfits,” all depicting unrealistic expectations for women.¹³ Even some product advertisements contribute to this shame around periods. For instance, Kotex has marketed their Kotex Ultra Pads as having “specifically designed rustle-free wrapper” to

12. Dasgupta, “Why Do Women Have Periods When Most Animals Don’t?”

13. Andrew Newman, “Rebelling Against the Commonly Evasive Feminine Care Ad,” *The New York Times*, March 15, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/16/business/media/16adco.html?_r=0.

keep menstruation a secret even in bathrooms.¹⁴ Advertisements and TV commercials never depict women in agonizing pain, using the product in the restroom, or even mention what the product is used for. These vague advertisements contribute to the overwhelming shame women feel concerning their periods and add to nonexistent conversations about menstruation.

Although the stigma surrounding periods still exists, recent worldwide conversations are challenging these preconceived notions. A social media campaign using the hashtag #JustATampon, challenges both men and women to post pictures with unused tampons. This campaign promoted by Plan UK aims “to get people to share a selfie with a tampon to break the stigma around periods.”¹⁵ Plan UK uses this campaign strategy to spread awareness and encourage people to donate money to support their charity work. Customers can donate to the charity by texting “Tampon” to 70007; by doing so they are “support[ing] menstrual health in developing countries.”¹⁶ A trending product also contributes to this conversation. Period underwear allow women to be more comfortable when on their menstrual cycle and to save money because the product is reusable. Some companies selling these products, such as Thinx, send funds to a partner organization in Uganda, such as AFRipads, after a customer purchases a pair of period underwear. AFRipads then uses these funds to train “women to sew and sell washable

14. “Pads: Ultra Thin Super with Wings,” *Kotex*, 2005, <http://www.kotexfits.com/ourProducts/pads/ultraThinSuperWithWings/>.

15. Amy Willis, “This is Why People Are Taking Selfies with Tampons #JustATampon,” *Metro*, June 9, 2015, <http://metro.co.uk/2015/06/09/this-is-why-people-are-taking-selfies-with-tampons-justatampon-5237427/>.

16. *Ibid.*

reusable cloth pads, turning local women into entrepreneurs” who then are able to sell “affordable and sustainable pack[s] of pads” to young girls in school.¹⁷

These conversations are also taking place even in the U.S. political realm after women live tweeted their periods following the March 2016 GOP debate in which Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump “implied that Fox News Host Megyn Kelly was hard on him . . . because she was menstruating.”¹⁸ Because of Trump’s insinuation, listeners and activists decided to respond through Twitter. Women tweeted at Trump about their periods with the hashtag #periodsarenotaninsult, proving that women are ready to start normalizing periods and challenging society’s menstrual perceptions.¹⁹ Lawmakers are also starting to challenge the taboos around menstruation with debates about whether or not tampons and other sanitary products should be exempt from sales tax. Representative Melissa Sargent stated that her “reluctance to talk about [periods] has prevented the issue from gaining more momentum in state legislatures.”²⁰ President Obama has commented on this unnecessary tax on tampons, and other countries outside the United States, such as the UK and Canada, are also discussing the exemption of feminine hygiene products from the general sales tax. High-profile events are also starting to address menstruation norms. In the summer of 2016, Fu Yuanhui, a Chinese swimmer, made news worldwide when she talked about her period on TV during the

17. “Power of Purchase,” *Thinx*, 2016, <http://www.shethinx.com/pages/power-of-the-purchase>.

18. Meg Wagner, “Women Live-Tweet Periods to Donald Trump Following Megyn Kelly ‘Blood’ Gaffe,” *NY Daily News*, August 11, 2015, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/women-live-tweet-periods-donald-trump-article-1.2321400>.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Jordan Gass-Poore, “Citing Gender Bias, State Lawmakers Move to Eliminate ‘Tampon Tax,’” *NPR*, March 6, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/2016/03/06/467377295/citing-gender-bias-state-lawmakers-move-to-eliminate-tampon-tax>.

Olympic Games. Yuanhui's "mention of period cramps was a rare display of openness about menstruation in athletics," but was even more notable considering her cultural background.²¹ Her interview opened a space for dialogue discussing how menstruation affects female athletes. Similarly, "marathoner Kiran Gandhi made news last year when she chose to use nothing, bleeding through her running clothes during the London Marathon."²² Clearly, 2016 was poised to "become the year of menstrual change," starting with the worldwide movement to "strip menstruation of its stigma and ensure that public policy keeps up."²³ Now is the time for global action.

Combatting the menstruation stigma globally "requires broader awareness-raising activities that—as a first step—acknowledge the stigma for what it is."²⁴ Menstruation must be acknowledged as a normal and natural process. The real challenge to combating these already existing perceptions "is that the cultural beliefs surrounding menstruation are so deeply entrenched in society."²⁵ Many cultures have long-standing beliefs and norms surrounding a women's menstrual cycle that limit women's daily lives, cause health problems, or associate menstruating women with "dirtiness" or "impurity." Many

21. Austin Bowen, "How Menstrual Cycles Might Affect Olympic Athletes," *Chicago Tribune*, August 18, 2016, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/health/sc-periods-olympic-athletes-health-0823-20160818-story.html>.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Abigail Jones, "The Fight to End Period Shaming Is Going Mainstream," *Newsweek*, April 20, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/2016/04/29/womens-periods-menstruation-tampons-pads-449833.html>.

24. Inga Winkler and Virginia Roaf, "Taking the Bloody Linen Out of the Closet: Menstrual Hygiene as a Priority for Achieving Gender Equality," *Cardozo Journal of Law & Gender* 21, no. 1 (2015): 30.

25. *Ibid.*

cultures also still hold, “social norms or unwritten rules and practices about managing menstruation and interacting with menstruating women.”²⁶

Menstrual Taboo Origins

Anthropologists Frank Young and Albert Bacdayan state that “menstrual taboos are those customs often found in tribal society that publicly restrict the behavior of menstruation and apply throughout most of a woman’s life.”²⁷ Although the western world has progressed beyond functioning as a “tribal society,” these taboos have been passed down into today’s U.S. customs. These customs have instilled a degrading social separation between males and females. Women “display strong feelings of shame and social discomfort regarding menstruation,” and “these feelings are evidenced in the measures women take to conceal not only menstrual blood but knowledge of their menstruation from others.”²⁸ Sociologist Rita Montgomery states that these taboos are “represented along a continuum that ranges widely from mild uneasiness and distrust of menstrual fluid and menstruating women, to elaborate complexes of restrictions, and ultimately to complete seclusion during the menstrual period.”²⁹ Women plan vacations around their period and avoid certain activities or public outings because of the uneasiness they experience when on their menstrual cycle. Women also hide their

26. Stefanie Kaiser, “Menstrual Hygiene Management,” *Sustainable Sanit*, <http://www.sswm.info/content/menstrual-hygiene-management>.

27. Frank Young and Albert Bacdayan, “Menstrual Taboos and Social Rigidity,” *Ethnology* 4, no. 2 (1965): 225–240, doi:10.2307/3772731.

28. Elizabeth Arveda Kissling, “That’s Just a Basic Teen-Age Rule’: Girl’s Linguistic Strategies for Managing the Menstrual Communication Taboo,” *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 24 (November 1996): 293.

29. Rita E. Montgomery, “A Cross-Cultural Study of Menstruation, Menstrual Taboos, and Related Social Variables,” *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1974): 137–138, doi:10.1525/eth.1974.2.2.02a00030.

products up their sleeves to keep from being embarrassed by the fact that they are experiencing a natural and normal process. Elizabeth Kissling argues that “like other communication norms and rules, communication taboos and the social phenomenon of embarrassment work to preserve the expressive order” and claims that periods are one source of embarrassment for young girls and women.³⁰ Women are taught at a young age to be embarrassed when clothing or bed sheets are soiled by their periods, and this leads to a feeling of fear for these embarrassing occurrences to happen.

Anthropologist Mary Douglas states that “a taboo is a ban or prohibition. . . . In essence it generally implies a rule which has no meaning, or one which cannot be explained.”³¹ Kathleen O’Grady states that “the first European record of the term comes from the journals of Captain James Cook from his eighteenth-century voyage to Polynesia.”³² Hence, the word “taboo” “comes from the Polynesian languages where it means a religious restriction, to break which would entail some automatic punishment.”³³ The verbal root “tapu is not assessed through a polarity of negative or positive denotations, since the same term can be used to denote something ‘holy’ as well as something ‘impure,’ something ‘scared’ as well as something ‘unclean.’”³⁴ Perhaps the term does not inherently have a negative connotation but rather can be positive in some

30. Kissling, “That’s Just a Basic Teen-Age Rule,” 292.

31. Mary Douglas, “Taboo,” *Man, Myth, & Magic*, ed. Richard Cavendish, vol. 21 (London: Phoebus, 1979), 2767.

32 Kathleen O’Grady, “The Semantics of Taboo: Menstrual Prohibitions in the Hebrew Bible,” *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity*, eds. Judith A. Herbert, Judith Ann Johnson, Anne-Marie Korte, and Kristin De Troyer (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 1–2.

33. Douglas, “Taboo,” 2767.

34. O’Grady, “The Semantics of Taboo,” 1–2.

cultures. Douglas also “argues that societies code elements as taboo, dirty, or dangerous to protect distinctive categories of their universe and to distinguish the ambiguous and the sacred.”³⁵ In this instance the word taboo is “used to create divisions between or common identification among groups of people.”³⁶ Communication scholar Erika Thomas states that “in the case of the menstruation taboo, a division is constructed between men and women, and this division becomes one way we identify, mark, argue and/or justify sexual difference.”³⁷

Religious Taboos

Menstruation taboos can be traced back to early biblical origins. In Genesis, Eve’s consumption of the forbidden fruit caused

all women [to] “suffer torment and misfortune.” And therefore she must have her period every month, and must fast once or twice [a month], so that she will always remember her sin and remain in a constant state of repentance. Just as a murderer constantly does.³⁸

Thus Genesis is often interpreted as claiming that, because of Eve’s sin, all women experience this symbol of sin. O’Grady further states that “the prohibition against sexual relations during menstruation is repeated several times throughout the Hebrew Bible (Lev 15:24; 18:19-20; 20:18; Ezek 18:6).”³⁹ Leviticus 15:19 further states that “whenever a

35. Mary Douglass, “Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo” (London: Routledge, 2004), xiii.

36. Erika Thomas, “Menstruation Discrimination: The Menstrual Taboo as a Rhetorical Function of Discourse in the National and International Advances of Women’s Rights,” *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate* no. 28 (2007): 68.

37. Thomas, “Menstruation Discrimination,” 68.

38. *Sefer mistvas ha-noshim*, Sochnik, as cited by Chava Weissler, “Mizvot Built into the Body: Thkhines for Niddah, Pregnancy, and Childbirth,” in *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 104.

39. O’Grady, “The Semantics of Taboo,” 1–2.

woman has her menstrual period, she will be ceremonially unclean for seven days.”⁴⁰ The chapter goes further in discussing the rules and practice for menstruating women. The encouragement of menstrual seclusion and segregation is not only found in the Hebrew Bible but also bleeds into many world religions. There seems to be a common theme that menstruation is synonymous with “impure” and “sinful.” This theme reflects the old reality that societies control what is unknown or what is feared. Taboos are created to have regulations and to provide answers for occurrences that are not understood and to bring assurance and order to a society. Therefore, because early people lacked the scientific knowledge to understand menstruation, menstrual blood was seen as dirty and out of the ordinary. People heavily relied on their religious texts about menstrual blood as a way to control the unknown.

Many world religions, such as

Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, have all made statements about menstruation and its negative effect on women, leading to prohibitions about physical intimacy, cooking, attending places of worship, and sometimes requiring women to live separately from men at this time.⁴¹

Some tribal religions require menstruating women to stay in huts outside their villages, while other religions forbid sexual intercourse and sometimes even physical contact with menstruating woman. This practice is found in “the Jewish code of law, *Halakha*, [that] details strict rules governing every aspect of the daily lives of Jews,” such as not coming into physical contact with menstruating women.⁴² Orthodox Jewish women ritually

40. Leviticus 15:19, New Living Translation.

41. Mark A. Guterman, Payal Mehta, and Margaret S. Gibbs, “Menstrual Taboos among Major Religions,” *The Internet Journal of World Health and Societal Politics* 5, no. 2 (2007): 2.

42. Aru Bhartiya, “Menstruation, Religion and Society,” *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 3, no. 6 (2013): 523, doi:10.7763/IJSSH.2013.V3.296.

immerse “in the Mikvah, the ritual bath” after their menstrual cycle to cleanse themselves.⁴³ In the first century, women were not even allowed into temples to worship during their menstruation period, but in recent centuries many have moved away from this extreme practice.

Christianity has similar beliefs to Judaism in regards to menstruation. And in many sectors within Christianity, such as Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, menstruation is still considered unclean and menstruating women are instructed not to engage in sexual intercourse.⁴⁴ While Western Christianity does not necessarily uphold any religious regulations regarding menstruation, menstruation taboos still exist. Misconceptions, such as the idea that menstruating women wilt flowers when they touch them, have contributed to the existing taboos and ideas that menstruation is a “curse” or “shameful,” and women avoid conversations about menstruation. Often women are “treated as though they are ill;” they are moody, tired, and need to avoid being out in public “during those days.”⁴⁵

Muslim cultures also label menstruating women as “impure,” and therefore, they must be avoided by men.⁴⁶ The Qur’an states in Al-Baqarah (chapter 2),

they question thee (O Muhammad) concerning menstruation. Say: It is an illness, so let women alone at such times and go not into them till they are cleaned. And when they have purified themselves, then go unto them as Allah hath enjoined upon you. Truly Allah loveth those who turn unto Him, and loveth those who have a care for cleanness.⁴⁷

43. Guterman, Mehta, and Gibbs, “Menstrual Taboos among Major Religions,” 2.

44. Bhartiya, “Menstruation, Religion and Society,” 523.

45. Guterman, Mehta, and Gibbs, “Menstrual Taboos among Major Religions,” 3.

46. Elizabeth M. Whelan, “Attitudes toward Menstruation,” *Studies in Family Planning* 6, no. 4 (1975): 107.

47. Al-Baqarah 2:222, English Translation.

Under Islamic Law there are two restrictions for menstruating women,

first, she may not enter any shrine or mosque. In fact, she may not pray or fast during Ramadan while she is menstruating. . . . Secondly, she is not allowed to have sexual intercourse for seven full days (beginning when the bleeding starts). . . . In addition, the woman must complete a “ritual washing” before she becomes “clean” again.⁴⁸

Hinduism shares similar menstrual restrictions, such as prohibiting menstruating women from entering certain places and believing menstruation to be “impure.” In addition to having restrictions on where they go and what they can do, Hindu women also have “various food restrictions during menstruation, including fish and meat.”⁴⁹ Thus these three major world religions share similar beliefs about menstruating women. For instance, “the most consistent theme that appears to unite the different religions is the idea of impurity; every religion views the menstruating woman as impure. Some religions view the impurity as strictly spiritual, whereas others fear physical danger and harm as well.”⁵⁰ These religious menstrual beliefs have helped form and maintain existing taboos today.

Cultural Taboos

Similar to various world religious, cultural myths and misconceptions aid in the creation of menstrual taboos. Female health specialists Tan, Hathotuwa, and Fraser state that

the terms “menstruation” and “menses” are derived from the Latin word *mensis* (month), which in turn relates to the Greek word mene (moon), the

48. Guterman, Mehta, and Gibbs, “Menstrual Taboos among Major Religions,” 3.

49. *Ibid.*, 4.

50. Delfin A. Tan, Rohana Haththotuwa, and Ian S. Fraser, “Cultural Aspects and Mythologies Surrounding Menstruation and Abnormal Uterine Bleeding,” *Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics and Gynaecology* no. 3 (2016): 8, doi:10.1016/j.bpobgyn.2016.09.015.

roots of the English words month and moon. Thus, the word “menstruation” is etymologically related to “moon.”⁵¹

In some cultures, this cosmic rhythm is believed to be in accordance with the moon’s cycle because it lasts around 28 days (the time it takes the moon to orbit the sun). In ancient Greece and Rome, menstruating women had great powers and “could stop hailstorms, whirlwinds and lightening, and kill crops.”⁵² Women in ancient Egypt “viewed menstruation as a ‘time for cleansing’” and “it was generally considered to have a healing effect.”⁵³ While some misconceptions concluded that having sex during menstruation could lead to birth defects or a specific gender of a child, others believed the blood to possess magical powers when applied to the body or even consumed. Since the beginning of time, cultures have sought out answers to menstruation but lacked the science to fully understand the women’s body. Numerous cultures around the world created and still believe myths and misconceptions that seem to solve the mystery of menstruation.

While there are several possible origins of these menstrual taboos, “none seem wholly satisfactory; probably no one approach nor exploration of a single variable can explain the vast variations in attitudes and customs regarding menstruation.”⁵⁴

Psychologists Ingrid Johnston-Robledo and Joan Chrisler state that “the stigma of menstruation has negative consequences;” for instance, “one of the consequences most

51. Tan, Haththotuwa, and Fraser, “Cultural Aspects and Mythologies,” 3.

52. Caster Yvette, “History Period-A Look at Menstruation through the Ages in 15 Fascinating Facts,” *Metro UK* (May 20, 2015), <http://metro.co.uk/2015/05/20/history-period-a-look-at-menstruation-through-the-ages-in-15-fascinating-facts-5204085/>.

53. Tan, Haththotuwa, and Fraser, “Cultural Aspects and Mythologies,” 4.

54. Montgomery, “A Cross-Cultural Study of Menstruation, Menstrual Taboos, and Related Social Variables,” 138.

frequently noted in literature is self-consciousness and hypervigilance associated with concerns about the revelation of one's menstrual status."⁵⁵ For example,

to avoid and prevent the embarrassment of violating menstrual taboo, girls creatively use linguistic strategies as slang terms, circumlocutions, pronouns, and euphemistic deixis to find ways to talk about something they are uncomfortable talking about or believe that they should not talk about.⁵⁶

Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler further argue that "in order for women to accept themselves every day of the month, cultures must change the way menstruation is viewed, and women themselves must take more control over the way they experience and feel about menstruation."⁵⁷ These taboos not only are restrictive towards women, but also "have direct implications for reproductive health."⁵⁸ Women across the world believe these misconceptions and therefore lack the knowledge and access to resources to manage menstruation.

Theoretical Frameworks

Because I am studying how rhetorical texts are working to challenge taboos, I will be studying images, videos, and words the rhetors use in these texts to analyze the strategies each uses to adapt to their audience and how they work to persuade individuals and communities to reconsider their beliefs about menstruation. I will be using framing theory and linguistic relativity to conduct this analysis, and the following sections provide an overview of these two frameworks.

55. Ingrid Johnston-Robledo and Joan C. Chrisler, "The Menstrual Mark: Menstruation as Social Stigma," *Sex Roles* 68, no. 1 (2013): 12, doi:10.1007/s11199-011-0052-z.

56. Kissling, "That's Just a Basic Teen-Age Rule," 292–293.

57. Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler, "The Menstrual Mark," 12.

58. Tan, Haththotuwa, and Fraser, "Cultural Aspects and Mythologies," 2.

Media Framing

In the sociopsychological tradition of communication theory, scholars view communication as “the process by which individuals interact [with] and influence each other.”⁵⁹ Communication scholars Robert Craig and Heidi Muller claim another hallmark of the sociopsychological tradition is that “communication is infused with causal forces of social influence and that these forces can be understood scientifically.”⁶⁰ Craig further states that “communication theorized in this way explains the causes and effects of social behavior and cultivates practices that attempt to exert intentional control over those behavioral causes and effects.”⁶¹ Several concepts from the sociopsychological tradition are regularly utilized when crafting messages—specifically media messages—made to influence how individuals think.

Research on the effects of media “has developed three interrelated but distinct paradigms to explain how the media shape audience perception of reality. These theoretical explanations include agenda setting, priming, and framing effects.”⁶² Agenda setting “is the process (or processes) by which an issue is brought to the attention of policy-makers.”⁶³ Within agenda setting, frames are “underlying structures of belief,

59. Robert T. Craig, “Communication Theory as a Field,” *Communication Theory* 9, no. 1 (1999): 143.

60. Robert T. Craig and Heidi L. Muller, eds., “The Sociopsychological Tradition,” in *Theorizing Communication: Readings Across Traditions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007), 313.

61. Craig, “Communication Theory as a Field,” 143.

62. Yahya Benkhedda, “Islam and Muslims in U.S. Think Tank Electronic Media: Framing, Narrative, and Ethics,” *Global Media Journal-Canadian Edition* 9, no. 2 (2016): 43-44.

63. Everett M. Rogers, James W. Dearing, and Dorine Bregman, “The Anatomy of Agenda-Setting Research,” *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 2 (1993): 68, doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01263.x.

perception and appreciation.”⁶⁴ These frames help “the audiences to locate, perceive, identify, and label the flow of information that surrounds them,” and by doing so, these frames influence “the thoughts, ideas, and attitudes of individuals and the public.”⁶⁵ Framing theory focuses on how “the frame of a news story gives meaning to the individual events reported,” rather than focusing on how the media tells people “what to think about.”⁶⁶ Framing is “based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences.”⁶⁷

Framing theory identifies how a rhetor’s decision to frame messages in a particular way may facilitate or constrain windows of opportunity for change.⁶⁸ To frame a message is to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.”⁶⁹ The principle of framing “consists of two main dimensions; one that refers to the way certain aspects in a text are made more salient (media frames), and one that

64. Martin Rein and Donald Schon, “Frame-Critical Policy Analysis and Frame-Reflective Policy Practice,” *Knowledge and Policy* 9, no. 1 (1996): 85, doi:10.1007/BF02832235.

65. Alberto Ardevol-Abreu, “Framing Theory in Communication Research in Spain. Origins, Development and Current Situation,” *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 70, no. 1 (2015): 435, doi:10.4185/RLCS-2015-1053en

66. Benkhedda, “Islam and Muslims in U.S. Think Tank Electronic Media,” 44.

67. Dietram A. Scheufele and David Tewksbury, “Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models,” *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007): 11, doi:10.1111/j.1460-2460-2466.2006.00326.x

68. Manuela Colombini, Susannah H Mayhew, Ben Hawkins, Meera Bista, Sunil Kumar Joshi, Berit Schei, and Charolette Watts, “Agenda Setting and Framing of Gender-Based Violence in Nepal: How it Became a Health Issue,” *Health Policy Plan* 31, no. 4 (2016): 495, doi: 10.1093/heapol/czv091.

69. Robert M Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,” *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51, doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x.

concerns how frames may affect how people perceive reality (individual frames).”⁷⁰ In other words, the media produces one frame for the public to view a text and then the individual uses his or her own frame to view that message. In both cases, the way the message is framed will impact the overall effect the message will have on an individual. Generally, messages can be framed in two ways—positively or negatively.⁷¹ Positively framed messages emphasize benefits the audience can obtain if they follow the message, while negatively framed messages focus on the losses the audience can expect if they do not follow the message.⁷²

From either a positive or negative perspective, rhetors can also craft messages by relying on cultural frames, or frames that a society holds true, such as a shared set of values.⁷³ These frames “are context specific and are thus shaped by the prevailing hierarchies and power relations” in a culture.⁷⁴ Individual factors also contribute to how a message is framed. Individual factors include “preexisting beliefs, values, and attitudes” and they “moderate the impact” of a message.⁷⁵ Often, “frames are stories and

70. Anna Maria Jonsson and Mikael Karlsson, “Cooperation, Media, and Framing Processes: Insights from a Baltic Sea Case Study,” *Nordicom Review* 37, no.1 (2016): 44, doi:10.1515/nor-2016-0022.

71. Positive framed messages have also been referred to in literature as gain-framed message. Similarly, negative framed messages have been referred to as loss-framed message. For example, these terms can be found in the article: Daniel J. O’Keefe and Jakob D. Jensen, “The Relative Persuasiveness of Gain-Framed Loss-Framed Messages for Encouraging Disease Prevention Behaviors: A Meta-Analytic Review,” *Journal of Health Communication* 12, no. 7 (2007).

72. Dong Jenn Yang and Kai Wen Lee, “The Moderating Effect of Social Desirability and Self-Efficacy on the Relationship between Message Framing and the Communication Effects for the Smokers,” *Business Management Dynamics* 5, no. 9 (2016): 49.

73. Colombini et al., “Agenda Setting and Framing of Gender-Based Violence in Nepal,” 495.

74. Ibid.

75. Sarah Elizabeth Henize, “Breast Cancer in the Media: Agenda-Setting and Framing Effects of Prevalent Messages on College-Aged Women” (Dissertation, Graduate College of Bowling Green State University, 2013), 33.

explanations, deeply embedded in [a society's] thought patterns, about the way society and the world work.”⁷⁶

Word choice is key when framing a message because “certain word choices trigger different frames for understanding a particular issue.”⁷⁷ Certain terms in different contexts can cause emotional responses or conflict with preexisting beliefs about the topic. Therefore, it is key for rhetors crafting persuasive artifacts to frame messages in a way that is appropriate for the context and that will produce the desirable response from the audience. Framing “help[s] to render events or occurrences [as] meaningful and thereby function[s] to organize experience and guide action” or elicit beliefs.⁷⁸

Much like news sources, rhetors crafting persuasive messages must also garner support for their views and inspire individuals to agree with them or deem their stories important. Framing can help explain the processes of attitude change and how individuals and organizations use their messages to influence beliefs and construct new realities. Social movement researchers often look at how social movements utilize frames to “enable mobilization and protest.”⁷⁹ Social movements have three core framing tasks:

(1) a diagnosis of some event or aspect of social life as problematic and in need of alteration; (2) a proposed solution to the diagnosed problem that specifies what needs to be done; and (3) a call to arms or rationale for engaging in ameliorative or corrective action.⁸⁰

76. Bill Kennedy and Colin Bailey, “Framing in Race-Conscious, Antipoverty Advocacy: A Science-Based Guide to Delivering to Your Most Persuasive Message,” *Clearinghouse Review* 43, no. 9 (2010), 411.

77. Ibid.

78. Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26, no. 1 (2000): 613.

79. Linda Bos, Sophie Lecheler, Moniek Mewafi, and Rens Vliegthart, “It’s the Frame that Matters: Immigrant Integration and Media Framing Effects in the Netherlands,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 55, no. 1 (2016): 99, doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2016.10.002.

80. David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization,” *International Social Movement Research* 1, no. 1 (1988):199.

The first framing task, diagnostic, “involves identification of a problem and the attribution of blame or causality.”⁸¹ This task states the problem clearly and can be easily detected when studying social movements. Through diagnostic framing, social movements define who they are and call out their grievances. Prognostic framing, the second core framing task, “involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan.”⁸² While these two frames are complementary, it is vital that they be balanced. Some social movements may over-emphasize one frame which causes issues. For instance, if the movement uses diagnostic framing too much, then the problem that they are defining may seem too much to tackle and overwhelming for their followers. On the other hand, if a social movement uses more prognostic framing, it would “most likely fail to motivate individuals that are not directly related to the victimization that is being dealt with.”⁸³ The problem will appear to have a lot of solutions and not be a problem that is needing support. Lastly, motivational framing is “the elaboration of a call to arms or rationale for action that goes beyond the diagnosis and prognosis.”⁸⁴ In this framing, a social movement justifies why and what kind of action needs to be done. It engages participants and calls for collective action. A social movement wants to accomplish all of these tasks in order to reach its audience and increase the chance of creating mobilization. Not all

81. Ibid., 200.

82. Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26, no. 1 (2000): 616.

83. David Snow and Catherine Corrigan-Brown, “Falling on Deaf Ears: Confronting the Prospect of Nonresonant Frames,” in *Rhyming Hope and History: Activists, Academics, and Social Movements Scholarship*, ed. David Croteau, William Hoynes, and Ryan Charlotte (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 225.

84. Snow and Benford, “Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization,” 202.

social movements clearly utilize all three frames and may find themselves having to reframe themselves to avoid disintegration.

When applying the theory of media framing to taboos, “framing can play a pivotal role in demonizing or normalizing any stigma or taboo.”⁸⁵ That is, the framing of a message can make an audience view a topic, such as menstruation, positively or negatively depending on the frame. This concept is evident in the traditional menstrual hygiene advertisements in the United States and United Kingdom. In these nations, “advertisements portray menstruation as a villain, and the female hygiene products as the hero that relieves women of the pain.”⁸⁶ This view negatively frames menstruation and therefore reinforces the menstrual taboo in those nations.

In short, framing affects how individuals make sense of a particular event or message. Media sources frame news by highlighting what they believe to be true or what agrees with their network’s ideologies. Activists and organizations also use framing to change their audience’s perceptions and to create a new reality. Regardless, framing is a tool that can create effective communication when applied and can influence individuals’ thoughts.

Linguistic Relativity

Communication theories help make sense of the world by giving insight into why people communicate the way they do. Specifically, the semiotic tradition of communication theory focuses on understanding language through the use of signs.

85. Arpan Shailesh Yagnik, “Reframing Menstruation in India: Metamorphosis of the Menstrual Taboo with the Changing Media Coverage,” *Health Care for Women International* 35, no. 6 (2014): 621, doi:10.1080/07399332.2013.838246.

86. *Ibid.*, 627.

Semiotics “cultivates the use of language and other sign systems to mediate between different perspectives” such as perspectives between different cultures.⁸⁷ Furthermore “semioticians address communication by examining phenomena such as the structure of language and other systems of signs, the relationship between language and thought, and the communicative uses of signs.”⁸⁸ After all, as John Locke claims in *The Abuse of Words*, the fundamental point of words is their ability to be “used for recording and communicating our thoughts.”⁸⁹

Similarly, each language embodies a unique worldview, so that speakers of different languages think about the world in quite different ways.⁹⁰ Language is an essential aspect of individuals and organizations communicating their ideas and experiences. With language, individuals can turn thoughts into communication with others. From the perspective of linguistic relativity,

it is naïve to think that when we learn a “foreign” language, we simply learn a new vocabulary to name the same objects and a new grammar to express the same relations between objects as exist in our own language.⁹¹

87. Craig, “Communication Theory as a Field,” 136.

88. Robert T. Craig, “The Semiotic Tradition,” in *Theorizing Communication: Readings Across Traditions*, ed. Robert T. Craig and Heidi L. Muller (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007), 163.

89. John Locke, “The Abuse of Words,” in *Theorizing Communication: Readings Across Traditions*, ed. Robert T. Craig and Heidi L. Muller (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007), 78-79.

90. Iman Tohidian, “Examining Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis as One of the Main Views on the Relationship Between Language and Thought,” *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 38, no. 1 (2009): 65, doi:10.1007/s10936-008-9083-1.

91. Eleanor Rosch, “Linguistic Relativity,” *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 44, no. 1 (1987): 254.

It is a traditional belief that most “people think about the world in a similar fashion but somehow speak distinctively for various geographical and genetic reasons.”⁹² Few still believe this to be true, and linguistic relativity theorizes that this is not the case.

But does language influence cognition, and are language and thought distinct from one another? Philosopher Zhu Zhifang states that linguistic relativity claims “the structure of a human being’s language influences the manner in which [a human being] understands reality and behaves with respect to it.”⁹³ Zhifang further states that linguistic relativity is centered on the premise that language influences how a person thinks and understands reality. It “indicates that worldview goes along with language, the world is different for different languages.”⁹⁴ Similarly, American linguist John A. Lucy states that “language embodies an interpretation of reality and language can influence thought about that reality;” therefore, “the interpretation arises from the selection of substantive aspects of experience and their formal arrangement in the verbal code.”⁹⁵ These “patterns of language . . . reflect or somehow represent a causal world which lies beyond the senses and which initiates the process which ends in knowledge.”⁹⁶ Interestingly Zhifang states that “the notion of linguistic relativity is the suggestion that all one’s life has been tricked by the structure of language into a certain way of perceiving reality, with the implication

92. Adnan Rashid, “An Interplay of English and Urdu Languages in Pakistani ESL Learners: Implications of Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis of Linguistic Relativity and Linguistic Determinism,” *NUML Journal of Critical Inquiry* 11, no. 1 (2013): 59.

93. Zhu Zhifang, “Linguistic Relativity and Cultural Communication,” *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 34, no. 2 (2002): 162, doi:10.1080/00131850120102231.

94. Ibid.

95. John A. Lucy, “Linguistic Relativity,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (1997): 294.

96. Ralph L. Carnes, “A Perceptual Model of the Whorflan Thesis,” *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 27, no. 1 (1970): 267.

that awareness of this trickery will enable one to see the world with fresh insight.”⁹⁷

When one uncovers the communication of another culture, they unveil that culture’s truths, thereby changing their own sense of reality created by their own culture’s language.

Linguistic relativity is comprised of three basic main ideas: first, “it assumes that languages can differ significantly in the meanings of their words and syntactic constructions;” next, “the semantics of a language can affect the way in which its speakers perceive and conceptualize the world;” and finally, “given that language can affect thinking, linguistic relativity holds that speakers of different languages think differently.”⁹⁸ Although language defines a person’s reality, linguistic relativity states that “no culture is superior to others for the two systems of describing the universe are equally valid.”⁹⁹ Cultures that share the same language share the same worldview, creating a “brotherhood of thought” throughout the society.¹⁰⁰ The Whorfian hypothesis claims that languages “mold ideas and program mental activity;” therefore, those with different languages will have different views and “even have difficulty communicating about certain topics.”¹⁰¹ In linguistic relativity, “language embodies an interpretation of reality and language can influence thought about that reality,” affecting the beliefs and

97. Zhu Zhifang, “Linguistic Relativity and Cultural Communication,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 34, no. 2 (2002): 162 doi:10.1080/00131850120102231

98. Phillip Wolff and Kevin J. Holmes. “Linguistic Relativity,” *WIREs Cognitive Science* 2, no. 1 (2011): 253, doi:10.1002/wcs.104.

99. Zhifang, “Linguistic Relativity and Cultural Communication,” 162.

100. Ibid.

101. Tohidian, “Examining Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis as One of the Main Views on the Relationship Between Language and Thought,” 66.

perceptions a person has.¹⁰² Linguistic relativity does not claim that all members of a culture share a universal interpretation or belief, but rather argues that how a society talks about a topic will determine how the society thinks about the topic. Because “different languages carve up reality in different ways, then it follows that speakers of different languages have different worldviews.”¹⁰³ Hence, “the differences between language systems is such that each language both stimulates different thoughts (however slight the differences may be) on the part of the speaker, and exists as a separate and distinct system.”¹⁰⁴ Although linguistic relativity states that cultures with differing language systems have different realities and therefore differing truths, it does not mean that one culture’s reality is truer than another’s. Each culture system depends on its language to symbolize concepts and articulate explanations of the real world. Language structures a society’s norms and customs and therefore shapes the reality that its people live in.

Although the basic premise of linguistic reality is that language influences thought, there are three types of influences within linguistic reality: semiotic, structural, and functional. Semiotic is concerned with “how speaking any natural language at all may influence thinking,” while structural “concerns how speaking one or more particular natural languages may influence thinking.”¹⁰⁵ Finally, the functional level is concerned with “whether using language in a particular way (e.g., schooled) may influence

102. Lucy, “Linguistic Relativity,” 295.

103. Panos Athanasopoulos, Emanuel Bylund, and Daniel Casasanto, “Introduction to the Special Issue: New and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Linguistic Relativity,” *Language Learning* 66, no. 3 (2016): 482, doi:10.1111/lang.12196.

104. Carnes, “A Perceptual Model of the Whorfian Thesis,” 269.

105. Lucy, “Linguistic Relativity,” 292.

thinking,” which is also known as “discursive relativity.”¹⁰⁶ These three types of influences further create conversation regarding how understanding language systems alters an individual’s thoughts. While some researchers agree with this breakdown of the three influences, others argue that it is a gross simplification of a complicated concept.

Scholars have recently developed several new branches of linguistic relativity and determined that there are two general conclusions on the question of whether or not language affects thought: thought is language, and thought is separate from language. Language as “language of thought,” believed by Plato and other theorists, is not generally regarded as true today because “people can have thoughts that are difficult to express, but this would never be the case if thoughts were represented entirely in natural language.”¹⁰⁷ Therefore thought being separate from language is the only viable answer. There are three different relationships of thought and language: thinking before language, thinking with language, and thinking after language. “Thinking before language” occurs during the thought process before language is used. For instance, in many languages verbs must have a specific tense and nouns are sometimes accompanied with a gendered article. Within “thinking before language,” “thinking for speaking” occurs when “speakers must engage in a special kind of mental activity” and can be “observed in people’s attentional patterns and memory for motion events.”¹⁰⁸ In this relationship, “the effect of language on thought occurs immediately before the production of language,” while “thinking with language” occurs at the same time as language is being used and “thinking after language” occurs when individuals are no longer engaged in the language process.

106. Ibid.

107. Wolff and Holmes, “Linguistic Relativity,” 254.

108. Ibid., 255.

Within each of these relationships, further research has gone into explaining the influence of thought on the process of language.

Scholars who study linguistic relativity argue that you can understand this theory in two “versions,” strong and weak. The strong hypothesis of linguistic relativity states that “language determines thought,” and therefore “focuses on the computational costs that different languages impose on thinking.”¹⁰⁹ In this version of linguistic relativity, Whorf believed that “distinctions that are made implicitly, by the grammar of a language, are far more important determinants of thought than are the explicit categorizations of the lexicon.”¹¹⁰ The weak version of linguistic relativity is that “language influences thought.”¹¹¹ In this hypothesis, scholars argue that a person’s language can only *influence* how something is perceived rather than believing it to *determine* how something is perceived. For Sapir and Whorf, “the real world is an abstraction from the experiential world, made possible by language; further, since languages differ, a corresponding difference is to be found in the real worlds of the participants of the various language.”¹¹² While we can assume that language does in fact influence thought, it cannot be concluded that “people who speak different languages think differently.”¹¹³ Scholars relying on linguistic relativity, therefore, must ask the question “does language influence thought?” and must “determine whether our thoughts are relative to (determined by) the ‘language’

109. Tohidian, “Examining Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis as One of the Main Views on the Relationship Between Language and Thought,” 68.

110. Earl Hunt and Franca Agnoli, “The Whorfian Hypothesis: A Cognitive Psychology Perspective,” *Psychological Review* 98, no. 3 (1991): 378, doi:10.1037/0033-295X.98.3.377.

111. Tohidian, “Examining Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis as One of the Main Views on the Relationship Between Language and Thought,” 68.

112. Carnes, “A Perceptual Model of the Whorflan Thesis,” 263–264.

113. Wolff and Holmes, “Linguistic Relativity,” 253.

we speak.”¹¹⁴ In asking these questions, researchers are able to observe societies to determine how their language shapes the world they live in.

Methodology

In this thesis, I will examine persuasive texts created by groups around the world that are working to combat menstrual taboos. Each region is unique and possesses barriers these artifacts must overcome to change how a particular society thinks and communicates about menstrual taboos. In narrowing down which artifacts to examine, I started with a global search of the trending texts that were creating conversations about menstruation. From there, I grouped the trending and unique texts by regions. I selected the artifacts that made significant news worldwide in regions that were producing the most trending conversations. I also specifically chose regions that represented vastly different cultures/societies because I am particularly interested in how rhetors shaped each message within the constraints of their culture. The regions I chose were the United States and the United Kingdom, India, and South Africa.

The vast differences among regions can be seen utilizing a basic understanding of social psychologist Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and anthropologist Edward Hall’s high- and low-context cultural taxonomy. High-context cultures include cultures that “prefer to use high-context messages in which most of the meaning is either implied by the physical setting or presumed to be part of the individual’s internalized beliefs, values, norms, and social practices” rather than the meaning being “provided in the

114. Jorg Zinken, “The Metaphor of ‘Linguistic Relativity,’” *History & Philosophy of Psychology* 10, no. 2 (2008): 2.

coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message.”¹¹⁵ The regions that were found to have a high-context culture are India and South Africa. Low-context cultures, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, “prefer to use low-content messages, in which the majority of the information is vested in the explicit code.”¹¹⁶ Hofstede refers to the variations among individual autonomy as the “individualism-collectivism dimension, the degree to which a culture relies on and has allegiance to the self or the group.”¹¹⁷ The United States and United Kingdom both are ranked among the highest countries in individualism, and South Africa is also ranked high on individualism. India has an intermediate score on the scale; therefore, the country has “both collectivistic and individualistic traits.”¹¹⁸ These are just a few cultural dimensions that establish the differences among the regions studied. Once I identified these three regions to focus on, I did further research into trending texts in those areas and chose a variety of artifacts (both those that were largely image-based and those that focused on video content) that were making the news in each region and that were active on social media platforms.

Based on these criteria, I have selected nine texts to analyze in this thesis. In Chapter II, I will assess THINX, the Red.fit campaign, and the Free the Tampons campaign from the United States and the United Kingdom. Then in Chapter III, I will analyze the Breaking the Silence campaign, Menstrupedia, and #HappytoBleed campaign, which are all located in India. And lastly in Chapter IV, I will examine The

115. Myron W. Lustig and Jolene Koester, “Cultural Patterns and Communication: Taxonomies,” in *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures*, 5th ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006), 110.

116. *Ibid.*, 111.

117. *Ibid.*, 115.

118. “India,” *Geert Hofstede*, accessed April 21, 2017, <https://geert-hofstede.com/india.html>.

Red Wings Project, the #WorthBleedingFor campaign, and the Serithi Campaign, all situated in South Africa. The following sections offer a brief introduction to each of these campaigns.

Texts from United States/United Kingdom

The United States and the United Kingdom share not only history, but also similar cultures. Besides speaking the same language, both nations also share similar legal systems and have some of the largest economies in the world. The technological development and educational systems of both nations are also very similar. Many attitudes and norms overlap between the two countries. While there are plenty of differences between these countries, for the purpose of this thesis I will be combining these nations as I discuss menstrual taboos. The hygiene technology and attitudes concerning menstruation are similar in these countries and therefore can be discussed together. In both nations, menstruation is still viewed as being a source of embarrassment and shame. Not only are periods seen as a humiliation, they are frequently absent from daily conversations. When inserted in conversation, periods are vaguely talked about and usually referred to by euphemisms. Commercials in these regions still depict menstruation as an enemy and are also vague as to what menstruation is. Products on the market are concerned with healing or fixing the problem and view menstruation as the enemy. While menstrual products are widely available in these countries, the expense of products on a monthly basis (specifically tampons) impacts women's finances, especially those that live below the poverty line. Menstrual products are also not covered by food stamps or WIC and therefore can be a financial burden for many women.

THINX.

The THINX organization aims to break period taboos while also addressing the needs of women who lack access to necessary menstrual sanitary products. THINX sells underwear that “can back up or replace tampons, pads, cups, or even sea sponges (if you’re into that), depending on your flow.”¹¹⁹ THINX has made news worldwide with their innovative product. Menstrual products have lacked innovation in recent years, and this product uses new technology to solve an old problem. This campaign is largely image-based in its mission to challenge menstrual taboos.

For this thesis, I will specifically study THINX advertisements. THINX also has one video advertisement where they demonstrate how their product works. This video ad is unique because it challenges taboos by not showing a pretty blue liquid and actually talking about menstruation. The video features “a model hooked up to a blood bag which distributed actual blood into her underwear” at a rate that is comparable to the rate that blood is released from the human body.¹²⁰ At the end of the video, the model gets up to show that her underwear did not leak on to the white block she was sitting on. The video also pokes fun at the typical advertisements for menstrual products. Because this is the first advertisement that actually depicts a woman on her period, I will be studying how THINX uses this message to challenge cultural taboos as well as their other advertisements.

119. “THINX,” *THINX*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <https://www.shethinx.com/>.

120. Kristina Monllos, “A Trans Man Stars in an Inclusive New Subway Ad for Period Underwear Brand Thinx Education through Representation.”

Red.fit campaign.

Bodyform is “one of the UK’s leading feminine protection brands.”¹²¹ Their belief is that “in life, nothing should ever hold you back,” which is why the company “is committed to helping women be their best selves with products designed to give [women] the confidence to push [their] boundaries.”¹²² The Bodyform team’s mission is to help women enjoy fitness at all points during menstruation, launching their new campaign Red.fit to empower “women to keep active while on their periods.”¹²³ In this thesis, I will study the campaign’s video called “Blood.” The video, created by the ad agency AMV BBDO,

shows a series of female athletes, from rugby players and boxers to skateboarders and bikers, getting a series of scrapes and cuts causing them to bleed. Each time, the determined women get up and keep fighting. The spot makes the connection to the brand clear with the tagline, “No blood should hold us back,” implying that menstruation shouldn’t be an impediment for female athletes.¹²⁴

This clip adds to the campaign by illustrating Bodyform’s message with powerful video elements and further “educates consumers about the menstrual cycle’s effect on exercise for women” as well as “empowering women who may have avoided working out while menstruating.”¹²⁵

121. “About Bodyform,” *Bodyform*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <http://www.bodyform.co.uk/all-about-us/about-bodyform/>.

122. *Ibid.*

123. Rachel Moss, “Bodyform’s ‘Red.fit’ Campaign Stops Periods Being ‘The Last Taboo’ in Women’s Sport,” *Huffington Post*, March 6, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/bodyform-redfit-campaign-periods-in-sport_uk_575175abe4b0b23a261a286b.

124. Oster, “AMV BBDO, Bodyform Think.”

125. *Ibid.*

Free the Tampons.

In June of 2016, “New York City passed legislation that would provide free tampons and pads in schools, prisons, and shelters—a first in the nation.”¹²⁶ Decades earlier, Nancy Kramer, an entrepreneur from Columbus, Ohio, had the same idea. Nancy Kramer started “Free the Tampons, a campaign to make feminine products accessible in all restrooms. [Kramer] said the cost of stocking restrooms at a school or business with sanitary supplies works out to \$4.67 per girl per year.”¹²⁷ Kramer “spearheaded a social movement” and hopes that “what happened in New York is only the beginning” of a domino effect of “free feminine products available across the United States—and the world.”¹²⁸

This campaign is unique because it has inspired action, such as the legislation that was passed in New York, and because it is interactive. The campaign promotes use of the hashtag #FreetheTampons and compiles the trending hashtag feed on their website under “#FreetheTampons.”¹²⁹ The organization also encourages supporters to share their own stories. Their goal is to help followers inspire change by sharing a time they have been caught without a tampon or sharing how they are helping to bring free tampons to their communities.¹³⁰ The foundation has also posted twenty articles on their website for

126. David Rosenberg, “How ‘Free the Tampons’ Went from an Idea into a Law,” *TEDx Innovations*, July 11, 2016, <https://tedxinnovations.ted.com/2016/07/11/how-free-the-tampon-went-from-an-idea-into-a-law/>.

127. Roni Caryn Rabin, “Free the Tampons,” *New York Times*, February 29, 2016, <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/02/29/free-the-tampons/>.

128. Rosenberg, “How ‘Free the Tampons’ Went from an Idea into a Law.”

129. “#FreetheTampons,” *Free the Tampons*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <http://www.freethetampons.org/freethetampons.html>.

130. “Stories,” *Free the Tampons*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <http://www.freethetampons.org/stories.html>.

supporters to read. For this thesis, I will examine two personal stories posted on the organization's website. I picked these two testimonies because they represent both the mission of the organization and the common frustrations discussed in the other stories posted.

Texts from India

In India, many young girls and women are unaware of what menstruation is before they experience their first menses. Puberty is hardly discussed in India, and therefore menstruation is also absent from conversation. Most young girls have to look to their parents, specifically their mothers, for information about their periods and how to manage menstruation. This leads to the passing down among generations of myths and improper menstrual hygiene practices. Girls are taught to believe in myths and follow strict restrictions that inhibit them from daily activities when they are menstruating. Because these myths are so commonly believed and continue to be spread, women grow up with a false reality about their periods. Many women following these rules will experience infections which impacts the rise in cervical cancer among women in India. Since India holds tradition and cultural customs in high regard, women do not know or fully understand how these norms and rules are detrimental to their health and well-being. I chose to focus on India as a region of study because of these strong traditional views and barriers to overcoming menstrual taboos.

Breaking the Silence.

Breaking the Silence Campaign, "in conjunction with in-person trainings, . . . has raised awareness about menstruation through social media, introducing interviews,

information, a hotline, and quizzes to engage both women and men.”¹³¹ The reality in India is that “23% of girls in India are leaving school after they have their periods” because of “the embarrassment they suffer due to poor sanitary conditions in schools,” but founder Urmila Chanam hopes to see this statistic decline and change reality.¹³² Besides educating and bringing awareness to India about menstruation, “Chanam also wants the government to include a chapter on ‘Menstrual Hygiene Education’ in the school curriculum which should be taught diligently to both the genders.”¹³³

This campaign is unique because it is rather large, yet operated by one woman without the backing of a nonprofit organization. While the campaign is a one-person operation, it has been widely successful. This campaign is also unique because it solely focuses its efforts on providing menstrual education through social media and hands-on training. For this thesis, I will examine Breaking the Silence’s social media platforms (specifically Facebook) and videos that were posted on the platform. I will be specifically examining the short video filmed and posted by founder Urmila Chanam and a longer film created by the organization. I chose to examine the shorter video by Chanam because it is heavily circulated on both her Facebook page and on the website. I decided to study the longer film by the organization because of its length and because the film illustrates the norms and restrictions placed on women during menstruation.

131. “Menstrual Blood Is Not Impure.”

132. Nandakumar, “Shed Your Inhibition about the Taboos and Myths of Menstrual Hygiene.”

133. Ibid.

Menstrupedia.

Menstrupedia is a “90-page comic book and online platform” that integrates “fun real-life stories and colorful illustrations to build menstrual awareness. The website and comic market themselves as an encyclopedia about periods, discussing issues including puberty and the physiology behind menstruation, as well as menstrual myths.”¹³⁴ The comic book was specifically designed for young girls ages nine to fourteen. This book is unusual because “there is no other Indian initiative similar to *Menstrupedia*.”

For this thesis, I will closely examine key sections of the 83-page comic book to analyze how the authors are communicating about this topic while challenging taboos, yet not offending their audience. I will be focusing my analysis on panels that specifically talk about menstruation and acceptable menstrual practices.

#HappytoBleed.

On November 20, 2015, twenty-year-old “Nikita Azad wrote an open letter to Prayar Gopalakrishnan, the Devaswom chief of the Sabarimala temple in Kerala” after “he had reportedly talked about a machine to scan if it is the ‘right time’ for a woman to enter the Sabarimala temple, which does not allow access to women in the reproductive age.”¹³⁵ Azad was outraged by the comment and launched the #HappytoBleed campaign “on November 21, 2015 as a counter attack against the sexist statement” made by the

134. “Website and Comic Book ‘Menstrupedia’ Breaks Taboo across India,” *Today*, April 11, 2014, <http://www.todayonline.com/china/india/website-and-comic-book-menstrupedia-breaks-taboo-across-india?singlepage=true>.

135. Harish V Nair, “Women Entry to Sabrimala: Happy Bleed Activists Move Supreme Court,” *India Today*, February 16, 2016, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/women-entry-to-sabrimala-happy-to-bleed-activists-move-supreme-court/1/596982.html>.

Devaswom chief.¹³⁶ The #HappytoBleed campaign challenges “menstrual taboos and sexism that women are subject to” and “acknowledges menstruation as a natural activity which doesn’t need curtains to hide behind.”¹³⁷ The campaign started as a week-long Facebook event that garnered 2.1 thousand people interested in the event and 8.4 thousand shares. The campaign “urges young women to hold placards/sanitary napkins/charts saying Happy to Bleed, take their pictures, upload to their profiles, and send it to the [organization], in order to oppose the shame game played by patriarchal society.”¹³⁸ The group also states that they “appeal to men to participate in the campaign by quoting that they support it, so as to break with [the] men-hating myth that is being built.”¹³⁹ Because the campaign primarily exists on Facebook, I will be studying how Nikita Azad has encouraged participants in the movement by using the hashtag #HappytoBleed. In order to do this, I will be examining posts on Facebook that utilize the hashtag #HappyToBleed.

Texts from South Africa

Lastly, I chose to examine the entire region of South Africa because the region yielded a lot of recent conversations about menstruation. In my research, I found the most artifacts challenging menstrual taboos in South Africa. Although I found a lot of nonprofits and small organizations talking about these issues of menstrual taboos in the area, it was difficult to find sources on the facts of menstrual attitudes and hygiene

136. Nikita Azad, “#HappytoBleed: An Initiative Against Sexism,” *Counter Currents*, November 23, 2015, <http://www.countercurrents.org/azad231115.htm>.

137. Nair, “Women Entry to Sabrimala.”

138. Happy to Bleed’s Facebook page, last accessed November 28, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/events/757746744337128/>.

139. Azad, “#HappytoBleed.”

practices. This could be due to the issue of the government ignoring the problem of menstrual health in the country for so long. Until recently, menstrual sanitation has been absent from conversations across the nation. Another reason could be that menstrual hygiene has been overlooked due to the focus on other efforts such as water sanitation and education in the country. Many universities are located in South Africa, such as the University of Cape Town and the University of Witwatersrand, which in 2016 were the top two universities in Africa. South Africa also has both large rural and urban areas which creates the issue of the lack of equal resources spread to the people. In the rural areas of South Africa, women were more likely to lack resources to manage their menstruation as well as lack information about their periods. While this still impacts those living in urban areas, urban areas tend to have greater access to both information and resources for menstruation. In South Africa, menstruation is not discussed openly in conversation. Menstrual hygiene is a huge issue in South Africa due to the lack of resources and proper sanitation in many parts of South Africa including schools. Since menstruation is absent from conversation, women are unable to discuss their challenges and find ways to overcome these barriers.

Red Wings Project.

Olwethu Njoloza-Leshabane started the Red Wings Project in November 2014. She was inspired to start the organization after visiting a low-income suburb in Johannesburg, South Africa and hearing that a young girl was caught stealing underwear from her neighbor's washing line. She found out that the young girl stole the underwear because "she had begun her periods and menstruated on the only underwear she owned so

needed another one to change.”¹⁴⁰ Since then, Olwethu has been teaching “school-going girls about their reproductive system as well as distribut[ing] sanitary pads to those girls in the most deprived circumstances.”¹⁴¹ Through the Red Wings Project, she tries to “dispel the taboos that exist in South Africa around women’s menstruation so that they are able to talk about any challenges they face during menstruation.”¹⁴² This has inspired the mission of the Red Wings Project, which is to

increase access to sanitary products to disadvantaged females, create awareness around the lack of sanitation faced by a major portion of South African women, collect and donate sanitary products to the disadvantaged, eradicate the taboos of girls and women feeling humiliated when their [sic] on their menses, call on policy makers to make women sanitary products available to the underprivileged, consolidate all sanitary distribution efforts all across the country into a central in-sync mechanism that enables equal and fair distribution to all areas, and educate women and girls about the disposal of used sanitary products and the importance thereof.¹⁴³

In this thesis, I will analyze how the Red Wings Project utilizes their Facebook page to start conversations about menstruation through images, posts, and hashtags. In order to do this, I will specifically focus on posts that utilize the hashtag #redheelmonday.

#WorthBleedingFor campaign.

Amnesty International WITS’ (Witwatersrand) campaign is “called #WorthBleedingFor and elaborates on wider concerns around issues of exclusion and

140. Gwadamirari Majange, “Strong Girls to Inspire: Olwethu Njoloza-Lesha (Humanitarian).” *One*. September 2, 2015. <https://www.one.org/africa/blog/strong-girls-to-inspire-olwethu-njoloza-leshabane-humanitarian/>.

141. *Ibid.*

142. *Ibid.*

143. Red Wings Project, “About.”

how they impact poor women and university workers.”¹⁴⁴ #WorthBleedingFor also “aims to raise awareness and remove stigma around menstruation so that South Africans can comfortably talk about issues affecting women’s health.”¹⁴⁵ The organization has organized gatherings and marches, circulated petitions, promoted wearing red shirts, and has continued to use the hashtag #WorthBleedingFor on social media. In this thesis, I will be examining the organization’s messages aimed at bringing awareness to not only their university and community, but also to the menstruation-related problems girls and women face in their country. Specifically, I will be analyzing texts posted on their Facebook page. I will also be following the hashtag #WorthBleedingFor. This campaign is interesting to examine because it was started by a small group on a university campus but aims to tackle a major national issue. They have made news and have had organizations partner with them to bring menstrual cups and hygiene to the community.

Serithi campaign.

The Serithi Campaign launched on September 20, 2015. Their logo reads: “dignity is not a privilege.”¹⁴⁶ The campaign was inspired by “the lack of affordable menstrual hygiene products combined with insufficient or unclean sanitation facilities at schools lead[ing] millions of girls in developing countries to stay home during their periods.”¹⁴⁷ The organization’s mission is to curb “the growing crisis experienced by

144. Lwandile Fikeni, “Amnesty International Wits Petitions Vice-Chancellor for Free Pads,” *Wits Vuvuzela*, April 9, 2016, <http://witsvuvuzela.com/2016/04/09/amnesty-international-wits-petitions-vice-chancellor-for-free-pads/>.

145. Fikeni, “Amnesty International Wits Petitions Vice-Chancellor for Free Pads.”

146. Serithi Campaign’s Facebook page, last accessed November 21, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/serithicampaign>.

147. Sarah Ruiz-Grossman, “Students Get Free Menstrual Cups So They Don’t Have to Miss School,” *The Huffington Post*, May 17, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/serithi-campaign-south-africa-menstrual-cups-school_us_573a3a93e4b077d4d6f3ce39.

young girls across the country [South Africa] who face absenteeism due to being unequipped for their menstrual cycle.”¹⁴⁸ This campaign is heavily image-based on social media, specifically relying on Facebook posts. I will be further examining these images posted on social media and how they aid in the campaign’s mission. I will also closely examine how the campaign communicates about its partnership with Mina Cup.

Conclusion

Because “taboo behaviors and communications are by definition those which are not performed or discussed . . . they are often not the sort of actions that one engages in daily or even sporadically.”¹⁴⁹ The artifacts I will examine in this thesis include persuasive messages with the goal to create a movement that challenges global attitudes and taboos about menstruation. These messages must be persuasive to elicit a response from their audience, expose audiences to quality messages that break taboos, and begin conversations to create support for their mission. These artifacts must move society members from blindly following traditional taboos that have been passed down for generations to starting a new reality by demystifying these taboos.

Because cultures determine norms and taboos around menstruation, this thesis will examine how cultures in the United States and the United Kingdom, India, and South Africa are shaping conversations about menstruation before analyzing key artifacts challenging menstrual taboos in those regions. Utilizing framing theory and linguistic relativity, I will study how these various artifacts work to shape new realities about menstruation for societies around the world through framing artifacts to share lived

148. Serithi Campaign’s Facebook page.

149. Walter Gantz, *The Movement of Taboos: A Message-Oriented Approach*, (Washington, D.C.:Eric Clearinghouse, 1978): 26, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED165143.pdf>.

experiences, changing how menstruation is talked about, and providing new knowledge about menstruation. These theories will provide the lenses through which I examine my texts, and when combined with an understanding of each country's cultural background, I will examine how each text is framing language to create a new reality. Ultimately, this thesis will answer the following questions: (1) How are these artifacts utilizing message framing to reach their audiences? and (2) Through message framing, how are these texts shaping language to create a new reality? After my analysis through my theoretical frameworks and my application to answer my first two research questions, I will then be able to answer my last research question: (3) How are rhetorical artifacts combating menstrual taboos in various cultures in the world?

I have organized the next three chapters by the previously defined regions and then by the artifacts within each region. I will overview the context of each region before going further into analyzing the texts. It is imperative to understand conversations currently happening in each region and the reality for menstruating women, which will give me insight into why menstrual taboos exist in that region and how each artifact is working to combat these obstacles.

In Chapter II, I will examine artifacts from the United States and the United Kingdom. For the U.S. campaign THINX, I will be addressing their recent ads in my analysis. The UK's Red.fit campaign has the powerful video "Blood" that I will focus my analysis on in this section of this thesis. In my analysis of the #FreetheTampons campaign, I will further analyze two of the many personal stories posted on the website.

In Chapter III, I will study texts from India. For the Breaking the Silence campaign, I will narrow my analysis to the circulating Facebook video the founder posted

on her page and a longer film that depicts the reality for menstruating women in India. Because the *Menstrupedia* comic book has 83 pages of material, I will select panels that best represent the whole book and the mission of the authors to analyze. Lastly, I will then analyze the campaign #HappytoBleed, by looking solely at Facebook posts that use the hashtag.

Finally, in Chapter IV, I will address selected artifacts from South Africa. For the Red Wings Project, I will focus specifically on their social media artifacts and following the #redheelmonday posts. I will choose the texts and images that best represent the overall campaign and that are contributing the most to the conversation. For the #worthbleedingfor campaign, I will focus my analysis on the long texts posted to their Facebook page. The Serithi Campaign focuses exclusively on image-based posts on their social media.

For all of my texts, I will look at how each rhetor's framing of media and messages is challenging current taboos about menstruation. The language each rhetor crafts creates a new reality in which women understand the truth about menstruation and no longer feel shame when menstruating. In this reality, women have access to sanitary products and are not ostracized by society. Girls around the world are expected not to discuss their bodies in fear of making someone feel disgusted by their body. We, as women, have been taught to hide our experiences. When women continue to avoid talking about the natural occurrences of their bodies and hide in shame, they are perpetuating a source of oppression. Menstrual taboos are just one more way women are oppressed and separated from men around the world. Women will never experience true equality in the world as long as the menstrual taboo still exists.

CHAPTER II

BREAKING TABOOS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

Growing up in the United States, I always considered myself privileged to have access to clean water and private restrooms on a daily basis. But even in this Western and technologically advanced nation, we still do not have the resources to handle a monthly phenomenon. Approximately 50% of people in the United States either has previously experienced or still experiences menstruation, yet we lack knowledge about what menstruation is. Instead of being taught the science behind what our bodies are doing every month, we are taught to fear wearing white pants for a week every month. We are taught to ask our friends to “check me” throughout the day. We are embarrassed when we soil our underwear, our clothes, and our sheets. And we are frustrated yet too familiar with the lack of private stall wastebaskets in every restroom for menstrual product disposal. Despite the fact that the United States and the United Kingdom pride themselves on being innovative and having resources widely available to most of the population, the two nations are still far behind when it comes to menstruation. In this chapter, I will discuss menstrual taboos in the United States and the United Kingdom before analyzing three artifacts that are challenging taboos in these nations.

Menstrual Taboos in the United States and United Kingdom

The books I sent away for explaining menstruation arrived in *plain* brown wrapping. My father got to them first, and *taunted* me by holding them over his head so that they were out of my reach. [emphasis added]¹

While this testimony comes from the 1970 pamphlet “Women and Their Bodies: A course by Boston Women’s Health Collective” later known as “Our Bodies, Ourselves,” not much has changed in the United States and United Kingdom regarding menstrual taboos over the past 37 years. In 1969, twelve women formed the Boston Women’s Health Collective now known as Our Bodies, Ourselves. The group “published a 193-page course booklet on stapled newsprint entitled ‘Women and Their Bodies.’”² This 75-cent pamphlet was revolutionary at the time because it discussed sexuality and abortion, matters that were illegal at the time. One year later, the book title was changed to “Our Bodies, Ourselves” to “emphasize women taking full ownership of their bodies.”³ This book was the first of its kind to be written for women about their bodies. It has been updated and published “every four to six years” since 1971 and “has been reproduced in 30 languages, reaching millions of women around the world.”⁴ Other than “Our Bodies, Ourselves,” very little literature has been produced on menstruation in either the United States or the United Kingdom since beginning the new millennium. In fact, “much of what is known about the puberty experiences of US adolescent girls is derived from literature published in the 1980s and 1990s.”⁵

1. Boston Women’s Health Collective, *Women and Their Bodies: A Course by Boston Women’s Health Collective* (Boston, MA: New England Free Press, 1970), 11.

2. “History,” *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, 2017, <http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/history/>.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. Ann C. Herbert, Ana Maria Ramirez, Grace Lee, Savannah J. North, Melanie S. Askari, Rebecca L. West, and Marni Sommer, “Puberty Experiences of Low-Income Girls in the United

Women’s studies researcher Chris Bobel states that “menstrual health activism is rooted in the women’s health movement of the 1970s and 1980s,” and has “naturally led some activists to ask questions about how women managed their menstrual cycles.”⁶ In 1977, the menstrual cycle became a “worthy subject of scholarly research” when the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research was founded.⁷ Up until that time, researchers and society had been oblivious to the health impacts of popular menstrual hygiene products. In 1980, the rise in cases of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS), a bacterial infection associated with the use of tampons because of their high absorbency that can sometimes lead to death, finally inserted menstrual hygiene safety into public conversation. During this decade, the CDC found a link between the “continuous use of tampons with a higher risk of TSS” due to tampon composition.⁸ It was not until 1982 that the Food and Drug Association (FDA) finally issued “a regulation that requires tampon package labels to advise women to use the lowest absorbency tampon to meet their needs.”⁹

In the UK, similar conversations also were occurring. In 1989, a group of “feminist environmental activists” enraged consumers and inspired “the Sanitary Protection Scandal, which inspired the national network television program *World in*

States: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Literature From 2000 to 2014,” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 3, no. 1 (2016): 363, doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2016.10.008.

6. Chris Bobel, “‘Our Revolution Has Style’: Contemporary Menstrual Product Activists ‘Doing Feminism’ in the Third Wave,” *Sex Roles* 54, no. 1 (2006): 332, doi:10.1007/s11199-006-9001-7.

7. Ibid.

8. “Historical Perspectives Reduced Incidence of Menstrual Toxic-Shock Syndrome—United States, 1980-1990,” *CDC*, last updated May 2, 2001, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00001651.htm>.

9. Bobel, “‘Our Revolution Has Style,’” 333.

Action to air a program on the hazards of chlorine gas bleached paper products.”¹⁰

Chlorine gas was commonly used to bleach wood pulp before it was turned into rayon (the product that tampons are to this day made of). Chlorine gas produces dioxin, which has “been linked to cancer, toxic shock syndrome, endometriosis, and birth defects among other health problems.”¹¹ Just six weeks after this scandal, “all of the major British sanitary protection producers, except tampon manufacturers, pledged to eliminate the use of chlorine gas bleaching.”¹² While most companies no longer use this method to produce tampons, to this day the FDA still does not regulate the chemicals used in tampons; they simply continue to mandate that tampon products issue a warning on their boxes notifying users of their risks.

Tampons are also taxed in both the United States and United Kingdom. In fact, while “there’s a sales tax exemption for treating erectile dysfunction in Wisconsin,” sales tax is still “applied to tampons and pads.”¹³ According to the *Washington Post*, “although sales taxes don’t specifically target feminine hygiene products, only a handful of states, including Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, give an exemption.”¹⁴ This sales tax on tampons “can add an upwards of 66 cents per box, but over the course

10. *Ibid.*, 334.

11. *Ibid.*, 334.

12. *Ibid.*

13 Jordan Gass-Poore, “Citing Gender Bias, State Lawmakers Move to Eliminate ‘Tampon Tax,’” *NPR: Politics*, March 6, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/2016/03/06/467377295/citing-gender-bias-state-lawmakers-move-to-eliminate-tampon-tax>.

14. Kristine Phillips, “‘There’s No Happy Hour for Menstruation’: Tax Liquor Instead of Tampons, Lawmakers Say,” *Washington Post*, March 13, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/03/13/theres-no-happy-hour-for-menstruation-tax-liquor-instead-of-tampons-lawmakers-say/>.

of a woman's lifetime, that adds up."¹⁵ NPR reported that "recent estimates by Euromonitor International, a market research firm, suggest that an American women between the ages of 12 and 54 spent 17.60 on average on tampons and pads last year;" therefore, "a large chunk of the US population has paid millions for this extra expense."¹⁶ This extra cost builds up and makes buying these necessary items difficult for women who lack the financial means to afford them on a monthly basis. California state assembly woman Cristina Garcia proposed to end the tampon tax "while raising taxes on liquor to make up for the revenue loss."¹⁷ This idea would save "California women about \$20 million a year in taxes."¹⁸ So far, eight states in the United States "have made tampons and sanitary products tax-exempt,"¹⁹ but "in order for all women to stop paying a tax on feminine hygiene products, all 50 states would have to eliminate the sales tax on tampons and pads."²⁰ The United Kingdom has also debated a tax exemption for tampons and pads. Women in the United Kingdom "are charged an additional fee whenever they purchase tampons and maxi pads" because "sanitary products are still considered a 'luxury item' by the government, even though other toiletries like razors and incontinence pads are not subject to the same tax."²¹ Women protested this tax by "publicly forgo[ing] tampons and pads while on their periods" to show the necessity of

15. Gass-Poore, "Citing Gender Bias, State Lawmakers Move to Eliminate 'Tampon Tax.'"

16. Ibid.

17. Phillips, "'There's No Happy Hour for Menstruation.'"

18. Ibid.

19. Jennifer Calfas, "Most States Charge a Tax on Tampons. This Lawmaker Has a Brilliant Solution," *Time*, March 15, 2017, <http://time.com/money/4701623/california-tampon-tax/>.

20. Gass-Poore, "Citing Gender Bias, State Lawmakers Move to Eliminate 'Tampon Tax.'"

21. Samantha Guff, "Women Protested the UK's 'Tampon Tax' By Bleeding in White Pants," *Huffington Post*, November 9, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/women-protest-tampon-tax-in-white-pants_us_5640bf35e4b0411d3071a92e.

tampons.²² In 2016, British Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the tampon tax would be eliminated—but not until 2018.²³ For now, the tampon tax revenue will be “earmarked for women’s charities.”²⁴

The feminine products industry in the United States and the United Kingdom not only provides products to handle menstruation, but also shapes the conversation about menstruation. Products are advertised as being “rustle-free” or compact so they can be hidden. The rhetoric on menstrual products continues to “promote secrecy” and treat menstruation as if menstruation is an illness.²⁵ Menstrual advertisements use “popular terminology [that] conveys negative attitudes and perpetuates stereotypes related to menstruation and creates social distance between the sexes.”²⁶ Products even are produced to manage and even eliminate or treat periods which further “denigrates menstruation.”²⁷ When women in Britain were surveyed about their experiences with menstruation, their responses echoed the same themes that are conveyed in menstrual advertisements.²⁸ According to a recent poll by ActionAid, “one in three British women

22. Ibid.

23. Harriet Williamson, “Just When You Thought It Had Gone, Philip Hammond’s Budget Brings Back the Tampon Tax,” *Independent UK*, March 8, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/2017-budget-philp-hammond-tampon-tax-domestic-violence-its-back-a7619071.html>.

24. Ibid.

25. Margaret L. Stubbs, “Perceptions and Practices around Menarche and Adolescent Menstruation in the United States,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1135, no. 1 (2008): 60, doi:10.1196/annals.1429.008.

26. Patricia McKeever, “The Perpetuation of Menstrual Shame: Implications and Directions,” *Women & Health* 9, no. 4 (1984): 34.

27. Stubbs, “Perceptions and Practices around Menarche and Adolescent Menstruation in the United States,” 61.

28. Ingrid Johnston-Robledo and Joan C. Chrisler, “The Menstrual Mark: Menstruation as Social Stigma,” *Sex Roles* 68, no. 1 (2013): 12, doi:10.1007/s11199-011-0052-z.

admit they are embarrassed about their periods.”²⁹ The same poll also stated that “over three and half million girls and women in the UK have missed school or work because of their period, yet only a quarter spoke honestly about the reason.”³⁰ Similarly, “girls living in the US learn simultaneously that menstruation is important and natural and that they should hide and ignore it.”³¹ Women take extraordinary measures “to hide any sign of menstrual blood in order not to embarrass themselves or their observers.”³² In fact, “most prepubertal children are unaware that their mothers and adolescent sisters are menstruating roughly 25% of the time.”³³ Because of this, young girls are raised to believe that their periods must be secretive and that they should feel embarrassed when menstruating.

Literature from the 2000s to the present also “focuses on the timing of pubertal onset.”³⁴ Young girls lack education about their menstruation and are concerned with the timing of their periods. Girls who started their periods either later or earlier than their friends, suffer from lower self-esteem and negative attitudes about menstruation.³⁵ Young girls are unfamiliar with what a “normal” period looks like and the timing of their periods, when in reality, it is normal that women’s bodies and menstruation are unique.

29. Rachel Moss, “World Menstrual Hygiene Day: Third of British Women Too Embarrassed to Talk About Periods,” *Huffingtonpost UK*, May 27, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/british-woman-too-embarrassed-to-talk-about-periods-action-aid_uk_5747ff03e4b03e9b9ed5a43b.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler, “The Menstrual Mark,” 15.

32. McKeever, “The Perpetuation of Menstrual Shame: Implications and Directions,” 33.

33. *Ibid.*, 35.

34. Herbert et al., “Puberty Experiences of Low-Income Girls in the United States,” 363.

35. *Ibid.*

Today, in both the United States and the United Kingdom, “menstrual activists are more pointed in their critique of the menstrual product manufacturers by emphasizing both their environmental disregard and the profit motive. However, the extent to which young girls are aware of these commentaries is unknown.”³⁶ Even though these conversations are starting to circulate, many companies are ignoring where the problem needs to be addressed - prepubescent children. Literature has continued to show that these taboos start early on, and that if menstrual activists really want to eliminate the menstrual taboo, they need to change society’s perceptions by changing the message being communicated to children about menstruation.

But despite these challenges, some changes are underway, such as the continuing conversation regarding the tampon tax and the recent idea of “period leave.” A “largely female” firm in Bristol, UK “has introduced a ‘period policy’ in an effort to give women more flexibility and ‘create a happier and healthier working environment.’”³⁷ The company “hopes to tackle the taboo of menstruation by becoming the first company in the UK to introduce a policy to allow women leave if they are suffering.”³⁸ Additionally, US organizations such as “Aunt Flow” and “Lola” are making it easier and more affordable to get menstrual products that are 100% cotton and produced without chemicals by offering a subscription service that delivers these products to a consumer’s front door.

36. Stubbs, “Perceptions and Practices around Menarche and Adolescent Menstruation in the United States,” 60.

37. Kayleigh Lewis, “Company Gives Women ‘Period Leave’ to Make Them More Productive,” *Independent*, March 1, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/period-leave-menstruation-work-employment-uk-women-a6905426.html>.

38. Lewis, “Company Gives Women ‘Period Leave’ to Make Them More Productive.”

United States and United Kingdom Campaigns

Even this brief overview illustrates how menstrual taboos are being challenged in the United States and the United Kingdom. Indeed, these issues are becoming a trending topic across both nations. This thesis will specifically look at how Thinx, Red.fit, and #FreetheTampons are each working to create change in the United States and United Kingdom. Before I begin my analysis of texts from these three campaigns, the next section will provide additional background information about each campaign.

THINX

THINX sells “period-proof” panties “for modern women.”³⁹ According to their website, twin sisters and co-founders Miki and Radha Agrawal began THINX in January 2014 in New York. Miki states that her “favorite thing to talk about, is what you are not supposed to talk about” because talking about menstruation is taboo.⁴⁰ The sisters were inspired to start the organization after years of experiencing embarrassing period stories and coming to the realization that their parents never talked to them about their periods. They later asked their parents why they never talked to them about their periods, and they replied that they felt uncomfortable.

The organization not only combats menstrual taboos, but also, for every pair of THINX sold, the business “generates a donation to Uganda based AFRIPads, which trains women in developing countries to make and sell reusable pads, which are sold at

³⁹ “THINX,” *THINX*, last accessed March 18, 2017.

⁴⁰ “About,” *THINX*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <https://www.shethinx.com/pages/about-us>.

affordable prices to local women.”⁴¹ THINX even has a referral program that encourages consumers to refer friends. For every friend referred who makes a purchase, the customer gets ten dollars on their THINX account and “unlimited street cred for being a taboo-breaking G.”⁴²

The company promotes the underwear as able to “absorb up to 2 tampons’ worth of blood, yet look and feel like a regular pair of underwear.”⁴³ The “period-proof” underwear is guaranteed to protect from leaks and is reusable, saving the consumer money on not having to buy menstrual products. The underwear just need to be rinsed after used, cold washed, and then hung to dry. They can even be washed with other clothing in the washer. The website has three levels for their underwear—for heavy days, medium days, and light days—as well as different styles such as boyshort, thong, and hiphugger. THINX period underwear are made of material that is “anti-microbial, moisture-wicking, absorbent, and leak-resistant.”⁴⁴ The design allows for the top to stay dry so consumers do not feel like they are sitting in a diaper, while the bottom layer absorbs liquids and fights bacteria. The website also has a chart for their clients that shows how absorbent each pair is by style. They also sell a boyshort style of underwear that is “gender-neutral.”⁴⁵

41. Emma Johnson, “Can These Panties Disrupt the \$15 Billion Feminine Hygiene Market,” *Forbes*, May 28, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/emmajohnson/2015/05/28/can-these-panties-disrupt-a-15-billion-feminine-hygiene-market/3/#7bcfa9b47a29>.

42. “Get 10\$,” *THINX*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <https://www.shethinx.com/pages/get10>.

43. “THINX.”

44. “How It Works,” *THINX*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <https://www.shethinx.com/pages/it-works>.

45. *Ibid.*

THINX markets themselves as selling “a brand of underwear for humans that menstruate.”⁴⁶ Therefore, in their latest subway campaign in New York’s Union Square Station, their advertisements featured a transgender man. Their point was to “educate people through representation of the trans menstruating male community in [their] new ads.”⁴⁷ THINX’s mission is to sell “underwear for people with periods” regardless of gender.⁴⁸ The organization challenges all period taboos with this and all their advertisements. In San Francisco, THINX had one of their advertisements banned from the metro system because “the ad read ‘pussy-grabbing-proof underwear,’ a nod to Trump’s now infamous ‘grab them by the pussy’ statement from a recently surfaced 2005 videotape.”⁴⁹ In addition to that advertisement, another ad had political undertones by promoting “glass-ceiling-proof underwear.”⁵⁰ The San Francisco Metro stated that the message was vulgar and inappropriate inside the stations. In response to the ad being banned, Miki Agrawal stated that “we figured since the Republican national candidate said it, we could say it too.”⁵¹ A year previously, the company dealt with similar problems on the New York subway. Advertisements illustrating “images of a peeled grapefruit, an egg, a few models, and the text ‘underwear for women with periods’” were

46. Kristina Monllos, “A Trans Man Stars in an Inclusive New Subway Ad for Period Underwear Brand Thinx Education through Representation,” *AdWeek*, May 17, 2016, <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/inclusive-new-subway-ads-period-underwear-brand-thinx-feature-trans-man-171508>.

47. *Ibid.*

48. “THINX.”

49. Sara Ashely O’Brien, “Trump-Inspired Thinx ‘Pussy’ Ad Banned in SF Subway,” *CNN Tech*, November 2, 2016, <http://money.cnn.com/2016/11/03/technology/thinx-trump-inspired-bart-ad/>.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*

deemed inappropriate and almost banned.⁵² Outfront Media, the company that approves the subway's advertisements, claimed that the advertisements showed too much skin and seemed inappropriate; they even suggested removing the word "period" from the ads in order to get them approved. Of course, this caused outrage because the advertisements did not show any sexually explicit images or scantily dressed women, but rather just challenged menstrual taboos in the United States. Fortunately, "Agrawal used outrage in the press to protest the decision [to ban the advertisements] and ultimately got the ads approved."⁵³

The company also offers active wear such as unitards and leotards that are designed for "providing perfect backup protection" while also being functionally appropriate for exercise.⁵⁴ Recently, the organization now sells 100% organic tampons that are produced without chemicals and do not come in a plastic cardboard applicator, meaning they "are bare naked."⁵⁵ The packaging of the tampons is unique in the feminine hygiene industry. The outside case depicts a tampon sliding into a vagina illustration whenever the box is slid closed. The company's mission to end menstrual taboos can be seen on all of their products and even their merchandise that has stitching of a grapefruit (resembling a vagina) on beanies, hats with the word "moist" on them, and t-shirts that say "real menstruating human." In the analysis section of this thesis, I will analyze

52. Ellen Scott, "This Advert Is at the Centre of All Kinds of Controversy for Daring to Mention Periods," *Metro*, October 22, 2015, <http://metro.co.uk/2015/10/22/this-advert-is-at-the-centre-of-all-kinds-of-controversy-for-daring-to-mention-periods-5455170/>.

53. O'Brien, "Trump-Inspired Thinx 'Pussy' Ad Banned in SF Subway."

54. "Activewear," *THINX*, Last accessed March 17, 2017, <https://www.shethinx.com/collections/activewear/>.

55. "Tampons," *THINX*, Last accessed March 17, 2017, <https://www.shethinx.com/products/tampons>.

THINX's short video advertisement that explains how their period underwear work. I will also be analyzing their print advertisements that have caused some controversy in the past.

Red.fit

Bodyform is “one of the UK’s leading feminine protection brands” and is “committed to helping women be their best selves with products designed to give [them] the confidence to push [their] boundaries.”⁵⁶ The company sells thin and thick pads as well as liners in various styles to fit different period needs. Bodyform products claim to fit perfectly due to their “unique SecureFit design,” to “stay in place with no risk of leaks,” and to “fit all women’s cycle needs.”⁵⁷ Their website breaks down their products for the consumer by telling which product would work for different parts of a woman’s cycle, when to use them, as well as just breaking down the parts of a woman’s cycle in detail. Bodyform has been around since the 1940s when they released their first crepe paper towel (sanitary napkin).⁵⁸ Their website gives information about periods, debunks period myths, offers a period calendar, gives information about first periods and puberty, and even offers advice to teens. Bodyform also has their own initiatives, one of which is the Red.fit campaign.

56. “About Bodyform,” *Bodyform*, last accessed March 17, 2017, <https://www.bodyform.co.uk/all-about-us/about-bodyform/>.

57. “What Is What,” *Bodyform*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <http://www.bodyform.co.uk/our-products/what-is-what/>.

58. “Bodyform Timeline,” *Bodyform*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <http://www.bodyform.co.uk/all-about-us/bodyform-timeline1/>.

The Red.fit campaign was developed “to help [women] keep fit right through [their] body’s monthly cycle.”⁵⁹ Their motto is that “no blood should hold [women] back.”⁶⁰ The campaign claims that “periods shouldn’t stop [women] from keeping fit, but there’s not much information out there to help.”⁶¹ Therefore, the campaign has aimed to give “expert guidance at each stage of [women’s] cycles to keep [them] feeling [their] best.”⁶² The campaign created “an online space offering women the information they need in order to feel energized and motivated throughout the month” called the Red.fit hub.⁶³ To do this, the campaign teamed up with Georgie Bruinvels, a sports scientist. Together, they split up a woman’s cycle into four parts—bleed, peak, burn, and fight. Bleed is the first phase of the cycle when women are menstruating, while phase two, peak, occurs right after a woman’s period. The third phase, burn, is when the body is high in hormones and metabolic rates are increased. Lastly, the fourth phase is fight and is the pre-menstrual phase. They also partnered with “gyms, natural fast food restaurant Leon, and Performance coach Faye Downey to provide the best exercise training, nutrition advice, and motivational inspiration” for each phrase of the cycle.⁶⁴ The Red.fit hub “offers tips for each stage, such as exercises to do during ‘bleed’ to ease stomach cramps and what food to eat during ‘burn’ to keep yourself fueled for working out.”⁶⁵ Not only

59. “What Is Red.fit,” *Bodyform*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <http://www.bodyform.co.uk/bodyform-initiatives/redfit/>.

60. Erik Oster, “AMV BBDO, Bodyform Think the ‘Last Taboo’ for Female Athletes is Menstrual Blood,” *AdWeek*, June 1, 2016, <http://www.adweek.com/agencyspy/amv-bbdo-bodyform-think-the-last-taboo-for-female-athletes-is-menstrual-blood/110338>.

61. “What Is Red.fit.”

62. *Ibid.*

63. Moss, “Bodyform’s ‘Red.fit’ Campaign.”

64. “What Is Red.fit.”

65. Moss, “Bodyform’s ‘Red.fit’ Campaign.”

does Bodyform list information about each phase and what is happening in the body during that phrase, they provide recipes, exercises, motivation tips, and even informational video “need-to-knows.”⁶⁶

Red.fit’s most featured artifact on their website is their 70-second video titled “Blood.” The video “features runners with scraped knees, boxers with bloody noses, and ballet dancers with raw toes, with the ultimate message that ‘no blood should hold us back.’”⁶⁷ The campaign aims to “tackle the last taboo in women’s sport by empowering women to keep active while on their periods.”⁶⁸ Their website also provides information including “exercise videos, nutritional information, and ‘motivational’ podcasts designed to be digested at various phases during the menstrual cycle ‘for ultimate benefit.’”⁶⁹ This powerful video and campaign is just one way women can learn more about their periods and “overcome the social barrier of discussing their periods.” In this thesis, I will focus specifically on analyzing this video campaign.

Free the Tampons

According to a national study commissioned by Free the Tampons (FTT), “86% [of women] started their period unexpectedly in public without the supplies they need.”⁷⁰ Out of that percentage, 79% of the women “improvised by ‘macgyvering’ a tampon or

66. “Burn,” *Bodyform*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <http://www.bodyform.co.uk/bodyform-initiatives/redfit/burn/>.

67. Rachel Moss, “Bodyform’s ‘Red.fit’ Campaign.”

68. Ibid.

69. Daniel Selwood, “Bodyform Unveils Red.fit Menstruation/Exercise Education Push,” *The Grocer*, May 31, 2016, <http://www.thegrocer.co.uk/buying-and-supplying/marketing/bodyform-unveils-redfit-menstruation/exercise-education-push/536896.article>.

70. “The Murphy’s Law of Menstruation,” *Free the Tampons*, August 2013, http://www.freethetampons.org/uploads/4/6/0/3/46036337/ft_infographic.pdf.

pad out of toilet paper or something else.”⁷¹ Therefore, “the Free the Tampon foundation believes that every bathroom outside the home should provide freely accessible items that women need for their periods.”⁷² Providing these products will prevent women from “an overwhelming emotional ordeal” when they start their periods in public.⁷³ The FTT foundation “is dedicated to providing education and resources that empower advocates to create change for women nationwide.”⁷⁴ Currently, the organization is in discussion “with business owners and in the public policy arena to overcome barriers, such as the concern that products would be excessively costly due to theft.”⁷⁵ The FTT website lists three ways supporters can get involved with the campaign. They state that individuals can join the conversation by following FTT on social media and sharing content, sharing personal period-related stories, and making a donation to the effort.⁷⁶

The FTT Foundation claims to be “on a mission to inspire change and drive demand for freely accessible tampons and pads in restrooms outside the home.”⁷⁷ Founder Nancy Kramer has “launched a national discussion about access to feminine care products in public restrooms” with the Free the Tampons campaign.⁷⁸ The website has five main menu items: about, news, action, stories, and #freethetampons. The about

71. “The Murphy’s Law of Menstruation.”

72. “About,” *Free the Tampons*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <http://www.freethetampons.org/about.html>.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. “Action,” *Free the Tampons*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <http://www.freethetampons.org/action.html>.

77. “About,” *Free the Tampons*.

78. Ibid.

section gives information about the foundation, campaign, and foundation members. The news tab gives links to various news articles talking about periods, tampon accessibility, and menstrual equality. The stories tab allows readers the opportunity to anonymously or not anonymously tell a story about a time they needed a tampon in public or about how they are helping in the mission to make tampons accessible. Not only can readers post their stories, but they can also read other people's stories, allowing them a chance to connect with others. The last tab, #freethetampons, is continuously changing because it is a hashtag generator that organizes and displays recent posts that have used the hashtag #freethetampons across different social media platforms. The FTT foundation gives women a chance to connect with others and to participate in their cause. It is motivational and can provide as an outlet for women to tell embarrassing period-related stories. For this thesis, I will be focusing my analysis on two testimonies shared on the website under "share your story."

These three artifacts are just a few examples of ways that menstruation taboos are currently being challenged. With the change of conversation about menstruation starting to become trendy, new organizations are emerging in the United States and United Kingdom that continue to further eradicate the menstrual taboo and provide safer ways to manage menstruation. Tampons can be found organically and delivered to doors, underwear can be used to absorb menstrual blood, and the pressure to hide periods is slowly starting to diminish. The next section of this thesis will further analyze each artifact.

Analysis

In this section, I will examine each artifact within the theoretical frameworks of framing and linguistic relativity, which I use to organize the analysis section. Then, within the framing theory section, I organize the analysis by the frames rhetors of each artifact used to communicate their organization's message. Because analysis through linguistic relativity does not yield similar themes, I organize this section by the way language is being used to shift realities. These two theories provide the methodology through which I will answer my first two research questions: (1) How are these artifacts utilizing message framing to reach their audiences? and (2) Through message framing, how are these texts shaping language to create a new reality? Then, based on each theoretical analysis and my answers to these two questions, I will address my final question: (3) How are rhetorical artifacts combating menstrual taboos in various cultures?

Framing

Throughout each artifact, rhetors craft messages with specific frames to influence thoughts, ideas, and attitudes concerning periods. The rhetors behind these campaigns use six frames throughout their artifacts: positive frames, negative frames, informative frames, shocking frames, motivational frames, and frames intended to blame the government for menstruation-related problems.

Positive frames.

In THINX's one minute and thirty-seven second advertisement for period underwear, they frame periods as being a positive and normal occurrence. The video begins with the narrator stating, "this girl is about to get her period but she's prepared,"

and the young woman on camera then smiles.⁷⁹ The video uses an IV and fluid bag full of red liquid to simulate menstrual blood, and the model is dressed wearing a shirt and the period underwear, but no pants. The bag and IV are used as a “period simulator” to illustrate how the THINX period underwear works by using a realistic depiction rather than the blue liquid used in traditional messages.

THINX also uses positive frames in their commercial to promote the idea that periods are normal by having the remainder of their video be an observation of “menstruating women.” The “mystical menstruating human” is reading, eating, cramping, exercising, meditating, eating more, and “when she is on her computer she could be writing her best-selling novel or her local congressman or she could just be looking up Facebook.”⁸⁰ At the end of the video, the woman stands up and the video zooms on the white cube she was sitting on to show that no blood leaked, proving that the product works. In the video, THINX not only uses positive frames, but also does so in a realistic fashion. By pairing this realistic depiction of a woman on her period with the old unrealistic advertisements, the audience is encouraged to realize that virtually all menstrual ads do use that blue liquid and happy women wearing white, but that those depictions are not realistic. Women in the audience also connect with the woman menstruating in the video because they too cramp, and they too go through the period side effect of cravings. Even though THINX depicts this reality, they do so in a positive frame to tell the audience that periods cause discomfort, but that this is normal.

79. “A Day in the Life of a Real Menstruating Human,” YouTube Video, 1.37, May 17, 2016, posted by Team THINX, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9z2IxJV11A>.

80. Ibid.

Negative frames.

Negative framing is also used throughout the THINX video. The video advertisement pokes fun at those “traditional” commercials and frames them in a negative light by stating that their video will be “without the use of fields of daisies, laughing, prancing women, or the ever favorite blue liquid demonstration.”⁸¹ By using humor to frame traditional commercials negatively, THINX is able to make their audience aware of the unrealistic depictions in other commercials and make the THINX commercial even more powerful. Using negative framing for the old advertisements makes the viewers feel negatively about those traditional advertisements and want to promote advertisements that depict the reality of menstruation accurately. The negative framing grabs the audience’s attention. They view the traditional commercials being made fun of, and they realize, “yeah those commercials do not actually talk about periods” or wonder, “yeah why are the women always dressed in white?” Once the audience is awakened to these ridiculous and unrealistic commercials, they can be more open to challenging how menstruation is discussed.

Informative frames.

The THINX video also utilizes an informative frame by describing how the product works and demonstrating how it can help manage menstruation. This video is unique because most menstruation videos do not actually demonstrate their product while using words such as “menstruation,” “period,” “cramping,” or using the color red to represent blood. Traditional advertisements are rather vague and unrealistic, while THINX frames this advertisement as informative and realistic— about a normal

81. Ibid.

occurrence for women that they do not need to be ashamed of. They proudly use the color red to represent blood and show a woman actually experiencing menstruation's side effects. Ultimately, the frames THINX uses in this video seek to change the attitudes women feel about their periods and promote embracing the natural phenomenon of periods.

Shocking frames.

THINX's controversial advertisements also rely on a "shocking" frame to elicit a response from their audience. As previously mentioned, the subway system in New York City even banned these advertisements because of their controversial images and text. In one advertisement, THINX uses the image of a half-peeled grapefruit resembling a vagina, which is one of the logos featured on their merchandise. Next to the grapefruit, the text states "UNDERWEAR FOR WOMEN WITH PERIODS" in large font. In response to the recent scandal surrounding Republican Candidate Trump's vulgar comments about women, another ad shows a woman wearing the underwear and the text next to it states, "PUSSY-GRABBING-PROOF UNDERWEAR." A third shows a woman lying on the ground curled up in the underwear with a heating pad off to the side. The text next to the image reads, "PERIOD (and I'm hardcore cramping so pls just leave me be for 3-7 days)-PROOF UNDERWEAR." These advertisements are shocking because they frame THINX's message in a vastly different way than what is culturally "normal" or "acceptable." They are not vague at all, but actually depict a vagina and retaliate against patriarchal norms by showing a woman in pain from her cramps. THINX does not shy from using the word "period" or depicting menstruation as a natural occurrence in these advertisements. Although these messages were framed to be shocking

and to stand out from other menstruation product advertisements, this frame also impacts the audience's reality, working to show what realistic menstruation looks like and to inform viewers about the realities of periods. THINX is changing how menstruation is talked about in daily conversations, how advertisements talk about menstruation and menstrual products, and how women view periods.

Motivational frames.

Similarly to THINX's advertisements, Bodyform uses a motivational frame to depict menstruation by using blood throughout the one minute and twenty-two second "Blood" video in their Red.fit campaign. The video does not have words or text until the very end. It starts off with slow music and pans over several girls dressed in athletic wear. The music then speeds up, and the girls start to participate in different activities such as ballet, biking, soccer, running, surfing, boxing, skate boarding, and rock climbing. As the video progresses, the girls all start to bleed for various reasons. The runner falls down and scrapes her knee, the ballerina takes off her shoes to show her bloody feet, the biker skids and cuts her thigh, the boxer gets hit in the face, the surfer hits a wave and goes underwater bleeding from her nose, the skater slides and scrapes her elbow, and the rock climber has bloody hands from climbing. The video then shows a woman on a white horse with a sword and blood on her face. She looks like she has been through a tough battle. The clip shows her swinging her sword, and then fades black as the viewers hear the sound of ice or glass breaking. This brief part of the video could be a depiction of the battle women have taken on to break a "glass ceiling." The girl is bleeding, but she is able to shatter the glass/ice and ends victorious in her battle. Despite the fact that all of the women are bleeding, each of them continues to participate in activities without

wasting any time caring about the blood. A minute into the video, the words “No blood should hold us back” pop up on the screen as the woman on the horse runs across the screen carrying a flag as if she won a battle. Then the video shows the women continuing their activities after hurting themselves.⁸² And at the end of the video, Bodyform inserts text that states, “Live Fearless. Bodyform.” with the sound of the glass/ice shattering.⁸³ Finally, they leave audiences with the words “Don’t let your period stop you.”⁸⁴

Bodyform uses a motivational frame in this video. They want to evoke strong feelings that motivate women not to view their periods as a limitation. The video rallies young girls and women by showing them that they are strong and that nothing can stop them. Bodyform frames this message by showing blood from sports and from activities that people are passionate about or enjoy throughout the entire advertisement. This blood was not framed as being dirty, harmful, or shameful. Instead, Bodyform frames the blood as a result of being strong; it is a product of working hard, and this blood was earned. Throughout this video, blood is not stopping the women’s activities and does not appear to be an issue. At the end of the video, Bodyform compares this blood to menstrual blood by stating, “no blood should hold us back.”⁸⁵ By stating this, they claim that menstrual blood is not different than these examples of blood and should not hold women back because it is not dirty, harmful, or shameful. By using motivational framing and logic in comparing regular blood and menstrual blood, Bodyform is changing how women view

82. “Blood,” YouTube Video, 1.22, May 27, 2016, posted by Bodyform Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q1GVOYIcKc>.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

their periods. Women will be motivated to not let their periods hold them back from chasing their dreams and doing what they enjoy in life. When women allow their periods to control their lives and hold them back, they are not fully living. Periods should not hold women back from chasing their dreams and from doing what they enjoy in life. This realistic and motivational video proves that nothing can hold women back because women are strong.

Framing to blame the government.

Free the Tampons uses a frame of “blaming the government” to showcase personal testimonies of women who started their periods and did not have access to tampons. Women send their embarrassing period stories to Free the Tampons, and the organization filters through the responses and posts examples that support the messages they hope to communicate. Because Free the Tampons chooses what to post, they become the rhetor. The organization then frames their message on their website by posting testimonies that push the organization’s mission. Women can submit these testimonies to the website anonymously but can also choose to disclose their names with their story. Katie T wrote:

I track my period every month and have [it] down to almost a science. I know for the most part when it is coming. Recently I was on my honeymoon and knew my period wasn’t suppose [sic]to start for another week. So naturally I didn’t think to pack tampons. I started in the middle of the night late enough that there no were stores open for me to buy a product. I had to call housekeeping, medical, and the front desk . . . all of which told me it was a personal problem that they couldn’t help me fix. In the midst of humiliation and on the brink of tears I had to yet again ask a random female if they had something.

If I could have just gotten 1 tampon/pad in the bathroom to get me through the night I could've bought a box in the morning. Instead I had to make my "personal matter" public and then feel bad about it.⁸⁶

In this testimony, the woman was demeaned by other women for not having a tampon for her period. She was embarrassed, frustrated, and desperate for a way to manage her menstruation. She lacked the resources to handle her period, which is a common experience for most women. Life is unpredictable, and menstruation is no different. This story is just like every other woman's story; sometimes menstruation cannot be planned for and will occur unexpectedly. Even though this is a common occurrence, Katie was humiliated by asking others and by having to make this matter public. At the end of the night, she felt bad about something normal and that she could not control. Like Katie's story, another woman writes:

Today I was working at a client site and I unexpectedly got my period. Unfortunately I did not have a tampon or 25 cents to buy one in the lady's [sic] room. With hesitation, I asked my two male colleagues if they had a quarter to spare. As I expected, they asked me what I needed it for then replied with a quick no.

My second option was to walk to the closest grocery store to purchase a box. It seemed like a simple and rational way to solve my personal (now public) problem. However, I was faced with another obstacle. Now what do I do with a box of 36 tampons? I was at a client so I couldn't store it in my desk. I took the train to work so I couldn't just put it in my car. I contemplated on taking two and throwing the rest away, but for some reason shoving 36 tampons in my tiny purse (with no zipper) seemed more rational.

After "indirectly" asking my two male coworkers for a tampon, walking to Giant with a wad of toilet paper in my pants, and riding the train home with a purse overflowing with feminine products, I wondered to myself why paper seat covers and hand towels are free, but not tampons. Would having a little basket with a couple of complementary feminine products really be

86. "Share Your Story," *Free the Tampons*, last accessed March 27, 2017, <http://www.freethetampons.org/stories.html>.

too much to ask for? At least update the tampon machines so they take dollar bills.⁸⁷

These testimonies are just two examples of the many Free the Tampons lists on their website. These testimonies illustrate the same message—periods are unpredictable, a private matter, and sometimes embarrassing. In both of these cases, women did not have access to a way to manage their menstruation and had to discuss something that they normally do not talk about, especially with strangers.

In their original state, these stories framed periods as the enemy because they are unpredictable and cause embarrassment. In these two stories, the issue of menstruation served as a barrier to the women's ability to receive help. Others were repulsed by the fact that these women were asking for menstrual products, and no one wanted to talk about the problem. Yet as Free the Tampons uses and frames both of these stories, they argue that the actual cause of the women's embarrassment was that they lacked the proper resources to manage their menstruation and had to go through a situation that most women in the United States and United Kingdom can relate to. Free the Tampons posts these stories in a "blaming the government" frame to talk about periods as being the real enemy and causing the embarrassment. They use this frame to uncover the real enemy—the fact that women are denied free menstrual products. All of the stories Free the Tampons shares highlight the same issue—women face embarrassment about their periods because they are denied access to products.

This framing technique to change the enemy from "periods" to "the government" matches the mission of the Free the Tampons organization. Free the Tampons believes in

87. Ibid.

making tampons widely accessible and free so women can manage their menstruation when it occurs unexpectedly and to help those who cannot afford the financial burden of tampons every month. By posting stories that reflect their mission, Free the Tampons is changing how women view their periods. Periods are no longer an enemy of women. Instead, women need to realize who the real enemy is. When this happens, women will be able to join together to create change and to help women across these two nations have happier and less stressful periods.

Framing summary.

These three rhetors all use frames in creating their messages. Through this analysis, I can now answer my first research question: How are these artifacts utilizing message framing to reach their audiences? In these artifacts, the rhetors frame their messages to relate to the audience and grab their attention. By using various frames that depict reality, the audience is more likely to participate in the artifact's mission or cause because they become invested in the process and want to see a change. THINX frames their messages to show periods as positive and normal. THINX also frames their video and advertisements to be informative and realistic. Red.fit uses motivational frames to inspire young girls and women to view their menstruation differently by framing their message to show that menstrual blood is no different than ordinary blood. Free the Tampons frames their message differently to relate to their audience. Free the Tampons shares testimonies of embarrassing incidents where women did not have tampons. These stories portray periods as unpredictable and therefore at times stressful and even embarrassing. These stories focus on the embarrassment of periods and how difficult periods can be to manage. The message is framed to blame the government while also

being relatable for women. Women can observe from these “blaming government” frames that all women share the same struggles and all of their stories have a commonality—they lacked the necessary resources to handle their periods. This frame refocuses who the enemy in all of these stories is. The enemy is not menstruation. If women had the necessities to handle this biological phenomenon, then periods would not be a time for embarrassment. By sharing these similar testimonies, these frames make periods not just a personal problem, but a public matter. Women need access to ways to manage menstruation. When women have public access to menstrual products, menstruation will be viewed differently. Menstruation should not hold women back and should not be something that is embarrassing or shameful. Menstruation is a normal occurrence that affects half of the population in the United States and the United Kingdom; it is time those societies change how menstruation is discussed. In all three artifacts, these texts utilize various message framing techniques to reach their audiences and make their messages relatable.

Linguistic Relativity

Because language crafts realities and can influence thought, it is important to consider the language rhetors used in these three artifacts. My analysis explains how rhetors used language in three ways to change societal understanding of menstruation in the United States and the United Kingdom. Specifically, I discuss how rhetors craft realities by shifting from vague to specific language, from powerless to powerful language, and from the language of hiding to the language of openness.

Shifting from vague to specific language.

In THINX’s video advertisement, they use two major types of language regarding periods—vague and specific. When referring to the old advertisements, they specifically refer to common images in those advertisements: “fields of daises,” “laughing, prancing women,” and the “blue liquid demonstration.”⁸⁸ These are examples of the vague images and words used to discuss periods in the past. Periods are not normally discussed openly in daily conversations and therefore not in advertisements as well. The THINX video challenges this vague language by openly discussing periods. In fact, they use the word “period” six times in their one minute and thirty-seven second video. They are specific in language to emphasize that they are in fact talking about periods and that they will not contribute to the elusive language of advertisements of the past.

In the THINX print advertisements, the word “period” is used repeatedly, again making it obvious that THINX is open to talking about periods. Much like the video, these advertisements also use language to talk about how powerful periods are. Because periods are so powerful, these advertisements claim their product is even stronger. These underwear are “pussy-grabbing-proof” and “period-proof;” therefore, by wearing them, menstruating humans are impermeable to any obstacles. In the THINX video and poster advertisements, they also use the word “cramping,” a word usually not discussed with period in public because women are only supposed to be laughing and prancing on their periods, not in pain. In using this specific language in their advertisements, THINX creates a new way to discuss periods.

88. “A Day in the Life of a Real Menstruating Human.”

Shifting from powerless to powerful language.

In using the language “mystical menstruating human,” THINX gives menstruation a supernatural power⁸⁹ by comparing the menstruating woman to a mystical creature. This term further pokes fun at how menstruation is viewed in the United States. The phrase seems to indicate that society is mystified by menstruation. This phrase lends to powerlessness. THINX uses this phrase to poke fun at the powerless language that is common in traditional menstruation commercials. Since menstruating women and menstrual blood are absent from traditional commercials, menstruation is considered a mystery. Combined with the statement that the woman in the video could be “writing a best-selling novel or her local congressman” THINX continues to poke fun at those traditional advertisements. While menstruating, the woman in the video can do anything.⁹⁰ She can write a novel if she wants to, be an active member of the community and write to a congressman, or she could just go on Facebook. These are things women can do regardless of the fact that they are menstruating, but by stating these in combination with calling the woman a mystic human, THINX is making fun of how society and commercials depict women. Society views women as being weak and powerless while menstruating. While this frame is an example of a traditional mindset that periods are powerless, the brand’s name brings power back to periods. The brand’s name “THINX” is a powerful word. Co-founder Miki Agrawal states that the name started because the panties are “thoughtful underwear” and “it thinks about you.”⁹¹ It is a

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. Annabel Acton, “Talking Taboo with Thinx Co-Founder Miki Agrawal,” *The Challenger Project*, 2016, <https://thechallengerproject.com/blog/2016/thinx>.

smart product. It thinks about women across the world because the product is made for them and their needs. The “x” at the end of the word “makes it sound technical” making the product “a technical, thoughtful product.”⁹² The website name uses the word “THINX” but also the word “she” in front of the brand name. This phrase “shethinx” is a powerful phrase. It claims that women are thoughtful and smart because they choose this product to manage their periods. This product makes women smart. In combination with the powerfulness phrase “mystical menstruating human,” THINX is stating that women are thoughtful and smart even when they are on their periods. This shift evokes the shift from women being irrational on their periods to being thoughtful and smart. Menstruating women are not mystical but are real. Not only are menstruating women real in our world, they are also thoughtful.

While Bodyform’s Red.fit does not use words throughout their video, they still influence the audience’s thoughts with the text they display at the end of the video. The three text-messages during the video are “no blood should hold us back,” “live fearless,” and “don’t let your period stop you.” These examples use powerful language that motivates the viewer and called for a positive response. The viewer feels empowered and indestructible reading these messages. The language in this advertisement inspires young girls that they too are strong and can overcome anything. They too can succeed and do anything, even when menstruating. The language Bodyform uses in those brief examples creates a new reality because it is a new way of thinking about periods. This video compares blood from working hard and facing trials to menstruation blood, which is

92. Ibid.

often viewed as being dirty. This video challenges how people think about periods by motivating viewers to not let any blood hold them back.

Shifting from language of hiding to language of openness.

Because periods are “personal,” the testimonies posted on Free the Tampon’s website highlight that there is “humiliation” and “hesitation” when having to discuss this matter in public. This language once again contributes to the conversation that periods are shameful and embarrassing to discuss. In both testimonies, the writers talked about how they had to “make it public” to get resources to manage their menstruation. The language used throughout these testimonies views periods as negative. Periods have caused these women frustrations, and therefore they are sharing similar stories of irritation. In their stories, they use language considered to be the norm when discussing menstruation. This is how a majority of women view their periods and discuss their periods with other women. They are embarrassed when they have to tell strangers and men that they are menstruating, and they try to do everything they can to hide the fact that they are even menstruating. Women hide their tampons in fear that someone will see them and know that they are menstruating. Women also are fearful that they will bleed through their clothing or have leaks that are a sign to the public that they are on their periods.

There were some similarities in the types of language portrayed in the two testimonies chosen and shared by Free the Tampons. Most of the language regarding periods here focuses on the desire to have periods be discreet. In the first testimony, Katie T discusses how she usually “tracks” her period, which is a popular term for keeping up with a woman’s period schedule. The term “track” makes it seem like the period is a living being, an animal in the wild that needs to be tracked. This language creates the

feeling that the period is wild and unpredictable. She was frustrated when her period was early and she had to make her period a public matter by asking strangers for tampons to manage her menstruation. In the second testimony, the writer writes that her period came “unexpectedly” which adds to the impression that periods are uncontrollable and cannot be tamed because they are wild animals. The second testimony’s author also said, “what do I do” in response to not being able to control her period. She was unable to track her period and therefore could not manage or “tame” her period with menstrual products. Because these products were not accessible to her, she was lost for what to do and spent a lot of time being frantic and trying to solve the problem. The other poster, Katie T, also claims that she was trying to “fix” the “problem” of her period with menstrual products. Because her period is something that needs to be tracked and fixed, Katie also referenced her period as being a “problem.” Not only is her period a problem, but it is a “personal problem,” a common view in the United States and the United Kingdom. Independently these testimonies use language to make menstruation something that is private and secretive; therefore, it should not be openly discussed. But by posting these testimonies, Free the Tampons is making these private matters and frustrations a public matter. They are shifting the language of hiding of periods to the language of openness by posting these testimonies and creating dialogue about menstrual issues. Free the Tampons is allowing women a chance to discuss their periods and the frustrations that sometimes occur. These testimonies can then fuel more conversations and transform periods into a topic that can be discussed freely and openly.

Linguistic relativity summary.

Through these examples, it is obvious how language is used to reflect the reality of menstrual taboos in the United States and United Kingdom—that menstruation is shameful and should be hidden from the public, that it is a personal problem that needs to be fixed and needs to be controlled, and that when menstruation is known to the public, women should feel bad and should experience humiliation. Although these stories use language to reflect the current reality, the act of rhetors sharing them publically is helping to influence a new reality.

THINX and Bodyform use new language that is positive and works to inspire the audience to think and talk about their periods differently. These two artifacts are trying to change the conversation about menstruation; therefore, they are focused on creating language that is new and not normally used to discuss periods. In each artifact, language is used to influence thought, create a new reality about menstruation for people in the United States and the United Kingdom, and challenge taboos and barriers to normalize the actuality of menstruation.

Conclusion

After analyzing these three artifacts, it is clear that message framing used to reach audiences can shape new conversations in the United States and the United Kingdom. These conversations can then lead to a new reality. In these artifacts, the menstrual taboo is challenged through the public discussion of menstruation and adoption of new frames for the discussion. After this analysis, I can address my third question: How are rhetorical artifacts combating menstrual taboos in various cultures? In the United States and the United Kingdom, these artifacts are challenging the menstrual taboo simply by changing

advertisements about periods, providing information about menstruation, and sharing stories about embarrassing moments on periods. These artifacts work together to acknowledge that although bodily functions can be embarrassing, they are normal and not something that should be shameful. In these artifacts, rhetors talk about periods openly and encourage women to be open about their menstruation stories and about their menstruation. By changing how the media frames and talks about menstruation, these artifacts are overcoming cultural and social barriers and are combating the menstrual taboo. The United States and United Kingdom need to continue with these conversations and continue to let women know that it is normal to cramp and to be in pain and for your period to cause you stress, but it should not be normal to be embarrassed, shameful, or view periods as being dirty. Women in the United States and the United Kingdom need to embrace their periods and not let this normal phenomenon hold them back.

CHAPTER III

BREAKING TABOOS IN INDIA

The menstrual taboo still persists in India today. Not only is it taboo to mention in daily conversations, but also “there is lack of information on the process of menstruation and proper requirements for managing menstruation.”¹ In India, “bodily excretions are believed to be polluting, as are the bodies when producing them.”² Even advertisements illustrate this taboo in the country by refraining from using any period-related word in their ads. In the United States, “the word menstruation, menstrual flow, or period was not used in TV commercials till the late 1990s,” but “in India, the use of the word ‘period’ is rare, whereas menstruation is just not used.”³ The extreme power of the taboo in India is alarming and causes many issues in society. Young girls and women deal with restrictions in their daily lives, lack education about their periods, and have poor menstrual hygiene. This chapter will first discuss the menstrual taboos in India, provide an overview of each artifact, and then analyze those artifacts according to the theoretical frameworks of framing theory and linguistic relativity.

1. Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation Government of India, *Menstrual Hygiene Management: National Guidelines*, December 2015, 5, http://unicef.in/CkEditor/ck_Uploaded_Images/img_1507.pdf.

2. Suneela Garg and Tanu Anand, “Menstruation Related Myths in India: Strategies for Combatting It,” *Journal of Family Medicine & Primary Care* 4, no. 2 (2015): 185, doi:10.4103/2249-4863.154627.

3. Arpan Shailesh Yagnik, “Reframing Menstruation in India: Metamorphosis of the Menstrual Taboo with the Changing Media Coverage,” *Health Care for Women International* 35, no. 1 (2013): 627, doi:10.1080/07399332.2013.838246.

Menstrual Taboos in India

So for the first two days of my menstrual cycle, every month, my existence at home depended on remembering every second that I was not allowed to touch anything – sit on sofa, cushions, towels, enter the kitchen, touch my siblings, my father or my mother, definitely not the temple. If I did touch something by mistake it would go for laundry (if it was a cloth), be washed separately (if it was a utensil), and I would invite much wrath of my mother (if it was my father or siblings I touched). My mother would somehow always save herself from my accidental touch, as she too would remember every second of those two days that my periods were on.⁴

In India, menstruating women still experience many restrictions in their daily lives, including not being allowed to enter the “puja” or prayer room, not entering the kitchen, and not being allowed to enter temples, pray, or touch holy books.⁵ Menstruating women are barred from these places because of the cultural norm that considers them dirty and impure; therefore, they cannot handle food or be in holy places. In some parts of India there is even a belief that women who are menstruating will spoil foods such as pickles. In fact, “some strict dietary restrictions are also followed during menstruation such as sour food like curd, tamarind, and pickles are usually avoided by menstruating girls.”⁶

A more extreme restriction on menstruating women is that of banishment. A gaokor is “a hut outside [of a] village where girls and women are banished during menstruation.”⁷ During menstruation, women “leave the main house, and live in a small

4. Avani Bansal, “My Menstrual Blood: There Are Overwhelming Taboos around Menstruation in India, Which Makes a Girl’s Life Miserable,” *The Times of India*, February 17, 2017, <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-edit-page/my-menstrual-blood-there-are-overwhelming-taboos-around-menstruation-in-india-which-make-a-girls-life-miserable/>.

5. Garg and Anand, “Menstruation Related Myths in India,” 184.

6. *Ibid.*, 185.

7. Gagandeep Kaur, “Banished for Menstruating: The Indian Women Isolated While They Bleed,” *The Guardian*, December 22, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/dec/22/india-menstruation-periods-gaokor-women-isolated>.

hut outside the village. They were not allowed to comb their hair or bathe.”⁸ These huts “lack a kitchen as women who are menstruating are not allowed to cook; those staying inside rely on family to bring them food and other items.”⁹ Considering these huts are usually not taken care of or used as a primary source of shelter, it is common for animals to enter or for women to suffer in extreme weather conditions. In 2016 in Nepal, the death of a 26-year-old woman while sleeping in a menstrual hut motivated the prime minister of Nepal to seek answers.¹⁰ In Nepal, this practice has been outlawed, but there is no punishment for those who continue to honor the tradition. The practice has not yet been outlawed in India, but it has been brought to the attention of the government.

Girls and women who follow these “various social, cultural practices, and taboos associated with menstruation” are not even able to provide an explanation for why they follow these rules and state that “they just follow it because they have been asked to do so.”¹¹ This taboo is dangerous for the safety of women and “has now snowballed into an intense issue of public health, human rights, gender inequality, social stigma, domination, and discrimination.”¹²

8. Manju Kaundal and Bhopesh Thakur, “A Dialogue on Menstrual Taboo,” *Indian Journal of Community Health* 26, no. 2 (2014): 193.

9. Kaur, “Banished for Menstruating.”

10. Danielle Preiss, “A Young Woman Died in a Menstrual Hut in Nepal,” *NPR*, November 28, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/11/28/503155803/a-young-woman-died-in-a-menstrual-shed-in-nepal>.

11. Anant Kumar and Kamiya Srivastava, “Cultural and Social Practices Regarding Menstruation among Adolescent Girls,” *Social Work in Public Health* 26, no. 6 (2011): 598, doi:10.1080/19371918.2010.525144.

12. Yagnik, “Reframing Menstruation in India,” 618.

In India and most countries in South Asia, “formal education about reproductive health is very limited.”¹³ Young girls in India have to rely on their mothers and friends for information about their periods. Often, young girls “grow up with limited knowledge of menstruation because their mothers and other women shy away from discussing the issues with them.”¹⁴ This turns into a vicious cycle of “passing on cultural taboos and restrictions.”¹⁵ Girls grow up without understanding menstruation and are taught to be embarrassed and not openly communicate about their periods. They in turn grow up to be mothers who are also shy about discussing these matters and pass on period shame to their children. A survey by WaterAid, an organization that provides access to clean water and safe hygiene practices, found that “41 per cent of [Indian girls] had no information, and were either completely unaware about menstruation or did not have knowledge about the purpose of menstruation as a biological process prior to its onset.”¹⁶ This shocking reality prevents young girls from being prepared for their periods and knowing how to manage their menses.

There are some differences based on education levels. For instance, “the girls who are better educated are more conscious of their menstrual hygiene.”¹⁷ And similarly, the more educated the parents (especially the mothers) are, the more knowledge about menstruation the daughters will have. The region of India a woman lives in also

13. Thérèse Mahon and Maria Fernandes, “Menstrual Hygiene in South Asia: A Neglected Issue for WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) Programmes,” *Gender & Development* 18, no. 1 (February 25, 2010): 3, doi:10.1080/13552071003600083.

14. Garg and Anand, “Menstruation Related Myths in India,” 185.

15. Ibid.

16. Mahon and Fernandes, “Menstrual Hygiene in South Asia,” 9.

17. Kumar and Srivastava, “Cultural and Social Practices Regarding Menstruation among Adolescent Girls,” 596.

influences her attitudes about menstruation. Women in urban areas tend to have more education/knowledge about menstruation and more resources to manage menstruation, while women in slums and rural areas lack the education and the resources to manage their periods. All in all, “due to lack of knowledge about menstruation and unavailability of means to cope with it, menstruation becomes a monthly disaster for many women in India.”¹⁸

In 2015, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reported that “the taboos surrounding this issue in the society prevents girls and women from articulating their needs and the problems of poor menstrual hygiene management have been largely ignored or misunderstood.”¹⁹ As previously mentioned, “many of the practices during menstruation have direct implications on reproductive health.”²⁰ For instance, many restrictions imposed on menstruating women deny them access to running water, which is needed for menstrual management. Healthy menstrual hygiene requires

access to appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene services, including clean water for washing clothes used to absorb menstrual blood and having a place to dry them, having somewhere private to change clothes or disposable sanitary pads, facilities to dispose of used clothes and pads, and access to information to understand the menstrual cycle and how to manage menstruation hygienically.²¹

Due to the lack of privacy and access to proper facilities, “113 million adolescent girls in India” will miss school this year due to menstruation.²²

18. Yagnik, “Reframing Menstruation in India,” 626.

19. Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation Government of India, *Menstrual Hygiene Management*.

20. Garg and Anand, “Menstruation Related Myths in India,” 185.

21. Mahon and Fernandes, “Menstrual Hygiene in South Asia,” 2.

22. “Why Days for Girls,” *Days for Girls*, last accessed March 19, 2017, <https://www.daysforgirls.org/>.

A WaterAid survey found that “around 89 per cent of respondents reported that they used cloth” that is reusable to absorb their menstrual blood.²³ The survey further reported that the respondents reused this cloth because of the unavailability and high costs of other menstrual products. Reusing the same cloth for menstruation without proper cleaning can lead to infection, and to properly clean menstrual cloths, the fabric needs to be thoroughly washed out with clean water and soap and then hung up to dry. Unfortunately, the “lack of facilities, including safe water and clean, private toilets, coupled with the taboos and embarrassment associated with menstruation” mean that these cloths do not get cleaned as regularly as they should.²⁴ Infections due to improper care of menstrual products are very common and “can result in cervical cancer or sterility.”²⁵ Like the cycle of period shame and enforcing menstrual restrictions, these infections can also be passed on to future generations. In India, “cervical cancer ranks as the second most frequent cancer among women” and is “the second most frequent cancer among women between 15 and 44 years of age.”²⁶ Recently, the government in India is recognizing this problem and starting to ensure better sanitation practices. The government’s Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) recognizes “the need for the programme to incorporate hygiene promotion, provide women’s sanitary complexes (community facilities with latrines and bathing facilities), and construct girls’ toilets at schools.”²⁷

23 Mahon and Fernandes, “Menstrual Hygiene in South Asia,” 3.

24. Ibid.

25. Yagnik, “Reframing Menstruation in India: Metamorphosis of the Menstrual Taboo with the Changing Media Coverage,” 625.

26. ICO HPV Information Centre, *India: Human Papillomavirus and Related Cancers, Fact Sheet 2016*, December 12, 2016, http://www.hpvcentre.net/statistics/reports/IND_FS.pdf. (also a report)

27. Mahon and Fernandes, “Menstrual Hygiene in South Asia,” 2–3.

Although the government is focusing on improving sanitation, it has ignored the fact that menstrual education also needs to be provided.

India Campaigns

Menstrual taboos in India are harming women; fortunately, new campaigns are working hard to challenge these taboos and to provide menstrual education. The next section of this thesis will give an overview of each campaign and then go into my analysis that uses linguistic relativity and media framing.

Breaking the Silence

Urmila Chanam travels “from village to village through rural India in a grassroots campaign to break menstruation stigma, myths, and taboo, and empower young women with information about their bodies.”²⁸ The 32-year-old public health professional is “a committed activist with a day job as an HIV/AIDS and public health development worker, and another job as a freelance journalist.”²⁹ For the last five years, Urmila’s mission has been to break myths and taboos around menstruation.³⁰ Chanam is “educating women on the need for such hygiene, at the same time teaching them about [the ways] cultural practices relating to it can prove deprecating and isolating for them” through her Breaking the Silence campaign.³¹ The campaign “gathers adolescent girls and

28. “Menstrual Blood Is Not Impure,” *Breaking the Silence*, last accessed November 28, 2016, <http://www.breakingthesilencereddrops.com/>.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Women’s Feature Service, “This Woman Has Taught 6,000 Girls across 9 States That Menstruation Should Not Disempower Them,” *The Better India*, July 17, 2016, <http://www.thebetterindia.com/61928/urmila-chanam-menstrual-hygiene/>.

31. Avinash Nandakumar, “Shed Your Inhibition about the Taboos and Myths of Menstrual Hygiene: Manipuri Activist Urmila Chanam’s Crusade on Breaking the Silence as a Woman,” *India Live Today*, July 19, 2016, <http://www.indialivetoday.com/shed-your-inhibition-about-taboos-and-myths-of-menstrual-hygiene-manipuri-activist-urmila-chanams-crusade-on-breaking-the-silence-as-a-woman/13908.html>.

women together in whatever space a community has available: a government school, broken down temple, old hospital, a spot near the well, under a tree, a rice paddy field, or even construction sites.”³² Due to the campaign’s efforts, Urmia has “trained 6,000 girls across nine [Indian] states to understand that their period need not disempower them since it is just biology.”³³

The campaign has already been successful in “mobiliz[ing] the donation of 10,000 sanitary pads in just one month to be distributed to girls and women in need.”³⁴ Urmila Chanam’s “first Digital Action Campaign in 2014 was spread across 10 states.”³⁵ The campaign was largely video-based, as she had a videographer during the campaign trailing her each day, before editing and uploading the footage that same day on various sites.³⁶ While Chanam’s

Break the Silence campaign uses social media to spread the word, on the ground she reaches out through school and community based trainings to spread accurate information on menstruation, its hygienic management and creation of a support system for girls and women so that periods do not interrupt school, work and aspirations.³⁷

The campaign has been successful in raising “awareness about menstruation through social media, introducing interviews, information, a hotline, and quizzes to engage both

32. “Menstrual Blood Is Not Impure.”

33. Women’s Feature Service, “This Woman Has Taught 6,000 Girls.”

34. “Menstrual Blood Is Not Impure.”

35. Nandakumar, “Shed Your Inhibition about the Taboos and Myths of Menstrual Hygiene.”

36. Women’s Feature Service, “This Woman Has Taught 6,000 Girls.”

37. Ibid.

women and men.”³⁸ As of 2016, campaign efforts have “trained 6,000 girls.”³⁹ In her training, Chanam “teaches girls how to manage their menstruation every month without pain or humiliation,” “distributes sanitary pads,” and “teaches yoga for menstrual pain.”⁴⁰ Her ultimate goal is to have these trainings be a safe place for girls and women to come together and share experiences while learning the truth about menstruation. Her next step is to start involving male teachers and males in general in her training sessions so they can cultivate “empathetic attitudes to menstruating girls.”⁴¹ My analysis in this chapter will focus on Chanam’s Facebook video that launched the campaign and her educational training posts shared on social media.

Menstrupedia

In India, “nearly two-thirds—62 percent—of all Indian girls have no awareness of menstruation until they get their first period.”⁴² During her childhood, Aditi Gupta “suffered through an anxiety-laden phase of her natural development. Forbidden to purchase products in public, as it might damage her family’s reputation, she used rags during her first years after puberty.”⁴³ Gupta was like many young girls in India; she

38. “A Global Campaign to Banish Myths, Taboos, and Stigma around Menstruation and Give Dignity to Girls and Women,” Last accessed March 19, 2017, <http://www.breakingthesilencereddrops.com/>.

39. Usha Rail Delhi, “A Woman Fights for Breaking the Silence Over the ‘Red Droplets,’” *The Weekend Leader*, July 18, 2016, <http://www.theweekendleader.com/Causes/2477/changing-mindsets.html>.

40. “A Global Campaign to Banish Myths, Taboos, and Stigma around Menstruation and Give Dignity to Girls and Women.”

41. Delhi, “A Woman Fights for Breaking the Silence Over the ‘Red Droplets.’”

42. Susan Scutti, “Aditi Gupta’s ‘Menstrupedia,’ Taboo-Busting Comic Book, Leaves Out Scary Menstruation Pics to Teach Indian Girls About their Periods,” *Medical Daily*, September 15, 2016, <http://www.medicaldaily.com/aditi-guptas-menstrupedia-taboo-busting-comic-book-leaves-out-scary-menstruation-pics-303132>.

43. Ibid.

lacked education about her period and how to handle this normal monthly routine. When “she got her first period, aged 12, everyone told her to keep it a secret,” making her period a shameful experience.⁴⁴

In March 2013, after an 18-month development period, Aditi Gupta created *Menstrupedia*, a “friendly guide to periods which helps girls and women to stay healthy and active during their periods.”⁴⁵ This “ground-breaking comic book and its companion informational website have been presenting girls with the information they need” for menstrual education.⁴⁶

While many books and online resources related to menstruation do exist, “all are written by foreign authors for Western audiences and are unsuited to Indian readers.”⁴⁷ These Western books have too much nudity for Indian audiences and cause discomfort among children and parents due to the topic and how it is discussed. *Menstrupedia* does not have “any overly-explicit illustrations that might cause trouble with an Indian girl’s family or, worse, make a girl uncomfortable with her own body.”⁴⁸ The comic book is “specifically for girls of age 9–14 years” yet “younger or older girls and even boys would find it an interesting and informative read.”⁴⁹

44. Suyin Haynes, “How an Indian Comic Book Is Teaching Girls about Their Periods,” *Time*, December 12, 2016, <http://time.com/4590678/menstrupedia-aditi-gupta-taboo-india/>.

45. “About,” *Menstrupedia*, last accessed November 28, 2016, <https://menstrupedia.com/about>.

46. Scutti, “Aditi Gupta’s ‘Menstrupedia,’ Taboo-Busting Comic Book.”

47. “Website and Comic Book ‘Menstrupedia’ Breaks Taboo across India.”

48. Scutti, “Aditi Gupta’s ‘Menstrupedia,’ Taboo-Busting Comic Book.”

49. “Comic,” *Menstrupedia*, last accessed March 19, 2017, <https://www.menstrupedia.com/comic/English>.

The comic book has now been “used by more than 60 schools, 15 NGOs (non-governmental or not-for-profit organizations), and 30,000 girls across India.”⁵⁰ The book’s website also “gets about 100,000 visitors a month from 195 countries.”⁵¹ Their Facebook page has “over 37,000 likes” and is “a forum welcoming contributors to openly voice their thoughts.”⁵² *Menstrupedia* is another powerful text that aims “to shatter the myths and misunderstandings surrounding menstruation for all ages.”⁵³ *Menstrupedia*’s website gives the consumer a way to purchase the book either in print or an online copy, has an ask question board similar to Yahoo answers, a regularly updated blog, and additional information about puberty, menstruation, hygiene, and myths. The comic book follows “the journey of three young girls and their experiences with periods” and

each character represents a stage of adolescence—girls who haven’t started their period yet and want to learn more about them; girls who have just started their periods and want advice on how to prepare for them; and girls who have had their periods for some time and might be curious about the myths surrounding them.⁵⁴

This colorful and informative comic is reaching young girls across India and changing cultural misconceptions and taboos regarding menstruation.

#HappytoBleed

College student Nikita Azad was outraged “after an Indian temple chief . . . said he would allow women to enter the shrine only after a machine was invented to detect if

50. “Menstrupedia Comic,” *Menstrupedia*, last accessed November 28, 2016, <https://www.menstrupedia.com/>.

51. Scutti, “Aditi Gupta’s ‘Menstrupedia,’ Taboo-Busting Comic Book.”

52. Haynes, “How an Indian Comic Book Is Teaching Girls about Their Periods.”

53. “About,” *Menstrupedia*.

54. Haynes, “How an Indian Comic Book Is Teaching Girls about Their Periods.”

they were ‘pure’—meaning that they weren’t menstruating.”⁵⁵ The temple prohibits all women in the reproductive ages from visiting the temple because they could be menstruating. Similar to this ban at the Sabarimala Temple in Kerala, India, “many Hindu temples in India—and also globally—have prominent notices displayed at the entrance telling menstruating women that they are not welcome, and many devout Hindu women voluntarily keep away from temples when they are menstruating.”⁵⁶ Azad responded to the event by writing “a scathing open letter” to the chief and expressed “frustration on social media through a campaign which declared loud and clear that [she is] #HappyToBleed.”⁵⁷ Images on social media with the hashtag, displayed “young Indian women holding placards—some made up of sanitary napkins and tampons—with the slogan “Happy To Bleed.”⁵⁸

The campaign now plans to “increase the magnitude of the campaign and take it to ground level reaching out to schools, colleges, universities, and villages” rather than remaining a primarily Facebook-centered campaign.⁵⁹ The movement has also inspired supporters to challenge the Indian Supreme Court decision to allow women to be discriminated against and prohibited from worshipping. Following the launch of their

55. “Why Are Indian Women ‘Happy to Bleed,’” *BBC News*, November 23, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-34900825>.

56. *Ibid.*

57. Asha Prakash, “Sabarimala Debate: #HappyToBleed Vs #ReadyToWait,” *The Times of India*, September 1, 2016, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/Sabarimala-debate-HappyToBleed-Vs-ReadyToWait/articleshow/53945601.cms>.

58. “Why Are Indian Women ‘Happy to Bleed.’”

59. Hemani Bhandari, “Women Are #HappytoBleed, Then What’s the Problem,” *The Indian Express*, November 24, 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/trending/trending-in-india/women-are-happytoleed-then-whats-the-problem/>.

social media campaign, the group received criticism because their hashtag used the word “happy.” The campaign’s founder, Nikita Azad, replied, stating that

there is no doubt that during menses, a woman experiences pain, and we nowhere are trying to escape from reality. However, words create their own meanings when we contextualize them in specific historical circumstances. Happy, as a word, is used as a satire, a taunt, a comment, on patriarchal forces which attach the understanding of purity-impurity of women with menstruation. Also, since menstruation is criminalized whose perpetrator is woman, #happy as a tag breaks with this hegemonic belief. A lot of other slogans are being used in the campaign by women participants like Lal Salaam, Smash Patriarchy, I don't bleed blue, I bleed red etc. which are equally relevant and increase the range of the campaign. We would certainly welcome other slogans which speak against feudal-patriarchal culture.⁶⁰

A counter campaign has also been form in backlash to Azad’s; some women are now declaring that they are #ReadyToWait, meaning that they “would rather wait it out till menopause for a chance to enter the Sabarimala Temple than interfere with tradition.”⁶¹

In a response, Azad announced again that “a public space cannot discriminate on the basis of gender or age” and decided to continue the campaign with all “new slogans, new pictures, [and] new hopes.”⁶² Because this artifact primarily exists on social media, my analysis later in this chapter will continue to follow and analyze posts that utilize the campaign’s hashtag.

In the following section, I will analyze texts from *Breaking the Silence*, *Menstrupedia*, and #HappyToBleed using framing theory and the theory of linguistic relativity. While many artifacts are contributing to menstrual education and tackling menstrual taboos in India, these three artifacts are the most prominent because of their

60. Azad, “#HappytoBleed.”

61. Prakash, “Sabarimala Debate.”

62. Nikita Azad’s Facebook page, accessed March 19, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/archangelniks/posts/10205592308767620>.

ground-breaking content and format. These artifacts have overcome significant cultural barriers to provide Indian women with the information they need to have healthy menstruation.

Analysis

In this section, I will examine each artifact through the lens of framing and linguistic relativity. Within framing theory, I will organize the analysis by the frames these rhetors used in crafting each artifact. Then, the linguistic relativity section will be organized by the types of language used to shift reality in some way. By applying the frameworks of framing theory and linguistic relativity I will be able to answer my research questions: (1) How are these artifacts utilizing message framing to reach their audiences? and (2) Through message framing, how are these texts shaping language to create a new reality? After addressing these questions, I will be able to answer my final question: (3) How are rhetorical artifacts combating menstrual taboos in various cultures?

Framing

Each rhetor frames their message in a unique way to relate to their audience. Because India has many cultural barriers, these rhetors have had to frame their message in a way that will be accepted in the culture so it can influence the people. The five frames I will discuss in this section are shocking, negative, informative, positive, and activist.

Shocking frames.

While Breaking the Silence does not have its own Facebook page, the founder, Urmila Chanam, uses her personal Facebook page to post content for the campaign and links Breaking the Silence videos from the campaign's website to her Facebook as well.

On the Breaking the Silence website, Chanam has posted a 19-second video that can also be found on her Facebook. The video is in both English and Hindi—a choice key to her ability to reach her audience. The 19-second video is of Chanam promoting the launch of the Breaking the Silence campaign. She states:

Shame and inhibition can prevent you from making the right health choices. Did you know 70% of all reproductive diseases among women in India are caused by poor menstrual hygiene? Join my campaign today, Breaking the Silence 2015: From Shame to Pride.⁶³

Her message in this video highlights the reality for women menstruating in India and encourages people to join her campaign. She calls out two limitations Indian women face while menstruating, follows this with a shocking statistic, and then urges listeners to join her. The framing she uses in this brief video is “shocking” because it states alarming facts and gains the attention of listeners. This message uses both a “shocking” frame, because the facts of menstrual health in India are not widely known, and a “reality” frame, because while these facts are shocking and alarming, they also depict the reality of life in India. These frames work together to encourage women to follow the campaign and to seek change for not only their daily life but also for their health and wellbeing.

Negative frames.

Another Breaking the Silence video Chanam shared on social media was a 9-minute-and-51-second short film titled “Silence Broken.” The film was produced by the Breaking the Silence Campaign. In the film, a young Indian girl has her period for the first time and her mother is displeased by the sight of the blood. Her mother teaches her

63. Facebook user Urmila Chanam, recently changed her profile name. The following is the citation for her Facebook page that I will reference for the rest of this chapter: Ch Urmill’s Facebook Page, last accessed March 28, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/urmila.ch/videos/vb.100001504638037/100049700010435/?type=2&theater>

the cultural and social norms and taboos that are associated with menstruation. Examples of these include not touching others, cleaning, or participating in any religious or holy activity. In one scene, the young girl is sweeping the floor when her mother comes in and states:

What is this? Didn't I tell you not to touch anything in the house during these 5 days? Stupid! You made the room untouchable now. And it needs to be washed now. Shall I take a bath 5 times a day for touching you? Go inside. I will bring meal for you.⁶⁴

In this conversation, Chanam frames her message about periods negatively to show the reality that Indian women have to face when menstruating. The young girl is learning menstrual norms and taboos and is having a hard time dealing with all the restrictions placed on her. She does not understand the rules her mother keeps telling her and gets into trouble often for not obeying them. In their conversations, her mother talks about how the girl's period is dirty and has contaminated the room and everything she touched. The video frames the message about periods negatively to show how life currently is for menstruating women. This negative frame is also relatable because viewers in India can certainly relate to the reality that the young girl is experiencing. The negative framing used in this video shows how menstruation is viewed today and is used to relate to the audience because they also deal with these restrictions.

Informative frames.

Later in *Breaking the Silence's* film, the girl is lying on the ground, and it appears she is lying outside or in a building without a roof because it is snowing and she is cold.

64. Ibid.

She is sleeping, and in a dream she talks to a woman. They have the following conversation:

Girl: Sister, am I untouchable for these 5 days?

Woman: No, you are not untouchable. This is only a misbelief of our social system.

Girl: Should we use sanitary pads?

Woman: Yes you should. Some people use clothes, ash, sand, etc. It's dangerous. More than 200 million woman in India are not aware of menstrual hygiene.

Girl: Sister, then I am not untouchable.

Woman: No. You need to be neat and clean only.

Girl: Can I go inside the temple for prayer? Can I ring the Temple's Bell?

Woman: Why not? Rapist, murderer, smuggler, terrorist—all allowed inside a Temple. Why not you?⁶⁵

In this conversation, *Breaking the Silence* uses an informative frame. The woman is exposing myths that the mother told the girl about her period. The woman tells the girl that she is “not untouchable.” By using this informative frame, the woman teaches the young girl and the viewers that menstruation is not dirty or impure. It does not restrict women but it should be managed healthily. This message is used to inform the girl and audience by stating facts about menstruation and combating popular myths about menstruation. This informative frame creates a new way for the audience to think about menstruation.

At the end of the film, the young girl stands up to her mother and the village woman. As she is standing up to the women, she also is standing up to cultural taboos. The women all back away from her and watch in awe as she rings the temple bell, putting an end to menstrual taboos. The informative frame combats the previous negative frame

65. Ibid.

by letting the audience know that these myths and restrictions are lies. The contradiction in the two different frames creates a new reality for menstruating women. Menstruating women learn that periods do not make them impure and that their periods are not the enemy that is restricting them, but rather that traditional norms and taboos are unrightfully restricting women in their daily lives. At the end of the video, women see how different life can be when they stand up to these traditions and learn the truth of menstruation.

The images in the comic book *Menstrupedia* are drawn to be culturally sensitive. There are no nude illustrations of body parts, and the girls remain clothed throughout the comic book. However, to accurately depict menstruation and the body, the comic book includes accurate drawings of the vagina and does show menstrual blood in underwear and on pads. The book also claims to be “practical guidance,” which is proven in how the entire book is framed.⁶⁶ Because a vast majority of girls lack information about their menstruation, informatively framed messages can change girls’ perceptions. Girls can read this comic book, change their viewpoints, and manage their menstruation differently. The informative framing teaches girls how to use a sanitary pad, how to dispose of a used sanitary pad, how to make sanitary pads at home, and how to clean cloth sanitary pads. The panels that discuss how to use a sanitary pad actually illustrate a pad being filled with blood. A few panels even address myths that are widely believed in India and focus on correcting those myths with new information. And the informative frames teach young

66. Aditi Gupta and Tuhin Paul, *Menstrupedia: The Friendly Guide to Periods for Girls* (India: Menstrupedia, 2014), 2.

girls about their periods by relating to them and breaking down the science of menstruation in an easy to learn and realistic way.

Positive frames.

Menstrupedia's 83 colorfully illustrated pages follow the stories of three young girls—Pinki, Jiya, and Mira. The young girls learn about puberty, menstruation, and their bodies throughout their times together. The title page of the comic book claims that it is “the friendly guide to periods for girls.”⁶⁷ Under the title of the comic book, readers see the three girls and Priya’s older sister, who is a doctor. The three girls are smiling and laughing on the cover. The title page of the comic book sets the frame for the entire book: this is a fun book. The author uses the word “friendly” in combination with the illustration of the girls laughing to show that periods are not scary. The bright colors and light-hearted framing techniques frame the message about periods positively. The names of the girls, their conservative outfits, and the mother’s traditional dress (who mainly does not participate in the conversations throughout the comic and is not featured on the cover page) make this book comfortable for those reading in India, clearly framing it as culturally sensitive just as it claims to be in the first few pages.

In the first few pages, the older sister, Priya, who is a doctor, states that “growing up is so exciting.”⁶⁸ Once again, puberty is being framed as exciting and positive. When one of the girls, Jiya, started her period, she was alarmed when she saw the blood on her underwear. She tells another girl, and they have the following discussion about the incident:

67. *Ibid.*, 1.

68. *Ibid.*, 8.

Pinki: “Blood!! But how?!”

Jiya: “I don’t know!”

Pinki: “I will ask Priya Didi. She is a Doctor. She will know what’s wrong.”⁶⁹

This conversation illustrates the reality in India. Many girls do not know about menstruation before their first menses. When Jiya saw the blood, she was alarmed and thought something was wrong, a thought that many girls in India have in this situation. However, the comic book goes on to frame the message in a positive light that is realistic while making periods and growing up seem exciting.

In the chapter on periods, *Menstrupedia*’s message positively frames periods as normal. In one panel explaining why the young girl had stomach pain on her period, Priya states that “it is normal for some girls to feel pain in their lower abdomen during periods. This pain is due to the uterus contracting to shed and squeeze the menstrual fluid out.”⁷⁰ When framing the message about periods, the comic book is positive in explaining the science of menstruation in a factual way without any offensive or upsetting language. Using words like “normal” frames periods as something that is a natural occurrence and therefore positive. Throughout the book, different panels communicate a safety message. For example, one panel states, “you should visit a doctor if: You’re more than 16 years old and your periods haven’t started.”⁷¹ These panels are framed as important because the yellow colored text bubble stands out from the other white text bubbles. This difference is important to note because the authors of the book separate what is normal from what is abnormal. There is a clear distinction between the two because in most messages women

69. Ibid., 26.

70. Ibid., 45.

71. Ibid., 48.

receive in India, periods are framed inaccurately. This book frames the two different situations clearly so that girls reading the book know exactly what is normal and what is not. Because most girls do not have information about their periods before their first menstruation, this distinction is key in educating them and preparing them for future changes they will face.

The comic book also uses positive frames by having colorfully illustrated pages that communicate menstruation as a positive and exciting phenomenon. Because menstruation is not traditionally discussed in the Indian culture, framing the book to be positive and also framing the book to be culturally appropriate makes learning about menstruation easier for the audience. The audience sees young girls who look like them and have culturally appropriate names whom they can relate to. The positive framing throughout the book also encourages them not to be scared or nervous to learn about menstruation. These frames teach girls about menstruation and help them learn healthy ways to manage their menstruation. Therefore, when these young readers grow up, they can teach their young girls about menstruation. This can start a new cycle of healthy menstrual hygiene in India and can end the power of the menstrual taboos that currently exist.

Activist frames.

#HappyToBleed uses social media and their hashtags to communicate messages about periods. The images posted by the organization on their Facebook page show women with signs and the phrase “happy to bleed” in red. Some women even write their messages on sanitary pads and post them with the hashtag. Another woman has a poster on which “Happy To Bleed” is written in red ink along with a picture of a uterus and

fallopian tube with blood dripping out of the uterus. The organization You Go Girl posted an image utilizing the hashtag #HappyToBleed. You Go Girl is “the official fan page of Whisper” that promotes followers to join them to “explore freedom, celebrate womanhood” as well as share menstrual experiences. Whisper is a sanitary pad supplier that sponsors and has their product featured in *Menstrupedia*. You Go Girl’s posted image is of two metal detectors side by side. On one side, the text says “metal detector”; underneath the detector, it says, “doesn’t let you carry metal objects.”⁷² The other metal detector image states, “say no to purity detector”, and underneath the detector, it says, “doesn’t let you: touch the pickle, enter temples, enter the kitchen, wash your hair.”⁷³ The caption of the photo says, “We’ve touched the pickle and now we’re out to break all taboos against periods. Are you with us? We’re #HappyToBleed.”⁷⁴ Another photo shows the organization’s founder, Nikita Azad, with a white paper sign stating, “Break the cage of age! Happy to Bleed.”⁷⁵ The caption alongside the photo addresses campaigns against #WorthBleedingFor. Her caption stated:

This is an important post. Please share widely. I recently saw that some women in Kerala have initiated a campaign called “Ready To Wait,” point out the fact that they respect menstrual discrimination in Sabarimala temple (calling it a tradition). It is not the first time when women have stood up as carriers of patriarchy. Be it blaming women for sexual harassment, respecting the honors of their families, accepting every form of patriarchy by calling it religion and custom, many women have internalized patriarchy. Thus, it does not come as a surprise to me.

However, that does not change our conviction and neither does it change the constitution. A public space cannot discriminate on the basis of gender

72. You Go Girl’s Facebook page, last accessed March 28, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/YouGoGirlIndia/photos/a.471072252914095.104703.465763843444936/1040123006009014/?type=3&theater>.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Nikita Azad’s Facebook page.

or age (if there are no adult issues involved). Having said that, I would also like to add a little more information about the recent interview of Prayer Gopalakrishnan in Mathurbhumi wherein he said that if women entered the temples, that would be a catastrophe..it would bring distraction among pilgrims. violence against women..etc. etc.

With all the information and propaganda peeping in, I think it is time to gear up again with new slogans, new pictures, new hopes. So, let us do it again! #HappyToBleed #BreaktheCageOfGenderandAge⁷⁶

Both the photo of the detectors and the photo with the founder frame the message similarly—it is time for change. They both have an “activist” frame.

The activist frame is used when rhetors discuss traditional and currently popular views on menstruation. In the detector image, the metal detector is used to challenge the current norms in place in India that bar women from entering temples when menstruating as well as the other restrictions placed on menstruating women. Next to this “purity detector,” the words “say no” serve to challenge the taboo. By comparing the metal detector image to a “purity detector” #HappyToBleed emphasizes the ways menstrual taboos are regulating and limiting women by denying them access to certain areas. A metal detector is used to prevent metal objects from entering a place. It regulates what is permitted inside. A purity detector is used here in the same way, but instead of regulating permissible objects, it regulates people. Not only does it regulate people from entering places, but it also restricts what a person can do privately; for instance, it forbids washing hair and touching pickles. Thus it limits more than a metal detector does because it regulates a person’s entire life. In this image, it is clear that the enemy is not periods. The word “period” is not even used in this image. Instead, the enemy is the purity detector, the power of the cultural norms and taboos. The caption above the image calls on viewers

76. Ibid.

to fight this enemy and to do what these norms say not to—touch the pickle. It says the detector is useless and should not be used. And it calls on the viewers to join them in combatting this enemy.

This “activist” frame clearly argues that periods are not the enemy and are not inhibiting women from their daily lives. Instead, these detectors and menstrual taboos are limiting women. The viewer sees the photo and is meant to have an angry reaction. The viewer is supposed to feel like she is being treated like an object that goes through a metal detector. The caption for Nikita’s image that shows her holding the poster also uses an “activist” frame to point out the enemy. In this case, the enemy is once again menstrual taboos, but instead of using the metal detector to illustrate this, she uses the counter-campaign, “Ready to Wait.” Like the metal detector, this counter-campaign stands for the traditions of restricting menstruating women. By calling out the “Ready to Wait” campaign on their beliefs and flaws, she leads the viewer to be offended by the campaign and to instead join her efforts. At the end she even announces that the #HappyToBleed campaign will start again, this time with new slogans, pictures, and hopes. These two examples, the hashtag #HappyToBleed, and the images of women holding “Happy To Bleed” signs, demonstrate the same activist theme in their message. The campaign uses this frame to persuade viewers to participate with the campaign. Most of the images posted with the hashtag are not just providing information or spreading awareness, but telling viewers to be activists and stand up to patriarchy. These women are not sitting idly by; they are proactively combatting menstrual taboos by stating that they are #HappyToBleed.

Framing summary.

The three artifacts I analyze in this chapter use a variety of different frames to spread their mission and to reach their audience. After conducting this analysis, I can address my first research question: How are these artifacts utilizing message framing to reach their audiences? In all of these artifacts, the rhetors had to overcome the same barrier—menstrual taboos in India. These taboos have restricted women in their daily lives, prevented healthy menstrual hygiene practices, and denied women knowledge about menstruation. Women not only lack the education to understand the science of menstruation, they believe popular myths that have been passed down from generation to generation. Because of Indian culture, many women felt uncomfortable talking about menstruation. Additionally, western menstrual and puberty books were too graphic for those seeking information about their bodies. These campaigns had to address the fact that the population did not know the difference between the truth and myths.

To reach their audience and create change, the rhetors had to be particular about the frames for their messages. Despite using different frames, all the rhetors related to their audience by using examples that the viewers were accustomed to. For instance, the Breaking the Silence campaign focused on using informative, shocking, and negative frames in their artifacts, but while doing so, made their message relatable by showing the reality for menstruating women. They used shocking facts about current hygiene issues due to poor menstrual knowledge and management. In the longer film, the campaign used negative and informative frames, while following the story of a young girl getting her period and learning about menstrual restrictions, a reality women in India live daily. *Menstrupedia* used positive frames but also related to their audience by having characters

from a culture and background similar to that of their audience. #HappyToBleed used their activist framing methods while still pointing to the reality of life in India for menstruating women. In all of these artifacts, the rhetors used various types of message framing to reach their audiences, but they all were able to reach their audiences by relating to their audience and illustrating the reality for menstruating women in India.

Linguistic Relativity

Because all three artifacts were concerned with changing the reality in India for menstruating women, the rhetors focus on specific word choices that change the way menstruation is discussed and viewed. I will analyze how rhetors crafted these new realities by shifting from shameful to proud language, restricting to open language, falsehoods to truth, and language of avoiding to confronting.

Shifting from shameful to proud language.

Breaking the Silence's artifacts use language to change the conversation in India from discussing periods as shameful and impure to something normal. For instance, in the twenty-second video by Breaking the Silence, Chanam starts off with two words: shame and inhibition. She uses these words to call out the feelings Indian women have about their periods. She starts off right away by pointing out and labeling these feelings. Her audience feels shame and embarrassment about their periods yet do not realize it or say it out loud. By using these words, she identifies with her viewers but also calls out how these feelings prevent women from making the "right" decisions about their menstrual health. The word "right" is convicting. It tells the audience that being shamed and embarrassed about their period is not the "right" decision. Finally, she asks her viewers to join her cause. Her campaign's name even reinforces her mission to change

the way language is used to talk about periods. Her campaign is “breaking the silence” or ending the hidden conversation about menstruation in India. Her campaign also states that it is about the movement from “shame to pride.” These words are used to establish a new reality where menstruation is not shameful but is seen as a normal occurrence for women. In creating this shift in language from shameful to prideful, Chanam encourages viewers to be proud of menstruation and of being a woman.

Shifting from restricting to open language .

The film posted by Breaking the Silence focuses on the shift between the realities of restriction and freedom. In the first half of the video, the mother calls her daughter “stupid” and “untouchable.”⁷⁷ She uses the “stupid” label because her daughter breaks the restrictions that are in place for menstruating women in India. The mother also refers to her daughter as untouchable because she is menstruating, concluding that this makes her impure. This reality restricts women in India because they truly believe they are impure and cannot participate in or touch anything holy. This restricts women’s daily lives as they are forced to sometimes live outside of the house and are not allowed to cook food in the kitchen. This also restricts women’s spiritual wellbeing because they are not allowed to touch holy books, go into temples, or participate in any religious functions.

At the end of the film, the girl talks to another woman who tells her she is in fact “not untouchable” and that these myths are “only a misbelief.”⁷⁸ The girl continues to ask questions about myths and menstrual hygiene, and the woman tells her to use sanitary pads and to have clean menstrual hygiene practices. The woman also states that a “rapist,

77. Ch Urmill’s Facebook page.

78. Ibid.

murder, smuggler, terrorist” is allowed inside a temple; therefore, the young girl should also be allowed.⁷⁹ The woman argues that menstruation is not more evil than those serious crimes. Therefore, if those criminals are allowed to enter temples, a menstruating woman should be as well. The older woman’s language clarifies the truth and changes the conversation about menstruation. Her language creates a new reality, one where women are no longer restricted or considered impure because of their periods. This language shifts the reality of women by discussing how they are still able to perform daily activities and be a part of holy events when menstruating. This shift in language combats the traditional restrictions placed on menstruating women.

Shifting from falsehoods to truth.

Menstrupedia uses language to create a reality where both girls and women are educated about periods. One panel states that “it is normal for some girls to feel pain in their lower abdomen during periods.”⁸⁰ The language “normal” alongside information about the science of menstruation creates a reality in which young girls are informed about menstruation before having their first period. The panels with the heading “you should visit a doctor if” also use educational language to change the reality in India. The panels discuss widespread Indian myths about menstruation such as not being allowed to worship or touch objects as well as the fact that “periods cause weakness.”⁸¹ Another example of language shifting reality occurs when Priya states, “there is nothing impure about menstruation or menstrual fluid!”⁸² By using language to debunk commonly

79. Ibid.

80. Gupta and Paul, *Menstrupedia*, 45.

81. Ibid., 48.

82. Ibid., 81.

believed myths, the book works to change the way women discuss menstruation. Readers know that these myths are false and are supplied with the facts to overcome these obstacles.

While the comic book uses language to combat myths and to teach children in India about menstruation, it also still enforces norms for Indian women. Even though the book teaches about menstruation, it still does not show detailed images or diagrams about the body so there is still some mystery about the female body. In one panel, Priya tells the girls that their bodies are “too young and not prepared to bear a baby yet” and that they “should be at least 20 years old” before they have a baby.⁸³ Thus, this book uses language to create a reality where young girls grow up knowing about their periods and having access to necessary education about menstruation. Girls can read the book and, in many cases for the first time, gain access to information and truth about menstruation instead of continuing to believe and spread myths about menstruation that are not only limiting but also dangerous for women’s health.

Language of avoiding to language of confronting.

The image posted by You Go Girl on Facebook with the hashtag #HappyToBleed uses confronting language by declaring in the caption that they have “touched the pickle.”⁸⁴ This statement defies traditional restrictions and myths on menstruating women. In India, it is believed that menstruating women can spoil pickles and should not touch other foods because they are unclean. This caption blatantly announces that the organization is not only breaking that rule, but also declaring it in a public space—online.

83. Ibid., 41.

84. You Go Girl’s Facebook page.

The caption also states that the organization is “out to break all taboos against periods.”⁸⁵ They then ask their audience, “are you with us?”⁸⁶ The language used in this caption inspires their viewers to not just sit back and continue to follow menstrual norms, but to stand up and confront these taboos. The rhetor uses this confronting language to shift the audience’s mindset from avoiding conversations about menstruation to confronting the issue. In India, it is common for periods to be missing from daily conversation, which is why menstrual taboos still exist. The rhetor wants to add menstruation into societal conversation. Not only is the rhetor talking about periods, but they are doing so in a thought-provoking way.

Nikita Azad’s post also uses confronting language. Her post with the sign “Break the Cage of Age! Happy to Bleed” announces that she is breaking menstrual taboos that have been passed from generation to generation.⁸⁷ She proudly confronts the avoidance of menstruation in dialogue by sharing this post on her Facebook page and by spreading her mission with the hashtag #HappytoBleed. The combination of a lengthy, powerful caption alongside an image with the words “Happy To Bleed” draws the attention of viewers. People scrolling their Facebook feed will be confronted with this image that cannot be easily glossed over.

If viewers wish to learn more or to participate in the cause, they can read her long caption on the photo that confronts the counter-campaign “Ready to Wait,” and points out that the campaign “respect[s] menstrual discrimination” and blindly upholds the

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. Nikita Azad’s Facebook page.

patriarchy.⁸⁸ She calls out the organization and the harm they are bringing to women in India. After she responds to the campaign's launch, she then states that the campaign "does not change our conviction and neither does it change the constitution. A public space cannot discriminate on the basis of gender or age (if there are no adult issues involved)."⁸⁹ By stating this, Azad declares her position on menstrual taboos—that she will not stop confronting this issue. She then provides further information about the interview with the Temple Chief who spurred her decision to found the Happy to Bleed organization. She states the Temple Chief said that "if women entered the temples, that would be a catastrophe.. it would bring distraction among pilgrims.. violence against women.. etc. etc."⁹⁰ By including this message in her post, Azad once again combats the campaign by providing more information about the interview and why she is outraged by the Chief's comments. This quote from the chief validates her cause and pushes it further because it is upsetting for viewers to read. Azad then ends her post by stating, "with all of the information and propaganda peeping in, I think it is time to gear up again with new slogans, new pictures, new hopes. So, let us do it again!"⁹¹ This strong call to action at the end declares that she is not avoiding the new propaganda or information that is trying to maintain the status quo of menstrual taboos; instead she is going to reactivate the campaign and this time be even stronger. Her language throughout this post is confrontational and inspires viewers to participate in her cause.

88. Ibid.

89. Nikita Azad's Facebook page, last accessed March 31, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10205592283726994&set=a.2003103857813.77449.1850123701&type=3&theater>.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

At the beginning of Azad's post, she says, "this is an important post. Please share widely."⁹² By asking viewers to share this post, she is trying to get the conversation about menstruation circulating. She wants viewers to not avoid menstruation, but to share this post and to start conversations on social media. Not only does she specifically ask people to repost this message, but the campaign's hashtag also promotes this idea of spreading menstruation conversations on social media. The hashtag #HappyToBleed promotes uploading images of signs and women holding posters that state "Happy To Bleed." These posts are meant to start a conversation about menstruation. They do not supply information about the campaign or even about menstruation. The purpose of these posts is simply to confront taboos by using powerful images that are not normally seen on public spaces. The hashtag and images are sharable; therefore, they work to shift the idea of hiding menstruation to a new reality where society can openly discuss this important topic.

Linguistic relativity summary.

These examples highlight the status quo in India, where women are denied access to information about menstruation, restricted when menstruating, and lack the resources to properly manage their menstrual blood. All of these issues trace back to the problem that menstruation is simply not discussed in India. Because menstruation is not discussed, women do not know the truth about their menses and therefore do not know how to manage it. Traditional myths cannot be combatted if women do not openly discuss periods and become educated about their menstruation. The artifacts I analyzed in this

92. Ibid.

chapter combat these issues by using language to shift between realities. Rhetors use language to change how menstruation is discussed.

Breaking the Silence uses language to tackle the shame surrounding periods and inspire viewers to consider periods something to be proud of. Breaking the Silence also uses their video to discuss how language restricts women on their periods. They then use language to free their viewers from these restrictions and to create a reality where women do not feel restricted by their periods. *Menstrupedia* uses language to teach young girls the truth about periods so that they can grow up understanding their periods and so that future generations pass on accurate information about menstruation rather than myths. Finally, #HappyToBleed confronts Indian society to work toward changing their reality. Their images allow menstruation to exist on social media and help the conversation circulate. In each artifact, language is used to shape a new reality in India, a reality where women understand their periods, no longer have shame when menstruating, and can be free to menstruate and live out their lives.

Conclusion

These artifacts illustrate how rhetors relate to their audiences through message framing to create new messages regarding menstruation in India. The language used in these conversations then shapes new realities. In these artifacts, menstrual taboos are being combatted in India by bringing the topic of menstruation into open conversation. With my analysis in mind, I now can address my final question: How are rhetorical artifacts combatting menstrual taboos in various cultures?

In India, when artifacts discuss menstruation, women are able to learn new information and attitudes surrounding menstruation can change. These artifacts work

together to create change in India. India's traditional and cultural norms have prevented society from fully understanding the science behind menstruation. By exposing the truths about menstruation and the myths and restrictions placed on menstruating women, rhetors are challenging cultural taboos. And by bringing menstruation into dialogue, the reality for menstruating women can change in India. These three rhetorical artifacts combat menstrual taboos in India by creating an outlet for women to learn and talk about menstruation. Women in India deserve to live their lives without fear of breaking menstrual restrictions or risking their lives due to poor menstrual health. When women in India can freely talk about menstruation, they not only gain new insights but also are freed from the chains of menstruation.

CHAPTER IV

BREAKING TABOOS IN SOUTH AFRICA

“Gosh,” “embarrassing,” “traumatic,” are a few one-word examples three women in South Africa used to describe their first periods.¹ While many period testimonies in South Africa discuss how women somewhat knew what their periods were before their first menstruation, most will still claim that they felt embarrassed about the experience. In South Africa, it is common for girls and women to lack resources to manage their menstruation and will often miss school rather than have to deal with their menstrual hygiene in public. In South Africa, menstruation is regarded as a sign of a woman being able to produce a child, which is startling to young girls experiencing menstruation for the first time. In this chapter, I discuss menstruation taboos in South Africa. While access to resources and education are limited, this chapter will also highlight and analyze three artifacts that are working to create menstrual awareness and make resources accessible across South Africa.

Menstrual Taboos in South Africa

Taboos about menstruation in South Africa are a growing concern for the whole country. Various studies have claimed that “in most African communities preparation for

1. Red Wings Project’s Facebook Page, last accessed March 26, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/redwingsproject/>.

menarche is lacking,” and South Africa is no different.² Social Researcher Dorah Ramathuba states that, “sexuality education is taught at schools during Life Orientation lessons in South African schools, which is a cause for concern, as culture inhibits discussions of such matters in public.”³ Many people in South Africa claim to either be unaware of menstruation or feel uncomfortable openly discussing it.⁴ Menstrual taboos are derived from years of passing down these attitudes both in school systems and families. Culturally, “it is not regarded important to give details on menstruation;” therefore, “menstrual knowledge is clouded by taboos and social cultural restrictions, resulting in adolescent girls remaining ignorant of the scientific facts and hygienic health practices necessary for maintaining positive reproductive health.”⁵ There are approximately “5 million girls between the ages of 10 and 19, across all races in South Africa.”⁶ While the average age of for girls experiencing their first menses is 12, in South Africa “girls are starting to menstruate at the age of nine.”⁷ Some experts speculate that this early onset of puberty occurs because of eating habits and chemicals in food in the country.⁸

2. Dorah U. Ramathuba, “Menstrual Knowledge and Practices of Female Adolescents in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.” *Curationis* 38, no. 1 (2015): 2, doi:10.4102/curationis.v.38i1.1551.

3. *Ibid.*, 4.

4. “Fight to Keep Young Girls at School,” *SA News*, July 22, 2016, <http://www.sanews.gov.za/features-south-africa/fight-keep-young-girls-school>.

5. Ramathuba, “Menstrual Knowledge and Practices of Female Adolescents in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa,” 4.

6. “Our Girls,” *Dignity Dreams*, last accessed March 23, 2017, <http://www.dignitydreams.com/our-girls.html>.

7. Melanie Gosling, “Girls Reaching Puberty at Age of 9,” *IOL*, November 1, 2013, <http://www.iol.co.za/lifestyle/family/kids/girls-reaching-puberty-at-age-of-9-1600751>.

8. *Ibid.*

World Toilet Day is celebrated every November 19th. The holiday's festival in South Africa "raise[s] awareness around Water and Sanitation and also encourages youth and community members' participation in water conservation, toilet hygiene and maintenance."⁹ South Africa "has been facing a prolonged water crisis, coupled with drought around most parts of the country," and the "water demand is expected to exceed supply in South Africa by 17% in 2030."¹⁰ According to the 2014 South African Human Rights Commission's report, "approximately 11% (1.4 million) of households (formal and informal) still have to be provided with sanitation services" and "26% (3.8 million) of households . . . have sanitation services which do not meet the required standards due to the deterioration of infrastructure."¹¹ This is not only a big problem for many private citizens' households, but is also a huge issue for school sanitation. Many schools desperately need new infrastructure and clean, working toilets. The toilet festival also promotes projects that are aimed at "providing free toilet maintenance and refurbishment services to rural and disadvantaged schools, and finally, it educates and promote[s] the use of clean toilets, non-dysfunctional toilets and cleanness" in schools.¹² These sanitation issues are a bigger concern in the rural regions of South Africa but are still a significant issue for a large population of South Africa.

9. "2016 Toilet Festival (South Africa)," *World Toilet Day*, last accessed March 23, 2017, <http://www.worldtoiletday.info/2015/events/2016-toilet-festival-south-africa>.

10. Nation Nyoka, "Fighting for Water Security in a Time of Demand," *News24*, March 22, 2017, <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/fighting-for-water-security-in-a-time-of-demand-20170322>.

11. South African Human Rights Commission, "Report on the Right to Access Sufficient Water and Decent Sanitation in South Africa: 2014," last accessed March 23, 2017, 6, [https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/FINAL%204th%20Proof%204%20March%20-%20Water%20%20Sanitation%20low%20res%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/FINAL%204th%20Proof%204%20March%20-%20Water%20%20Sanitation%20low%20res%20(2).pdf).

12. "2016 Toilet Festival (South Africa)."

Not only is the lack of sanitation services a problem for daily hygiene, but it also creates many issues for healthy menstruation hygiene. It is estimated that, in South Africa, “around 7 million girls miss school each month because of menstruation,”¹³ largely caused by “the lack of school toilets with privacy and facilities for menstrual hygiene.”¹⁴ In lower income regions of South Africa “disposable sanitary towels and tampons may be prohibitively expensive. Consequently, many women and adolescent girls resort to using cloth, newspaper, or toilet paper, potentially curtailing their regular activities.”¹⁵ In South Africa, “the average tampon costing around R.150” makes “having a period an expense that many cannot afford.”¹⁶ Because “most South Africans still live below the poverty line,” alternative means are used for “stemming the flow.”¹⁷ Cloths or rags are more commonly used in South Africa than sanitary pads. Because cloths are reusable, they must be washed often for proper menstrual health, and the still common taboos regarding menstruation lead most users to not properly clean their menstrual cloths. Instead, to hide menstrual cloths, most “washed and dried them not in direct sunlight and stored their underwear in plastic shopping bags, [and] schoolbags,” which is

13. Stuart Lewis, “South Africa: The Price of Sanitary Pads is a Tax on Womanhood,” *All Africa*, March 8, 2016, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201603080267.html>.

14. Mags Beksinska, Jennifer Smit, Ross Greener, Virginia Maphumulo, and Zonke Mabude, “Better Menstrual Management Options for Adolescents Needed in South Africa: What About the Menstrual Cup?,” *South African Medical Journal* 105, no. 5 (2008): 331, doi:10.7196/samj.9205.

15. Mags E. Beksinska, Jenni Smit, Ross Greener, Catherine S. Todd, Mei-ling Ting Lee, Virginia Maphumulo, and Vivian Hoffmann, “A Randomized Crossover Trial Comparing the Menstrual Cup to Tampons or Sanitary Pads,” *Journal of Women’s Health* 24, no. 2 (2015): 151, doi:10.1089/jwh.2014.5021.

16. Lewis, “South Africa.”

17. Ibid.

ineffective and can lead to “perineal infections.”¹⁸ Because girls do not have the ability to rinse and dry their cloths out at school, they risk menstrual leak which leads to embarrassment from either leaks or the odor of a bloody cloth. This embarrassment adds to the stress of going to school while menstruating; therefore, “girls who cannot afford sanitary products miss approximately five days of school a month during their monthly cycles.”¹⁹ This prevents young girls from acquiring education.

The lack of resources and education about how to manage menstruation causes a cycle of passing on these same period stresses and taboos to future young girls. The high dropout rate and the fact that girls lack education about menstruation contributes to the high maternal death rate in South Africa. Many girls are unaware that menstruation means their bodies are able to produce a child and therefore many get pregnant. And many who drop out of school get married earlier and therefore pregnant at an early age. These factors are contributors to, “the rate of maternal deaths per 100,000 people” rising in South Africa “from 150 in 1998 to 269 in 2010.” And out of those deaths, “36% of the maternal deaths were of pregnant teenagers.”²⁰

To promote healthy menstrual management and to decrease the number of dropouts, menstrual cups (MC) are starting to be introduced in many parts of South Africa. In fact, “providing forms of menstrual management to women and girls in need has been on the South African (SA) government’s agenda for the past 4 years.”²¹ The SA

18. Ramathuba, “Menstrual Knowledge and Practices of Female Adolescents in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa,” 5.

19. “Fight to Keep Young Girls at School.”

20. Gosling, “Girls Reaching Puberty at Age of 9.”

21. Beksinska, Smit, Greener, Maphumulo, and Mabude, “Better Menstrual Management Options for Adolescents Needed in South Africa,” 331.

Government has even partnered with some organizations in order to provide these cups as a form of sanitary menstrual management. Menstrual cups are “an alternative to disposable hygiene products” because of their “nonabsorbent reusable barrier cup that collects menstrual blood and is typically made of flexible medical-grade silicone.”²² Since “the life span of one MC is typically 5 years, use of MC rather than tampons would represent a considerable cost savings over time.”²³ The affordability of menstrual cups could help alleviate the growing issue of menstrual hygiene across South Africa and could help keep girls in school.

South Africa Campaigns

With this brief overview of both the issues surrounding menstruation in South Africa and ways that the menstrual taboo is being tackled in mind, I will turn to look at how artifacts are challenging menstrual taboos in South Africa. Specifically, I will be looking at how The Red Wings Project, #WorthBleedingFor Campaign, Serithi Campaign, and the Caring4Girls Campaign in South Africa are also working to create change across the nation. The next section provides an overview of each campaign.

Red Wings Project

The Red Wings Project is a nonprofit organization located in Kyalami, South Africa that aims to address “issues of lack of sanitation for South African Women.”²⁴ The organization states that “in most African schools, young girls are pretty certain and convinced that going home or staying at home is the better solution to their periods than

22. “Fight to Keep Young Girls at School.”

23. Ibid.

24. Red Wings Project, “About,” *Red Wings Project*, 2014, <http://www.redwingsproject.com/about/>.

to be at school.”²⁵ In 2013, “research showed that young girls missed an average of 800 hours of school every year because they do not have access to sanitary pads.”²⁶ This prevents young girls from learning in school and also poses hygienic issues. The organization’s mission is to

increase access to sanitary products to disadvantaged females; create awareness around the lack of sanitation faced by a major portion of South African women; collect and donate sanitary products to the disadvantaged, homeless, and shelters; eradicate the taboos of girls and women feeling humiliated when their on their menses; call on policy makers to make women sanitary products available to the underprivileged; consolidate all sanitary distribution efforts all across the country into a center in-sync mechanism that enables equal and fair distribution to all areas; educate women and girls about the disposal of used sanitary products and the importance thereof.²⁷

They further claim that “period pains may hurt physically, but what hurts even more is the lack of conversation and engagement about sanitary products and education for women.”²⁸

Their website offers anyone the opportunity to donate sanitary towels, sign a petition to “subsidize underprivileged women for sanitary product” and “remove the 14% tax on sanitary product,” and offers opportunities to volunteer.²⁹ In 2017, the Red Wings Project is launching “SISTA” or Sister in Solidarity Taking Action. The purpose of the program is to provide “young women a platform for empowerment and inspiration

25. Ibid.

26. Gwadamirari Majange, “Strong Girls to Inspire: Olwethu Njoloza-Lesha (Humanitarian),” *One*, September 2, 2015, <https://www.one.org/africa/blog/strong-girls-to-inspire-olwethu-njoloza-leshabane-humanitarian/>.

27. Red Wings Project, “About.”

28. Olwethu Leshabane, “What Hurts More Than the Period Pains?,” *Red Wings Project*, 2015, <http://www.redwingsproject.com/what-hurts-more-than-the-period-pains/>.

29. Red Wings Project, “Petition,” *Red Wings Project*, 2014, <http://www.redwingsproject.com/petition/>.

through contact with mentors and coaches.”³⁰ The Red Wings Project states that “SISTA is a movement aimed to inspire, create, learn, grow, love, and share.”³¹ The image shared with the announcement of the launch features four females with the words “Black Girls Talking!” underneath. Above the women are the words self/spirit, body, life skills, and impact. Their Facebook page has 2,305 likes, and they also have a Twitter account with 117 followers and an Instagram account with 575 followers. They primarily utilize one hashtag, #RedHeelMonday, on all of their social media platforms. This hashtag inspires users to take a photo in their red heels every Monday to “break menstrual taboos one red heel at a time.”³² They also have advocates in the community who write blogs and spread the program’s mission. The organization also goes out into the community, visits schools to talk to young girls about their periods, and even hosts events for young girls. In this thesis, I will analyze how the Red Wings Project utilizes their Facebook page to start conversations about menstruation through the images, posts, and hashtags they post. I will specifically examine the Red Wings Project’s posts with the hashtag #RedHeelMonday.

#WorthBleedingFor Campaign

A branch of the human rights organization called Amnesty International located at the University of the Witwatersrand (commonly known as WITS), Johannesburg started a campaign “for the rectification of an intolerable injustice.”³³ In April 2016, the group

30. Red Wings Project, “SISTA,” *Red Wings Project*, 2014, <http://www.redwingsproject.com/sista/>.

31. Ibid.

32. The Red Wings Project’s Facebook page, last accessed November 20, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/redwingsproject/>.

33. Amnesty International WITS’ Facebook page, last accessed March 21, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/pg/AmnestyInternationalWITS/likes/?ref=page_internal.

started a “petition to WITS Management demanding sanitary pads be made freely available on campus, for workers and students.”³⁴ The petition gained over 3,400 signatures. The group’s ultimate goal is the “complete removal of tax on menstrual products and for them to be made freely available in all public spaces—urgently so in underdeveloped areas.”³⁵ South Africa has

around 2.1 million young girls endur[ing] the daily struggles of life below the poverty line. They are hence unable to afford sanitary pads, and are forced to improvise, using dangerous alternatives like sand-filled socks in attempts to cope with their period.³⁶

These young girls are then unable to access their right to education because without having the proper sanitary products, they have no choice but to miss school. Therefore, “one in ten girls in Africa do not attend school while menstruating.”³⁷

The group spreads awareness of these issues by hosting talks that discuss menstruation, organizing gatherings protesting the availability of menstrual products, inspiring the community to join their efforts by wearing red shirts, and of course motivating followers to follow and utilize their hashtag #worthbleedingfor. In April 2016, the group organized during lunch to have women sit on top of “red marked dots which symbolize[d] the menstrual cycle that women go through on a monthly basis.”³⁸ This

34. Ibid.

35. Amnesty International WITS’ Facebook page.

36. Raees Noorbhai, “South Africa: Bleed the Beloved Country-#WorthBleedingFor Campaign Seeks to Make Pads More Accessible,” *All Africa*, April 19, 2016, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201604200889.html>.

37. Ibid.

38. Amnesty International WITS’ Facebook page.

demonstration was successful because they created awareness of the campaign and were challenging the menstrual taboo. The “sit in” protest was referred to as “bleeding in.”³⁹

The organization primarily uses social media and community events to promote their mission and create change. Because I am unable to attend these events, for the purpose of this thesis I will analyze their social media presence, specifically the posts with the hashtag #worthbleedingfor. Because it is unique that an organization has long texts on social media rather than posting mostly image-based posts, I will be particularly focused in analyzing their textual posts on social media.

Serithi Campaign

The Serithi Campaign, based in Pretoria, South Africa, is “aimed at curbing the growing crisis experienced by young girls across the country who face absenteeism due to being unequipped for their menstrual cycle.”⁴⁰ The campaign is supported by the South African government who seeks to reduce the number of days females miss school. The campaign realized that “donations of sanitary towels would not provide a sustainable solution to this profound yet largely hidden social challenge.”⁴¹ Therefore, they believe that “providing young girls with a sustainable economical solution--menstrual cups,” will solve the problem of young girls missing school during their periods.⁴² The organization partnered with HappyDay, supplier of a menstrual cup called the Mina Cup, and “with

39. Ibid.

40. The Serithi Campaign’s Facebook page, last accessed March 22, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/serithicampaign/>.

41. Dineo Ramonnye, “Serithi Campaign,” *Amaphiko*, <https://amaphiko.redbull.com/en/projects/serithi-campaign>.

42. Ibid.

the support of the South African government” gave menstrual cups to girls in Pretoria.⁴³

The Mina Cup

is about the length of a pinkie finger and it is made out of medical grade silicone . . . it is discreet and easy to use because the cup is comfortable. It can be used for up to eight hours, after which it has to be rinsed out with clean water. It also needs to be sterilized in boiling water for five minutes once a day. The cup lasts up to five years, which is a significant cost saver.⁴⁴

The Serithi Campaign not only brings these menstrual cups to schools and girls in need, but also hosts educational workshops to inform young girls about their menstruation and how to use sanitary products. On May 7, 2016, the campaign reported that their “first beneficiary handover” was successful.⁴⁵ They gave out a total of “88 menstrual cups to students at the Tshogofatsong school” which “provide[d] much needed relief of financial pressure on parents” in poorer communities.⁴⁶ They are continuing to raise funds to be able to increase their outreach and provide menstrual cups to more underprivileged girls across the country. In addition to providing cups and workshops about menstrual health, they also provide workshops about “gender roles for both girls and boys, consent, woman empowerment, [and] puberty.”⁴⁷ They are also spreading awareness by being not only in the communities, but also on the news. They have been interviewed this past year on the public service South African Television channel (SABC 1). Because of their partnership with the government, the campaign has a lot of potential

43. Ruiz-Grossman, “Students Get Free Menstrual Cups So They Don’t Have to Miss School.”

44. “Sanitary Dignity Campaign Changes Schoolgirls’ Lives,” *SA News*, May 8, 2016, <http://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/sanitary-dignity-campaign-changes-schoolgirls-lives>.

45. “Our First Beneficiary Handover,” *Serithi Campaign*, last accessed March 21, 2017, <https://amaphiko.redbull.com/en/projects/serithi-campaign>.

46. Ruiz-Grossman, “Students get Free Menstrual Cups so They Don’t Have to Miss School.”

47. The Serithi Campaign’s Facebook page.

for growth and being able to increase their resources. In this chapter, I will analyze their social media content, primarily their image-based posts that connect with their mission to eradicate school absenteeism due to menstruation. The Serithi Campaign is on their way to making a difference by “changing the world, one girl at a time.”⁴⁸

These three artifacts represent three of the most prominent menstrual taboo challenging organizations in South Africa. These artifacts are unique because of their mission and their organization’s foundation. One organization has support from the South African government, while another was spearheaded by a group of students, and yet another was founded and is led by just one passionate woman. Even though all of these artifacts had different origins, all of them have the same mission—to bring menstrual awareness to the people of South Africa and therefore change the reality of menstruation. These artifacts seek change and are working to eradicate menstrual taboos. With all of this background information in mind, I will now turn to my analysis of each artifact.

Analysis

This section will analyze each artifact previously mentioned through framing theory and linguistic relativity. I will begin my analysis by discussing the frames the rhetors used to communicate their messages. Then, within the linguistic relativity section, I will organize my analysis by how the language in the artifact creates shifts in realities. These two theoretical frameworks provide a methodology through which I will answer my first two research questions: (1) How are these artifacts utilizing message framing to reach their audiences? (2) And through message framing, how are these texts shaping language to create a new reality? Then, after my theoretical analysis and responses to

48. Ibid.

these questions, I will answer my last question: (3) How are rhetorical artifacts combating menstrual taboos in various cultures?

Framing

Rhetors craft messages using media framing to “select some aspects of a perceived reality”⁴⁹ to influence “the thoughts, ideas, and attitudes of individuals and the public.”⁵⁰ In each artifact I will analyze, the rhetors use various frames to affect the conversation about periods in South Africa. I found five frames the rhetors used throughout these artifacts: activist frames, informative frames, realistic frames, positive frames, and frames blaming patriarchy for menstruation taboos.

Activist frame.

Red Wings uses their hashtag #RedHeelMonday to inspire followers to post and participate in their movement. Red Wings Project advocate Olwethu Leshabane shared a photo of herself with the hashtag. In the photo, she is wearing red heels. Her caption reads:

#RedHeelMonday

Water and sanitation has not had the same kind of champion that global health and education have had. Let’s champion this movement to improve the sanitation and water sanitation in our country. “Because sanitation has so many effects across all aspects of development—it affects education, it affects health, it affects maternal mortality and infant mortality, it affects labor—it’s all these things, so it becomes a political football. Nobody has full responsibility.”—Rose George

#FeminineSanitationAdvocate #SanitationAwareness #RedWingsProject⁵¹

49. Robert M Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,” *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51, doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x.

50. Ardevol-Abreu, “Framing Theory in Communication Research in Spain. Origins, Development and Current Situation,” *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 70, no. 1 (2015): 435, doi:10.4185/RLCS-2015-1053en.

51. Olwethu Leshabana Mrs South Africa 1st Princess’ Facebook Page, last accessed April 3, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/Olwe2Lesh/photos/a.1047011922022073.1073741828.1046760418713890/1227568507299746/?type=3&theater>.

Leshabane's post uses an activist frame to craft her message that promotes the Red Wings Project's mission. She refers to herself as a "feminine sanitation advocate" and is promoting awareness with her post by discussing water and sanitation issues in South Africa. She states that water and sanitation have not been given the level of focus from advocates that health and education have and that this is an issue. She urges her viewers to join her in this movement to improve these issues in South Africa. She then ends her post with a caption from journalist and author Rose George discussing the greater effects of sanitation. This message is framed inspire action from her viewers.

The hashtag #RedHeelMonday itself also aims to inspire and spur a movement. By creating a hashtag that can be used to spread a message, she invites viewers to also post photos of themselves in red heels. This hashtag is made specifically for women to use because it promotes the wearing of heels—shoes more commonly worn by women. Women mostly wear heels when they are going to work or going out, not just when they are sitting at home or wanting to be comfortable. The image of heels stands for being confident and out in public. Paired with the red color to represent the color of menstrual blood, this image makes a powerful statement. It states that women are being bold and strong. Women are standing against menstrual issues in South Africa. The hashtag also encourages women to wear their red heels to indicate they are spreading awareness about menstrual taboos. Women are not only encouraged to wear their red heels on Monday but to also post photos of themselves in their shoes with the hashtag

#RedHeelMonday. These posts signify that viewers are participating in the Red Wings Project's mission to address "the issues of lack of sanitation for South African women."⁵²

This activist frame not only brings awareness to the problems caused by a lack of sanitation but spreads the issue across social media platforms. When viewers participate with the post or the hashtag, they are changing how periods are viewed.

#RedHeelMonday generates activist framed messages that are powerful and persuasive. These posts are gaining support and creating a movement. This movement needs activists to create change across South Africa. It creates not only dialogue about menstruation by eliciting social media posts, but also is inspiring a movement that can hopefully fix sanitation and water issues in South Africa. When these issues are fixed, menstruating women will have access to the necessary resources to manage their periods healthily.

A member of Amnesty International WITS posted an image on her Facebook supporting the organization by using the hashtag #WorthBleedingFor. Her post shares an image that is circulated by Amnesty International WITS' campaign #worthbleedingfor. The image is a photograph of graffiti. The graffiti depicts an arm grasping what appears to be a sanitary pad. The pad has red ink (blood) flowing down the pad and down the arm then ends in an arrow shape. The arm is outlined in black ink and also has lines running parallel to the red ink that end in arrows as well. The arrows are pointing to the right towards the red spray-painted text. The image of the fist grasped together holding the sanitary pad gives the illusion of a similar image used to illustrate "power" or "protest" because images of an arm and a hand making a fist are a frequently used image to promote the idea of protesting. This image is used on posters and graphics

52. The Red Wings Project's Facebook page.

to call for strikes, liberty, equality, unity, and power. Although the image is used to call for various principles, the main representation of the closed fist is to stand for revolution or protest. By combining the fist with the sanitary pad, the rhetor creates a message about protest or activism. She calls for women's sanitation liberties. The fist is holding up the pad to declare that sanitary pads will bring equality and power to women. The caption of the photo ends with the phrase "Aluta Continua," which is translated as "the struggle continues, victory is certain." These last words and the depiction of the fist holding the sanitary pad inspire activism. The rhetor crafted this message using activist framing to motivate her viewers not to quit in their fight for sanitation improvements. This activist post seeks to garner support for the organization. The organization uses this frame to not only create conversation about the struggles of menstruating women, but to also encourage viewers to participate in the collection of sanitary pads. When viewers participate in the collection and create more dialogue about the problem, the issue can be brought into the light and therefore lead to change on the Rhodes University campus.

Amnesty International WITS spreads their message on their campus through the use of social media and physical posters. An image of one of these posters that they circulated on social media has the same image of the fist grasping a sanitary pad. The headline, written in red, says #WorthBleedingFor and the black subheading underneath states "handover of demands."⁵³ The poster goes on to state:

Gather in front of the Great Hall to display solidarity with poor women who can't afford pads. Be present as we hand over demands to university management and a representative of the Department of Women.

Venue: Great Hall Piazza Date: Wednesday, 20th April Time: 13h15⁵⁴

53. Amnesty International WITS' Facebook page.

54. Ibid.

The rhetor used activist framing in their message by using both the image of the fist and the text. The fist promotes the idea that this is a protest, and the text tells the viewers where to gather and what to demand. The rhetor uses an activist frame to unite groups of people who want to fight for the same principles. By doing this, the rhetor works to create a crowd of people with similar goals to fight together for change on campus.

Informative frame.

Olwethu Leshabane frequently posts for the Red Wings Project on Mondays for the hashtag #RedHeelMonday. She uses an informative frame to supply information to viewers who are in need of advice. Her post again features her red heels, but this time the image is a zoomed in photo of her calves and feet rather than her full outfit. The caption reads:

Is your daughter/niece/little sister etc. reaching puberty? Are they around the age of 9/10 and you're looking for resources to assist with discussing menstruation, sanitation, sex, and HIV/AIDS? Please email info@redwingsproject.com—we'll send you back some reading material.
 #RedHeelMonday #RedWingsProject #MenstruationMonday #PeriodStories
 #MenstrualSanitation #FemaleSanitation @redwingsproject⁵⁵

This post uses informative framing to assist their audience. The rhetor realizes that their viewers are in need of information regarding puberty because this is an issue in South Africa. This post asks the viewer questions to relate to the audience. By asking these questions, the rhetor is focusing on a specific population that is need of their resources. Doing this provides the viewers who need help with information. Rather than flooding social media with detailed information, Olwethu uses short informative posts to catch the audiences' attention and lead them to a way to find more information either by going to

55. Olwethu Leshabana Mrs South Africa 1st Princess' Facebook page.

the Red Wings Project's website or by emailing the organization to receive more information. This frame is used to provide new information to those in need in South Africa. By informing the population about menstruation and other health issues, the organization works to change how menstruation is talked about. Rather than having children reaching puberty without any awareness of how their body functions, Red Wings Project crafts informative messages to educate. Children then have the necessary information to manage puberty and menstruation.

The Serithi Campaign uses mainly image posts (many featuring young girls smiling and laughing) with text placed over various images. All of their posts also include their logo with the words "Dignity is not a privilege."⁵⁶ In many of their posts, they discuss the concept of menstrual cups. Menstrual cups are a trending topic in South Africa because they will help manage menstruation without creating sanitation issues or encouraging girls to miss school. Menstrual cups can last longer in the body than tampons, do not produce waste because they are reusable, are a clean way to manage menstrual blood, and are affordable because of their long-lasting silicone material. The Serithi Campaign focuses their efforts on spreading awareness and information about menstrual cups on their social media. The campaign focuses on equipping young girls in South Africa with these products so that they can manage their menstrual cycle and not miss school due to their periods.

One of their posts further illustrates their informative message framing. The post is in black and white with a photo of young girls outside dancing in lines. The closer girl, who is laughing, is the focus point of the photo. On top of the black and white photo,

56. Serithi Campaign's Facebook page.

white text states: “why menstrual cup? The cotton in tampons can strip your vaginal walls of naturally occurring lining (moisture), making your ‘lady bits’ more susceptible to disease.”⁵⁷ The caption of the photo says: “Why the menstrual cup? #BeingWoman.”⁵⁸ This post informs viewers about the health benefits of menstrual cups. By doing this, the rhetor gives information to viewers so they can make better choices regarding menstrual products. Using informative framing makes the viewer see the facts of menstrual cups and be more likely to want to use that product. A comment on the post also helps prove that the informative framing promotes the menstrual cups. A Facebook user commented on the photo: “where do we get this menstrual cup, can I buy for my child though?”⁵⁹ Serithi Campaign responded the same day to the comment stating, “hi there [Facebook user’s name], message our page so we can discuss this further. Regards Serithi.”⁶⁰ The campaign not only provides information through their original message but also in how they interact with their followers. By doing this, the rhetor informs women and changes how they manage their menstruation. The goal is that this will then lead to healthier menstrual management practices which will keep girls in school and keep infections and diseases down.

Realistic frame.

Once again, Olwethu posts for the Red Wings Project and uses the hashtag #RedHeelMonday. In this post, she uses a realistic frame in her message to viewers. In

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

this post she once again shares a close-up image of her calves and a pair of red heels on her feet. The caption for this photo states:

No access to toilets or being confronted with toilets that are mostly blocked or dirty infringes on the learners' rights to equality and human dignity in the Bill of Rights [sic]. Failing to ensure this access is a failure to protect their equal entitlement to learn under conditions that respect, protect, and promote the inherent human dignity of each child.

Case Study:

A Grade 11 learner at Kwamfundo Secondary School in Khayelitsha [sic] she explains that the boys' and girls' bathrooms are separate and that four of the seven taps work with no soap or paper towels. In the girls' section [sic] six of the seven toilets works [sic], but there is no toilet paper, no rubbish bins and the doors do not lock. There are sanitary bins that are only emptied out once they are full. She says the bathroom "stinks and is infested with flies". She only uses the bathroom once she is desperate. If she were menstruating she would rather wait until she is home before going to the toilet. "This makes me very uncomfortable during class and makes learning harder, but I do not want to use that bathroom. I know of some girls at my school, if they are on their period and really want to go to the bathroom they will rather ask to go home and miss the rest of the school day than use the school's bathroom to change. When I cannot keep it in and I have to go to the bathroom, it is sometimes so dirty that I do not sit on the toilet seat and I use my foot to flush the toilet because I do not want to touch the handle." Some of the water points (taps) at the school do not work. Her description fit that of many rural and per-urban schools visited for this article.⁶¹

This post uses realistic framing to craft a message that shows the reality facing many young girls in South Africa. This message details the experience of using the bathroom at school for a eleventh grader and then the challenges that arise when she is menstruating. By telling a real story of a girl experiencing menstrual hygiene restrictions, the rhetor communicates a powerful message. This story not only illustrates the issue of the lack of sanitation in schools but depicts a firsthand experience with this issue. In doing this, the rhetor gives insight to the realities young girls must endure when they are menstruating. This is a reality for many young girls and women across South Africa, and it is not only

61. Olwethu Leshabana Mrs South Africa 1st Princess' Facebook page.

preventing them from receiving education, but is also posing serious menstrual hygiene issues.

The caption for Maseko's previously mentioned Facebook post depicting the fist grasping a sanitary pad, reads #WorthBleedingFor and Free Pads Now. The text states:

This Thursday, Rhodes SRC will be launching #PledgeAPadThursday. It is a reality at Rhodes University that there are young women who cannot attend their lecturers [sic] or tutorials because they do not have sanitary pads and cannot afford them. How can one be productive in class when you have to use tissue, a newspaper or rags? There are girls who miss tests or exams because they have their period and that means perhaps, one less lawyer, one less accountant, one less President in the future South Africa. This cannot and will not be allowed in our institution..[sic] not under our watch or under our leadership! We will be situated at the Kaif on Thursday from 12-2pm collecting sanitary pads that will be placed in boxes in various residences and digs. Join a cause #WorthBleedingFor Aluta Continua.⁶²

The rhetor used realistic frames in this post. She states that “it is a reality at Rhodes University,” framing the message as a true story.⁶³ She then goes further in the post by giving examples of what young women have to go through when they are menstruating at this university. She states that many young women miss classes and cannot focus in their classes because of their periods, and that as a result, their future careers are jeopardized. Because women lack the proper sanitation resources at this university, the future of South Africa will mean missing women are missing from important career roles.

After illustrating this story in her post, Maseko then tells her viewers how they can change this reality for young women by participating in a sanitary pad collection on campus. This story grabs the attention of her viewers and gives them the opportunity to

62. Khensani Ntando Nkanyezi Maseko's Facebook page, last accessed April 4, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1088690881184410&set=gm.1176478299038796&type=3&theater>.

63. Ibid.

understand the reality of young women throughout South Africa. When viewers understand the harsh reality of being limited by periods due to the lack of sanitation efforts, they are motivated to end this reality by joining the cause. This story also creates a new way of thinking about periods. The rhetor uses this realistic story to promote the conversation about changing sanitation in South Africa so that women can function in society. When women have access to cleaner sanitation, they are able to be active contributors to society. This impacts not only women in areas of South Africa but the whole nation. This post claims that a future lawyer, accountant, or President of South Africa might be experiencing these realities. And if this reality is not changed, they may be denied the opportunities to get there.

Positive frame.

The Serithi Campaign uses a lot of positive frames in their messages. They use this frame to keep from scaring their viewers or audience members. They are trying to reach young girls and women in South Africa and teach them about how to manage their menstruation. To do this, they frame their products as positive ways to manage menstruation. They promote menstrual cups as healthy, affordable, and easy to use. By using positively framed messages about menstrual cups, viewers see the messages and feel positive about the product. This encourages viewers to want to try the products. The campaign posts a lot of images from their training sessions that supply menstrual cups to young girls and women and show them how to properly use the product. In one image, a smiling woman is shown on stage talking into a microphone. In her hands is a menstrual cup. She is squeezing it with her fingers in one hand to show how it is inserted into the vagina and the other hand is holding the stem that shows how to pull the product out of

the vagina. This image shows two key elements: what a menstrual cup is and a woman holding the cup while smiling. Her audience appears to be mostly female, and they are all looking at her with interest about the product.

Another image shows a group of school girls in uniforms jumping and smiling. In their hands they have black bags with menstrual cups and supplies in them from the Serithi Campaign. Another photo features school girls standing with their bags of supplies next to older women and men who could be teachers or volunteers with the campaign. Once again everyone is smiling in this photo. These images were all posted without captions by the Serithi Campaign. The images are powerful and speak loud enough by themselves without the need for additional text. These images show menstrual cups as a positive experience. Young girls and women are happy about the product, and therefore the product must work. These positive frames make menstrual hygiene easier to discuss and also promote the use of menstrual cups as a positive experience.

Blame the patriarchy frame.

Amnesty International WITS uses mostly textual-based posts on social media regarding their #WorthBleedingFor campaign. Their text appears to have been typed up on a computer document and then screenshotted to be uploaded on their Facebook page. One particular post features a letter to their members informing them of the petition they “handed over” to “WITS management demanding sanitary pads be made freely available on campus, for workers and students.”⁶⁴ They also informed readers that the petition had “more than 3400” signatures and that they “were notified that the university would table the petition with the Vice Chancellor,” but instead the university never returned back to

64. Amnesty International WITS’ Facebook page.

the discussion. And at the time of the post, “no response whatsoever has been received.”⁶⁵ The next section of the letter goes into detail about the frustrations the group feels about the administration’s complete disregard for their petition and the fact that “millions of South African women and girls are robbed of their rights to dignity, healthcare and education because they can’t afford menstrual products.”⁶⁶ The school never addressed the petition nor did they comment about the issues going on across the campus. They call out the school for not taking responsibility for this issue and for being unwilling to address it. They further call out the university for claiming to “believe in feminism” yet not “addressing a crisis that is dispossessing millions of women in the country.”

After calling out the school’s failure to respond to their petition, the group then changes the frame of the message. Instead of blaming the school for this issue, they tackle the real root of the problem—patriarchy. The organization states that “for as long as patriarchy and capital is dictating the priorities from an ivory tower, the university’s statements in support of socio-economic progress, racial equality and gender equity remain empty and impotent.”⁶⁷ In their attempt to overcome the patriarchy, the group mentions that they “intend to host a series of talks at the female residences on campus to raise awareness about menstrual cups.”⁶⁸ Besides trying to provide menstrual cups on campus to manage menstruation, the group also states that their “ultimate goal, however,

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

remains the complete removal of tax on menstrual products and for them to be made freely available in all public spaces.”⁶⁹

The letter ends with the sentence: “For as long as patriarchy, rape culture and institutionalized misogyny continues to exist, we must continue to struggle.”⁷⁰ This post uses message framing to illustrate the cause of menstrual issues in South Africa.

Although they are concerned with the access of products on their campus, they point out the real problem is not just their school not providing these products, but is much bigger.

The problem occurs because menstruation is not viewed as important and is not discussed openly in conversations. The issue exists because the patriarchy continues to ignore women and therefore the problems women endure. Shifting the blame from one smaller part of the issue to the larger issue creates dialogue about the root of the problem.

Women are being denied their basic human rights. Women are struggling in South Africa because it is against cultural taboos to discuss menstruation and because women are unable to properly manage their menstruation. The issue of sanitation and the lack of resources is an “intolerable injustice.”⁷¹ Women are not able to fully participate in their education while menstruating and therefore are “being robbed of their futures.”⁷²

Framing summary.

The rhetors in these three artifacts used activist, informative, realistic, positive, and patriarchy-blaming frames when crafting their messages. By using frames to shape their message, the rhetors were able to discuss menstruation in a new light that was

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

specifically relevant to their target audience. With my analysis in mind, I am now able to address my first research question: How are these artifacts utilizing message framing to reach their audiences? These artifacts used various message framing techniques to reach their audience by appealing to the reality their audience was accustomed to. By telling stories of women experiencing similar problems, the rhetors connect with their audience. By providing information and facts about menstrual health and products, audiences can relate to the rhetors' messages by comparing their daily lives and menstrual health to those that are depicted in the artifacts.

All of the artifacts focused on relating to their audience by discussing a problem most women in South Africa experience—not being able to manage their menstruation properly. Red Wings Project and #WorthBleedingFor both use hashtags to promote their message. By doing so, they work to bridge the gap between the organization and their audience. They are inviting their viewers to not only read their messages but to also participate by uploading their own posts using the hashtags. The Serithi Campaign uses many images that connect with the audience. The images show girls and women in South Africa learning directly from the Serithi Campaign. In all of these artifacts, it is critical that each rhetor relates to her audience. And through framing choices, these artifacts are gaining support and working to create change in South Africa.

Linguistic Relativity

Linguistic Relativity claims that language structures a society's norms and cultures. Therefore, language also structures a society's reality. It states that how a society discusses a topic will then influence how the society thinks about the topic. Therefore, it is imperative to examine how rhetors use language in their messages to

determine that message's impact. In the following section, my analysis will explain how rhetors use language to create shifts in how menstruation is understood in South Africa. I will discuss how rhetors craft new realities by shifting from passive to active language, from the language of deprivation to provision, and from misleading to informative language.

Shifting from passive to active language.

In Olwethu Leshabane's image of herself wearing red heels with the hashtag #RedHeelMonday, she uses language that is active to influence viewers to participate in her cause. She uses the word "champion" twice in her post as she explains how water and sanitation have not received the same amount of campaigning as health and education have in South Africa. She also states "let's champion this movement" regarding the movement to improve the "sanitation and water situation" in the country.⁷³ Leshabane wants to change the reality in South Africa. She no longer wants women to be quiet and passive about these issues. Instead, she stands up to these issues and she motivates others to do so as well. Her language choices argue that when women stop being passive about what they need, they can improve their situation and change their reality. It is clear that women need access to cleaner sanitation and water situations to have healthy feminine hygiene. Her post claims that by participating with this artifact, women can take a step towards a better living and a healthier reality.

The #WorthBleedingFor poster by Amnesty International WITS also uses language to motivate their viewers to be part of their movement. The #WorthBleedingFor poster states that this is a "handover of demands," and they ask participants to "display

73. Olwethu Leshabane Mrs South Africa 1st Princess' Facebook page.

solidarity,” and for them to “be present as [they] hand over demands.”⁷⁴ The language used throughout this poster and in those key phrases influences viewers to not remain idle. Amnesty International WITS wants their audience to be part of the change they are working toward on campus. They invite viewers to take a stand and to unite with them on the issue to resolve the problems created by a lack of menstrual products on campus. Amnesty International WITS’ letter posted on their Facebook page also uses active language. They call out the university stating that it is “disgraceful that the university is ignoring the voices of those calling for the rectification of an intolerable justice.”⁷⁵ The organization uses their post to communicate that they are angry at the university for not helping fix this problem. The rhetor’s choice to end their letter with the Portuguese phrase “Aluta Continue” meaning “the struggle continues, victory is certain,” further emphasizes the activism they are promoting in this letter. This phrase is a cry for freedoms that is typically still used in protests and riots. In these cases, active language is used to combat how menstruation has been viewed previously in South Africa. Using active language changes the reality for menstruating women. Women can join the cause to bring sanitation and menstrual hygiene efforts to South Africa so that women no longer have to remain stuck in a victimized position where they must overlook these issues.

Shifting from language of deprivation to provision.

In Olwethu Leshabane’s longer text post I mentioned earlier in this chapter, she describes a case study about a grade 11 learner suffering from her school’s poor sanitation. The post states that students did not have “access to toilets” and many toilets

74. Amnesty International WITS’ Facebook page.

75. Ibid.

were “blocked or dirty.” Many of the bathrooms did not have working taps or soap. Often, stalls did not have toilet paper, trash cans, or doors that locked. The girl states that the bathroom “stinks and is infested with flies” and that “she only uses the bathroom once she is desperate.” When the girl is on her period, she claims that “she would rather wait until she is home before going to the toilet” which causes distraction in her classes throughout the day. Many girls also are willing to miss school and stay home when they are menstruating so that they do not have to use the school’s bathrooms. These texts illustrate the harsh reality for young girls at this secondary school. These girls do not feel comfortable using the restroom and therefore are forced to wear the same product all day or to go home. Wearing the same product for too long is unhealthy and causes concerns for hygiene and health. It is also uncomfortable and can increase the chances for leaks, which are embarrassing for young girls to deal with at school. Holding in bodily fluids is also unhealthy and can lead to bladder infections. Discussing these realities in this post allows the viewer to fully understand the horrors that young girls must endure. But the post ends with a way the viewer can change this reality. It tells the viewer they can “get involved in giving young females their dignity.” By stating this, the rhetor allows a shift in language to occur. Earlier she discusses the lack of resources girls have and how that impacts their lives specifically at school; then she provides a way to supply products to these girls and therefore keep them in school. She argues that there is a way girls can stay in school--if they have resources to use the bathroom and to manage their periods. Providing girls with these resources promotes the “inherent human dignity of each child.”

The letter from Amnesty International WITS also uses language to illustrate how women in South Africa are being subjected to harsh realities. Because women cannot

take proper care of their menstrual hygiene, they are being deprived of education and the opportunity to fully experience daily life. The letter further states that women are “robbed of their rights” and therefore “robbed of their future.”⁷⁶ Women are being robbed of these matters because young girls are having to miss school because they are not able to take care of their menstruation properly at school. Because young girls are missing school, some drop out and some do not reach their fullest educational potential, which then hinders their future careers. Not only are women being deprived of opportunities and freedoms, they “must continue to struggle.”⁷⁷ Amnesty International WITS claims that the “struggle is not over” for women because they are still being denied the resources they need to succeed in life. While most of this letter highlights the struggles women must endure, it does provide hope. The group intends to change this reality by talking about and raising awareness on these issues. The group states that menstrual cups being available across the campus is how the issue can be tackled on a small scale. They later mention that the eradication of taxes on menstrual products and the accessibility of free tampons will fix the problem for all South African women. Thus, providing women with better sanitation and products such as the menstrual cup will end some struggles women in South Africa face and will give women back their futures.

Similar to the Amnesty International WITS post for #WorthBleedingFor, Khensani Ntando Nkanyezi Maseko’s post also illustrates the reality of deprivation among women and points to a new reality where women have supplies to better their lives. Her post states that “it is a reality at Rhodes University that there are young women

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

who cannot attend their lectures or tutorials because they do not have sanitary pads and cannot afford them.”⁷⁸ She paints a picture of a reality that will emerge if this trend continues in South Africa by stating “one less lawyer, one less accountant, one less President in the future South Africa.”⁷⁹ Using strong language to illustrate how women at the University are being deprived of their education due to the not having access to sanitary pads, shows the viewer what reality is like for women on the campus. In the second half of the post, she then states that “this cannot and will not be allowed in our institution” and calls for followers to bring sanitary pads to the organization’s collection.⁸⁰ By combatting the current reality of deprivation with a reality that is aiming to provide menstrual products, Maseko is changing the lives of university women. Instead of women missing school because of their menstruation, they can be supplied with the necessary products so that they can continue their education.

Shifting from misleading to informative language.

Olwethu Leshabane’s post for viewers seeking health resources uses informative language to correct misconceptions and to educate young girls in South Africa. The post asks: “Is your daughter/niece/little sister etc. reaching puberty? Are they around the age of 9/10 and you’re looking for resources to assist with discussing menstruation, sanitation, sex, and HIV/AIDS?”⁸¹ After asking this question, Leshabane tells the viewer to email the Red Wings Project who can supply resources to help the viewer with these conversations. This post asks questions to narrow down the viewers and to reach those

78. Khensani Ntando Nkanyezi Maseko’s Facebook page.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Olwethu Leshabana Mrs South Africa 1st Princess’ Facebook page.

who need information. This post aims to supply information to viewers so that they can teach young girls about proper health practices. This post creates an opportunity for viewers to gain information they did not have before. This information combats myths or misinformation about menstruation or health practices that might be circulating around the nation. Leshabane's informative language changes how her viewers discuss menstruation because when viewers have the correct information about menstruation, they can educate young girls about these principles and then end the cycle of poor menstrual hygiene health. Young girls need to know before puberty how to manage their menstruation so that they can have healthy periods and healthy lives. By teaching young girls the correct information about menstruation early, they will learn to practice these standards throughout their life. Girls will then hopefully not have to miss school and will have healthier bodies. When young girls are taught from an early age and then grow up with these practices, they will then teach their future young girls how to take care of menstruation. This cycle will change the reality of poor menstrual health in South Africa.

The Serithi Campaign also aims to inform their audiences through their social media posts. By simply giving factual information about menstrual cups, they are truthfully informing their audience about the product. In the post describing the harms of tampons, they are informing viewers of dangers and issues they might not have been previously aware of. Not only is the rhetor pointing to the dangers of using tampons, but they ask the question: "Why menstrual cup?"⁸² Using this question as a heading before going into the dangers of tampon usage illustrates to the audience that menstrual cups are healthier and therefore should be used instead of tampons. Pairing the phrase "dignity is

82. Serithi Campaign's Facebook page.

not a privilege” with the images of menstrual cups states that menstrual cups give dignity back to women in South Africa and that these products are not a privilege, but rather should be a right.⁸³ Making these products a right means that these products should be freely accessible for women across the country. Using language to inform both young girls and women about their periods combats the ways menstruation is viewed and discussed today. Women can now be informed about their periods, how to properly manage their periods, and can be aware of how menstrual cups can benefit their lives. When these things occur, women can fully function in society and continue to teach young girls for generations about how to properly manage their menstruation.

Linguistic relativity summary.

Through the theoretical framework of linguistic relativity, it is evident that the rhetors mentioned in this chapter understand that the way a society talks about a topic determines how they think about that topic. After my analysis, I can now answer my second research question: Through message framing, how are these texts shaping language to create a new reality? In each of these artifacts, the rhetors used language to craft a new way for society to think about menstruation. Rhetors use language to shift reality in their messages from how a topic has been discussed to how it is now being discussed through their message. These shifts can then influence societal beliefs. In these artifacts, rhetors shifted from passive to active language, from language of deprivation to provision, and from misleading to informative language. These shifts in language create a reality where women have access to both information and proper resources for their

83. Ibid.

menstruation, a reality in which women have opportunities to stay in school and succeed in their future careers.

Conclusion

In South Africa, the lack of proper sanitation creates major health risks for menstruating women. Not only does this risk the health of women, but it also further distances the gap between genders. After this analysis, I can address my third question: How are rhetorical artifacts combatting menstrual taboos in various cultures? In South Africa, young girls grow up in a reality where they cannot go to school when menstruating because of the sanitation situation. Therefore, these girls are being denied education and the opportunity to succeed in their future careers. Not only do young girls miss a lot of their education because of these issues, but many even drop out of school. Women need a way to manage their periods without having to sacrifice their daily lives. The Red Wings Project, #WorthBleedingFor, and the Serithi Campaign are all working to change this reality for women in South Africa. These artifacts are combatting the menstrual taboo in South Africa by relating to their audience in their messages and addressing problems women commonly face. The rhetors craft messages to inform women about their periods and menstrual management, supplying women with the necessary resources to manage menstruation, and are persuading women to be a part of the eradication of menstrual taboos and issues in South Africa. Women deserve dignity; therefore menstrual health should not be considered a privilege.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

While the stigma surrounding menstruation is still prevalent worldwide, numerous rhetorical artifacts are sparking conversations that challenge these notions. Understanding how societies view menstruation provides ways for rhetors to craft messages that tackle these views. Combating menstrual taboos is necessary to improve women's social status around the world. Menstrual taboos in various cultures result from a society's assumptions about menstruation that are used to enforce norms and restrictions and therefore create gender hierarchies. Cultural and religious beliefs continue to reinforce a society's discourse on the taboo. Menstrual taboos hinder societies' discussions and therefore education about menstruation. The negative outcomes of perpetuating menstrual taboos among cultures include mental anguish, physical ailments (including death), and the isolation of populations due to gender differences. And while rhetorically studying various cultures helps explain the conditions behind the creation and prevalence of menstrual taboos, it is equally important to study how artifacts are overcoming these barriers.

The first chapter of this thesis discussed the science of menstruation to provide a solid foundation for the thesis's discourse on menstruation, and to combat the lack of menstrual education readers undoubtedly experienced in their lifetime. After this brief educational section on menstruation, the chapter discussed worldwide conversations against menstrual taboos that are making global news. These conversations are important

to highlight because discourse on menstruation sparks awareness across the world about this issue. Next, Chapter I discussed the possible origins of taboos—both general and specific to menstruation. This section went further in depth on the religious and cultural origins of these taboos. I then discussed the theoretical framework for my analysis. The two theories I used were media framing and linguistic relativity. After providing a literature review of these theories, I discussed my methodology and provided a brief overview of each region and artifact discussed throughout my thesis.

Chapters II, III, and IV were organized by regions. In Chapter II, I discussed menstrual taboos in the United States and United Kingdom and artifacts from THINX, Red.fit, and Free the Tampons before conducting my analysis. Chapter III covered menstrual taboos in India and artifacts from Breaking the Silence, Menstrupedia, and #HappyToBleed. Finally, in Chapter IV, I examined menstrual taboos existing in South Africa as well as artifacts from the Red Wings Project, #WorthBleedingFor, and the Serithi Campaign. In the analysis section of each chapter, I addressed my research questions: (1) How are these artifacts utilizing message framing to reach their audiences? and (2) Through message framing, how are these texts shaping language to create a new reality? And finally, (3) How are rhetorical artifacts combating menstrual taboos in various cultures in the world? The next section will review each chapter, beginning with Chapter II discussing menstrual taboos in the United States and the United Kingdom.

United States and United Kingdom Menstrual Taboos

In the United States and the United Kingdom the topic of menstruation is absent not only from conversations and advertisements, but also policies. The fact that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not regulate menstrual products, and that

menstrual products are not covered by food stamps illustrates how menstruation is viewed by the government. Because the consideration of menstruation is absent from many policies, it is clear that menstruation is not on the government's radar of importance. This contributes to the overwhelming idea that menstruation is to remain hidden from public conversation. Advertisements in the United States and the United Kingdom contribute to this notion that periods are to be hidden. Menstrual products are designed to be "rustle-free," promoting the idea of secrecy. Medicinal products are designed to control periods and in some cases eliminate periods altogether. Women in these nations also believe their menstruation is embarrassing and a private matter. While menstruation is regarded as a shameful experience in the United States and United Kingdom, THINX, Red.fit, and Free the Tampons are creating messages that challenge these existing menstrual taboos.

THINX

THINX sells underwear and clothing that are "period proof." The organization's mission is to combat menstrual taboos by creating advertisements and products that attempt to change how society communicates about menstruation. Along with providing innovative menstrual products, THINX combats menstrual taboos in their advertisements. Their advertisements contradict traditional advertisements that vaguely refer to periods and never actually show how to use the product or demonstrate the product realistically. This thesis analyzed THINX's thirty-seven second video advertisement demonstrating the company's period underwear. The video used an IV and red fluid to demonstrate menstrual blood being absorbed into the underwear. THINX also uses print advertisements, such as their ad with an image of a half-peeled grapefruit resembling a

vagina, with the text “UNDERWEAR FOR WOMEN WITH PERIODS” in large font. Another ad shows a woman wearing the underwear and text that states “PUSSY-GRABBING-PROOF UNDERWEAR.” The last advertisement I studied was of a woman lying on the ground in the underwear with a heating pad off to the side. The text reads, “PERIOD (and I’m hardcore cramping so pls just leave me be for 3–7 days)-PROOF UNDERWEAR.”

Red.fit

Bodyform, “one of the UK’s leading feminine protection brands,” sells menstrual products that are produced to accommodate the different needs in a woman’s cycle.¹ Their website also gives detailed information about periods, debunks period myths, offers a period calendar, gives information about first periods and puberty, and even offers advice to teens. The campaign believes that no blood, including menstrual blood, should hold women back. Their website features information and resources for women to refer to when they are menstruating. Red.fit offers extensive information about each phase of a woman’s cycle on their website as well as providing recipes, exercises, and tips for women in that phase. Red.fit also features a powerful seventy-second video titled “Blood.” The video “features runners with scraped knees, boxers with bloody noses, and ballet dancers with raw toes, with the ultimate message that ‘no blood should hold us

1. “About Bodyform,” *Bodyform*, last accessed March 17, 2017, <https://www.bodyform.co.uk/all-about-us/about-bodyform/>.

back.”² The campaign aims to “tackle the last taboo in women’s sport by empowering women to keep active while on their periods.”³

Free the Tampons

Free the Tampons believes that “every bathroom outside the home should provide freely accessible items that women need for their periods.”⁴ The foundation therefore discusses ways that they can make this reality possible. Their website provides ways for supporters to be involved with the campaign by encouraging followers to join the conversation via social media, share personal period stories, and make donations to the effort. Their website allows readers the opportunity to anonymously or openly tell a story about a time they needed a tampon in public or about how they are helping in the mission to make tampons accessible. Not only can readers post their stories, but they can also read other people’s stories, allowing them a chance to connect with others. These personal stories illustrate how periods can be a source of extreme stress and embarrassment when women lack access to feminine hygiene products.

Media Framing

Rhetors use media framing to craft messages they hope will influence an audience to think a certain way about a topic. In the case of menstruation, these artifacts are changing the way society views menstruation; therefore, these rhetors frame their messages differently. The rhetors behind these campaigns use six frames throughout their

2. Rachel Moss, “Bodyform’s ‘Red.fit’ Campaign.” *Huffington Post*, March 6, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/bodyform-redfit-campaign-periods-in-sport_uk_575175abe4b0b23a261a286b.

3. Ibid.

4. “About,” *Free the Tampons*, last accessed November 27, 2016, <http://www.freethetampons.org/about.html>.

artifacts: positive frames, negative frames, informative frames, shocking frames, motivational frames, and frames intended to blame the government for menstruation-related problems.

Positive frames.

THINX's video advertisement and product demonstration utilized positive frames to promote the idea that periods are normal by focusing their video on a simple observation of "menstruating woman." Throughout the video, the woman participates in daily activities as she is menstruating, proving that menstruation does not limit a woman's life. THINX not only uses positive frames, but does so in a realistic fashion. The commercial talks about periods as being a normal occurrence and depicts the reality that periods sometimes bring discomfort.

Negative frames.

Negative framing was also used in this video by THINX. The video shows clips from traditional commercials and frames them negatively by making fun of the commercials' vague language. By using humor to frame traditional commercials negatively, THINX makes their audience aware of the unrealistic depictions in other commercials, and in turn makes their own commercial even more powerful. Using negative framing for the old advertisements makes the viewers feel negatively about those traditional advertisements and want to promote advertisements that depict the reality of menstruation accurately.

Informative frames.

The THINX video also uses an informative frame when describing the functionality of the product and how it can be used during menstruation. This is unique

because most advertisements do not actually show a realistic demonstration of how menstrual products work. In this commercial, THINX uses liquid that is red like blood and says the words menstruation, period, and cramping—all words typically absent from traditional menstrual advertisements. This frame changes how women view periods and period commercials because it informs women that periods are normal and should be talked about in advertisements.

Shocking frames.

THINX's controversial advertisements use a "shocking" frame to gain their audience's attention. These advertisements specify that their message is about periods, which is shocking because most advertisements are vague about the functionality of their products. These advertisements, such as the "PUSSY-GRABBING-PROOF UNDERWEAR" ad and the grapefruit ad that states: "UNDERWEAR FOR WOMEN WITH PERIODS," are shocking because they are against the norm. These advertisements stand out because they depict vaginas, have women in period underwear, and simply because they include the word "period" written largely on all of their advertisements. By doing this, THINX not only stands out in the menstrual product world but also changes how advertisements talk about periods.

Motivational frames.

Bodyform's Red.fit campaign uses motivational frames in their video "Blood." The video does not have words or text until the very end. Throughout the video, various girls participating in different activities fall down or hurt themselves and begin bleeding. The words "No blood should hold us back" appear on the screen one minute into the video. Rather than seeing the blood and stopping their activity, each of the women

continues to participate in activities without wasting any time caring about the blood. At the end, the audience is left with the words “Don’t let your period stop you.”⁵ Bodyform uses a motivational frame in this video to evoke strong feelings from their audience. They aim to motivate women to not view their periods as a limitation or allow their periods to stop them from doing the things they love. This video not only tells women to not let periods stop them, but also that menstrual blood is not different than these examples of blood. Periods should not hold women back from chasing their dreams and from doing what they enjoy in life.

Framing to blame the government.

Free the Tampons encourages women to write out embarrassing period-related stories and submit them to their website. The foundation then filters through these stories to pick stories to showcase on their website. Because Free the Tampons believes in making menstrual products, specifically tampons, freely accessible to all women, they pick stories in which women had period issues because of the lack of menstrual products. Two testimonies on their website show this to be true. In both of these cases, women did not have access to a way to manage their menstruation and had to discuss something that they normally do not talk about, especially with strangers.

Yet as Free the Tampons uses and frames both of these stories, they argue that the actual cause of the women’s embarrassment was that they lacked the proper resources to manage their menstruation and had to go through a situation that most women in the United States and the United Kingdom can relate to. Free the Tampons posts these stories

5. “Blood,” YouTube Video, 1.22, May 27, 2016, posted by Bodyform Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q1GVOYIcKc>.

in a “blaming the government” frame to talk about social norms and regulations as the real enemy that causes the embarrassment. They use this frame to uncover the real enemy—the fact that women are denied free menstrual products. All of the stories Free the Tampons shares highlight the same issue—women face embarrassment about their periods because they are denied access to products.

Linguistic Relativity

Linguistic relativity influences thought when used to craft language in messages. In Chapter I, I discussed how rhetors craft realities by shifting from vague to specific language, from powerless to powerful language, and from the language of hiding to the language of openness.

Shifting from vague to specific language.

THINX’s video advertisement has a shift from vague language that is typically used in menstrual commercials, to specific language that is used in their advertisement. The THINX video challenges this vague language by openly discussing periods. In fact, they use the word “period” six times in their one-minute-and-thirty-seven second video. They are specific with language to emphasize that they are in fact talking about periods and that they will not contribute to the elusive advertisements of the past. Much like the video, THINX’s advertisements also use language to talk about how powerful periods are. Because periods are so powerful, these advertisements claim their product is even stronger. They not only talk about periods in their advertisements, but also use words such as “cramping” to describe the reality of periods for women. In using this language in their advertisements, THINX creates a new way to discuss periods.

Shifting from powerless to powerful language.

In using the language “mystical menstruating human,” THINX gives menstruation a superpower.⁶ THINX adds to this claim that menstruation is powerful and menstruating humans are strong. Throughout the video advertisement and other advertisements, THINX states that periods do not make women powerless, but rather that women are strong and powerful.

Even though Bodyform does not use words throughout the “Blood” video, they too influence the audience to believe that women are powerful. The viewer feels empowered and indestructible reading the messages that argue blood should not hold women back. The language in this advertisement inspires young girls that they too are strong and can overcome anything. They too can succeed and do anything, even when menstruating.

Shifting from language of hiding to language of openness.

In both testimonies on Free the Tampon’s website, the writers refer to how they had to “make it public” to get resources to manage their menstruation. The language used throughout these testimonies views periods as negative. Periods have caused these women frustrations, and therefore they are sharing similar stories of irritation. But by posting these testimonies, Free the Tampons is making these private matters and frustrations a public matter. They are shifting from the language of hiding of periods to the language of openness by posting these testimonies and creating dialogue about menstrual issues. Free the Tampons provides women a chance to discuss their periods

6. “A Day in the Life of a Real Menstruating Human,” YouTube Video, 1.37, May 17, 2016, posted by Team THINX, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9z2IxJV11A>.

and the frustrations that sometimes occur. These testimonies can then fuel more conversations and transform periods into a topic that can be discussed freely and openly.

Chapter I Summary

These three rhetors used media framing in crafting their messages. Through my analysis, I answered my first research question: How are these artifacts utilizing message framing to reach their audiences? In these artifacts, the rhetors frame their messages to relate to the audience and grab their attention. THINX uses frames to be positive and show women that periods are normal and not something to avoid in conversation. THINX also uses shocking frames to grab the attention of their audience and therefore persuade them to buy their products. THINX framed their video advertisement to also be informative so that women could be informed about their periods. Red.fit's "Blood" video was motivational and inspired both young girls and women to view menstruation differently and to not feel weakened by their periods. Free the Tampons framed their message to show women that the enemy was not periods, but rather the government. The government causes embarrassment and stress for women by not providing affordable access to menstrual products. In all three artifacts, these texts utilize various message framing techniques to reach their audiences and make their messages relatable.

Through these examples, it is obvious how language is used to reflect the reality of menstrual taboos in the United States and United Kingdom—that menstruation is shameful and should be hidden from the public, that it is a personal problem that needs to be fixed and controlled, and that when menstruation is known to the public, women should feel bad and humiliated. THINX uses specific language so that their audience understands periods and sees how advertisements in the past have not actually informed

their audience about periods or about their product. THINX and Bodyform are using positive and motivational language so that women are influenced to view their periods differently. And finally, Free the Tampons encourages women to view their periods no longer as a private matter, but as something that needs to be openly discussed publicly. By doing this, menstrual products have the potential to be more accessible and women will no longer be embarrassed or stressed when they lack the resources to manage their periods.

Finally, I addressed my third question: How are rhetorical artifacts combating menstrual taboos in various cultures? In the United States and the United Kingdom, these artifacts are challenging menstrual taboos simply by changing advertisements about periods, providing information about menstruation, and sharing stories about embarrassing moments on periods. These artifacts work together to acknowledge that bodily functions can be embarrassing, but that they are normal and not something that should be shameful. In these artifacts, rhetors talk about periods openly and encourage women to be open about their menstruation stories and about their menstruation. The next section will overview India's menstrual taboos and artifacts that I discussed in Chapter II.

India Menstrual Taboos

In India, menstruating women have experienced and still experience many restrictions in their daily lives. Menstruating women are prohibited from daily activities such as entering holy rooms, participating in holy activities, handling food, and touching certain foods, and in some extreme cases they are banished from their homes. These restrictions all stem from the myth that women are impure when they are menstruating. Another issue for women in India is the lack of education on menstruation. Young girls

have to rely on their mothers for menstrual education. Mothers often do not have the correct information and pass on myths and restrictions that promote improper menstrual hygiene. This leads to a high risk of infection and can result in cervical cancer. The three artifacts I discussed in this section are Breaking the Silence, Menstrupedia, and #HappyToBleed.

Breaking the Silence

Urmila Chanam, the founder of Breaking the Silence, educates women about menstruation by traveling to villages and offering educational training as well as menstrual products to women in need. Her ultimate goal is to have these trainings be a safe place for girls and women to come together and share experiences while learning the truth about menstruation. In this thesis, I analyzed a 19-second video clip posted on Chanam's Facebook page as well as longer film produced by the campaign. In her short video clip, Chanam shares information about the realities for menstruating women in India. The longer film depicts life for a young girl who starts her period and has to learn how to follow the culture's norms and rules.

Menstrupedia

Menstrupedia is an 83-page comic book that teaches young girls about puberty and menstruation. The book is published in an assortment of languages and is available both online and in paper format. The book is unique because it is not offensive to traditional cultures. The images are not too graphic nor do they show too much skin. The book provides information about menstruation and teaches young girls how to use and clean a sanitary pad and make one at home. This resource is beneficial to girls in India because it is the first book of its kind to that is not offensive to India's cultural norms.

The book also uses characters who are relatable to the average girl in India. This colorful and informative comic is reaching young girls across India and changing the misconceptions and taboos regarding menstruation in that culture.

#HappyToBleed

College student Nikita Azad was outraged when a temple in India announced that they were prohibiting women of reproductive age from visiting because they could be menstruating. She challenged this response by writing a letter to the temple chief and starting the movement #HappyToBleed. The movement inspired supporters to challenge the Indian Supreme Court decision to allow women to be discriminated against and prohibited from worshipping. The movement exists predominantly on social media and motivates users to post photos of themselves with posters stating: “Happy To Bleed.”

Media Framing

Each of the three artifacts frames their messages in different ways to relate to their audiences. These artifacts use five frames: shocking, negative, informative, positive, and activist. The next section will review each of these frames.

Shocking frames.

The short video posted by Urmila Chanam on Facebook uses shocking frames to highlight the reality of menstruation for women in India. She states a fact to shock her audience and gain their attention. She also calls out the two limitations Indian women face while menstruating—shame and inhibition. This message uses “shocking” frames because the facts of menstrual health in India are not widely known. Thus, while these facts are shocking and alarming, they also depict the reality of life in India for viewers.

Negative frames.

The film produced by Breaking the Silence tells the story of a young Indian girl having her period for the first time and her mother's displeased reaction at the sight of the blood. Her mother teaches her the cultural and social norms and taboos associated with menstruation. Examples of such include not touching others, cleaning, or participating in any religious or holy activity. The conversations between the young girl and the mother are framed negatively to show the reality many Indian women have to face when menstruating. This negative frame is also relatable because viewers can relate to the situation the young girl is experiencing.

Informative frames.

In the other half of the Breaking the Silence film, the frame shifts from being negative to being informative. The girl is sleeping outside and has a dream in which she talks to a woman. In this conversation, the young girl asks the woman questions about her period. The woman tells the girl the truth about menstruation and tells her that she is not "impure." The woman also debunks the myths and restrictions that the mother taught the young girl. By using this informative frame, the woman teaches the young girl and the viewers that menstruation is not dirty or impure. This message is used to inform the girl and audience by stating facts about menstruation and by combating popular myths about menstruation. This informative frame creates a new way for the audience to think about menstruation.

Positive frames.

Menstrupedia frames periods in a positive way. The colorfully illustrated pages and photos of smiling girls show that periods are not scary. When the characters in the

books talk and learn about menstruation, their conversations are framed positively to show that growing up can be exciting. The positive framing also reinforces that periods are normal and do not make girls impure. When framing the message about periods, the comic book is positive in explaining the science of menstruation in a factual way without any offensive or upsetting language. Using words like “normal” frame periods as something natural and therefore positive. Because menstruation is not traditionally discussed in the Indian culture, framing the book positively while still remaining culturally appropriate makes learning about menstruation easier for the audience. The audience sees young girls who look like them and have familiar names who they can relate to. The positive framing throughout the book also encourages them to not be scared or nervous to learn about menstruation.

Activist frames.

#HappyToBleed uses social media and hashtags to connect with followers and spread their mission. The images posted by the organization on their Facebook page show women with signs and the phrase “happy to bleed” in red. Some women even write their messages on sanitary pads and post them with the hashtag. In the images I focused on, the posts used activist themes when rhetors discuss traditional and currently popular views on menstruation. This “activist” frame clearly argues that periods are not the enemy and are not inhibiting women from their daily lives. The campaign uses this frame to persuade viewers to not just be upset with the current restrictions on menstruating women, but to participate with the campaign. Most of the images posted with the hashtag are not just providing information or spreading awareness, but telling viewers to be activists and

stand up to patriarchy. These women are not sitting idly by; they are proactively combating menstrual taboos by stating that they are #HappyToBleed.

Linguistic Relativity

In India, language about menstruation is a barrier for menstruating women. Lies about menstruation and myths impact how periods are discussed in conversations. Because these menstrual myths and taboos have been passed down from generation to generation and are part of many traditions, rhetors have to be delicate in their word choice when addressing these taboos. I analyzed how rhetors craft these new realities by shifting from shameful to proud language, restricting to open language, falsehoods to truth, and language of avoiding to confronting.

Shifting from shameful to proud language.

In the short video by Breaking the Silence, Chanam starts off with two words: shame and inhibition. She uses these words to call out the feelings Indian women have about their periods. She starts off right away by pointing out and labeling these feelings. By doing this, Chanam creates a shift from talking shamefully about periods to being proud about menstruation. She pairs this shift with words such as “right” to let her audience know that this shift is the correct thing to do. In creating this shift in language from shameful to prideful, Chanam encourages viewers to be proud of menstruation and of being a woman.

Shifting from restricting to open language.

The film produced and posted by Breaking the Silence depicts the realities of restriction and freedom. In the first half of the video the mother labels the daughter as being “untouchable” because she is menstruating. The mother then teaches her daughter

the rules and restrictions she must follow when she is menstruating. The girl struggles throughout the first half the film because she constantly gets into trouble for not following these rules. At the end of the film, the girl has a dream where another woman tells her that these myths are untrue. The woman teaches the girl how to take care of her menstrual health and tells her that she is not “untouchable.” Her language creates a new reality where women are no longer restricted or considered impure because of their periods. This language shifts the reality of women by discussing how they are able to perform daily activities and be a part of holy events even when menstruating.

Shifting from falsehoods to truth.

Menstrupedia uses language to create a reality where both girls and women are educated about periods. The book teaches girls what is normal about periods and what to expect. It also challenges the myths and restrictions that are widely believed in India. By using language to debunk commonly believed myths, the book works to change the way women discuss menstruation. Readers learn that these myths are false and are supplied with the facts to overcome these obstacles.

Shifting from avoiding to confronting.

The language used in posts with the hashtag #HappyToBleed inspires their viewers to not just sit back and continue to follow menstrual norms, but to stand up and confront these taboos. The posts use this confronting language to shift the audience’s mindset from avoiding conversations about menstruation to confronting the issue. In India, it is common for periods to be missing from daily conversation, which is one reason why menstrual taboos still exist. #HappyToBleed aims to add menstruation into daily conversations by promoting the use of their hashtag on social media. This promotes

not only discussions about periods but also shifts how periods are discussed. By uploading images and posts with the hashtag #HappyToBleed, rhetors are no longer avoiding periods in conversation but rather are confronting society by posting these images in a public space.

Chapter III Summary

The three artifacts I analyzed in this chapter used a variety of different media framing techniques to spread their mission and to reach their audience. After conducting this analysis, I addressed my first research question: How are these artifacts utilizing message framing to reach their audiences? It was evident in all of these artifacts that the rhetors had to overcome the same barrier—menstrual taboos in India. These taboos have restricted women in their daily lives, prevented healthy menstrual hygiene practices, and denied women knowledge about menstruation. To overcome these barriers, these artifacts had to frame their messages to directly depict these menstrual health issues and then provide a way for change. These artifacts related to their audiences by exposing the truths about menstruation in a way that was not offensive to the audience's culture. When addressing restrictions and myths, the rhetors used facts to combat these lies and to inform women about the truth of menstruation. These rhetors also persuaded their audience to join their team by illustrating a new reality for women in India.

The artifacts I analyzed in this chapter combat cultural taboos by using language to shift between realities. Rhetors use language to change how menstruation is discussed. Breaking the Silence used language to tackle the shame surrounding periods in India. By using language to discuss the shame around menstruation, the rhetor inspires her viewers to consider a new way to feel about their periods. Breaking the Silence also uses language

to address the restrictions placed on menstruating women. By challenging these restrictions and providing the truth about menstruation, the rhetor works to create a reality where women are no longer bound by their periods. *Menstrupedia* uses language to teach young girls the truth about their periods so that they can grow up healthy and teach future generations accurate information regarding menstruation. Lastly, #HappyToBleed confronts society by posting images that break norms. These images promote open conversation about menstruation participation from followers.

After my analysis using framing theory and linguistic relativity, I was then able to address my final question: How are rhetorical artifacts combating menstrual taboos in various cultures? Throughout these artifacts, rhetors are combating menstrual taboos in India by educating women and challenging menstrual myths and restrictions. Therefore, menstruation will no longer be considered impure and women can participate in society even when menstruating. When women are properly educated on menstruation and menstrual health, they understand the difference between the truth and myths. The next section will review South Africa's menstrual taboos and artifacts that I studied in Chapter IV.

South Africa Menstrual Taboos

Many women in South Africa are unaware of menstruation or do not feel comfortable discussing it in public. Not only is the topic viewed as unimportant, but women lack the necessary resources to handle their menstruation. Access to proper water and sanitation is a problem across South Africa. This impacts not only general health, but also the ability to practice proper menstrual hygiene. It is estimated that, in South Africa, "around 7 million girls miss school each month because of menstruation," largely due to

the lack of proper sanitation in schools.⁷ Girls would rather go home and miss school when menstruating than change their menstrual product in the dirty and inadequate restrooms. The Red Wings Project, #WorthBleedingFor Campaign, and the Serithi Campaign are working to change this problem in South Africa.

Red Wings Project

The Red Wings Project is a nonprofit organization located in Kyalami, South Africa that works to end sanitation issues for women. The organization predominantly uses social media, specifically Facebook, to reach viewers and spread their message. They use the hashtag #RedHeelMonday to inspire their followers to wear red heels in honor of breaking menstrual taboos. Followers are encouraged to upload a photo of themselves in the heels on social media with the hashtag #RedHeelMonday. The hashtag #RedHeelMonday itself also aims to inspire and spur a movement. By creating a hashtag that can be used to spread a message, the organization invites viewers to also post photos of themselves in red heels. This hashtag is made specifically for women to use because it promotes the wearing of heels—shoes more commonly worn by women.

#WorthBleedingFor

Amnesty International at the University of WITS created the movement #WorthBleedingFor, which advocates for campus administration to provide sanitary pads for their students and workers. The group posts information about the campaign on their social media, creates petitions, and organizes gatherings to protest this issue. While the organization wants to bring sanitary products to campus, their long-term goal is to

7. Stuart Lewis, "South Africa: The Price of Sanitary Pads is a Tax on Womanhood," *All Africa*, March 8, 2016, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201603080267.html>.

eradicate the taxes on menstrual products and for the products to be freely available for those in need.

Serithi Campaign

The Serithi Campaign's goal is to equip young girls with menstrual cups so they can manage their menstruation and not miss school. Not only does the campaign provide these products, but they also host educational workshops to inform young girls about their menstruation and how to use sanitary products. The campaign uses social media to post images and information about their campaign's efforts. They predominantly discuss the benefits of menstrual cups to influence viewers to try the product.

In each artifact I analyzed, the rhetors used framing to make an impact on the conversation about periods in South Africa. I found five frames the rhetors used throughout these artifacts: activist frames, informative frames, realistic frames, positive frames, and frames blaming patriarchy for menstruation taboos.

Media Framing

Rhetors frame their messages in various ways to reach their audiences and influence their thinking. In Chapter IV, I found five frames the rhetors used throughout these artifacts: activist frames, informative frames, realistic frames, positive frames, and frames blaming patriarchy for menstruation taboos.

Activist frames.

Red Wings uses activist frames to inspire followers to post and participate in their movement. Many posts urge viewers to join in the movement to improve sanitation issues in South Africa. Viewers are encouraged to join this movement by wearing red heels and posting their photo with the hashtag #RedHeelMonday. The image of heels stands for

being confident and out in public. Paired with the red color to represent the color of menstrual blood, this image makes a powerful statement. It states that women are being bold and strong. By posting these images, viewers are standing against menstrual taboos in South Africa.

The image of a fist grasping a sanitary pad on a photo posted by a member of Amnesty International WITS also uses activist frames. The image of a fist typically stands for power and protest; therefore, the image seems to declare that sanitary pads will bring equality and power to women. The organization uses this frame not only to create conversation about the struggles of menstruating women, but also to encourage viewers to participate in their mission to freely supply sanitary pads across the campus. Amnesty International WITS spreads messages on their campus through social media and physical posters. Their posters call on viewers to gather with them and be a part of their protest. The rhetor uses an activist frame to unite groups of people who want to fight for the same principles.

Informative frames.

The Red Wings Project provides information to their audience through posts labeled with the hashtag #RedHeelMonday. In these posts, the rhetor asks if the viewers need more information about puberty and other health concerns and then gives them the email for the Red Wings Project so they can send further information. This post uses informative framing to assist their audience. The rhetor realizes that their viewers need information regarding puberty because this is an issue in South Africa.

The Serithi Campaign uses mainly image posts on their social media platform. In many of their posts, they advocate for menstrual cups by supplying information to their

viewers about the product. They post images that discuss the health benefits of menstrual cups. Their goal in posting these images of menstrual cup information is that this knowledge can lead to healthier menstrual management practices which will keep girls in school and keep infections and diseases down.

Realistic frames.

Rhetors using the hashtag #RedHeelMonday use realistic frames in their messages when telling stories about realities of young girls in South Africa coping with menstruation. These messages detail the experiences of using the bathroom in schools without proper sanitation and the challenges that arise when girls are menstruating. By using real stories, the rhetor communicates powerful and realistic messages.

Posts with the hashtag #WorthBleedingFor also supply a realistic depiction of life for menstruating women in South Africa. In these posts, the rhetor describes once again a woman in school dealing with menstruation and the problems that arise. A post with this hashtag states that many young women miss classes and cannot focus in their classes because of their periods, and that as a result, their future careers are jeopardized. Because women lack the proper sanitation resources at this university, the future of South Africa could very well mean women are missing from important career roles.

Positive frames.

The images posted by the Serithi Campaign use positive frames when discussing menstrual cups. They do this to create a positive feeling about the product so that viewers are more likely to try them. They promote menstrual cups as healthy, affordable, and easy to use. The organization posts powerful images of girls and young women holding the products while smiling and laughing. These images show menstrual cups as a positive

experience. Young girls and women are happy about the product; therefore, the product must work. These positive frames make menstrual hygiene easier to discuss and also promote the use of menstrual cups as a positive experience.

Blaming the patriarchy frames.

Amnesty International WITS uses posts with a lot of text to discuss their #WorthBleedingFor campaign. The organization's letter to their followers clearly defines the real reason for the lack of menstrual products on campus and in South Africa. They state that although the university is failing to solve injustices on their campus, the real issue is patriarchy. The problem exists because menstruation is not viewed as important and is not discussed openly in conversations. The patriarchy continues to ignore women, and therefore the problems endure.

Linguistic Relativity

Throughout these artifacts, the rhetors made language choices to cause their audience to think a certain way. The following section discusses how the rhetors crafted new realities by shifting from passive to active language, from the language of deprivation to provision, and from misleading to informative language.

Shifting from passive to active language.

Posts with the hashtag #RedHeelMonday inspire active language to influence viewers to participate in the cause. Talking about menstruation and posting about it on social media makes the conversation active. Women no longer need to hide their conversations about menstruation or not talk about it. Their posts not only encourage women to post photos with the hashtag but also encourage women to be a part of the

movement. The hashtag claims that by participating with this artifact, women can take a step towards better living and a healthier reality.

#WorthBleedingFor posters also use active language to convince participants to join in their protests. The poster uses strong language to demand that the university take action and fix the problem by making tampons accessible on campus. The language used throughout this post and in those key phrases influences viewers to not remain idle. Amnesty International WITS wants their audience to be part of the change they are working toward on campus. They invite viewers to take a stand and unite with them to resolve the problems created by a lack of menstrual products on campus.

Shifting from language of deprivation to provision.

The Red Wings Project's posts also depict the reality for young girls dealing with menstruation during school. In one post, a girl talks about how she does not feel comfortable going to the bathroom at her school because of the lack of working toilets and water faucets. While the discussion in this post highlights the lack of resources girls have, it ends with a way the viewer can change this reality. This post gives viewers the chance to participate in the project and get involved with bringing supplies to girls in need.

The letter posted by Amnesty International WITS also uses language to illustrate how women in South Africa are being subjected to harsh realities. Because women cannot take proper care of their menstrual hygiene, they are being deprived of education and the opportunity to fully experience daily life. Women do not have menstrual products to manage their periods and therefore are distracted during class or do not even come to class. The post later mentions that the eradication of taxes on menstrual products and the

accessibility of free tampons will fix the problem for many South African women. Thus, providing women with better sanitation and products such as the menstrual cup will end some struggles women in South Africa face.

#WorthBleedingFor also illustrates the reality of deprivation among women. These posts use strong language to illustrate how women at the university are being deprived of their education without access to sanitary pads and show the viewer what reality is like for women on the campus. The post shifts from highlighting a life of deprivation to how viewers can change this reality. #WorthBleedingFor encourages their followers to bring sanitary pads for a collection so that they can provide for women on campus.

Shifting from misleading to informative language.

The Red Wings Project's posts bring information to those with daughters, nieces, or sisters close to puberty, and uses informative language to correct misconceptions and educate young girls in South Africa. Red Wings Project aims to supply information to viewers so they can teach young girls about proper health practices. This language creates an opportunity for viewers to gain information they did not have before. This information combats myths or misinformation about menstruation or health practices that might be circulating around the nation. Girls will then hopefully not have to miss school and will have healthier bodies.

The Serithi Campaign also aims to inform with their posts. By simply giving factual information about menstrual cups, they are truthfully informing their audience about the product. In the post describing the harms of tampons, they inform viewers of dangers and issues they might not have been previously aware of. These informative

posts challenge the misinformation viewers may have previously had due to a lack of education and myths about menstrual hygiene. Women can now be informed about their periods, how to properly manage their periods, and how menstrual cups can benefit their lives.

Chapter IV Summary

The rhetors in these three artifacts used activist, informative, realistic, positive, and patriarchy-blaming frames when crafting their messages. By using frames to shape their message, the rhetors discussed menstruation in a new light that was specifically relevant to their target audience. With this analysis in mind, I addressed my first research question: How are these artifacts utilizing message framing to reach their audiences? These artifacts all attempt to relate to their audiences to help individuals connect with their message. To relate to their audience, the rhetors illustrate the realities women in India endure when they are menstruating. Not only are they reflecting these realities in their message, they are also showing women that these realities can be changed. By using hashtags in their messages, the rhetors also bridge the gap between the organization and their audience. They invite their viewers to not only read their messages but to participate by uploading their own posts using the hashtags.

Through linguistic relativity, it is evident that the rhetors whose texts I analyzed in Chapter IV understand that the way a society talks about a topic determines how they think about that topic. After my analysis, I answered my second research question: Through message framing, how are these texts shaping language to create a new reality? In each of these artifacts, the rhetors used language to craft a new way for society to think about menstruation. The artifacts addressed myths and corrected them by providing new

and accurate information about menstruation and menstrual products. The artifacts also used language to change how menstruation is viewed and discussed. Women are encouraged to not only discuss their periods but to be a part of this change across South Africa.

After my analysis using framing theory and linguistic relativity, I then addressed my final question: How are rhetorical artifacts combating menstrual taboos in various cultures? These artifacts are combating menstrual taboos in South Africa by supplying information and advocating for improved water and sanitation conditions. The rhetors overcome the barrier of menstrual taboos by discussing menstruation on social media. In making the problem known in a public space, the rhetors bring the issue to society's agenda. In describing the reality for women in South Africa, the rhetors illustrate the need for national change.

Conclusion

The “impurity” of menstrual blood is a common theme across cultures. This myth has created a stigma and an obstacle to overcoming gender equality. Often, “menstruation is a source of oppression for women because of the shame attached to monthly bleeding and the challenges women face as menstruators in public spaces.”⁸ Women across cultures are taught that menstruation is shameful and must be hidden at all times. This idea limits women's ability to perform daily tasks while menstruating, and often women plan their lives around their menstrual cycle.

8. Ingrid Johnston-Robledo and Joan C. Chrisler, “The Menstrual Mark: Menstruation as Social Stigma,” *Sex Roles* 14, no. 1 (2013): 12, doi:10.1007/s11199-011-0052-z.

Red Wings advocate Olwethu Leshabane states that “period pains may hurt physically, but what hurts even more is the lack of conversation and engagement about sanitary products and education for women.”⁹ Education is key to tackling menstrual taboos across the world. Religious and cultural beliefs shaped menstrual taboos in the past, and the same myths have been passed from generation to generation. It is time that women combat these myths and learn the truth about their periods. Menstruation is not impure; it is normal and healthy.

In rhetorically studying menstrual taboos and artifacts that challenge these taboos, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the challenging lives of menstruating women across the world. This research not only provides insights into the origins of such taboos but also illustrates the severe outcomes of those taboos. Rhetorically studying these artifacts allows the researcher to understand a culture and how messages can be used to communicate within that culture. When combating menstrual taboos, it was key that these artifacts looked to the barriers existing in their culture to create change. In researching how to challenge menstrual taboos, researchers learn how to change the way a society thinks by framing messages and using language to reach their audiences.

If the menstrual taboo continues to exist across the world, women will continue to struggle to achieve gender equality. Menstrual taboos are another way women are being held back and restricted in societies. Not only do menstrual taboos provide limitations for women, but taboos also encourage unhealthy hygiene practices. In eradicating the menstrual taboo, women will be able to take care of their bodies and prevent cases of

9. Olwethu Leshabane, “What Hurts More Than the Period Pains?,” *Red Wings Project*, 2015, <http://www.redwingsproject.com/what-hurts-more-than-the-period-pains/>.

infection and cancer that result from unhygienic menstrual practices. Therefore, the research into menstrual taboos across cultures is important to consider for women's overall well-being.

Future research could expand this study to include more regions of the world and additional artifacts. Because of the scope of this project, it was not feasible to cover more cultures or include an in-depth study of the way all artifacts communicate anti-menstrual taboo messages. Future studies could also expand the research on origins of taboos to better understand how to overcome these issues in societies. Lastly, researchers could gain from greater access to a variety of artifacts. Because this project was situated in the United States, it was easier to collect artifacts challenging menstrual taboos in that location. Artifacts in other parts of the world were harder to access, but would be beneficial to examine in future projects.

Menstrual taboos are an unnecessary cause of embarrassment, shame, and stress around the world. Women should be proud of their periods because menstruating is a unique biological occurrence only granted to females. Menstruation gives women the ability to produce life and should be viewed as a powerful phenomenon. Without menstruation, humankind could not exist. It is time that women break the cycle of menstrual taboos and be proud of what their bodies can do. And like Urmila Chanam states, "let no part of a girl/woman's biology be the cause of her suffering and subjugation. Let her biology not hold her back from realizing her potential. Menstrual blood is not impure."¹⁰

10. Urmila Chanam, "Menstrual Blood Is Not Impure!," *World Pulse*, October 18, 2014, <https://www.worldpulse.com/en/community/users/urmila-chanam/posts/34846>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “2016 Toilet Festival (South Africa).” *World Toilet Day*. Last accessed March 23, 2017. <http://www.worldtoiletday.info/2015/events/2016-toilet-festival-south-africa>.
- “About.” *Free the Tampons*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.freethetampons.org/about.html>.
- “About.” *Menstrupedia*. Last accessed November 28, 2016. <https://menstrupedia.com/about>.
- “About.” *THINX*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <https://www.shethinx.com/pages/about-us>.
- “About Bodyform.” *Bodyform*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.bodyform.co.uk/all-about-us/about-bodyform/>.
- “Action.” *Free the Tampons*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.freethetampons.org/action.html>.
- “Activewear.” *THINX*. Last accessed March 17, 2017. <https://www.shethinx.com/collections/activewear/>.
- Acton, Annabel. “Talking Taboo with Thinx Co-Founder Miki Agrawal.” *The Challenger Project*. 2016. <https://thechallengerproject.com/blog/2016/thinx>.
- Ahmed, Rokeya, and Yesmin, Kabita. “Menstrual Hygiene: Breaking the Silence.” *WaterAid Bangladesh*. 2008. <http://www.ircwash.org/sites/default/files/Ahmed-2008-Menstrual.pdf>.
- Amnesty International WITS’ Facebook page. Last accessed March 21, 2016. https://www.facebook.com/pg/AmnestyInternationalWITS/likes/?ref=page_internal.
- Ardevol-Abreu, A. “Framing Theory in Communication Research in Spain. Origins, Development and Current Situation.” *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 70, no. 1 (2015): 423-50. doi:10.4185/RLCS-2015-1053en.
- Athanasopoulos, Panos, Emanuel Bylund, and Daniel Casasanto. “Introduction to the Special Issue: New and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Linguistic Relativity.” *Language Learning* 66, no. 3 (2016): 482-6. doi:10.1111/lang.12196.
- Azad, Nikita. Facebook page. Last accessed March 19, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/archangelniks/posts/10205592308767620>.
- . “#HappytoBleed: An Initiative Against Sexism.” *Counter Currents*. November 23, 2015. <http://www.countercurrents.org/azad231115.htm>.
- Bansal, Avani. “My Menstrual Blood: There Are Overwhelming Taboos around Menstruation in India, Which Makes a Girl’s Life Miserable.” *The Times of India*. February 17, 2017. <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-edit-page/my-menstrual-blood-there-are-overwhelming-taboos-around-menstruation-in-india-which-make-a-girls-life-miserable/>.

- Beksinska, Mags, Jennifer Smit, Ross Greener, Virginia Maphumulo, and Zonke Mabude. "Better Menstrual Management Options for Adolescents Needed in South Africa: What About the Menstrual Cup?." *South African Medical Journal* 105, no. 5 (2008): 331-331. doi:10.7196/samj.9205.
- Beksinska, Mags E., Jenni Smit, Ross Greener, Catherine S. Todd, Mei-ling Ting Lee, Virginia Maphumulo, and Vivian Hoffmann. "A Randomized Crossover Trial Comparing the Menstrual Cup to Tampons or Sanitary Pads." *Journal of Women's Health* 24, no. 2 (2015): 151-8. doi:10.1089/jwh.2014.5021.
- Benford, Robert D. and David A. Snow. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26, no. 1 (2000): 611-39.
- Benkhedda, Yahya. "Islam and Muslims in U.S. Think Tank Electronic Media: Framing, Narrative, and Ethics." *Global Media Journal-Canadian Edition* 9, no. 2 (2016): 41-63.
- Bhandari, Hemani. "Women Are #HappytoBleed, Then What's the Problem." *The Indian Express*. November 24, 2015. <http://indianexpress.com/article/trending/trending-in-india/women-are-happytobleed-then-whats-the-problem/>.
- Bhartiya, Aru. "Menstruation, Religion and Society." *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 3, no. 6 (2013): 523-7. doi:10.7763/IJSSH.2013.V3.296.
- Bobel, Chris. "'Our Revolution Has Style': Contemporary Menstrual Product Activists 'Doing Feminism' in the Third Wave." *Sex Roles* 54, no. 1 (2006): 331-45. doi:10.1007/s11199-006-9001-7.
- Bodyform Channel. *Blood*. YouTube Video, 1.22. May 27, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q1GVOYIcKc>.
- "Bodyform Timeline." *Bodyform*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.bodyform.co.uk/all-about-us/bodyform-timeline1/>.
- Bos, Linda, Sophie Lecheler, Moniek Mewafi, and Rens Vliegthart. "It's the Frame that Matters: Immigrant Integration and Media Framing Effects in the Netherlands." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 55, no. 1 (2016): 97-108. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2016.10.002.
- Boston Women's Health Collective. *Women and Their Bodies: A Course by Boston Women's Health Collective*. Boston, MA: New England Free Press, 1970.
- Bowen, Austin. "How Menstrual Cycles Might Affect Olympic Athletes." *Chicago Tribune*. August 18, 2016. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/health/sc-periods-olympic-athletes-health-0823-20160818-story.html>.
- "Burn." *Bodyform*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.bodyform.co.uk/bodyform-initiatives/redfit/burn/>.
- Calfas, Jennifer. "Most States Charge a Tax on Tampons. This Lawmaker Has a Brilliant Solution." *Time*. March 15, 2017. <http://time.com/money/4701623/california-tampon-tax/>.
- Carnes, Ralph L. "A Perceptual Model of the Whorflan Thesis." *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 27, no. 1 (1970): 263-71.
- Chanam, Urmila. "Menstrual Blood is Not Impure!." *World Puls.*, October 18, 2014. <https://www.worldpulse.com/en/community/users/urmila-chanam/posts/34846>.

- Clancy, Kathryn. Interview with Elizabeth Rowe. *Period Podcast 3*. Podcast audio. September 30, 2016. <http://kateclancy.com/page/3/>.
- Colombini, Manuela, Susannah H. Mayhew, Ben Hawkins, Meera Bista, Sunil Kumar Joshi, Berit Schei, and Charolette Watts. "Agenda Setting and Framing of Gender-Based Violence in Nepal: How it Became a Health Issue." *Health Policy Plan* 31, no. 4 (2016): 493-503. doi:10.1093/heapol/czv091.
- "Comic." *Menstrupedia*. Last accessed March 19, 2017. <https://www.menstrupedia.com/comic/English>.
- Craig, Robert T. "Communication Theory as a Field." *Communication Theory* 9, no. 1 (1999): 119-61.
- Craig, Robert T., and Heidi L. Muller. *Theorizing Communication: Readings Across Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007.
- Dasgupta, Shreya. "Why Do Women Have Periods When Most Animals Don't?" *BBC*. April 20, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150420-why-do-women-have-periods>.
- Del Giudice, Marguerite. "Why It's Crucial to Get More Women into Science." *National Geographic*. November 8, 2014. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/11/141107-gender-studies-women-scientific-research-feminist/>.
- Delhi, Usha Rail. "A Woman Fights for Breaking the Silence Over the 'Red Droplets.'" *The Weekend Leader*. July 18, 2016. <http://www.theweekendleader.com/Causes/2477/changing-mindsets.html>.
- Douglass, Mary. "Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo." London: Routledge, 2004.
- . "Taboo." Edited by Richard Cavendish, Reprinted in *Man, Myth, & Magic*. London: Phoebus Publishing, 1979: 2767-71.
- Entman, Robert M. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51-8. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x.
- "Fight to Keep Young Girls at School." *SA News*. July 22, 2016. <http://www.sanews.gov.za/features-south-africa/fight-keep-young-girls-school>.
- Fikeni, Lwandile. "Amnesty International Wits Petitions Vice-Chancellor for Free Pads." *Wits Vuvuzela*. April 9, 2016. <http://witsvuvuzela.com/2016/04/09/amnesty-international-wits-petitions-vice-chancellor-for-free-pads/>.
- "#FreeTheTampons." *Free the Tampons*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.freethetampons.org/freethetampons.html>.
- Gantz, Walter. *The Movement of Taboos: A Message-Oriented Approach*. Washington, D.C.: Eric Clearinghouse. 1978. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED165143.pdf>.
- Garg, Suneela and Anand, Tanu. "Menstruation Related Myths in India: Strategies for Combatting It." *Journal of Family Medicine & Primary Care* 4, no. 2 (2015): 184-6. doi:10.4103/2249-4863.154627.
- Gass-Poore, Jordan. "Citing Gender Bias, State Lawmakers Move to Eliminate 'Tampon Tax.'" *NPR*. March 6, 2015. <http://www.npr.org/2016/03/06/467377295/citing-gender-bias-state-lawmakers-move-to-eliminate-tampon-tax>.

- “Get 10\$.” *THINX*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <https://www.shethinx.com/pages/get10>.
- “A Global Campaign to Banish Myths, Taboos, and Stigma Around Menstruation and Give Dignity to Girls and Women.” Last accessed March 19, 2017. <http://www.breakingthesilencereddplets.com/>.
- Gosling, Melanie. “Girls Reaching Puberty at Age of 9.” *IOL*, November 1, 2013. <http://www.iol.co.za/lifestyle/family/kids/girls-reaching-puberty-at-age-of-9-1600751>.
- Guff, Samantha. “Women Protested the UK’s ‘Tampon Tax’ By Bleeding in White Pants.” *Huffington Post*. November 9, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/women-protest-tampon-tax-in-white-pants_us_5640bf35e4b0411d3071a92e.
- Gupta, Aditi, and Tuhin Paul. *Menstrupedia: The Friendly Guide to Periods for Girls*. India: Menstrupedia, 2014.
- Guterman, Mark A., Payal Mehta, and Margaret S. Gibbs. “Menstrual Taboos Among Major Religions.” *The Internet Journal of World Health and Societal Politics* 5, no. 2 (2007): 1-7.
- Happy to Bleed’s Facebook page. Last accessed November 28, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/events/757746744337128/>.
- Haynes, Suyin. “How an Indian Comic Book is Teaching Girls About Their Periods.” *Time*. December 12, 2016. <http://time.com/4590678/menstrupedia-aditi-gupta-taboo-india/>.
- Henize, Sarah Elizabeth. “Breast Cancer in the Media: Agenda-Setting and Framing Effects of Prevalent Messages on College-Aged Women.” Dissertation. Graduate College of Bowling Green State University. 2013.
- Herbert, Ann C., Ana Maria Ramirez, Grace Lee, Savannah J. North, Melanie S. Askari, Rebecca L. West, and Marni Sommer. “Puberty Experiences of Low-Income Girls in the United States: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Literature From 2000 to 2014.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 3, no. 1 (2016): 363-79. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2016.10.008.
- “Historical Perspectives Reduced Incidence of Menstrual Toxic-Shock Syndrome—United States, 1980-1990.” *CDC*. Last updated May 2, 2001. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00001651.htm>.
- “History.” *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. 2017. <http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/history/>.
- Holy Bible*. New Living Translation.
- “How It Works.” *THINX*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <https://www.shethinx.com/pages/it-works>.
- Hunt, Earl and Franca Agnoli. “The Whorfian Hypothesis: A Cognitive Psychology Perspective.” *Psychological Review* 98, no. 3 (1991): 377-89. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.98.3.377.
- ICO HPV Information Centre. *India: Human Papillomavirus and Related Cancers, Fact Sheet 2016*. December 12, 2016. http://www.hpvcentre.net/statistics/reports/IND_FS.pdf.
- “India.” *Geert Hofstede*. Last accessed April 21, 2017. <https://geert-hofstede.com/india.html>.

- Johnson, Emma. "Can These Panties Disrupt the \$15 Billion Feminine Hygiene Market." *Forbes*. May 28, 2015. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/emmajohnson/2015/05/28/can-these-panties-disrupt-a-15-billion-feminine-hygiene-market/3/#7bcfa9b47a29>.
- Johnston-Robledo, Ingrid, and Joan C. Chrisler. "The Menstrual Mark: Menstruation as Social Stigma." *Sex Roles* 68, no. 1 (2013): 9-18. doi:10.1007/s11199-011-0052-z.
- Jones, Abigail. "The Fight to End Period Shaming is Going Mainstream." *Newsweek*. April 20, 2016. <http://www.newsweek.com/2016/04/29/womens-periods-menstruation-tampons-pads-449833.html>.
- Jonsson, Anna Maria, and Mikael Karlsson. "Cooperation, Media, and Framing Processes: Insights from a Baltic Sea Case Study." *Nordicom Review* 37, no.1 (2016): 41-55. doi:10.1515/nor-2016-0022.
- Kaiser, Stefanie. "Menstrual Hygiene Management." *Sustainable Sanit*. <http://www.sswm.info/content/menstrual-hygiene-management>.
- Kaundal, Manju, and Bhopesh Thakur. "A Dialogue on Menstrual Taboo." *Indian Journal of Community Health* 26, no. 2 (2014): 192-5.
- Kaur, Gagandeep. "Banished for Menstruating: The Indian Women Isolated While They Bleed." *The Guardian*. December 22, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/dec/22/india-menstruation-periods-gaokor-women-isolated>.
- Kennedy, Bill, and Colin Bailey. "Framing in Race-Conscious, Antipoverty Advocacy: A Science-Based Guide to Delivering to Your Most Persuasive Message." *Clearinghouse Review* 43, no. 9 (2010), 408-21.
- Kissling, Elizabeth Arveda. "'That's Just a Basic Teen-Age Rule': Girl's Linguistic Strategies for Managing the Menstrual Communication Taboo." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 24 (November 1996): 292-309.
- Kumar, Anant and Srivastava, Kamiya. "Cultural and Social Practices Regarding Menstruation among Adolescent Girls." *Social Work in Public Health* 26, no. 6 (2011), 594-604.
- Leshabane, Olwethu. "What Hurts More Than the Period Pains?." *Red Wings Project*. 2015. <http://www.redwingsproject.com/what-hurts-more-than-the-period-pains/>.
- Leshabane, Olwethu Mrs South Africa 1st Princess. Facebook Page. Last accessed April 3, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/Olwe2Lesh/photos/a.1047011922022073.1073741828.1046760418713890/1227568507299746/?type=3&theater>.
- Lewis, Kayleigh. "Company Gives Women 'Period Leave' to Make Them More Productive." *Independent*. March 1, 2016. <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/period-leave-menstruation-work-employment-uk-women-a6905426.html>.
- Lewis, Stuart. "South Africa: The Price of Sanitary Pads Is a Tax on Womanhood." *All Africa*. March 8, 2016. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201603080267.html>.
- Locke, John. "The Abuse of Words." In *Theorizing Communication: Readings Across Traditions*. Edited by Robert T. Craig and Heidi L. Muller. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007: 169-176.
- Lucy, John A. "Linguistic Relativity." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (1997): 291-312.

- Lustig, Myron W., and Jolene Koester. "Cultural Patterns and Communication: Taxonomies." In *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures*, 5th edition. Edited by Karon Bowers. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006: 109-135.
- Mahon, Thérèse, and Maria Fernandes. "Menstrual Hygiene in South Asia: A Neglected Issue for WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) Programmes." *Gender & Development* 18, no. 1 (February 25, 2010): 99-113. doi:10.1080/13552071003600083.
- Majange, Gwadamirari. "Strong Girls to Inspire: Olwethu Njoloza-Lesha (Humanitarian)." *One*. September 2, 2015. <https://www.one.org/africa/blog/strong-girls-to-inspire-olwethu-njoloza-leshabane-humanitarian/>.
- Maseko, Khensani Ntando Nkanyezi. Facebook page. Last accessed April 4, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1088690881184410&set=gm.1176478299038796&type=3&theater>.
- McKeever, Patricia. "The Perpetuation of Menstrual Shame: Implications and Directions." *Women & Health* 9, no. 4 (1984): 33-47.
- "Menstrual Blood Is Not Impure." *Breaking the Silence*. Last accessed November 28, 2016. <http://www.breakingthesilencereddrops.com/>.
- "Menstruation and the Menstrual Cycle Fact Sheet." *Women's Health*, 2014. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/menstruation.html>.
- "Menstrupedia Comic." *Menstrupedia*. Last accessed November 28, 2016. <https://www.menstrupedia.com/>.
- Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation Government of India. *Menstrual Hygiene Management: National Guidelines*. December 2015. http://unicef.in/CkEditor/ck_Uploaded_Images/img_1507.pdf.
- Monllos, Kristina. "A Trans Man Stars in an Inclusive New Subway Ad for Period Underwear Brand Thinx Education through Representation." *AdWeek*. May 17, 2016. <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/inclusive-new-subway-ads-period-underwear-brand-thinx-feature-trans-man-171508>.
- Montgomery, Rita E. "A Cross-Cultural Study of Menstruation, Menstrual Taboos, and Related Social Variables." *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1974):137-70. doi:10.1525/eth.1974.2.2.02a00030.
- Moss, Rachel. "Bodyform's 'Red.fit' Campaign Stops Periods Being 'The Last Taboo' in Women's Sport." *Huffington Post*. March 6, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/bodyform-redfit-campaign-periods-in-sport_uk_575175abe4b0b23a261a286b.
- . "World Menstrual Hygiene Day: Third of British Women Too Embarrassed to Talk About Periods." *Huffingtonpost UK*. May 27, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/british-woman-too-embarrassed-to-talk-about-periods-action-aid_uk_5747ff03e4b03e9b9ed5a43b.
- "The Murphy's Law of Menstruation." *Free the Tampons*. August 2013. http://www.freethetampons.org/uploads/4/6/0/3/46036337/fit_infographic.pdf.
- Nair, Harish V. "Women Entry to Sabrimala: Happy Bleed Activists Move Supreme Court." *India Today*. February 16, 2016.

- <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/women-entry-to-sabrimala-happy-to-bleed-activists-move-supreme-court/1/596982.html>.
- Nandakumar, Avinash. "Shed Your Inhibition about the Taboos and Myths of Menstrual Hygiene: Manipuri Activist Urmila Chanam's Crusade on Breaking the Silence as a Woman." *India Live Today*. July 19, 2016. <http://www.indialivetoday.com/shed-your-inhibition-about-taboos-and-myths-of-menstrual-hygiene-manipuri-activist-urmila-chanams-crusade-on-breaking-the-silence-as-a-woman/13908.html>.
- Newman, Andrew. "Rebelling Against the Commonly Evasive Feminine Care Ad." *The New York Times*. March 15, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/16/business/media/16adco.html?_r=0.
- Noorbhai, Raees. "South Africa: Bleed the Beloved Country-#WorthBleedingFor Campaign Seeks to Make Pads More Accessible." *All Africa*. April 19, 2016. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201604200889.html>.
- Nyoka, Nation. "Fighting for Water Security in a Time of Demand." *News24*. March 22, 2017. <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/fighting-for-water-security-in-a-time-of-demand-20170322>.
- O'Brien, Sara Ashely. "Trump-Inspired Thinx 'Pussy' Ad Banned in SF Subway." *CNN Tech*. November 2, 2016. <http://money.cnn.com/2016/11/03/technology/thinx-trump-inspired-bart-ad/>.
- O'Grady, Kathleen. "The Semantics of Taboo: Menstrual Prohibitions in the Hebrew Bible." *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity*, Edited by Judith A. Herbert, Judith Ann Johnson, Anne-Marie Korte, and Kristin De Troyer. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003: 1-28.
- O'Keefe, Daniel J., and Jakob D. Jensen. "The Relative Persuasiveness of Gain-Framed Loss-Framed Messages for Encouraging Disease Prevention Behaviors: A Meta-Analytic Review." *Journal of Health Communication* 12, no. 7 (2007): 296-316.
- Oster, Erik. "AMV BBDO, Bodyform Think the 'Last Taboo' for Female Athletes is Menstrual Blood." *AdWeek*. June 1, 2016. <http://www.adweek.com/agencyspy/amv-bbdo-bodyform-think-the-last-taboo-for-female-athletes-is-menstrual-blood/110338>.
- "Our First Beneficiary Handover." *Serithi Campaign*. Last accessed March 21, 2017. <https://amaphiko.redbull.com/en/projects/serithi-campaign>.
- "Our Girls." *Dignity Dreams*. Last accessed March 23, 2017. <http://www.dignitydreams.com/our-girls.html>.
- "Pads: Ultra Thin Super with Wings." *Kote.*, 2005. <http://www.kotexfits.com/ourProducts/pads/ultraThinSuperWithWings/>.
- Phillips, Kristine. "'There's No Happy Hour for Menstruation': Tax Liquor Instead of Tampons, Lawmakers Say." *Washington Post*. March 13, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/03/13/theres-no-happy-hour-for-menstruation-tax-liquor-instead-of-tampons-lawmakers-say/>.
- Prakashi, Asha. "Sabarimala Debate: #HappyToBleed Vs #ReadyToWait." *The Times of India*. 2016. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/Sabarimala-debate-HappyToBleed-Vs-ReadyToWait/articleshow/53945601.cms>.
- "Power of Purchase." *Thinx*. 2016. <http://www.shethinx.com/pages/power-of-the-purchase>.

- Preiss, Danielle. "A Young Woman Died in a Menstrual Hut in Nepal." *NPR*. November 28, 2016. <http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/11/28/503155803/a-young-woman-died-in-a-menstrual-shed-in-nepal>.
- Rabin, Roni Caryn. "Free the Tampons." *New York Times*. February 29, 2016. <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/02/29/free-the-tampons/>.
- Ramathuba, Dorah U. "Menstrual Knowledge and Practices of Female Adolescents in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa." *Curationis* 38, no. 1 (2015): 1-22. doi:10.4102/curationis.v.38i1.1551.
- Rashid, Adnan. "An Interplay of English and Urdu Languages in Pakistani ESL Learners: Implications of Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis of Linguistic Relativity and Linguistic Determinism." *NUML Journal of Critical Inquiry* 11, no. 1 (2013): 58-79.
- Red Wings Project. "About." *Red Wings Project*. 2014. <http://www.redwingsproject.com/about/>.
- . Facebook Page. Last accessed March 26, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/redwingsproject/>.
- . "Petition." *Red Wings Project*. 2014. <http://www.redwingsproject.com/petition/>.
- . "SISTA." *Red Wings Project*. 2014. <http://www.redwingsproject.com/sista/>.
- Rein, Martin, and Donald Schon. "Frame-Critical Policy Analysis and Frame-Reflective Policy Practice." *Knowledge and Policy* 9, no. 1 (1996): 85-104. doi:10.1007/BF02832235.
- Rogers, Everett M., James W. Dearing, and Dorine Bregman. "The Anatomy of Agenda-Setting Research." *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 2 (1993): 68-84. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01263.x.
- Rosch, Eleanor. "Linguistic Relativity." *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 44, no. 1 (1987): 254-79.
- Rosenberg, David. "How 'Free the Tampons' Went from an Idea Into a Law." *TEDx Innovations*. July 11, 2016. <https://tedxinnovations.ted.com/2016/07/11/how-free-the-tampon-went-from-an-idea-into-a-law/>.
- Ruiz-Grossman, Sarah. "Students Get Free Menstrual Cups So They Don't Have to Miss School." *The Huffington Post*. May 17, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/serithi-campaign-south-africa-menstrual-cups-school_us_573a3a93e4b077d4d6f3ce39.
- "Sanitary Dignity Campaign Changes Schoolgirls' Lives." *SA News*. May 8, 2016. <http://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/sanitary-dignity-campaign-changes-schoolgirls-lives>.
- Scheufele, Dietram A, and David Tewksbury. "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models." *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007): 9-20. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2460-2466.2006.00326.x.
- Scott, Ellen. "This Advert Is at the Centre of All Kinds of Controversy for Daring to Mention Periods." *Metro*. October 22, 2015. <http://metro.co.uk/2015/10/22/this-advert-is-at-the-centre-of-all-kinds-of-controversy-for-daring-to-mention-periods-5455170/>.
- Scutti, Susan. "Aditi Gupta's 'Menstrupedia,' Taboo-Busting Comic Book, Leaves Out Scary Menstruation Pics to Teach Indian Girls About their Periods." *Medical Daily*. September 15, 2016. <http://www.medicaldaily.com/aditi-guptas->

- menstrupedia-taboo-busting-comic-book-leaves-out-scary-menstruation-pics-303132.
- Selwood, Daniel. "Bodyform Unveils Red.Fit Menstruation/Exercise Education Push." *The Grocer*. May 31, 2016. <http://www.thegrocer.co.uk/buying-and-supplying/marketing/bodyform-unveils-redfit-menstruation/exercise-education-push/536896.article>.
- Serithi Campaign. Facebook page. Last accessed November 21, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/serithicampaign>.
- "Share Your Story." *Free the Tampons*. Last accessed March 27, 2017. <http://www.freethetampons.org/stories.html>.
- Snow, David, and Catherine Corrigan-Brown. "Falling on Deaf Ears: Confronting the Prospect of Nonresonant Frames." In *Rhyming Hope and History: Activists, Academics, and Social Movements Scholarship*. Edited by David Croteau, William Hoynes, and Ryan Charlotte, 222-238. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Snow, David A and Benford, Robert D. "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization." *International Social Movement Research* 1, no. 1 (1988): 197-217.
- South African Human Rights Commission. "Report on the Right to Access Sufficient Water and Decent Sanitation in South Africa: 2014." Last accessed March 23, 2017. [https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/FINAL%20th%20Proof%20%20March%20-%20Water%20%20Sanitation%20low%20res%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/FINAL%20th%20Proof%20%20March%20-%20Water%20%20Sanitation%20low%20res%20(2).pdf).
- "Stories." *Free the Tampons*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.freethetampons.org/stories.html>.
- Stubbs, Margaret L. "Cultural Perceptions and Practices around Menarche and Adolescent Menstruation in the United States." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1135, no. 1 (2008): 58-66. doi:10.1196/annals.1429.008.
- "Talking about Periods: An International Investigation." *Clue*. November 2015. <http://www.helloclue.com/survey.html>.
- "Tampons." *THINX*. Last accessed March 17, 2017. <https://www.shethinx.com/products/tampons>.
- Tan, Delfin A., Rohana Haththotuwa, and Ian S. Fraser. "Cultural Aspects and Mythologies Surrounding Menstruation and Abnormal Uterine Bleeding." *Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics and Gynaecology* no. 3 (2016): 121-33. doi:10.1016/j.bpobgyn.2016.09.015.
- Team THINX. *A Day in the Life of a Real Menstruating Human*. YouTube Video, 1.37. May 17, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9z2IxJV11A>.
- "THINX." *THINX*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <https://www.shethinx.com/>.
- Thomas, Erika. "Menstruation Discrimination: The Menstrual Taboo as a Rhetorical Function of Discourse in the National and International Advances of Women's Rights." *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate* no. 28 (2007): 65-90.
- Tohidian, Iman. "Examining Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis as One of the Main Views on the Relationship Between Language and Thought." *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 38, no. 1 (2009): 65-74. doi:10.1007/s10936-008-9083-1.
- Urmill, Ch. Facebook Page. Last accessed March 28, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/urmila.ch/videos/vb.100001504638037/100049700010435/?type=2&theater>.

- Wagner, Meg. "Women Live-Tweet Periods to Donald Trump Following Megyn Kelly 'Blood' Gaffe." *NY Daily News*. August 11, 2015. <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/women-live-tweet-periods-donald-trump-article-1.2321400>.
- "Website and Comic Book 'Menstrupedia' Breaks Taboo Across India." *Today*. April 11, 2014. <http://www.todayonline.com/chinaindia/india/website-and-comic-book-menstrupedia-breaks-taboo-across-india?singlepage=true>.
- Weissler, Chava. "Mizvot Built into the Body: Tkhines for Niddah, Pregnancy, and Childbirth." In *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, edited by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, 101-15. Albany, NY: State U of New York Publishing, 1992.
- "What Is Red.fit." *Bodyform*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.bodyform.co.uk/bodyform-initiatives/redfit/>.
- "What Is What." *Bodyform*. Last accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.bodyform.co.uk/our-products/what-is-what/>.
- Whelan, Elizabeth M. "Attitudes toward Menstruation." *Studies in Family Planning* 6, no. 4 (1975): 106-8.
- "Why Are Indian Women 'Happy to Bleed.?' " *BBC News*. November 23, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-34900825>.
- "Why Days for Girls." *Days for Girls*. Last accessed March 19, 2017. <https://www.daysforgirls.org/>.
- Williamson, Harriet. "Just When You Thought It Had Gone, Philip Hammond's Budget Brings Back the Tampon Tax." *Independent UK*. March 8, 2017. <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/2017-budget-philip-hammond-tampon-tax-domestic-violence-its-back-a7619071.html>.
- Willis, Amy. "This is Why People Are Taking Selfies with Tampons #JustATampon." *Metro*. June 9, 2015. <http://metro.co.uk/2015/06/09/this-is-why-people-are-taking-selfies-with-tampons-justatampon-5237427/>.
- Winkler, Inga, and Virginia Roaf. "Taking the Bloody Linen Out of the Closet: Menstrual Hygiene as a Priority for Achieving Gender Equality." *Cardozo Journal of Law & Gender* 21, no. 1 (2015): 1-38.
- Wolff, Phillip, and Kevin J. Holmes. "Linguistic Relativity." *WIREs Cognitive Science* 2, no. 1 (2011): 253-65. doi:10.1002/wcs.104.
- Women's Feature Service. "This Woman Has Taught 6,000 Girls across 9 States that Menstruation Should Not Disempower Them." *The Better India*. July 17, 2016. <http://www.thebetterindia.com/61928/urmila-chanam-menstrual-hygiene/>.
- Yagnik, Arpan Shailesh. "Reframing Menstruation in India: Metamorphosis of the Menstrual Taboo with the Changing Media Coverage." *Health Care for Women International* 35, no. 6 (2014): 617-33. doi:10.1080/07399332.2013.838246.
- Yang, Dong Jenn, and Kai Wen Lee. "The Moderating Effect of Social Desirability and Self-Efficacy on the Relationship between Message Framing and the Communication Effects for the Smokers." *Business Management Dynamics* 5, no. 9 (2016): 48-56.
- You Go Girl. Facebook page. Last accessed March 28, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/YouGoGirlIndia/photos/a.471072252914095.104703.465763843444936/1040123006009014/?type=3&theater>.

- Young, Frank, and Albert Bacdayan. "Menstrual Taboos and Social Rigidity." *Ethnology* 4, no. 2 (1965): 225-40. doi:10.2307/3772731.
- Yvette, Caster. "History Period-A Look at Menstruation through the Ages in 15 Fascinating Facts." *Metro UK*. May 20, 2015.
<http://metro.co.uk/2015/05/20/history-period-a-look-at-menstruation-through-the-ages-in-15-fascinating-facts-5204085/>.
- Zhifang, Zhu. "Linguistic Relativity and Cultural Communication." *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 34, no. 2 (2002): 161-70. doi:10.1080/00131850120102231.
- Zinken, Jorg. "The Metaphor of 'Linguistic Relativity.'" *History & Philosophy of Psychology* 10, no. 2 (2008): 1-10.