

Connecticut College

Digital Commons @ Connecticut College

American Studies Honors Papers

American Studies Program

2020

Dirty, Bloody, Money: Menstruation Education for Young American Women in the 20th Century

Amelia DeFrancis

Connecticut College, adeFrancis98@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/americanstudieshp>



Part of the [American Popular Culture Commons](#), [United States History Commons](#), [Women's History Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

DeFrancis, Amelia, "Dirty, Bloody, Money: Menstruation Education for Young American Women in the 20th Century" (2020). *American Studies Honors Papers*. 16.

<https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/americanstudieshp/16>

This Honors Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the American Studies Program at Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Studies Honors Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. For more information, please contact bpancier@conncoll.edu.

The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

Dirty, Bloody, Money: Menstruation Education for Young American
Women in the 20th Century

An Honors Thesis Presented by Amelia DeFrancis
To the Department of American Studies
Advised by Professor Catherine Stock

Connecticut College
New London, CT
May 1, 2020

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my high school AP European History teacher, Sarah Klumpp, who first recognized my passion for primary sources, close reading, and learning about the past. Without her recognition I would never have become the college student I am today, and I likely would never have built up the confidence to approach a project like this.

Thank you to Mrs. Marilyn Gass, who so generously and warmly shared her story with me, and in doing so enriched and brought to life the sources and ideas I wrote about. Getting to know her by through this project was an unexpected gift that I am so grateful for.

Thank you to the Connecticut College community. To my Professors – who have taught me how to read, write and think critically, and have made my learning experience at the college one full of connection and support. To my friends – especially Hanna, who has been my partner in studying history since our Freshman year and who, in her own thesis endeavor, has been a constant sounding board, supporter, and teammate on our many walks, phone calls, and third floor library check-ins. To Ashley Hanson in the library who has been a friend, a calming presence, and expert footnote editor. To Summar West, who seamlessly helped me edit and re-read my entire project – all from Google meet, during the height of a stressful transition to remote learning.

Thank you to Alice Raw and Ella St. George Carey, both inspiring historians and women, who tutored me during my Junior year abroad at Oxford. I would never have been prepared for this project without their rigorous and passionate teaching last year.

Thank you to my parents and my brother, who listened to my every stress, idea, decision, question, confusion, joke, or story not just throughout all of college and the process of this thesis, but also throughout my entire life – instilling in me that my voice, my thoughts, and my mind were all of value.

Finally, thank you to Professor Catherine Stock, my advisor and mentor during this year and throughout my four years at Conn. She has gone above and beyond to support, guide, and encourage this project and my own learning. Her patience, humor, and integrity has shown me the type of educator I aspire to be.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Chapter One: A Period of Debate: Menstruation Education’s Emergence.....	8
Chapter Two: Cultivating the Curse: 1920s and 1930s Menstrual Product Print Ads.....	27
Chapter Three: Advertisers as Educators: 1940s and Beyond.....	44
Conclusion.....	62
Bibliography.....	65

Introduction

In 1921 The Girl Scouts of America introduced the “Health Winner Badge.” A patch embroidered with the image of a caduceus, a symbol of medical treatment, it required girls to learn the physiology of menstruation in order to earn it. The notion that encouraging young women to learn about their bodies was radical in 1921, may sound arcane to the modern reader. However, at the start of the 20th century, many Americans did not understand the scientific realities of menstruation and relied on myths and explanations passed down through generations. Yet, as the “Health Winner Badge” shows, the progressive emphasis on scientific explanation and popular education about sexuality transformed menstruation understanding and far outlived the progressive era itself. Twentieth century Americans crafted the notion of a well-controlled female body, one that would not leak, smell, ache, cause anxiety, appear unfashionable, or lose efficiency (productive or reproductive) at inopportune moments.

This thesis, *Dirty, Bloody, Money: Menstruation Education for Young American Women in the 20th Century*, will demonstrate that they would do this in three specific ways: starting with the boom of medical expertise in the 19th century and advice around sex education in the progressive era, the establishment of advertisements that targeted fear and anxiety linked to menstruation in the early 1920s and 1930s, and through the advent of educational marketing like booklets and films by the 1940s.

This project covers the start of the 20th century into the late 1960s and early 1970s which coincided with the emergence of second wave feminism. In doing so, my thesis narrates how the early to mid 20th century created many of the conflicts that second and even third wave feminism had to address by the later 20th century and in the 21st century.

I have approached my analysis of advertisements and education through an interdisciplinary methodology. Not only did I attempt to analyze these sources through a historical lens by thinking critically about the current events and societal changes during their times of production, but I also looked at them through the lenses of graphic design and in-depth textual analysis and close reading. The main collection of advertisements used were found in women's and girl's magazines archived in the Sophia Smith Collection of Women's History at Smith College. I was also very fortunate to have access to many digitalized advertisements and booklets through the Museum of Menstruation's website. By interviewing a woman in her 80s who had been educated about menstruation during the 1940s and 50s, I was able to analyze what one girl's actual response and understanding of the advertisements and educational resources I worked with was. Through these different approaches to my sources, I was able to expand the meanings and significance of each advertisement and educational resource, furthering my argument that they are powerful tools for historical analysis.

This thesis is organized into three chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter examines how menstruation education grew out of the emergence of sex education in the early 20th century. First, it will provide an overview of how menstruation has historically been understood and how young women learned about menstruation prior to its introduction into public education in order to provide context for the shift that occurred in the 20th century. Next, it will explain how the Progressive era and World War I led to a heightened focus on sanitation and public health that further led to the emergence of sex education in schools. Finally, I argue that the emergence of sex education, and thus menstruation education in schools, is closely tied to the eugenics movement. I identify how arguments used for and against sex education are also arguments for eugenic beliefs around whiteness, hygiene, and morality.

The second chapter analyzes how the forces of the progressive era, and the advent of disposable menstrual products led to the emergence of menstrual product advertising. I will analyze ads from 1920 to 1945 and argue they reflect what messages were being broadcast to young women during this decade about their bodies, as well as helping to legitimize the new products. It will examine how advertisements focused on shame and fear were able to create a marketplace for their products and create a “necessity” out of a new and previously non-existent mass-produced product.

The third chapter expands the analysis of advertisements to focus on education, looking at films, booklets and pamphlets produced by companies from the 1940s to the 1960s. I argue in this chapter that the resources produced for young women at the time created a distinction between which women were seen as important to keep ‘pure’ and ‘clean,’ and how the lack of mainstream marketing to women of color and lower class women re-enforces their exclusion from the ideals of American femininity and public health care. I show how educational advertising became a powerful tool for brands, as it shaped young women’s product loyalty and created lasting memories and impacts on consumers.

Finally, in my conclusion I show how today’s menstruation education and marketing remains exclusionary and continues a theme of what I will refer to as “backwards progress,” a trend in the public recognition of women’s bodies that creates just as many if not more problems than advances.

While the emphasis on education and understanding of menstruation was radical, my thesis argues that much of the 20th century’s new menstruation management, intended to open conversations and help young women not fear their own bodies, invented new forms of stigmatization and shame for the young American girl. Health product companies like Procter &

Gamble and Johnson & Johnson, capitalized on the propagation of period related products, and their educational booklets began to emphasize that without their pads or tampons a young woman might quickly become dirty and unsanitary. While these products brought ease and comfort to many women, they also brought with them the recognition that without proper menstrual care, a woman's body was an embarrassment for herself and those around her. The advertisements and educational booklets ignored women who were not white or upper-middle class, emphasizing that only certain women would be able to attain the controlled, desirable body that could be accepted by society.

My thesis shows that despite the progressive movement's introductions of increased access to medical knowledge and mainstream discussions of reproductive education, the era also produced destructive new notions of femininity and cleanliness for young women and created race and class barriers, furthering the stigmatization of women without access to the products they were now told they "needed."

Three historians have provided a strong foundation for my work. Joan Jacobs Brumberg details the historical impact of young women's bodies in her history of coming of age *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*. She writes, "it is the historical moment that defines how she (the American girl) reacts to her changing flesh." Laura Friedenfelds' *The Modern Period*, provides historians with an overview of changes in menstruation management in the 20th century, particularly focused on how these tactics changed many middle-class women's day to day lives. Susan K. Freeman analyzes women's reproductive education in *Sex Goes to School: Girls and Sex Education before the 1960s*.

However, no book focuses primarily on the importance of the shift in young women's menstruation education that coincides with the boom of advertising and progressive era expertise

in the 20th century. My thesis responds to that gap and in doing so emphasizes how educational booklets, pamphlets, and advertisements merged together to promote awareness and education about menstruation. Given the focus on marketing within the broader theme of capitalism, this thesis also examines how narratives of race and class shaped this message. These themes are particularly relevant to my thesis because cleanliness and purity, two major advertising strategies used by pad and tampon companies, are directly correlated with wealth and whiteness. I will argue that despite second and third wave feminisms' attempts to further women's sex education, improve women's access to their gynecological care, and eliminate stigmas and mythologies around women's bodies, much more work remains to truly change menstruation education and its cultural meaning in America. This thesis works to broaden our understanding of how health product corporations intentionally stigmatize women's bodies in order to scare young women into buying more products, thus influencing how they understand their "changing flesh."¹

¹ Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "'Something Happens to Girls': Menarche and the Emergence of the Modern American Hygienic Imperative," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 1 (1993): 99-127.

Chapter One: A Period of Debate: Menstruation Education's Emergence

In an interview for this thesis, Marilyn Talbot Gass, a woman who came of age in the late 1940s, recalled how in her post-war house they did not have a dishwasher. Instead, with her mother, she would spend each evening washing and drying dishes after dinner. Mrs. Gass described how it was in this private routine, that she would ask her mother her questions about reproduction, menstruation, and growing up. For Mrs. Gass, now in her early 80s, the memory is so vivid that she remarked she could still “see us, mother and daughter, washing and drying dishes and having these conversations.”² Mrs. Gass’ memory reveals the complex and personal histories of how young women learned about menstruation and their bodies. While for her it was at the kitchen counter with her mother, for another woman it could have been from her older sister, a friend in the schoolyard, or a young woman working next to her on the assembly line.

Prior to and outside of advertising and formal menstrual education, there are numerous ways young women learned. This chapter aims to set up the history of menstruation education in America from 1900 until the construction of corporations’ advertisements in the 1920s. In doing so, it reveals that there were systems of menstruation education for young women that existed prior to the advent of widely commercially available menstrual products and shows that sex and menstruation education histories are inseparable. Although Mrs. Gass’ story takes place twenty years after the time-frame of this particular chapter, it serves as a reminder that the practices of passed-down learning and intimate conversations between women would remain a vital common thread throughout the decades of menstrual education, revealing the importance of understanding the history of menstruation education prior to the advent of commercially available products.

² Marilyn Talbot Gass, interview by author, Northampton, MA, March 20, 2020.

Understanding Menstruation throughout History

How women took care of themselves and managed menstruation throughout world history and in the United States specifically is an understudied phenomenon. Pliny the elder, in the first century AD “compiled a long list of common beliefs about the noxious, poisonous nature of menstrual blood,” and many authors in the early Middle Ages to believe that menstruation was ridding the body of impurities.³ Hippocrates onward embraced versions of what became known as the “plethora” model: that women’s bodies produced more blood than they were able to consume in their regular activities so menstruation would rid the body of “bad blood.”⁴ Through at least the Middle Ages, and for even longer amongst lower class women,⁵ almost all women frequently missed their periods. The physical labor, lack of protection from cold temperatures in winter, inadequate nourishment, chronic illness, frequent pregnancies, and breastfeeding all likely caused amenorrhea. Without modern pregnancy tests, it could be difficult or impossible to tell the difference between early pregnancy and the onset of illness.

By the mid 18th century, the plethora model for understanding menstruation grew to be questioned. Humourism was on the wane and medical writers began to understand that the body was “composed of discrete organs with specific functions and secretions.”⁶ Thus, it became understood that menstruation was specifically related to secretion from the uterus and not from a store of the entire physical body’s leftover blood. By the 19th century, medical knowledge

³Laura Freidenfelds, *The Modern Period: Menstruation in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

⁴Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Humourism was a system of medicine detailing the makeup and workings of the human body, adopted by Ancient Greek and Roman physicians and philosophers.

further advanced, and concepts of menstruation's connection to the reproductive cycle were established.⁷

The changes in menstrual management after the increase in medical knowledge around menstruation will be discussed later in this chapter. Before doing so, it is necessary to understand the social, political, and geographic changes occurring in America that I argue led to the emergence of menstruation education in America. The social hygiene movement at the turn of the century, after the influx of European immigrants and the Progressives' desire to "improve" all aspects of American life, would eventually lead to the desire to change and modernize the way young American women understood their bodies and their blood.

The Progressive Era and the Rise of Social Hygiene Movements

The peak of European immigration in America occurred in 1907 when over one million people entered the United States. By 1910 there would be over 13 million immigrants living in the United States. However, there were limitations on such influxes, especially those that were intentional in preventing non-white or perceived non-white people into the country.⁸ The Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 limited immigrants from China and other parts of Asia, and the sweeping Immigration Act of 1924 aimed to restrict Southern and Eastern European immigrants,

⁷Ibid.

⁸ David R. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White : The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*. (New York, Basic Books, 2005). The Italians, Irish, and Jews were not always perceived as "white." Historian David R. Roediger's book *Working Toward Whiteness* states new immigrants, until they were fully brought into the white family, lived in a state of in-betweenness, meaning they were placed in a racial pecking order below whites but above people of color. The essayist James Baldwin has frequently mused on how whiteness was made. He writes that "by informing their children...black women, black men and black children had no human integrity that those who call themselves white were bound to respect. And in this debasement and definition of black people, they debased and defined themselves."

particularly Jews, Italians and Slavs from entering in large numbers. Government attempts to limit influxes of such groups were indicative of broader fears around urbanization, race, and population change. In 1790, only one out of every twenty Americans lived in “urban areas.”⁹ By 1870, one out of four Americans would and by 1920, one out of every two. As American industry underwent tremendous growth, big business began to boom in America, and immigrants arrived in millions while cities grew and grew.

However, as the cities grew, their services didn’t keep up. Cities lacked central planning with few sewer systems or clean water. Many roads were not yet paved. Because of the few building codes in place to protect the people living in them, many people lived in squalor with disease and political corruption as lurking threats.¹⁰ The existence of overcrowded and ill-ventilated housing, unsafe workplaces, filthy streets, unsanitary drinking water and other urban problems spurred reform movements that sought to prevent or alleviate these conditions through public and private efforts. As a result, during the Progressive era, United States’ reformers began a crusade for social hygiene and formulated a new set of ideas about the government’s role. Daniel Burnstein, a historian of public health in America argues that New York City, America’s largest metropolis and hub of immigration, attempted to confront the complex social ills through government, serving as a guide for many other American cities. The city’s implementation of the DSC (Department of Street Cleaning) set a trend in progressive thinking that environment and behavior efforts, like street cleaning and tenant friendly housing, could help prevent what they viewed as “interrelated” conditions of dirt, disease, and degeneration. The concern for civic sanitation was a coded way for the reformers to express their disgust at the conditions of the

⁹Daniel Burnstein, *Next to Godliness: Confronting Dirt and Despair in Progressive Era New York City*. (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Ibid.

slums. Using street cleanliness as a gauge for “decency” allowed for these critics to assert their expertise and spread ideas about sanitization and “decency.”¹¹

This crusade after the First World War included promoting “moral health,” through sanitizing all aspects of sexuality after wartime experience had heightened awareness of venereal disease. After the war, young women were more and more likely to learn about menstruation outside the home and at a younger age than before. Burnstein writes that, “given the era’s emphasis on cleanliness and its association with wholesomeness, order, good character, and health, it is not surprising that reformers stressed the topics of civic sanitation in childhood education.”¹² They did so out of the belief that that scientific explanation and rational management of sexuality should be values shared with all Americans. In the 19th century, the middle class had adopted habits of bathing and changing clothes to separate themselves from the lower class. If the middle class had already been able to do so, progressives hoped they could convince the new masses of immigrants and migrants to do so as well.¹³

Progressives wrote programs, books, and legislation to regulate work and housing on the basis of sanitization. However, despite the inclusive seeming message, it is necessary to keep in mind that the progressive mission also coincided with the rise of the eugenic movement in America, and the widespread belief in medicine that non-white people, especially blacks, were inherently dirtier and sicker, than whites.¹⁴ Young women who were not Anglo-Saxon, were poor, and lived in both urban and rural areas were targeted as key to keeping the “unfit” from

¹¹ Ibid., 3.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See footnote 8.

¹⁴ Angie C Kennedy, "Eugenics, “Degenerate Girls,” and Social Workers During the Progressive Era." *Affilia* 23, no. 1 (2008): 22-37.

propagating. At the same time, one of the most important progressive pieces of legislation was the mandating of public schooling, which eventually, was broadened to include instruction in hygiene, manners and sometimes sex education. Thus, it is no surprise that menstruation and menarche education became linked to the imperatives of the progressive era health reform movement, while also reflecting the de-sexualization the eugenics movement promoted to certain groups of young American women.¹⁵ This problematically connected to popular movements of eugenics and social-reform which would help to form a system which would continue to employ racism and exclusion into menstruation education throughout American history.¹⁶

Although most historians emphasize cities, Progressive era reform did not limit itself to urban areas. They also began crusades to “modernize” rural America, and the emergence of 4-H programs would reveal the progressive motivation to spread “hygiene awareness” all across the country. Themes of eugenics would also appear in the progressive campaigns for country life. Migration into cities, some eugenicists believed, was in part a result of “rural degeneracy” caused by what they argued were moral, mental, and genetic pathology of poor white and non-white rural people. Eugenicists took their argument further, noting that the degradation of rural areas was causing a “race suicide.”¹⁷ They believed whites who left rural areas would begin to

¹⁵ Wallace H. Maw, "Fifty Years of Sex Education in the Public Schools of the United States, 1900-1950: A History of Ideas" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1953).

¹⁶Joan Jacobs Brumberg *The Body Project : An Intimate History of American Girls*, Laura Freidenfelds, *The Modern Period: Menstruation in Twentieth-Century America* Although Laura Freidenfelds sets up the argument that women learned about menstruation differently because of racial and class differences, and Joan Jacobs Brumberg has also pointed to the importance of class difference becoming highlighted with the emergence of commercially available menstrual products, neither author successfully connects the rise in menstrual education with the rise of eugenics. My hope is that this thesis will demonstrate that one cannot separate the history of menstruation education from the racism and efforts to “sanitize” prevalent in early 20th century medicine.

¹⁷Gabriel Rosenberg, *The 4-H Harvest: Sexuality and the State in Rural America*. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania press, 2016).

produce less and live without the same morals that country living brought. The romanticism of an agricultural past was a tool used by both eugenicists and progressives to draw attention for the need for rural reform.¹⁸

In 1908 President Theodore Roosevelt appointed a “Commission on Country Life,” with the desire to make rural civilization as “effective and satisfying as other civilizations.”¹⁹ The commission would hold over thirty public hearings throughout the country and circulate over half a million questionnaires in order to gain a further understanding of the lives of rural Americans. A final report, titled “Report of the Country Life Commission” was printed in 1911. The report reveals that what became known as the “country life movement” was really just an extension of the Progressive era’s aim to modernize and hygenicize the United States. “In every part of the United States there seems to be one mind, on the part of those capable of judging, on the necessity of redirecting the rural schools,” stated the report.²⁰ The report continued by stating, “everywhere [in the US] there is a demand that education have a relation to living, that the schools should express the daily life, and that in the rural districts they should educate by means of agriculture and country life subjects.” However, what it went on to say was that there should be a specific focus on health and sanitation and that “particular care should be taken that they stand for the morals of the pupils and their communities.”²¹ The result of the encouragement to promote these morals would be the birth of sex education programs in 4-H clubs.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹ Christopher W Shaw. ““No Place For Class Politics”: The Country Life Commission and Immigration.” *Agricultural History* 85, no. 4 (2011): 520-39.

²⁰ “The Final Report of the Country Life Commission.” *The Independent ... Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts (1848-1921)* 67, no. 3167 (1909): 374.

²¹ Christopher W Shaw. ““No Place For Class Politics”: The Country Life Commission and Immigration.” *Agricultural History* 85, no. 4 (2011): 520-39.

Today, rural political culture is often seen as synonymous with a skepticism of big government. Thus, understanding that the most ubiquitous symbol of rural civil society came from the full property of the US government can seem like a contradiction. The historian Gabriel Rosenberg has asked, “How could this relationship between an icon of rural America and the leviathan of the American state be hidden so effectively?”²² The foundations of 4-H emerged in 1902 from the Department of Agriculture, with the idea of creating practical and hands-on learning in public schools more connected to rural life. Yet, the sex-segregated structure allowed club organizers to turn their attention from the technical details of agriculture and home economics and to focus on the gendered bodies and psychologies of the rural youth. Through the sex education programs of 4-H, particularly those created into the later 20th century, a mission to restore “morality” to country living is apparent.²³ Texts encourage the adherence to traditional gender roles, promote abstinence until marriage, and articulate over and over the importance of educating children to have “proper hygiene” in morals and physical standards.²⁴

Understanding eugenics’ engagement with rural living, sets up a context for understanding how pervasive the high anxiety around morality within America was during and after the Progressive era. However, even further background on the emergence of the “science” of eugenics is necessary to discuss in order to see how it would impact almost every discussion of public health in the coming decade, including menstruation.

Eugenics and Racism in Medicine

²² Gabriel Rosenberg, *The 4-H Harvest*.

²³ Gabriel Rosenberg, *The 4-H Harvest*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

The term eugenics was coined by Francis Galton in 1883 as “the science of improving the stock.” Although described by Galton and others as an attempt to further understand genetics and hereditary traits, in reality it was a science that promoted white supremacy and distinguished “positive” and “negative” traits for the sake of articulating the hereditary superiority of white, western Europeans over all other races. Because of the progressive era’s deep faith in science, eugenicists were fueled by the rise of expertise authority to access social and political power. The theory of eugenics revolved around the notion of “degeneration.” The theory held that individual and societal survival hinged on fitness and the ability to survive. However, there was also a notion that the survival was a decision. Eugenicists argued it was individual decisions that shaped the genetic fate of humanity. The belief that hereditary goodness was a choice led to its matriculation into sexual health classes and hygienic reform. If experts argued that degeneration was solvable through encouraging better decisions from those deemed less “fit,” (any non-white or disabled person), then perhaps the solution was to try to educate and reform until people began to reverse the degeneration patterns that scientists argued were becoming prevalent.

Women’s health has long been rooted in practices of racism in medicine, thus making it not surprising that later menstruation education would use whiteness as a signifier of cleanliness. James Marion Sims, who developed pioneering tools and surgical techniques in the 19th century and is often referred to as the “father of modern gynecology,” conducted much of his research on enslaved black women, without anesthesia or consent.²⁵ The sterilization of black women in America is one of the most under told stories of the intersection between medical abuse, racism, and sexism. Fannie Lou Hamer outlined the history of what she called the “Mississippi appendectomy,” a process Hamer had undergone herself after being admitted to hospital to have

²⁵ Robert O’Sullivan, "Sims: Butcher or Savior?" *Irish Medical Times* 43, no. 39 (2009): 40.

a uterine fibroid removed. Mississippi appendectomy quickly became the term for the involuntary sterilization procedure that targeted poor black women throughout the south, when more than 8,000 sterilizations took place in Mississippi and South Carolina during the 1920s – 1980s.²⁶ The sterilization law was passed in Mississippi in 1928, making it the 26th state to pass the law, and stated that, “persons who are afflicted with hereditary forms of insanity that are recurrent, idiocy, imbecility, feeble-mindedness or epilepsy”²⁷ could be sterilized. However, soon the movement turned towards diminishing the black population by involuntary measures. A woman who was recommended to the North Carolina eugenics board had a diagnosis that she was “promiscuous” and “feeble-minded” according to a social worker at the hospital. The hospital asked her grandmother, who was unable to read or write, to sign off on the surgery that they said would “help her.” After giving birth, the young woman was sterilized.²⁸

How American Girls Learned

With a context of how eugenics developed and filtered into women’s medicine and health, one can begin to understand how it could then shape the way that young girls began to learn about menstruation and their bodies, especially if they were not white or upper-class women. The next section of this chapter will explain how management practices changed and were influenced by class, race, and the changes in medical understandings of menstruation.

In eighteenth century America, the majority of sexually mature girls learned about menstruation within the family and small community. Mothers and other adult women were the

²⁶ Paige McGinley, "Generational Schism, Fannie Lou Hamer, and the Future of Protest." *TDR/The Drama Review* 62, no. 1 (2018): 172-75.

²⁷ William M Kantor, "Beginnings of Sanitization in America." *Journal of Heredity* 28, no. 11, 374-76.

²⁸ Ibid.

primary and regular sources for young girls for information about their bodies and the process of puberty. Adult women were also role models for young girls in a society where there was little discontinuity between the experiences of mothers and their daughters.²⁹ Because of the absence of literature--books and pamphlets on female biology--it can be assumed that young women learned by word of mouth about menstruation. However, by the 19th century, and the rise of scientific medicine, women stopped learning about their bodies from other women and rather relied male medical professionals to learn about their periods.³⁰ After the industrial revolution and the decline of traditional communities, a rise of individualistic styles of domesticity in the 19th century left girls to the instruction of their mothers alone or their peers in learning about menstruation.³¹ In traditional, agricultural society, families worked together as a unit of production. Women could parent and also play a role in producing food or goods needed for the household. Industry changed all of this. Families were often separated as work and home grew further apart.³² For young women in particular, as age-segregated schools and activities increased in the 19th century, they were less likely to spend time around older women who would teach them through proximity about their changing bodies.

²⁹Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "'Something Happens to Girls': Menarche and the Emergence of the Modern American Hygienic Imperative," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 1 (1993): 99-127.

³⁰Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750 to 1950* (New York, 1986). There is a parallel between what happened to women in childbirth and what happened to girls first learning of their periods. Historian Judith Walzer Leavitt has argued that as the nineteenth century progressed, the experience of childhood moved from a world of women and what was known as "social childbirth" and into the hospital and terrain of science.

³¹Wally Secombe, *Weathering the Storm: Working-class Families from the Industrial Revolution to the Fertility Decline* (London, New York, Verso, 1993).

³² Ibid.

By the early 20th century, the sense that mothers were inadequate in preparing girls for menstruation grew.³³ The idea of the “inadequate mother” was powerful and became a critical justification for medical and other experts to take control of what had once been a female domain. Doctors argued that most middle-class mothers had little understanding of the changing shape of the female life course. In the 19th century, because of demographic and social changes, women were experiencing more ovulatory cycles than previously in human history. Thus, young women began to ovulate and reach menarche before they were going to begin to have children or get married. Doctors worried mothers might not understand how to separate menarche from its social implications.³⁴ These changes of context in women’s health explain the medicalization of menstruation. As physicians grew more focused on reproductive health, progressive era education for young women about sexual health eventually led to menstruation education.

Pre- 20th Century Management

In a dissertation on the history of menstrual technology in the United States, Laura Klosterman Kidd writes that “most investigations into commercial sanitary protection products concentrate on the 20th century, focusing on the advent of disposable menstrual pads.”³⁵ She notes that there is little information on the types of sanitary protection products developed or created for women in the United States prior to the introduction of Kotex. Historians agree that most women used “diaper like pieces of cotton fabric” or cotton rags during their menstrual

³³Brumberg, “Something Happens to Girls,” 99-127.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵Laura Klosterman Kidd, “Menstrual Technology in the United States, 1854 to 1921,” (PhD diss., Iowa State University, 1994).

periods, and that there is even a history of Persian women and Roman women having used tampons.³⁶

In her dissertation, Kidd organizes the patented technology produced between 1854 and 1921, leading up to the emergence of Kotex and far before the introduction of Tampax and commercially available tampons. She divides the technology into six categories: belts and supporters, absorbents, absorbent holders, garment protectors, and retentive menstrual cups.³⁷ In organizing and identifying these groups, Kidd provides evidence that there was a plethora of devices being patented before the widespread commercially available Kotex napkin. One of the earliest patented designs that Kidd writes about is Alfred A. Starr's "catamenial sack" from 1854. The product received the first menstrual product patent in the United States, after Starr designed it in order for "females to secure themselves from inconveniences during their menstrual periods."³⁸ Starr created the item as a replacement to the "string or tape" which women previously used to attach a napkin to. Starr's invention reveals that he was simply building off the design women had already been using for centuries and was now hoping to profit from it commercially. Thus, it is interesting to view the early patents as examples of a broader theme in women's medicine of male professionals creating "new" out of what had already existed for years, a theme that will be explored further in chapter two and three of this thesis.

We must be careful to not assume that all American women were learning about and managing menstruation in the same way, especially in looking at the period prior to mass produced menstrual products. It is crucial to realize that different ethnic and regional groups learned differently about their periods; highlighting these differences helps not only to grasp

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

further the history of menstruation, but also to understand the history of “American modernity.”³⁹ Laura Freidenfelds, a historian of American menstruation, has tried to understand the different experiences of American women by conducting oral interviews with three specific groups--African Americans in the rural South, white New Englanders, and Chinese Americans in urban California.

Several women spoke about how they did not directly learn from their mothers, possibly providing insight as to how the notion of the “inadequate mother” emerged. Rachel Cohen, a Jewish woman who grew up in an economically struggling family in New York City in the 1930s, stated that her mother

“Never voluntarily came to (her) and said, ‘This is going to happen.’ I guess she did with me what was done with her, you know her mother didn’t sit her down and give her this shining lecture.”⁴⁰

Roberta Cummings Brown, an African American woman raised in the 1930s in a small town in the rural south remembered that she learned about methods of management from friends at school, mostly who were older. She also indicated why she believed her mother neglected to teach her, stating, “she had been warned by her older sister and it never occurred to her that she might be expected to teach her daughters.”⁴¹

Though many of the women interviewed by Freidenfelds revealed differences in the way they first learned of menstruation, they were strikingly consistent in their desire to modernize their bodies. The fact that many embraced and worked in subtle ways to make themselves modern--even when they were often aware of how progressive, white, urban, and educated

³⁹ Freidenfelds, *The Modern Period*, 4.

⁴⁰ Freidenfelds, *The Modern Period*, 15.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

origins did not fit into their own identities--is a repeating theme. Ida Smithson and Jane Cummings, two African American women born in the rural South, explained that they had friends who showed them how to cut cloth and fold it and attach it to their clothes. They also commented that they remembered people in their neighborhoods who would wash their fabrics and hang them to dry overnight, "I remember people in my neighborhood who used to wash it--they used to wash those cloths. And save them for the next time! It was something to think about."⁴² To Ida and Jane, the notion of washing was an indication of class difference and they declared they felt more "hygienic" and "modern" being able to throw out their fabrics.⁴³

Young women were learning about menstruation through many avenues prior to public education. Previously even some mothers did not discuss this topic with their own children, making it a radical shift to have menstruation taught in schools. However, before menstruation education would become popularized, sex education had to fight its way into public school curriculums and other public spaces. Thus, understanding its emergence is just as pivotal as understanding prior menstruation management practices.

Public Sex Education

Despite its support from many reformers, in the Progressive era, sex education was a contested topic in the United States. Debates among doctors, educators, and parents emerged around the question of sex education's place in American society. These debates reveal what a radical and transformative topic sex education would become. In 1921, Emil Novak, a member of the gynecological Department at the Johns Hopkins medical school wrote, "No one can take

⁴² Ibid., 31.

⁴³ Ibid., 31.

the place of the mother in instructing her daughter in and beautiful truths of the reproductive life and its various manifestations...However, (when) such home instruction is out of the question...there is a legitimate field for the activity of various agencies now interested in 'sex education' of young people."⁴⁴ As the field of sex education moved into classrooms, debates amongst educators over in which discipline the topic should be taught emerged. Educators wondered, should it be learned in biology, physiology, physical education or home economics classes? What educators did agree on, however, was that it was better to be taught "a year too early, than an hour too late"⁴⁵ In 1914, the Journal of Education published a debate entitled "Sex Hygiene at the Department of Superintendence."⁴⁶ In it, three different authors, all superintendents across America, argue their views on whether sex education belonged in schools. The viewpoints of the three helps further demonstrate the conflict and vast difference in ideas around sex-ed in the early 20th century and show a link to eugenics in some of the educators' arguments.

The first superintendent, Henry Mott, writes in favor of teaching what he terms "race-hygiene" in schools.⁴⁷ Race-hygiene was one of the most popular terms used to describe an approach to eugenics in the early 20th century. Racial hygienists believed that the lack of eugenics would lead to rapid social degeneration and the decline of civilization by the spread of "inferior characteristics."⁴⁸ Thus, Mott's use of the term cannot go unnoticed in his continued

⁴⁴ Emil Novak, *The Woman Asks the Doctor* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1935), 134.

⁴⁵ Brumberg, "Something Happens to Girls," 99-127.

⁴⁶ J. W. Carr, "The Teaching of Sex Hygiene in Public Schools." *The Journal of Education* 79, no. 15 (1914): 399-400.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ William M Kantor, "Beginnings of Sanitization in America." *Journal of Heredity* 28, no. 11, 374-76.

argument for sex-education in schools. He writes that teaching young women in schools “a true reverence for motherhood and a deep love for little children will do more to inspire noble, pure, living among our youth than the fear of the ravages of disease which follow in the wake of immoral social practices.”⁴⁹ To Mott, the sex education he envisioned was largely a course in domestication and not a place to teach about venereal disease and the realities of reproduction. He writes, “the real questions of the laws of reproduction, the schools should leave home. But such knowledge of sex-hygiene as the pupils should know may be most taught by the teacher as the occasion demands.”

The other two superintendents take very different views than Mott. J.W. Carr, a superintendent from Bayonne, New Jersey argues that to him, the subject is “so intimate and personal” that it should be taught by a “person who is near and dear.”⁵⁰ However, Carr neglects to come up with an answer for whom this person should be. He also argues that a “sense of modesty and shame should be developed” around the topic of sex, and that if it were to be taught in schools it would “lead to morbidity.” C.G. Pearse agrees with Carr that the “sex physiology and hygiene” should not be taught in schools.⁵¹ However, Pearse focuses his argument on schools instilling a “sweet atmosphere of a well conducted and supervised school.” In this space, he argues that there would be “care to avoid to localities where the toilet rooms of the other sex are places” and “a courteous ignoring of...the accidents to the clothing...”.⁵² Pearse’s language reveals how debates such as these were often stifled by educators’ own inability to use clear,

⁴⁹J. W. Carr, "The Teaching of Sex Hygiene in Public Schools."

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

descriptive language about sex education, as Pearse refuses to name the menstrual blood he is likely referring to in the “accidents” he discusses.

Public libraries also created debate around sex education when they began to put books on their shelves that discussed topics such as puberty and hygiene. The *Wilson Library Bulletin* presented librarians debating on the propriety of stocking sex education books for teenagers to access.⁵³ A librarian wrote “What should one do when a small boy, about fourteen years old, whose family I am not acquainted with by who seems of a quiet and rather studious temperament, comes into our civic library and shyly asks for a book that will tell him “all about boys and girls and things like that?”.⁵⁴ Her question received twenty-six responses, with some conservatives dismissing the request entirely, others asking the books be locked up but provided, and the most liberal arguing it was necessary to keep books on the subject stocked. The library itself came out on the liberal side, writing, “the librarian who imposes a barrier between the child and an essential part of his education is failing her duty to society, is weaving another strand into the net of taboos.”⁵⁵

Emergence of Public Menstrual Education

Since menstruation was considered a sexual topic in the early 20th century, it makes sense that it would fall into the category of sex education and thus into these debates.⁵⁶ By the mid-century, as the next chapter will show, the advent of the sanitary product industry further introduced talk around how girls got their periods. The production of advertisements, educational

⁵³ Patricia J. Campbell, *Sex Education Books for Young Adults, 1892–1979* (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1979).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

booklets, and films combined to generate a public discourse around menstruation. Understanding that the notions of cleanliness and sanitation derived from racist medical beliefs and movements in the earlier 20th century, reveals the deeper implications of these resources. With the background provided in this chapter, we can begin to see how efforts to whiten and “clean” women and girls would be hidden in the messaging produced by the new sanitary product industry.

Chapter Two: Cultivating the Curse: 1920s and 1930s Menstrual Product Print Ads

In the introduction to *The Second Sex*, feminist Simone de Beauvoir writes that there are numerous processes of socialization in patriarchal societies that cultivate women's alienation from their own bodies. One of Beauvoir's examples of these processes is the "curse" of menstruation. She writes that, "the social construction of menstruation as a woman's curse is explicitly implicated in the evolution of woman as other: the blood, indeed, does not make woman impure; it is rather a sign of her impurity."⁵⁷ That is to say, menstruation did not make a woman the "other," but rather that because she was an "other" the menstruation was a curse. The narrative of the cursed body was a theme that advertisers quickly integrated into their ads. Advertisers' embraced the older, nineteenth century understanding that menstruation made women biologically limited. Advertisements announced that the only way for women to combat their inherent weakness was to invest in the new lines of feminine hygiene products.⁵⁸ Advertisers hoped to show that women could still be assured of health and wellbeing while they took their assigned place in modernity. Yet, hidden behind the messages of health, sanitization, and modernity, are negative attitudes toward menstruation and thus women's bodies that product companies crafted in order to justify and promote their products.

During the formation of the first Kotex magazine campaign in 1921, Wallace Meyer, an advertising executive in charge of the account, dismissed the prototype of the first ad for

⁵⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (New York, Vintage, 2011), 169.

⁵⁸ See Laura Freidenfelds, *The Modern Period: Menstruation in Twentieth Century America* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), for description of 19th century medical beliefs on menstruation.

depicting “too many men in a product designed for women.”⁵⁹ “Cellucotton” had been developed and manufactured by the Cellucotton Products Company to use as bandages in hospitals during the First World War. Now they were using the product to produce disposable menstrual pads and had decided to base the advertisement around the product’s wartime history.⁶⁰ Though the final ad would show three women, one touching a wounded man’s arm, while the other two sat nearby, the first depiction in the ad included four soldiers and only one nurse, thus evoking Meyer’s comment. The final caption of the ad read, “To Save Men's Lives, Science Discovered Kotex.” Although the advertisement was changed, Meyer’s comment emphasizes the conscious effort of understanding what it meant to “advertise to women” that would be explored through the use of menstrual product ads in the 20th century.⁶¹ The birth of American advertising, and the invention of disposable, commercially available menstrual products coincided introducing a perfect platform to try to do exactly what Meyer wondered how to do--advertise a product but a product “designed” for women.

The Boom of Consumerism and the Birth of American Advertising

As outlined in the previous chapter, western culture experienced dramatic social, economic, technological, and psychological changes during the end of the 19th century and following World War I.⁶² Advertising and the advocacy of consumerism was on the rise as old

⁵⁹ Museum of Menstruation, “The first Kotex Sanitary Napkin ad campaign, 1921, and almost-the-first Kotex ad (prototype, about 1920),” Harry Finley, 1999, Accessed January 10, 2020. <http://www.mum.org/urkotex.htm>.

⁶⁰ Kat Eschner, “The Surprising Origins of Kotex Pads,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 11, 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/surprising-origins-kotex-pads-180964466/>.

⁶¹ Museum of Menstruation, “The first Kotex sanitary napkin ad campaign, 1921, and almost-the-first Kotex ad (prototype, about 1920),” Harry Finley, 1999, Accessed January 10, 2020. <http://www.mum.org/urkotex.htm>.

⁶² Burnstein, *Next to Godliness*.

cultural authorities diminished. The mass production of products lowered the prices of consumer goods and now items were available and affordable for more people than ever before.⁶³ With more buyers, advertising quickly had a broader audience. Advertising a product changed from simply announcing its existence to the public to having to convince a buyer to commit to a certain brand or type of product. Critical to the boom of advertising after World War I was magazines' new commitment to the culture of consumerism. Magazines for women emerged, such as *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*, later critical in the advertising of menstrual products.⁶⁴ Starting in 1917, Girl Scouts of America published a magazine first called *The Rally* and later titled *The American Girl*, the first magazine intended only for young, white American girls.

Understanding the popular themes of American advertising during the start of the century is helpful when later thinking about how menstrual product ads continued to employ the same themes. Advertisements of escape is a theme critical to the messages created during the decades. Roland Marchand, a historian of American advertising culture, wrote that by the early 1920s ad executives were working under the assumption that people wanted to “escape from themselves” and that ad creators tried to reflect public aspirations rather than contemporary circumstances, to “mirror popular fantasies rather than social realities.”⁶⁵ Just like themes in Socialist Realism art reflected, the illustrations in American advertising exaggerated the ideals and aspirations of the country far past its reality. In other words, advertisers dramatized the American dream. Marchand has written that ads reveal more than just what they are advertising.⁶⁶ Rather, they

⁶³ Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985), 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 4.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

show what America values or devalues, hopes to become, and wishes to not be seen as--a point critical in the examination of menstrual ads later in this chapter.

The ad history of Coca-Cola provides a clear example of how product advertising changed over the pre and post war periods. In the 1880s, when the product was first introduced, it was marketed as medicine that could cure headaches and “sustain” a person. By the 1920s, seeking brand loyalty, the company beverage was a "fun food." Coca-Cola had quickly learned that they would need to move away from plain, information-based advertising, to lifestyle ads.⁶⁷ Coca-Cola’s change reflects Marchand’s claim about escapism becoming an important theme in advertising by the 1920s. World War I had touched every part of American life, including how advertisers marketed products.

Disposable Menstrual Product Ads, 1921-1944

Careful analysis of advertisements in women’s magazines, specifically those that include images or references to girls and teens, illuminates what messages the decade presented to young girls and women about menstruation. The ads surveyed in this study, however, do not depict an accurate representation of all young American women at the time.⁶⁸ The most critical of these limitations is that the ads only present white, upper class women, who are all thin and well dressed, with popular styles of hair and makeup for the time periods the ad appears in. Of course, most main-stream advertisements targeted at white consumers (like these ads were) would never use an African American or other woman of color during the decades this chapter analyzes. Segregation, racism, and stereotypes during this time limited the representation that would be

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Marchand, *Advertising the American*, 3-6.

seen in the publications *Ladies Home Journal* and *The American Girl*.⁶⁹ With the understanding of what limitations these ads carried with them, we can further read from them what image of the American young woman was promoted and idealized by companies: an attractive, white, upper-class girl, who dutifully did her work, did not complain, prioritized dates with boys and socializing, and was loyal and committed to her family and country.

The personal product industry understood that the primary goal of marketing and advertising was to convince the consumer that they needed a particular product.⁷⁰ However, their challenge would be to show the consumer that a product would best meet her needs at a time when there was little product differentiation. As the Johnson and Johnson Montreal office noted in an oral history interview on their products, “a pad is a pad is a pad.”⁷¹

The feminine ideal has a long history in the US media and advertising. Advertising has been targeted largely toward women since it was developed in the early twentieth century. An early guide for marketing to women emphasized the importance of framing their audience “not simply as workers and producers, but as consumers.”⁷² Advertising of this early era thus tried to instill in women that they had both control and knowledge, but it was defined by the marketplace.⁷³ Advertisers then strove to create a differentiation by focusing on social meanings rather than the merits of a product, as the advertisements we will examine show.

Modernity and American Womanhood

⁶⁹ Though searched through Black periodicals and publications of the early 20th century, I was unable to find any menstrual product advertisements within them.

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Arveda Kissling, *Capitalizing on the Curse: The Business of Menstruation*, (Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 19.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 57.

⁷² *Ibid*, 58.

⁷³ *Ibid*.

Early advertising campaigns in the 1920s women's periodicals relied on what Roland Marchand has referred to as a "vacuum of advice."⁷⁴ Rather than bragging about their product's abilities directly, these advertisements were more likely to "scientifically" argue for the value and convenience of the product. In these early ads, rather than trying to compete with other companies, the goal was simply to prove there was a need for a product previously unavailable. Since disposable pads had not existed previously, and people had managed without them, an interesting dynamic for the advertiser was set up: they would need to prove the necessity of a product previously not needed.⁷⁵ A theme that appeared over and over in the survey of menstrual product advertising that best exemplifies the desire to show the necessity of the "modern" disposable pads is the emphasis on mother's learning from their daughters. In order to promote modernity, advertisers turned young women into the symbols of the future and what was modern and thus desirable.

During the 1920s, the personal product industry targeted mothers and their difficulties in preparing their daughters for menstruation.⁷⁶ A Kotex ad in a 1925 *Woman's Home Companion* titled "*Every Mother Should tell Her Daughter this,*" depicts two white, upper class women, sitting in their parlor. Ellen Buckland was a registered nurse that Kotex had hired to write the advertisements' copy, a decision that in part meant Nurse Buckland herself was being advertised by Kotex, and one that they hoped would elevate the expertise of their ad and thus the product. The ad states, "today mothers everywhere are telling their daughters of this new way which has revolutionized women's personal life. They give thanks that their daughters need never know the

⁷⁴ Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 130.

⁷⁵ Kissling, *Capitalizing on the Curse*, 55.

⁷⁶ Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 133.

old fashioned makeshifts- unhygienic, dangerous to health- that this new way supplanted.”⁷⁷ By identifying the different experience daughters were having from their mothers, and arguing the young women’s lives were improving due to their product, Kotex could assert the importance of their disposable pads in the lives of young girls.

Modess launched a campaign in 1929 that took a different approach to guiding the intergenerational conversation. Rather than placing mothers as educators for their daughters about menstruation management, they turned the daughters into the symbols of what it meant to be a young and modern woman, and instructed mothers to look to their daughters. J. Walter Thompson gave the campaign the name, "Modernizing Mother," and numbered each of the ads as "episodes."⁷⁸ It is possible, he hoped, that the consumer would collect the entire set. Each ad depicts a mother and daughter together, doing everything from skiing to golfing to drawing beauty marks on each other’s faces. The theme of each ad revolves around the daughter teaching the mother a “lesson” on what it means to be a modern woman. If a reader of *Woman’s Home Companion* found one of the ads in November of 1929, it would display the title “They’re Cute, Mother, a Cotton Nightie is Primitive,” showing a young woman suggesting that her two piece pajama set was better than the nightgown her mother is trying to give to her in the image.⁷⁹ Modess used this same dynamic of old versus new to set up their eventual transition to discussing their new menstrual pads. The ad states if “old fashioned ways cannot withstand the merry onslaught of the modern girl,” arguing that “her enthusiasm is so sane and contagious”

⁷⁷“Every Mother Should Tell her Daughter this,” Kimberly-Clark Corp., 1925, Uploaded 2011, <http://www.mum.org/kote25.htm>.

⁷⁸ “They’re Cute Mother-- A Cotton Nightie Is Primitive,” Johnson and Johnson., November 1929, <http://www1.assumption.edu/ahc/1920s/modern%20woman/ModernizingMom/Modess.html>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.



See Footnote 78

that she must “refuse” the “drudgeries and repressions” of her “mother’s girlhood.” Because they argue the modern daughter’s life has improved since her mother’s youth, she is the reason for Modess’ existence and success. They wrote that her “quick appreciation encourages manufacturers to strive for improvements. Two years of research in laboratories led to Modess...”⁸⁰ Thus, if the mother

wants to follow in her daughter's good example, she will have to use Modess. In February, the series episode was titled, “*Mother . . . don't be quaint*” and depicted a mother and daughter at home, with the daughter fixing her mother’s makeup, arguably making her “less- quant” in the eye of the ad viewer.

The June 1929 “episode” from Modess takes the “modern” woman one step further, this time placing her on the golf course. Titled, “Never Mind, Mother, You’ll Learn,” the ad depicts a daughter coaching her mother.⁸¹ Modess uses the analogy of the golf game to represent the game of modernity. The ad reads, “what a splendid game it is, these joyous, fearless,



MODERNIZING MOTHER . . . Episode Number Five

Modess
(Pronounced Mō-des)



SO INFINITELY
FINER

See Footnote 81

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ “Never Mind Mother, You’ll Learn,” Johnson and Johnson., June 1929, Uploaded 2007, <http://www.mum.org/modju29.htm>.

modern girls are teaching mothers - the game of escaping the bondage of old-fashioned ideas and being happily you again.”⁸² Rather than selling their product directly, Modess is selling the youthfulness and freedom that their pads bring to women. The Modess campaign for mothers reveals that the emphasis on modernization was at the center of the messaging for disposable pads in the 1920s. With a product that was so new to the marketplace, the most important message it hoped to deliver was that it was a woman's guide for the future. However, if disposable pads were the marker of modernity and the new age, what was to be said for women who could not afford the product or who did not come in contact with its advertising? Since advertising set the expectations and reveals to some extent how society viewed women, it also can project how women without the advertised product were inherently being characterized by the ad.

By the 1940s, ads about girls and mothers continued the emphasis on the importance of conversation between the mother and the daughter. For example, a 1941 Kotex ad is split into two sections, one from the mother's perspective titled, “I wish my Daughter would,” and one from the daughter’s titled, “I wish my Mother would.”⁸³ Both sections recount what each wishes their relationship with each other looked like, from a mother’s desire for her daughter to wear less makeup, to the daughter’s request for her mother to look and feel younger.⁸⁴ Each section ends with the other lamenting that they do not talk about menstruation or its management with each other and wish they did. Thus, the ad is clearly demonstrating that Kotex believes it would

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ “I Wish my Daughter Would, I Wish my Mother Would,” Kimberly-Clark Corp., Uploaded 2013, <http://www.mum.org/kotmay41.htm>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

profit from closer relationships between mothers and daughters, and potentially an open dialogue about menstruating.

Although not directly related to menstruation, an ad for a sex education book that appeared in a November 1948 copy of the *New York Times*, also identifies the decade's focus on creating conversation between mothers and daughters. The ad, for the book *The Stork Didn't Bring You*, is titled "She dreaded the day her daughter would ask her about the facts of life...".⁸⁵ The ad explains how mothers can be aided in "that little talk" with the help of this book. A striking detail is the ad's emphasis that all the "foremost religious groups" promoted the book, citing not only the Young Men's Christian Associations but also the Jewish Board of Guardians. Again, the emphasis is on the importance of mothers having "the conversation" around sex, changing bodies, and personal hygiene, while the coded language for these categories remains, proving that even by the 1940s, companies wanted to promote conversations, but still didn't have the vocabulary or language to instruct mothers on how these conversations should go.

Taboos, Secrets, and The Ideal American Girl

The focus on hygiene in the menstrual product industry was not a coincidence--it coincided, as the previous chapter discussed, with a broader American hygienics movement before and during the 1920s.⁸⁶ However, the association of products with the notion of cleanliness and as a means for avoiding embarrassment from "inadequate" personal hygiene meant that the very existence of creating products labeled "feminine hygiene" would perpetuate the belief that women were dirty and in need of special cleansing. The ads had such power in

⁸⁵ "Display Ad 271 -- No Title" *New York Times*, Nov 14 1948, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁸⁶ Burnstein, *Next to Godliness*.

forming how popular culture and US habits formed. For instance, the expression “often a bridesmaid but never a bride” came out of the 1925 Listerine ad for fresh breath wash.⁸⁷

Recognizing that the personal product industry had power to shape how women were viewed and understood their bodies reveals how much power they had in shaping and reinforcing culture’s conception of femininity.

A Kotex ad from the 1940s emphasizes the relationship between the use of menstrual products and the attention a young woman would get from a boy. It reads “can you keep him interested?...charm the prom bid out of him?...” The ad then goes on in italics to hint at the girl’s period stating “feeling the way you do?”⁸⁸ It reassures the young woman, “well, calm yourself! In this day and age, there's little excuse for letting trying days of the month ruin a sunny disposition.”⁸⁹ The first issue in this ad is its assessment that the ultimate goal for this young woman would be getting a date to prom. Even worse is that it suggests that it is the fault of her own body and its natural cycle that is keeping her from the achievement, inherently turning the young woman against herself.

The emphasis on personality and “charm” also appears in earlier menstrual product advertisements. An ad in the *New York Times* in June of 1924 states, “80% of the lack of charm, the loss of the immaculacy expected of a woman, according to hygienic authorities, is due to the common use of the makeshift “sanitary pads.”⁹⁰ It goes on to declare that women even can get sick from not using their products, stating that “60% of many ills common to women, according to numerous medical authorities, are due to the same cause. Using these unsanitary ways is a bad

⁸⁷ Kissling, *Capitalizing*, 13.

⁸⁸ “You're fit to be tied!...,” Kimberly-Clark Corp., Early 1940s, Uploaded 2010, <http://www.mum.org/yourfit.htm>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ “Display Ad 65 -- No Title” *New York Times*, June 8 1924, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

habit.”⁹¹ Kotex wants women to see that “charm, immaculacy, exquisiteness, under all circumstances,” is possible with their product. By choosing these adjectives as the motivation for their product, the advertisement reveals what the broader expectation of girls and women was during the 1920s.

An advertisement from the early 1940s states, “Kotex has flat, pressed ends to prevent embarrassing, telltale bulges...to keep your secret safe.”⁹² The emphasis on secrecy and embarrassment is identified in many of the ads of the early 20th century. These themes enforced the narrative to the young woman reading the ad that her period was a shameful, unsanitary issue that was not to be discussed and could prevent her from keeping her “sunny disposition” in check. The emphasis that happiness should be a girl’s standard personality sets a sexist standard for young women and girls, revealing that a “pleasing personality” was still regarded as the ultimate goal for young women in the 1940s.

The secrecy and shame associated with menstrual products is apparent in several different ads. Another Kotex ad from 1942 states, “Your self-confidence need never miss a beat...keep a girl’s secret safe!”⁹³ A 1928 Kotex advertisement reads, “Kotex also deodorizes by a new disinfectant. And thus, solves another trying problem.”⁹⁴ This statement in particular reveals another level of shame the company sought to profit from was highlighting the smell of menstruation and warning women they needed protection from it. An ad from *Ladies Home Journal* in 1921 takes the embarrassment and focuses it on the “problems” that some upper-class

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² “You’re fit to be tied!...,” Kimberly-Clark Corp., Early 1940s, Uploaded 2010, <http://www.mum.org/yourfit.htm>.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ “What the World Expects of Women to-day,” Kotex Company, *The Tatler*, 1928, Duke University Libraries: Repository Collections and Archives, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r4513vg35>.

women in particular may face. Titled “Simplify the Laundress Problems,” it depicts a woman looking distressed as her maid watches her.⁹⁵ Clearly, the ad is arguing that if women use Kotex they won’t have to be “embarrassed” by their servants having to see the menstrual blood in their laundry. This ad evokes not only the notion of how embarrassing menstruation can be but also sets up an interesting class dynamic. The maid, though also a woman, should still be seen as threatening by the employer. Thus, Kotex is arguing that the shame around menstruating can still exist between women, especially if they are of different social classes. Perhaps it even suggests that because of their higher status, women of the upper class are expected to keep up the highest levels of secrecy around menstruation so as not to be “degraded” by a process natural to their own bodies.

A common campaign used to fight the embarrassment of menstruation in the early and mid 20th century was disguising and using coded language for disposable products. At the bottom of a 1921 ad, Kotex declares, “Kotex are easy to buy. No embarrassing counter conversations. Ask for them by name; say “a box of Kotex,” and you will be served in nearly every drug, dry goods and department store.”⁹⁶ A 1923 advertisement reminds women that “you can dispose of it (the pad) easily, without embarrassment - a point all women will appreciate.”⁹⁷ They also write that you can mail order your pads, indicating that one does not even need to go through the process of purchasing in public, but can do so from the privacy of her own home. They add that the product will come in an “indistinguishable, unmarked wrapper.”⁹⁸ A 1932 Kotex advertising campaign for the “phantom Kotex,” is centered around the notion of

⁹⁵ “Simplify the Laundress Problem,” *The Ladies Home Journal*, November 1921, Page 87.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

discreteness and secrecy. The advertisement states “no longer the haunting dread of telltale outlines, of revealing wrinkles under that close fitting gown - as remarkable an improvement as was Kotex itself in 1920.”⁹⁹ This advertisement emphasizes the rigor and time that have gone into improving their product in order to gain customers’ appreciation and trust. It discusses how “months of research...thousands of practical tests...participated in by more than 600 women,”¹⁰⁰ have led to the new and improved Kotex pad.

Nationalism and Menstruation

By the 1940s, a common theme in some menstrual product ads was the focus on patriotism and nationalism. When the United States entered the war in 1941, there was a national emphasis on women’s involvement in the war effort. Five million women entered the workforce between 1940-1945, filling the gap created by soldiers departing for war.¹⁰¹ Menstrual product companies quickly understood that they could use patriotism as a tool for advertising menstrual hygiene. One of the ways they harnessed this tactic was by depicting girls doing housework, presumably taking the place of the mothers who were volunteering or working for the war effort. “When mom’s counting on you? When your country’s counting on you?” declares an ad from 1943, which shows a girl slumped into a chair with a mop leaning by her side.¹⁰² The ad goes on to say that while the girl’s mother is “rolling bandages, selling war bonds and driving drill

⁹⁹ “Phantom Kotex,” Kimberly-Clark Corp., 1933, Uploaded 1999, <http://www.mum.org/kotpha33.htm>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Judy Barrett Litoff, David C. Smith, "U.S. Women on the Home Front in World War II," *The Historian* 57, no. 2, (1995): 349-60.

¹⁰² “Patriotism in menstrual hygiene! ‘And I promised Mom’, ” Kimberly-Clark Corp., May 1943, Uploaded 1998, <http://www.mum.org/inthe43.htm>.



See Footnote 102

presses,” it should not be too much to expect this young woman to keep the house clean.¹⁰³ The dilemma, however, and what is stopping her from her chores, is the girl’s period. Kotex’s answer? “See for yourself how many girls simply shrug their shoulders and say it’s no secret at all...it’s just that Kotex sanitary napkins give more comfort.”¹⁰⁴

Thus, if the girl used a Kotex pad, she would be a part of what they title the “Keep-Going corps” and

would not let her period get in the way of her patriotic duties. Another advertisement also plays with the image of a tired, worn out girl, with work she cannot seem to manage because of her period. It states, “You’ve got the glooms...But you keep saying to yourself: ‘Snap out of it...I won’t be a slacker...there’s so much to do today!’”¹⁰⁵ The ad then lists all of the tasks the young woman should be tackling, instead of having “glooms,” such as making bandages, finishing navy helmets, and attending a “Defense Stamp Luncheon.” One of the most intriguing aspects of the ad is its later statement that the girl better be prepared for when the “boys come home from

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ “Smile - Sister, Smile!,” Kimberly-Clark Corp., 1941, Uploaded 2011, <http://www.mum.org/smile.htm>.

camp...” for it would make her “a fine citizen” to spoil their “furlough” with a “face of frowns.” The ad states that the answer is not to “simply give up,” on such “trying days” but to use Kotex.¹⁰⁶ It even adds in that it is “too bad if you’re one of those who didn’t discover Kotex sanitary napkins long ago.”¹⁰⁷ Depicting young women’s menstruation as a possible limitation for their contribution to the war effort makes menstruation not just the young woman’s issue, but also the nation’s. In doing so, these ads reveal that by the 1940s, advertisements knew the political power they possessed and turned their products into tools for inspiring nationalism along with product devotion.

Why Ads Matter

Menstruation product advertisements for young women serve as historical tools for understanding what was seen as important and of value for young American women. They also reveal just how constructed the notion of a “sanitary” product is. As advertisements of these decades taught girls and young women that they needed to hide their periods, be ashamed, and use disposable products over previous methods of menstruation management, they created the language of sanitization and health that would give disposable pads a medical and social superiority in society. As they told young women to “keep up” a good attitude, they also revealed that the desirable young woman was someone who did not complain, who was happy and helpful at all times, and thus constructed an idealized personality for the young women. When ads reminded girls the importance of having conversations with their mothers, they made young women into the symbols of modernity and emphasized that a young woman was to be valued on

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

her relationship to her family. By the 1940s, the ads' conflation of patriotism and menstrual care created a political platform for their products as well as placing a national pressure on young girls to serve their country through their appearance, cleanliness, and capacity to persevere.

While the messages that are revealed in the ads are important, more important are the messages that are not directly spelled out and are uncovered through the analysis of what the ads do not say. If disposable pads were the marker of modernity, what was to be said for women who could not afford the product or who did not come in contact with its advertising? If advertising can set the expectations of society, it also can project how women without the advertised product were inherently being characterized as lesser, unsanitary, and backwards. Looming behind advertisements for the health, sanitization, and modernity that menstrual products brought with them, are the constructions of dirtiness and disgust for women's bodies that American society also deeply held as truths. Through these close readings of the language of advertisements, we can gain further insight into the menstruation education that has shaped American girlhood, for better or worse.

Chapter Three: Advertisers as Educators: 1940s and Beyond

Menstrual product advertising grew in size and scope by the 1940s, intertwining itself not only with American understandings of menstruation but also with educational practices for young women. By the mid-century, advertisers were looking for ways to expand from the print advertisements of the previous decades. The most apparent way that they did so was making the switch from advertiser to educator. As the first chapter discussed, understanding how girls learned about menstruation and understood their bodies has a long and complex history in the United States. However, by recognizing and examining changes in the education we can gain deeper understandings of how capitalism, society, medicine, and women themselves understood menstruation and their bodies.

The intersection between the advertising world and the education world melds the last two chapters' discussions. This chapter aims to examine how the combination of the two fields influenced societal understanding of young women and menstruation. Additionally, the popularization of tampons starting in the early 1940s produced rhetoric about female sexualization and another series of taboos about menstruation, which will be examined later in the chapter. Menstrual education and advertising reinforced cultural understandings of young women. Educational advertising in the mid-20th century utilized the notions of sanitation and cleanliness that the earlier half of the decade had emphasized.

Menstrual product advertising by the mid-century was transformed by changes in visual culture and advances in graphic design. The advent of color TV and the increase in color printing lead to more striking visuals and further tools for graphic designers and advertisers to shape their

messages.¹⁰⁸ In her exploration of visual culture and graphic design, Ellen Lupton has argued that “vision is social. Graphic design involves more than a one-way transfer from sender to receiver.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, the analysis of the graphics in addition to the text in these advertisements is critical for understanding what they are saying and showing the viewer. In doing so, I hope to show how graphics and images of these decades had the power to shape opinion and “galvanize people around a shared belief or point of view,” just as much as the overt text.¹¹⁰

Understanding Educational Advertising: Booklets to Videos

The term educational advertising refers to ad campaigns that attempt to inform or persuade the public or even a specific audience (young women in the case of menstruation advertisements). This form of advertising was popularized during World War II. Radio broadcasters and television programs were the first to broadcast educational advertisements, usually promoting war efforts. Educational advertising’s wartime emergence makes it often associated with propaganda efforts.¹¹¹ However, by the mid-century, advertising firms were learning how to use educational advertising as a tool for product promotion. Personal product companies that made disposable menstrual products would quickly do the same.

Menstrual product company booklets published in the late 1940s and into the next several decades were the most popular form of educational advertising. These booklets discuss not only menstruation (and offered their own products as the “hygienic” solution), but also puberty, the girls' developing bodies, boys, and general questions about growing up. Schools often handed

¹⁰⁸ “The Rise of Color,” *Harvard Magazine*, July-August 2010, <https://harvardmagazine.com/2010/07/rise-of-color>.

¹⁰⁹ Ellen Lupton, *How Posters Work*, (New York, Cooper Hewitt, 2015), 20.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Marchand, *Advertising the American*, 200-215.

these items out to girls, and companies sometimes sold or gave away "starter kits" of their products with them. Just as tobacco companies learned young people often stayed with the product they started with, menstrual product companies also realized by getting clients' interests early, they could establish a loyal customer base.¹¹² Another fascinating area in which educational advertising emerged was film. One particularly important film was a ten-minute-long cartoon created by Kotex with Walt Disney studios titled "The Story of Menstruation." Approximately 10 million American high school students watched the film, making it critical for understanding educational advertisements' actual impact on young people.¹¹³

Disney Takes on Menstruation

In 1946, Disney released "The Story of Menstruation," as a part of a series of videos they made for American schools. They hired gynecologist Mason Hohn to consult and ensure that the film was scientifically accurate. In part, Hohn was hired to ensure that school doctors and nurses would allow the film to be played, hoping they would approve of his medical authority. The film was co-presented with Kotex and was supposed to be shown hand-in-hand with their pamphlet, "Very Personally Yours." The film hired actress Gloria Blondell as a narrator for the cartoon.¹¹⁴

Through animated diagrams, the film details the menstrual cycle. Its excellent explanation of the reproductive cycle and focus on biology is a result of the involvement of Dr. Hohn. "The Story of Menstruation" is in many ways progressive. It presents clear biological facts as it depicts the ovaries, fallopian tubes, and vagina with a clear graphic. It reassures girls

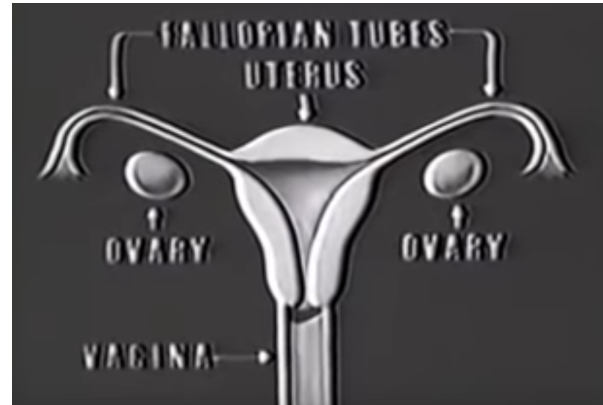
¹¹² Kissling, *Capitalizing on the Curse*, 23-27.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ "The Story of Menstruation... As Told and Animated By Disney In 1946," Women You Should Know, July 13, 2017, <https://womenshouldknow.net/the-story-of-menstruation-as-told-and-animated-by-disney-in-1946/>.

that menstruation is healthy and normal. Its use of the word vagina makes it the first film believed to have done so in its screenplay.

Yet, despite some of the progressive aspects of the film, it still emphasizes many problematic notions of menstruation. Disney historian Jim Korkis has suggested that the film depicts “a hygienic crisis rather than a maturational event.”¹¹⁵ The film begins by asking “Why is nature always called mother



See Footnote 114

nature?” and answering, “perhaps it’s because like any mother she quietly manages so much of our living without our ever realizing there’s a woman at work.”¹¹⁶ Within these first lines emerges an expectation for women to be silently existing while still productive and in the background, without any recognition of their labor. The next issue in the film is revealed in its effort to depict different body types. It shows several images of girls, stating that “some are heavy and some are slight.”¹¹⁷ However, the graphic only depicts slender women, thus still excluding any body type that could be recognized as not attractive. While Kotex tries to be inclusive, the result creates more exclusivity than if they had not brought up body type at all. The film also warned girls of the dangers of taking showers that are either too hot or too cold; not only is this false information, but it also emphasizes the belief that girls and women are particularly sensitive during menstruation. The video, similar to the ads of the previous decades,

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ *The Story of Menstruation*, (1946; United States: Walt Disney Productions, International Cellucotton Company).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

reminds girls to “keep smiling and even tempered,” revealing the continued importance of prescribing girls to be well behaved and happy at all times. At another point, the video reminds girls that “a well-groomed feeling will keep you feeling poised and lift your moral.”¹¹⁸ While the industry’s educational efforts were clearly an important step in demystifying menstruation, in the long term it created issues for girls facing puberty. In fact, some may argue that surrendering menstruation to Walt Disney contributed to difficulties we still face today regarding female adolescent sexuality. The industry turned itself into an ever-present party in the mother-daughter discussions and took away from older women’s authority on the matter.

Although the modern critiques of the film above make sense to today’s audience and even to Mrs. Gass, a woman referenced in chapter one who was interviewed as part of my research on menstruation education, most of her memory of the film was strikingly positive. She remembers watching the film around 1947 or

1948 at a special after-school screening. In our interview she said that “You have life experiences that you never forget.”¹¹⁹ For her, watching the film was one of these. She said, “I can almost see myself in that classroom watching it.”¹²⁰ Mrs. Gass saw the film after her mother



See Footnote 114

found out it was being shown after school. Despite the fact that her daughter was a few grades younger than those the screening was held for, she encouraged her daughter to watch it. Her mother’s choice would not be in vain. For Mrs. Gass, the film resonated. After watching it, she

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Marilyn Talbot Gass, interview by author, Northampton, MA, March 20, 2020.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

felt informed, better prepared, and glad that she had seen it. In fact, when interviewed today, she said the vivid imagery of the film was still striking to her. “I still remember the cuteness of those animated girls and the message,” she recalled. Her memories of the film’s bright colors, Disney cartoons and how they worked to convey the information emphasizes Lupton’s theory of the power of color and image production. For Mrs. Gass, the imagery of the film had been so clear in her mind that seventy years later she could still picture it. She also remembers that the film was produced by Kotex. She said, “I can vouch for that because I never bought Modess! Because of that film!”¹²¹ Mrs. Gass’ memory and experience with the film proves exactly how powerful educational advertising can be. Seventy years after watching the film, she could still remember its importance and how it shaped her understanding of menstruation and perhaps even her product loyalty.

Looking through Booklets: Educational Advertising on the Page

In analyzing these booklets, we must take into account how girls would have received them as well as which American girls would come into contact with them. Of course, it is impossible to solidly grasp how many women may have at one point or another stumbled upon one of these texts--perhaps finding it packaged with a box of pads they had purchased, or having it passed to them in a health class by a school nurse. Yet, similarly to the previous chapter’s discussion of ad circulation, it is most likely that these booklets came into contact most often with educated, upper or middle class, white women, those who were the likeliest to be either

¹²¹ Ibid.

enrolled in a health class at their school or have the money to purchase disposable sanitary products.¹²²

In the late 1990s, a group of four female Psychologists published a paper that reported statistical evidence of the differences in information that past menstruation education booklets presented. The goal of their study was to understand how the menstrual cycles presentation interacted with the development of young women from a psychological perspective. However, the evidence they discovered is transferable to understanding the historical change as well, since they studied booklets ranging from the 1940s to the 1990s. Their study resulted in several key statistics. First, they found that 78% of the 230 booklets examined focused only on menstruation and its management rather than on puberty as a whole. Thus, they revealed that publishers' main concern was looking directly at the issue that related to their product, rather than educating the girl holistically on her body.¹²³ Secondly, the study determined only 3.6% of the books discussed what it felt "like to menstruate" and only 28.6% of the booklets actually examined the color and composition of menstrual blood. While 82.1% of booklets determined that menstruation was an aspect of growing up, only 14.3%--a total of four booklets--suggested that menarche was a sign of good health.¹²⁴ The study determined that the negative aspects of menstruation were far more likely to be mentioned. Cramps, for example, were mentioned in 85.7% of booklets and moodiness mentioned in 64.3%. They also found that booklets focused more heavily on hygiene

¹²² Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "'Something Happens to Girls': Menarche and the Emergence of the Modern American Hygienic Imperative," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 1 (1993): 99-127.

¹²³ Mindy J Erchull, Joan C Chrisler, Jennifer A Gorman, and Ingrid Johnston-Robledo, "Education and Advertising: A Content Analysis of Commercially Produced Booklets about Menstruation," *The Journal of Early Adolescence* 22, no. 4 (2002): 455-74.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

and product use.¹²⁵ The statistics found in the study echo the results that close historical analysis of the booklets also reveal--that product and its necessity would be prioritized over actual education.

One of the most popular booklets was the “Growing up and Liking it” booklet produced by Moddess and the Personal Products Company. “Growing up and Liking it” was published several times over the course of the later 20th century. A close analysis of copies from 1944, 1957, 1964, 1978, and 1991, presents changing narratives for young women about their bodies over the decades and provides evidence of how commercial campaigns turned out educational tools on menstruation for their own profit.

Each of the booklets produced over the course of about fifty years follows a similar outline in the order in which they share information with the reader. They each begin with an emphasis on the wonder of “growing up.” This is followed by a question and answer section, and then a list of information on what to



See Footnote 128

do and not do during the days of your menstruation. This section changes the most over the decades. For example, in 1944 the section is titled “Follow these Health Rules,” but replaced in 1964 with the headline, “How to Feel Confident about Menstruation.”¹²⁶ The images in the 60s

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Company, 1964.

also show young women looking into the camera, another depiction of their confidence and pride, whereas in the 40s, the booklets tend to show snapshots of girls passive in their day to day lives and not engaging with the camera.

These titles alone suggest new rhetoric and beliefs around menstruation. By the sixties, as this title suggests, a more casual, fun tone was starting to be used in advertising



See Footnote 126

as well as the start of an emphasis on the woman's emotional wellbeing and self-confidence. Next, the booklets tend to explain a more specific outline of what actually occurs in the body during menstruation. Sometimes these chapters include quotes from doctors, as well as medical diagrams and depictions of a female reproductive system. Finally, the booklets all shift to more focused product advertisements by the end, in some cases even ending with order forms or coupons for their products.¹²⁷ Although the order stays relatively the same, the style and content make important shifts that reveal societal interpretations and mythologies around femininity and menstruation.

Descriptions of mythologies around menstruation in the booklets reveal changes in information and assumptions about menstruation being passed onto young girls over the decades. Swimming is one of the central mythologies addressed in each of the booklets. In 1944 it was written that "out of consideration for others" a girl should not swim in pools.¹²⁸ The emphasis here is not only on the limitations menstruation presents but also on how menstruation is an offense to those around you, evoking a message of shame and disgust for young girls in their

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Corporation, 1944.

understanding of their bodies. By 1964, the booklet states that swimming is alright as long as the girl stays “cleanly” and wears a tampon.¹²⁹ The 1978 and 1991 copies do not directly mention swimming, but rather include recommendations to exercise and stay active in order to feel better and “fight fatigue.”¹³⁰

Another common mythology addressed in all the pamphlets is the detectability of menstruation by others. In the 1944 booklet, most of the emphasis is on the product’s ability to prevent “accidents” and “keep you from coming through.”¹³¹ Never once is period leakage or staining directly referenced, but rather written about in a way that makes the reader terrified of its implications and stresses the importance of hiding signs of bleeding. Like the earlier ads examined at in chapter two, these booklets also focus on the fact that Modess products have “no give away outline” making it socially “acceptable with shorts and dresses.” In the 1957 edition, messages around the shame in purchasing menstrual products are clear through their highlighting of the disguised packaging and self-purchase programs. The booklet tells girls that “the Modess box is considerate, wrapped, it looks as though it might contain bath salts or note paper.” Thus, the company sends the message that there would be shame in being seen buying menstrual products. They also instruct girls not to say they want pads or tampons, but just to tell the clerk, “Modess please,” as stating the actual object names is perceived as embarrassing.¹³² Although the 1964 tells girls that the claim “boys can tell when a girl is menstruating- so don’t date” is “ridiculous!” it still focuses on disguise. It advertises to use Modess products to “protect your daintiness,” a message that implies that to be known to be menstruating would make a girl “un-

¹²⁹ *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Company, 1964.

¹³⁰ *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Company, 1978.

¹³¹ *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Corporation, 1944.

¹³² *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Corporation, 1957.

dainty” and thus “unfeminine.”¹³³ The irony here is obvious. Menstruation is a biologically feminine experience, so to argue that it's the cause of non-femininity demonstrates the underlying misogyny of these advertisements and messages being projected onto young women.

The most noticeable shift in the booklets are changes in tone and aesthetic made to them over the years. The booklets before the 1970s all are written in a traditional, informative style, and all include photos of young women.¹³⁴ The 1944 booklet is the most formal in the language it uses and reads the most as a guide. It does not refer directly to the reader, but rather is written around “the girl” and how “her body’s change in shape.”¹³⁵ The tone is removed and observational rather than at all personal. Clearly, Modess did not want to comment directly to their customer and was inclined to use non-personal language in order to reduce possible “embarrassment” for the reader. The 1957 booklet, though still using more formal language, addresses the reader as “you,” subtly beginning to evoke a more personal message in the information. It asks, “Why do you feel the way you do? What is happening to you?”¹³⁶ By 1964, the language is even more casual and modernized. It even uses some joking language when answering what it refers to as “old wives” tales about periods. It purposely includes the myth “a permanent won’t take while you’re menstruating,” and responds, “just silly!” Interestingly, more so than in the booklets from the 40s and 50s, the 60s booklet emphasizes femininity more often. The 1960s booklets’ emphasis on the importance of “daintiness” as well as its use of hyper-feminine examples like the hair styling myth make it far less progressive¹³⁷ In the 1970s, the booklet made a drastic shift in style, though still keeping with the title, “Growing up and Liking

¹³³ *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Company, 1964.

¹³⁴ *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Company, 1978.

¹³⁵ *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Corporation, 1944.

¹³⁶ *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Corporation, 1957.

¹³⁷ *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Company, 1964.

it!” The booklet is written entirely in letters between three fictional girls. Through narration by Donna, Patty, and Ginny, all young women, the booklet aims to present a very personal, understandable explanation of menstruation.¹³⁸ The bright colors and font choices also reveal its desire to appear approachable and familiar to young women. In 1991, the book kept with this style, only changing the names to the more updated Christine, Laura and Andrea. The letters use slang language, as well as personal stories and humor to explain menstruation as well as the health classes they are taking at their schools.¹³⁹ These copies eliminate all of the medical explanations and question and answer sections, replacing them with small amounts of information tucked into the letters between the girls. The transition, from the narrator in the 1940s who cannot address the reader directly, to first person narratives between young women, reveals a large shift in approaches to understanding and discussing menstruation.

Although the Modess booklets only provide a small sample of messages to young women about menstruation, they act as a controlled source from which to identify changes in societal

interpretations of femininity and menstruation.

Although the messages and style change over time, the overarching themes of shame, embarrassment, and disguise remain consistent.

“Growing Up and Liking it” was not the only booklet that girls might have received.

Kotex produced a series of their own booklets, ranging from “As One Girl to Another” in 1943,

Each girl has a very different personality.

PATTY (whose stationery is yellow) seems to know everything. But as we said, she's really lonely and it takes her some time to make friends. And, you'll notice she really learns a lot from her mother, older sisters and teacher. But Patty does sound like an authority when she talks.

DONNA (whose letters are in blue) is quite shy. She doesn't know very much about growing up. Donna really needs her friends Patty and Ginny to explain things . . . and to keep her spirits up.

GINNY (who writes on pink paper) seems to be a very busy, confident person. You'll notice as you read that she is a bit excitable at times.

See Footnote 138

¹³⁸ *Growing up and Liking It*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Company, 1978.

¹³⁹ *Growing up and Liking It, Andrea and Friends*. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products, 1991.

which in a similar fashion to the earliest editions of “Growing up and Liking it” presented menstruation in a formal and non-detailed way, to their three volume 1968 set of books “The Miracle of You,” “Your Years of Self Discovery,” and “You and Your Daughter.” These booklets mentioned not only pads, but tampons as well, and were far more progressive, emphasizing the importance of open conversations between parents and children. However, the series also attempts to discuss topics like sexuality and masturbation in ways that, although reflective of the beliefs of the decade, are highly problematic. They encourage that “professional counseling, in some instances can reverse the emotional direction into heterosexual patterns,” if girls are to have the “symptom of maladjustment” caused by homosexuality. They also write that masturbation, although “not technically a physical or social problem,” like homosexuality, “can cause social and emotional consequences.”¹⁴⁰ These comments reveal that the booklets have the dual purpose of educating girls about sexual changes as well as menarche.

Tampons: Innovation at a Cost

The earliest invention of tampons is found in ancient Egyptian medical records, describing how women would use different natural materials in their vaginas to absorb blood. Decades later, in the early 1920s, a Kimberly-Clark employee named John Williamson poked some holes in a condom, stuffed it with the fluffy, absorbent filling used in commercial Kotex pads, and pitched it to his dad, a Kimberly-Clark medical consultant, as a menstrual solution. “Never would I put any such strange article inside a woman!” the elder Williamson is said to have exclaimed, thus swiftly shooting down what might have been the origin story of the modern

¹⁴⁰ “Three puberty & menstruation booklets from Kotex, 1968, making the Life Cycle Library,” Museum of Menstruation, Uploaded 2002, <http://www.mum.org/kotbk68a.htm>.

commercial menstrual tampon.¹⁴¹ However, in 1931 a doctor by the name of Earle Haas patented his design for the modern-day tampon, and eventually a businesswoman Gertrude Tendrich would buy the tampon and create the Tampax company to start mass production. By 1949, the brand would appear in more than fifty magazines. In the United States, part of their increased popularity was the spike in women's physical activity after World War II. Tampax advertised the tampons were more comfortable for the active women, since they were far more comfortable and less cumbersome than a disposable pad. In 1945, the magazine *Consumer Reports* wrote that though tampons were popular, they were still only a fraction as popular as pads. "There can be no doubt in (tampons) rapid growth, as more women take advantage of the comfort of the internally worn protections," the magazine stated. Sales of tampons grew five times between 1937 and 1943. One survey from 1940 and 1944 stated that a quarter of women regularly used them.

However, the availability and popularity of tampons did not equate to their immediate acceptance.¹⁴² Physicians contributed to the hysteria and misinformed popular beliefs due to their own lack of understanding the female reproductive process. Since through the early 20th century physicians commonly believed that regular menstruation was needed to rid the body of waste, they were concerned that tampons trapped "waste" inside and could lead to illness.¹⁴³ They also compared menstruation to a wound, arguing that "as an early surgical precept, we learned that whenever there is free serum, blood, or discharge from a wound or body cavity, free

¹⁴¹ Freidenfelds, *The Modern Period*, 172.

¹⁴² Laura Klosterman Kidd, "Menstrual Technology in the United States, 1854 to 1921," (PhD diss., Iowa State University, 1994).

¹⁴³ Freidenfelds, *The Modern Period*, 175.

drainage is desired and much be encouraged.” Thus, they believed that tampons eliminated the possibility for the drainage they believed was important for menstrual blood.

However, perhaps the leading cause of mythology was both the public’s and physicians’ misinformed concern over tampons threat to young women’s virginity. To put it simply, many people were uncomfortable with the product simply because they understood it went inside a vagina. Especially in the case of young girls, there was a discomfort with the idea that to insert one, a girl would have to be in contact with her vaginal or labia area.¹⁴⁴ Infact, the advent of the applicator was in part to make it possible to insert a tampon without the “dreaded” self-touching. The worries that the tampon would break the hymen or that its use would be sexually stimulating, possibly leading to autoeroticism, were also popularized. A 1942 survey of American and Canadian physicians revealed these concerns. Rather than emphasize the hymen however, doctors commented on the “difficulty” of tampon insertion that young girls would face. The lack of clear language from these doctors, reveals just how uncomfortable even the medical community was in writing about girls and their physical interactions with their own bodies. They feared that a tampon would mimic sexual intercourse and thus cause “inappropriate” awakening of sexual interests in young women.

Tampax, contested the notions of early sexualization and the threat of tampons to virginity. On its first package insert from 1936, Tampax stated, “in exceptional cases, very young girls may find it difficult to use Tampax properly. If there is doubt, consult your physician.”¹⁴⁵ By 1952 the packaging took the issue head on stating, “fully mature young women can use

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 173.

¹⁴⁵ Freidenfelds, *The Modern Period*, 175.

Tampax without impairing their virginity.”¹⁴⁶ Their educational materials insisted that virgins could use tampons without issues.

Other brands however, remained conservative. Kotex’s education pamphlet “As One Girl to Another” declared

“Frankly, most authorities say young girls shouldn’t use tampons without first consulting their doctors. The reason is this. In most girls, there’s usually a membrane called the hymen which partly closes the entrance to the vagina- from which comes the menstrual flow. Therefore, Kotex sanitary napkins are more comfortable and better suited to a young girl’s needs, than tampons of any type.”¹⁴⁷

As the language here reveals, the issue of virginity became a tool used for brands to push their products over others. If Kotex could convince girls that pads were safer than Tampons in their educational booklets, they could secure that young women would buy pads over tampons. However, the bigger issue was that in order to promote their own products, the booklets that were meant to be educational, had to provide girls with false information. By the 1960s, Kimberly-Clark would finally move past the position that tampons were unsafe. Health magazines for teenagers began assuming that young girls would use tampons. By the 70s, as a result of second-wave feminism and the heightened sexual liberation movement brought on by the advent of the pill and more dedicated research to women’s health, they would explicitly discuss the issue, declaring that virginity is a matter of sexual intercourse, not related to the state of a girl’s hymen and that regardless, tampons would not break an intact hymen.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 176.

Second Wave Feminism and the Future

As this chapter reveals, the decades after World War II introduced many new issues for young girls' understanding of menstruation. While the popularization of tampons gave women and girls more choices in their menstrual care, it also introduced a focus on young women's virginity and sexuality not previously discussed in the realm of menstrual education. The focus shifted from keeping girls clean and hygienic, to also ensuring they were virginal and non-sexual at the same time.

The women's movement of the late 1960s into the 1970s, would try to debunk many of the problematic themes discussed in this chapter and re-construct women's health care in America. One of the most groundbreaking movements was the publication of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, by the Boston Women's Health Collective. What began as a meeting at a women's health liberation conference in 1969, led to the first publication of the book in 1970, with its expressed goal of dispelling widespread ignorance about the female body and women's health issues. It noted that the dismissive treatment women often received from male-dominated medical institutions, could sometimes be injurious. The book emphasized the importance of women's knowledge about their own bodies, and it encouraged their active participation in medical treatment. Each chapter contained an extensive list of resources, attempting to further inform and include women about and in their own health care. However, alongside progressive work like this, many of the ads of the later 20th century continued to perpetuate sexist and misinformed information.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ The Boston Women's Health Collective, *The New Our Bodies, Ourselves*, (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1984), xi-xvii.

The intersection between the advertising world and the education world created a continued, if not heightened, dedication to committing girls to their products through false information, such as warnings about odors or even lapses in productivity without the said disposable menstrual product. While the information available to girls increased through booklets and films, their content remained disguised misogyny. As discussed in the previous chapters, the educational resources continued to set up what I have argued is a constructed language of dirtiness and disgust for women's bodies - one that American society would then imbed into their culture and believe.

Conclusion

American menstruation management and education has changed in the 21st century. There are new trends, themes, and practices explored in the advertisements, types of products available, and media depiction of menstruation. Terms like “period poverty” or “period tax,” that confront the socio-economic issues that come with menstruation appear on social media. One brand has created an ad depicting a transgender man dealing with his menstruation, confronting the gender normativity surrounding menstruation.¹⁵⁰ Many new companies, such as Lola, Cora, Freda, Flo, Thinx, and Flex, just to name a few, have been working to become alternatives to big companies like Kotex and Tampax. Many of these companies, started by women, have launched ad campaigns with titles such as, “Do You Know What is in Your Tampon?”¹⁵¹ confronting the FDA’s non-requirement for listing ingredients in tampons and pads and using it as a tool to market their own, all natural or organic products.

Health movements to promote women’s menstrual product access in countries outside the US have caught the eye of the media in the last decade. The Netflix produced short film *Period. End of Sentence* won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Short Subject in 2019. The film follows a group of local women in Hapur, India, as they learn to operate a machine that makes low-cost, biodegradable sanitary pads. The women begin to sell their pads to other women at affordable prices, showing that period product production on a local level can help by not only

¹⁵⁰ Pavithra Mohan, “Thinx’s first national ad campaign imagines a world where men get periods, too,” FastCompany, October 3, 2019, <https://www.fastcompany.com/90412779/thinx-menstruation-ad-campaign-imagines-men-getting-periods>.

¹⁵¹ Sophie Elmhirst, “Tampon wars: the battle to overthrow the Tampax empire,” The Guardian, February 11, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/feb/11/tampon-wars-the-battle-to-overthrow-the-tampax-empire>.

providing broader product access for women but also can empower women and their community's economic future.¹⁵²

Progressive movements like these have helped in many ways to lift the taboos of menstruation and open the public's eyes to the actual issues that can arise with the lack of affordable, safe, or available menstruation products -- women missing work or school, women not knowing that chemicals may or may not exist in an item inside their own bodies, or the tax that women pay for menstrual products each year that contributes to their economic lag behind men. However, these campaigns still are trying to sell or market a certain product, even if it is "safer" or more "inclusive" than the alternative. Just because the openness around menstruation has changed, it does not mean that capitalism has stopped playing a critical role in the development of women's menstrual products. Rather, it proves that campaigns for products continue to reflect what society is "allowing" or promoting for young girls and women. When Thinx launched an advertisement that asked "Would we treat periods differently if everyone got them?" It depicted a man with a tampon string outside of his boxers as he walked through a locker room, many major network TV companies refused to air the ad.¹⁵³ While we may no longer be telling young women to "smile through the pain," the messages crafted by large consumer brands are still attempting to brand womanhood in order to sell their products. The Tampax campaign, "Outsmart Mother Nature," in 2009, may have been intent on "avoiding oft-parodied clichés," yet it still managed to depict menstruation as "the enemy" and depicted

¹⁵² "Period. End of Sentence.," The Pad Project, <https://thepadproject.org/period-end-of-sentence/>.

¹⁵³ Pavithra Mohan, "Thinx's first national ad campaign imagines a world where men get periods, too," FastCompany, October 3, 2019, <https://www.fastcompany.com/90412779/thinx-menstruation-ad-campaign-imagines-men-getting-periods>.

women “defeating” their own bodies.¹⁵⁴ The fear of menstruation that exists at the highest levels of American culture, makes it impossible for “breakthrough” brands like Thinx to spread their message widely.

Menstrual product campaigns of the early 21st century, when looked at by historians in the next several decades, will reveal what Americans were thinking about, hoping for, or choosing not to be -- just as the ads analyzed in this thesis’s chapters have shown of the 20th century. Looking at how we confront menstruation in today’s advertising reveals that it continues to be a tool for understanding the limitations and expectations for women in American society. The hope, is that in the next several decades, advertisements and education will follow the footsteps of the activists, teachers, and companies that have heightened the nation’s awareness on the greater and actual global issues of menstruation -- its environmental, economic, and equity consequences -- rather than trying to emphasize women’s vulnerabilities for profit. In doing so, there may be long lasting and powerful change that is possible in educating young women about their “bad blood.”

¹⁵⁴ Becky Swanson, the director of Leo Burnett USA on the Tampax account stated this in an interview with New York Times reporter Andrew Newman. Andrew Newman, “A Campaign that Erases a Layer of Euphemisms,” The New York Times, March 19, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/business/media/20adco.html>.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Carr, J.W. "The Teaching of Sex Hygiene in Public Schools." *The Journal of Education* 79, no. 15 (1975) (1914): 399-400.

Cellucotton Products Corporation. "Simplify the Laundress Problem." *The Ladies Home Journal*, November 1921, Page 87.

Finley, Harry. "The first Kotex sanitary napkin ad campaign, 1921, and almost-the-first Kotex ad (prototype, about 1920)." *Museum of Menstruation*. 1999, Accessed January 10, 2020. <http://www.mum.org/urkotex.htm>.

Growing up and Liking It, Andrea and Friends. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products, 1991.

Growing up and Liking It. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Corporation, 1944.

Growing up and Liking It. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Corporation, 1957.

Growing up and Liking It. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Company, 1964.

Growing up and Liking It. Milltown, NJ: Personal Products Company, 1978.

Johnson and Johnson. "Never Mind Mother, You'll Learn." June 1929, Uploaded 2007, <http://www.mum.org/modju29.htm>.

Johnson and Johnson. "They're Cute Mother-- A Cotton Nightie Is Primitive." November 1929, <http://www1.assumption.edu/ahc/1920s/modern%20woman/ModernizingMom/Modess.html>.

Kantor, William M. "Beginnings of Sanitization in America." *Journal of Heredity* 28, no. 11, 374-76.

Kimberly-Clark Corporation. "Every Mother Should Tell her Daughter this." 1925, Uploaded 2011, <http://www.mum.org/kote25.htm>.

Kimberly-Clark Corporation. "I Wish my Daughter Would, I Wish my Mother Would." Uploaded 2013, <http://www.mum.org/kotmay41.htm>.

Kimberly-Clark Corporation. "Patriotism in menstrual hygiene! 'And I promised Mom'." May 1943, Uploaded 1998, <http://www.mum.org/inthe43.htm>.

Kimberly-Clark Corporation. "Phantom Kotex." 1933, Uploaded 1999, <http://www.mum.org/kotpha33.htm>.

Kimberly-Clark Corporation. "You're fit to be tied!...." Early 1940s, Uploaded 2010, <http://www.mum.org/yourfit.htm>.

Kotex Company. "What the World Expects of Women to-day." *The Tatler*, 1928, Duke University Libraries: Repository Collections and Archives, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r4513vg35>.

Novak, Emil. *The Woman Asks the Doctor*. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1935. 134.

Talbot Gass, Marilyn. Interview by author. Northampton, MA, March 20, 2020.

The Boston Women's Health Collective. *The New Our Bodies, Ourselves*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984. xi-xvii.

The Story of Menstruation. 1946; Los Angeles, CA: Walt Disney Studios.

"Display Ad 271 -- No Title." *New York Times*, Nov 14, 1948. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

"Display Ad 65 -- No Title." *New York Times*, June 8, 1924. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

"The Final Report of the Country Life Commission." *The Independent ... Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts (1848-1921)* 67, no. 3167 (1909): 374.

Secondary Sources

Beauvoir, Simone de, Malovany-Chevallier, Constance, and Malovany-Chevallier, Sheila. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage, 2011.

Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. "'Something Happens to Girls': Menarche and the Emergence of the Modern American Hygienic Imperative." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 1 (1993): 99-127.

Burnstein, Daniel. *Next to Godliness: Confronting Dirt and Despair in Progressive Era New York City*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Campbell, Patricia J. *Sex Education Books for Young Adults, 1892–1979*. New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1979.

Elmhirst, Sophie. "Tampon Wars: The Battle to Overthrow the Tampax Empire." *The Guardian*, February 11, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/feb/11/tampon-wars-the-battle-to-overthrow-the-tampax-empire>.

Erchull, Mindy J, Joan C Chrisler, Jennifer A Gorman, and Ingrid Johnston-Robledo. "Education and Advertising: A Content Analysis of Commercially Produced Booklets about Menstruation." *The Journal of Early Adolescence* 22, no. 4 (2002): 455-74.

Eschner, Kat. "The Surprising Origins of Kotex Pads." *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 11, 2017. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/surprising-origins-kotex-pads-180964466/>.

Freidenfelds, Laura. *The Modern Period: Menstruation in Twentieth Century America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

Judy Barrett Litoff, David C. Smith, "U.S. Women on the Home Front in World War II." *The Historian* 57, no. 2, (1995): 349-60.

Kennedy, Angie C. "Eugenics, "Degenerate Girls," and Social Workers During the Progressive Era." *Affilia* 23, no. 1 (2008): 22-37.

Kidd, Laura Klosterman. "Menstrual Technology in the United States, 1854 to 1921." PhD diss., Iowa State University, 1994.

Kissling, Elizabeth Arveda. *Capitalizing on the Curse: The Business of Menstruation*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006.

Lupton, Ellen. *How Posters Work*. New York: Cooper Hewitt, 2015.

Marchand, Roland. *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

Maw, Wallace H. "Fifty Years of Sex Education in the Public Schools of the United States, 1900-1950: A History of Ideas." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1953.

Mcginley, Paige. "Generational Schism, Fannie Lou Hamer, and the Future of Protest." *TDR/The Drama Review* 62, no. 1 (2018): 172-75.

Mohan, Pavithra. "Thinx's First National Ad Campaign Imagines a World Where Men get Periods, too." *FastCompany*, October 3, 2019. <https://www.fastcompany.com/90412779/thinx-menstruation-ad-campaign-imagines-men-getting-periods>.

Newman, Andrew. "A Campaign that Erases a Layer of Euphemisms." *New York Times*, March 19, 2009. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/business/media/20adco.html>.

O'Sullivan, Robert. "Sims: Butcher or Savior?" *Irish Medical Times* 43, no. 39 (2009): 40.

Roediger, David R. *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*. New York: Basic Books, 2005.

Rosenberg, Gabriel. *The 4-H Harvest: Sexuality and the State in Rural America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Secombe, Wally. *Weathering the Storm: Working-class Families from the Industrial Revolution to the Fertility Decline*. London, New York: Verso, 1993.

Shaw, Christopher W. "'No Place For Class Politics': The Country Life Commission and Immigration." *Agricultural History* 85, no. 4 (2011): 520-39.

"Period. End of Sentence." The Pad Project, 2018. <https://thepadproject.org/period-end-of-sentence/>.

"The Rise of Color." *Harvard Magazine*, July-August 2010. <https://harvardmagazine.com/2010/07/rise-of-color>.

"Three Puberty & Menstruation Booklets from Kotex, 1968, making the Life Cycle Library." Museum of Menstruation. Uploaded 2002. <http://www.mum.org/kotbk68a.htm>.