Factors Related to Menstrual Activism: Evaluating the Impact of Humorous Messages

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General Research Question

❖ How do different types of messages impact people’s support for menstruation-related issues?
Menstrual products taxed as “luxuries”
- “Discriminatory Tax”
- “Pink Tax”

Canadian campaign (#NoTaxOnTampons)

The discriminatory tax was overturned in Canada, however, a majority of the United States still taxes menstrual products. (Excluding: Alaska, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Oregon … and soon Florida (Jan. 2018) and Connecticut (July 2018)!

Background

Source: http://fusion.kinja.com/these-are-the-u-s-states-that-tax-women-for-having-per-1793848102
Menstruation has been historically stigmatized:

- Treated as a taboo topic and treated with secrecy (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013).
- Kotex “quiet” pad wrapper
- Menstrual euphemisms

Signs of menstruation, such as openly carrying a pad or tampon, may result in being viewed as less competent, reliable, and likeable. (Roberts et al., 2002)
How can we garner support if menstrual matters are stigmatized?

- **Humor**: may increase positive mood, which is a robust predictor of prosocial behavior (Salovey, Mayer, & Rosenhan, 1991)

- **Feminist humor**: aims to challenge patriarchal ideas and stereotypes
  - May have the potential to deconstruct the stigmatization that surrounds menstruation (Gouin, 2004).
Purpose of Study

- To examine:
  - How different types of messages about menstruation-related issues impact people’s willingness/intent to engage in activism.
  - The role of informational messages and humorous-informational messages, using discriminatory menstrual product taxes as a case study.
Specific Research Questions

❖ Does information alone increase the likelihood of a viewer’s intentions to participate in menstruation-related activism?

❖ Can feminist humor combined with information lessen the stigma surrounding menstruation, *increasing an individual’s willingness* to participate in menstruation-related activism?
Present Study

Hypotheses

❖ We predicted that participants who watched a humorous-informational video about the tampon tax issue would report higher menstruation-related activism intentions than participants who watched a video that was exclusively informational.

❖ Other factors: feminist identity, perceived fairness of menstrual taxation, attitudes of menstrual secrecy, having prior knowledge of menstrual product taxation issues, and positive affect
  - possible predictors of menstruation-related activism
Method: Materials

**Independent Variable:**

3 videos:

A.) Menstrual Product Tax Informational Video - “Support #NoTaxOnTampons Campaign” (2015) by Operation Maple

B.) Menstrual Product Tax Humorous-Informational Video “#NoTaxOnTampons: Canada remove the GST on menstruation products” (2015) by Canadian Menstruators and performed by feminist comedians *The Crimson Wave*

C.) Control Humor - compilation of bowling outtakes

* Each video 3 minutes
Methods: Measures

Dependent Variable:

- Menstruation-Related Activism Scale

“Many U.S. states do not consider menstrual products to be a necessity and therefore tax them. If you lived in a state where this was true, how likely would you be to engage in…”
  - “signing a petition to protest menstrual product taxation”
  - “donating menstrual products to a women’s shelter”

7pt Likert scale - very unlikely to very likely
Reliability = .92
Methods: Measures

Potential Covariates:

- **Beliefs About and Attitudes Towards Menstruation Scale** (BATM) (Marván, Ramírez-esparza, Cortés-iniestra, & Chrisler, 2006).
  
  “*Women should avoid talking about their periods when men are present.*”

  Secrecy Subscale Reliability = .82

- **Positive and Negative Affect Schedule** (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), Reliability = .92
  
  “*I feel excited...strong...interested...*”

- **Demographic variables**
  - Gender

- **Feminist identification**

- **Perceived fairness of tax**

- **Prior knowledge of “Tampon Tax”**

- **Perceptions of videos**
Participants

- 243 participants through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk
  - Recruited 300, removed 57 due to failed manipulation checks, quality control, low time of completion
- Age ranged from 18-51, $M = 27.52$, $SD = 4.22$
- 55.6% male, 44.4% female
- 78.8% white, 8.3% Asian, 5.4% Latino/Hispanic, 4.6% Black
- 43.2% college degree or higher
- Compensated $2.00
- Option to enter raffle for 1 of 8 $25 Starbucks giftcards
Hypothesis 1: Humor would lead to increased activism intentions

- One-way between subjects ANOVA
- Significant effect of condition on activism intentions
- \((F(2, 239) = 3.77, p < .05)\)
- Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test
- Contrary to our hypothesis, activism was higher in informational condition than in humorous informational condition

*Conditions significantly different from one another
* \(p < .05\), ** \(p < .01\), *** \(p < .001\)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Scale Range</th>
<th>Women M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Men M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-test</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Identity</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1 - 7</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>-5.37***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived Fairness</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>2.91**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Menstrual Secrecy</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activism Intentions</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1 - 7</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>-6.69***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
## Results: Factors that Influence Menstrual Activism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menstruation-Related Activism Intentions</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.00***</td>
<td>.36, 1.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feminist Identity</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>.00***</td>
<td>.10, .29</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>.00**</td>
<td>-.49, -.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belief in Menstrual Secrecy</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>.00***</td>
<td>-.67, -.22</td>
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<td>Prior Knowledge of Tampon</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.02*</td>
<td>-.77, -.06</td>
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<td>Tax</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>.00***</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informational Controlc</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<td>.81</td>
<td>-.33, .</td>
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<td>Controlf</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>4.60</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* \( p < .05 \), ** \( p < .01 \), *** \( p < .001 \), Referent group = Info humor

### Dummy Coded IV

**Multiple Linear Regression**

Model Significant

\[ F(8,217) = 36.53, \quad p < .001 \]

51.1% variance in activism intentions
Discussion:

- Large gender differences in menstrual-related activism intentions
  - More men are lawmakers

- Humorous messages may decrease activism intentions
  - Seen as more disgusting

- Informational messages may increase activism intentions
  - Treat issue as serious matter

- Feminist identity, knowledge of the issue, perceived fairness, menstrual secrecy, positive affect predict activism intentions
  - Spreading knowledge of issue is important
  - Challenging menstrual secrecy can help increase activism
  - Positive affect increases willingness
Discussion:

**Strengths:**
- Effects of issue-specific menstruation-related messages has not been explored
- Can inform campaigns aimed at getting people involved with menstruation-related issues

**Limitations:**
- Homogenous sample - mostly white
- Cannot completely guarantee that participants watched whole videos
- Did not measure actual behavior, just intentions
- Specific issue may not generalize to other issues

**Future Directions**
- Examine messages specifically targeted for men
Acknowledgements

- Katie Schneider, Collaborator
- Dr. Phil C. Langer, Gender and Humor Course
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- The Crimson Wave
- HART Lab, Dr. Sarit Golub


