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

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❖ How do different types of messages impact people's support for menstruation-related issues?

Background

- ❖ 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)!

Which States Tax Your Period?

Taxes Tampons
No Sales Tax
Does NOT Tax
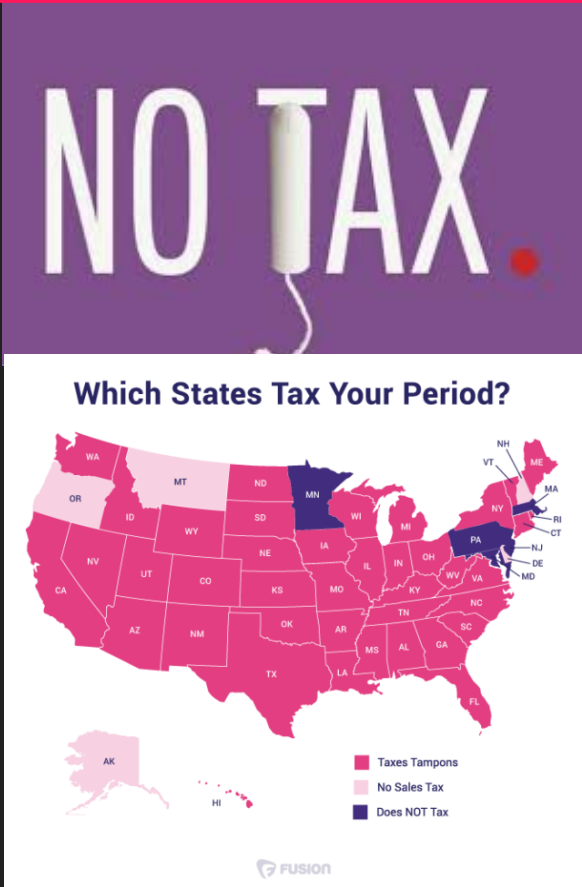
- Menstruation has been historically stigmatized:

    - 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)

LET'S TALK
ABOUT *it*
~~PERIODS~~

- 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).

Feminist humor raises consciousness. And the reason it's funny is because it stands something on its head. Goodness knows you've got to have a sense of humor if you do feminism full-time, I tell you.
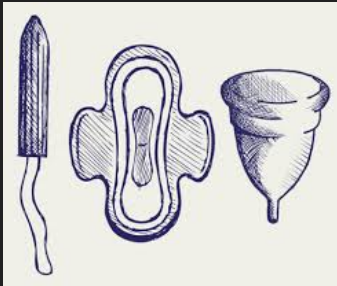
— Eleanor Smeal —

AZ QUOTES

VIDEO OR TRANSCRIPT 1-

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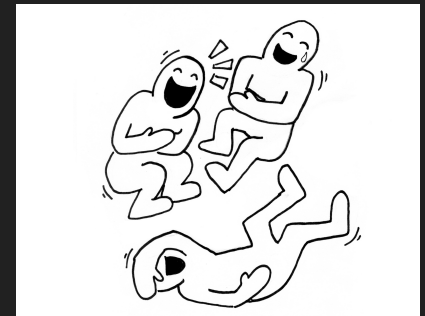
- To examine:
    - How different types of messages about menstruation-related issues impact people's willingness/intent to engage in activism.

    - The role of informational messages and humorous-informational messages, using discriminatory menstrual product taxes as a case study.

❖ 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?

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

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

Dependent Variable:
ᵛ   **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
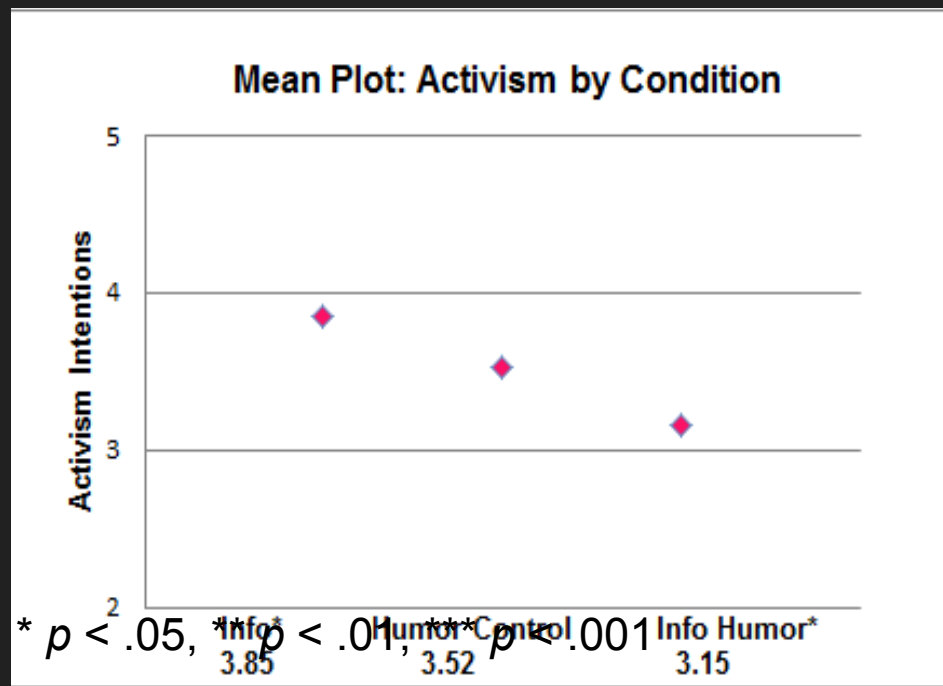
Methods: Measures

Potential Covariates:

v **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

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

v **Demographic variables**
  – Gender

v **Feminist identification**

v **Perceived fairness of tax**

v **Prior knowledge of "Tampon Tax"**

v **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

Mean Plot: Activism by Condition

* p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Info*
3.85   Humor*Control
3.52   Info Humor*
3.15

*Conditions significantly different from one another

- ❖ 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

Results: Descriptives & Gender Differences

	M	*SD*	Scale Range	Women M	SD	Men M	SD	t-test
Feminist Identity	3.89	1.97	1 - 7	**4.61**	**1.95**	**3.31**	**1.80**	**-5.37***
Perceived Fairness	1.58	.90	1 - 5	**1.40**	**0.79**	**1.73**	**0.95**	**2.91****
Menstrual Secrecy	2.07	.74	1 - 5	-	-	-	-	NS
Positive Affect	2.63	.96	1 - 5	-	-	-	-	NS
Activism Intentions	3.53	1.60	1 - 7	**4.23**	**1.46**	**2.95**	**1.48**	**-6.69***

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Results: Factors that Influence Menstrual Activism

Menstruation-Related Activism Intentions	β	t	p	95% CI
Gender	.22	4.14	.00***	.36, 1.03
Feminist Identity	.24	4.17	.00***	.10, .29
Perceived Fairness	-.18	-	.00**	-.49, -.13
Belief in Menstrual Secrecy	-.21	3.44	.00***	-.67, -.22
Prior Knowledge of Tampon	-.12	-	.02*	-.77, -.06
Tax	.23	3.92	.00***	.21, .54
Positive Affect	-.03	-	.57	-.50, .28
Informational	.01	2.29	.81	-.33, .
Control		4.60		422

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

Dummy Coded IV

Multiple Linear Regression

Model Significant $F(8,217) = 36.53$, $p < .001$

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

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