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## Menstruation among the Houseless in Popular Media

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# Menstruation among the Houseless in Popular Media

## Reflexive Statement

This research has been a very long labor of love. I've always liked to talk about menstruation. I think it may have something to do with the fact that I was only nine years old when I began menstruating. I was in fourth grade at the time, and unfortunately, at my elementary school, we were not taught about puberty or reproductive health until the end of fifth grade. My parents hadn't talked to me about menstruation yet either. So, when I started menstruating, I didn't know what to do. My mom figured it out when she found bloodstains in my underwear, and years later she told me that she had cried over the loss of my childhood. Like many people, learning how to manage my menstruation was difficult for me and resulted in many pairs of stained underwear and days spent curled in the fetal position instead of in school. What made it more difficult was that I wasn't able to tell anyone what was happening because no one else was menstruating yet. I distinctly remember my response to my first friend revealing that she had started her period. I was overjoyed and sent her an instant message later that day telling her that I would answer any question she had. In high school and later in college, I was always ready to talk about how painful my cramps were or how heavy my flow was with anyone who would listen—much to my friends' embarrassment. It's not that I didn't understand that I was supposed to keep my period a secret; it's that I didn't think I should need to.

When I began contemplating what I would focus on for my capstone project, I knew I wanted a topic that would combine my two majors—public health and women and gender studies—and menstruation was the obvious choice. I began thinking about period poverty and menstrual equity at the global level after learning that menstruation is one of the leading reasons that girls in developing nations drop out of school. It wasn't long before I decided that I wanted to focus on period poverty here in the United States, maybe even in Rochester, NY. For months I tried to find research about menstruation among the houseless and continuously came up empty-handed. This paper is a result of my shock and frustration at the current state of literature as well as my lifelong love of talking about things that make other people uncomfortable.

I hope this gives you some understanding of what brought me to this particular research. Additionally, I think it's important to recognize the privilege of my identities. I am a white, able-bodied, cis-gender woman, and I have never personally experienced housing insecurity or been unable to

access the products and facilities I need to manage my period.

### **Introduction**

Issues of women's health have historically been overlooked in academic scholarship. Currently, there is a severe lack of information and research on menstruation in the houseless population. When conducting formative research, I found very few scholarly works that were dedicated to this topic and had produced meaningful conclusions. Despite the lack of attention from academic writing, there seems to be an understanding among popular media sources that menstruating while experiencing houselessness is an important issue deserving more attention.<sup>1</sup> Because popular media often reflects and influences the views of society, it is interesting to see the difference in the representation of houseless menstruation in popular media compared to that in academic scholarship. This essay will attempt to determine some of the key themes found throughout online magazine articles from a feminist perspective.

I conducted a literature review, examining what is currently published in

that 'home' is not necessarily a physical space.

<sup>1</sup> While the term homeless may be more familiar and common, houseless is used throughout this essay because it recognizes

scholarly writing about houseless menstruation. I then utilized content analysis of articles published in popular media about houseless menstruation. I found that the articles did an excellent job of explaining the wide variety of problems experienced by houseless menstruators, however they were not as inclusive as they should have been, specifically in regard to gender. I argue that had these articles been informed by feminist theory, they would have done a better job at representing and serving this population. More scholars need to participate in research and discourse around houseless menstruation because theory-based solutions will be more effective in solving this prevalent problem.

### **Formative Research**

As previously mentioned, there is very little scholarly knowledge of the experiences of houseless menstruation. I found no articles that specifically investigated the topic, however, I found a few articles that focused on houseless women where the topic of menstruation was raised, however briefly. One article from 2017 looked at body image among houseless women, and menstruation was brought up. One of the main body image influencers for houseless women was the shame of menstruation and difficulty

avoiding shame and stigma. The researchers found that lack of access to hygiene products correlated with lower body image (Mitchell & Ramsey, 2017). Stigma heavily influences the separate experiences of menstruation and houselessness, so, logically, this stigma would be compounded among people who simultaneously experience houselessness and menstruation.

For houseless people who menstruate, one of the main sources of shame and stigma likely stems from the inability to manage menstruation. As previously mentioned, menstruation must be kept secret to avoid societal judgment and embarrassment. Houseless people may not be able to access necessary hygiene products or follow recommended hygienic practices while menstruating. In a study by Ensign (2000), some houseless women reported that it was sometimes difficult to use menstrual products while houseless. While there was no explanation in the article, based on information about menstruation in developing nations, it could be hypothesized that this is because of a lack of access to clean water and sanitary facilities such as bathrooms and showers. Due to financial burdens, houseless individuals may also resort to stealing menstrual products when they cannot afford them, or when they

cannot access them from organizations and shelters that serve them (Ensign, 2000). Along with feelings of shame and stigma, if an individual is unable to effectively manage menstruation, their risk of developing reproductive tract infections increases. A review done by Sumpter and Torondel (2013) found that there was a correlation between menstrual hygiene management and infection, however, this correlation could not be deemed significant due to the small sample size.

Similar to my own findings, in 2017, Parrillo (2017) called the lack of knowledge on houseless menstruation a public health emergency and stated that “Although commonly reported in underdeveloped nations, [their] Google Scholar search for menstrual hygiene management in the United States homeless women revealed sparse mention of this pervasive health concern” (p. 14). Sumpter and Torondel (2013) also concluded that there is not enough existing research to understand how menstruation influences women’s [author’s terminology] lives and the possible benefits women would experience by improving menstrual health management. When data is collected on the topic of menstruation, it is often collected from a narrow demographic. For example, Hennegan,

Shannon, and Schwab (2018) found that menstrual data was collected from predominantly wealthy, urban, and educated individuals in developing countries such as Ethiopia, India, and Nigeria. Many of the articles also represented incredibly small populations, with sample sizes often being less than 100. Finally, none of the scholarship found in my review recognized the experiences of people who menstruate and do not identify as women.

## **Methods**

I used feminist media analysis on thirteen different articles published online by *Bustle*, *CNN*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Forbes*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *HuffPost*, *LA Times*, *Ms. Magazine*, *Paper Magazine*, *Teen Vogue*, and *Yes Magazine*. To produce my sample of articles, I searched Google using the terms “homeless,” “homelessness,” “houseless,” “houselessness,” “menstruation,” and “period.” This search generated thousands of results including different blogs, organizations, and news websites. To narrow my sample, I selected only those articles from online magazines and newspapers that I believed were well known and had been successfully publishing work for many years. In my initial search, I searched for and selected

articles that specifically included the terms “homeless,” “houseless menstruation,” and “period.” I made this a priority because I found that many of the articles published in scholarly journals did not directly address houselessness *and* menstruation while conducting formative research.

It was important that the popular media that I analyzed were focused on the specific topic. However, this still yielded fewer results than desired. So I expanded the search terms to include articles that referenced “period poverty” and “menstrual equity,” two dominant discursive frames in public writing on this issue. Period poverty is commonly defined as lacking access to necessary menstrual hygiene products and facilities (Global Citizen). Menstrual equity is defined as having access to clean, safe, and affordable menstrual hygiene products and facilities (Women’s Voices). Both of these terms are commonly used when discussing issues of menstruation faced by economically disadvantaged people and are therefore relevant to this research. Additionally, all the articles I used appeared on the first two pages of the Google search results, suggesting that they were the most relevant and popular articles on the subject. Finally, each article was published between 2015 and 2020. So

the information was generally reflective of the current state of the problem.

Before reading the articles, I determined a series of questions to help guide my coding and analysis. The first question, what are the articles talking about, was very broad and mainly used to help determine if the articles were suitable for this research. The next few questions were focused on the experiences that I anticipated might be described in the articles. How do people manage menstruation? What are the comorbidities? What are other associated problems? Finally, the last set of questions was intended to critique the actual dialogue of the articles. Who is writing about this problem? Who is being written about? Who isn’t being written about? And who is the intended or expected audience? I took detailed notes while reading the articles and organized these notes by aligning them with the question(s) they answered. After doing this I identified emergent themes and patterns existing across the articles and determine themes.

## **Findings**

### ***The Cycle of Stigma***

The first theme that I found across all of the articles was the “Cycle of Stigma.” Each article examined different ways that the general stigma or taboo

surrounding periods affects the lives of houseless people. Menstruation is not a topic often discussed publicly because many people have been socialized to believe that it is a private or secret matter (Kerkham, 2010). In fact, because menstruation is so taboo, a recent survey showed "...that there are 5,000 slang words used to refer to menstruation in 10 different languages..." (Sharma, 2019, para. 15). Okamoto and Molland (2019) writing for *CNN* published an article reporting that "stress and shame were the most common emotions that [students across the U.S.] associated with menstruation" (para. 3). This shame is magnified among houseless people due to the shame of being houseless, the shame of not having a menstrual product, and the shame of not being able to afford a menstrual product. Shame leads to people not discussing periods or menstruation, which means that many houseless individuals are not asking for the products they desperately need. Finally, when people don't ask for the products, the products are not donated and the whole cycle continues again (McNamara, 2017). Another article published by *HuffPost* echoed this point noting that, "The fact that menstruation is a taboo topic, to begin with, means that people who are able to help, often aren't even aware that such a vast need

exists" (Goldberg, 2015, para. 7). An interviewee in a *Cosmopolitan* article by Moore (2015) noted that menstrual products like tampons and pads are not donated as frequently or in as great a quantity as most other donations to women's shelters. This cycle of shame may affect all people who menstruate. However, the articles note that these effects disproportionately impact houseless people.

### ***Comorbidities***

Another theme across all the articles were discussions of additional problems experienced by houseless people who menstruate. Every article cited different examples of reciprocal effects associated with menstruation and houselessness, such that the presence of either problem heightens the negative effects of the other. Commonly mentioned were issues of pain and discomfort that typically accompany menstruation. Pain from cramps and/or headaches was mentioned as a menstrual problem that can worsen due to houselessness because houseless people are often unable to access pain reducing medications (Moore, 2015). Another source of pain can be caused by infections, such as Urinary Tract Infections (UTI), which are more likely to occur for multiple reasons among

houseless people who menstruate. One reason given by an interviewee in an article published by *HuffPost* was that houseless people have less access to bathrooms, and more specifically showers. Not bathing or cleansing regularly during menstruation can increase a person's risk of developing infections (Goldberg, 2015). Jennifer Weiss-Wolf gave another reason for infection in an interview with *Harper's Bazaar* noting that people experiencing poverty and houselessness may resort to reusing supplies, like old clothes, or wearing tampons and pads longer than recommended because they have no other choice (Kosin, 2017). Both of these choices can increase the risk of infection. Using a tampon for too long is especially dangerous as it could result in Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) which can quickly become fatal (Meadows-Fernandez, 2017).

Articles also noted that periods can become irregular due to the stress of menstruation and houselessness. This was the experience for one interviewee in an article by McNamara (2017) published in *Teen Vogue*. High levels of stress have the potential to influence a person's hormones which can result in irregular menstruation. Stress is often caused by uncertainty and there are many uncertainties that houseless people

who menstruate experience. This could include uncertainty about where to sleep, eat, or use the bathroom. Stress can also increase due to medical issues such as pain and infection and the cycle of stigma, both mentioned previously.

### ***The Cost of Menstruating***

All these physical problems can result in other problems such as missing opportunities, specifically school and work. Menstruation and houselessness as separate difficulties can negatively impact a person's ability to attend school or work, and when a person experiences both simultaneously their attendance may decrease more (McNamara, 2017). This is due to limited access to resources to manage menstruation and the associated physical problems compounded with the influence of negative stigma and shame surrounding periods and houselessness. However, houselessness does not just cause menstruation to be more difficult to manage, menstruation also makes houselessness more difficult to escape because of the missed opportunities. Less educated individuals are more likely to be houseless. So are people who lose a job due to frequent absences and people who are not able to make interviews. In this way, menstruation perpetuates houselessness just as

houselessness worsens the experiences of menstruation.

Missed opportunities are not the only cost of menstruating while houseless. The actual financial burden of menstruation places significant strain and stress on houseless individuals. In a series of interviews Weiss-Wolf and Epstein-Norris (2017) conducted for *HuffPost*, multiple houseless women reported that period products were impossible to afford. Multiple factors influence a person's ability to purchase period products, one of the main ones being the tampon or "pink tax," which taxes menstrual products as luxury goods, and is still in place in 35 U.S. states (Weiss-Wolf, 2019; Magistretti, 2019). The tampon tax places a financial burden on all people who menstruate, but the impact of the tax is magnified among the houseless. Additionally, products like tampons and pads are often not covered by SNAP (commonly known as food stamps) and Medicaid because they are not seen as necessary (Little, 2015; Sharma, 2019). These programs are put in place to specifically help people who struggle financially. By excluding menstrual products, these programs are assisting the problem not the people.

### ***Managing Menstruation***

The final theme discussed across all articles was describing how houseless people manage menstruation. Two ways to manage menstruation that were often mentioned in conjunction were stockpiling products when they were available and rationing products. As mentioned previously, houseless individuals have difficulty with purchasing menstrual products and with finding organizations that will supply them with products. These people may be faced with an incredibly difficult choice to purchase a box of tampons or pads or purchase food for the night (McNamara, 2017). There are also examples of organizations that provide people with a set or limited number of period products (Moore, 2015). This is problematic because it could, and often does, result in people making dangerous choices concerning their health such as rationing menstrual products. As mentioned previously, some are forced to use only one tampon or pad a day which dramatically increases their risk of developing infections. Aside from health concerns, rationing products could result in people bleeding through their clothing which can make them feel ashamed, decrease their confidence, and cause increased stress about hiding and removing stains on their clothing.

Another way houseless people manage menstruation is by using alternatives to products specifically designed for menstruation. When people run out of their supply, they are forced to turn to other resources such as paper towels, toilet paper, napkins, and old clothing like shirts and socks (Upadhye, 2017). These are, quite obviously, not effective solutions. First, there are questions of sanitation and hygiene, especially when potentially repurposing and reusing old clothing. If these items are not properly sanitized, the person could end up with a serious infection. Additionally, none of these products were designed to absorb blood and uterine lining the way a tampon or pad is. Using products like these could cause people to bleed through. Even if they do not bleed through, the person may be in a constant state of worry about whether or not they are staining their clothing and inadvertently telling the world that they are on their period.

### **Solutions**

Recently, more articles are focusing on the fight for menstrual equity. Older articles were simply trying to highlight an overlooked problem. Now that more people are aware of the inequity, there has been more of a focus on solutions. Many articles mentioned organizations

that have been founded with the specific intent to serve houseless people who menstruate and other, older, organizations with programs supporting houseless people since learning about the issue. Organizations like “Cora” and “L.” produce safe period products and will donate one box of period products to houseless people for every box sold (Magistretti, 2019). Other organizations like “Helping Women Period” and “Distributing Dignity” collect and distribute products to houseless menstruators (Meadows-Fernandez, 2017). Many of these organizations were founded in the last ten years and have grown quite rapidly as society has become more aware and more concerned with the plights of houseless people who menstruate.

Other articles noted that in order to remedy this issue of accessibility, a systematic change is necessary. While individuals and organizations donating period products to those who need them is incredibly important and powerful work, the problem will not disappear until there is no longer a need for these products to be donated. Many organizations like “Period Equity” founded by Jennifer Weiss-Wolf and “Period.” founded by Nadya Okamoto are fighting to pass legislation that would remove the tampon tax and make period

products free in government-funded spaces like schools and public restrooms. Larger, progressive cities like Los Angeles have already made strides, passing legislation that requires public schools provide low-income students with free products (Barajas, 2019). Radical systemic change needs to occur that will provide everyone with access to the products and facilities they need to live hygienic and dignified lives.

One of the main conclusions I came to during the process of this research is that none of the previously mentioned themes are experienced separately from the others. Indeed, while I address each discretely in this essay, they each compound and interact with one another in ways that cause menstruation to be uniquely challenging for the houseless. Menstruation, houselessness, stigma, shame, physical difficulties, missed opportunities, the way one manages menstruation, all of these experiences and more are intertwined. When looking at representations of houseless menstruation it is not possible and not useful to look at each theme's individual influence, rather, it is necessary to look at the complete experience and how each theme affects and is affected by the others.

### **Politics of Representation**

### **Who isn't Represented?**

Generally, the dialogue surrounding menstruation centers cis-women and largely ignores people who do not identify as women. When examining these thirteen articles, I found that there was little to no recognition of non-binary and trans people, in regards to both who was writing the articles and who the articles were being written about. Only six of the articles specifically mentioned non-binary, trans, or gender-nonconforming people in some way (Barajas, 2019; Kosin, 2017; Meadows-Fernandez, 2017; Sharma, 2019; Upadhye, 2017; Weiss-Wolf, 2019). However, even though these authors recognized that menstruators are not exclusively cis-women, the majority of their articles gave focus to cis-women. No more than one, maybe two, sentences addressed the experience of non-binary, trans, and gender-nonconforming folks. Additionally, these identities were often quite literally parentheticals in the articles. Upadhye (2017) wrote "If you're a woman (or a trans man or anyone who menstruates)..." in an article for *Bustle* (para. 1). Placing trans men and all other menstruators inside the parenthesis situates these identities as secondary to, or less important than cis-women in the menstrual movement.

A few authors did a better job of including trans and non-binary people in their discussion of menstruation. Jennifer Weiss-Wolf (2019) dedicated a short paragraph to all people who menstruate and recognized that the current movement often excludes trans and gender-nonconforming people from the conversation. The entire article was written as a call to action for changes that need to be made within the U.S. in general and within the menstrual movement. Weiss-Wolf (2019) is a prominent voice in the menstrual equity movement, and I argue that she made this statement in large part due to her deep knowledge of the movement and the feminist theory that supports it. It is apparent that most if not all of the other authors did not have this extensive knowledge of menstrual equity or feminist theory.

Finally, I found it interesting that one article briefly mentions trans and non-binary individuals and how they "...continue to be marginalized in every way" (Sharma, 2019, para. 15). Although the author recognizes this marginalization, they do not offer additional insights as to why this is or what should be done to change it. Recognition of injustice is simply not enough, action must be taken to stop the injustice. In this article, as well as all of

the other articles, it is not enough to simply recognize that trans, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming people menstruate. The authors must dig deeper by actively including representations of these experiences and examining the additional barriers that are had by gender-nonconforming houseless menstruators.

### **Who is Writing?**

I experienced quite a bit of discomfort when attempting to label the authors in some way. The purpose of determining their identities was to discover whether or not the articles I had read were written by a diverse group of individuals who were able to represent different groups and identities within the menstrual movement. I will admit I went into this exercise with a bias due to what I considered less than adequate representation within the articles themselves. However, even with this bias, as a feminist scholar, I was not comfortable labeling strangers without at least a few guiding ideas. First, I would use only the information that was presented on the magazine's website or in the article itself. While searching for the authors might have given me more insight into who they were, if they had wanted readers to have that information it would have been included in their

biography. Also, by choosing to examine only the biographies available on the magazine website, I was able to guarantee that I was, in fact, reading about the author and not about someone else with the same name. Second, I would not make assumptions based on the author's biography or photograph. This meant that I would use gender-neutral pronouns unless the biography specifically used gendered language. I would not assume race or ethnicity unless it was specifically stated, and I would not assume socioeconomic status, specifically housing status unless it was specifically stated.

Even with these guidelines, it was rather difficult attempting to determine the identities of the authors of these articles for many reasons. First, most author biographies do not focus on the many complex identities of the individual, but rather their accomplishments and areas of work and interest. One exception to this was the *Forbes* author Magistretti (2019) who stated in their bio that they were visually impaired. No other author specifically stated any of their identities. Only two authors, Julia Barajas (2019) and Janet Upadhye (2017), used she, her, hers pronouns in their biographies. However, based on prior readings and work, I was aware that Jennifer Weiss-Wolf (2019),

who authored two articles, and Nadya Okamoto (2019) both identify as female. None of the authors identified themselves as members of specific racial or ethnic groups or socioeconomic class. However, again based on prior readings, I was aware that Nadya Okamoto (2019) experienced housing insecurity for a time in her childhood which inspired her to go into this work. It was not surprising to me that the authors did not disclose this information as it is private and has the potential to incite negative criticisms from their online audience. However, as a researcher looking at these articles through a feminist lens, I think it would be beneficial for the authors to share the parts of their identities that brought them to this work and influenced their writing.

One unexpected finding from looking at the author biographies was a better understanding of certain authors' specialties and educational background. Some of these specialties included popular books, Netflix shows, rape crisis, drug policy, the tampon tax, poverty and inequality, sex and relationships, consumer technology, and accessibility. This was an incredibly wide range of interests, however, some of these interests gave me better insight into why the author chose to write about houseless menstruation and what

aspects of houseless menstruation they chose to focus on.

### **Who is Reading?**

For this section, I will focus specifically on *Cosmopolitan*, *Teen Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Ms. Magazine*. Each of these publications has both an intended audience and an actual audience. The intended audience is who the magazines state they are writing for. For example, *Cosmopolitan* specifically writes for young women, *Ms. Magazine* writes for feminists of all ages, and *Harper's Bazaar* calls itself "... a daily resource for the modern woman" (Cosmopolitan, 2020a; Ms. Magazine 2020b; Harper's Bazaar 2020). Based on these descriptions it is easy to assume that the content published by these media sources is intended for young people, more specifically, young, liberal women.

Unsurprisingly, the actual audience—which is represented by the demographic data—matches this description pretty well. For each of these magazines, the data showed that their audiences were predominantly made up of women. The median age for each magazine differed, however, the majority of readers were between 18 and 40 years old. Readers of *Harper's Bazaar* had a median income of over \$100,000 and *Cosmopolitan* readers

have a median income of about \$66,000 (Harper's Bazaar, 2019; Cosmopolitan 2020b). *Ms. Magazine* reported that 78% of their readers are homeowners (2020). Finally, about 77% of *Cosmopolitan's* audience reported that they are either currently in college or were once in college (2020b). While there was no data on the political leanings of the audience, it can be assumed that because these sources generally publish liberal content their readers are probably also liberal, or at the very least concerned with social justice.

Based on both the intended audience and the actual audience, the typical reader of *Cosmopolitan* or any of the other publications is probably a young, well-educated, middle class, socially conscious woman. Not only is this reflected in the demographic data and the stated intended audiences, but also in many of the articles published on the websites that center the experiences and interests of this type of person. Of course, I highlight these specific media sources because they published articles that centered the experiences of houseless menstruators, but houseless menstruators are certainly not a large percent of either audience and their stories are outliers on these websites. This brings up an entirely new set of questions starting with why do these

articles exist, what is their intent, and what are the possible outcomes?

### **Why do These Articles Exist?**

Are articles about houseless menstruators being published because they are the stories the actual audience wants to read or is it an attempt to expand the intended audience? Although it is unlikely that the media sources are attempting to expand their intended audience to include houseless and low-income people—because capitalism—it’s certainly something worth thinking about. Simply publishing one or two articles that center a group is not enough to bring that group into the discussion, especially not when it is an extremely marginalized group. Of course, representation is vitally important, however, accessibility is just as important in this case. In order to truly expand the audience, big changes would need to be made at a systemic level. Low-income people would need to have the leisure time that accompanies financial security, allowing them time to seek out and read these articles. They would also need to gain access to the necessary technology and appropriate education not only to read but comprehend the articles as well. For these reasons and many more, we can conclude that these articles were not

published with the intention of expanding the current audience demographics and are more likely written because the topic is interesting to the actual audience.

### **What is the Intent of These Articles?**

The most probable answer to this question is to get people to read the articles, click the link, view the advertisements, and generally make money. Young, liberal, socially conscious women have shown interest in issues surrounding menstruation, as it is a topic they can relate to, and therefore, would probably be interested in reading an article about houseless menstruation. Although making money is the biggest driving force to publish any article, these media sources could publish articles about anything and they chose to center houseless menstruators. Many of these magazines and authors claim to be committed to social justice in some way, shape, or form, so it is likely that this is the secondary intention of these articles.

### **What are the Possible Outcomes?**

This is it, the big question: are these articles helping or harming the community of houseless menstruators? It would be easy to argue either side, so that is exactly what I’m going to do. These articles could definitely have a

positive impact on houseless menstruators. They bring awareness to an issue that not many people know about or think about. Even better, the people reading these articles most likely have access to resources they could use to serve the community—if they chose to do so. On the other hand, for many of these articles, there is no way to know if the community is benefiting from the publication of their stories. We, the readers, do not know if the community is given access to these articles or if they are receiving any of the profit that has been made by these media outlets. Without this knowledge, it is easy to conclude that the authors and magazines are exploiting houseless menstruators by profiting off of their experience.

Is there a way to publish these articles without exploiting houseless menstruators and other marginalized communities? I am inclined to say yes. I would like to see a statement at the end of the articles saying something to the extent of “the magazine will donate a portion of the profit made by the article to a menstrual equity organization.” There could also be a link to different menstrual equity organizations that the readers could follow in order to get involved in the movement. *HuffPost*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Bustle* each included a link with a statement

encouraging readers to donate at the end of the articles (Goldberg, 2015; Kosin, 2017; Moore, 2015; Upadhye, 2017).

The addition of scholarly research and theory in this conversation could have many potential benefits. Academic discourse could lead to a more diverse and inclusive understanding of who menstruates. Scholarly research is almost guaranteed to be more ethical than the media articles examined in this section. This is largely because scholars are required to receive IRB approval for any research they conduct in order to ensure that the research is ethical and that vulnerable populations, like houseless people, are protected. Additionally, articles published by scholars would ideally be informed by theory and include theoretical constructs like the cue to action, increasing the effectiveness of the research.

### **Conclusion**

There is an urgent need for more academic scholars to research and write about houseless menstruation. Most of what is known about houseless menstruators has been researched and published by popular media sources instead of academic scholars. This has caused the discourse to center cisgender women and almost completely ignore the experiences of non-binary and trans

menstruators. As feminist scholars it is our responsibility to examine and bring to light the experiences of all houseless

menstruators in order to solve the problems associated with houseless menstruation.

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