

MENSTRUAL TROLLS UNDER A POLITICAL BRIDGE:

A FEMINIST CRITICISM OF

PERIODS FOR PENCE

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BY:

BERKLEY DAWN CONNER

ADVISOR: DR. KRISTEN L. MCCAULIFF

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Chapter One:

INTRODUCTION

After two months of amending, followed by a 37-13 Senate vote and a 60-40 House vote in favor, on March 24, 2016, former Indiana Governor Mike Pence signed House Enrolled Act 1337 into law. The law, authored by former Indiana Representative Casey Cox and co-authored by Indiana Representatives Peggy Mayfield, Ronald Bacon, and Chris Judy, serves to mitigate the conservative fear that women often seek abortions after they have learned of a fetus' genetic makeup. In other words, Indiana Republicans are concerned that, too often, women seek abortions because they are unhappy with the fetus' race or sex, or fear that the future child may be born with genetic anomalies. As such, HEA 1337 strengthens the severity of Indiana's existing abortion laws in three major ways. It prohibits abortion on the basis of race, sex, or diagnosis of disability; enhances informed consent provisions by adding new information that an abortion provider must impart to a woman seeking an abortion; and adds a requirement that the remains of any miscarriage or abortion be cremated or buried (Tuttle, 2016). Pence, who was nationally recognized for his social conservatism following his promotion of Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act in 2015, believes the law to be a "comprehensive pro-life measure," and claims that HEA 1337 guarantees the "dignified final treatment of the unborn" (Schleifer, paras. 1-2). While the law does serve to police the grounds on which women can seek abortion services, HEA 1337's measure regarding interment generated the most outrage.

Because fertilized eggs can be released and expelled during a woman's period, any period has the potential to be a technical miscarriage. Enter Periods for Pence, a campaign started by Carmel, Indiana resident Laura Shanley, which was initially housed on Facebook and then

extended to Twitter. Both social media platforms exist mostly to relay the “meat” of Periods for Pence to the public: the phone calls. Since March 24, 2016, the women of Periods for Pence have made calls, straight to the office of Pence himself, to let him know about their menstrual cycles, just to make sure they will not be prosecuted in light of the new law. Shanley transcribes these phone conversations for “likers” to read.

The phone calls made on behalf of Periods for Pence are funny, tongue-in-cheek, sarcastic, and biting, but the campaign is not all fun. On the contrary, Periods for Pence launched to raise awareness about the unconstitutional nature of HEA 1337 in hopes that it will be struck down. In other words, Periods for Pence is not trying to *raise awareness* about periods or abortion, it is trying to persuade lawmakers to *actually change* the law, and is using periods to do so.

This thesis examines the discourse on Periods for Pence’s Facebook and Twitter pages. I analyze this text from a feminist perspective, looking at the strategies the women of Periods for Pence use in an effort to enact policy change. Therefore, in this thesis, I answer the following questions:

RQ1: How does Periods for Pence establish the rhetorical relationship between corporeal protest and policy change?

RQ2: How does Periods for Pence invite the public to make the connection between menstruation and abortion?

Finally, scholarship involving feminist criticism is often divided into “waves,” implying that there are different places and times to practice certain feminist strategies. I argue that these strategies and time periods overlap. Thus, I also seek to use this case study as a place to examine:

RQ3: How does *Periods for Pence* exemplify the blending of second and third-wave feminist theory and activism?

In order to answer these research questions, this thesis is organized as follows. The analysis of *Periods for Pence* begins with a rationale for this project in Chapter One. The literature review begins in Chapter Two and includes a discussion of academic inquiries into issues of menstruation and concludes with rhetorical queries of feminist activism. In Chapter Three I outline the critical bent that orients this project by first discussing the purpose of feminist rhetorical criticism and then exploring second and third-wave approaches to feminist theory. I also note theoretical work that argues for a blending of these approaches. I apply a blended second and third-wave feminist theory to *Periods for Pence* in Chapter Four to reveal the protest strategies used by the members of the campaign. Finally, in Chapter Five I provide my concluding thoughts and the implications of this project.

Rationale

Periods for Pence warrants rhetorical study for three key reasons. First, the campaign is positioned within an overarching cultural moment where women's fight for reproductive health care justice and equality is becoming more mainstream. Second, *Periods for Pence* is part of a larger movement by activists who use their bodies for protest and can illuminate the way(s) in which periods are used by activists as a political tool to encourage legislative change. Third, studying this campaign can contribute to the work of academic researchers who seek to further understand corporeal elements of protest rhetoric.

First, women's reproductive health, specifically regarding both abortion and menstruation, is having a cultural moment. This is largely due to the recent surge in state and federal legislation of women's reproductive rights. Within the first two months of the year 2015,

100 bills were introduced in the United States that intended to restrict women's access to abortion (Culp-Ressler, 2015). In July 2015, The Center for Medical Progress's infamous "Planned Parenthood videos" led to the questioning of Planned Parenthood's ethics in their fetal tissue donation practices which spurred promises of the federal defunding of Planned Parenthood from 2016 presidential hopefuls such as Ted Cruz, Carly Fiorina, and Donald Trump. The videos were argued to be the inspiration for multiple instances of property damage to various Planned Parenthood facilities and a shooting at a Planned Parenthood in Colorado Springs by Robert Dear Jr. that left nine wounded and three dead (Goldberg, 2015). In 2016, pieces of anti-abortion legislation that sought to control doctors who provide abortions as well as medical procedures that occur before, during, and after an abortion is performed in states including Oklahoma, Texas, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Indiana received national attention for their severity (Domonoske, 2016).

Attempts to legislate abortion have been met with fervent protest, which has led to much media attention and virtual activism. In response to the Center for Medical Progress' videos, the Planned Parenthood Action Fund launched their "Stand with Planned Parenthood" campaign to educate the public about Planned Parenthood's services, practices, and ethics as well as garner support, monetary or otherwise, for the organization in the wake of the threat of federal defunding. The "Stand with Planned Parenthood" campaign sells merchandise, offers a filter for Facebook profile photos, has seen support from celebrities and politicians like Lena Dunham and Hillary Clinton, and continues to enjoy much traffic on Twitter via their hashtag, #standwithpp (Pearson, 2015). Additionally, rallies and various other campaigns have been held and started across the country to demonstrate frustration with anti-abortion legislation. Texas citizens were met by pro-choice activists at the Supreme Court in March 2015 in hopes that the Court would

strike down Texas House Bill 2 that aimed to close the majority of abortion clinics in the state. Protestors used #stopthesham to document the protest on Twitter, and the hashtag was used by Senator Bernie Sanders, Black Lives Matter, and Planned Parenthood (Riotta, 2016). Oklahoma, North Carolina, and other states in the country have housed various protests and rallies, often occurring outside each state's capitol building, as a result of similar legislation. These rallies bring together protestors who urge the government to “stay out of my vagina” and support Planned Parenthood, some even dressed as giant uteruses (Lachman, 2015).

In addition to anti-abortion legislation and its accompanying protest, menstruation is also getting a fair amount of attention in the socio-political spotlight. In January 2016, President Obama became the first president to speak publicly about menstruation when he was interviewed by YouTube star Ingrid Nilsen about the luxury tax (an extra tax typically reserved for non-essential or otherwise expensive, frivolous items) on menstruation products in 40 states. In the interview, Nilsen asked Obama why he thought such a tax existed. Obama responded that he believed it could have something to do with the fact that men were at the helm regarding the creation of the tax laws (Newton, 2016). Since the interview, popular media sites have erupted with stories about the so-called tampon tax. The most notable of these pieces of journalism is perhaps Jones' (2016) *Newsweek* cover story, which served as an exposé on all things tampon tax, menstruation shaming, and menstrual health. In her piece, Jones notes that the tampon tax is not just an annoyance for women. In most cases, it represents a barrier to essential health care. Jones elucidates that homeless and low-income women in the U.S. are affected most by the tampon tax because menstrual products cannot be purchased with food stamps. In these instances, women either opt to use some other, often unsanitary, product to stem their bleeding, they bleed into their clothing, or they sell their food stamps in order to afford menstrual products.

Falling back on one of these options leaves women and girls vulnerable to social discrimination, forces young girls to drop out of school, and can cause various serious health complications, including death (Jones, 2016). Perhaps this is why, Jones explains, *NPR* called 2015 “the year of the period,” and *Cosmopolitan* deemed it “the year the period went public.”

While the most notorious instances of protest of the tampon tax have occurred outside of the United States, they have given way to a particular type of embodied feminist protest. In March 2015, Canadian artist Rupi Kaur posted a photo of herself fully clothed with a period stain on her sweatpants to Instagram and the image was “accidentally” removed by the site twice, sparking national conversation; Kaur was eventually allowed to keep her photo posted to the site (Shanghani, 2015). In July 2015, musician Kiran Gandhi ran the London Marathon while visibly free-bleeding (intentionally menstruating without the use of menstruation products) to raise awareness about women’s lack of access to menstruation products and to discourage period shame (Evans, 2015). And in November 2015, students Charlie Edge and Ruth Howarth free-bled outside the Houses of Parliament in London to protest the blocking of a bill that would have removed the value-added tax (the UK equivalent of a luxury tax) from menstruation products (Jackson-Edwards, 2015). Some prominent U.S. figures, like Comedy Central’s Key and Peele and TBS’s Samantha Bee have publicly spoken out against period-shaming and the tampon tax (Jones, 2016). Other notable instances of U.S. protest in the name of menstrual justice have come in the form of awareness campaigns like #happytobleed, #tweetyourperiod, #freethetampons, and #thehomelessperiod.

Just as periods and pregnancy are biologically linked, the feminist activism surrounding abortion and menstruation are linked. Typically, if a woman gets her period it is an indication that she is not pregnant. For this reason, *Periods for Pence* is situated interestingly in the middle

of the national conversation about abortion rights and the national conversation about menstruation justice. Studying the campaign will provide insight into how these two prominent cultural movements are informing such a specific instance of political protest.

Periods for Pence quickly gained popularity and infiltrated the social sphere via online support, instances of in-person activism, and the resulting news coverage, making the campaign one of several that tout the use of the body as a political strategy. Periods for Pence earned 19,000 “likes” on Facebook a mere 11 days after it was created, and continues to garner support and attention (Carter, 2016). Smith (2016) notes that the campaign began on Facebook and eventually moved to Twitter. To date, the Facebook page boasts 95,212 “likes” while the Twitter handle is followed by 6,168 users who also use #periodsforpence in many of their tweets. Mazzoni (2016) argues that one of the most interesting aspects of the campaign is that “an Indiana woman went from watching TV with her husband to mobilizing hundreds — and then thousands — of her peers to fight policy they deemed unjust” in only a couple of hours (para 8).

The campaign is not limited to the Internet; the point of Periods for Pence is to call Pence and let him know about your menstrual cycle. The majority of Periods for Pence’s activism takes place on a much more personal level, so much so that Pence’s office was forced to shut down their phone lines in April 2016 because the office was receiving so many calls about menstruation (Mazzoni, 2016). Additionally, representatives of Periods for Pence endorsed John Gregg, the 2016 Democratic candidate for Indiana governor and Pence’s opponent. On May 28, 2016, the Periods for Pence’s Facebook page endorsed Gregg and his running mate, Representative Christina Hale. Women from the group made appearances at Gregg and Hale’s rallies to voice their support for Pence’s opposition in person (Schillace, 2016).

It did not take long for local and national news sources to catch on to the hype surrounding Periods for Pence's unique form of protest. Local Indianapolis news station, RTV6, reported that Periods for Pence inspired women across the globe to fight against abortion restrictions (Heinz, 2016), *The Huffington Post* described the activism as "flooding" and urged their readers to participate in the campaign with the headline "You Know You Want to Tell Indiana Gov. Mike Pence About Your Period" (Hanson, 2016). *New York Magazine* argued that Period for Pence's brand of "menstrual trolling" was "the best new kind of trolling" and *Triple Pundit* argued the campaign was "the perfect example of spurring change at the policy level" (Rinkunas, 2016, para 5; Mazzoni, 2016, para 6).

Not only did Periods for Pence garner a lot of attention, but it earned its place among other public campaigns that are energizing the feminist movement using menstruation. Similar to Periods for Pence, in February 2016 Kentucky women started the #askbevinaboutmyvag Twitter campaign after Governor Mike Bevin signed a bill requiring women seeking an abortion to first have a consultation (Domonoske, 2016). In November 2015, Irish women tweeted about their periods to Prime Minister Edna Kenney using #repealthe8th as a response to Ireland's strict laws banning abortion (Phipps, 2015). In 2016, after hearing of Periods for Pence, Polish women began calling Prime Minister Beata Szydlo with the details of their menstrual cycles after she voiced support for a complete abortion ban (Eleftheriou-Smith, 2016). The most famous of these campaigns is perhaps #periodsarenotaninsult, which rose to popularity after Donald Trump insinuated GOP debate moderator and former FOX news anchor Megyn Kelly was on her period when she gave him tough questions during the first 2016 Republican debate (Ross, 2015).

Finally, this project addresses a gap in academic research regarding menstruation and protest. Kissling (1996; 2013), Laws (1990), Park (1996), and Woods (2013) have all studied the

ways parents and children discuss menstruation, how girls are socialized to handle menstruation, and the influence of media and advertising on discourse about menstruation. To date, very little rhetorical research exists that interrogates the relationship between menstruation and social justice or menstruation and political protest. Additionally, researchers such as Betlemidze (2015), Hungerford (2015), and McAlister (2015) have all studied how women in particular use their bodies in protest (such research is usually in interest of the Ukrainian protest group FEMEN), but no rhetorical research exists in this area past a focus on how female protestors use obscenity or nudity in protest.

This research gap must be filled because it is vital to consider menstruation when attuning to embodied protest, specifically embodied protest of a feminist nature. MacDonald (2007) asserts that that bodily fluids, including menstrual blood, should be studied in terms of how they can be incorporated into performance because they have social capital in that they incite fear and disgust. Because women's social capital is typically at risk during menstruation, it is important to consider how menstruation interacts with protest to get women what they want out of legislation.

Chapter Two:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Periods for Pence, and the narrative surrounding the campaign, turned menstruation into national news. Because this thesis deals with the link between periods and policy change, I review literature concerning the social construction of menstruation as well as feminist strategies to achieve policy change. I first examine literature that analyzes menstruation's place in the current socio-political climate. This section offers an explanation for why audiences are uncomfortable with menstruation, and argues that menstruation is often a site of oppression and the policing of women's bodies. Because Periods for Pence formed in protest of particular legislation, it makes sense that I next examine scholarship that explores feminist activism. Ultimately, the absence of literature linking menstruation and feminist protest strategies makes the analysis of Periods for Pence necessary.

Periods in Academia

A limited amount of scholarship on menstruation has been published in the field of communication studies. The work that has been done is dated and exists in several areas of concentration, but appears most often in interpersonal studies, typically when scholars are interested in unpacking the nuances of mother-daughter relationships. The interrogation of menstruation as it appears in rhetorical scholarship exists mostly to understand blood and menstrual blood as socially and sometimes politically symbolic, but some rhetorical works aim to draw attention to the ways in which our social understanding of menstruation is impacted by mass media. Additionally, scholarship involving menstruation and its social and political status is quite copious in the fields of sociology, psychology, and anthropology. As such, in this section I

draw from a group of interdisciplinary scholars to provide an overview of the ways in which menstruation and menstruating women and girls have been studied in academia. I explore these concepts in four realms: periods as taboo, periods as marginalizing, period in interpersonal contexts, and periods in protest.

Periods as taboo. To understand menstruation's place in communication studies, it is important to first acknowledge the role of the menstruation taboo. Indeed, the taboo is the locus or catalyst for the majority of scholarly pieces written about menstruation. The existing body of work examining the menstruation taboo reflects scholars' documentation of the way society perceives taboos and the impact such perception has on cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs. The literature surrounding the menstruation taboo was largely developed by sociologists, cultural anthropologists, and rhetorical scholars alike and questions our culture's relationship to menstruation, the media's perpetuation of the taboo, and the taboo's impact on interpersonal relationships.

First, previous work has attributed the menstruation taboo to menstrual blood's similarity to dirt and other pollutants. Indeed, the very reason why the taboo exists is because menstruation is seen as unclean. In her book, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, social anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966) asserts that the menstruation taboo still stands because of society's association of menstruation with a bodily type of pollution. Thomas (2007) unpacks Douglas' work and explains that "sexual pollution and bodily pollution are understood as symbols which represent the relations between parts of society and mirror hierarchy" (p. 67). In their book *Blood Stories: Menarche and the Politics of the Female Body in Contemporary U.S. Society*, critical-cultural scholars Janet Lee and Jennifer Sasser-Ceon (1996) explain that, in order for a society to successfully use the menstruation taboo as a means of controlling

menstruation, women have to be ashamed of their menstruating bodies. To this end, the discourse of the menstruation taboo features language that implies a woman's genitalia is smelly, dirty, or otherwise unsanitary. Douglas asserts that once a woman feels shame related to the dirtiness of her body, a symbolic resemblance exists between the limits of the body and danger to the community, freeing society to intervene and manage the body for the "good" of the community. If a society can control bodily pollution, then societal happenings remain within the grasp of hierarchical control. Thus, cultures normalize social rituals, like the menstruation taboo, that control bodily pollution because these rituals maintain social order.

Douglas' (1966) assertion is also reflected in Kenneth Burke's (1985) theorization of the guilt-redemption cycle, which suggests that individuals must free themselves of pollution to maintain social order. Burke's famous theory offers that the ultimate motivation of humankind is to purge oneself of guilt. Humans experience guilt due to their participation in a socially prescribed hierarchy created through hegemonic ideology and public discourse. The hierarchy represents order or status quo. When an individual recognizes his or her place in the hierarchy but steps out of line, they have become a pollutant, effectively disrupting the social order and ultimately bearing guilt. To return order and control to the social hierarchy, an individual must purge him or herself of guilt through either a process of victimage (scapegoating) or mortification (admitting one's guilt). The sentiment emboldens Douglas' fear, however abstract Burke's conceptualization of pollution may be. Should menstruating women disrupt social order with their menstrual pollution, they must amend the disruption by ridding themselves of the pollutant.

Scholars have found that the intricacies of Western civilization's menstruation taboo are a direct reflection of our culture's attitude toward menstruation. Indeed, the policing of whether

women may discuss or display their periods is indicative of both a fear of menstrual blood and a desire to control it. In her book, *Issues of Blood: The Politics of Menstruation*, sociologist Sophie Laws (1990) explains that the notion that menstruation should be veiled is the foundation of our social practice regarding menstruation. Laws unpacks a lineage of cause and effect, suggesting that because our culture champions a menstruation taboo, the way we interact with and treat menstruating women is inevitably burdened by the taboo. Social constructs and policies that oppress menstruation and menstruating women, such as compact tampons or the menstrual product luxury tax, arise due to our society's discomfort with looking at and talking about periods and period-related concepts.

Scholars also note that, as it exists today, the menstruation taboo is a discursive weapon that threatens women's rights and status. Rhetorical critic Erika Thomas (2007) argues:

The [menstruation] taboo's discourse is used to regulate and control women's bodies and their consumption. Although women mostly entered the public sphere with the first and second waves of the feminist movement, discursive regimes allow the menstruation taboo to continue today limiting their rights as full citizens. (p. 78)

She furthers that the taboo persists despite advances in science and progressive social understanding. While today it is professionally, and in some circles socially, understood that menstruation has transcended its historical stigma as a disease in need of austere medical treatment and should be acknowledged as a healthy, normal bodily function, most people still see menstruation as a problem that should be managed by way of concealment.

Second, the menstruation taboo is perpetuated through the media. Cultural values are, of course, reflected in media that is consumed by the masses, and the menstruation taboo is no exception. Much of the media's attention to menstruation is paid via the marketing of menstrual products and pharmaceuticals that affect menstruation. The perpetuation of the menstruation taboo in the media has been documented mostly by rhetorical scholars, but by psychologists as well.

Rhetorical scholars Elizabeth Arveda Kissling (2013) and Carly Woods (2013) both examine how the modern marketing of oral contraceptives, such as Yaz, Seasonique, and Seasonale, as menstrual suppressors uses Postfeminism as a strategic tool with which to convince women to choose to suppress or eradicate their periods. Kissling offers:

As these ads explicitly claim, the reason to take Seasonique is not for contraceptive utility, but for its other effects: the way it will transform your life by eliminating regular monthly menstruation. In this way, contraceptives become part of the makeover paradigm of postfeminist sensibility. (p. 501)

Similarly, Woods worries, "This is problematic in that the campaigns seem to either mass-produce a need for menstrual suppression where it may not exist or reproduce limited gendered scripts" (p. 279). Both Kissling and Woods contend that such advertisements quite literally capitalize on the menstruation taboo because they sell menstrual suppressing oral contraceptives as drugs that provide women with a choice when it comes to their periods. However, both scholars argue that these advertisements really provide women with an *illusion* of choice, as they sell the idea that women are happier, healthier, and more able when they are free of their periods. Woods argues that, by capitalizing on the illusion of choice, and by proxy the menstruation

taboo, companies that market and sell menstrual suppressors advocate menstruation as something women should combat, reject, and want to live free from.

Marketing strategies similar to those that Kissling (2013) and Woods (2013) expose are also used in the marketing and selling of menstrual hygiene products. Rhetorical scholar Shelley M. Park (1996) highlights that companies that profit from the sale of menstrual hygiene products such as tampons and pads have changed their marketing strategies over time. Advertisements that were once health-oriented – encouraging women to buy their products to maintain a certain standard of health – have more recently become liberation-oriented. Park explains that today “menstrual products [are] marketed to evoke liberation over health because menstruation is still considered unclean and [is] seen as an abnormality” (pp. 160-161). Advertisements such as these depict menstruation as something that a woman should want to free herself from because having a period means deviating from the norm. Consequently, the menstruation taboo is perpetuated because of the suggestion that a natural bodily process, like menstruation, is strange, dirty, or in some way abnormal.

Other scholars have illuminated the impact that the media’s perpetuation of the menstruation taboo has had on society, particularly the way people treat women. Lee (2007) argues that people generally have a problem discussing menstruation and menstrual health because our culture, by way of social practice in popular media, has fed them misinformation about the physiological effects that menstruation have on women. Psychologists Lucia Marván, Rocio Vázquez-Toboada, and Joan Chrisler (2014) explain that “attitudes towards menstruation and stereotypes of menstrual and premenstrual women may contribute to sexism and negative attitudes towards women” (p. 280). Films, television shows, and books tend to depict menstruating women as inconsolable, dirty, cranky, angry, or crazy despite the fact that

menstruation itself does not contribute to such emotional states. Lee asserts that these depictions play a role in shaping the cultural perceptions of women and femininity. As such, the language and imagery used to discuss menstruation in the media gives menstruating women in the real world a negative connotation. Per their mediated portrayals, real menstruating women are thought to be incapable of feeling rational emotions or exhibiting rational behavior and are ostracized – left to deal with menstruation themselves. Lee suggests that this notion can be dangerous considering the global necessity of reform in the realm of menstrual hygiene.

Finally, our culture's attitude toward menstruation affects how women interact with others during and/or about menstruation. Kissling (1996) argues that, because women are socialized to believe their periods should be veiled or eradicated, women's feelings of social discomfort surrounding discussing menstruation are evident through both concealment and the communication taboo. Concealment refers to the belief that menstruation is something that should be hidden; it is exemplified in ways such as a woman keeping tampons in her purse or using products to hide the smell of menstruation. The communication taboo is an extension of concealment, referring to the idea that menstruation should not only be hidden physically, but verbally as well. The communication taboo works in two ways: menstruating women and girls feel as though they cannot discuss their physical state, and women who are not menstruating, as well as men, feel they either cannot discuss menstruation at all, or can only make light of menstruation. Kissling furthers that such a denouncement of menstruation can be especially harmful to young girls who are not yet comfortable with menstruation, as they are at a higher risk to be mocked by their peers, especially those of the opposite sex, and may not feel comfortable asking questions due to the prevailing social stigma surrounding the topic.

Periods as marginalizing. Western culture attaches a negative connotation to menstruation and menstruating women. Consequently, the marginalization of women in various forms is justified because women's bodies are seen as alien or debilitating while men's bodies are seen as the cultural standard. In this section, I draw from work in women's studies, rhetorical criticism, and cultural studies to provide an overview of the scholarship that has linked the perception of menstruation to the oppression of women. I explore this concept in two areas: women's bodies as undesirable, and femininity as inferior.

First, women's bodies are seen as fundamentally different from men's and undesirable in their difference. In her book, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, women's studies scholar Elizabeth Grosz (1994) asserts that differences in bodily areas and development have come to justify the claim that men and women "signify, live, and practice their sexualities and desires" differently (p. 198). Thomas (2007) unpacks this notion when she explains, "[Male and female] characteristics serve to emphasize the difference between men and women and justify social arguments for male dominance, yet such cultural marks are often biologically arbitrary" (p. 72). Grosz acknowledges that while male and female bodies develop differently, and that these developmental differences garner differences in attitudes and responses toward different bodies, the coding of the female body remains constant as "a body which leaks, which bleeds, which is at the mercy of hormonal and reproductive functions" (p. 204).

Women's corporeal difference is seen through a lens of male desirability. Because male bodies are considered the standard, female bodily functions that differ from males' are thought of as undesirable sexually and biologically. Grosz (1994) explains that menstruation in particular is given meaning based on the ideals of male, heterosexual desire as well as maturity:

For the girl, menstruation, associated as it is with blood, with injury and the wound, with a mess that does not dry invisibly, that leaks, uncontrollable, not in sleep, in dreams, but whenever it occurs, indicates the beginning of an out-of-control status that she was led to believe ends with childhood. The idea of soiling oneself, of dirt, of the very dirt produced by the body itself, staining the subject, is a “normal” condition of infancy, but in the case of the maturing woman it is a mark or stain of her future status, the impulsion into a future of a past that she thought she left behind. This necessarily marks womanhood, whatever else it may mean for a particular woman, as outside herself, outside its time . . . and place . . . and thus a paradoxical entity, on the very border between infancy and adulthood, nature and culture, subject and object, rational being and irrational animal. (p. 205)

Second, menstruation is a symbol of femininity, and inherent in our cultural notion of femininity is inferiority and submission. Rhetorical critic Shauna MacDonald (2007) explains that our association of menstruation with female inferiority can be traced back to Aristotle. Janice Delaney, Mary Jane Lupton, and Emily Toth (1988) illuminate that Aristotle linked menstruation to what he perceived to be women's passive role in reproduction, and that he saw menstrual blood as “matter to which no male had contributed life-giving form” (pp. 45-46).

Foundational beliefs such as the notion that women are emotional, immature, and irrational, and that, because of this, they are inferior to men, led to the pathologizing of menstruation as well as the menstrual taboo. These cultural beliefs perpetuated the restriction of women's rights to equality and citizenship in America, despite the fact that the work of feminist scientists such as anthropologist Emily Martin (1991) and science historian Evelyn Fox Keller (1978) has

attempted to quash such beliefs. Fox Keller's work first questioned gender in the scientific community by criticizing the cultural association of *science* with *masculine*, a link that shifts the field to a patriarchal mindset. Martin supports Fox Keller's argument by pointing out the gendered understanding of fertilization. She reconceptualizes the passivity of the egg, and, by extension, femininity, during fertilization and argues that the joining of egg and sperm is a mutual process rather than one dominated by the sperm (i.e., masculinity).

While not too much work on this concept has been done by rhetorical scholars, this type of research links to what some rhetorical critics have done regarding women's breasts. Rhetorical critic Phaedra Pezzullo (2003) contends that women have always been relegated to "bodies" in a negative sense, similar to the way Aristotle deemed women's bodies passive. Pezzullo claims that often women's bodies, in particular breasts, are seen as "non-intellectual, utilitarian extensions of heterosexual men's desires and reproductive needs" (p. 357). For this reason, she claims, campaigns like National Breast Cancer Awareness Month that claim to seek out cures and care for women with breast cancer actually cultivate oppressive rhetoric that detaches the breast from the woman. Pezzullo implores her readers to consider the status of women in body politics and to question the notion that breasts, as is often the case during breast cancer awareness rallies, are allowed to be displayed or talked about only when there is the potential that they will be absent.

Rhetorical critic Nicole Hurt (2009) also examines the role breast cancer awareness campaigns play in the objectifying of women's breasts. She argues that the pink ribbon that has come to be associated with the Susan G. Komen Foundation carries with it colonial discourse that works to deem the colonized degenerative to justify oppression and institute systems of "administration and instruction" (p. 6). In other words, the pink ribbon, while seemingly

unifying, actually otherizes women afflicted with breast cancer by focusing only on her breasts and ignoring the woman to whom they are attached. Hurt (2008) suggests that advertisements devoted to fighting breast cancer employ third-wave feminism to sexualize or diminish women with breast cancer by making their breasts the focus of attention. She observes of the imagery in a “Punch It!” advertisement from the Susan G. Komen foundation that depicts a woman defeating breast cancer with physical violence:

The woman’s body, which as I suggest earlier receives the majority of the attention, is posed rather seductively. Her left shoulder is pulled back and her right shoulder is pushed forward in a twisting motion. It also seems as though she is arching her back. Through these motions, the woman’s breasts become the central focus of her body. The breasts are not merely just “there” either. In fact, her breasts seem to be unnaturally perky as they are pushing through the top of her tank. (p. 20)

Pezzullo’s and Hurt’s work examination of discourse related to breasts, while necessarily different from the work done on periods, reflects similar instances of women’s body parts replacing the women themselves.

Periods interpersonally. A significant portion of the research dedicated to menstruation attempts to understand how menstruation and its social connotation impacts women’s relationships with people and groups. Most of this work has been completed by scholars of interpersonal communication, but a few rhetorical scholars and psychologists have devoted their voices to understanding these relationship dynamics as well. This research exists mainly in the context of mother-daughter relationships.

Kissling (1996) explains that because fathers generally opt out of the menstruation talk with their daughters, mothers are left to carry the discussion. As such, interrogating the nature of mother-daughter relationships during menarche is of great interest to researchers. Public health and interpersonal communication scholars Natoshia Askelson, Shelly Campo, and Sandi Smith (2012) argue that “parenting style is an important factor to consider when examining mothers’ behaviors related to communication about sex topics” because parenting style can impact future parent-child communication about sex-related health topics (p. 440). Negotiating mothering with the anxiety caused by a taboo becomes tricky considering the mother-daughter relationship is one of the most fragile familial relationships. Interpersonal scholar Erin Willer (2007) explains that the mother-daughter relationship is the closest of the parent-adolescent relationships, but is also characterized by the most conflict. The onset of a daughters’ menstruation is one life event that marks a decrease in connectedness between mothers and daughters. Psychologist Cynthia Bishop (1992) explains that this is perhaps because of the risk of self-disclosure in parent-child relationships. She warns that children risk negative consequences when they disclose personal information to their mothers because children typically seek validation about their feelings, actions, or behaviors through self-disclosure and there is a chance they may not receive it. Bishop suggests that, because the menstruation taboo complicates a mother’s willingness to validate feelings or answer questions their young daughters may have about menstruation, a young girl experiencing menarche could yield negative consequences for the overall health of any particular mother-daughter relationship.

Kissling (1996) argues that it is difficult for women to talk to their daughters about this area of women’s health; typically they are more comfortable talking about conception and pregnancy. Theoretically, women must bear the responsibility of discussing menstruation either

with their daughters or with each other, because, as interpersonal scholars Adelaide Haas and Mark Sherman (1982) explain, women are far more likely to see menstruation as an appropriate topic of conversation than men. If women were to stop discussing menstruation altogether, menstruation would likely be ignored into social irrelevancy.

Kissling (1996) notes that the thought of discussing menstruation is often very anxiety-provoking for adults, so many adults with young daughters will either delay this discussion or refuse to engage in this discussion, preferring that the child's teacher or school nurse give the talk instead. This effect of the menstruation taboo can leave young girls unprepared to experience menarche, at best. At worst, a young girl can suffer health problems in the event that she does not feel comfortable discussing menstruation with her parents or other mentors or guardians. Additionally, conversations about menstruation may or may not happen in schools. When they do happen, they typically contain problematic language. For example, rhetorical critic Dacia Charlesworth (2001) explains that when schools teach young girls about menstruation, they do so using language that rhetorically normalizes the process. Girls are taught to think of menstruation as a normal part of their routine, they are reassured that the average, healthy girl menstruates, and they are told menstruation makes a woman. If done incorrectly, this type of normalization can leave girls vulnerable to feelings of inadequacy or immaturity should they compare their experience with menstruation to that of their peers. Kissling furthers that young girls who are unprepared to handle menstruation are also more at risk to disrupt the social standard maintained by the menstruation taboo. These girls may try to talk to their peers about menstruation, and risk feeling embarrassment or shame as a result of bullying that may occur. Because menstruation is, above all else, a health-related bodily function, failing to properly care for oneself during menstruation can yield severe health consequences. As young girls are the

most inexperienced with menstruation, they are the most at risk to fall victim to such health problems. Young girls may try to express their interest in learning about menstruation in subtle and unorthodox ways in order to lessen the difficulty of seeking out information about menstruation.

Periods in protest. The concept of using menstruation as a protest strategy is relatively new, and, thus very little research has been done in this area. However, rhetorical critic Shauna MacDonald's (2007) piece on the transformative potential of menstrual leaks provides interesting insight into the nuances of using menstrual blood as a tool for social and political change. In her piece, MacDonald asserts that Western thinkers have largely ignored bodily fluids because our culture has removed them from the intellectual realm. She contends, however, that bodily fluids should be studied in terms of how they can be incorporated into performance because they are valuable in that they carry taboo. MacDonald explains that bodily fluids like menstrual blood are excellent tools to combat injustice because "fluids transgress boundaries and deconstruct binaries, thereby threatening the current masculine/rational thought systems" (MacDonald, 2007, p. 350). In other words, MacDonald suggests that harnessing the rhetorical power of menstrual blood could allow women to push past the social and political barriers that have relegated their bodies to places of inferiority and gain not only bodily autonomy, but perhaps also cultural respect for their bodies.

Feminist Activism

Scholarly work related to feminist activism in communication studies is fairly extensive and continues to grow as both feminist politics and activist strategies permeate new socio-cultural spheres. Rhetorical studies of feminist activism are typically concerned with the rhetorical functions of specific activist strategies. Such investigations usually focus on how

feminist activists use their bodies as protest tools. Studies of feminist activism also appear frequently within the field of media studies. These studies often inquire about the relationship between feminist activism and social media. In this section, I look to various rhetorical and media scholars to generate a summary of the work that has investigated the nuances of feminist activism. I explore four facets of this scholarship: corporeal activism, online activism, feminist activism and space, and rhetorical strategies of feminist activism.

Corporeal activism. Periods for Pence falls under the umbrella of what is perhaps the most attention-grabbing brand of feminist activism, which involves using the body for rebellious purposes, often referred to in the literature as “corporeal activism.” Because this study seeks to investigate the use of menstruation as a protest strategy, it is important to first highlight the scholarship devoted to corporeal aspects of feminist activism. Menstruation is not the first and certainly will not be the last biological phenomenon used as a strategic protest tool. Despite the fact that embodied protest is the trendy way to protest in the 21st century, women actually have a long history of using embodied protest as a means to create political change. Today, embodied protest is being pushed to new limits, leaving it ripe for academic study. The existing body of work is evidence of rhetorical scholars’ interest in both why women use their bodies as protest tools and what a woman’s body symbolizes when it actually becomes a protest tool.

First, embodied protest typically happens in response to social or political commentary or legislation on women’s bodies. Sultana (2013) asserts that because women are marginalized in every single sphere of life, unique protest methods that involve the body are often the best means of resistance. This is because women’s bodies carry with them a double-edged cultural significance. In most societies, women’s bodies are seen as honorable, pure, and innocent. This is why, typically, women are seen as beings to be cherished, nurtured, and loved. In these same

societies, however, women's bodies are often the site of humiliation, violation, and legislation. Sultana points out that both Foucault and Bourdieu argue that the primary mechanism of dominance operates through manipulation of the body. In other words, the best way to assert power is to physically, or rhetorically, take control of another's body.

Since women are seen as inferior in nearly every part of the world, asserting control over their bodies is all too common. The way to address such oppression, then, is to use the body to respond to it. Sultana (2013) claims that women have often used their bodies to make a point in the form of critical commentary on the status quo. This tradition continues today, as "most political protests are enacted through the body—from marches, to political theatre, to the act of chaining a body to a tree or a building. The body is a key vehicle of protest" (Sultana, 2013, p. 36). Pezzullo (2003) argues that the scope of embodied protest is quite extensive. She claims that utilizing the politics of the body can be and has been used to resist "thinking that reifies a mind/body split, suppression or denial of female agency, and spatial politics of gendered labor" (p. 357). To highlight such injustices against women's bodies, women will often assume the injustices for activist reasons, effectively illustrating the problem in a way that is uncomfortable or even gory to the public.

Second, there is no better example of this radicalized version of embodied female protest than the Hungarian activist group FEMEN. While embodied protest is becoming more popular among feminist activists in the United States, perhaps the most notorious instances of such protest occur outside of the United States, and FEMEN is responsible for the majority. Several rhetorical scholars have recently turned their attention to FEMEN because the group is such an interesting and complex case study of grotesque corporeal protest. The women of FEMEN are controversial because they are relentless in their fight for the liberation of women from all

oppressive institutions and because they display partial nudity while doing so. Hungerford (2015) further claims that FEMEN is representative of a new kind of feminist activism, one that symbolizes a “return of the oppressed” and refuses to adhere to patriarchal norms or the confines of industrialized spaces (p. 361). Her observation suggests that FEMEN has taken Foucault and Bourdieu’s notion of reclamation of the body as rebellious and moved it into the 21st century. Despite the polarizing effect FEMEN has on its audiences, Hungerford submits that the group’s rhetorical power stems from its ability to provocatively transform shame by enacting grotesqueness to engage in their advocacy. The women of FEMEN use their bodies to display a heightened version of oppression. This strategy not only attracts the attention of their oppressors and the world, but draws on the double-edged sword of the politics of women’s bodies to make a point. Betlemidze (2015) explains that what is so intriguing about FEMEN’s activism is that the group is able to “transform the status quo and disrupt hegemonic power structures while offering opportunities to see and act differently” (p. 377). Betlemidze describes one FEMEN protest in particular, during which the protesting women stood in the streets topless and wearing high heels with blood painted down their legs and hangers hanging on their short shorts. Across their breasts were messages supporting the right to have an abortion. This example demonstrates that while a partially nude body may be coded as humiliating or sexual in any other context, in protest a partially nude body tells a story and makes a demand.

Third, while FEMEN utilizes their own particular brand of nudity for their advocacy, nudity is a common theme in corporeal feminist activism. This is likely because women’s naked bodies provoke a strong negative response when they are seen in any context outside of one that is sexual. Sutton (2007) discusses a paradox in Western societies where, while human bodies, especially female bodies, are turned into sexually objectified commodities, naked bodies of

resistance can lead to social outrage and violent punishment. Sultana (2013) suggests that this may be because “nakedness” and “nudity” are coded as separate concepts with different connotations. She explains:

Nakedness simply refers to the body without clothes, nudity entails a level of sexual objectification. Nudity presupposes display. While a nude body is to fulfill desires of consumption of a male gaze, a naked body asserts its agency in the shedding of clothes. (p. 36)

The purposeful removing of clothing for protest implies an autonomy that society fears from women. Because women are so often depicted as nude in advertisements, pornography, etc. for the purpose of male pleasure, when a woman takes off her own clothes in a display of rebellion, the act generates anger because the nakedness is on her own terms.

Finally, while body politics are undoubtedly interesting to study through the lens of corporeal feminist protest, some rhetorical scholars agree that it may also behoove the field to use this “new” brand of feminist activism to study the reactions it garners. McAlister (2015) notes that the questions raised about FEMEN’s brand of “sextremist,” feminist protest are useful for “generating conversations about the political, ethical, and cultural implications of the reactions they generated” (p. 359). Sultana (2013) echoes this sentiment by suggesting that those who research women’s bodies and protest should focus on community reaction because corporeal activism, in its boldness, rarely sees a positive response from the communities in which it takes place. Protest typically occurs to sway public opinion or raise public awareness. As such, it’s worth uncovering how the public responds to such unorthodox displays.

Online activism. The 21st century has seen a shift in where feminists typically protest. Traditionally, public displays of activism have taken place on the streets where activists have

always had the chance to reach the widest audience. This is no longer the case in the digital technology era, and a majority of feminist activists have turned to the Internet for their advocacy efforts. In this section, I draw from rhetorical scholars as well as media scholars to outline why feminists protest online and how this medium aids or hinders their efforts.

First, feminists have turned to the Internet because it may provide them with a safer space to carry out their activism. In their piece about #MyStealthyFreedom, detailing a humorous, online movement by women in hijab, Novak and Khazraee (2014) explain that online protest featuring women's bodies is a hub of debate regarding physical and emotional safety. Some scholars argue that social movements incorporating corporeal elements turn to an online presence because it allows for a semblance of control regarding information shared and, to a degree, safety in numbers. Other women's communities that may not necessarily engage in protest have also found safe spaces on the Internet. For example, Morrison (2014) explains that Mommy Blogs, forums in which mothers share autobiographical accounts of their experiences during motherhood, offer mothers a place to feel safe sharing their vulnerabilities or sensitive information with other mothers they may not necessarily know, but trust nonetheless. This is because the mommy blog acts as a semi-private and supportive community in which to discuss something as highly politicized as mothering. Allan (2014) submits that online blogs can provide women of color a safe outlet through which to express matters related to intersectional feminism that may not be accepted in a more public and white feminist-dominated space. Dias (2003) argues that cyberspace can even provide women with a sense of community for discussion they believe the public may shun, such as pro-anorexia discourse.

Critics of the notion of a "safe" online space for feminist activists often cite the Internet's lack of security as the source of their worry and argue that women could not possibly feel safe

sharing sensitive information, personal narrative, or photos of their bodies, in any form, online. Other scholars note that although communication online does not take place face-to-face, users are still left vulnerable to many of the same social ills that plague in-person conversations.

Political communication scholar Keren Darmon (2014) asserts:

Feminism continues to struggle with issues of privilege in online spaces, namely the struggle for visibility and recognition of women and feminist ideas in the mediated public sphere on their own terms. Online feminist spaces, such as Criado-Perez's "The Women's Room," seek to redress the gender imbalance in the perception and representation of female expertise. At the same time its founder is exposed to threats and torrential abuse on Twitter for campaigning online, in person, and in the mainstream media to maintain women's visibility within the establishment. (p. 701)

While online activism clearly has its benefits and drawbacks, scholars seem to agree that part of what makes online spaces so attractive is what de Laat (2008) refers to as the "assumption of trust." Essentially, users are likely to meet others with similar opinions and interests in online spaces, and assume they can share intimate information with these users in hopes that they will form a supportive bond and will not have to risk any violation of privacy.

Additionally, a shift toward majority online activism may exclude countless women from participating in advocacy efforts. This largely has to do with who is able to access the Internet and who will be accepted into online communities meant for women. Portwood-Stacer and Berridge (2014) explain, "Questions linger as to whether online feminist activism is accessible by and inclusive of working-class and poor women, women of color, queer and trans women, differently-abled women, women in developing countries, and individuals who do not identify as

women” (p. 519). Allan (2014) echoes this concern and submits that online feminist communities often shut down thoughts or suggestions that do not match their own. If the discourse does not fall in line with the normative discourse, it is not welcome. In much the same way as activism that takes place “in person” often leaves out those on the margins of society, the online community risks the exclusion of women who may seek to participate in activism but are either shunned from online communities or physically unable to access these communities.

Finally, online feminist activism appears to be efficient in garnering more support for the activists’ cause. This is partially due to the nature of online media. Social media in particular plays a massive role in essential tasks such as spreading the word about rallies, calling for volunteers, and distributing information about meetings, etc. In their essay detailing the history of change in the SlutWalk protest, rhetorical critics Bonnie Dow and Julia Wood (2014) note that what started as one event in Toronto soon inspired countless grassroots SlutWalk events across the globe due to word of mouth (or perhaps more appropriately, word of type) via social media. Feminist columnist and author Jessica Valenti (2011) notes that, regarding SlutWalks in particular, “the protests have translated online enthusiasm into in-person action in a way that hasn’t been done before in feminism on this scale” (para. 4). Valenti furthers that technology is important to the modern feminist movement because the movement is constantly facing burn-out. Technology is perhaps the future of feminism because it generates excitement by reaching more, and diverse, people. Valenti suggests that online feminist activism is ushering a new era of feminism altogether – one in which feminist anger begins online and then translates to the streets, a single feminist action can make global news, and one comment can spark an entire debate. McVeigh (2013) argues that various demonstrations of feminist activism have taken place solely online, but have helped strengthen the feminist movement nonetheless. She explains

that campaigns aimed at forcing corporations like Facebook to change their policies regarding online abuse, feminist magazines that highlight feminist media, and even simple hashtags are taking the Internet by storm and garnering hundreds of thousands of supporters along the way. While scholars and popular critics agree that online feminism is by no means a perfect solution to a huge problem, they recognize how much the digital age has changed feminist activism and how much it will continue to change feminist activism in the future.

Feminist activism and space. Whether online or in person, feminist activism allows women to claim space in a society or community. Such space is typically either physical, rhetorical, or both. Women use this space to speak out for their causes and to speak out about their own experiences. In this section, I will review various rhetorical critics' work related to space to provide an overview of how feminist activists claim both physical and non-physical space.

First, feminist activism helps women carve out physical and non-physical space for themselves in the public domain. This is, of course, contentious because women are consistently kept from occupying or taught not to occupy space at all. Betlemidze (2015) discusses FEMEN's occupation of physical, public space as a claiming of what has never been theirs. She explains:

The occupying of public spaces by FEMEN activists also creates a gendered dissonance. Historically, public space has been a domain for masculine actions, while feminine actions were mainly restricted to domestic arenas. The high number of predominantly male police workers trying to control many of FEMEN's and other groups' protests worldwide still manifests this principle of masculine dominance over public spaces. By attacking the public spaces of Paris, Kiev, Tripoli, Rome, and other places landmarked by iconic symbols, FEMEN is

subverting uses of urban space and becomes a force of disunity in these settings.

(p. 376)

The simple act of placing women's bodies, often in large numbers, in places like streets, parks, or city corners is a display of rebellion against oppressive, hegemonic structures that have, for so long, kept women out of sight, out of mind.

Not only do feminists rely on occupying physical space to make their faces seen, but much modern feminism relies on the use of counterpublics to reclaim intangible space for women to make their voices heard. In a critique of Habermas' notion of the public sphere (a "space" in which private citizens come together to discuss social problems), Nancy Fraser (1990) conceptualized a *counterpublic*, or a place where marginalized groups come together to discuss social problems (likely related to their marginalization). Fraser claimed that the marginalized were excluded from the public sphere, and so had to create their own version of reality. Pezzullo (2003) argues that, today, it is important to understand the use of counterpublics to interrogate the way feminists in particular create and maintain their own space during protest. Indeed, Dow and Tonn (1993) offer that "feminist counterpublics" provide the "potential to function as a critique of patriarchal modes of reasoning as well as to offer an empowering alternative" (p. 300). There is hope that counterpublics influence the public sphere in some way. For example, Asen's (2000) study of counterpublics illustrates that "participants in the public sphere still engage in potentially emancipatory affirmative practice with the hope that power may be reconfigured" in their search for answers to exclusion, oppression, and marginalization (p. 424). Whether or not reconciliation ever occurs, scholars seem to agree that counterpublics serve two important purposes: a space for withdrawal and regrouping, and a space for discussion about

activism related to their causes. True emancipatory potential, it seems, emerges from between these two purposes.

Finally, it is important to note that modern feminist activism is flavored by personal experience and individuality, giving each activist the space to connect his or her own oppression to his or her own activism. In a perfect world, modern feminism supports a personalized, individual feminism for every feminist. While this may or may not be the reality, it most certainly seems to be the message modern feminist activism is purporting. Sowards and Renegar (2006) offer:

This type of activism embodies a wide range of rhetorical practices that are powerful, personal, and self-created. Because these activities are defined by the individual activist, they are also not prescriptive. This principle creates space for multiple individual and social identities, providing contemporary feminists with flexibility and malleable tactics for navigating the social systems in which they live. (p. 70)

Modern feminist activism may not only be about feminists carving out a space for themselves in a world full of non-feminists. It may also be about feminists carving out a space for themselves among other feminists. Although feminists seem to share a collective vision for what a feminist future looks like, this may not be the case. As such, occupying space among the public sphere may mean negotiating between non-feminists and fellow feminists.

Rhetorical strategies of feminist activism. Feminist activism is carried out in many ways for various purposes. In this section, I briefly review two rhetorical strategies used by feminist activists: consciousness-raising and collective rhetoric. Both strategies have a long history with feminist activism, and both strategies are still studied today.

First, consciousness-raising was developed by second-wave feminists to bridge the gaps between women and as a response to women's negative self-concepts (Campbell, 1973). It is easy to write off consciousness-raising as simply raising awareness, but, as an activist tool, consciousness-raising benefitted the feminist community at large. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1973) described the consciousness-raising process as designed to address affirmation "of the affective, of the validity of personal experience, of the necessity for self-exposure and self-criticism, of the value of dialogue, and of the goal of autonomous, individual decision making" (p. 79). As feminism has evolved, so have the consciousness-raising strategies of feminist activists. Today, third-wave feminist activists focus on personal and social injustice. Consciousness-raising is a collaborative effort to generate a critical response to oppression. Sowards and Renegar (2004) offer that this type of rhetorical response functions as consciousness-raising on social media platforms, in popular culture, and even in the classroom. Such a response can foster both public and private dialogue about gender inequities.

Second, collective rhetoric seeks to unpack how activists make meaning while participating in activism. Tasha N. Dubriwny's (2005) theory of collective rhetoric centers on "the creation of situations in which the telling of individual experiences makes possible a reframing of one's understanding of the world" (p. 396). Collective rhetoric is typically used if a group hopes to change an audience's view about an issue, usually about something contentious. According to the theory, an audience's view is most likely to be changed if many women engage in oratorical strategies that outline their own personal experiences, subvert them so that the audience may connect to these experiences, and ultimately recode the contentious issue so that the audience is on the rhetor's side.

While both of these strategies have roots in second-wave feminism, their usefulness today is not contested. However, understanding third-wave and postmodern feminism through the lens of second-wave strategies could provide new insight into the nuances of modern strategies of feminist activism.

Chapter 3:

CRITICAL ORIENTATION

In this section, I outline the concepts and germinal scholarship that are key to understanding the theoretical orientation used in this project. First, I explain feminist rhetorical criticism, then I discuss the similarities between feminist criticism's different approaches regarding personal testimony, self-revelation, decision-making, and diversity. Finally, I describe the texts to be used for analysis. Ultimately, I apply a third-wave feminist criticism that is rooted in second-wave methodology to *Periods for Pence* and the media coverage surrounding the event to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How does *Periods for Pence* establish the rhetorical relationship between corporeal protest and policy change?

RQ2: How does *Periods for Pence* invite the public to make the connection between menstruation and abortion?

RQ3: How does *Periods for Pence* exemplify the blending of second and third-wave feminist theory and activism?

Feminist Rhetorical Criticism

Feminist rhetorical criticism acknowledges the construction of women and gender as both integral to the communication process and worthy of academic study. Despite its importance, feminist criticism is relatively new to the field of communication studies. Just as feminism is ever-changing, so too is feminist criticism, and, over time, various scholars have used different orientations of feminist criticism to approach texts. These approaches have characteristics unique to the type of feminist criticism that is being employed. Different "eras" in the history of

feminism are traditionally referred to as “waves.” Attempts to distinguish between different “waves” of feminism is theoretically complex and problematic, as it so often fails to recognize the nuances of both the goals of feminism and the identities of feminists. However, for the purposes of this project, it is helpful to understand how rhetorical scholarship acknowledges the differences between waves. As Condit (1984) points out in her essay that traces the lineage of abortion rights activism, “systematic tracing of a specific set of features can tell us a good deal about both the content and structure of [a] movement” (p. 420). Therefore, I provide a brief review of the purpose of feminist criticism as a niche, the approach of second-wave feminist scholarship, the approach of third-wave feminist scholarship, and an overview of how these two approaches overlap.

Purpose

Feminist criticism challenges traditional, patriarchal norms and ideologies. Dow and Condit (2005) outline that in the 1970s, when second-wave feminism was culturally on the rise, there was a burgeoning call in the field to find a way to study it because second-wave feminism could not be understood using traditional rhetorical methods. Old-fashioned communication models used male speech as the standard against which all other speech should be judged. Consequently, female techniques were often deemed inferior. The birth of feminist criticism helped carve out a place not only for women scholars in communication studies, but for women’s voices and narratives. In a revolutionary essay, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1989) argues that women’s discourse deserves a place in the rhetorical field because it has for so long been treated as less important than the narratives of men. Barbara Biesecker (1992) extends this sentiment, as she champions feminist criticism as a means to provide a new perspective about what is deemed rhetorically significant. Feminist criticism emerged to combat the notion of men’s rhetoric as the

cornerstone of communication analysis. As a result, different types of texts began to be studied and respected. In fact, Dow (1995) asserts that feminist criticism continues to “use the intellectual resources of feminism to understand and to valorize the contributions of women to public life” (p. 106). This means that in a field dominated by white, male scholars and speeches, female academics started to cultivate scholarship centered on how feminism was inciting change for women’s rights in the social sphere.

Second-wave Approaches

Traditional, second-wave feminist criticism often examines how women communicate through public address. Specifically, scholars who specialize in second-wave feminist criticism are interested in finding out what oratorical techniques women have used to make their voices heard or to push for social change. As such, these scholars often turn to the speeches of white, Western women activists and suffragists to cultivate the texts they study. Campbell (1983) explains that early feminist rhetoric was characterized by stylized oratory, as was necessitated by the historical context in which these women lived. Because women’s rights were extremely fringe, addressing women’s needs to the public took skill. A healthy body of scholarship has been put forth in an effort to understand how women, in particular oppressed women, manipulate their oratory as a means of gaining the public’s sympathy and support for women’s rights. For example, Skinnell (2010) analyzed Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s “Address to the Legislature of New York” and found that Cady Stanton utilized social reform rhetoric to appeal to the biases of her privileged, white, male audience and successfully addressed the social conditions of women. Brigance (2005) studied both Cady Stanton’s and Susan B. Anthony’s Civil War rhetoric to discover their strategic efforts to support the war in exchange for the granting of suffrage. And Carlson (1994) found that Lucretia Mott utilized Burkean “bridging devices” to encourage

women of dissimilar backgrounds to unify in pursuit of common feminist goals. These examples illustrate both the various techniques that early feminists employed, as well as the interests of feminist scholars to engage in what is often thought of as second-wave feminist rhetorical criticism.

One of the most enduring concepts to come from second-wave feminist rhetorical criticism is that of “consciousness-raising.” Kathie Sarachild (1970) is credited with coining the term. Consciousness-raising relies on private, intimate, oratorical communication that centers on personal experience. Because women’s rights were excluded from the public sphere, consciousness-raising became the means by which to communicate with and create change for women. Consciousness-raising is at the epicenter of second-wave feminist criticism. Campbell (2002) believes that it may present the biggest challenge to the capacity of traditional theory because consciousness-raising uncovers women’s suppressed voices while praising their artistry at the same time. Dubriwny (2005) argues that consciousness-raising is even powerful enough to reshape public opinion about controversial topics, such as abortion, through the seemingly simple act of storytelling. By sharing personal narratives, audience members are invited to see the social fabric through the points of view of the women engaging in consciousness-raising. Dubriwny’s sentiment echoes that of Dow and Tonn (1993) who argue that this brand of “storytelling” works because it is linked to policy changes. By shifting the audience’s viewpoint to match that of the rhetor, it becomes easier to convince an audience that change needs to occur. Condit (1993) asserts that the adopting of a collective consciousness-raising shifted the vantage point of women. Where before they struggled to engage their audiences with their messages, collective strategies allowed for women to reach more audience members. This strategy was

helpful in expanding the feminist agenda (Maddux, 2008). Over time, feminists felt they should expand cultural perspectives in their discourse.

Third-wave Approaches

Feminist theory saw a shift from a second-wave to a third-wave approach in the mid to late 90s thanks, in large part, to an essay by feminist critic Bonnie Dow (1995). The essay inspects tensions in feminist scholarship and acknowledges three areas that need more attention in the discipline: the role of differences among men, women, and different feminisms; the use of feminist theory; and the relationship between feminist theory and politics. Dow calls for an approach to rhetoric that transcends the application of traditional theory to women's discourse. Third-wave feminist theory is apt to achieve transcendence largely because it calls for the inclusion of diverse women's voices and pushes toward the end of a reliance on traditional discourse.

Third-wave feminism is often seen as an opponent of second-wave feminism. Sorisio (1997) claims that third-wavers do not see themselves in the feminism of the second-wave – it is too stale, too exclusive, and perhaps even irrelevant today. But, to view third-wave feminism as merely a “hipster” among feminisms is to deny its impact. Shugart (2001) argues that third-wave feminism calls for an individualized approach to feminism, as well as champions combative approaches to oppression. The combative label has led the public to view third-wave feminism as radical. Renegar and Sowards (2003) explain that third-wavers are often labeled as “feminazis,” and are seen as hypersexualized, vulgar, and fickle. Differing opinions regarding identity politics, inclusion, and ideology have led to the adoption of multiple feminisms (Sorisio, 1997). Perhaps as a result, the tension between third-wavers within the movement has become a prominent feature of third-wave feminism.

The acceptance of the tensions present in third-wave feminism make it hard to define. Anderson and Stewart (2005) argue that third-wave feminism is difficult to delineate because there is no historical era to look back on – technically we are still living third-wave feminism. Even so, they unpack third-wave feminism in two contexts: third-wave feminism in the academy and third-wave feminism in popular culture. Academically, scholarship on third-wave feminism focuses on its contradictions. Aspects of third-wave feminism such as these types of contradictions, diversity, and complexity are also the focus of academic work. In popular culture, third-wave feminism is cast in a more self-indulgent light. Shugart, Wagoner, and Hallstein (2001) explain that pop culture portrays third-wave feminism as a “brand new” feminism that is linked to celebrity, sexuality, and self-obsession. Anderson and Stewart claim that third-wavers are portrayed as fun, sexy, and alluring. Interestingly, this portrayal is in complete opposition to the public’s view of second-wave feminists as ugly man-haters.

Due to its inclusive nature, or, perhaps more appropriately, its inclusive intent, scholars who specialize in third-wave feminist theory are typically interested in matters of representation, race, class, contradiction, and sexuality. In light of these interests, several scholars have devoted work to the canon of third-wave feminist theory. Dow (2002) studies the television series *Ally McBeal* and discusses that the show promotes what she calls “lifestyle feminism,” a way that media promotes feminism as a lifestyle choice rather than as political. Characters are able to recognize feminism and understand inequality, but they do not use these realizations to fight for societal change. By making this choice, characters that exhibit Dow’s lifestyle feminism exemplify Shugart’s (2001) individualized approach to feminism. Lifestyle feminism suggests that personal choices are, indeed, political; to see inequality is one thing, but to fight against it is another. Inaction and action are both political choices that third-wave feminism, at times

frustratingly, supports. Feminist protestors who engage in public acts of defiance, and those who do not, exemplify the very individuality celebrated by third-wave feminism.

Third-wave feminist criticism also makes an appearance in Levy's (2005) book *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*. The book is an examination of women's current role in "raunch culture," or the sexually-charged display or use of a woman's own body for her own empowerment. Levy argues that raunch culture is a rebellion against second-wave feminism. Whether or not this is true, women have embraced raunch as both a form of humor and a symbol of sex-positivity. While not comparatively radical by any means, raunchy humor and raunch culture contribute to the view of third-wave feminists as radical because they so blatantly put a culturally sexualized body on display for (typically) "gross" purposes. This is precisely why more and more women are using their bodies for protest purposes. When on display, especially in a raunchy way, female bodies send political messages linked to third-wave feminism.

Second-wave and Third-wave Overlap

As I have outlined, second-wave feminist criticism is focused on traditional women's discourse such as speeches, and seeks to determine which oratorical techniques women are using to call for policy change. Third-wave feminist criticism is focused on women's empowerment in the digital era, individual approaches to feminism, and techniques of protest including grotesqueness and raunchiness. In this thesis, I apply a method associated with second-wave feminist criticism to a third-wave feminist text. As such, here I briefly outline the work of Sowards and Renegar (2004) and Dubriwny (2005) that is devoted to blending second and third-wave feminisms.

Sowards and Renegar (2004) argue that feminist consciousness-raising has evolved in style, substance, and function compared to previous second-wave notions of consciousness-raising. They claim a third-wave incarnation of consciousness-raising has rhetorical value because it accounts for changing social awareness, new cultural conditions, and various perspectives. Sowards and Renegar apply a theory of third-wave feminist consciousness-raising to various third-wave feminist texts. They find that, because the problems surrounding feminism have shifted in the last forty years, feminists have adapted consciousness-raising to more appropriately address the current rhetorical situation. This adaptation instills a critical perspective that focuses on personal and social injustices. As a result, consciousness can be raised and sequentially foster public and private dialogue about gender inequality in various facets of the public sphere, including but not bound by or limited to: through mass media, in popular culture, and in college classrooms.

Dubriwny (2005) proposes a theory of collective rhetoric to study the Redstockings' Abortion Speak-Out of 1969. Her theory focuses not on the persuasive text itself, but instead reveals the ways oppressed groups create new meaning from persuasive texts. This theory details the way "collective rhetoric emerges through strategies that enable the collaborative creation and validation of worldviews through the articulation, or the strategic linking, of individual experiences" (p. 396). Oppressed groups create new meaning from the articulation and validation of shared, lived experiences through three rhetorical processes: personal narrative, use of irony, and symbolic reversals. The strategies work through a process that Burke (1954) calls *perspective by incongruity*. Dubriwny argues that feminists (Demo, 2000; Foss, 1979) have adopted Burke's strategy for their own purposes; she refers to this process as "atom cracking," or the "strategic juxtaposition of incongruent ideals, values, practices, and symbols that not only

call into question gender ideologies but also re-moralize them” (p. 398). Atom cracking is the goal of collective rhetoric because once an ideology is re-moralized, oppressed groups create solidarity which can bring about change.

Though second-wave feminist criticism was originally used to study oratory and *proper, traditional* protest, there are commonalities among second-wave strategies and third-wave strategies. Consciousness-raising is, indeed, categorized as a second-wave strategy, one that Campbell (1973) argues is “characterized by rhetorical interactions that emphasize personal testimony, participation and dialogue, self-revelation and self-criticism, and autonomous decision making” (p. 83). Sowards and Renegar (2004) claim that the characteristics identified by Campbell persist in third-wave feminist strategies, but that new characteristics are also present. For example, personal testimonies still appear, but do so in more public venues such as anthologies, books, or online feminist media. The use of social media to engage in second-wave strategies like consciousness-raising makes it easier to include diverse ethnic, economic, and social perspectives to broaden the sense of inclusivity when it comes to storytelling and the audiences with which stories are shared. Self-revelation occurs in the third-wave via pop culture icons and the growing popularity of feminist characters on television and in movies. Role models such as these help young women recognize their personal oppression and possibilities for liberation. Finally, autonomous decision making in the third-wave is seen in more varied options for self-expression (i.e., online forums, public protests, writing, or teaching). It is problematic to view second-wave strategies as antiquated or outdated because they work just as strongly in a third-wave generation. Thus, it is crucial to recognize that it is not so much that second and third-wave rhetorical strategies are similar, but that they can exist outside of themselves, within each other.

Texts Used for Analysis

Although Periods for Pence has grown to be extensive and has experienced a rebranding, in this study, I examine the Periods for Pence Facebook page and Twitter account between the dates of March 28, 2016 (the day the accounts were created) and April 21, 2016, the day of the Rally for Women's Rights at the Indiana Statehouse. The posts between these dates are most consistently transcriptions of women's phone calls to Governor Pence's office. After the rally, the accounts mainly became used for sharing news articles related to Pence and reproductive health. I examine posts and comments and look for language that reflects support between members of the campaign, humor, and a creation of new and re-moralized meaning regarding menstruation and abortion. Posts in which participants ask questions related to the campaign, share affirmation of others' participation, make jokes that capitalize on female reproductive anatomy and physiology, and point out the logical flaws of HEA 1337 are all of particular interest to me. I analyze 19 primary Facebook and Twitter posts from 18 different rhetors that best represent the discourse of Periods for Pence. I take comments into account as well as I consider how the communication on Periods for Pence's Facebook and Twitter pages has chained out and circulated. These posts are created by people participating in the campaign including Laura Shanley, the campaign's creator. Some of these posts are transcriptions of calls made to Pence's office, while others reflect banter and depict support between members in the form of Facebook comments or Twitter threads.

The women of Periods for Pence seek to draw attention to the strictness of HEA 1337 by talking extensively about their periods. These women exhibit their feminism in an act of protest that has received much national attention. Thus, I will use these texts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How does *Periods for Pence* establish the rhetorical relationship between corporeal protest and policy change?

RQ2: How does *Periods for Pence* invite the public to make the connection between menstruation and abortion?

RQ3: How does *Periods for Pence* exemplify the blending of second and third-wave feminist theory and activism?

Chapter Four:

ANALYSIS

Periods for Pence garnered global attention as a result of its unabashed approach to calling for policy change. While popular media outlets have praised the campaign for remaining witty and fearless in the face of dehumanizing legislation, perhaps Periods for Pence's greatest achievement is that it has mobilized generations of women who remain committed to the fight for reproductive justice and equality and who are happy to share the intimate details of their menstrual cycles along the way. It is perhaps tempting to think of Periods for Pence as simply another light-hearted, third-wave feminist attempt at taking the Internet by storm and failing to yield any material or political impact. In an interview with *Cosmopolitan*, Periods for Pence creator Laura Shanley explains that she did not put much thought into the inception of the campaign, rather, she mentions, "I threw up the Facebook page — took me about 20 minutes. I typed out a rant, and it just took off from there" (Gupta, 2016, para. 6). Of course, there are those like Freiburger (2016) who are happy to note the seemingly immature nature of Periods for Pence, which he calls "gross, juvenile, and ignorant" (para. 1). But the reality is that the campaign illustrates a blending of feminist approaches to protest that span decades, suggesting that, whether campaign participants know it or not, Periods for Pence is strategic. In this chapter, I analyze how the campaign unifies methods of feminist protest in order to call for tangible policy change.

I begin by analyzing how Periods for Pence combines digital and corporeal protest strategies, which are often assumed to go hand-in-hand with second and third-wave feminist protest strategies. Finally, I use Tasha Dubriwny's (2005) theorizing of a blending of feminist

protest strategies to analyze text found on Periods for Pence's Twitter and Facebook pages. I argue that, with a few modifications, Periods for Pence exemplifies a blending of different strategies associated with feminist advocacy and thereby rejects the notion of different feminisms for different periods of time. Further, the coexisting strategies in the campaign demonstrate a need for feminist theory that acknowledges these strategies as similar, unending, and fluid.

(Wo)man and Machine

A key characteristic of Periods for Pence is that the protestors are able to channel elements of corporeal protest, or using the body for rebellious purposes, through phones (via the calls made to Pence's office) as well as the Internet (via Twitter and Facebook where the campaign is housed). Thus, Periods for Pence seamlessly transfers corporeal utterances through digital mediums. This section examines Periods for Pence Facebook posts and tweets that reflect actual phone calls that were made to Mike Pence's office as well as direct digital correspondence with Pence and other Periods for Pence participants. The text used for analysis in this chapter is of various forms. Some posts are phone calls transcribed by Laura Shanley and other campaign participants, while others reflect banter between participants. On Twitter, participants in the Periods for Pence campaign will often communicate with Mike Pence directly by using his former Twitter handle, @GovPenceIN. Tweets from the Periods for Pence campaign also come from the Twitter handle @PeriodsforPols which is a shortened version of Periods for Politicians, the campaign's updated name after the announcement of Mike Pence as Donald Trump's vice presidential running mate in the 2016 election.

Since menstruation is so deeply entrenched in cultural shame (Sasser-Ceon, 1996), it is a wonder that Periods for Pence exists at all. But it does, and the women who call Mike Pence in the name of the campaign share details about their bodies shamelessly. Hungerford (2015) notes

that an important aspect of embodied protest is that protestors' rhetorical power comes from the group's ability to provocatively transform shame by enacting grotesqueness to engage in their advocacy. Periods for Pence enacts grotesqueness by using explicit detail to discuss the menstrual cycle and Pence's legislative interference. For example, this Periods for Pence Facebook post demonstrates that the caller elects not only to describe the quality of her bodily excrement, but to note the symbolism of physical violation present in Pence's actions as well:

Periods for Pence: Me: My period is three days late, but I'm starting to get the white mucus discharge. I thought the gov should know since his hand is in my uterus.

Man: Ummm, please *stifles giggles* contact your physician. (April 11, 2016)

Others, like Twitter user @kaedlen, opt to strictly discussing issues of bodily blood:

@kaedlen: @periodsforpence @GovPenceIN Started my PERIOD 3 days early over here in HK... Should I worry Gov? OMGS THERE'S SO MUCH BLOOD! (April 7, 2016)

Still others, like Twitter user @LoopsOFury, choose to describe the sensation of menstruation with vivid language use:

@LoopsOFury: @periodsforpence @GovPenceIN It happened in the middle of a doozy of a period--8 days! I could feel it sort of... slither out (April 5, 2016).

Periods for Pence participants' rhetorical choice to include explicit discussion of menstruation in their phone calls and Internet discourse is a way to reject the Western choice to not talk about the body, particularly the female body. Film theorist Laura Mulvey (1989) is often credited with popularizing the notion of the *male gaze* in film and media studies which illuminates the discrepancies between the men's and women's subjectivities in film and

television. As Foss and Foss (1994) point out, men often occupy the position of a spectator in mediated texts, while women are the object of this vantage point and typically displayed for the enjoyment of men. Mulvey deems this a structure of male looking / female to-be-looked-at-ness. Rhetorical and media scholars alike (Daughton, 2010; Gibson & Wolske, 2011) have made note of how the male gaze is reflected in contemporary mediated texts. Women's heads and/or faces are often removed from movie posters, television scenes, and advertisement material while enhanced versions of their bodies become the center of attention, effectually centering the women's sexual appeal while removing their personhood entirely. Representations of women in media that make use of the male gaze illuminate that which men wish to, or do not wish to, see while simultaneously disembodimenting women – reducing them to little more than flesh to be gawked at.

Of course, there are ways to talk about menstruation without invoking the body. As a culture, Western citizens engage in this behavior frequently by employing what Kissling (1996) calls the communication taboo, which suggests that women should hide menstruation conceptually by choosing not to discuss it. One way this is done is by using euphemisms for the words “menstruation” and “blood.” Plenty of these have become popularized and include but are certainly not limited to: Aunt Flo, shark week, that time of the month, the red scare, the crimson wave, and even the term “period,” which references the *period* of the month when a woman is menstruating. Euphemisms such as these remove all corporeal elements from discussion of menstruation and instead replace images of bodies and blood with images of time, politics, nature, and, inexplicably, family members. Discourse about menstruation that removes women and their corporeality from the conversation is representative of the same type of male gaze theorized by Mulvey (1989). Rather than representing menstruating women in ways that are

biologically accurate, Western discussion of menstruation is structured in such a way as to accommodate the male spectator. Mulvey's theorization suggests that women are often depicted as objects to be desired by men, and removing all mention of blood, genitalia, or sexual reproduction from the conversation about menstruation makes women more desirable. As Grosz (1994) points out, menstruation is given meaning based on the ideals of male, heterosexual desire. Society conforms to talking about menstruation in a way that conceals its "dirtiness" in order to appeal to patriarchal notions of what women (and their bodies) should and should not look like, smell like, or do.

In contrast, Periods for Pence participants capitalize on the corporeal elements of menstruation and the physical stakes of HEA 1337. Although these protestors' bodies are not seen, the language used in their communication indicates a *choice to highlight* the body by painting grotesque images of, not only menstruation, but bodily discharge, demonic possession (via use of the phrase *slither out*), and sexual assault (via invoking Pence's hand in another's uterus) – all of which have bodily consequences. Admittedly, using vivid language to describe the menstrual cycle does not necessarily make this type of activism corporeal, but what it *does* do is allow women to talk about menstruation in a way that undergirds the body. The participants so often make use of the words "I," "me," and "my," not to mention they put *feeling* at the forefront of the discussion by painting images of a hand in a uterus or the "slithering" of menstrual excrement from the body. These choices place women, and their bodies, into digital discussion about bodies. Not unlike the way photos on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter center real people, women are refocused in the conversation about menstruation and reproduction. No longer is menstruation essentialized to merely a bodily function. Similarly, no longer is menstruation discussed through tight lips or removed from conversation. These posts

demonstrate a movement by women to reclaim ownership of their reproductive anatomy and physiology. Importantly, these posts are phenomenological, that is to say, they privilege a subjective *knowing* that only the menstruating people can have and choose to share.

By taking ownership of their bodily functions, and using detail to call attention to a violation of their bodies, Periods for Pence protestors also echo the sentiments of Hungerford (2015) and Sultana (2013) insofar as they purposefully center their physiology so that their bodies become sites of resistance against attack, in effect symbolizing the resiliency of the oppressed. To depict their bodies as resilient, the members of Periods for Pence rely on Mike Pence's (and the rest of the world's) disgust for menstruation to make a point. Essentially, the campaign uses the communication taboo to fight the communication taboo. This is typically done by cheekily highlighting Pence's "concern" with women's reproductive anatomy and physiology or suggesting that he take over their gynecological care, which is especially laughable coming from Planned Parenthood, represented here by "@PPact":

@mlentz77: Just got bad news @GovPenceIN. My OBGYN quit. I'm so glad we have you! I'll schedule my appointment soon! @periodsforpence #periodsforpence. (April 2, 2016)

@PPact: Since @GovPenceIN is so concerned with your reproductive health, make sure he doesn't miss a bleed! (March 24, 2016)

Of course, these women know that Mike Pence is not actually concerned with their menstrual cycles or their reproductive health. In fact, they know that he is likely disgusted by both. But the posts purposefully center menstruation for this reason, as if to say, "We know you hate our bodies, so we will tell you all about them." This attack turns even an utterance of the campaign members' bodies into weapons. Sultana (2013) argues that bodies can become sites of resistance

through resignification, which she defines as “subverting the meaning that is imposed on a humiliated body and investing newer meanings in the same body which renders it more powerful” (p. 35). By emphasizing menstruation in a way that, according to Douglas (1966), defines menstruation as dirty and a pollutant to describe their own bodies, the protestors of Periods for Pence subvert the meaning of a menstruating body as gross and instead give their menstruating bodies political significance and power. Hungerford (2015) argues that subversion of a gendered body “in protest signals a return of the oppressed” (p. 361) which characterizes protestors as “antiestablishment and anticonformist” (p. 361). Thus, in order for Periods for Pence to transform their bodies from oppressed to resistant, they must first acknowledge Pence’s view of their bodies before refusing to communicate shame in their displays of grotesqueness.

While Periods for Pence promotes the invocation of bodies, the campaign also effectively blurs the line between digital activism and embodied activism. Historically, embodied activism is seen as originating with the second-wave feminist movement, particularly during the late sixties and seventies when it was common for feminists to mobilize around issues of free love and reproductive rights (Sowards & Renegar, 2004). On the other hand, digital activism is typically viewed as rising to popularity during the third, and some even argue the fourth, wave of feminism as an homage to activism in the age of technology (Dow & Wood, 2014). Periods for Pence uses social media to unify women engaging in embodied protest. Although calling Mike Pence’s office to describe menstruation is, admittedly, not as *in the flesh* as marching through the streets with bloody coat hangers, similar imagery is evoked. Whether red paint on a coat hanger or a mention of menstrual blood slithering out of a body, the highlighting of the corporeal positions women’s bodies at the forefront of protest.

While I maintain that *Periods for Pence* effectively showcases embodied protest on a mediated platform, it is worth mentioning that the campaign continues to engage in advocacy outside the realm of the web. Indeed, *Periods for Pence* phone calls are made in person, but the protest has also sparked several rallies and, since the election of Trump and Pence as president and vice president of the United States, various new protests (Diekhoff, 2016) – a testament to the notion that feminist activism is adaptable. Valenti (2011) explains that the exciting thing about contemporary activism is that advocacy that is housed online is able to move beyond the confines of the Internet. There are feminist movements that have used a blend of consciousness raising, face-to-face activism, and digital mediums to advocate for their causes. The previously mentioned SlutWalks are a perfect example of such activism. While the walks are organized almost entirely in online spaces, the actual marches happen in the streets where the women's bodies become almost the sole focus of the advocacy. In these spaces, women share their stories, utilize various forms of humor and irony in their signs and on their bodies, and symbolically reverse the societal understanding of the term “slut.” *Periods for Pence* is not alone in its blending of strategies, rather its popularity cements its place in a long lineage of similar feminist protest movements.

Dial “F” for Feminism

Periods for Pence blends mediums traditionally associated with different generations of feminist protest while simultaneously blending protest strategies traditionally associated with different waves of feminism. Most notably, the campaign employs strategies similar to those used in Tasha Dubriwny's (2005) theory of collective rhetoric. In theorizing collective rhetoric, Dubriwny asserts that a second-wave feminist protest strategy known as consciousness-raising

has value in third-wave theory and, in effect, lays the groundwork for a discussion about the blending of second and third-wave feminist protest and theory.

Dubriwny (2005) uses the Redstockings' Abortion Speak-Out of 1969 as the site for her theorizing of collective rhetoric. During this event, pro-choice women met gathered on a platform in a public street to share stories of their experiences with and related to abortion. Their stories chained off of one another as the women engaged in acts of narrative sharing, irony and humor, and symbolic reversal, ultimately creating a cohesive narrative that remoralized abortion in contrast to the popularized narrative of the time which hinged on the demonization of the procedure by male authority figures.

Periods for Pence takes place decades later, and, through an entirely different platform, makes the campaign fertile ground for its dismissal as different from that which Dubriwny theorizes. However, I argue Periods for Pence and collective rhetoric are compatible. In this section, I parse out these similarities, arguing that the members of Periods for Pence engage in a similar strategy through a slightly altered technique. Indeed, Dubriwny argues that collective rhetoric is “a process of persuasion that envisions the creation of novel public vocabularies as the product of the collective articulation of multiple, overlapping individual experiences” (p. 396). Through analysis of Periods for Pence posts on Facebook and Twitter, it is clear that the members of Periods for Pence engage in the sharing and overlapping of their own experiences in a manner similar to those of the women of Redstockings fame. After all, Dubriwny argues that sharing personal narrative, use of irony and humor, and symbolic reversal can re-moralize polarizing ideologies for those who oppose them. In an effort to help their audience re-moralize abortion as legal and necessary, Periods for Pence exemplifies each of the necessary facets of collective rhetoric.

Networked Narrative. Initially, and perhaps most importantly, Periods for Pence is built on a network of women who have two important characteristics in common: they menstruate and they demand the right to have an abortion. Inevitably, then, the campaign provides these women with a cause they can rally around and a platform on which they can support each other.

Dubriwny (2005) argues that engaging in co-construction of narratives by sharing stories that build on one another helps “create a community by allowing participants to affirm and validate each other’s experiences by sharing parts of their own experiences” (p. 405). As a reminder, for the purposes of this project, *narrative*, according to both Dubriwny and Campbell (2002), refers to personal, lived experience that is shared for protest purposes, usually in a public setting. This type of narrative differs from one that centers scene, character, etc., because the feminist theorizing of narrative is specifically focused on the woman or women sharing it.

The shared narrative reflected in the Periods for Pence campaign is represented by the co-creation of narratives by site users. This is most typically seen in the form of comments to original Periods for Pence posts in which women engage with material from the original post and proceed to share their similar experiences, whether those experiences are with menstruation or phone calls they have made to Pence’s office. In the following example, which depicts an original Periods for Pence tweet and several tweets in response, the campaign (represented by both the Twitter handles @periodsforpence and @PeriodsforPols) calls for its members to report their menstrual cycles to the office of Governor Pence. In this tweet thread, several members share both their experiences with menstruation as well as their concerns about their menstrual cycles in light of HEA 1337:

@PeriodsforPols: Contact @GovPenceIN to report your periods in response to HEA1337! Because it IS his business, now! (March 30, 2016)

|

@PriestessofAres: @periodsforpence @GovPenceIN Ah yes..Would he like to know in gory detail what every girl goes through? Graphic detail? (March 30, 2016)

|

@danapokie: @PriestessOfAres @periodsforpence @GovPenceIN Some symptoms of pre menopause are quite fascinating. Soaked thru 5 Playtex Ultras in 1hr! (March 30, 2016)

|

@SpoolandThimble: @periodsforpence @GovPenceIN if I remove my tampon & there's a big clot, should I have that interred? What if I'm in a med facility restroom? (March 30, 2016)

|

@ma2therisa: @periodsforpence @GovPenceIN I'm PMS'ing this week, just thought that you'd like to know. I'll be tweeting you again next week. (March 30, 2016)

In this example, several different Twitter users share their personal experiences in response to Periods for Pence's original call to action. User @PriestessofAres asks if Pence would like to know every woman's graphic account of her own menses, and user @danapokie responds with details about her experience with pre menopause, taking care to note that her menstrual flow is currently so heavy that it has soaked through 5 ultra-sized tampons in 1 hour. User @SpoolandThimble follows @danapokie's lead and also discusses her problems with menstrual blood and tampon use. Specifically, she lets Pence and the other users know that she is

either currently or has in the past experienced menstrual blood clots that she has had to deal with in public spaces. Finally, user @ma2therisa adds on to the thread by offering that she is currently experiencing pre-menstrual syndrome and will be sure to comment with the details of her menstrual flow the following week. When Periods for Pence asks women to detail their menstrual flow, the users do so in direct communication with Mike Pence. Each of their tweets builds off of another until users can see a complete story detailing women's experiences with menstruation.

What is interesting about narrative sharing in Periods for Pence is that the social media platform makes it possible for these women to create a cohesive narrative not only about their menstrual cycles, but about their involvement in the campaign. Laura Shanley tells *Cosmopolitan* that once she started transcribing her calls to Pence on the campaign's Facebook page, "people just started calling as well" (Gupta, 2016, para. 6). Placing the calls to Pence on a public platform allows the group's mission to be visibly supported and reproduced via social media functions such as liking, commenting, sharing, and retweeting. Often, Periods for Pence supporters will see an original post and then either voice their desire to join in, or simply join in right away. For example:

Periods for Pence: Me: Good morning. I just wanted to call and let the good Governor know that I am still not pregnant, since he seems to be so worried about women's reproductive rights.

Irritated lady on the other end of the phone: And can I get your name, please?

Me: Sure, it's Not Pregnant Laura. (March 29, 2016)

|

Anjali Mirmira: My latest call:

Me: hello, I was wondering if you could tell me where Gov. Pence went to medical school?

Rep: Excuse me? He's hasn't from what I am aware of

Me: Then why does he feel like he can be the healthcare provider of every woman in Indiana and know nothing about women's healthcare?

Rep: Maam, do you have a constructive question? Because we've been getting these calls too often

Me: Sure. Where's the closest planned parenthood from zionsville?

Rep: *hangs up.* (March 29, 2016)

|

Shawn Fisher: Wow! I wonder if Gov. Pence considers my tubal ligation and years later hysterectomy to be bad choices? Perhaps I should call? Thoughts?

hmmm. (March 29, 2016)

|

Carl Lampman: Call and ask. (March 29, 2016)

|

Kathy Marquis Waugh: Please someone post his number I so want to call, thank you.” (March 29, 2016)

In this Facebook comment thread, members of Periods for Pence see the original post reflecting a phone call made by Shanley and proceed to describe their own phone calls, ask if they should call regarding certain issues related to their own cycles, voice their individual interest in participating, and support the activists in the campaign. In this way, the campaign functions to

also foster a cohesive narrative about activism. The generative meaning that is produced and reproduced fosters a doors-open policy with regard to discussing personal anatomy and physiology, but also casts a wider net of interest in the campaign's cause.

Dubriwny's conception of shared narrative exists in the Periods for Pence campaign in that the commenters and responders collectively build a community that supports and solidifies the group's intentions and messages. Sowards and Renegar (2004) theorize a blending of second and third-wave feminist strategies that supports this notion as well; their argument is that more and more often, scholars are seeing second-wave strategies play out in online, third-wave contexts. They offer several examples of this phenomenon including personal testimony appearing in public venues such as social media, which creates alternative options for autonomous decision-making. It is obvious that Periods for Pence is housed on public Facebook and Twitter pages, which makes for easy access to any citizen privileged enough to be able to use the Internet. Personal testimonies are shared in tweet threads and comment chains on these sites, and can be viewed by supporters of Periods for Pence. Finally, members of Periods for Pence have several options when it comes to how they choose to demonstrate their support. They can like or follow the pages, like or retweet the posts, contribute to the content of the pages, call Mike Pence's office, and/or attend the rallies held in the name of Periods for Pence. This campaign, then, boasts all the pathos-laden cohesion of the second-wave feminist movement as it centers a kind of consciousness-raising popularized by second-wave feminist scholars who discuss the significance of an invitational feminine style when it comes to public speaking (Campbell, 1998; Dow & Tonn, 1993) with all the modernity and connectivity of the third-wave feminist movement.

Bloody Hilarious. What is so appealing about Periods for Pence, even for those who would not typically enjoy casual conversation about menstrual blood, is the hilarity with which the women describe their menses. In fact, Gupta (2016) praises the campaign as being perhaps the most hilarious way to contact your representatives. While Periods for Pence's jokes about stains and uteri do make good chuckle material, Dubriwny argues that the use of humor in feminist protest, particularly when considering it through the lens of collective rhetoric, is strategic and essential. Rather than highlighting a specific type of humor like wit, satire, or parody, Dubriwny mentions that the type of humor used for consciousness-raising purposes centers on self-denigration and common understanding. She notes that during the Redstockings' Abortion Speak-Out, humor was typically communicated through instances of "irony in any given situation" (p. 407). She points out that in order for irony to be appropriately used in instances of protest, protestors must leave gaps in logic for their audiences to fill. This strategy allows protestors to determine who their allies are and invite them to join their cause. Of course, if audience members miss out on the irony of a situation, it seems impossible that they could ever support the protestors' cause in the first place. Dubriwny furthers that the humor that often arose out of ironic situations during the Speak-Out was largely self-deprecating, but also spoke to the larger narrative of women's struggles to achieve bodily autonomy in the sixties.

I argue that the content produced by Periods for Pence is not necessarily ironic, but it *is* tongue-in-cheek, sarcastic, and facetious. While this does not exactly reflect Dubriwny's (2005) understanding of humor in collective rhetoric, it does speak to Kalcik's (1986) valuation of humor as a strategic rhetorical tool. Kalcik argues that strategic humor often initially appears to be devaluing the individual, typically through plays on stereotypes, who employs its use. By this logic, women, particularly pro-choice women, are well-suited to use this type of humor. Pro-

choice women are often stereotyped as radical, crazy, and selfish. What makes humor based on stereotype so effective in a protest context is that usually carries with it implicit critiques of the stereotypes it appears to propagate. For example, Dubriwny explains that the Redstockings activists relied on humor that made them appear as if they did not know anything about their bodies. In reality, having knowledge about their bodies (as opposed to the men who were legislating them), was crucial to the success of the women's rights movement. To make themselves appear as if they had no knowledge of their own bodies then, worked to reveal the dangers of not knowing about women's bodies.

Periods for Pence functions similarly, though largely without irony, as the content generated and shared by the members of Periods for Pence mostly serves to point out the logical flaws of HEA 1337. For example, Twitter user @lynneebrown highlights the shallow logic used in the crafting of Pence's bill by noting that it fails to account for women who have had surgical procedures and women who may not biologically reproduce:

@periodsforpence @GovPenceIN I've heard you're interested in women's

reproductive health. FYI I've had a hysterectomy. Plus lesbian. (April 1, 2016)

Facebook user Rick Matlock played on the stereotype of menstruating women as cranky and needing comfort as a way to feign interest in reporting his wife's reproductive health to Pence and inquiring about the extent to which Pence would remain financially interested in all facets of women's reproductive healthcare:

My wife seems to be doing fine, just thought I would check in since the State has taken the time to be concerned with her .. Her irritability level was 8. Her chocolate intake level was 9. Her snippy comments were a level 10..Just contact me if you need more info.. Thank You for your concern..BTW, do you reimburse

for OB/GYN visits? Do you cover the parking garage fees as well? (April 6, 2016)

Pence's failure to understand the intricacies of the lack of menstrual blood present in a woman's biology is also frequently used for comedic effect. An anonymous contributor writes:

I'm 60 and stopped having my periods 10 years ago. Will I be fined for such activity? (April 6, 2016)

Yet another anonymous Facebook contributor feigned concern about faux medical issues to highlight Pence's lack of foresight in signing HEA 1337, as well as to call to attention Pence's history of marginalizing minority citizens:

So I knew a girl 30 years ago who had an abortion. Do you think Pence would want me to stone her the next time I see her? And since I'm gay, should I also stone myself afterwards? So many questions and not enough answers. (April, 2, 2016)

While perhaps not each of these examples is laugh-out-loud hilarious, these posts do embody elements of sarcasm and facetiousness that first acknowledge Pence's position and *then* give audience members the intellectual space to grapple with the substance behind the wit. Notably, each of these posts includes some element of self-denigration (i.e., making a point of the poster's marginalized status) or common understanding (i.e., contributing to the conversation surrounding reproductive care expenses). Of course none of the concerns exemplified above are genuine. Despite the fact that a recurring argument from his staff is that HEA 1337 is meant to protect women (Schneider & Cook, 2016), the members of Periods for Pence create these posts because they do not believe Mike Pence sincerely cares about women. The feigned concern for women's temperaments, doctor's visit fees, and legal consequences is meant to clue audiences

into the logical fallacies that exist in Mike Pence's justification for signing HEA 1337 in the first place. The point is that, under the pretense of the law, issues like menopause, reproductive surgeries, and sexual preference should have also been considered and were not. Periods for Pence wants their audiences to understand that, had these types of issues been considered, the bill could have never been passed in the first place.

The brilliance of Periods for Pence's humor lies in the work it assigns to its audience. Chvasta (2006) argues that an enthymematic strategy such as the one employed by the Periods for Pence protestors highlighted above allows audience members to find value in the protestors' cause for themselves, which increases the overall efficacy of the movement. If audience members can fill in the logical gaps, they can see the value in repealing HEA 1337. Essentially, this strategy saves Periods for Pence protestors the burden of arguing with those who cannot and will not support their cause. Rather, their efforts are focused on those members of the audience who can see the humor in the logical gaps they have created and understand that those gaps are indicative of more serious problems embedded in the law itself as well as the law's inevitable repercussions.

The members of the Redstockings employed humor during their Abortion Speak-Out to give their audiences a chance to reconsider their beliefs about a contentious political issue. It is hard to be sure how many opinions the Redstockings swayed with their comedic efforts, but what is certain is that humor has been employed as a particularly useful feminist protest strategy for decades. In a third-wave context, humor plays out in Periods for Pence posts, and, thanks to the visibility of public social networking sites, observers are able to garner a general understanding of how many supporters the campaign is yielding based on likes, shares, and even the circulation of popular press news focused on the campaign. Truly, the blending of second and third-wave

humor strategies bolsters Periods for Pence's visibility and strengthens the number of allies excited to participate.

A Reversal in Red. In order for Periods for Pence to have any sort of political practicality, the campaign needed to convince their audience to believe in the serious damage HEA 1337 could cause women's rights. By engaging in both the spinning of cohesive narratives about reproductive health issues and the formation of enthymematic humor, the members of Periods for Pence position themselves closer to establishing an overall support system for their ideology. Before political success can be achieved, however, Dubriwny (2005) argues that its members must re-moralize abortion for their audience. In other words, Periods for Pence must convince their audience that abortion is not only a necessity but a right. The campaign attempts this by engaging in what Dubriwny calls *symbolic reversal*, or the re-moralizing of a contentious ideology. Regarding Periods for Pence, efforts to enact symbolic reversal are targeted toward the linking of menstruation and abortion. The campaign's argument hinges on juxtaposing the unpredictability of menstruation, as well as a myriad of logical flaws, with compliance to HEA 1337. For example:

@LaMorteVivante: @GovPenceIN @periodsforpence Woke up this am to a bloody mess in my pajamas. What's the best way to get the stain out?

#periodsforpence. (April 5, 2016)

@Sasha827: @GovPenceIN @periodsforpence Started my cycle today. When will you be by to check my used pads for HB1337 compliance so I know to be home? (April 5, 2016).

As HEA 1337 suggests, any menstrual expulsion is subject to its jurisdiction. The goal of Periods for Pence, then, is to reject this notion. To do so is to acknowledge the biological link between menstruation and pregnancy.

The members of Periods for Pence acknowledge the link between menstruation and pregnancy using several techniques, all of which are humorous, and all of which indicate that a regulation of a woman's fetal blood inevitably involves the regulation of her menstrual cycle – a near impossible feat given menstruation's irregularity. For example, one of Laura Shanley's first calls to Pence's office is simply a report that she could not be pregnant given that her period had come and gone. This particular call highlights the impracticality of claiming to be concerned with women's reproductive health without understanding that pregnancy and menstruation are linked:

Them: Good Morning, Governor Pence's office

Me: Good Morning. I just wanted to inform the Governor that things seem to be drying up today. No babies seem to be up in there. Okay?

Them: (Sounding strangely horrified and chipper at the same time) Ma'am, can we have your name?

Me: Sure. It's Sue.

Them: And your last name?

Me: Magina. That's M-A-G-I-N-A. It rhymes with –

Them: I've got it. (March 31, 2016)

In a follow-up call, Shanley details just how easily a pregnancy can go wrong against a mother's wishes, often resulting in expelled blood:

Me: Hello, this is Sue Magina again. I just hit a pothole on I-70. It was a doozy! I'm worried it might have shaken something around up in there, and I wanted to make sure that was addressed in this new abortion law. I knew Governor Pence would be worried. Thanks. (April 1, 2016)

And perhaps the best example to demonstrate Periods for Pence's use of symbolic reversal is the phone call that started it all. In Laura Shanley's very first phone call to Pence's office, used as a previous example as well, she lets the staff know that she still is not pregnant (likely due to the arrival of her period), and effectively translates the entire point of Periods for Pence directly to his office:

Me: Good morning. I just wanted to call and let the good Governor know that I am still not pregnant, since he seems to be so worried about women's reproductive rights.

Irritated lady on the other end of the phone: And can I get your name, please?

Me: Sure, it's Not Pregnant Laura. (March 29, 2016)

One critique of pro-life citizens is that, in arguing against the morality of abortion, they overlook the reality that not all women choose to terminate their pregnancies. While Periods for Pence does support the notion that abortion is a moral, legal right, the campaign, as exemplified above, mostly concerns itself with circumstances in which a terminated pregnancy lies outside a woman's impetus of control. In other words, in Periods for Pence's eyes, HEA 1337 is Mike Pence's way of criminalizing abortions that were had via a woman's informed decision making, but the law also punishes women who did not make a choice to terminate a pregnancy. This line of argumentation is the key to Periods for Pence's use of symbolic reversal. At a certain point, it becomes nearly pointless to argue about abortion rights with those who will never morally grant

them. However, if *Periods for Pence* can get their audience to understand that HEA 1337 has ramifications beyond those that Mike Pence seeks to implement, perhaps, then, they can convince those with political power that the law is not sound enough to remain.

This is, of course, not simple, and relies on a variety of strategies including narrative sharing and the use of humor. Laura also continuously invokes her body and its processes during her phone conversations with Pence's office, as well as generally uses casual language, reminiscent of slang at times, that suggests she is both comfortable with her body and certain of her personal politics. In the case of *Periods for Pence*, it is worth noting that the use of irony and symbolic reversal occasionally work hand in hand. The three most recent examples demonstrate that menstruation can exist separately from pregnancy, presumably because menstruation is typically thought of as a biological indicator of the lack of a fertilized egg in utero. An earlier example regarding being a lesbian indicates the impossibility, in some cases, that menstruation could ever (unbeknownst to the menstruator) expel an egg because women cannot get each other pregnant. And while the absence of a monthly period typically indicates a pregnancy, the previous example regarding menopause reminds readers that menstruators, at some point, cease to menstruate all together. By naming these logical gaps, *Periods for Pence* illustrates the structural fragility of HEA 1337 in an attempt to re-moralize abortion as an event that is nearly as unpredictable as menstruation. It cannot be predicted or calculated, and therefore it cannot be legislated.

Chapter Five:

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS, PERIOD

Analyzing Periods for Pence opens doors for activists and scholars alike to tackle questions related to the state and efficacy of contemporary feminist protest and how these feminists infuse their advocacy with corporeal elements in a digital age. Entrenched in a political climate, in which politicians seem more focused than ever on legislating *women's* bodies in particular and has recently seen numerous displays of protest in response, it is essential for scholars to analyze movements like Periods for Pence. In this chapter, I first answer my research questions pertaining to the campaign's use of corporeal protest as a tool for policy change and illustration of a blending of second and third-wave feminist advocacy techniques. I next consider Periods for Pence's impacts that both create space for intellectual theorizing about waves of feminism and feminist protest and affect public understanding of menstruation. Finally, I conclude this chapter by presenting ideas for future research.

Of Periods, Policy, and Protest Strategy

A Corporeal Call to Action. This thesis pays close attention to how the members of Periods for Pence capitalize on corporeal elements during their advocacy. While it may seem difficult to enact effective corporeal protest in almost exclusively a digital sphere, the women of Periods for Pence are able to keep the focus of media attention towards their efforts not on their calls or social media pages, but on their discussion of menstruation. Therefore, I ask the question:

RQ1: How does Periods for Pence establish the rhetorical relationship between corporeal protest and policy change?

By positioning their bodies and bodily functions at the front of the campaign, the women of Periods for Pence invite their audience to acknowledge the logical gaps in HEA 1337, and thereby deem the act ineffective and intrinsically call for its removal. While Periods for Pence is not necessarily a corporeal protest in the way that FEMEN's or SlutWalk's activism is corporeal, both of these groups tangibly use their bodies to visibly display nudity or otherwise grotesque imagery in protest of oppressive body politics, it does place corporeal elements at the forefront of a movement housed largely in an online sphere. The campaign's purpose is to highlight the grotesque, or uncomfortable embodiment of the male gaze, much in the same way FEMEN and Slutwalk do. While members of FEMEN and participants of Slutwalk remove their clothing and adorn their skin with writing and fake blood as a means of turning their bodies into weapons against patriarchal forces, the women of Periods for Pence discuss their menstrual cycles in exorbitant detail an attempt to weaponize their bodies. Of course, those who participate in Periods for Pence mean to make their audience, or at least Pence and his staff, uncomfortable. They achieve discomfort by turning Pence's rhetorical ownership of women's bodies on its head, forcing him to acknowledge that which he wants to control: in the case of HEA 1337, not only abortion, but menstruation as well. The women of Periods for Pence understand that in order to effectively force Pence to confront his patriarchal ideologies, he must be made aware of the "grossness" of women's reproductive biology. And so, details about menstruation are showcased through phone calls and the public posts that detail them.

While the campaign does highlight women's bodies, it also serves to humanize them in the face of a socio-political culture that so often detaches the woman from the body for male pleasure in particular. In fact, in the era of Donald Trump, popular news media has made lewd comments about women's bodies (often from the mouths of men in power) more transparent than

ever before. Sargent (2017) reports that artists Zoë Buckman and Natalie Frank created a 30-foot long mural entitled *We Hold These Truths to be Self-Evident* displaying quotations from nearly 40 politicians who have “made odious public remarks about women’s bodies and rights” (para. 1). Featured on the mural is President Trump’s brag about grabbing women by the pussy as well as former Missouri Representative Todd Akin’s assertion that a woman’s anatomy can shut her body down if she is legitimately being raped. Not only are these quotations representative of men’s opinions of women’s rights, but they detach bodies from the women they represent by failing to account for women’s ownership over their own beings and emotions. By refocusing these women’s experiences with menstruation, *Periods for Pence* makes a timely and necessary cultural statement in light of such remarks: that women *do* have power over their bodies and simultaneously are more than their bodies. They are agentic humans with feelings who know their bodies better than any male politician ever could. The corporeal strategies clear in the *Periods for Pence* campaign serve to attach women not only to menstruation, but to abortion as well. The calls made to Pence’s office refocus public attention on the female experience and, thus, both menstruation and abortion are humanized as they are embodied within the protest.

Menstruation and Abortion: A (Bio)logical Link. Intrinsic in my project’s focus on corporeal strategies at play in the *Periods for Pence* campaign is a consideration of how women’s reproductive biology is discussed and linked. It is interesting that, unlike the Redstockings in 1969, the women of *Periods for Pence* do not fight abortion legislation with discussion about their experiences with abortions. Rather, they fight abortion legislation with discussion about their experiences with *menstruation*. Thus, I ask:

RQ2: How does *Periods for Pence* invite the public to make the connection between menstruation and abortion?

The campaign capitalizes on the menstruation taboo to draw attention to the improbabilities of HEA 1337. As the calls to Pence's office (made public through Facebook and Twitter posts) demonstrate, there are several loopholes, all linked to the unpredictability of menstruation contained in the act that would unfairly punish women who are simply having their periods. The campaign, and by proxy the descriptions of women's menstrual cycles, come as a direct response to Mike Pence's signing of HEA 1337. As such, this highlighting of women's menstrual cycles forces audience members to grapple with the inconsistencies between how reproductive bodies function and Mike Pence's legislation of them. The weaponization of women's bodies inherently serves this purpose. At the crux of *Periods for Pence* is the argument that any menstrual cycle could expel a fertilized egg and that, if Mike Pence is going to attempt to legislate what is done with the remains of an abortion or miscarriage, he is going to also have to legislate what is done with the excrement of every woman's menstrual cycle, as, logically, these excrements could possibly be one in the same. This, of course, would be a ludicrous feat, and that is what the campaign demonstrates logically and metaphorically. For if Pence's office could not even handle the number of phone calls it received, how could it possibly handle the amount of menstrual excrement it would, under HEA 1337, need to legislate? This is the question Pence's administration cannot seem to answer.

Not only does using menstruation as a tool to point out HEA 1337's logical gaps link it to politics about abortion, but the campaign also makes note of, and to some extent equates, the societal taboos surrounding both menstruation and abortion. It is clear that shame in discussing menstruation is absent from the *Periods for Pence* calls and posts. Likewise, popular news coverage about the campaign has served to shatter the menstruation taboo that Western culture so tightly clings to. In effect, abortion taboo is also breached because if the campaign links

menstruation and abortion. So if the menstruation taboo is dispelled, so too is the abortion taboo. This is perhaps one of the more important functions of the campaign. Periods for Pence has, perhaps inadvertently, not only shed light on the menstruation taboo, but on the public's fear of abortion. Dubriwny (2005) notes that the Redstockings publicized abortion during their Speak-Out in 1969, and in a cultural moment in which abortion rights have once again been threatened, Periods for Pence has served a similar purpose, while also tackling a taboo as old and persistent as that of menstruation.

Feminisms Blended. While this project seeks to understand how menstruation plays a part in the fight for abortion rights, it importantly also considers feminist protest strategies. Periods for Pence utilizes traditionally second-wave protest strategies in a traditionally third-wave context. In effect, I question:

RQ3: How does Periods for Pence exemplify the blending of second and third-wave feminist theory and activism?

Periods for Pence uses second-wave feminist techniques in a third-wave context and medium. Specifically, Periods for Pence illustrates consciousness-raising as a means of producing collective rhetoric, traditionally second-wave theorizations, via digital media, a medium thought of as being third-wave.

It is clear that the accessibility of the digital era has undoubtedly contributed to Periods for Pence's efficacy and notoriety. The activism itself takes place over the phone, and then those phone calls are made public via social media. Because the Facebook and Twitter pages are simple to access and engage with, it is likely that the fact that the campaign's choice to mobilize its members digitally has allowed it to expand. As Sowards and Renegar (2004) point out, this feature is part of what attracts scholars and activists to distinguish third-wave feminism as

separate from second-wave feminism, which, traditionally has mobilized its members in public meeting areas like capitol building steps or town squares.

However, while the “third-wave-ness” of Periods for Pence is undeniable, the second-wave strategies of consciousness-raising and collective rhetoric are clearly present in the campaign’s activism efforts. Initially, a cohesive narrative is created in online contexts (i.e., Facebook comments and tweet threads). As Laura Shanley calls the members of the group to action and posts transcribed versions of her calls to Pence’s office, the women of the campaign follow suit, share their experiences and support one another’s efforts, spinning a story of women’s experiences with reproductive biology. Additionally, the posts demonstrate a biting brand of humor that leaves audiences to grapple with HEA 1337’s impossible mandates. In the process, a generative meaning that links menstruation, abortion, and the logical flaws of HEA 1337 is produced and reproduced as women use their experiences with menstruation to detail the harms the act will pose to menstruating women. Finally, abortion is symbolically reversed. As Dubriwny (2005) illuminates, the Redstockings were able to reframe abortion as a procedure to be carried out at the will of women rather than via the authority of men. Similarly, as they point out the flaws in Pence’s legislation and narrate their reproductive experiences, the women of Periods for Pence rhetorically reframe abortion as unable to be understood by male politicians, and only able to be understood by women themselves. Here it becomes necessary to note that while abortion is symbolically reversed through Periods for Pence’s work, perhaps menstruation is not. Indeed, Periods for Pence capitalizes on menstruation’s “grossness” to make a point about abortion legislation. While it is true that the women of Periods for Pence do not communicate shame about their periods, they *are* relying on a patriarchal view of menstruation in order to engage in their activism. Lest it be forgotten that the point of the campaign is to gross out Pence

and his constituents. However, members of the campaign cannot do so without relying on the very stereotype their campaign claims to dispel.

Feminism's Fluidity

Scholarship, Feminism, and Activism. Historically, academics, public intellectuals, and activists alike have, likely for organizational purposes, distinguished between waves of feminism. But, analysis of Periods for Pence reveals that it is plausible that acts of protest in the name of feminism may not fall neatly into one wave or another. Rather, the work of the members of Periods for Pence illustrates that feminist activism has always been, and remains, fluid. Abortion was initially conceived of as a second-wave feminist issue since second-wave feminism is typically marked by, among other things, combatting issues related to attacks on women's sexual and reproductive freedoms. As such, abortion activism has traditionally been studied by communication scholars using second-wave methodologies (Campbell, 1983; Campbell, 2002; Dubriwny, 2005). But the year is 2017 – an era marked by raunchiness and the prolific power of the digital sphere that many (Sorasio, 1997; Sowards and Renegar, 2006; Down & Wood, 2014) argue deems an existence of third or even fourth-wave feminism – and abortion is *still* at the forefront of political contention.

Today, women's rights to reproductive health care and services remain under constant threat. As my analysis demonstrates, the same strategies used to advocate for abortion rights in 1969 are being used to advocate for abortion rights in 2017. Consciousness-raising and collective rhetoric as well as embodiment strategies span decades. The strategies are not new, they are just being carried out in new ways. The inclusion of digital media as a way to enhance protest strategies with regard to ease and publication does not make the protest strategy unique. If

Periods for Pence has taught academics and activists anything, it is that women find ways to use the same strategies in spaces that are popular in the current time.

Illustrative of the fluidity of feminist activism is the women's advocacy that resulted from Donald Trump's election to the presidency. On January 21, 2017, the nation watched as hundreds of thousands of women from across the world marched in protest of President Trump. The Women's March on Washington, and the local and regional branches of the march, organized in ways similar to Periods for Pence. Nearly all mobilization and update efforts occurred via official Facebook and Twitter pages before anyone's feet hit the pavement. In fact, many women of Periods for Pence fame, including Laura Shanley herself, participated in the Women's March on Washington (Cook, 2017). While it is tempting to think of the Women's March on Washington as a unique protest effort, the overlap between it, Periods for Pence, and the Redstockings' Abortion Speak-Out does not disappear across a timeline. Rather, it reinvigorates, adapts, and persists to fight against the same forms of oppression over and over again.

To call attention to feminist protest's fluidity, and simultaneously question its categorization in terms of waves, is to call the academy to action. As I have outlined, a distinction between waves of feminism has been followed by a tendency for scholars to study these waves using theoretical approaches unique to each wave. But, if feminist activism is more fluid than it has been historically thought to be, scholars should approach the study of feminist activism with the same fluidity. Doing so could yield an understanding of the nuances of protest strategies, particularly related to how and why they have or have not worked in different historical eras across various iterations. What is more, while not everyone can access the Internet or take off work to protest, the techniques utilized by Periods for Pence are fairly inclusive.

While the women of the Redstockings' Abortion Speak-Out utilized collective rhetoric in person, Periods for Pence's translation of the strategy affords protestors the ability to participate from anywhere with access to a phone. Based on my analysis, I argue that not only are second-wave techniques effective through third-wave mediums, but that different theorizations of digital spaces could reveal the staying power of second-wave techniques in a world in which they are more accessible. A holistic approach to feminist activism, could serve to investigate these claims in more depth rather than hinder them on the basis of wave distinction.

To Bleed or Not to Bleed. It is clear that Periods for Pence reframes abortion in much the same way the Redstockings' Abortion Speak-Out did. What the campaign fails to rebrand however, is its namesake. Indeed, no real symbolic reversal of menstruation takes place in the campaign's advocacy efforts, rather the women of Periods for Pence rely on menstruation's "grossness" to call for policy change. This is important, because, as the campaign's name, primary means of activism, and reason for a great deal of the campaign's news coverage (Hanson, 2016; Mazzoni, 2016; Rinkunas, 2016; Schillace, 2016) suggests, the point of Periods for Pence is to reframe public perception of *periods*. Of course, the campaign does call attention to periods, but does so in a way that reifies the same sexist tropes used to demonize menstruation and suggest that it should not be spoken about. Capitalizing on the notion of menstrual blood as gross, dirty, and polluting as a way to capture the attention of legislators, and consequently the press, may appear humorous, edgy, and effective, but it does little to reframe the public's understanding of menstruation. Instead, audiences are left laughing or cowering in the face of copious details about the look and feel of menstrual blood.

Such a sentiment echoes the critiques of Christine Harold's (2004) theorization of culture jamming, which suggests that, as an act of protest, "pranksters' deploy the tools of the mass

media and marketing in order to take advantage of the resources and venues they afford” (p. 189). In other words, those disillusioned with capitalist tactics engage in capitalistic practices to transform them for anti-capitalist purposes. Some scholars, particularly Sutherland (2014) have noted that culture jamming may not be an entirely sound method of protest, as it necessitates a reliance on the “system,” in this case capitalism, in order to dismantle the system. Similarly, Periods for Pence relies on a Western fear of menstruation in an attempt to demonstrate that there is nothing about menstruation to be feared. Importantly, Periods for Pence has, to date, been unable to inspire an overturn of HEA 1337. Whether or not this is due to its reliance on the grotesque aspects of menstruation cannot be determined, but it is worth considering if using the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house ever helps activists achieve their goals.

Directions for Future Research

It is necessary to understand that Periods for Pence’s activism no longer exists strictly within Indiana borders. Indeed, since March of 2016 the United States has seen the election of Donald Trump to the presidency, with Pence by his side as Vice President. In this position of extraordinary political power, Trump and Pence together continue to tout policies that will remove federal funding from Planned Parenthood, a leading provider of safe and affordable abortions in the United States, as well as to reinstate the global gag rule (Groppe, 2017; Terkel, 2017). In response, Periods for Pence has changed its name to Periods for Politicians, and the scope of its work has expanded from the state level to the federal level by tackling the Trump administration’s handling of reproductive rights (Potts, 2016). Thus, future research should also consider Periods for Politicians an important artifact for rhetorical analysis, as their work will certainly persist in the future.

It is tempting to think of Periods for Pence as unsuccessful, given the campaign has been ineffective from a policy standpoint, but the campaign has certainly made waves. Carter (2016) explains that, in the wake of Periods for Pence, Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky planned to request a preliminary injunction to block Pence's restrictions, and Smith (2016) notes that in April of 2016 the Indiana branch of the American Civil Liberties Union filed a federal lawsuit to block Pence's legislation. In June of 2016, U.S. District Court judge Tanya Walton Pratt granted Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky's injunction, calling HEA 1337 "unconstitutional," "a violation against due process and equal protection under the law," and "a direct contradiction of *Roe v. Wade* (Stearns, 2016, paras. 1-3). In accordance with the injunction, HEA 1337 has not yet taken effect, although Indiana state attorneys remain open to filing an appeal.

While a causal relationship between these legal actions and Periods for Pence cannot be determined, it is worth considering that menstruation-centric protests are prompting policy changes, or, at the very least, creating an awareness that they may spill over. The continued legislation of women's reproductive rights has only seen an increased response from groups that share Periods for Pence's thirst for equality. For example, Weiss (2016) notes that, in the midst of the popularity of the hashtag #freethetampons, seven U.S. states have eliminated the tampon tax: New York, Massachusetts, Illinois, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland. Should HEA 1337 remain ineffective, credence must be granted to Periods for Pence and other protests like it so that academics can better understand these movements' direct role in policy change.

In what is sure to be a contentious four years under a Trump administration, scholars will also want to pay close attention to the way feminist organizations protest guaranteed suffocation

of their reproductive rights. Indeed, the Women's March on Washington used much of the same language and imagery that originated with the women of Periods for Pence (Stopera, 2017).

Turning an academic eye to the protests that Periods for Pence has inspired will help our scholarly community understand not only how these protest strategies have transferred between mediums and to larger crowds protesting broader policy, but can better guide academics and activists alike toward an understanding of how these protests can be more effective, and how scholars can better write about them.

If Mike Pence learned anything during his tenure as Indiana Governor, it is that his phone lines were not prepared for a state full of menstruating women scorned. As he and like-minded politicians serve American women from the White House for at least the next four years, it is certain that the future is red. Perhaps only time will tell if blood will be shed in effect.

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