

Saylor Hill

SPA Leadership

Professor Manuel, Professor Wilson, TA Emma Lovato

30 September 2020

Policy Memo

Research Question: Is there a disparity in how women in the United States access menstrual products? If there is, what are the impacts of that?

Incentive:

Women's menstruation is not a choice yet is addressed as if it is. It is addressed as if it is by charging for feminine hygiene products. By charging for these products, this makes access to these products limited. There are numerous women who are affected by not having access to these much needed products. Women who don't have access to these products include homeless women, women in jail, and disabled women. Inequalities affect everyone different, however this is an inequality that can and should be addressed.

Executive Summary:

- There is a lack of access to important information: "Many pre-pubescent girls do not receive information about menstruation, so their first menstrual cycle can be a frightening experience. In India, a cross sectional study of 387 school going girls reported that only 37% of them were aware of menstruation before menarche" (Wilbur). "This natural process has gained increased attention for its role in female health and social participation in recent years, following a history of neglect and silence. Policy and programming have rapidly expanded, seeking to address unmet menstrual needs. This response has far outstripped the pace and

funding of research to understand menstrual experiences and inform and evaluate interventions” (Hennegan).

- There is a stigma surrounding this topic: “My next paper, tentatively called *Periods and Workplace Policy*, proposes an expansion of federal employment law to normalize and destigmatize menstrual management at work.⁵⁸ Currently, the inability to address periods at work is an obstacle to full workplace equality and economic security for some. Periods happen at work, but few employers voluntarily have created workplace policies that protect workers’ needs to manage menstruation” (Crawford). “Access to feminine hygiene products is an issue that affects women and girls throughout the United States, and lack of access is an issue of Reproductive Justice that is often overlooked. The barriers that have prevented individuals from accessing such products have been specifically put in place by the government, whether the burden is a result of inaction, ignorance, or policies purposely governing such products” (Durkin).
- There is a lack of access to those who are less privileged than the able bodied, middle class women: “Allegra relates, ‘Recently, a homeless patient told me that she also would wrap toilet paper around her underwear during her menses. she spoke about the expense of tampons and sanitary pads. her shelter provided only 2 pads per cycle, whereas the average woman uses approximately 20 tampons/pads per cycle.⁷ her inadequate options were toilet paper, reused cloths or ruining her only pair of underpants” (Parrillo). “Carla Laroche, co-chair of the ABA Criminal Justice Section's **Women** in Criminal Justice Committee, first read that **women** in prison were not ensured free **access** to feminine **hygiene products** in an article about an Arizona bill that aimed to supply them with **more** than 12 sanitary pads per month” (Robert).

“Barriers faced included a lack of standardized guidance for professional carers; a lack of menstruation training, information and support provided to people with intellectual impairments and their carers; a lack of understanding of severity of symptoms experienced by people with intellectual impairments, the high cost of menstrual products and lack of appropriate options for people with physical impairments. Few interventions were found, and strategies for menstrual hygiene management applied by carers of persons with intellectual impairments include limiting the disabled person’s movements when menstruating and suppressing their menstruation” (Wilbur).

- This is something that can and should be fixed: “The belief that menstrual equity is a beginning step on the path to gender equity motivates this work” (Crawford).

Key Stakeholders:

- A group called Alliance for period supplies. This group is a nonprofit organized interested in meeting the needs for others. They do this by education others and handing out much needed supplies. They have been doing this since 2018 so they have experience in helping the needs of women.
- Period. This is an organization of young people advocating for periods. They have been around since 2016, helping educate those around them on menstruation. Right now they are focusing on the impact of COVID-19 and how they can help those in need. They have been talked about by numerous press including *People*, *NBC News*, and *ELLE*.
- Helping women period. This is an organization that aims at providing free products to those who are in the lower income bracket/homeless. To help them you can donate products, donate money, or volunteer.

Appraisal of Past Solutions/Opposing Views:

- There are plenty of other more important inequalities, this should not be focused on. I think this is important because this is something that 50% of the population faces. All women face this so this is an inequality that is pretty important and should be addressed.
- Other necessities aren't free, why should this one be free? As much as I would advocate for free feminine hygiene products, I don't think that it super realistic right now. I am more advocating that each women should have access to theses products because they are necessary.

Budget:

- A. I don't think that I will need a budget! I am planning on reaching out to organizations to see how I can raise money and donations. I will be getting this money and donations by those surrounding our community.

Timeline:

1. October
 1. Reach out and interview organizations I want to work with
 2. Interview scholars in this field
2. November
 1. Policy Memo
 2. Draft of plan for Spring
3. December
 1. Finalize who you want to work with
 2. Reach out to that organization
 3. Come up with how you will start the spring semester

Conclusion:

The issue of not having access to feminine hygiene products is a problem that I am going to address. Too many people are afraid to have this conversation which means women aren't getting the help that they desperately need. I hope that by doing my project I will be able to raise awareness and help at least a handful of women with providing the products that they need.

Works Cited

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