



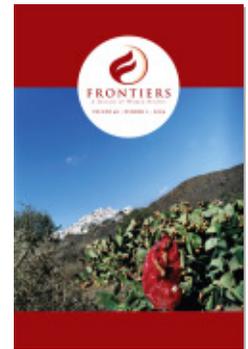
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and Menstrual Representation in the 1970s

Jennifer Nelson

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Historicizing Body Knowledge

Women's Liberation, Self-Help, and Menstrual
Representation in the 1970s

JENNIFER NELSON

[Woman] is simply what man decrees; thus she is called “the sex,” by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex—absolute sex, no less.

—Simone de Beauvoir

Many feminists who embraced Women's Liberation grew up in a culture saturated with messages like the one captured by Simone de Beauvoir in 1953.¹ They criticized this monolithic representation of woman as “the sex” and exposed a historically and socially hegemonic tradition of Western art and visual culture that affirmed heterosexual men's pleasure in looking at women's sexed bodies.² According to Laura Mulvey, narrative cinema, in particular, represented heterosexual male desire and point-of-view as a universal and disembodied truth that affirmed men's power over women. She termed this universalizing perspective “the male gaze” in an influential essay published in 1975, which exposed gendered power relations rooted in a visual system based on a phallogocentric understanding of the meaning of sexual difference. Mulvey argued (via Freudian psychoanalytic theory) that the “patriarchal unconscious”—and the roots of women's oppression—rested on the representation of woman's “real lack of a penis.”³ Mulvey also maintained that transforming patriarchy depended upon both exposing the patriarchal system of representation that rested on interpretations of women as the “other” and inferior sex and constructing new feminist self-representations rooted in women's own experiences of their sexed bodies.

This essay focuses on feminist activists and artists of the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s—women's health movement feminists and two experimental feminist filmmakers, one of whom also took part in the feminist women's health movement—who criticized the hegemony of the

“male gaze.” These activists and artists created self-representations of their own embodied experiences, or what I have termed “body knowledge.” As the women who populate my essay were similarly situated as white, I also explore how white 1970s feminist activists and artists grappled with how to represent women’s textured and heterogeneous experiences. The women I write about in this essay struggled to forge a feminism that represented common experiences of oppression among women but also revealed the complexity and heterogeneity of women’s experiences of oppression. I believe that a failure to recognize the 1970s feminist effort to attend to women’s similarities and their differences has set the stage for popular critics of Women’s Liberation of the 1970s to mark the movement ahistorically as “white” even though many white women addressed differences among women. Furthermore, women of color, working-class women, and lesbians were active as feminists in the 1970s and critical of racism, classism, and heterosexism within Women’s Liberation during the same period.⁴ Thus I use this essay to understand Women’s Liberation activists’ representation of their bodies as politically powerful for them in their historical context, although their politics had both empowering and marginalizing effects.

The charge of essentialism, the idea that women’s shared female biology is more important than their differences and should form the basis of feminist politics, has long been associated with both the creative and activist expressions of white feminists of the 1970s. Furthermore, essentialism often has been provided as an explanation for white feminists’ inability to tackle the “dilemma of difference” to address racism, classism, and heterosexism. In many ways essentialism has come to define contemporary feminism and has been used as a foundation for its dismissal.⁵ Art historian Amelia Jones points out that the dismissal of 1970s feminism as essentialist has had a damaging effect on our understanding of what feminism meant in the context of the movement. She explains, “Younger generations of feminists have little access to the wealth of insights that were painfully developed in the art and theory of this period and waste time reinventing what has already been extensively theorized.”⁶ Furthermore, Jones argues in her work on feminist artist Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party* that “a certain ‘essentialism’—that is, the claiming of identifiably similar experiences among particular groups of people—is a crucial component of any ‘coalition politics.’”⁷ “Essentialism” works to establish the political subjectivity of the group. Yet this sort of “strategic essentialism,” as Gayatri Spivak termed it, runs the risk of also overgeneralizing women’s experiences as too uniform or even universal and, thus, marginalizing women whose experiences were ignored.⁸

By referencing women’s collective and shared experiences and the knowl-

edges they produced while living with female bodies, feminists in the women's health movement and 1970s white feminist filmmakers and artists like those I write about here—Emily Culpepper and Barbara Hammer—evoked representations of the body to demonstrate that *women* produced knowledge with sexed female bodies. Both Culpepper and Hammer used images of the female body—and more particularly images of menstruation—as symbols of women's common marginalization due to their sex as well as to represent women's embodied production of knowledge about their experiences. The array of feminist art produced in the 1970s is vast. I use Culpepper and Hammer since, like the women's health activists also discussed in this essay, both were commenting particularly on women's experiences of menstruation to counter sexist cultural understandings that represented female genitals and menstruation as shameful and something to be hidden.⁹

Although often not thought of together, women's health movement activists and feminist artists or filmmakers shared political perspectives that circulated among feminist groups. Other scholars have also begun to comment on the political and ideological links between feminist art production and the wider Women's Liberation Movement. For example, historian Michelle Moravec argues that “the feminist art movement drew on the women's liberation movement to shape its message and organizational forms.”¹⁰ Historian Jill Fields similarly points out that “the feminist art movement developed in conjunction with the wider women's movement because female artists faced discrimination in pursuing professional careers and because art depicting women's subjective experiences was discouraged and disparaged by the art world establishment.”¹¹ And in her work on Chicago, Jones argues, “By making the personal experiences of women—menstruation, childbearing, maternity, aging, eroticism, domesticity, violence, objectification—political, feminists challenged the age-old erasure of women's participation in Western culture.”¹² Feminists proclaimed the “personal as political”—particularly the personal as it was politically impacted by living with a female body in a sexist society—through widely different mediums.

By examining the ideas about the body that circulated in the women's health movement and among Women's Liberation Movement artists and experimental filmmakers, I build on the historical research done by Moravec, Fields, and Jones on feminist artists. I also build on the work of feminist curators such as Cornelia Butler, who organized the exhibit “WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution,” focused on art that emerged from the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s. Butler noted that feminist artists used representations of the body “as the *prima materia* for explorations of physical, psychological, and spiritual experience, as well as sexual identity.”¹³ I also draw

from important historical scholarship on Women's Liberation produced by Michelle Murphy and Wendy Kline, both historians of the feminist women's health movement, focused on visual production of situated knowledge about women's bodies.¹⁴

Ideas about the reproductive body and how it might be represented differently—from women's embodied perspectives—reflected their formation during the 1970s, a period of radical transformation of understandings of women's roles in society and tensions around women's diversity of experience. Even if some of the women in this essay never met and were working in different contexts and on different projects, all of them produced artifacts that help us better understand how 1970s feminists represented their female bodies and how they believed they could transform cultural meanings to suit their pursuits as health practitioners and artists. As Jones asserts, "they were clear about the possibilities of combatting discrimination through the recuperation of women's bodies through representation."¹⁵ Through their work in women's health centers, in feminist studio spaces, and at film screenings set up in women's coffee houses or in newly founded women's studies programs, new images and meanings were generated that came to be associated with female bodies. The body as an instrument of female rather than male pleasure was one of these meanings. Feminists also challenged the idea that the female reproductive body was polluted, taboo, abnormal, or in need of concealment when menstruating. They exposed representations of women and their genitalia as dangerous enigmas to be investigated and solved by men. They challenged understandings of the female body as allied solely with nature and thus separate from the mind that produced knowledge, science, history, art, and culture. And they challenged the idea of the female sex as unseen unless represented for men's pleasure. As art historian Lisa Tickner explained in her 1978 essay on feminist art that had emerged up to the time of her writing during that explosive decade, "The most significant area of erotic art today is that of the *de*-colonizing of the female body; the challenging of its taboos; and the celebration of its rhythms and pains."¹⁶ Her words could also describe the feminist women's health movement.

SELF-HELP & THE "BODY KNOWLEDGE" OF THE FEMINIST WOMEN'S HEALTH MOVEMENT

The feminist women's health movement developed as feminists began to criticize medicine for failing to attend to women's lived experiences with their bodies; they also demanded more information about and greater control over their bodies. The first women's health movement book to provide women with

information on their bodies from a feminist perspective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, was published in 1970 as *Women and Their Bodies* by the New England Free Press.¹⁷ Feminist women's health clinics also proliferated during the early 1970s. As I explain in my work on the Aradia clinic founded in Seattle in 1971, women's health movement feminists created their own clinics because they "wanted to transform women's health care to incorporate a nonhierarchical and compassionate atmosphere that validated women's experiences with and knowledge of their bodies and affirmed their reproductive and sexual intentions, whatever those might be."¹⁸

The feminist women's health movement portion of this article focuses on the Cambridge Women's Community Health Center (CWCHC) and their creation of self-help and fertility consciousness groups in the 1970s. CWCHC was not unique in its focus on self-help. Yet they made it central to their health care in a way that other clinics did not always do. Furthermore, there is a rich collection of documents discussing both self-help and fertility consciousness in collective settings in the CWCHC collection at Radcliffe's Schlesinger Library. This portion of the essay draws on those sources.

Feminists across the country based their self-help practices on the idea that women could wrest control of their own health care from mostly male doctors by starting from their experiences with and observations of their own bodies in collective forums. As Kline notes, the self-help philosophy was grounded in the idea of "body knowledge," that women's "experiential evidence was an alternative to clinical knowledge. Women, by their very nature, were the experts of their own bodies."¹⁹ A CWCHC information flyer emphasized women's control over knowledge produced about their bodies: "We, not the 'professionals,' will control what is done to us medically, and know why it is done. We do not take the place of a doctor, but we DO reverse the patriarch-authority-doctor over 'patient' roles. We take women's medicine back into our own hands by taking back control over our own bodies and becoming strong in our self-knowledge."²⁰

As the CWCHC flyer explained, this approach to health care deconstructed traditional medical hierarchies. Doctors and other medical professionals were not the experts; women were. Patients learned about their reproductive bodies at feminist clinics around the country by looking in a mirror that reflected their cervix and the cervixes of other women, reversing the conventional gaze of the doctor whose exclusive look was aimed at the woman's body. Emphasizing the importance of the visual in self-help, feminist groups appropriated the mirror and the speculum to deconstruct this visual hierarchy, which reinforced systems of knowledge production by which doctors examined and knew of women's bodies while women's bodies were off-limits to themselves.

If women wanted to become more involved with the feminist health movement, they were encouraged to join a self-help group in which members would chart changes in their cervixes over time, allowing them to learn how to recognize early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and when they were ovulating, which could be employed as a method of fertility control.²¹

The CWCHC opened in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1974. It was run by a collective of white women, although historian Wendy Kline points out that the collective stressed “diversity in sexual orientation.”²² The women who created the clinic were already active with self-help. In August 1973 Jennifer Burgess and Cookie Avrin met at a self-help demonstration in Worcester, Massachusetts. Carol Downer suggested that they plan a women’s health conference that would pave the way for a women’s health center in Cambridge. Along with Terry Plumb and other women in a feminist paramedic group, Burgess and Avrin planned the First Annual Women’s Health Conference, held at the Boston YWCA in November 1973 with 150 women in attendance. After the conference Judy Abelow, Barbara Johnston, Jan Singer, and Sharon Donovan, with Avrin, Burgess, and Plumb, started planning “a woman owned and controlled health center.”²³

Collective and participatory health sessions in which women shared knowledge about their bodies and their experiences with their bodies were a main feature of the health care provided by CWCHC. Most women who visited the clinic came for regular preventive gynecological care and pregnancy screenings. Many had been dissatisfied with their medical care options and sought out a feminist women’s health center with a focus on self-help in a group setting. On their evaluation forms, patients were asked why they decided to come to CWCHC and to provide feedback on how they felt about self-help and cervical and breast self-examination. For example, one patient wrote on a 1976 clinic evaluation form, “I wanted to learn self-examination and I wanted to learn from other women. I’ve hated all the other places I’ve gone.”²⁴ Another patient responded: “[I] have been monitoring and observing my body’s messages on my own for a long time and believe that your approach encourages self-reliance and self-knowledge.”²⁵ Also in 1978, a patient similarly wrote that she felt “positive—I’m interested in self-vaginal examination as an aid in birth control and to help control yeast. Self-knowledge seems to help me feel more comfortable sexually also.”²⁶ Another twenty-six-year-old patient asserted that she came to CWCHC because she wanted to take an active role in her health care rather than submit passively to the medical authority of a doctor. She wrote on her form:

I like it [self-help] because it emphasizes my active role in taking care of

myself rather than a passive one. It also dispels the mystique of the relationship between doctor and patient and the hierarchy of

Doctor
Nurse
Patient²⁷

Many women who came to the clinic were new to the group self-help approach. The preponderance of women responding on their evaluation forms wrote about the excitement they felt being able to see their reproductive organs, which they described as having been hidden. The experience often countered their negative associations with their own female genitals. A new patient wrote in 1976, commenting on her attitude toward self-help, "It's all still new to me, interesting, and a bit frightening since all of my life my genitals have been hidden secretive." The same patient explained further, "It was the greatest thing that ever happened to me since I discovered sex."²⁸ Another woman echoed the sense that knowledge about her body had been hidden: "The self-help class was great—I felt I was learning stuff that had been hidden from me."²⁹ A patient who was part of a well-woman participatory self-help group in 1978 reflected that she felt she had been "kept in ignorance in the conventional doctor-patient relationship of gynecologists." The same woman also commented, "I believe that being a woman is not a disease," echoing the feminist health movement contention that women's bodies often had been treated as if they were abnormal.³⁰ Similarly, a twenty-one-year-old writing in 1979 noted, "I liked being able to see another woman's genitals—made me feel . . . normal."³¹ Finally, in 1980 an eighteen-year-old expressed that she chose the CWCHC "because I got no answers from other doctors. I was told 'I wouldn't understand,' they kept me blind about my body instead of explaining."³²

Women also commented that they sought out feminist-oriented and self-help health services because general medical practitioners and gynecologists had treated them disrespectfully, often as if they couldn't understand their bodies and the biological processes associated with them. For instance, writing in 1976, a woman commented, "Part of my reason for coming to the Health Center this time was because the gynecologist I had seen elsewhere was not very thorough or understanding. I was made to feel that since I probably couldn't understand things on anything but a rudimentary level, there was no sense in taking the time to explain." Affirmation about the process of acquiring knowledge about their bodies came up repeatedly in the evaluations. Another patient commented, "It was a positive experience, a learning one for me. I feel more comfortable with my own body (and more knowledge-

able as well!)” A woman wrote in 1978, “The more I can do myself the better I feel about the medical aspects of being a woman. Demystification is important.”³³ Self-help validated a woman’s experiential and subjective observations of her own genitalia, which explicitly criticized and reversed the power-laden doctor-patient relationship in medicine and gynecology.³⁴

Patient comments affirmed the 1970s feminist women’s health movement perspective that experiential “body knowledge” was valid, and that women were the logical producers of this knowledge about women because they experienced life with female bodies. This perspective countered what Elizabeth Grosz has described as the “presumption that though knowledge is produced by individuals, it is in no way personal or merely idiosyncratic if it is to be considered as genuine knowledge. The knowing subject who produces knowledge is, as it were bracketed off from the knowledges produced. Knowledge is considered perspectiveless.”³⁵ Patients reversed this presumption by expressing the validity of the knowledge produced about their bodies because it emerged from their subjective experiences, a set of subjective experiences that brought women together in Women’s Liberation.

Unfortunately, the race of the CWCHC patients was not documented in the feedback forms collected in the archive. This absence is unfortunate for historians interested in how differences among women were attended to during the movement. It is revealing, however, because race remained an unmarked and presumably less significant category among both patients and staff; the emphasis was on the *reproductive* body as sexed and how feminists might transform women’s experiences associated with medical processes. The effect of this absence produced the illusion of a uniform experience among women that emphasized men’s appropriation of knowledge about and power over women’s bodies without acknowledging experiences of racism, classism, or histories of colonial oppression. This understanding of how power operated erased historical and medicalized understandings of the body that reinforced violence and power over the bodies of women of color, understandings that were as much about racial and imperial subordination as about subordination by sex.³⁶

Yet staff at CWCHC did invoke racism as a problem to be challenged. For instance, by 1978, an information flyer about the organization stated,

We think that sexism, capitalism, imperialism, heterosexism and racism are inextricably bound together. Each of us at Women’s Community Health has different ideas about what precisely should be done or can be done to eliminate oppression, but as feminists, we know from our experiences that working in a women-controlled health center based on self-

help and self-knowledge is a realistic focus in the struggle for a more human society. Control over our lives and bodies is a basic issue in this struggle.³⁷

As this document reveals, CWCHC members recognized intersectional oppressions, yet race, class, and imperialism were often subordinated as secondary issues to women's need to increase control over their bodies and health care in relation to (white) men and doctors. In another instance, Catherine DeLorey, a staff member at CWCHC, in a paper for the Department of Health Services, School of Public Health program at Harvard, wrote of racism and capitalism (class) as political issues, but immediately shifted away from race and class to address the feminist goal of "self-knowledge" among women. She explained, "We think that sexism, capitalism and racism are inextricably 'intertwined.' . . . As feminists, [we] think that working in a woman-controlled health center based on self-help and self-knowledge is a realistic focus for us. . . . Control over our lives and bodies is a basic issue in our struggle."³⁸ The 1978 document and DeLorey's statement both implied that the solution to racism and classism was the woman-controlled health center in which women's "body knowledge" would be honored. This response did not prioritize political solutions to reproductive health abuses such as forced or coerced sterilization or welfare rights demands identified by many women of color as fundamentally important to their feminist politics in the 1970s, including by the Boston-area Combahee River Collective members in their 1977 statement.³⁹ Later in the same document DeLorey mentioned sterilization abuse in a comment contending that it was also important to the clinic staff: "WHI [Women's Health Inc., a pseudonym for CWCHC] carries out political activity on issues concerning the health care of women. Some of these activities could involve . . . concern and support to groups organized around sterilization abuse." Although sterilization abuse was recognized as a political issue being addressed by women of color, the proposition that it "could" be an issue to "support" suggested it was not of primary concern. Women of color did not agree that a political response to sterilization abuse was optional. White Cambridge feminists might have been less concerned about sterilization abuse because it was not something that they had personally encountered as white women. On the contrary, many white women had been denied voluntary sterilization if they did not already have children.⁴⁰

A smaller number of women at the CWCHC joined five-week sessions to chart their menstrual cycles for personal self-knowledge and, for some, to control their fertility without the use of contraceptives. These groups of women trained themselves to observe daily cervical changes and discharges.

By observing cervical discharges (blood and mucus) and slight changes in the cervical opening, such as dilation, women could identify the fertile period in their cycle. They also recorded temperature changes and their emotional states throughout their cycles. All of these signs were written down and compared with other women's monthly changes. Paula Garbarino, staff member at CWCHC, wrote an article about fertility awareness in 1978. She explained, "Awareness of the fertile periods puts us more in touch with the total menstrual cycle. This awareness can be used for the purpose of conception or, by avoiding penile vaginal contact during fertile time, as a means of natural birth control."⁴¹ Fertility awareness as a method of birth control required that women be cognizant of the changes in their reproductive organs. Thus they were actively involved in producing knowledge about their fertility based on data gathered from their own bodies.⁴² Acknowledging their subjective experiences as women with female bodies affirmed the validity of the knowledge they produced and united them in a movement that targeted women's subordination in the field of medicine. Yet the data they gathered—mucus, blood, body temperature—was also represented as being the evidence of a racially neutral female body that tended to reinforce a presumption of experiential similarities among women.

Feminists in the women's health movement also wanted to deconstruct what they perceived as popular and pervasive negative cultural messages about women's reproductive bodies, particularly those messages about female genitals and the fluids they released that reinforced stereotyped sex roles. In a CWCHC informational flyer used for menstruation workshops, women's health activists Emily Culpepper and Esther Rome, one of the co-authors of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, asserted:

Cultural, religious and personal attitudes about menstruation are a part of our menstrual experience and often reflect how women are treated. Due to the false belief that menstrual blood is "unclean," women have been actually separated from others during their periods. Also, in the belief that the whole menstrual cycle makes women unstable or less capable, women have been denied jobs and treated as inferior.⁴³

Menstruation workshops were organized so that women could discuss their personal experiences with each other to disrupt negative cultural attitudes as well as increase knowledge about the workings of their bodies. Women's health movement activists argued that many women had common negative and culturally oppressive perceptions of menstruation. By understanding their bodies by observing them and sharing their experiences, they could combat these negative perceptions. Culpepper and Rome explained, "They claim that

a woman's cycle is complicated and mysterious. But this remains the case only because adequate research has not been done and because our own knowledge about ourselves is not taken seriously." While drawing attention to historical and cross-cultural characterizations of menstruation as defiling, Rome and Culpepper also emphasized the diversity of menstruation experiences. They wrote, "We hope each woman comes to understand more about her own cycle and what is usual and normal for her. We are not interested in setting up new stereotypes of what the 'normal' menstrual cycle should be. We are sharing our different experiences."⁴⁴ In an article reflecting on the menstruation workshops, Culpepper further emphasized, "I directly address the issue of norms, stating clearly that the workshop will include a variety of attitudes. There are women who love their periods, women who hate them, women for whom they are 'no big deal' or a 'minor hassle.' . . . Sometimes, these are all the same woman."⁴⁵

Feminist artists of the 1970s also represented the female reproductive body (often employing self-representation akin to the self-help exam) through the lens of their lived experience. Writing of the movement during the 1970s, art historian Lisa Tickner observed that the "acceptance and re-integration of the female genitals into art has thus been a political, rather than a directly erotic, gesture. . . . It is a category that promotes self-knowledge (like the self-examination health groups) by which it has probably been influenced."⁴⁶ The next part of this article explores two 1970s feminist filmmakers' representations of the female sexed body. Both filmmakers—although separated by geography, Culpepper based in the Boston area and Barbara Hammer based in the Bay Area—used experimental film in 1974 to represent menstruation in ways that disrupted stereotypes of femininity and the female bleeding body as secret and taboo.

FEMINIST BODIES AND EXPERIMENTAL FILM

I start with Culpepper because she was involved in the feminist women's health movement in Cambridge and Boston in the 1970s, so her work is a natural bridge between the women's health movement and the use of the medium of film to self-represent women's embodied experiences. Collective experience and community was a fundamental aspect contributing to the Women's Liberation politics that informed both the women's health movement and feminist art production. One of the methods used to identify political issues during the early and explosive years of the 1970s feminist movement was through a collective process that came to be called Consciousness Raising or just CR. Small groups of women came together to talk about how the

“personal was political.” Some of these groups were associated with a particular organization, others just sprang up among friends.⁴⁷ Feminists in CR groups discussed various topics relevant to their lives that were increasingly associated with their subordinate status and oppression. As Culpepper recalls, “We examined these taboos, their sources, justifications, and how they functioned. So many were about our bodies and what they meant.”⁴⁸ Feminists, including Culpepper in her menstruation workshops, used these informal group conversations as the basis for the creation of new representations to challenge the entrenched cultural meanings and taboos attached to women’s bodies. They also found sources of support in these communities as they fought to transform a culture that often isolated and marginalized women who engaged in activism focused on the social transformation of gender roles.

Of course, white feminists’ activism and art reflected the bounds of their particular historical identities—identities associated with being both white and female. At the same time, Women’s Liberation Movement activists articulated the heterogeneity of women’s experiences in different ways. In both Culpepper’s and Hammer’s context, personal experiences were associated with gender and sex oppression as well as marginalization associated with their sexual and romantic involvement with other women. Culpepper also forged her activist teeth in the Civil Rights movement in Georgia in high school and in college at Emory University and grew up in a southern family opposed to segregation, where she “learned early that white was a privilege.”⁴⁹ In 1979, in Boston, she allied with black feminists in the Combahee River Collective to protest the lack of police attention paid to the murder of black women in Roxbury, participating in a march called “We Cannot Live without Our Lives,” and helped organize a music festival of black women artists.⁵⁰

As a Master of Theological Studies student at the Harvard Divinity School, Culpepper decided to make an experimental film—called *Period Piece . . . of Women’s History*—for her thesis that would focus on the “intersections of religious and cultural attitudes towards women’s sexuality.”⁵¹ Her film, completed in 1974, includes four voiceover stories organized in chronological order. The voiceover stories include a reading from the nineteenth-century autobiography of Mountain Wolf Woman, a member of the Winnebago tribe; a first-menstruation story told by feminist philosopher Mary Daly; a childhood memory told by close friend and ex-husband Robin Hough; and a menstruation onset memory told by her friend and collaborator on the film, Linda Barufaldi, who was the cameraperson and appears in the film, and whose voiceover is heard while she goes about daily activities including writing her thesis and changing her tampon. The first three voiceovers are paired with recurring images from the Women’s Liberation Movement,

drawings pairing women's bodies with nature, photos of flowers and greenery, advertisements for Kotex napkins emphasizing women's need for "protection" during their periods, and abstract images of red "blood" swirling in water.

Culpepper used her film to represent the tension between what she saw as common cultural messages of menstruation as taboo, dangerous, unclean, and something to be hidden and the actual diverse menstruation experiences of women. Culpepper wrote about beginning the film with Mountain Wolf's story, "Rather than romanticize (i.e., colonize) Native American culture, I chose Mountain Wolf Woman's story because her life and her family's demonstrated clear pride in Winnebago practice and, at times, ambivalence and confusion arising from effects on her tribal culture from colonized conditions, including her conversion to Lutheran Christianity."⁵² The Mountain Wolf reading voiceover recounts fear and isolation associated with a first period. As a girl, Mountain Wolf was told by her mother that during her period her gaze was dangerous and would contaminate men's blood and cause her to be an evil person, so she must run to the woods and hide herself. But the story also recounts caring expressed by Mountain Wolf's sister and sister-in-law, who found her crying in the woods in the snow and built a shelter for her, where she stayed for four days during her period. This story is followed by a voiceover by Mary Daly recalling her experience of being told by a nun in Catholic school that she would scream when she saw the blood from her first period. Hough's story recounts his memory as a small child of seeing droplets of blood on the floor; he perceived they had to do with something secret and frightening associated with his mother. Barufaldi's story, by contrast, is about her first period as a rite of passage shared with her mother and female neighbors. Menstruation is depicted in the film as taboo historically and cross-culturally, but also as "an everyday ordinary event." Barufaldi appears in the film while she has her period, going about regular activities including "writing a term paper, stopping briefly to change a tampon, then back to the typewriter." The imagery of Barufaldi changing her tampon could be perceived as explicit. The camera focuses on her extracting a used tampon and inserting a fresh one into her vagina. The impression conveyed, however, is that changing one's tampon is a regular and even insignificant event. The voiceover accompanying these scenes is meant to convey the "matter-of-factness" of menstruation, the opposite of something taboo or dirty.⁵³

Culpepper also gestured toward the complexity and tensions within the Women's Liberation Movement by using imagery from the Boston radical feminist group Cell 16—an image of a nude woman drawn in pink and red surrounded by swirls of long hair suggestive of roses—and imagery that referenced socialist feminism—a Soviet image from a journal published by

the Socialist Women's League of West Berlin that depicted a defiant woman dressed in black on a red background waving a flag—to signify her personal rejection of the divide between radical and socialist feminism within 1970s Women's Liberation. Culpepper explained that her goal was to capture “how different we were. That was what Consciousness Raising was all about.”⁵⁴ Indeed, Culpepper captures women's diverse experiences, but there is also a thread running through the film suggesting common cultural experiences associated with menstrual shame. This thread of commonality linked to menstruation likely contributed to critiques of Women's Liberation as essentialist since women's common experiences of oppression associated with having female bodies are placed at the forefront without overt acknowledgment of the ways white women, too, could be implicated in structures of power over other women.

The film concludes with Culpepper performing her first vaginal self-exam while menstruating. As she explained, “The women's health movement had begun teaching women how to look at our own cervixes with a plastic speculum and I was eager to do my first self-exam while bleeding.” Culpepper asserted that as an activist in the feminist movement in Boston and Cambridge, and as a scholar who focused on “intersections of religious and cultural attitudes toward women's sexuality, bodies, and health,”⁵⁵ she wanted to give the “menstrual experience . . . dramatic, even ritual, import.”⁵⁶ Rather than generate an academic text for her thesis, she decided to create a film because she believed visual representation was necessary to counter entrenched cultural taboos. She recalled, “Pondering my next step, I became deeply convinced that to move ahead about menstrual meaning, we would simply need to see it. Look at it. See it RED. See it BLOOD. See it FLOWING from our VULVAS.”⁵⁷

For the last self-exam scene, Culpepper prepared by allowing her blood to flow freely. As she explained, she wanted blood to be visible. She described the experience as one that demonstrated the ease of self-exam but, more important, also captured her wonder at viewing her secreting cervix:

I shone a flashlight on a mirror balanced in front of my vulva, so I could see the reflected image of my cervix, bleeding. Wow! I forgot the camera and the film. But I did not forget I was sharing this profound moment with my friend Linda. . . . I looked up with a gaze that goes right through the camera as if it isn't there, directly to her. We both treasure that intimate moment.⁵⁸

As she noted in this comment, Culpepper's film directly addressed the notion of a female gaze by positioning Barufaldi behind the camera, filming Culpepper, and filming two women looking at each other, and looking at

(and filming) one woman's genitalia, which was a cultural taboo suggestive of both pornography and lesbianism.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Culpepper's gaze includes both her own cervix reflected in the mirror and captured by the camera, her look toward her female friend, and the camera's look at her, which of course includes the viewer's look at Culpepper's bleeding cervix. This series of looks disrupts the exclusive prerogative of heterosexual men to look at and represent women's objectified and sexualized bodies.

One of the most pervasive negative messages associated with menstruation addressed by Culpepper and other artists during this period was the notion that it and other vaginal excretions must remain hidden. Culpepper and other artists countered this message by representing menstruation visually. As philosopher Iris Marion Young observes,

From our earliest awareness of menstruation until the day we stop, we are mindful of the imperative to *conceal* our menstrual processes. We follow a multitude of practical rules. . . . In everyday life these requirements of concealment create enormous anxiety and practical difficulties for women, and are a major source of our annoyance with the monthly event.⁶⁰

Menstruating, Young argues, is one of the aspects of a female body that sets it apart from a male body. If men and the male body are taken to be the standard for equal participation in the public, or as Grosz writes, the "universal is . . . a guise for the masculine," then women must not expose their difference if they want to enter the public as equal participants.⁶¹ Culpepper and the other women in the women's health movement of the 1970s exposed women's bleeding and excreting bodies in public and claimed their right to be "equal participants" with these bodies exposed.

As a second example of visual representation of the "bleeding body," I turn to Bay Area experimental filmmaker Barbara Hammer's short film, *Menses*, also made in 1974, which satirizes what Young calls "menstrual etiquette"⁶² as a way to transform social expectations of menstruation reinforced by this "etiquette."⁶³ Hammer described the film as a "satire on the Disney and Disney-type films that many of us junior high school prepubescent girls watched. They were all lace and daisies and muted whispers surrounding the flow." She continued, explaining how her film criticized the "menstrual etiquette" promoted by myths of proper femininity: "What a farce. To carry a rag between one's legs, to stuff cotton cylinders into a private body opening—it was treated like a secret, like something precious and distinguishing. It was a lie."⁶⁴ In an interview with me she explained her experience with her first period. It was one of fear when she saw blood in the toilet and thus resonated with memo-

ries represented in Culpepper's film. Hammer explained that she too was told nothing about menstruation before it happened.⁶⁵

The film is shot in Tilden Regional Park above the Berkeley campus—chosen to represent lesbian feminists as outsiders in relation to “dominant culture and the male-controlled institution of the university.” *Menses* is a feminist political film that uses satire, in Judith Brodsky and Ferris Olin's words, to “illuminate oppressive social relations embedded in daily life in order to trigger transformations of consciousness.”⁶⁶ The idea for the film grew out of conversations among Hammer and a lesbian circle of friends about their experiences with their periods and about myths and taboos associated with menstruation.⁶⁷ The film humorously exposes the conventions associated with the things women needed to do to maintain “menstrual etiquette.” Rather than represent menstruation as singularly natural, Hammer exposes the collision between the bodily function of menstruation and the social proscription that menstruation remain hidden or, if it is exposed, be treated as something dirty and even defiling.

The imagery of the film represents the consciousness raising that provoked the film. The film begins with a group of nude (white) women standing close together in the park. Immediately the image shifts to repeated overlapping images of women's inverted triangular pubic areas and upper thighs overlaid with a recurring image of a disembodied egg, a playful symbol of women's reproductive capacity that also suggests the laying of eggs, while the soundtrack states, “It's ecologically resourceful to menstruate,” and then repeats, “menses, menses . . .” The repeated and superimposed egg floats over the women's pubic areas, creating an abstract image of inverted triangles overlaid by circles. The image shifts back to the naked women standing outside in the rustic setting as they “lay” eggs that drop one by one from between their legs. A woman—playing the part of Lady Macbeth washing away her sins⁶⁸—then works to scrub blood vigorously from her thighs. Another woman's blood drips onto a white sheet. All of the women are occasionally superimposed with an image of red flowing blood and a cracked egg. The musical soundtrack becomes increasingly cacophonous as the word “menstruation” is repeated.

These images provide a visual critique of “woman's nature”—and women in nature—as configured in a society that characterizes women as closely associated with nature and reproduction. While women are revered as sacred—when reproductive—when they are bleeding they are the opposite. They have not conceived—their eggs have cracked—so they need to be covered and scrubbed clean. Christian religious messages closely associated with “menstrual etiquette” are also exposed—menstruation must be hidden but it is also a sign of future fertility, a positive as long as it is also managed. Two women

perform a quasi-religious ceremony akin to a communion. One woman, dressed in a white robe, receives a “wafer” (labeled codeine pill) from another woman, who is nude except for a pair of knee-high boots and a floppy black hat. The enrobed woman, signifying purity/virginity, kneels as she takes the pill/wafer from the nude woman in boots, indicating dangerous female sexuality. When the kneeling woman sips from a glass of red blood, it spills down her now naked chest and drips down her torso and between her legs, defiling her purity. In the next short scene a virginal young woman—dressed in a girlish dress, green knee socks, and loafers, her hair arranged in braids tied with pink ribbons—struggles to adjust a sanitary napkin held in place with a belt *over* her dress. She finally stomps on a package of sanitary napkins in frustration over the “menstrual etiquette” that requires women to hide their blood and remain sexually pure.

This series of images—of the naked woman bleeding onto the white sheet, the women engaged in religious communion, and the young woman enraged by her maxi pad—are interspersed with images of women emerging from a drug store after buying large quantities of “sanitary products.” One woman emerges carrying various “feminine products,” one box of Kotex held in her mouth. Another emerges and drops them all in front of the store. When a woman purchases her “sanitary products” by herself she is represented as clumsy and overwhelmed by the boxes of products. Her clumsiness appears to be the result of the imposition of “menstrual etiquette,” a burden to which she struggles to conform. Yet when women are together they walk joyfully from the store, arms wrapped around each other, pushing their cart of menstrual products.

The image of women in the park also changes depending on whether they are represented alone or in a group. Alone, the bleeding woman is wrapped and smothered in toilet tissue and red blood until she falls in the dirt, sullied. The voiceover recalls a memory of Hammer’s first period: “When I first started menstruating, I didn’t know what was happening to me. I looked into the toilet and I thought I was dying.” The word dying repeats, but the shot shifts to a group of women together who at first seem to be falling to the ground but then begin to frolic nude, playfully wrapping the toilet paper around each other in a kind of menstrual Maypole dance. The image of the dancing women is tinted in red and the women’s bodies become superimposed over each other in an abstract kaleidoscopic image of women circling one another and draping each other with tissue. The image of the dancing women alternates with a moon (that echoes the egg) while the voiceover repeats, “moan, menses, moan, moan, menses” as the word “moan” begins to sound like “moon.” The images of the women dancing together coupled with

the image of the women happily emerging from the store carrying their “sanitary products” suggest that women’s community fosters women’s joy which defeats the imposition of “menstrual etiquette” and conventional femininity associated with it.

Thus, like CWCHC feminists who gathered together to look at their cerivixes, and Culpepper in her concluding image of her, her friend Barufaldi, and the image of her menstrual blood, Hammer also depicted the power of a collective of women united by the common experiences of sexist oppression in the form of pressure to conform to “menstrual etiquette” and sexual expectations of purity preserved for future reproduction sanctioned by patriarchal culture and Christian religion. Yet in all of these representations, whiteness goes unacknowledged as a factor that unites white women in collective forms of liberation. Hammer’s film presumes common cultural understandings of what it means to conform to “menstrual etiquette” and what it means to appear as a good or virginal girl. For example, the film does not recognize that young women of color were often not granted the opportunity to remain virginal, and were not associated with sexual purity, because this was not an aspect of Hammer’s own experiences of gender or sex oppression.⁶⁹

Yet Hammer also felt marginalized by mainstream male filmmakers as a lesbian artist. She recalls, “My lesbian films were often rejected by avant-garde showcases across the country and museums everywhere during the period I was actively and expressly engaged in making lesbian representation.”⁷⁰ Scholar Chuck Kleinhans also situates Hammer in a period that marginalized women artists, and even more so if they were lesbians. He writes, “Hammer’s role as a feminist and lesbian media maker in the 1970s needs to be understood in a historical context. For many years, she was almost alone as an out-of-the-closet lesbian filmmaker.” Barred from an art scene overwhelmingly dominated by men, “she showed her own work in feminist bookstores, women’s coffeehouses, and women’s studies classrooms.” She also “organized weekend workshops and classes to teach women filmmaking skills and set up screenings of women avant-gardists from the past.”⁷¹ Through these activities she found and fostered a community of feminist artists and also drew on lesbian feminist community forged in the 1970s in San Francisco, the power of which she represented in her films.

Hammer also explicitly referenced the female body as a source of knowledge. In an essay on imagery in films made by women she explained,

Body images are prevalent in women’s films. Women know the world through their internal organs, the muscular structure, the way the bones rest, the skin’s sensitivity. This holistic epistemology, or method of relat-

ing to the world, means that many of the images in the films are directly from or of the body.⁷²

Her work emerged in a historical context in which, in the words of historian Jill Fields, feminist artists referenced women's collective embodied experiences to reclaim the "representation of the female body from its central role in Western art as an object of spectatorship and evidence of male artists' professional skill."⁷³ Film historian Alexandra Juhasz explains, "As Hammer smashed through silence and into representation, her short films mirrored a contemporary, feminist understanding of women's experience—later deemed 'essentialist' or labeled 'cultural feminism'—that championed women's exploration of the specificity of their female power."⁷⁴

Hammer reflected on accusations that her work from the 1970s was essentialist. She argued that what was identified by some critics as essentialist in feminist work from this era was actually the product of rigid gender segregation and, in the case of lesbians, sexual marginalization that prevented women and lesbians from documenting their own lives and impressions. She wrote,

There are image clusters or methods of using imagery that are female; that is, we can find similarities of image and image use in women's films. Whether these women's images are "caused" [by] or "come from" biological differences or the differences in social training and acculturation I do not know. Living as we do in this culture of rigid separation of conditioning for women and men, we women are taking on the work of identifying image differences for the growing understanding of women's culture. We need to write and talk and discuss and argue and state as clearly as we can what we feel to be our differences and hence our strengths.⁷⁵

Hammer explained that while the images were associated with women's embodied lived experiences, they were not simplistically an expression of female biology separate from social "conditioning." Rather, if men and women were acculturated differently, she suggested that women needed the space and freedom to represent their "differences" as they lived them and perceived them—rather than accepting the stereotypical images used to maintain their subordination. As a white woman working in a largely segregated white cultural context, however, Hammer may not have recognized that her artwork and her commentary on it rested on racial segregation as much as sex separation.

Hammer's efforts to distance her early films from accusations of essentialism deserve attention while we also realize that white feminists produced texts in a particular historical context that now looks different in the twenty-first

century after women of color criticized “white feminism” for its racial exclusion. The critique of Women’s Liberation for its whiteness created an understanding of the movement and its artifacts as “white feminism” that white participants in 1970s Women’s Liberation could not have at the time as members of racially segregated communities. A dismissal of 1970s feminist art and film as essentialist misses important elements of that representational discourse. Hammer explained, “My films talk about all the things we were told never to talk about: orgasms, personal desire, the body, sex. I wanted desperately to break that taboo of not talking, to smash through all that silence I had been raised to believe was the way women had to be.”⁷⁶ Rather than create a romanticized vision of *woman*, Hammer, Culpepper, and the feminists engaged in self-help at CWCHC exposed cultural taboos that characterized and confined many women’s experiences living with female bodies in 1970s society.

JENNIFER NELSON is a United States historian with an emphasis in women’s history. She teaches in the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program at the University of Redlands. Her dissertation became her first book, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (NYU Press, 2003). Her second book, *More Than Medicine: A History of the Women’s Health Movement* (NYU Press, 2016), extended her research on the feminist and women’s health movements in the United States. Nelson has also published articles in a variety of women’s history, medical history, and women’s studies journals on the subject of reproductive rights, women’s health, and social justice movements. Her first article on the feminist abortion rights movement in Mexico is forthcoming in an edited collection published by Routledge (2019). She is currently working on a book-length project on the movements for and against legal abortion in Mexico.

NOTES

1. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Knopf, 1953), 13.
2. Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 22–34. Mulvey’s article generated considerable controversy and conversation in subsequent decades. These debates are beyond the scope of this essay. A few of the most notable include: E. Ann Kaplan, “Is the Gaze Male?” in *The Film Theory Reader: Debates and Arguments* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Teresa De Lauretis, *Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Jackie Stacey, “Desperately Seeking Difference,” *Screen* 28, no. 1 (1987): 48–61; Jane Gaines, “White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory,” in *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Patricia Erens (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

3. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 22.

4. There is a rich historiography of the involvement of women of color in contemporary US feminist movements. See Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors* (New York: Routledge 2004); Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2005); Wini Breines, *The Trouble Between Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Elena Gutiérrez, *The Politics of Mexican-Origin Women's Reproduction* (Austin: University of Texas Press 2008); Nancy Maclean, *Freedom Is Not Enough* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Aimee Carrillo Rowe, *On the Subject of Feminist Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); and Anne Valk, *Radical Sisters* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Victoria Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

Many examples of descriptions of "white feminism" exist on the Internet. The URL I have provided is just one example that I find to be particularly divorced from the history of the contemporary feminist movement and the struggles and conversations about race that have taken place. <https://www.bustle.com/articles/1206844-7-things-feminists-of-color-want-white-feminists-to-know>.

5. In her book on the history of the movement and the strong association of it with both white women and lesbianism, Victoria Hesford partially attributes these associations to media images of Women's Liberation that obscured the heterogeneity of both the actors and the goals of the 1970s movement. Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation*, 61–65.

6. Amelia Jones, "The 'Sexual Politics' of *The Dinner Party*: A Critical Context," in *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History*, ed. Amelia Jones (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 86.

7. Jones, "'Sexual Politics' of *The Dinner Party*," 99.

8. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 205. Spivak invokes the "strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest."

9. See Cornelia Butler, "Art and Feminism: An Ideology of Shifting Criteria," in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 14–23, for a discussion of the vast complexity and heterogeneity of 1970s feminist art.

10. Michelle Moravec, "Toward a History of Feminism, Art, and Social Movements in the United States," *Frontiers* 33, no. 2 (2012): 23.

11. Jill Fields, "Frontiers in Feminist Art History," *Frontiers* 33, no. 2 (2012): 2.

12. Amelia Jones, "Sexual Politics: Feminist Strategies, Feminist Conflicts, Feminist

Histories,” in *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party in Feminist Art History*, ed. Amelia Jones (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) 26–27.

13. Butler, “Art and Feminism,” 23.

14. Wendy Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Women’s Health in the Second Wave* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Michelle Murphy, *Seizing the Means of Reproduction: Entanglements of Feminism, Health, and Technoscience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Michelle Murphy, “Immodest Witnessing: The Epistemology of Vaginal Self-Examination in the US Feminist Self-Help Movement,” *Feminist Studies* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 115–47.

15. Jones, “‘Sexual Politics’ of *The Dinner Party*,” 109.

16. Lisa Tickner, “The Body Politic: Female Sexuality and Women Artists since 1970,” in *Looking on: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media*, ed. Rosemary Betterton (London: Pandora, 1987), 239.

17. Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge*, 13–14.

18. Jennifer Nelson, *More Than Medicine: A History of the Feminist Women’s Health Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 94.

19. Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge*, 42.

20. Box unprocessed, folder 30, Women’s Community Health Center Records (WCHCR), Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

21. Nelson, *More Than Medicine*, 99–100.

22. Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge*, 42.

23. “In the beginning . . . a Herstory of the Women’s Community Health Center,” p. 1, box 1, folder 2, WCHCR.

24. Box 7, folder 21, WCHCR.

25. Box 7, folder 21, WCHCR.

26. Box 7, folder 21, WCHCR.

27. Box 9, folder 6, WCHCR.

28. Box 7, folder 23, WCHCR.

29. Box 8, folder 9, WCHCR.

30. Box 8, folder 14, WCHCR.

31. Box 9, folder 2, WCHCR.

32. Box 9, folder 6, WCHCR.

33. Box 8, folder 4, WCHCR.

34. Murphy, “Immodest Witnessing,” 140.

35. Elizabeth Grosz, “Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason,” in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (New York: Routledge, 1993), 191.

36. Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997); Danielle McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape and Resistance* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

37. Untitled document, box unprocessed, folder 39, WCHCR.
38. Catherine DeLorey, "Women's Health, Inc.: An Organizational Analysis," ca. 1976, box 1, folder 3, WCHCR. (This was a paper written for the Department of Health Services, School of Public Health, at Harvard by DeLorey, a staff member of WCHCR. She used "Women's Health, Inc." as a pseudonym for WCHCR.)
39. Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 66–67; Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 206; Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, ed. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (New York: Feminist Press, 1982), 13–22.
40. "Women's Health, Inc.: An Organizational Analysis."
41. Paula Garbarino, "Fertility Awareness: Birth Control Under New Management," *Equinox*, February 1978, p. 11, box 13, folder 11, WCHCR.
42. Garbarino, "Fertility Awareness."
43. "Menstruation," 4, Emily Culpepper private collection.
44. "Menstruation," 1.
45. Emily Erwin Culpepper, "Menstruation Consciousness Raising: A Personal and Pedagogical Process," in *Menstrual Health in Women's Lives*, ed. Alice J. Dan and Linda L. Lewis (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 276.
46. Tickner, "Body Politic," 242.
47. Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open*, revised edition (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 87, 148.
48. Emily Erwin Culpepper, "Positively Breaking Taboos: Why and How I Made the Film 'Period Piece,'" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 22, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 127.
49. Emily Culpepper, interview with author, July 25, 2017.
50. Emily Culpepper has been involved in a very long-term relationship with a woman. In the 1970s she identified as a "dyke," but this was not a focus in her film. She was also married to a man when she first moved to Boston and became involved in Women's Liberation. Emily Culpepper, interview with author, July 25, 2017.
51. Culpepper, "Positively Breaking Taboos," 129.
52. Culpepper, "Positively Breaking Taboos," 133.
53. Culpepper, "Positively Breaking Taboos," 136.
54. Culpepper, interview with author.
55. Culpepper, "Positively Breaking Taboos," 129.
56. Culpepper, "Positively Breaking Taboos," 134.
57. Culpepper, "Positively Breaking Taboos," 132.
58. Culpepper, "Positively Breaking Taboos."

59. During this time in her life Culpepper was in the process of discovering that she was sexually attracted to women and identified as a “dyke.”

60. Iris Marion Young, “Introduction,” in *On Female Body Experience: “Throwing Like a Girl” and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 106–7.

61. Grosz, “Bodies and Knowledges,” 204.

62. Young, “Introduction,” 111.

63. Barbara Hammer also created a menstruation photo series in the early 1970s that depicts herself and a lover. This series focused on the sensuality of the body during menstruation. The series has not been shown publicly. Hammer, interview with author, September 12, 2017.

64. Barbara Hammer, *Hammer! Making Movies Out of Sex and Life* (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2010).

65. Hammer, interview with author.

66. Judith K. Brodsky and Ferris Olin, “Stepping out of the Beaten Path: Reassessing the Feminist Art Movement,” *Signs* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 332. Brodsky and Olin are describing Martha Rosler’s 1975 video performance piece *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, which also uses satire to expose gendered social hierarchies.

67. Hammer, interview with author.

68. Hammer, interview with author.

69. See McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*; Darlene Clark Hine, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West,” *Signs* 14, no. 4 (1989): 912–20; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “‘The Mind That Burns in Each Body’: Women, Rape, and Racial Violence,” *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (1983): 328–49.

70. Quoted in Judith M. Redding and Victoria A. Brownworth, *Film Fatales: Independent Women Directors* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1997), 80.

71. Chuck Kleinhans, “Barbara Hammer: Lyrics and History,” in *Women’s Experimental Cinema: Critical Frameworks*, ed. Robin Blaetz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 170.

72. Barbara Hammer, “Women’s Images in Film,” in *Women’s Culture: The Women’s Renaissance of the Seventies*, ed. Gayle Kimball (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1981), 119.

73. Jill Fields, “Frontiers in Feminist Art,” *Frontiers* 33, no. 2 (2012): 6.

74. Alexandra Juhasz, *Women of Vision: Histories in Feminist Film and Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 77.

75. Hammer, “Women’s Images in Film,” 117.

76. Redding and Brownworth, *Film Fatales*, 77.