

Things We Don't Talk About
Women's Stories from the Red Tent

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Abstract

The Red Tent is an embodied red fabric environment that acts as a catalyst to women's empowerment. Spontaneous and organic, a Red Tent is a place where women gather to rest, renew, and often share deep and powerful stories about their lives. Red Tent spaces and the grassroots movement were inspired by Anita Diamant's *New York Times* bestselling novel, *The Red Tent*, published in 1997. The Red Tent movement is changing the way that women interact and support each other by providing a place that honors and celebrates women, and by enabling open conversations about the things that women don't want to talk about in other venues. This dissertation shines a spotlight on this vital, emergent women's tradition.

This work presents a cohesive, heretofore-undocumented tradition and explores the Red Tent as a phenomenon and a contemporary movement that is unique to women. Through this work it was shown that the Red Tent fosters many positive experiences for women including: Building community, encouraging caring, healing, and empowerment, offering a platform for sharing women's stories, and serving as a tool for menstrual activism, while simultaneously providing a space for self-care and renewal. This study provides a discussion of the history of menstrual huts and moon lodges and how they have shaped the development of the Red Tent. This study also expands research in the fields of textiles, embodied experiences, Women's Spirituality, liminal spaces, ethics of care, and sacred spaces. Additionally, the process of filming and editing the one-hour documentary film *Things We Don't Talk About: Women's Stories from the Red Tent* is documented.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation documents the Red Tent and the process of creating a one-hour documentary film *Things We Don't Talk About: Women's Stories from the Red Tent*. The Red Tent is a contemporary tradition of red fabric tent-like spaces that honor women and promote a new form of women's community. Inspired by the bestselling novel *The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant (1997), the Red Tent movement has resonated with women throughout the United States and beyond. This work presents a cohesive, heretofore-undocumented tradition and explores the Red Tent as a phenomenon and a contemporary movement that is unique to women. Using a narrative form of inquiry, the film examines and portrays stories that result from women's participation in twelve Red Tents and Red Tent Temples in the United States.

The film *Things We Don't Talk About* stands on its own. However, it is accompanied by this document, which covers additional territory. Chapter 1 sets up the parameters of this study and includes original research questions and how they have changed; an outline of the research and film objectives, assumptions, participants, and limitations; a explanation of the perceived need of this project; and lastly the working definitions.

Chapter 2 offers background documentation on the Red Tent. This chapter describes the effect of the Anita Diamant's novel, *The Red Tent*, and a limited, but cohesive review of literature, which shows how the Red Tent movement is understood in the popular media. This chapter also offers the reader a table of where Red Tents and Red Tent Temples are currently located and an explanation of the functions of the Red Tent. Through this work it will be shown that the Red Tent fosters many positive experiences for women including:

Building community, encouraging caring, healing, and empowerment, offering a platform for sharing women's stories, and serving as a tool for menstrual-positive activism, while simultaneously providing a space for self-care and renewal.

Chapter 3 provides an important discussion of the history of menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions and how they have shaped the development of the Red Tent for women. I also provide a lengthy review of literature about menstrual literature to show how female scholars have changed the research questions and analysis of menstruation compared to the literature on menstrual huts. This body of literature also shows how feminist scholars are contradicting patriarchal oppression, offering new positive images of womanhood, and presenting menstruation as a celebratory tool for women's empowerment.

Chapter 4 includes a review of additional literature in a variety of fields that have shaped and informed my conclusions about the Red Tent. Such fields include the ethics of care, women's spirituality, gendered spaces, sacred spaces, embodied experiences, liminal spaces, spiritual textiles, and the history of the color red. This chapter also comprises a commentary of how the literature has aided in answering my research questions.

Chapter 5 outlines the methodology of this project and a review of literature that informed my filmmaking methods; more specifically, this section focuses on the approach of the film. I believe that creating a documentary film is the most effective method to showcase this research on the Red Tent. The film uses several qualitative, ethnographic, and folklore research methods, such as narrative inquiry, filming and photographic documentation, individual interviews, focus-groups, and historical background interviews.

This chapter also outlines each of these approaches and provides a listing and description of my participants.

Chapter 6 documents each production stage in the process of creating my film *Things We Don't Talk About: Women's Stories from the Red Tent*. This chapter includes a step-by-step documentation of pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution.

My involvement in this project and my participation in the Red Tent movement stems from a long-standing interest in Women's Spirituality, women's communities, and spiritual textiles. Since 2004, I have attended and presented workshops at a Women's Spirituality festival now known as Where Womyn Gather in Poyntelle, Pennsylvania, (formerly called Womongathering and Spirit of Womongathering). My first Red Tent experience was in 2006 at Womongathering when a group of five women created their first Red Tent inaugurating to what has become a dynamic annual event.



Illustration 1.1: Where Womyn Gather, Poyntelle, Pennsylvania. Photographed by the author.

Through my experience at Womongathering over the past seven years, I have observed and participated in phenomenal experiences in the Red Tent, but what always intrigued me most was how the space itself was transforming women's lives. To be more specific, the textiles in the Red Tent fascinated me, and I was eager to explore how this spiritual *textile* space was catalyzing women's profound experiences. This curiosity—and an invitation to make a short film for ALisa Starkweather, the founder of the Red Tent Temple Movement—fueled my desire to research and create a film on the Red Tent for my dissertation.

CHAPTER 1:

Parameters of this study

Evolution of Research Questions

The following are the original research questions about the Red Tent posed in my dissertation proposal:

1. What can we discern about contemporary women's attitudes toward menstruation within the American Women's Spirituality movement?
2. What are the functions of the Red Tent?
 - a. Does the Red Tent function as a tool for women's healing?
 - b. Does the Red Tent movement function as a form of advocacy for care?
 - c. Does the Red Tent affect women's feelings about menstruation?
3. Do women who have experienced the Red Tent have stories about healing? What are they?
4. What role does the design and materiality (color, light, use of textiles, shapes of the created space) of the Red Tent play in its function as a healing (or other) space?
5. What role does the Red Tent play in the broader contemporary American New Age Women's Spirituality movement?

During the course of conducting interviews, focus-group interviews, and general filming of women interacting and talking in the Red Tent, it became apparent that my initial research questions were not reflective of the Red Tent movement. My research questions

changed in the following ways: Question #1 changed from an emphasis on menstruation to embodied experience. It turned out that menstruation was *not* a major characteristic of the Red Tent. Menstruation does play a role, but it was not at the forefront of the Red Tent's purpose. Many women often share personal stories of their first menstruation, but these stories often come up spontaneously. The line "within the American Women's Spirituality movement" was also removed from the question because while several of the Red Tents were formed within this movement, many of the ones that were filmed actually existed outside of the Women's Spirituality movement. As a result, the research question was changed to explore the broader theme of women's embodied experiences rather than menstruation within the Women's Spirituality movement.

Question #2 addressed the functions of the Red Tent. This question changed in three ways: Part A of this question asked, "does the Red Tent function as a tool for women's healing." My original research questions were based upon an assumption that the Red Tent was a healing place. It was discovered that the Red Tent does serve this function for many women who have experienced trauma, but it is not accurate to assume that all women who participate in the Red Tent need or experience healing. As result, this research question was expanded to focus on women's empowerment. I define empowerment as the act of gaining power as the result of a transformational experience. Part B of this question asked, "does the Red Tent movement function as a form of advocacy for care." This question was rooted in the field of ethics of care. My analysis showed that ethics of care was about the moral choices of taking care of children and elderly. Therefore, the emphasis of this question changed. The Red Tent is more about self-care and caring for each other by

providing a place for renewal and reflection. Care actually plays a significant role in the goals and functions of the Red Tent. Part B of this question was not included in my updated research questions, but I review of literature on ethics of care and a discussion of the issues of how self-care expands the field are provided in Chapter 4. Part C of this question asked, “does the Red Tent effect women’s feelings about menstruation.” As mentioned previously, menstruation became less of a focus of this study. Hence, the question was expanded to include other women’s bodily or life experiences.

Questions 3 and 4 did not change as the result of conducting this research. Question #5: “what role does the Red Tent play in the broader contemporary American New Age Women’s Spirituality movement” was too broad a question for this study. When asked this question, the participants were not able to answer it or they would comment that they believed that the Red Tent movement was a much broader movement. This question and this study specifically looked at the “American” Red Tent movement, but the women in the movement do not simply think of this as an American tradition. There are Red Tents all over the world and the women are excited by that fact. Furthermore, I found that this tradition was not a subset within the New Age Women’s Spirituality movement, but actually existed outside of it. The Red Tent is a place that honors and celebrates all women in both spiritual and non-spiritual communities.

As I conducted my interviews and general filming, I found that many Red Tent participants had varying views as to whether such spaces existed in the past. Many participants assumed that women in the past must have used a Red Tent because of Anita Diamant’s book. These participants believed that the contemporary practice was one of

“reclaiming.” This got me thinking if the Red Tent was based on historical practice or if it was an invented tradition. As a result, I created a new research question, which reads: Is the Red Tent based in historical practice or is it an invented tradition? How have menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions shaped women’s understanding of the Red Tent?

The following is a list of the updated research questions:

1. What can we discern about women’s attitudes toward their embodied experience within the Red Tent?
2. What are the functions of the Red Tent?
 - a. How does the Red Tent function as a tool for women’s empowerment?
 - b. Does the Red Tent affect women’s feelings about menstruation and other women’s bodily or life experiences?
3. Do women who have experienced the Red Tent have stories about healing and/or empowerment? What are they?
4. What role does the design and materiality (color, light, use of textiles, shapes of the created space) of the Red Tent play in its function as a healing (or other) space?
5. Is the Red Tent based in historical practice or is it an invented tradition? How have menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions shaped women’s understanding of the Red Tent?

Research and Film Objectives

The goal of this project is to create an emotionally engaging, character-driven film that explores the Red Tent through individual and group narratives. The focus of this study examines four main research objectives:

1. To identify the functions of the Red Tent.
2. To document Red Tent narratives.
3. To research and record the history of the Red Tent movement and its roots from the menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions.
4. To uncover the design principles and materials that influence women's experiences within the Red Tent.

Objective #1, to identify the functions of the Red Tent is presented both in this document (Chapter 2) and in the film. Objective #2, to document Red Tent narratives, is showcased prominently in the film and my process of film production and my results are documented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Objective #3, to research and record the history of the Red Tent movement, is presented in the film and this document. A list of Red Tent and Red Tent Temple groups are provided in Chapter 2 and a thorough review of literature on the history of menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions is found in Chapter 3. Objective #4, to uncover what design principles and materials influence women's experiences in the Red Tent is addressed only in this document, specifically in Chapter 4.

Assumptions

This project assumes that the Red Tent phenomenon is indicative of an important social movement and that a documentary film is an appropriate method of inquiry to explore this phenomenon.

Participants

This film included individual and focus-group interviews and general filming of female Red Tent participants ranging in age from newborn to elderly. Based on the original research questions, focus-groups were organized by menstrual category: menarche teens; menstruating women who have not had children; menstruating women who have had children; premenopausal, menopausal, and postmenopausal women. The participants were largely self-selected and came from Women's Spirituality festivals, Red Tents, and Red Tent Temple groups throughout the United States. The interviews that we not self-selected were the historical background interviews with ALisa Starkweather, DeAnna L'am, and Anita Diamant.

Premenarche girls and teens were included in this film because they play a significant role in the Red Tent phenomenon. The reason menstruating women were divided into those who have and have not had children was to examine the effects that childbearing and childrearing had on the way women view and experience the Red Tent. Premenopausal, menopausal, and postmenopausal women were included to examine what roles they play and whether they experience the Red Tent differently. Because the Red Tent includes women in all stages of life, selecting this broad sample of women was essential to address my research questions. It was important to represent each group in order to show

the range of women's experiences. By comparing stories that arose from homogenous focus-groups, I uncovered numerous similarities in women's experiences, attitudes, and opinions across generational boundaries. The interview, focus-group, and historical background participants are listed by name, age, and their location in Chapter 5.

Limitations

The Red Tent is a woman-only space hence this study was gender-specific. Men have written some of the research that informed this study, but all collected data and filmed narratives came from women. Moreover, because many participants came from within the New Age American Women's Spirituality movement, they were not necessarily a diverse group. Most were highly educated and middle class.

Another limitation of this study is that women who were more outgoing were more likely to participate in the film. Hence, women who were less outspoken (and may have had different experiences or stories to tell) were under-represented. To encourage wider participation, I offered women the option of responding through an anonymous written questionnaire administered either in person or on the film's website (<http://www.redtentmovie.com>). I also used the website to collect additional written personal narratives.

Two additional limitations of this project included filming and conducting interviews at the Spirit of Womongathering festival in Poyntelle, Pennsylvania. This Red Tent was held a festival environment, which meant that there were numerous other workshops and activities taking place, hence I was limited by participants' schedules. My

general filming in the Red Tent was also restricted to three hours per day, over the four-day festival because of these workshops and because the hosts did not want me to interfere with the activities of the Red Tent for participants who were not interested in being filmed.

Perceived Need and Significance

It is apparent that there is something special about the Red Tent that fills a deeply personal need for women. Rarely does a best-selling book start an international movement. I will attempt to delve into and explain the resonance of the Red Tent phenomenon.

The film and the research behind it builds on existing literature about women's experiences, Women's Spirituality, women's narratives, embodied experiences, liminal spaces, menstruation, menstrual stories, ethics of care, and folklore. The work examines the relationship between embodied experiences and women's healing and empowerment narratives. Other researchers have shown the importance of listening to women. According to Nicole Kousaleos ("Feminist Theory and Folklore," 1999) we can understand women's reality and their expressions in a particular cultural context by examining women's experiences.¹ Furthermore, as other folklorists have said, by observing women's aesthetic choices we can see how women see themselves and how they situate themselves within their culture.² "This kind of analysis can help show how [women] have utilized the resources of their own creativity and courage to shape, and in some cases escape, the roles presented to them by society."³ Rosan A. Jordan and Susan J. Kalcik argued in *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture* (1985) "one assumption that a thoughtful examination of women's culture disproves is that women are necessarily powerless."⁴ For this reason,

feminist folklorists have long maintained that their scholarship provides an approach that deviated from the notion that “normative” experiences were male in nature. It is also significant to point out that “women have often been doubly silenced by inattention to those aspects of culture deemed worthy to record.”⁵ Instead of devaluing women’s experiences, feminist folklorists argued that women’s experiences needed to be documented within a new gendered category that considered female experience as unique. This is a particularized cultural paradigm. Joan Sangster (*Through Feminist Eyes*, 2011) claimed that oral history is one of the most useful methods of performing feminist research. It redirects our gaze to overlooked topics and offers women recognition as providers of historical scholarship and features women’s historical memory.⁶ Exploring the Red Tent as a contemporary space will also illuminate the reasons and the ways women are creating such spaces and how they are using them as a tool for empowerment, self-care, and caring for each one another. It is within this scholarly framework that I documented and analyzed Red Tent narratives.

I was interested in creatively approaching this undeveloped topic for scholars and women of all kinds. The film not only presents a cohesive, heretofore-undocumented tradition, but also represents a form of activism for the Red Tent movement itself. My intention is that it will further women’s empowerment through its examination and presentation of the Red Tent tradition as a medium that promotes self-esteem for women and girls and positive models for menstruation, caring, healing, and community. The very act of documenting this tradition honors this means of co-creation and women’s empowerment.

Working Definitions

Empowerment is the act of gaining power as the result of a transformational experience.

Healing is an internal process of physical, mental, psychological, and/or emotional cleansing, repairing, or curing leading from a state of sickness or woundedness to good health.

Moon Lodge is a Native American space where women go to menstruate and to honor menstruation, both their own and others.

Narrative Inquiry is a research method in which qualitative insights about the researched subject is gained through an analysis of field notes, interviews, journals, letters, autobiographies, and oral accounts. Like its investigative method, the end product of this approach often takes the form of a narrative.

Red Tent is a womb-like space constructed from red fabric. It is a place where women gather; it is an icon, and it is a state of mind. Some women create Red Tents to honor their menstruation. Others create spaces where they can honor and nurture themselves, promote women's conversations, or hold workshops and other events for women. Many Red Tents are autonomous, meaning that they act independently of one another, and many have admission fees.

Red Tent Temple is a special type of Red Tent. It is a red-fabric space where women gather to honor all stages of womanhood. Women honor and take care of themselves and promote women's conversations. Red Tent Temples have a donation-based admission system, and are part of a global grassroots movement.

Red Tent Temple Movement is a global grassroots community founded by ALisa Starkweather in November 2006.

Sacred Space can be defined as a natural or human-made environment where religious or spiritual experiences take place and where rituals are performed.⁷

Spirituality is a nonreligious connection between a person and a sense of the transcendent or the Divine.

Women's Spirituality is a category of contemporary female practice that emphasizes female empowerment and Goddess-based practices and narratives.

CHAPTER 2:

The Red Tent Phenomenon

The Book

To begin this analysis of Red Tent narratives, it is important to define what the Red Tent is. First and foremost, *The Red Tent* (1997) is a novel by Anita Diamant that retells the biblical rape story of Dinah. “The Rape of Dinah” (Genesis, chapter 34) was recounted not by Dinah, but by her brothers. Diamant provided a fictional feminist retelling of the tale, giving Dinah her own voice. She also gave the women a menstrual hut, a form of women’s community. The book is presented through Dinah’s eyes and those of the women around her. Through my experience talking informally to women at Womongathering (Poynette, PA) and during my question-and-answer sessions at screenings of one of my previous films, I have come to believe that the success of *The Red Tent* is rooted in its feminist retelling of this ancient biblical story, in which the idea of a menstrual hut has struck a cord with modern women.

The Red Tent novel originally did not have a great impact on women’s lives. This began to change when the author herself initiated a word-of-mouth campaign by giving copies away to Rabbis, female Christian leaders, and independent booksellers. This approach proved successful, and by 2002 *The Red Tent* had become a *New York Times* bestseller and a publishing phenomenon. The book has since been published in twenty-five countries and translated into twenty languages.

What is a Red Tent?

The “Red Tent” is many things to many people. It is a womb-like red fabric space, it is a place where women gather, it is an icon, and it is a state of mind—all concepts inspired by Diamant's book. Some women create red fabric spaces specifically to honor their menstruation. Others create spaces where they can take care of themselves, promote women's conversations, and/or hold workshops and other events for women.

The “Red Tent Temple” is both a place and a grassroots movement founded by ALisa Starkweather to further expand the notion that a Red Tent Temple can be a place where women gather to honor all stages of womanhood. These spaces are technically Red Tent Temples, but they share many similar functions with other Red Tents. Many participants use the terms Red Tent and Red Tent Temple interchangeably. In this document, both spaces will be referred to as the Red Tent.

For many women the Red Tent is a sacred space, but it does not proclaim any one spiritual or religious practice. It is important to note, however, Starkweather's Red Tent Temple Movement was established within the Women's Spirituality movement, so many women who have created Red Tent Temples in their communities have incorporated elements of their goddess or pagan spiritual practices. A sacred space can be defined as a natural or human-made environment where religious or spiritual experiences take place and where rituals are performed.⁸ They are also places where one can go to meditate or pray and they may be considered personally special or profound. Susan Hale (*Sacred Space, Sacred Sound*, 2007) said, “a sacred space is *temenos*, a Greek word meaning an enclosure that makes it possible to enter into a relationship with a

greater reality. Entering into sacred space, one crosses a threshold and moves from *chronos*, human time and space, into *kairos*, eternal time.”⁹ Through my own observations of Red Tents, it is apparent to me that when women enter, they enter sacred space.

While the original function of the biblical Red Tent in Diamant’s book had to do with women gathering following pregnancy and during menstruation, the contemporary practice of creating a separate space is not about ostracism. It is a spiritual practice, a sacred woman’s place, an enjoyable and non-judgmental space, and part of a women’s movement. The book was a tool that helped women reshape their relationships with each other and gave them a specific vehicle for coming together.

The functions of a Red Tent

Inside the Red Tent, women feel comfortable and open up to address common personal, cultural, and social issues. It is a place where women can *truly* be themselves and talk about *anything* if they want to. The Red Tent attempts to fulfill a constellation of gendered societal needs:

- Celebrate women
- Offer a space for self-care and caring for other women
- Provide a place where women’s voices are heard
- Discuss issues about body image, self-respect, and empowerment
- Promote positive ideals of womanhood for girls
- A place to escape and to re-energize
- Educate women about their bodies and their sexuality
- Enable open conversations about menstruation, rape, and infertility

- Create a holistic exchange of information about sexual health, pregnancy, and birthing
- Offer a place to have fun and laugh

Who is creating Red Tents?

The Red Tent is a space created by women. In most cases, a few women create the space through a co-creative process. Women temporally transform spaces like yurts, spiritual centers, cabins, and bodywork and yoga studios into Red Tents for an evening or a weekend. There are other cases, where the creation is a more solitary experience where one woman transforms her living room into a Red Tent and invites other women into her home.

Women throughout the world are creating Red Tents and Red Tent Temples in their communities. One apparent trend is that women who were former students of ALisa Starkweather's Priestess Path Apprenticeship School are hosting many of the Red Tent Temples on the east coast of the United States. While many Red Tents have formed without Starkweather's influence, there is a common thread among many of the women who are hosting Red Tents and Red Tent Temples. The hosts tend to be healers by profession. To be more specific the women are midwives, life-coaches, body-workers, yoga teachers, herbalists, priestesses, and counselors. I also found that the hosts act as facilitators for circle work, conversation, and women's empowerment as well provide additional support for women after their Red Tent experiences.

Where are Red Tents located?

Red Tents are located throughout the world, but I only captured footage from fourteen Red Tents in the United States. It was important to this study to create a timeline of where, when, and who created these Red Tents. A timeline of the current Red Tent and Red Tent Temple groups and spaces throughout the world is provided in Appendix #2. This timeline is also represented as an animation in the film. I compiled this timeline in three ways:

1. Using ALisa Starkweather's Red Tent Temple database to contact organizers by email or phone.
2. Collecting this information through Facebook searches for Red Tent and Red Tent Temple groups.
3. With Google® searches for "Red Tent" and "Red Tent Temple" to find websites and blogs with information about Red Tent groups.

In each case, I asked the organizer, Facebook moderator, or Webmaster the date of their first Red Tent/Red Tent Temple that they offered in their community, the location it was held, and whether they considered their group a Red Tent or a Red Tent Temple.

A Review of Red Tent Literature

As indicated, Anita Diamant's 1997 book *The Red Tent* was a best-selling novel that led to the Red Tent phenomenon. While the novel does not directly analyze the Red Tent movement or address the subject of contemporary women's stories, it is a valuable background reference. Most women who understand the Red Tent do so because they have

read the book. Hence, I used the book as a starting point to connect with women during my interviews. It also served as a backdrop for the entire project.

“The Red Tide” by Patricia Holt, which appeared in *Ms. Arlington* magazine (October/November 2001), examined the division between patriarchal society and the matriarchal practice of the Red Tent and how the dichotomy shaped women’s responses to Diamant’s book. Holt explained that because Diamant situated her story in a time when men made all of the decisions and women were not allowed to speak to or look at men, contemporary women felt that going into their menstrual tent was a relief, not a burden for the book’s female characters.

Since women must hide the wisdom they have gained over generations, it is only in that sacred place that all the mysteries and the secrets—and the gossip, fears, and hopes—they have withheld from the outside will be revealed and exchanged. So it is in the Red Tent that we see all the secrets that stretch across the centuries—how women fend off unwanted sexual advances by altering men’s food; how they use herbs to abort or delay conception; how they attend, rather than control, childbirth for the greater safety of the mother and baby; and most of all, how they regard menstruation not as ‘a curse’ or a lifetime of cramps but as a blessing to be celebrated.¹⁰

Holt’s article was a valuable resource because it provided a foundation for the narration of the film. The article examined the functions of the Red Tent and presented a framework for understanding what goes on in the Red Tent.

“A Haven for Women (Right Next to the Recliners),” by Molly Rose Kaufman and Jenn Bain (*New York Times*, January 16, 2005), offered a description of a Red Tent that was set up at the ABC Carpet & Home store in New York City. Made from hundreds of red scarves, the ABC Red Tent was a place where “women found they were able to let go of the burdens of their hectic lives, concentrate on themselves, and forge connections.”¹¹ The authors stated that they

had never before seen such high-powered New York businesswomen, in their business suits and stockings, lounging, sleeping, and crying with strangers. They reported that women visited the space numerous times and recounted that women felt they were coming home to themselves. The space also created a new kind of networking opportunity.¹² This article demonstrated how powerful the setting could be and it reinforced the idea that women are cognizant of this need. The Red Tent served a vital function, even when set up in a luxury home-furnishing store.

“The Red Tent: A Woman-Space Phenomenon” by Tracie Welser (2007), published in the journal *Off Our Backs*, is the only existing quasi scholarly article about the Red Tent. Welser maintained that the book *The Red Tent* awakened a longing among Western women for a place to celebrate menstruation and to gain the kind of wisdom that women share in that kind of space.¹³ She stated the “true definition” of a Red Tent is a place where women share ideas, ask questions, talk to one another, and really listen to what other women have to say. It is a space where women can discuss things that cannot be discussed honestly in other venues. This article further established the idea that the Red Tent fills a contemporary need for sisterhood; a place for women’s community. Many women don’t even realize they need a Red Tent until they have experienced it. “The Red Tent stirs up a bond among women that they can take with them to other places.”¹⁴ Welser further affirmed that “the creation of women-only spaces is nothing new. But with the advent of this novel [*The Red Tent*], a revived, larger and more mainstream acceptance of woman-space has become apparent in the form of permanent spaces and organized meet-ups, virtual Red Tent groups, and mobile spaces arranged at festivals.”¹⁵ Welser’s article offered

insight into the Red Tent phenomenon by exploring the functions of the Red Tent movement, concluding its function as a tool for women's empowerment. The article not only informed my preliminary research, but also offered an approach for examining the Red Tent that assisted in building the "historical" narrative in the film.

"Canada: Opening up the Red Tent" by V. Radhika, published in the *Women's Feature Service* (September 10, 2007) was a short article that offered an Indian woman's perspective on the Red Tent Sisters store in Toronto, Canada. Radhika focused mostly on the store's products, ranging from adult items to baby-birthing tubs. She did include a short section that discussed where the name "Red Tent" came from and how the store is offering classes and workshops that promote positive ideals for sex and menstruation. Radhika quoted Anushree Agrahari: "coming from India, we never discussed these things openly. But this place gives the confidence to sit, examine and discuss female sexuality."¹⁶ The Red Tent crosses cultural boundaries. Like the *New York Times* report of the ABC Carpet and Home store Red Tent, this article demonstrated that the Red Tent movement is spreading beyond the women's festival circuit and appearing in commercial venues.

Red Tent Filmography

The YouTube-hosted video “RED TENTS: Reclaim, Renew, Rejoice” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQ39pZC6DRs>), created by DeAnna L’am, is a seven-minute video filmed at the 2008 celebration of “Menstrual Monday” in Sebastopol, California. This video documented the tradition of the Red Tent from Anita Diamant’s book and referenced Moon Lodges. According to L’am, the video served as a call to action for women to experience the spiritual journey of a Red Tent and make menstruation visible to American culture. The video included a how-to section on creating a Red Tent and discussed the types of objects that might be included in the space. The videographer focused mainly on L’am’s explanations, mixed with a few visitor comments. This is the only previous video or film on the Red Tent. Footage from this video was not included in *Things We Don’t Talk About*, but it attested to the existing interest in the movement and the Red Tent tradition.¹⁷

Clearly, there has been very little written about the Red Tent movement. With the exception of Welser’s quasi-scholarly article, the video and newspaper articles are for a general audience. Welser’s article is the only “research” on the Red Tent movement. Hence, it is fair to say that this is a largely undocumented tradition and that this project is bringing the subject to the foreground, paving the way for future research.

CHAPTER 3:

Beyond the Menstrual Hut

Menstrual Huts

There is a pervasive question among Red Tent participants as to whether such spaces existed in the past. Many participants assume that women in the past must have used a Red Tent and that the contemporary practice is one of “reclaiming.” In actuality, there were no Red Tents in history as we know them today, but the Red Tent is not a new idea. There are menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions all over the world that are still being used and also date back to 800 C.E.

The contemporary Red Tent is in a sense an “invented tradition,” although it does not strictly follow the definition set out by Eric Hobsbawm (*The Invention of Tradition*, 1983). Hobsbawm argued that an invented tradition is a set of practices that are governed by rules and rituals that imply continuity with the past. In actuality there is no such continuity. Invented traditions are adapted from old traditions with a new set of conditions and purposes. Invented traditions form because rapid transformation of society weakens its social patterns.¹⁸

Following the success of the book, Diamant’s number one question from her readers was whether or not the Red Tent ever existed. Here is her response:

It’s important to note that I have never claimed that the women of the Bible actually used a menstrual tent; there is no historical evidence to support such a claim. However, since there have been menstrual tents and huts throughout the pre-modern world, it seemed historically plausible to give them one. The importance of the tent developed in the process of writing, but the idea of making it a place of community, rest, and celebration

predates *The Red Tent*. Some years prior to starting the book, I heard a lecture by the Jewish writer, Arthur Waskow, who suggested rethinking a biblical law that required separation of a woman from the community for 60 days after the birth of a girl compared to 30 days after the birth of a boy. From a feminist point of view, this could be seen as a reflection of the notion that girl babies made mothers more "unclean" than boys. Waskow asked us to consider a different theory, no less feminist, but far more interesting to me. Perhaps, he said, this was an acknowledgment that giving birth to a birth-giver was a more sacred, a more powerful experience. The extra month could be seen not as a punishment, but as a reward.¹⁹

While Diamant claimed that the Red Tent was a fictionalized place, she did mention during her interview that she examined menstrual huts from Africa while researching her book. Diamant also noted that these African menstrual huts were places of banishment, whereas her Red Tent was more of a place of celebration, renewal, and women's community. This led me to consider what research had been done on menstrual huts, where they were located, who performed the research, whether the informants were male or female, and whether there was a male bias in the literature. I looked at several sources that explored and referenced menstrual huts. The criterion for inclusion in my discussions was that the sources mention menstrual huts, menstrual spaces, or moon lodges and incorporates historical information.

According to Verrier Elwin (*The Muria and their Ghotul*, 1947) menstrual huts were a common practice among the Muria of Madhya Pradesh, India. The Muria are a subset of the Gond people. Wynne Maggi (*Our Women Are Free*, 2001) also referenced the use of a menstrual hut by the Gond people of Madhya Pradesh, eastern Maharashtra (Vidarbha), Chhattisgarh, northern Andhra Pradesh, and Western Orissa. Elwin described the menstrual hut, known locally as *witar-kurma*, in great detail:

In many villages, especially those to the west where the influence of the Abujhmar Maria is strong, the Muria build separate huts where their women can be segregated at this period. Sometimes they make one communal hut for the whole village; sometimes there is one hut for a group of houses; occasionally a big house with a large family has a hut to itself. The Muria generally do not build such huts outside of the village, but in some isolated spot within its borders. The huts are usually wretched little buildings with small doors. Inside may be seen a bed, a cooking-hearth, a few pots, some strips of cloth, a little firewood. The hut is build by the *chelik*—no married man may help—who are paid by the village women with liquor for their services.²⁰

Elwin, went on to state that a girl or woman's experience in the menstrual hut was very difficult and many young girls claimed that it was like being in jail.

Unlike Elwin's representation of the imprisoning menstrual hut, Collin Turnbull's research (*The Forest People*, 1961) showed the women of the Mbuti of the Ituri forest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) had a positive view of menstrual celebration and used the space as a ritual hut. When a girl first menstruated the female relatives and other pubescent girls gathered in the menstrual hut, known as *elima*, for one month.²¹ According to Turnbull, the girls were taught how to take pride in their bodies both for their sexual and reproductive potential. Turnbull described the events in the *elima* as one of the most joyful and happy times in a girl's life. Chris Knight (*Blood Relations*, 1991) referenced Turnbull's research, adding that "together [the girls] are taught the arts and crafts of motherhood by an old and respected relative. They learn not only how to live like adults, but how to sing the songs of adult women."²² The *elima* was an important part of women's culture among the Mbuti.

The research of William Lessa (*Ulithi*, 1966) and that of Edwin G Burrows and Melford Spiro (*An Atoll Culture*, 1969) describe the use of menstrual huts in Ulithi and

Ifaluk, Micronesia. In both these cultures the imposing and distinctive menstrual huts draw public attention to women's reproductive status.²³ Lessa stated that Ulithian women spend eight days in the menstrual house each month amounting to about one fourth of their procreative lives. He went on to state that with the start of a girl's first menstruation, the women of the village loudly chant "The menstruating one, ho-o-o!" as she walked to the menstrual house.²⁴

Unlike the previous examples, William N. Stephens ("A Cross-Cultural Study of Menstrual Taboos," *Cross-Cultural Approaches*, 1967) hypothesized that menstrual taboos in so-called primitive societies are derived from the intensity of castration anxiety felt by the men.²⁵ Karen Ericksen Paige and Jeffery M. Paige (*The Politics of Reproductive Ritual*, 1981) also cite Stephens' hypothesis. The authors build on his work by illustrating the connection between Oedipal conflicts in males and menstrual huts as the highest form of menstruation restriction.²⁶ Stephens' sociological study recorded seventeen groups on five continents whose women used menstrual huts. His research documented the use by the following people: Arapesh, Ashanti, Cheyenne, Dahomeans, Dakota, Hupa, Ifaluk, Kwakiutl, Malaita, Maria Gond, Ojibwa, Paiute, Papago, Sanpoil, Tiv, Ulithi, and the Warrau. Stephens claimed that "high" societies more commonly have menstrual taboos, including the use of menstrual huts, because there is an ever-present fear among men that women are dangerous while menstruating. Although it is not clear how Stephens defined "high" societies. Frank W. Young and Albert A. Bacdayan ("Menstrual Taboos and Social Rigidity," *Cross-Cultural Approaches*, 1967) critiqued Stephens' research. Young and Bacdayan pointed out that Stephens' sources may not have been reliable, and they document eleven

societies who used menstrual huts: Arapesh, Cheyenne, Dahomeans, Hupa, Ifaluk, Kwakiutl, Maria Gond, Paiute, Papago, Sanpoil, Tiv, and Ulithi.²⁷ Young and Bacdayan comment that restrictions placed on menstruating women may not have directly coincided with the fact that they were menstruating; it may be possible that menstrual huts and other taboos are forms of restricting female behavior in general.²⁸

In a brief account of menstrual huts among the Warao, a people from northeastern Venezuela and western Guyana, Maria Suarez' (*Los Warao*, 1968) showed that the menstrual hut was not only a place where women experienced menstrual segregation, but also the sexual advances of strangers from outside of the village because of the remote location of the hut.²⁹

Much of the menstrual hut literature of the 1960s was conducted by men and provides us with a quantitative and simple analysis of menstrual huts; whereas, the literature of the next few decades takes a more qualitative approach. You will also see that most of the following research was performed by women.

Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo ("A Theoretical Overview" in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, 1974) took a different view. She argued that pollution beliefs and the use of menstrual huts reinforced women's power. The author stated, "a woman who is feared often has power."³⁰ In her view, when women gather in menstrual huts they have an opportunity to create a world free from the control of men.³¹ Rosaldo observed, "'pollution beliefs can provide grounds for solidarity among women,' and depending on the cultural context, menstrual seclusion 'huts' can themselves be sanctuaries. We must consider the degree to which accounts of seclusion have been inflected by the pride of missionaries and

other colonialists in putting an end to what *they* perceived as evil, rather than by the lived experiences of women in ‘menstrual huts.’” She noted that, menstrual huts are often one of the first practices of an indigenous society that are relinquished upon contact with outsiders.³²

Other feminist scholars also recast the male perspective. According to Marla N. Powers, (“Menstruation and Reproduction,” *Signs*, 1980) an Oglala girl of the Lakota tribe would enter a menstrual hut prior to her first rite ceremony to separate herself from the profane world.³³ Powers argued that there was a unique “relationship between female puberty ceremonies and so-called menstrual taboos. Anthropologists have usually treated these rites independently and have regarded taboos associated with menstruation as symbols of a woman's defilement.”³⁴ Powers claimed that anthropological literature often presented menstrual huts and other menstrual rituals out of a cultural context. She argued that this method of analysis led many of her predecessors to focus on the negative qualities of menstruation and menstrual seclusion.³⁵ “The most misinterpreted aspect of the menstrual taboo is seclusion of the woman. This isolation has been interpreted by Western investigators as a sign of defilement and degradation.”³⁶ Powers’ strongly disagrees with the work of Young and Bacdayan (“Menstrual Taboos and Social Rigidity,” 1967), who equated the menstrual hut with defilement. She offered a contrary argument: She said many researchers believe that women do not object to using a menstruation hut because they have been accustomed to the “rules” of their society and because the male-dominated and hierarchical structure leaves them with no other options. Powers considered this a vast misinterpretation.

Values placed on certain behaviors in Western society [cannot] be equated with values placed on those same behaviors in non-Western society. For example, Ortner ("Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Woman, Culture and Society*, 1974) considers the limitations put on participation in ceremonial events by menstruating women among the Crow as a symbol of defilement, although there is no empirical evidence that the Crow themselves share her interpretation.³⁷

In their book *The Politics of Reproductive Ritual* (1981), Karen Ericksen Paige and Jeffery M. Paige presented a study of two-hundred pre-industrial societies that had menstruation practices. Their study showed distinct menstrual practices in ninety-nine societies. They found that 64.6% did not practice menstrual segregation, 35.4% practiced menstrual segregation, and 19.2% of the societies had and used menstrual huts.³⁸ Their study not only provided evidence that menstrual segregation was an extreme form of restriction that drew attention to women's reproductive status, but also reinforced "public expressions of the belief in the polluting nature of fertile women."³⁹

Sally Price (*Co-wives and Calabashes*, 1983) offered similar evidence about the menstrual hut. Her research on the Maroons of Suriname, an Afro-American people who live in the tropical forests of northeastern South America, showed women's contempt for the menstrual hut known as the *faagi*. Price explained Maroon men's perception of the polluting force of vaginal fluids from menstruation and childbirth and showed that it reinforced their menstrual prohibitions.⁴⁰

Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer offered a brief account of the use of menstrual huts among the Khanty people of Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Russia (historically known as Yurga) in her article "On the Scent of Gender Theory and Practice" (*American Anthropologist*, 1985). Although she did not offer an ethnographic present for her research,

she noted that Khanty women described their menstrual huts as uncomfortable and rooted in ancient beliefs about menstrual blood as pollution.⁴¹ She argued that cross-cultural data showed that societies that were male dominated often have created elaborate restrictions regarding menstruation and female “pollution,” but she strongly warned against adopting an underlying and universal reasoning behind the use of menstrual huts. She also went on to state that “men traditionally stressed the pollution restrictions, while women were more likely to find positive ramifications in separation and co-operation. The existence of gender-specific sacred groves and rituals suggests both men and women manipulated pollution taboos to their advantage.”⁴² Regardless, Balzer cautioned against developing reverse ethnocentrism where one wishes “menstruation to be viewed positively, at least by women, when in reality it is more complex.”⁴³

Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation, edited by Thomas Buckley and Alma Gottlieb (1988), is perhaps the most widely cited resource on menstrual huts. The authors present a wide range of essays about menstrual taboos and “pollution.” Buckley and Gottlieb commented that while menstruation remains a fascinating topic for anthropologists and ethnographers, little evidence of menstrual symbolism has been established. Many accounts focus on menstruation as an exotic taboo and do not “dig deeper.” I would have to disagree: the foregoing review suggests there were several statistical studies completed in the 1940’s and 1960’s. Buckley and Gottlieb remarked that anthropological accounts about menstruation have become redundant. While this may be true, they affirmed new trends towards methods of inquiry that explore intragender variations and positive menstrual symbolism for women. In this collection of essays,

Buckley and Gottlieb state that the fieldwork focused on women and was mostly conducted by women.

In their exploration of the root of menstrual taboos, Buckley and Gottlieb argued,

'The menstrual taboo' as such does not exist. Rather, what is found in close cross-cultural study is a wide range of distinct rules for conduct regarding menstruation that bespeak quite different, even opposite, purposes and meanings. Many menstrual taboos, rather than protecting society from a universally ascribed feminine evil, explicitly protect the perceived creative spirituality of menstruous women from the influence of others in a more neutral state.⁴⁴

The authors further cited a strong correlation between taboos and oppression of women. They contended that other than the psychological effects on women, taboos restrict other people's actions more than the menstruating women's. The most common of menstrual taboos relates to women's isolation, and the prohibition of sex and cooking.

In his essay "Menstruation and the Power of the Yurok Women," Buckley presented research on the aboriginal Yurok people of northwestern California. He commented that while much of the literature on the Yurok attested that menstruation was seen as pollution, in his research he found that Yurok women used a "menstrual space" not because they were "poisonous," but rather because they felt that their powers should not be used for mundane tasks during menstruation. At a Yurok girl's first menstruation, she goes to the "sacred mountain pond" to ritually bathe. While it is not required, many Yurok women continue this practice on a monthly basis, even into menopause. These practices illuminate the Red Tent and its scholarship by offering a positive view of the use of menstrual huts through an American (Native America) practice.

In their chapter “A Critical Appraisal of Theories of Menstrual Symbolism,” Buckley and Gottlieb mention that the use of menstrual huts and menstrual seclusion has ‘caught the eye of’ numerous anthropologists’ imaginations throughout history. One such anthropologist is Chris Knight (*Blood Relations*, 1991) who commented on the research of his predecessors. He cited the work of Thomas Buckley (*Blood Magic*, 1988) to establish the strong male bias of past published and unpublished research on the menstrual symbolism of the Yurok.⁴⁵ Knight strongly argued that comparable examples of women-positive menstrual seclusion are rare, yet these examples should “not be regarded as ‘basic’ or ‘original’ from an evolutionary standpoint.”⁴⁶ He went on to state that “Buckley and Gottlieb decline to rule out the possibility that in many societies at least, ‘women themselves may have been responsible for [the originality of this] custom.’”⁴⁷ Knight goes into further detail with his comparison of Buckley’s research on the Yurok. He claimed that

women among the Yurok may have secluded themselves and sought spiritual power in large dome-shaped communal menstrual huts (Buckley 1998:200-4). Like the women in their huts, men in their sweat lodges maintained strict continence.... Just as women bled menstrual, men during this period ‘gashed their legs with flakes of white quartz, the flowing blood being thought to carry off psychic impurity, preparing one for spiritual attainment’ (Buckley 1988: 195). Entering a sweat-lodge—in this culture at least—was, then a male counterpart of female menstrual seclusion or...the activity of going on ‘strike.’⁴⁸

Knight presented this comparative example to uphold the gender distinctions within this society.⁴⁹

Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert (*Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender*, 2000) offered little evidence of the practice of the menstrual hut, but she did reference Buckley and Gottlieb’s menstrual huts as one distinct

model of a women's space. Fonrobert argued women's spaces create an opportunity for collective gender identities to emerge. She believed sites like the menstrual hut are often seen as potential places for resistance against gender domination.⁵⁰

According to Wynne Maggi (*Our Women Are Free*, 2001), the *bashali*, or menstrual house, is one of the most important institutions of the Kalasha women of Chitral in northern Pakistan and is a place where men are strictly forbidden. The act of going to the *bashali* is a form of religious practice that reinforces Kalasha cosmology and insures a prosperous reproductive life. According to Maggi's research, the oldest *bashali* dates to the early 1900's. She witnessed and used the *bashali* in the 1990's while she was working on her dissertation. Aside from being a place where women go to menstruate or give birth, Maggi argued that the *bashali* is a place where women exercise their creativity, playfulness, exchange sexual jokes and innuendos, and make decisions about reproduction and marriage without outside pressure. It is also a place where women sleep in close proximity and are affectionate towards each other. Furthermore, the *bashali* is a place for women to practice their religious devotion and speak to God directly, which in their everyday life is a responsibility of men, not women.⁵¹

The importance of the *bashali* in Kalasha women's lives goes beyond ritual significance in Kalasha cosmology. Far from being a prison in which women are separated from the rest of Kalasha society and made powerless, the menstrual house is an important center for female culture and community and it enhances women's agency, both personally and collectively. Further, what happens in the *bashali* has consequences that emanate beyond the *bashali* ground itself...The Kalasha *bashali* is a place where women do things that would be surprising or inappropriate in other contexts. It is a place where women feel free to behave in way they ordinarily don't. Here they conduct their own purification ceremonies, make their own ritual offerings. They are more open about sexuality and reproduction and talk more candidly about husbands and mothers-in-law. They are more playful

and physically rough. Here they can smoke cigarettes, sleep late, take naps, drink endless cups of tea, flirt with passersby, sing and dance simply for the joy of it.... It is a place, as my friend Asmara Aya so elegantly put it, where *wa siaw*—where there is ‘space.’⁵²

Maggi argued that there is a unique bond between women because they all eventually perform *bashali* rituals; hence it is one of the only places where hierarchy is less important. It is “a place where women’s lives intersect physically and temporally, where women share property and purpose.”⁵³ On the other hand, Maggi went on to note that Westerners often romanticize the unity of Kalasha women simply because they share time in the *bashali*. Nevertheless, Maggi attested that women, for the most part, do enjoy going to the *bashali* not because they have to, but because they can. Maggi offered the following examples of women who would use the *bashali* for other purposes: Women who were not menstruating would “pretend” just so they could get away for a few days; women who would usually stay for their typical five day menstrual cycle would sometimes extend their stay to eight days because they were enjoying themselves; women would use the *bashali* as a place to plan for and execute their elopements; women who had angry husbands would often use the *bashali* as a place to escape their rage; lastly, young women would sometimes use the *bashali* as a place to avoid being coerced into early marriages.

In *Our Women Are Free* Maggi referenced a paper she presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in San Francisco in 1992 entitled, “Inside the Menstrual House: A Cross-Cultural Exploration.” Here she argued that “besides the minimal chores that Kalasha women must do to feed themselves and keep warm, there is little work. In fact, in a cross-cultural survey of existing literature on twenty-six

menstrual houses throughout the world, the only consistent similarity amid a bewildering array of different customs and beliefs” was that women’s experiences in a menstrual house were a reprieve from normal labors.⁵⁴ In Maggi’s endnotes she referred to a personal communication with Adam Nayar, whose research from the 1970’s with the mountain communities of the Astor (northern Pakistan, the Hindu kush, and Afghanistan) indicated that menstrual houses had been common in the past, but had died out over the past decades. While the practice of using a menstrual house had been lost, Nayar explained that the word for menstrual house has become a synonym for lazy, and men would often joke, “Is your wife in the menstrual house?”⁵⁵

Maggi also referenced the earlier work of Paola Graziosi, “The Wooden Statue of Dezalik, a Kalash Divinity, Chitral, Pakistan” (*Man*, 1961). Graziosi showed that male researchers often have naïve attitudes about menstrual houses. Maggi commented, “women are not cast as agents, participants in the creation of cultural traditions, but as prisoners to the rules made by and for men.”⁵⁶ She went on to state, “sentences referring to women’s activities are always constructed using passive verbs; women are spoken of as passive objects at the disposal of others. Finally, the horror of menstruation is taken to be so obvious that Graziosi did not find it necessary to back up [her] statement with supportive ethnographic material.”⁵⁷ While Maggi’s research builds on previous literature, she clearly disdained the male bias in menstrual-hut literature.

Shai Secunda offered insights into the religious views of seclusion in menstrual huts in his article “In or Out? Menstrual Segregation and Identity” (*Kol Hamevaser*, 2008). Secunda showed that menstrual huts are sites of women’s identity construction. He

referenced the work of Thomas Buckley and Alma Gottlieb (*Blood Magic*, 1988) when he mentioned how recent ethnographies offer evidence that segregated menstruants are creating “impressively vibrant, female-dominated traditions.”⁵⁸ I would argue that the ethnographies of Buckley and Gottlieb are not recent and it would have been more useful for Secunda to offer the example of the Red Tent as a current female-dominated tradition. While it may be true that Secunda was aware of Anita Diamant’s book *The Red Tent* (1997) because of his expertise in Jewish studies, he may not have been aware of the Red Tent movement because as we have seen from the review of literature, no ethnographical studies have been published on it.

The most useful documentation of menstrual huts is his reference to *Mishnah* in *Niddah* 7:3. The *Mishnah* is a redaction of the Jewish oral traditions. Secunda claimed, *Niddah* 7:3 hinted to the segregation of Jewish women to menstrual huts. He also commented that the practice was not widespread within Judaism. “Nevertheless, there were some Jewish communities that came into contact with groups that practiced some form of menstrual segregation.”⁵⁹ Secunda offered Talmudic Babylonia as one example, which was ruled by the Sassanians, a Persian dynasty that practiced the ancient dualistic religion of Zoroastrianism. Secunda argued that “the basic contours of the menstrual laws appear in the sixteenth chapter of the *Videvdad*, an *Avestan* book composed orally in the earlier half of the first millennium BCE. According to the *Avesta* and its Middle Persian translation and commentary, the *Zand*, menstruating women were to remain in a *daštānistān*, or ‘place of menstruation’ for at least four days per month, and do little more than ‘sit, eat, and sleep.’ The menstruant was not to leave the structure, and the person who

brought her food was to stay at a distance of at least three paces from her.”⁶⁰ Secunda went on to reference another text from a later time period. He wrote, “the tenth century Islamic legal scholar, Hamza al-Sahmi, writes: ‘Aisha [one of Mohammed’s wives – S.S.] said, ‘I asked the Prophet, God’s prayers and peace be upon him, for permission to build a hut to stay in during my menstrual period, but he did not permit it.’”⁶¹ Secunda offered substantial evidence of the Zoroastrian influence on Jewish and Muslim with regards to the menstrual hut. Secunda argued,

The *hadith* and *Didascalia* demonstrate the important role of ethno-religious identification that the menstrual laws played. Beyond the larger societal questions that were being raised concerning the proper place of menstruant women in society, and aside from the rabbis’ need to justify the permission granted to a husband and his menstruating wife to seclude themselves, the strong association of the *daštānistān* with Zoroastrian practice may have weighed heavily on the minds of even those Jews who considered adopting stricter segregation of menstruants. It would seem that menstrual purity practices, including segregation, were deeply inscribed with communal identity. It could be that this is one of the reasons that ultimately, the practice of menstrual segregation never gained traction in Talmudic and medieval Jewish society – it was simply too Zoroastrian.⁶²

Secunda went on to state that unlike Zoroastrians, rabbinic Jews do not banish their wives to menstrual huts, but there is evidence of discussions within Jewish communities of the rightful place of menstruating women.⁶³

Summary

The literature showed us that there are varying viewpoints of the role and purpose of menstrual huts. At least up until recent decades, the majority of the literature had a male and western bias. A thorough analysis of menstrual hut history was useful to this analysis of Red Tents because it showed that it is not completely an invented tradition.

I compiled the following table of references to show the history of menstrual huts and moon lodges. This table was also used in a animation in the film. The table is organized by continent.

Table 3.1 *Referenced Menstrual Huts and Moon Lodges by Time and Place*

Year	Modern Geographic Location	Continent/Region	Tribe/People	References
17th-18th centuries	Republic of Niger, West Africa	Africa	Saramaka	64 65
Prior to 1895	Kumasi, Ghana	Africa	Ashanti	66
1900's	Ethiopia	Africa	Jewish	67
1934	Mwaya, Tanzania and northern Malawi	Africa	Nyakyusa	68
1941	Mali	Africa	Dogon	
1960's	Republic of Benin	Africa	Dahomey	69
Unknown	Sierre Leon	Africa	Mende	
Unknown	Ituri, Democratic Republic of the Congo	Africa	Mbuti	70
Unknown	Nigeria and Cameroon	Africa	Tiv	71
Early 1900's	Chitral, Pakistan	Asia	Kalasha	72
1955	Meghalaya, India	Asia	Garo	73
1958	Tihingan (village) Klunhung (district) Bali, Indonesia	Asia	Balinese	74
1970's	Astor, Pakistan	Asia		75
1970's	Rumbur Gol, Pakistan	Asia		76
Early 1980's	Central Anatolia, Turkey	Asia		77
Unknown	Central India: Madhya Pradesh, eastern Maharashtra (Vidarbha), Chhattisgarh, northern Andhra Pradesh, and Western Orissa	Asia	Gond (Muria)	78 79
Unknown	Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Russia	Asia	Khanty	80
Prior to 1930	Wogeo, New Guinea	Australia	Wogeo	81
800CE-1500CE	Present-day Natchez, Mississippi	North America	Natchez Nation	82
1600's	North-central Washington	North America	Sanpoil	83
Early 1600's	Northeast and North central Florida, Southeast Georgia	North America	Timucua Nation	84
1630's	Northeastern Quebec, Canada	North America	Montagnais Nation	85
1630's	Quebec and Ontario, Canada	North America	Algonquin	86

			Nation	
1650	Northern New England, the Canadian Maritimes, Nova Scotia/New Brunswick, Quebec, Newfoundland, and Maine	North America	Micmac	87 88
Late 1600's	Southeastern Arizona	North America	Papago Tribe	89
1730's	Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, Alabama	North America	Choctaw Nation	90
1750's	South-central Oklahoma	North America	Chickasaw Nation	91
Prior to 1800	Alabama	North America	Muscogee Creek Nation	92
Prior to 1836	North & South Dakota	North America	Hidatsa	93
1850	Northwestern, California	North America	Yurok Nation	94
Prior to 1860	Western Washington	North America	Twana	95
Prior to 1860	Lower Trinity River Northwestern California	North America	Hupa	96
Prior to 1860	Southern Oregon	North America	Klamath	97
1867	Missouri River: The Platte, Loup and Republican rivers in present-day Nebraska and in northern Kansas	North America	Pawnee	98
Prior to 1890	Copper River Delta and near the town of Cordova, Alaska	North America	Eyak	99
1890	Northwestern, California	North America	Hupa Tribe	100
1890	Northern Vancouver Island in British Columbia	North America	Kwakiutl	101
1930	Southwestern United States - Monument Valley	North America	Navaho	102
1976	Pine Ridge reservation in Southwestern South Dakota	North America	Oglala (Lakota)	103
Unknown	Northern British Columbia and the Yukon Territory	North America	Nahane	104
Unknown	North & South Dakota	North America	Cheyenne	105
Unknown	Minnesota & Northern Iowa	North America	Dakota	106
Unknown	Near Lake Superior	North America	Ojibwa	107
1500's	Mogmog Island, Ulithi, Micronesia	Pacific Ocean	Yap	108 109 110
Early 1800's	Hawaii	Pacific Ocean		111
Prior to 1820	Northern isthmus, New Zealand	Pacific Ocean	Maori- Nga Puhi	112
Prior to	Kingdom of Ana, western Upolu	Oceania	Samoans	113

1829	Island (Samoa Islands, Polynesia)			
1900	Atoll of Jaluit, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Micronesia	Oceania	Marshallese	¹¹⁴
1920	Kiwai Island, New Zealand	Pacific Ocean	Kiwai	¹¹⁵
Prior to 1930	Tikopia	Pacific Ocean	Tikopia	¹¹⁶
Unknown	Papua New Guinea	Pacific Ocean	Arapesh	¹¹⁷
Unknown	Caroline Islands	Pacific Ocean	Ifaluk	¹¹⁸
Unknown	Solomon Islands	Pacific Ocean	Malaita	¹¹⁹
Prior to 1650	Island of Dominica	South America	Callinago	¹²⁰
1700's	Republic of Suriname	South America	Maroon and Saramaka	^{121 122}
1915	Tupinamba near Rio de Janeiro	South America	Timbira	¹²³
1917	Talamanca Canton in Limón Province of Costa Rica	South America	Bribri	¹²⁴
1921	Cape Gracias a Dios	South America	Miskito	¹²⁵
1932	Along Barama River in British Guiana	South America	Carib	¹²⁶
1935	Northeastern Venezuela and western Guyana	South America	Warrau	¹²⁷

This chart and analysis of menstrual huts and moon lodges informed this research greatly because it showed us that the Red Tent has a history: The idea of a separate women's spaces or menstrual hut is not a new idea. Anita Diamant claimed that the Red Tent in her book was fictionalized, but was rooted in research on Africa. While Diamant did not do an exhaustive study of menstrual huts, this review of literature demonstrated that menstrual huts existed in numerous cultures throughout the world. To address my research question of how menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions have shaped women's understanding of the Red Tent, I would argue that many Red Tent participants are vaguely aware of this historical influence. Additionally, I believe that many participants ignore or are unaware of the original male bias. I would even go as far as to say that many contemporary women in the Red Tent movement concur with the idea of menstrual huts as

women's power space. However, they romanticize menstrual huts of the past in order to justify their desire for idyllic feminism.

Reclaiming Menstruation

As mentioned previously, the menstrual hut literature takes a more social scientific and quantitative approach, whereas this menstrual stories section take a more ethnographic and qualitative approach. This review of menstrual literature is valuable to this study on Red Tents because it shows how women contradict patriarchal degradation and pass on positive images of womanhood.

There is a body of literature produced during the feminist movement and the emerging Women's Spirituality movement of the late 1960's and 1970's. According to WorldCat, an extensive online database for interlibrary loans, there are 2,878 resources in English with the word *menstruation* in the title. Of this total, 207 were published in the 1970's, 314 in the 1980's, 572 in the 1990's, and 918 in the 2000's. My criteria for inclusion in this review was that the sources incorporate historical information about menstrual taboos, use narrative inquiry as a method of presentation, discuss menstrual healing, or mention menstrual huts or moon lodges.

Woman's Mysteries: Ancient and Modern by M. Esther Harding (1971) offered a chapter on the meaning of a woman's "moon cycle" as it related to cross-cultural taboos. Harding defined taboo as something that is unclean, set apart or unholy. A menstrual taboo usually denoted a period of isolation. Harding affirmed that during "primitive times," menstrual taboos were so prevalent that women understood that they were to never to be

seen by a man or let a man see their shadows during menstruation. "The regulations regarding menstruation seem to represent the first taboo imposed by primitive man, or should one not rather say they form the first taboo which 'the gods' imposed on primitive man?"¹²⁸ Harding commented that one could wonder why this unique bodily function has become so taboo, when other excretions are not. Perhaps because it is the only time when blood runs freely. In general, menstrual blood was thought to be an infection or something evil because it was not something that a man could do. Harding offered evidence of a menstrual hut that informed this Red Tent scholarship when she said, "in other cases a special menstrual lodge is provided on the outskirts of the village where the women can retire, but sometimes even that amount of care is not granted to them and they must go to the bush and protect themselves as best they can from heat, storm, or cold in whatever rude shelters they can construct."¹²⁹

Harding discussed historical taboos and attitudes. She quoted G. Buhler's *The Laws of Manu* (1879), an English book about Hindu laws, which stated, "the wisdom, the energy, the strength, the might, and the vitality of a man who approaches a woman covered with menstrual excretions, utterly perish. If he avoids her while she is in that condition his wisdom, energy, strength, sight, and vitality will all increase."¹³⁰ She also reported that it was common among Romans and Anglicans to insist that following the birth of a child, a new mother must be religiously disinfected. Similarly, throughout Europe menstruating women were forbidden to touch butter, wine, or meat.¹³¹ Although it should be noted that she did not offer an ethnographic present for this restriction.

In addition to examining taboos, Harding discussed more positive ways in which menstrual taboos offered women a means of purposely isolating themselves, especially in slavery situations, and of safeguarding themselves against sexual demands. Her stance on the progression of the ethics of menstruation suggested an intriguing concept for the development of this study, although her universalist generalizations have been avoided. I specifically question Harding's use of terms such as "primitive times" or "primitive man" as the prejudicial rhetoric of her time.

Another book that looked at women's attitudes to menstruation appeared around the same time. *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, first published by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective in 1973, is one of the most respected women's-health reference books ever written. While this volume covered a range of topics about women's sexuality, bodies, parenting, pregnancy and so on—all topics common in the Red Tent—for the purpose of this literature review only references to menstruation were included.

Our Bodies, Ourselves offered women a self-guided tour of their sexual anatomy and an understanding of their menstrual health. The authors believed that this approach was empowering to women. They begin their section on menstruation by listing a few common terms that women use ("the curse", "my friend", "the period", "Aunt Flo", and the less euphemistic "on the rag") that caused women to avoid saying "menstruation" or "bleeding." Unlike many of the other references in this literature review, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* commented that there is no "right" way to celebrate menstruation and that all women experience their menstrual cycles with varying cultural differences and personal practices. Through this easy-to-understand but thorough medical approach, the authors

offered women advice across racial and social boundaries. The book was reprinted in 1976, 1998, and 2005. There are also numerous editions specifically about pregnancy, menopause, etc. *Our Bodies, Ourselves* is so widely known by Red Tent participants that it plays an important part in their menstrual attitudes.

The Wise Wound: Menstruation and Everywoman by Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove (1978) was a prominent book that numerous sources have since cited. The authors analyzed how a woman feels just before and after menstruation, how her actions during menstruation affect those around her, the ways society “pays her back” for those effects, and how the social attitudes about menstruation in turn reinforce why she feels and acts that way she does. Shuttle and Redgrove gave this example: “I am tabooed and this makes me feel horrible which causes me to behave unpleasantly, so I am ostracized and tabooed, so I continue to feel horrible and behave unpleasantly.”¹³² Shuttle and Redgrove argued that it is possible to break this cycle of menstrual disillusionment. Citing the work of G. F. Melody (“Behavioral Implications of Premenstrual Tension,” *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, vol. 17, 1961) the authors explained that to modify a women’s sense of self-image she must be provided with new information about the positive attributes and the hidden gifts of menstruation. In their section on “Lifting the Curse,” Shuttle and Redgrove reinforced their position on transforming women’s attitudes about menstruation by drawing on the influential article “The Premenstrual Syndrome” by Mary Brown Parlee (*Psychology Today* (US), vol. 80, no. 6, 1973).

It is all very well to collect data to show what a curse the period is, but that doesn’t mean to say that there is a ‘curse’ there. If you look for the stereotype of the menstruating woman, you will find her. She shows how narrowly-conceived and inefficiently-interpreted many of the ‘scientific’ studies have

been.... Ms Parlee shows that the field is dominated by the *assumption* of finding a premenstrual syndrome.... [She implies that researchers, who appear to be in search of the inferior stereotype, rarely consider the possibility of positive events at menstruation.] 'Rarely is it suggested that it is the behavioral events that affect the menstrual cycle....'¹³³

This argument reinforced and enhanced my understanding about how the Red Tent movement influences women's attitudes and behavior. It also offered an explanation for how and why the Red Tent movement is successful and why it continues to grow in popularity.

Penelope Washbourn's article, "Becoming Woman: Menstruation as Spiritual Challenge" was written several years later (in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* edited by Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, 1979). Washbourn suggested that women associate "life crisis" with the fact of having a female body and that the first crisis that women experience is menstruation. Washbourn affirmed that personal and spiritual questions surround such crises. Hence, rites of passage are necessary elements for marking and defining a woman's life. She claimed, "to perceive female sexuality gracefully involves seeing it within the process of becoming more fully human and with an understanding of the purpose of life... women *need* 'rites of passage' that symbolize the hopes, fears, and questions of ultimate meaning in their search for personal and social identity in contemporary society."¹³⁴ Washbourn's article is an excellent resource that surveyed authors from different fields who examined menstruation as a social taboo and asserted that this can be overcome through a spiritual approach, which is one of the missions of the Red Tent.

Shakti Woman: Feeling Our Fire, Healing Our World (1991) included a chapter on the female bloodroots of shamanism. Vicki Noble claimed that birthing and menstruation are the two most fundamental female attributes and the core of female shamanism. In this chapter, Noble presented an anthropological and cross-cultural analysis of how shamanistic groups view menstruation. Citing Lawrence Durdin-Robertson's *The Cult of The Goddess* (1974), Noble claimed that many cultures from the past believed that the first menstruation had great spiritual power because it was the only ethical blood used for ritual purposes. Its strength lies in that it comes freely. Although Noble does not state a time period, she claimed that statues and other sacred objects were often painted with red ochre to resemble menstrual blood. Noble cited a range of literature to affirm that menstrual taboos began with the loss of Goddess traditions and fertility cults. She referenced the work of Barbara Walker (*The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, 1983) describing menstruation as the key to healing for future generations. Authors Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove (*The Wise Wound*, 1988) referred to menstruation as the most critical human evolutionary development. Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor (*The Great Cosmic Mother*, 1987) argued "that the menstrual taboo was a preeminently political move on the part of men and society, one of the most successful methods devised by men to undermine self-acceptance, self-understanding, and self-confidence in women. [Menstruation acted] as a constant confirmation of a negative self-image."¹³⁵

Noble offered a few shamanistic traditions and cultures that to this day celebrate menstruation. One contemporary example is the Navajo (*Dine*) tribe in North America. The Dine' have a tradition of menstrual initiation for four days after a girl gets her first period.

During this time the girl makes the community cornbread and serves as a channel for the goddess Changing Woman. According to Noble, shamanic traditions believe that “our willingness to face the dark is the key to our own development. What we’re afraid of is actually the treasure at the center of our being, the female source energy from which we have so long been severed.”¹³⁶ Noble asserted that during times of menstruation women tend to isolate or work as if nothing is happening, whereas they should gather with other women in places like moon lodges to care for themselves and for others.

Blessings of the Blood: A Book of Menstrual Lore and Rituals for Women by Celu Amberston (1991) presented a series of short ethnographies about women’s memories and rituals of menarche, as well as a section of scholarly interviews about how women have viewed menstruation. Amberston’s menstrual stories expand on previous anthropological studies about the horrors of menstruation and menarche through a New Age Women’s Spirituality approach. Amberston clearly stated in her preface that the numerous anthropological studies of menstruation documented over the years do not reflect a holistic view of the vibrant and realistic narratives of women and they serve to put women down more than to encourage a new way of understanding. Whether it was a celebratory initiation or an experience of confusion and fear, the vivid memories of a girl’s first period define how she views menstruation for the rest of her life. Amberston built on a literature about menstruation from the 1970’s that explored the myths and meanings of menstruation and how to “lift the curse.”

Amberston was particularly interested in offering short menstrual-positive stories. She offered a cross-cultural view of menstruation from interviews with a range of holistic

therapists and psychologists, including a shaman and a Native American moon lodge facilitator and author. Amberston quoted author Vicki Noble (*Shakti Woman*, 1991) in a section called “The Blood Mystery: A Return to Our Shamanic Roots”:

Menstrual blood is the most potent substance on the planet in this magical sense, and in the ancient past [the community used it purposefully]. Now we disregard this extrasensory power and continue with our jobs, our home lives—‘business as usual.’ When we behave this way, the unacknowledged ‘dark’ power releases through us as irritation, grumpiness, headache, bloating, and other negative physical symptoms.¹³⁷

In Noble’s view the most common menstrual taboo is that a woman may not have intercourse during menstruation. According to her, it is the only time when a woman can fully experience the shamanistic rite that is menstruation—to spiritually and physically connect with that which could have been, but will not come to fruition.¹³⁸

“Sacred Time, Sacred Way” documented Amberston’s interviews with Native American moon lodge facilitator and author Brooke Medicine Eagle. Analogous to the proponents of Red Tent, Brooke Medicine Eagle claimed that American women had lost their deep connection to the power of menstruation because of puritanical European ethics. Through a spiritual approach to menstruation, she attempted to overcome these rooted ethical issues and taboos related to first and last bleeding rituals.¹³⁹

Sister Moon Lodge: The Power and Mystery of Menstruation by Kisma K. Stepanich (1992) further explored the way Native American cultures celebrated menstruation. Stepanich briefly examined the power of the color red and how it directly related to honoring menstruation. While Stepanich documented specific moon lodge rituals, many are not directly used in the Red Tent.¹⁴⁰

Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing by Christiane Northrup (1994) offered two useful sections: "Healing versus Curing" and "Healing Our Menstrual History: Preparing Our Daughters." Northrup clearly defined healing in a way that is extremely pertinent to the Red Tent. She explained that healing comes from within the individual, whereas curing is an external treatment often administered by doctors. When someone is healed, they address the imbalance within the body that caused the symptoms. Furthermore, through a healing process, a woman brings the hidden issues of her life to the surface. Northrup quoted dream analyst Patricia Reis: "the bigger meaning of healing is a 'whole-ing,' filling out the missing pieces of a person's life."¹⁴¹

In her "Healing Our Menstrual History: Preparing Our Daughters" section, Northrup asserted that mothers must pass on positive images of womanhood, body image, and menstruation. By doing this, daughters can free themselves of patriarchal degradation. She noted that, unfortunately, by looking at the multitude of women's body-related issues in American culture, we could see that mothers are doing exactly the opposite. Northrup claimed that young girls have often been introduced to menstruation as it relates to sex and getting pregnant. Hence, girls are not prepared to fully understand menstruation's nonsexual gifts. Girls thus use sex as a rite of passage rather than menstruation. "Reclaiming menstrual wisdom involves women envisioning new and more positive ways of thinking and talking about the menstrual experience to ourselves, our daughters and to the men in our families," said Northrup.¹⁴² This section of the book illustrated the goal of the Red Tent. It was useful for informing my perspective and was helpful when I created

the film's narration. The following passage eloquently epitomized the call to action that the Red Tent addresses:

Clearly, we cannot take our daughters into a space where we have never been. We cannot provide healing for them in areas in which we're still deeply wounded ourselves. If we still carry generations of shame about the processes of our female bodies, we cannot hope to pass on to our daughters a sense of love for their own bodies. We need new ways of thinking about this whole area. Each of us must create new ceremonies and new rites of passage for our own daughters. But before we can hope to do this effectively, we must own our own experiences, however unsupportive and painful, and work through them.¹⁴³

The above quote serves as the call to action that the Red Tent advocates. With this attitude, we are able to overcome the taboo of the "things we don't talk about."

Red Moon: Understanding and Using the Gifts of the Menstrual Cycle by Miranda Gray (1994) sought to help women become more aware of their menstrual cycles and appreciate menstruation by understanding the energy that comes along with it. Unlike other sources on menstruation, Gray affirmed that the entire monthly cycle, not just the time of bleeding, is the 'menstrual experience.' Through a narrative and practical approach, Gray presented interactive methods to overcome the taboos of menstruation. While her terminology is problematic, she too discussed the idea that in several "primitive cultures" women were confined to a hut, away from the rest of the village, which was shared by all the women of the tribe. The menstruating women were not allowed to touch the implements of daily life, and anything that they came into contact with at this time became "contaminated" and was destroyed. In particular, the menstruating women were forbidden to touch anything belonging to men.¹⁴⁴ Unfortunately, Gray does not define which cultures used a menstrual hut, only that they were "primitive." She did, however briefly examine the contemporary

religious taboos of Islamic women not being allowed to enter a mosque during menstruation and how in Christianity menstruation is associated with the original sin of Eve. Gray claimed that numerous menstrual-positive teachings were to be found in legends, myths, folk stories, and nursery rhymes, and that a reinterpretation of these narratives are essential to establishing a paradigm shift.¹⁴⁵

Honoring Menstruation: A Time of Self-Renewal by Lara Owen (1998) offered a history of menstruation, mythic figures related to archetypes on bleeding, and “beliefs of menstrual-positive cultures.” It also included three in-depth personal stories that illustrated this history. It is apparent that Owen builds on previous literature: Christiane Northrup wrote the foreword to this book. (Later (2009), Owen and Northrup co-authored the book, *Her Blood is Gold*.)

Owen argued that in the 1990’s American cultural ideas about menstruation were noticeably dissimilar to those of the past. Commercials and advertising about menstruation have become more realistic, which has softened the taboos and prejudices about it. Hence, the Red Tent is part of the trajectory of this gradual new understanding. Owen claimed that women and girls during the late 20th century were more susceptible to negative ideas about menstruation because women are menstruating more than at any other time in history:

Girls are starting to menstruate earlier due to protein-rich diets and hormones in food; women are less likely to die young, they have fewer children and therefore spend less time not menstruating. Increased work and family stresses, in addition to more periods, mean that women are more physically and psychologically vulnerable to negative attitudes to menstruation. So it is more important now than ever that we investigate ways to make our periods physically, emotionally, and spirituality healthy.¹⁴⁶

Owen stated that the lack of menstrual recognition, specifically for teenagers, is a precursor to self-esteem problems. Like many of the other writers cited in this literature review, Owen offered women ways to connect with their menstrual cycle. "This attitude is rooted in the denial of female reality that runs through the core of the history of the past few thousand years."¹⁴⁷ Owen documented cross-cultural traditions that honor menstruation. Practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine, she claimed, believe that women need to honor their menstrual feelings and to take time away from society. Owen also drew on previous Native American research from Anne Cameron (*Daughters of Copper Woman*, 1981) representing the stories of the Nootka people of the Pacific Northwest who use a moon lodge; Thomas Buckley's work on the Yurok people of Northern California; and the already-alluded to Navajo puberty ritual called the *Kinaalda*. Owen also presented brief accounts of the work of Colin Turnbull (*The Forest People*, 1962), who documented the puberty rituals of the Pygmies of the Congo; the teachings of Sobonfu Some` of the West African Dagara tribe; and the extensive anthropological research of Thomas Buckley and Alma Gottlieb (*Blood Magic*, 1988). Owen's summary established a reference point of various traditions, as well as offered a thorough history of menstrual stereotypes and how they have changed throughout time.

Filmography of Menstrual Stories

Bloodtime, Moontime, Dreamtime (2008) by Emmy award-winning filmmaker Roberta Cantow is a 118-minute film trilogy about blood, menstruation, and menstrual rituals. *Bloodtime, Moontime, Dreamtime* is segmented into the three chapters of its title. "Bloodtime" is a 20-minute film about what Cantow called "claiming the territory." From watching the film, it is difficult to understand what was meant by this subtitle. In fact, "Bloodtime" illustrated American cultural associations with blood, whether as pain, war, destruction, "blood friends," or theatrical blood. Cantow combined interviews with women wearing red dresses with numerous overlapping and ethereal video images of blood drops, paintings of bleeding, women dancing in red dresses, and blood on clothing or in water. The overall focus of this section is on blood, rather than menstruation. Cantow presented American culture as having an appetite for war and spilling blood. Moreover, numerous interview sound bits and illustrative footage focused on the positive associations of blood in a warrior nation. The last minute or two of "Bloodtime" transitioned from warrior and theatrical images to declarations by women about their menstrual stage. One interviewee commented, "it is important to acknowledge menstruation in our culture."¹⁴⁸ There is also one comment by a woman who said that having a menstrual hut would be very nice.

The second film of the series, "Moontime," more directly referenced the topics of my research. "Moontime" is a 36-minute film about transitioning from menstruation as a curse to a blessing. Cantow presented numerous references to huts and menstrual-positive cultures or traditions that practice menstruation rituals. Many of these comments come from an interview with author Lara Owen, (*Honoring Menstruation*, 1998 and *Her Blood is*

Gold, 2009). Owen commented, “young girls do not know how sacred menstruation is” and women often hide these values.¹⁴⁹ Owen stated that American culture suppresses menstruation; young girls don’t want to grow up because they don’t want to menstruate. While this may be true, numerous other interviewees commented that cultures like some Native American tribe, with their moon lodge, traditional Chinese medicine practitioners, and Hindu and Buddhist cultures that respect sexuality often have a more positive view of menstruation. (Having lived in India and studied Buddhism, I do not agree that Hindu and Buddhist traditions exclusively respect sexuality or menstruation. Many of these comments are broad and romantic generalizations of Eastern culture in the West.) At the end of this film Cantow positioned a few comments and imagery that point to the connection between the rise in environmentalism and how women today are reframing their relationship to menstruation.

The final film in this trilogy, “Dreamtime,” explored borrowed and improvised menstrual and pregnancy rituals, such as the Mikvah, a Jewish ritual bath, doll-making, women’s circles, and body-impression art. While the third part of this trilogy does present a variety of ways to honor women and menstruation, it is strange that there is no mention of the Red Tent tradition or the book that engendered it. Perhaps this is an oversight by the filmmaker. Given that this film came out in 2008, it is possible that much of the filming was completed before the book became popular and the textile spaces emerged.

Bloodtime, Moontime, Dreamtime is intended for a female audience within the Women’s Spirituality movement. My film further develops these menstruation themes from

a scholarly perspective, is expected to reach a wider audience, and realistically documents the burgeoning Red Tent movement.

Summary

There is a growing body of scholarship on menstrual issues. A closer look revealed that several of the sources from the 1980's were second editions of literature from the 1970's or were articles that were later included in books. As a result, many of the sources referenced in this literature review came from the 1970's and the 1990's.

Menstruation was a key issue that I intended on exploring with my original research questions; hence the lengthy review of literature. In retrospect, this review of literature offers a unique view of the Red Tent with respect to my new research question about the history of menstrual huts. The majority of the literature on menstruation comes from the 1960's through the 1990's and was conducted and written by women. The review of menstrual hut literature is analogous, but was collected primarily by men. I question whether these two literatures were a reaction to one another. There are numerous cross-references between fields of inquiry, with one major exception: the menstrual hut literature takes a more social scientific and quantitative approach, whereas the menstrual stories take a more ethnographic and qualitative approach. This review of menstrual literature is valuable to this study of Red Tents because it shows how women have changed the research questions and analysis of menstruation; this body of literature shows us that feminist scholars are contradicting patriarchal oppression and giving us new and positive images of womanhood.

Chapter 4:

Review of Additional literature

Ethics of Care

Developed in the 1970's, ethics of care was a holistic, feminist approach that called attention to and promoted the importance of "care-focused" relationships and actions. It was an assumption in my dissertation proposal that the ethics of care perspective was useful to a thoughtful analysis of the Red Tent. If we assume that the Red Tent functions as an empowering space and that it serves as a place where advocacy for care can happen, then it influences the ethics of women and allows them to rehear their own voices and experience their own rhythms. It has been my experience that men typically treat women's life transitions as abstract and emotionless and often have no interest in hearing these stories. Because all women go through life transitions, it is helpful for women to witness these stories, which often organically unfold while they are caring for each other.

Experience is central to feminist thought, but what is meant by experience is not mere empirical observation.... Feminist experience is what art and literature as well as science deals with. It is the lived experience of feeling as well as thinking, of performing action as well as receiving impressions, and of being aware of our connection with other persons as well as of our own sensations.¹⁵⁰

Most moral theories are individualistic in nature, but ethics of care theorists believed that this cultivates a false sense of humanity. Moreover, this individualist approach viewed our human responsibilities of care giving as "accidents" of familial or social connections.¹⁵¹

Carol Gilligan's research on the moral development of women and girls (*In a Different Voice*, 1982) paved the way for ethics of care theory and a whirlwind of controversy. Gilligan argued that women and girls communicate and discern moral issues "in a different voice." She claimed, women and girls have a "care perspective" that values narratives and prudently considers relations between people when determining moral judgments.¹⁵²

Before I continue, it is important to identify what is meant by "care." According to Virginia Held (*The Ethics of Care*, 2006), "care is both value and practice."¹⁵³ Nel Noddings (*Caring*, 1984) argued that care is a deep-rooted feminine quality of receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness. Caring for others implies protecting the welfare or maintaining one's self or another. When one shows care, one has regard for another's views and interests.¹⁵⁴ Annette Baier, in her article, "What Do Women Want in a Moral Theory," (1997) asserted that the ethics of care is a moral theory that emphasizes interpersonal relationships based on love, trust, and friendship.¹⁵⁵ Ethics of care theorists, such as Robert Cavalier ("Ethics of Care", 2002) argued that when men deal with ethical issues they approach them with rules, laws, principles, and loyalty, whereas women focus on the *context* of the situation and how the relationships will be affected by their decisions.¹⁵⁶

My analysis of ethics of care showed that it was more about the moral choices of taking care of children and elderly. I believe that the Red Tent expands the ethics care theory. The Red Tent functions as a space for self-care and caring for each other by providing a place for renewal and reflection. Many women in American society are not honoring their life transitions. Americans have been socialized to not feel proud of

womanhood. When one honors these experiences, one honors one's self. But what is meant by care in the Red Tent are actions like listening, offering advice when women ask for it, giving comfort while a woman cries, providing and receiving body work, massage, nail painting, singing, dancing, telling jokes, sharing poetry, and creating artwork. In general, American culture does not sufficiently provide the kind of celebration that is experienced in the Red Tent, which serves as a place where all women can experience a sense of pride. Women often feel out of control during life experiences such as menstruation, rape, giving birth, etc. Stories told in the Red Tent validate those feelings. As a place to stop and rest, the Red Tent allows women to step outside of their daily activities and helps them acknowledge their part in the cyclical process.

Women's Spirituality

There are numerous books on Women's Spirituality, but many of these books are intended for a general audience and are often not based in scholarly research. The following literature came from two primary sources which I found valuable to this Red Tent study: The first is a large volume entitled, *The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power Within the Feminist Movement* (1982, 1994) edited by Charlene Spretnak. This volume included fifty-three essays from several of the most influential scholars and forerunners of the Women's Spirituality movement such as Marija Gimbutas, Starhawk, Carol P. Christ, Gloria Steinem, Judy Chicago, and Z. Budapest. The second is new book entitled *Women, Spirituality, and Transformative Leadership* (2012) edited by Kathe Schaaf, Kay Lindhal, Kathleen S. Hurty, and Reverend Guo Cheen. This book has been included in this review of literature primarily because ALisa Starkweather, the founder of the Red Tent Temple movement, contributed to the book. This book has scholarly elements, but its intended audience is Women's Spirituality leaders.

In the introduction to *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, Charlene Spretnak gave a brief history of the Women's Spirituality movement beginning with first-wave nineteenth-century feminists Matilda Joslyn Gage and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Spretnak compared Women's Spirituality to patriarchal traditions by first examining how patriarchy put women down:

The myriad varieties of patriarchal oppression—co-opting and replacing the Goddess, imposing patrilineal descent and ownership of woman's womb, restricting and mutilating woman's body, denying women's education and legal rights, forbidding her control of her body, and portraying that body as a

pornographic toy—all of these acts are motivated by a desperate drive to prevent women from experiencing their power.¹⁵⁷

Spretnak stated that because of patriarchy, women have often regarded themselves as what Simone de Beauvoir refers to as the “other.” Spretnak’s work contributed to the growing articulation of this movement and informed my Red Tent research because it examined why women have been wounded and why we can view the Red Tent as a tool to heal the wounds.

One of the other chapters in *The Politics of Women’s Spirituality*, “Womanpower: Energy Re-Sourcement” by Judy Sally Gearhart, takes a different stance. She examined widely criticized existing methods of the Women’s Spirituality movement, affirming that radical actions against the system, seizing power within the system, and creating alternative organizations are losing battles. She presented an alternative approach to creating womanpower, which she called “energy re-sourcement.” According to Gearhart, this implied finding another source; a source deeper than patriarchy and rooted in a path of consciousness-raising and self-awareness. Energy re-sourcement asked women to find a new epistemology, spiritually and ethically. Women must reformulate their relationship to their world, their bodies, and their ideas, she said. Gearhart believed that by finding an inner source and isolating themselves with other like-minded women, they would bring about changes in America’s power-ridden society. Through this gradual healing approach, women should embrace a separatist stance and seek a new power: not a power-over, but a womanpower.

Gearhart claimed that “[women] are built to receive. Let’s say that loud and clear. We are also built to give, but even our giving is in our own mode and that mode is totally

different from the mis-sourced interpersonal energy exercised by most men (and unfortunately by many women)."¹⁵⁸ Gearhart addressed numerous critiques of energy re-sourcement, such as that it is too slow a transition and that she put too much emphasis on spirituality, rather than addressing struggles within the system. While Gearhart's concept of energy re-sourcement has its problems, her viewpoint informs the Red Tent movement in that it asks women to gather and to reinterpret how they have misunderstood and understood women's issues. The Red Tent tradition is a form of energy re-sourcement.

Another essay in the volume, "The Healing Powers of Women" by Chellis Glendinning, began with the recounting of a personal experience. During her freshman year of college, Glendinning stopped menstruating. Through a series of drastic surgical procedures and infections, she claimed that she was robbed of her womanhood during a time when she would normally have come of sexual age and pursued motherhood. Glendinning argued that her loss of power and her denial of self-healing reflected a patriarchal system of Hippocratic medicine where the unique ability of the body to heal itself was overlooked. Glendinning referenced literature such as Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English's *Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness* (1973), which exposed medicine as sexually biased against women. Glendinning argued that the work of Phyllis Chesler (*Woman and Madness*, 1972) demonstrated that accepted female roles are often characterized by what a psychiatrist would call mental illness: dependence, passivity, sexual inactivity, "help seeking," and fear. Glendinning strongly made the case for women to reclaim their role in the healing process, whether through self-care, practicing the old healing ways, or creating and following new medical ways that respect woman and the life

energy of the body. Glendinning presented arguments for the following traditions: midwifery and natural childbirth, death guides, laying-on of hands, listening to dreams, healing retreats, shaman healers or guides, and self-healing.

For women to heal ourselves is a political act. To reclaim ourselves as whole and strong beings is to say 'no' to the patriarchal view of women as weak and 'misbegotten.' To call upon the natural healing ways is to say 'no' to the patriarchal obsession with controlling, directing, and enacting 'cure.' To heal ourselves is a reclamation of the power we all have as living beings to live in harmony with the life energy.¹⁵⁹

According to Glendinning, the work of Diane McGuinness and Karl Pribram, neuropsychologists at Stanford University, reinforced this call to women. McGuinness and Pribram asserted "women are more accurate than men at perceiving 'subliminal' messages, more empathetic, and more attentive to sounds and their emotional meanings. All of these qualities contribute to receiving and understanding the often subtle changes of the healing process."¹⁶⁰ For this reason, Glendinning argued that a spiritual dimension of healing should be encouraged among women. This scholarship reinforced the healing intentions of the Red Tent movement. It is clear that the work of authors like Glendinning have ignited this new tradition, twenty-five years later. Glendinning also imparted a framework with which to analyze how self-healing and caring are being utilized and understood in the Red Tent.

"The Roots of Feminist Spirituality" by Cynthia Eller in *Daughters of the Goddess* (edited by Wendy Griffen, 2000) laid out how the American Women's Spirituality movement was built from "scratch" since the 1960's. Eller commented that one of the strengths of the movement is that it privileged femaleness and often recruited women from within a patriarchal system of belief or from the emerging neopaganism. Eller affirmed that

“the journey from secular feminism to feminist spirituality was direct and simple: feminism precipitated such a deep and comprehensive change in consciousness that it already functioned as spirituality.”¹⁶¹ Eller further pointed out that while consciousness-raising groups played a significant role in raising awareness, they were not the direct cause for the rise of the Women’s Spirituality movement. She explained that the “weathervane” of the movement lay in the journal *Womanspirit*, published in Oregon from 1974 to 1984.

Eller goes on to briefly discuss that women were recasting their roles in Judaism, Christianity, Witchcraft, Native American traditions, and other New Age practices. Eller commented that the Women’s Spirituality movement is a combination of all of these traditions. One can see that the Red Tent not only draws from all of these practices, but also expands them. I would also argue that the Red Tent movement is not the result of conscious-raising groups, but rather comes from a deeper need for a bond among women. Many participants are not the right age to have participated in conscious-raising groups, and others probably don’t even know that they existed.

“Birthing Awake the Dream” in *Women, Spirituality and Transformative Leadership* (2012) was a chapter written by ALisa Starkweather, the founder of the Red Tent Temple movement. It documented her journey and her insights into women’s transformation. Starkweather claimed that women’s transformation is a process of undoing one’s identity in hopes that one begins to live the life one is meant to live. Starkweather’s chapter reads like narrative oratory. After her twenty-five years of experience with women’s empowerment, Starkweather claimed that “what we repress—what we do not want to own, what we deny about ourselves—holds power.... If we are ready to work together,

society benefits. Every day, women hold up one another's greatness and society benefits.... How we hold up our greatness is the key.... Our health is in our ability to show up as strong women loving and respecting each other, rather than fearing or acting out forms of harmful hierarchy."¹⁶² While Starkweather does not explicitly mention the Red Tent Temple Movement, this chapter is useful to this study on Red Tents because it exemplified the principles that have gone into the mission of the movement.

"In Order to Heal the World, We Have to Stand for Each Other's Greatness, but 'First,' the Grandmothers Told Her, 'You Have to Heal the Wound Between Women,'" by China Galland in *Women, Spirituality and Transformative Leadership* (2012) offered another example of Women's Spirituality that informed this research. Galland recalled a conversation with her friend Michel Henry. In this conversation, Henry commented that the Grandmothers told her that, "the biggest betrayal has been women betraying women. First we have to heal the wound between women. Once the wound between women is healed, then the wound between men and women can heal; once the wound between men and women heals, the family can heal; once the family heals, the community can heal, and once the community heals, the world can be healed." This concept is very similar to the healing aspect of the Red Tent experience. The Red Tent is not exclusively about healing women because not all women need to be "healed." However, I have found that the Red Tent is bringing women together across generational boundaries.

Summary

The Politics of Women's Spirituality (1982, 1994) and *Women, Spirituality, and Transformative Leadership* (2012) were useful to this Red Tent study because ALisa Starkweather founded the Red Tent Temple movement within the American Women's Spirituality movement. Many of the Red Tents and Red Tent Temples that consider themselves part of this movement do so because the groups were founded within a particular spiritual construct. The first Red Tent that I experienced was at the Women's Spirituality festival known previously as Womongathering. The Red Tent is a tool within the greater movement that brings women together and gives them an outlet for community interaction and expression. While this may be true, it is important to note that the Red Tent is not about any one particular spiritual practice. Women's Spirituality often implies a goddess-based practice. The Red Tent is not goddess-based, but rather is woman-based. The fact that we are woman is what binds us. In this way, the Red Tent is a gendered space. It should also be noted that consciousness-raising groups played a role in the Women's Spirituality movement of the 1960's and 1970's and while many researchers will see some obvious connections between the Red Tent and consciousness-raising groups, many Red Tent participants are unaware of this influence because they were born after 1970. Which is why I did not include a review of literature on consciousness-raising.

A Gendered Space

As Shirley Ardener (*Women and Space*, 1981) wrote, “space reflects social organization, but of course once space has been bounded and shaped it is no longer merely a neutral background: it exerts its own influence.”¹⁶³ This quote helped shaped my understanding of the Red Tent. The Red Tent begins with a space, but it is more than that. It is a movement that seeks to change our society and the way that women interact. The Red Tent is a gendered space not only because it is a woman-only space, but also because it has a feminist agenda to promote cooperation and to encourage rest and reflection. The Red Tent exerts its influence in a loving and gentle way by inspiring the women who attend and by showing them that there can be a different way to live.

Daphne Spain (*Gendered Spaces*, 1992) argued that status differences between genders led to the creation of gendered spaces that often reinforced male dominance. In the context of the Red Tent, I would also argue that this gendered space is a necessary reclamation of something that once supported our development as women. Moreover, women have lost the support systems from the past as a result of entering the workforce. Spain argued, “once spatial forms are created, they tend to become institutionalized and in some ways influence future social processes. Although space is constructed by social behavior at a particular point in time, its legacy may persist (seemingly as an absolute) to shape the behavior of future generations.”¹⁶⁴

Kerstin W. Shands (*Embracing Space*, 1999) argued that space and behavior reinforce one another. Women’s spaces have historically been associated with confinement. Shands presented numerous literary examples from first-and second-wave feminists, as

well as writers within the women's liberation movements of the 1960's and 1970's. Shands claimed that confinement is a double-sided coin, with negative and positive qualities. "Radical feminists in America have sought to create a safe and supportive 'womanculture, a new society informed by the radical feminist values of wholeness, trust and nurturance, of sensuality, joy and wildness'—a 'womanspace, a space free from male intrusion' located outside of 'cages of forced motherhood and sexuality....' Women of the second wave of feminism were able to find a 'free space' in the liberating practice of consciousness-raising."¹⁶⁵ In this way, Shands offered us an example of how seemingly oppressive spaces can at times be viewed as empowering places. On another note, Shands argued that the female body serves as a metaphor for a house.¹⁶⁶ In a similar way, the Red Tent is often described in relation to the female womb: The Red Tent is like womb-space. Furthermore, to remind women of this relationship, many women in the Red Tent say that "we are the Red Tent, our bodies are a Red Tent."

The following two articles presented ethnographic narratives of how the Tuareg, a nomadic Berber pastoralist people from North Africa, used a space analogous to that of the Red Tent. The articles "Where All the Women are Strong" and "The Tent as a Cultural Symbol and Field Site: Social and Symbolic Space, 'Topos,' and Authority in a Tuareg Community" clearly build on each other and inform the Red Tent concept.

"Where All the Women are Strong" by Barbara Worley (*Natural History*, 1992) discussed how Tuareg women used a tent as a ritual birthing space. Women of the village gathered around the tent for up to forty days chanting and throwing incense into the tent to stave off the Old Woman spirit who sought to kill the mother and newborn child. While the

“ethnographic present” of this article may be dated, it is another example of a gendered women’s space that shows how the Red Tent may be indirectly rooted in other traditions.¹⁶⁷

“The Tent as a Cultural Symbol and Field Site: Social and Symbolic Space, ‘Topos’, and Authority in a Tuareg Community” by Susan Rasmussen, which appeared in *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 69, no. 1 (Jan., 1996), examined the tent as a social and symbolic place. Rasmussen argued that the tent is a maternal ritual space and a focal point of personal identity in Tuareg society. Furthermore, she illustrated how the tent served as an epicenter for female rites of passage. Here too, the ethnographic present may be dated, but the ideas still apply. As will be addressed later in this chapter, my own Red Tent research further examines the apparent connections between the tent structure and the female functions of the space.

Cheryl Townsend Gilkes (*If It Wasn’t for the Women...*, 2001) offered an excellent comparative model for how women have creatively worked together to build communities that seek to overcome social challenges.¹⁶⁸ As a grassroots movement, the Red Tent is a strategy for achieving social change. It has been said that to change a culture, change the women. Townsend Gilkes argued that African-American women play a crucial role in creatively shaping the cultural process of social change. Similar to that of the women in the Red Tent movement, African-American women’s community work highlight the importance of the history of the group and the need for unity. “The women generate an alternative organization and a set of commitments to group interests that are the basic elements of ‘community.’”¹⁶⁹ I would argue that women in the Red Tent movement do the

exact same thing, and my film illustrates how they do this. As in Townsend Gilkes' research with African-American women, the women of the Red Tent instill their community with a new set of values that foster cooperative social organization that challenges and changes American society. The context of Townsend Gilkes' research is better understood with a clear definition of community. She uses James Blackwell's definition of the African-American community as a social unit that is held together by challenging the forces of white oppression and racism.¹⁷⁰ Using this definition as a model, I would define community within the context of the Red Tent as a group of women who are seeking support and nourishment from their daily lives. The community serves as an extended family and offers an outlet to give and to receive.

Summary

The Red Tent as a gendered space is changing the cultural paradigm that sexually segregated spaces are oppressive. The Red Tent brings women together to give them a sense of personal empowerment by nourishing our desire to find strength from the group, rather than power over another. There is a contemporary need for sisterhood in American culture and a place for fellowship. The Red Tent as a gendered space provides a place for kinship among women. Many women don't even realize what a Red Tent can do for them until they have experienced it.

Sacred Spaces

The Temple in the House: Finding the Sacred in Everyday Architecture by Anthony Lawlor (1994) offered a chapter on “Making a Sacred Place” that was useful for exploring the Red Tent as a sacred place and framing my interviews questions and analysis of how women are making Red Tents. Lawlor attested that sacredness does not lie solely in places for religious purposes, but sometimes it is found in a place like a concert hall, classroom, factory, or marketplace where the soul is allowed to shape its environment. Lawlor quotes Joseph Campbell’s definition of a sacred space:

Sacred space is a space that is transparent to transcendence, and everything within such as space furnishes a base for meditation.... When you enter through a door, everything within that space is symbolic, the whole world is mythologized. To live in a sacred space is to live in a symbolic environment where spiritual life is possible, where everything around you speaks of the exaltation of the spirit. This is place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of creative incubation. At first you might find that nothing happens there. But if you have a sacred place and use it, something eventually will happen. Your sacred space is where you find yourself again and again.¹⁷¹

This quote is descriptive of the Red Tent and it has helped formulate my perception of the Red Tent movement.

Lawlor also explained that making a sacred space is an act of self-empowerment and consciousness-raising. The processes include: Envisioning the space, determining the seed-concept or central feeling of the space, drafting a seed diagram, planning the individual elements, crafting the space, and lastly, having the ritual experience. While this chapter in Lawlor’s book is designed to assist people creating temples or altar rooms in their home, much of what he wrote was indirectly applicable to creating a Red Tent. Women who are building Red Tents believe they are creating sacred spaces, but they do not consciously

follow Lawlor's steps. However, they do negotiate elemental decisions within the prescribed framework of the healing mission of the Red Tent. Hence, applying Lawlor's steps for making a sacred space was helpful in understanding the process of Red Tent creation.¹⁷²

Sacred Architecture by Caroline Humphrey and Piers Vitebsky (1997) presented a similar approach to looking at monumental, durable architecture, but this source showcased non-permanent spaces within Native American and Oceanic traditions.

Humphrey and Vitebsky state:

We are accustomed to thinking of sacred architecture in terms of magnificent temples, cathedrals and mosques, which tower for centuries above the communities that built them. This is indeed a widespread means for humans to express their yearning for the divine, and the use of expensive and long-lasting materials clearly reflects human longings for eternity. But the eternity can also be expressed through the regular destruction and renewal of temporary structures... A building's sacredness lies, not in the idea of permanence, but in the concentration of sacredness that it embodies or makes possible.¹⁷³

This concept of the sacredness of a building coming from that which it embodies and not from its permanence is very useful in understanding the impermanence of the Red Tent. Humphrey and Vitebsky affirmed that with the rise of centralized traditions, buildings of monumental proportions were often built. Belief systems fueled new architecture and new traditions. Sacred places are instruments of tradition and identity. It is through this co-creative desire that the Red Tent movement is understood. In their chapter on "Retreat and Isolation," Humphrey and Vitebsky briefly addressed issues of menstruation with regard to architecture: "In parts of southern India and the Brazilian Amazon, girls are secluded during their first menstrual period. Among the Dyak of Borneo they are isolated for a year

in a white hut; they are also dressed in white and allowed to eat white food only.”¹⁷⁴ This information supports this Red Tent scholarship by presenting three cultural groups that used a designated menstrual space, but it is unclear whether they considered these spaces sacred.

Thomas Barrie (*Spiritual Path, Sacred Place*, 1996) echoes this sentiment about what a space symbolizes, but expanded on this idea when he stated that our culture is built on hero worship. Barrie commented that unfortunately we as individuals are rarely heroic, but architecture, with its ability to influence our environment, plays a powerful role in elevating individuals from a myopic and spiritually impoverished viewpoint to one of grandeur, hope, and possibility.¹⁷⁵ Sacred spaces use shape, form, and volume to not only provide for the basic physical needs of their congregations, but also to create metaphors for divine reality. Chartres Cathedral is one famous example of a sacred space that through its physical appearance transcends the very nature of buildings as simply shelter. With its soaring height, Chartres “skirted the edge of the possible... it seized the imagination and opened the door to a new way of thinking, not merely about architecture, but about the purpose and meaning of life.”¹⁷⁶ Examples of soaring and monumental architecture abound, but small spaces such as a Native American sweat lodge also serve as a catalyst for divine connection. A sweat lodge is a type of ceremonial sauna. It is a dome-like space made from withes of aspen or willow. It is constructed using the earth as its floor and it has a central pit in the middle for the hot rocks. The sweat lodge is a small space whose entryway serves as a method of grounding occupants to the earth as they crawl through a narrow, womb-

like entranceway. (It should also be noted that the moon lodge and a sweat lodge are often spatially analogous).

Caroline Humphrey and Piers Vitebsky (*Sacred Architecture*, 1997) argue that the creation of this vaginal-looking dome reinforced one's connection to the earth and to birthing practices. Nature-made sacred spaces such as caves also are used to symbolize the womb and the promise of spiritual rebirth. These rounded shapes are also found in Buddhist stupas, Hindu temples, sacred mountains, tombs, and pyramids.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, the classic shape of the igloo serves a sacred function for the Canadian Arctic peoples. With its vaginal entrance and a womb-like inner space, the domed shaped roof represents the sky and the doorway to the sun and the moon. Like the igloo, the Mongolian yurt is also a sacred dwelling. The yurt references a cosmology based on a three-layered universe, culminated in principal points. All of these examples utilize specific forms that point to or connect their occupants to the heavens or something greater than the self.¹⁷⁸ My analyses of igloos and yurts have shown their function as a sacred space, but they also function as a secular dwelling place.

Like form, "light can create illusions of depth of field, it can create drama, a sense of openness, and a sense of spirituality."¹⁷⁹ Victoria Meyers (*Designing with Light*, 2006) argued that all great sacred architecture is about creating spaces that adapt to light and help the occupant experience a divine connection.¹⁸⁰ Light's contribution to sacred space provides enrichment and expression. As in all architecture, it enhances the textures of spatial forms, creates varying hues, and works to heighten people's sensory experience by creating an intimate, safe, and comfortable experience. Meyers wrote, "Abbot Suger, the

Abbot of the Church of St. Denis in the twelfth century, saw color and light as the most important aspects of church design. Suger set about redesigning the abbey church of St. Denis as a reflection of his belief that light and color are the closest representations we have of spirit.”¹⁸¹ While the Abbey of St. Denis was the first church to use light as a metaphor, many Gothic churches, chapels, and cathedrals would far exceed it in exploring God through light in sacred architecture. The light in gothic cathedrals plays a more dramatic role, whereas, the light in a Red Tent is dim and warm. In this way, the Red Tent is more analogous with a moon lodge and sweat lodge. In the sweat lodge, for example, sensory deprivation of extreme heat and no light plays a huge role in bringing about the spiritual effects of this liminal space. While the Red Tent is not a space where sensory deprivation is used a tool to invite spiritual experience, the combination of the light, the textiles, and color enhances the Red Tent’s sacredness because these three elements are instrumental in making the space feel like a safe, womb-like space. It is the embodied experience of this womb space that makes the Red Tent a sacred space.

Frank Mahnke (*Color, Environment, and Human Response*, 1996) explored the unique role that color plays as a design element. Mahnke argued that color holds such great power and possibility because it does so much more than decorate. Color *defines* a sacred space by connecting it to a specific tradition or set of emotions. For example, red has a great impact on one’s emotions and reinforces particular expressions, behaviors and connotations, such as passion, power, sensuality, and fear. (A more thorough review of literature on the color red will be addressed later in this chapter.) “The location of a color within an interior space can make a great deal of difference to influence a room’s character,

the way that it is perceived psychologically, and subsequent reactions to it. A particular hue that is perfectly suitable on the floor may elicit an entirely different reaction when applied to the ceiling."¹⁸² In some cases, red on the ceiling is intruding, distributing, and heavy; on the walls red can be advancing because we tend to see red first and it can manipulate our sense of space.¹⁸³ Red as a floor covering can make one feel conscious and alert. Mahnke attested that the use of color in a space adds to the complexity of the space and its use in a specific location can enhance our spiritual experience.¹⁸⁴

Summary

While the Red Tent is not religious space that promotes a specific worldview, it is a spiritual space that was created within a specific context—the Women’s Spirituality movement. By analyzing the meanings of sacred space and its characteristics we can see how the Red Tent fulfills its mission to provide a comfortable space for women to care for themselves and for each other. Many Red Tents are constructed in circular spaces like yurts. When they take the form of square rooms they are often converted yoga or bodywork studios, office spaces, church basements, cabins, or outdoor pop up tents. Even though the spaces may appear to be square, the textiles they are outfitted with give them a gentleness, which imbues the space with sacredness and reinforces it as a healing and empowering space. The Red Tent is inviting. The dim, but gentle visual temperature of the lighting reinforces the nurturing goal. The warmth comes from the various hues of red fabric used to form the space. The softness of the cloth and the warmth of the colors provide a sense of love, hope, and possibility for the participants.

Embodied Experience

There is considerable literature on embodied experiences, but I have focused primarily on literature that related to women. “Embodiment, Community Building, and Aesthetic Saturation in ‘Restroom World,’ a Backstage Women’s Space” by Beverly Gordon (*Journal of American Folklore*, Fall 2003) portrayed a space as a symbol of women’s distinctive value. Gordon dynamically illustrated how “Restroom World,” a uniquely decorated third-floor women’s bathroom in the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s School of Human Ecology building, exemplified women’s aesthetics and connectedness. Gordon examined how the “curator” and patrons expressed a distinctly female method of relating to the space and its objects. She argued that the “coziness” and intimacy of the space reflected an embodied quality. “Not only is it a place where the body is central, even celebrated, but the space itself is a “dressed” entity that [functioned] as a kind of extended communal body for regular patrons. The women involved with the space [interacted] with it as part of themselves; they not only [used] it, but intimately [identified] with it.”¹⁸⁵ Similar to the Red Tent in concept, “Restroom World” was a place where women interacted with and deeply identified with the space, and where women were celebrated. It was a place where their bodily functions and body-image issues were addressed. To further examine how Restroom World acted as an extension of the female users, Gordon drew on extensive literature about material culture, folklore, body lore, and embodiment. She argued that by “dressing up” Restroom World with objects and clothing, the space had a body of its own. This research can be applied to the Red Tent as a “dressed-up” space. Gordon claimed that women bond to spaces like these because of the shared experience

with changes in biological cycles and childbearing. In *Restroom World*, this was often done indirectly through a guestbook where women left ongoing comments. Gordon remarked, “visitors to this room are bonded by their shared bodily experience and are further empowered by feeling part of a community of insiders.”¹⁸⁶ Gordon’s perspective on women’s spaces and embodiment can be applied to this Red Tent project. It is even more significant since the Red Tent offers women a more caregiving and in-person community experience.

“Whose Body? An Introduction to Bodylore” by Katharine Young (*Journal of American Folklore*, Winter 1994) explored various ideas about how the self is inserted in the body and how the body has a history. Young referenced the work of R.W. Connell (*Gender and Power*, 1987) when she said, “the body is involved in every kind of social practice.”¹⁸⁷ We engage the world through our body and we use it as a tool of understanding. Young argued, “the world adumbrates itself around the body so that the body anchors the self’s experience. From that anchorage, we apprehend the world, the Other, and the self.”¹⁸⁸ While Young did not go into much detail about the specifics of a gendered body, she did mention that the body acts as our site for experiencing life and that our gender creates a set of subjective relationships. Young offered the example of a woman holding a water jar as a symbol for Pueblo culture. She commented that “Pueblo women potters simultaneously enact their role as ‘signifiers of stability’ in the ‘politics of representation’ and become agents of change.’ By inventing *the Pueblo cultural body*, they disrupt the ‘aesthetic primitivism’ that constrains them to these representations of themselves even as they reinscribe them.”¹⁸⁹ Like the symbol of a woman holding the water

jar represents the Pueblos, the Red Tent is an American and gendered cultural symbol for the womb.

“Embodiment Theory” by Kathy Davis (*Embodied Practices*, 1997) commented that research on the body has focused around two distinct feminist themes: the body as a reflection of the larger culture and the body as a theoretical development. Davis remarked, bodies have become a method of self-expression and a vehicle for who we would like to be. With our body we can change our social status and by associating our body with products, clothing, organizations, associations, etc. we can express what we value. Along this same school of thought, I would argue that women who associate with the Red Tent are exhibiting social trends of the importance of women’s community, life reflection, and self-care. Davis provided a lengthy account of the history the scholarship on the body, but her section on “feminism and the body” was useful to this study.¹⁹⁰ Davis noted,

The female body has been the subject of numerous empirical studies in a wide variety of specific contexts. These studies focus on how women experience their bodies, on how women’s bodies are implicated in various social and cultural practices and on symbolic representations of the female body. The history of women’s bodies has been mapped in various areas of social life and attention has been devoted to how institutions and cultural discourses shape women’s embodied experiences. The specific character of women’s embodied experiences of menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause have been explored... Reproductive control has been a favorite topic among feminist scholars—from contraception, abortion and sterilization to the new reproductive technology like IVF.¹⁹¹

Davis went on to state that much of the research on women’s bodies have focused on its relationship to medical discourse. The Red Tent as an embodied experience does not exclusively serve this role, although I have documented (in the film) a few stories of women

talking about how they have experienced personal attacks on their bodily functions and medical conditions.

Joan Sangster (*Through Feminist Eyes*, 2011) briefly discussed scholarly debates about the nature of experience from a material and Marxist feminist perspective. She stated that body studies are a “hot topic” with much academic debate. Sangster argued that embodied experience is “somewhat ubiquitous, unsolvable, and always with us.”¹⁹² Sangster gave the example of reading personal letters as a research approach. She believed that this embodied experience provides the researcher with a first-person and third-person viewpoint. In this study, I collected women’s stories in their own words. This approach provided me with a first-person viewpoint of how numerous women felt about the Red Tent and how it informed their experience. In addition, I used third-person perspective, because I analyzed the stories and instilled my own voice in the narrative of the film as a Red Tent participant, narrator, and a researcher.

Cathy Winkler and Kate Wininger’s chapter “Rape Trauma: Contexts of Meaning” in *Embodiment and Experience* edited by Thomas J. Csordas (1994) offered a thought-provoking analysis of rape as an embodied experience. They argued that embodied experience is a unique reality that is experienced by the body, rather than the mind. This analysis was useful to this study because rape stories did come up in my interviews and one was documented in the film. Winkler and Wininger commented that after the rape experience, victims often experienced a trauma-induced disconnection between body and mind. During the rape, the rapist controlled the woman’s body. In order to “save” or protect one’s mind, the woman separated the body from the mind. However, the authors argued

that one method for “repairing” this separation is interpreting the meanings of the contexts caused by the trauma. Rape victims, and I would also argue that anyone who has experienced a trauma, have body-memories. As in the example in this film, the rape victim did not want to go into the Red Tent because it was a reminder of the rape. The space created a body-memory. However, once she was able to re-contextualize her memories and have some support from other women in the Red Tent who had also experienced rape, she was able to overcome her fears and heal that deep wound.

Summary

I have shown that there is a very clear sense of body symbolism in the Red Tent, both visually and metaphorically. The space almost “screams” woman with its fabrics, color, temperature, sound, and energy. Although many participants may not completely understand the effects of the Red Tent, nearly every participant acknowledges the embodied effect. As in the example with rape and embodied experience, I argue that rape can cause women to lose the embodied experience, and the Red Tent can help renew it. More information about the embodied experiences and liminal spaces will be addressed in the next section and textiles and embodied experience will be examined later in this chapter.

Liminal Spaces

A liminal space is an “in-between” zone that often has the potential for providing an embodied experience. Derived from the Latin word for threshold or doorway, liminal spaces are conducive to transitional, spiritual, or supernatural experiences.

The anthropologist Victor Turner (*The Forest of Symbols*, 1967) developed and presented the concept of liminality. Turner called it the “betwixt and between” or the idea of being both *this* and *that*. Turner’s research on liminality focused on the rituals and rites of passage of the Ndembu of Zambia. Turner explored the liminal periods of the Ndembu. He looked at social maturity, cult membership, rites of separation, aggregation, and initiation rites. Interestingly, Turner pointed out that many people focus on the transition itself, rather than on the states or spaces between that which took place. Turner argued that a person often takes on a liminal persona, a twofold character, in these rituals and thus there is a change in their being.¹⁹³

According to Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson and Jen Cellio (*Disability and Mothering: Liminal Spaces of Embodied Knowledge*, 2011), there is a unique but unstable relationship between liminal spaces and embodied experiences. Lewiecki-Wilson and Cellio also argue that there is a level of risk involved with liminal spaces, more specifically, there is a level of uncertainty involved in the experience. The authors also offer the example of a pregnant woman being a liminal and embodied “space.” While in labor, her body acts as a threshold between herself and another.¹⁹⁴ This book has informed my perspective on the Red Tent by showing how women have experienced liminal spaces and how we can compare the Red Tent to a pregnant body that is changing, healing, and empowering women.

Catalina Florina Flourescu's new book, *Transacting Sites of the Liminal Bodily Spaces* (2011), focused primarily on people experiencing disease, but her observations provided a broader view of liminal spaces that was extremely helpful in examining the Red Tent. She addressed how we define the spaces of our bodies and our lived experiences. She asked, are our bodies liminal? Flourescu went on to explain that "as public persons, we act as well as transact our own and others' spaces. As actors and actants, we perform several roles, just as several roles per-form us."¹⁹⁵ It is insightful to think about the various roles individuals play as being liminal spaces. More specifically, when a woman transitions from mother to wife or from wife to employee she is crossing a threshold of her varying personas.

Summary

The Red Tent is most certainly a liminal space. My film documentation has shown that many women in the Red Tent often find themselves more open to new experiences and transitional moments. One common characteristic that I found unique to the Red Tent movement was the practice of "checking one's title at the door." Many Red Tents have a box at the door where, upon entrance a woman writes down her titles before she enters. I would argue that this action reinforces the idea that the Red Tent is a liminal space. The act of "laying down" one's title and having the ability to walk into the space without a sense that one "needs" to play a certain role is an example of liminality. I have witnessed hundreds of women identify with the goals of Red Tent, but it is observing and documenting their experiences that have shown me the power of this liminal space.

Spiritual Textiles

Beverly Gordon's new book *Textiles: The Whole Story* (2011) explored numerous roles that textiles play. More specifically, her chapter on "Textiles and the Spirit" discussed the spiritual and religious uses of textiles as metaphors for transcendence. Gordon argued, "part of the universal human experience seems to be a deep longing to taste the state of timeless unity where the sense of the individual self falls away."¹⁹⁶ She claimed that we use textiles to symbolize our spiritual longings.¹⁹⁷ *Textiles: The Whole Story* assisted me in analyzing the roles that fabrics play in the Red Tent. I have used the following categories to explore the roles: textiles as a delineator of sacred space, as a spiritual textile production practice, as a metaphor for embodiment, and as ritual clothing.

The textiles in the Red Tent literally form the space and thus create a sacred environment. The textiles reinforce the sacred experiences. The fabrics meld together to create a distinctly feminine appearance: soft, smooth, and luscious. The textiles provide both a visual and physically warm temperature, which aids to its sacralizing qualities. They also soften the sound in the space. In her section on "Setting and Sacralizing Space," Gordon offered several examples of how textiles literarily create sacred environments. One example is a *chuppa* or a canopy that is placed above a couple during a Jewish wedding. Gordon commented that the *chuppa* is one of the oldest examples of a spatial conduit for God. Many Jews also draw their *tallit* over their head like a tent while in prayer. This "tent" symbolizes the closing off of the mundane world.¹⁹⁸

As represented in my previous documentary film, *Creating Buddhas* (2008) the enormous fabric *thangkas* also served a spiritual connector. *Thangka* is a Tibetan word

meaning something that rolls up. Some fabric *thangkas* constitute the largest two-dimensional religious art in the world. These enormous fabric *thangkas* measure up to two-hundred feet tall. To this day, giant fabric *thangkas* are rolled out on monastery walls, special hillsides, and even on the sides of mountains in order to bless huge crowds of devotees. My research on fabric *thangkas* showed that sacred images help us understand ourselves. They function as a medium of connection to enlightened beings. While a Red Tent is not an “image” it is an iconic space that serves as a method for connecting women to themselves and to other women. Huge fabric *thangkas* not only serve as a connection to Buddhas, but they also form a unique fabric space. Many large fabric *thangkas* are only brought out on special occasions, perhaps once every twelve years for a few hours. This rarity, coupled with the enormous size transforms the entire city or hillside into a sacred space.

Another example of a large spiritual textile that creates an awe-inspiring site is the sacred cloth, known as the *kiswah* that decorates the ancient Kaa’ba shrine in the al-Haram Mosque in Mecca. This is the most sacred textile in the Muslim world. It measures 658 square meters and is replaced every year because it is eventually torn into pieces and given away to Muslim male pilgrims.¹⁹⁹ The *kiswah* is black with gold-embroidered text from the Qur’an. Gordon recounted that this cloth serves as a visual form of prayer.²⁰⁰

Gordon also offered a few examples of how textiles transform personal environments into holy spaces. Many Jewish households often use a special tablecloth while observing the weekly Sabbath. Gordon showed how the tablecloth served to sacralize the home and promote a time of prayer, rest, and spiritual renewal. She also recounted how

many religions also use rugs or prayer shawls to define personal sacred space. Muslim prayer rugs serve to define one's personal sacred space and to aid men with prayer in the direction of Mecca.

Many Christians create knitted prayer shawls for people in their congregations who are sick or suffering. They believe when the person uses the shawl, which has been instilled with prayers, it is like being held by God. Making prayers shawls, among numerous other textile production practices serves a spiritual function. Gordon argued that creating textiles, specifically knitting and weaving are comforting, hypnotic, and healing activities. In a similar way, I would also argue that creating a Red Tent is a form of sacred textile production. While the women who are building the Red Tents are not creating the actual fabrics, they are experiencing many of the same experiences as other textiles producers. Many women from my interviews often described the process of installing a Red Tent as meditative and healing, both for themselves and the women who occupy the space. Gordon recounted, "because industrialization, mechanization, and now globalization have taken the production of cloth far away from most of us, we have collectively lost our awareness of its power—lost our understanding of its magic."²⁰¹ My interviewees remarked that they often pray and sing women-oriented songs to imbue the space with "magic" while they are building the space; in this way, they bestow the fabric with their prayers. Gordon referenced the Hindu belief that textile production evokes the maker's spiritual nature and aids them in maintaining their connection with the divine.²⁰² My interviewees have attested that they feel deeply connected to their spiritual practices while creating and hosting Red Tents.

Textiles also function as a metaphor for a sacred embodiment. The supple feeling of the fabrics on the skin enriches women's experience in the Red Tent, but it also plays a symbolic role in echoing their bodies and their wombs. There is an obvious connection to the flowing, draping qualities of fabric that associates it with the womb and with menstruation. Textiles in sacred spaces have always been used to evoke a connection between the space and the body, and the pleasing tactility is one of the primary sensory methods used to produce a transcendent effect. Many of my interviewees have described their Red Tent experience as "coming back to their center." It also seems important to point out that many Red Tent participants believe that the womb, with its reproductive and creative power is the center of women's power.

In her chapter on spiritual textiles, Gordon showed how numerous cultures use ritual clothing. She specifically focused on wearing white during religious ceremonies. Here are a few of her examples: Catholics wear white for Holy Communion and Baptism to symbolize "heavenly dress"; Muslims change into white garments about six miles from the holy center of Mecca to enter a state of *ihram* (purity); and the Yoruba wear white to mark the connection between ancestors and humans. It is apparent that donning a white garment for spiritual purposes serves as liminal dress; it helps human transition from the secular to the sacred. I would argue that women wear red clothing in the Red Tent to create a similar spiritual connection. I believe that wearing red garments not only serves as a liminal space, as an embodied representation of a Red Tent, but also as a metaphor for the sacredness of women and their life-giving and menstrual forces. As was shown in the film, many of the women wear red clothing while they are in the Red Tent, but in their daily lives

they did not wear as much red. This showed me that the women are using their dress for ritualistic purposes and as a symbol as them “being a Red Tent” as well. It also showed other references to wearing red clothing in modern-day America include their relationship with sex and money: red lipstick, red-light districts, red sale signs, and red sports cars. In our Hollywood films we have women clad in red dresses to symbolize their roles as adventuresses or prostitutes. Amy Butler Greenfield (*A Perfect Red*, 2005) commented, “the red dress became the emblem of the pinup girl and the wanton woman, worn by the likes of Betty Grable, Marilyn Monroe, and Brigitte Bardot.”²⁰³ There are also numerous other examples in American culture that demonstrate our continued relationship with red as powerful—think of a 1980’s female executives with their red power suits or Dorothy’s ruby slippers that helped her grow up and walk down the Yellow Brick Road in the *Wizard of Oz*.²⁰⁴ While wearing red clothing in Red Tent does not serve to enhance women’s sexual appeal, it does offer women a sense of spiritual empowerment and connection.²⁰⁵

Summary

I have used the categories of fabric as a delineator of sacred space, as a spiritual textile production practice, as a metaphor for embodiment, and as ritual clothing to show the roles that textiles play in the Red Tent. All of these delineations showcase and reinforce the potency of the Red Tent and serve to further expound my argument that the Red Tent provides nurturing experiences that are changing women’s lives.

The Color Red

Design elements shape our world with emotion, beauty, and joy. They give it a sense of liveliness, but they also serve as a medium in which to understand the observable world. The emotion-packed color red holds an important role in *every* culture throughout history. Red is a multi-faceted color that ranges from burgundy to mauve, and depending on its hue and value, can represent the following:

Rich, elegant, cultivated, refined, regal, tasty, expensive, mature, sumptuous, cultivated, luxurious, robust, exciting, energizing, sexy, lusty, sensual, passionate, hot, dynamic, stimulating, provocative, dramatic, powerful, courageous, magnetic, assertive, impulsive, adventurous, demanding, stirring, spontaneous, motivating, violent, warlike, hell, blood, temperamental, antagonistic, danger, earthy, warm, strong, sturdy, established, and sometimes even a country.²⁰⁶

Color often shapes our experiences and descriptions of objects. According to Amy Butler Greenfield (*A Perfect Red*, 2005)

An affinity for red seems almost hard-wired into us.... In language after language, the word for red is an ancient one, older than any other color...[except for] black and white. Before there was blue or yellow or green, there was red.... Sacred to countless cultures, red has appealed to humans for time out of mind. Throughout much of the world, red represents events and emotions at the core of the human condition.²⁰⁷

Seemingly from the beginning of time, the color red has been both an alluring life-sustaining and life-threatening symbol that has fascinated humans and formed the basis for many of the social, historical, and cultural meanings of the color. Leatrice Eiseman (*Color*, 2006) claimed that red is so deeply ingrained in the human psyche that it signals a “fight or flee” response with every decision we make, even with something as mundane as choosing a commercial product or biting into a ripe apple.²⁰⁸ On a physical level, red represents the flow of life (i.e. blood) and entices us into feeling more alive. No other hue has this capacity.

Eisemen wrote, “physiologically, red is a call to the adrenaline glands to get the body and senses activated.”²⁰⁹ It also has the ability to raise our blood pressure and anxiety level. In this way, the color red commands us. In her book on the meanings of color in film narratives (*If it's Purple Someone's Gonna Die*, 2005) Patti Bellantoni wrote, “red, no matter what its manifestation, jolts you physically.”²¹⁰ She went on to state, that “red is like visual caffeine. It can activate your libido, or make you aggressive, anxious, or compulsive. In fact, red can activate whatever latent passions you might bring to the table. Red is power, but red doesn't come with a moral imperative.”²¹¹

Now that solid foundations for the broad cross-cultural associations with red have been laid, it is important to briefly identify particular uses and meanings in Western and non-Western cultures at different time periods. We will see how red is seen as life giving and life threatening, a representation of beauty and fashion, at the center of numerous economic controversies, a representation of religious and spiritual power, and its many other social roles. These historical accounts show us how red is construed and how it may influence participants understanding of the Red Tent.

Archeological evidence indicated that throughout Europe and Central Asia red was an important color to the Neanderthals. It is possible that red was one of the only colors available to them; however, we know that they buried their dead with red ochre, which would suggest that the color was held in high esteem. Frank H. Mahnke (*Color, Environment, and Human Response*, 1996) wrote, “understanding the connection between life and blood probably goes back to the earliest of times.... Ancient Homo sapiens realized that this red substance gave life and meant life.... Being alive meant health, energy,

confidence, and strength—all terms that reflect the symbolic meaning of red.”²¹² One famous example is an elaborate painting of a horse and hunting scenes at Lascaux in southwestern France. From this we can also assume that red played an expressive role in the worldview of these ancient people. According to Butler Greenfield (*A Perfect Red*, 2005) in these early cultures red “has often been credited with magical powers, including the ability to exorcise demons, cure illness, and ward off the evil eye.”²¹³

Moving ahead about 20,000 years, we see red as a dominant color in Greek and Roman societies as well. Although the most common association was with fire and divinity, we begin to see the emergence of red in war, interior design, and fashion.²¹⁴ The Romans used a powdered pigment form of raw cinnabar, a deadly form of mercury sulfide, to paint their victorious gladiators; as lipstick on rich women; and to paint statues of gods on festival days. Archeological evidence from murals in Pompeii showed red ochre as the most common form of red used in interiors, but the wealthiest and most fashionable homes were painted with cinnabar.²¹⁵ Also popular when used as a red dye was kermes (from the Sanskrit *krim-dja*), a scale insect native to the Mediterranean. Today’s Farsi speakers use the word ‘*kermes*’ to describe red.²¹⁶ Typically found on an oak tree, kermes has also been known as “oak berry.”²¹⁷ Victoria Finlay (*Color*, 2002) recounted “since the ancient Egyptians had started importing it by the camel-load from Persia and Mesopotamia, the *kermes* trade routes had increased to cover the known world, from Europe to China. The Romans liked it so much that they would sometimes demand that taxes should be paid in sacks of *kermes*.”²¹⁸

The most prolific use of red in the Roman Empire was for war. One has to look no farther than the Scarlet Legions to see the most practical and powerful use of red. This civic use was one of the first and most widespread expressions of the power of red in history. According to Greenfield, “elusive, expensive, and invested with powerful symbolism, red cloth became the prize possession of the wealthy and wellborn.... In classical Rome red became so synonymous with status that the city’s most powerful men were called *Coccinati*: the ones who [wore] red.”²¹⁹ Even after the fall of Rome, similar emotional meanings and physical uses for red continued throughout Europe and the Mediterranean.

Before we continue with an examination of red in Europe in later centuries, it is important to look at the Zapotec, Incan, and Aztec civilizations because so much of the history of Europe’s obsession with red revolved around these Latin American cultures. First and foremost, Finlay (*Color*) observed that “the Zapotec word for red, ‘*tlapalli*,’ is the same as the word for ‘color.’”²²⁰ From this we can assume that red was the most significant color in pre-Columbian culture. Cochineal is a kermes-like insect native to the New World.

Medieval Europeans with their growing monarchies and religious institutions begin to seek out alternative forms of imperial purple, and so red with its similar royal associations became fashionable. Even within the Roman Catholic Church we see the rise its strong associations with red as a symbol of power. From the twelfth century, the Catholic Church began to invest less into their buildings and ornaments and more into their vestments. “For most Europeans...the new ‘cardinal purple’ was simply a visible sign of the Pope’s temporal and spiritual power. For them, red had long since become the color of kings.”²²¹

As more and more aristocratic Europeans became wealthier and the Spanish empire expanded in the sixteenth century, Europe became crazed with cochineal fever and the Spanish control over the dyestuff was a matter of life and death. Greenfield makes the comparison between today's dress and that of Renaissance Europe:

Today dressing for success often [meant] donning gray and black suits, beige blouses, and black pinstripes. [For us,] subdued colors are considered classy. To the people of Renaissance Europe, however, such thinking would have seemed entirely backward. In their day, gray and beige were the colors of poverty: only the poorest of the poor—and lowly priests, monks, and nuns—wore such undistinguished garb.²²²

Finlay mentioned that in the mid seventeenth century English military and political leader Oliver Cromwell made his New Model Army famous as the “Red Coats” when he outfitted them with cochineal-dyed Kuffler tunics to create a symbol of British power (and to obscure the blood-stains).²²³

It is not until the nineteenth century that the desire for red and the obsession with cochineal began to fade. As a competing product, the British began to import lac, an Indian scale insect that also created a red dye.²²⁴ Furthermore, in 1859 synthetic magenta and solferino dyes were invented in England and as a result we see the slow decline of the obsession with red as the other hues gained popularity.²²⁵

Compared to its economic, political, or fashionable meanings from Europe, Latin America, and modern-day America, red plays a more social and spiritual function in the non-Western countries of India and China. In India, red is the most auspicious color for married Hindu women: On her wedding day, her hands and feet would be intricately painted with reddish-brown henna. She would also be draped with a bright red sari and red bangles to symbolize fertility and a successful marriage. Once she was married, she would

be marked by a red *bindi* or *kum kum* powder dot on her forehead to represent the spiritual third eye and act as a symbol of protection. It is also a common practice with many Indian women to add the *kum kum* powder to the part in her hair. Kate Smith (“The Color Red” in *Sensational Color*, 2010) claimed that an Indian woman’s wearing red on her wedding day is “the most powerful symbol of leaving behind one’s adolescence and stepping into womanhood and, eventually, motherhood.”²²⁶ Aside from serving as a “marriage mark,” *kum kum* is also used to bless devotees’ foreheads when one goes to certain temples, during a special festival, or as a blessing from an elder to one who is younger. Similarly, the August holiday of Raksha Bandhan is a holy day where sisters tie red strings onto their brothers for their protection.

Red in China has both social and political meanings. In ancient China and as a folk custom today, red is considered a symbol of luck, prosperity, and good health.²²⁷ In modern-day China red is the most powerful symbol of the Communist Republic. In Buddhism (found in Chinese-occupied Tibet as well as other Buddhist-influenced cultures) red is one of the five colors of the Buddhas and of course it is represented in the robes of monks and nuns. Examining the role of red threads, Beverly Gordon (*Textiles*, 2011) recounted that “a koan written by Chinese monk Sung-Yuan asks, ‘why is it that even the most clear-eyed monk cannot sever the red thread of passion between his legs?’ The image literalized in early China, where courtesans wore red garters on their thighs, Rinzai Zen practitioners tie a red thread around a bride’s wrist as a sign of fruitful union and a frank acknowledgement of its sexuality.”²²⁸

Summary

The color red plays a variety of social, political, spiritual, and economic roles that are reflected throughout many historical periods. Red is seen as life giving and life threatening, a representation of beauty and fashion, at the center of numerous economic controversies, a representation of religious and spiritual power, and a sexual symbol. This information is useful to exploring the Red Tent because it lays the groundwork for understanding the space. The various tones of the red fabric play a significant role in the social and spiritual understandings for the participants. In my interviews, many women stated that they believed that the color symbolized all that was female: sexy, hot, furious, soft, and warm. Many participants pointed out the obvious connection between the color and menstruation and giving birth. Other interviewees also commented that the color has a fluid but comforting quality that made the space feel like a womb. While I would argue that the combination of fabric and the color created this experience, I too believe that red often symbolizes all of these female qualities.

CHAPTER 5:

Methodology

I employed the qualitative ethnographic and folklore research methods of narrative inquiry, filming and photographic documentation, individual interviews, focus-groups, historical background interviews, a questionnaire, and a website in researching this project. Each of these methods contributed to my overall understanding of the subject and to my film approach. The various techniques acted as crosschecks of each other and they built on and illustrated the themes of the film.

Recruitment

Women were recruited in the following ways: At festivals and conferences I enlisted participation through a notice in the program book, on signage at registration and communication areas, and on signage outside of the Red Tent entrance. I recruited Anita Diamant, ALisa Starkweather, and DeAnna L'am by personal email. I solicited interviews from women in Red Tent and Red Tent Temple groups throughout the United States by doing website and Facebook searches for email addresses and contacting women through Red Tent Temple founder ALisa Starkweather's introduction to her worldwide network of Red Tent Temple groups.

Agreement to Being Filmed

Public presentation of this research in the form of a documentary film was integral to the project as a whole. *Things We Don't Talk About* will be widely disseminated through channels of educational media distribution, including television, film, DVD, film festivals, conferences, Women's Spirituality festivals, schools and universities, museums, print media, and on the Internet for trailers and on-demand film download. Participants in this film clearly understood that the film would be shown publicly. No one was filmed without having signed a University of Wisconsin-Madison legal department approved informed consent form (see Appendix 3). The informed consent that each woman signed specified that:

- She agrees to voluntary participation
- She authorizes to record on film or audio, her name, likeness, image, and any materials made available during filming
- She understands that I may edit such recordings or excerpts
- She gives permission for the use of this material ONLY for the purpose of this film
- She gives permission for all forms of presentation, including television, film, print media, and on the Internet for trailers and on-demand film download
- She understands that her name, likeness, and voice may be used for publicity
- She makes no claim present or future of invasion of privacy
- She releases from any claim of damage for showing or distributing the recordings or portions thereof for the exclusive presentation or promotion of this film
- She will affirm that I am, and my film company Soulful Media, the owner of all rights to said recordings and that no monetary consideration is owed
- The recordings and the film will be kept and presented indefinitely

For a girl or teen under the age of eighteen to participate, she and her parent or legal guardian were required to sign the consent form. Her parent or legal guardian was also offered the opportunity to sit in on the focus-group interviews, individual interviews, and general filming.

Steps to minimize risk for women who were participating included the following: Participants in focus-groups had the added assurance that they would be partnered with women at the same life stage, and that I (a woman) would be the only person filming. This method is similar to that employed by the Wisconsin Public Television female-only crew that filmed *In Wisconsin: Infinite Boundaries* (August, 2000) documenting the fears and confessions of breast-cancer survivors.²²⁹ I also made preparations at the Spirit of Womongathering festival to create a quiet, private 12' x 12' space for the entire festival in which to conduct interviews. There I created a Red Tent "set" with red fabrics to be displayed in the background of the filmed shot.



Illustration 5.1: Red Tent interview set at the Spirit of Womongathering festival. Photographed by the author.

At the Spirit of Womongathering festival, I limited the number of activities I filmed in the “official” Red Tent so that I did not distract from the purpose of that space for those uninterested in participating in the film. In addition, my camera equipment was “dressed” with red clothing and fabrics to integrate it into the space and increase the women’s comfort. Red and pink gels were also attached to the lights.



Illustration 5.2: Red Tent interview set at the Spirit of Womongathering festival showing “dressed” camera equipment. Photographed by the author.

In this way, my camera equipment became both an aspect of the space and a “participant” in the interview. This method was also used during the general filming sessions in the Red Tent.

Participants were told at the outset that they could withdraw from the film and study even after filming was complete. I only had one participant contact me after the fact and ask me to not use her footage. The request was honored.

Red Tent Filming and Photographic Documentation

I conducted two stages of general filming in the Red Tent: (1) the installation and construction process only at the Spirit of Womongathering festival and (2) how women used the finished space. Participants were instructed to go about their normal activities.

I did general filming at fourteen different locations, as follows:

- **Women's Festivals and Conferences**
 - Spirit of Womongathering festival, Poyntelle, Pennsylvania
 - 500+ in attendance
 - Women's Belly and Womb Conference, Shutesbury, Massachusetts
 - 150+ in attendance

- **Red Tent and Red Tent Temple Groups**
 - Arlington, Virginia
 - Baldwinville, Massachusetts
 - Bethesda, Maryland
 - Glassboro, New Jersey
 - Grafton, Massachusetts
 - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 - Pittsfield, Massachusetts
 - Salem, Massachusetts
 - Santa Cruz, California
 - Sebastopol, California
 - Syracuse, New York
 - Toms River, New Jersey

There were few constraints placed on me by the Red Tent organizers because most women were comfortable with the goal of the film and wanted to participate. The only serious restriction that I encountered was at the Spirit of Womongathering festival, where I was requested to limit my general filming in the Red Tent to ensure that my presence in the space was unobtrusive for the 500-plus women who attended the festival. To overcome this limitation I filmed for one hour in the morning, one hour in the afternoon, and one hour in the evening per day over the course of the four-day festival. Filming for those three hours per day at different times of the day enabled me to examine and document the different types of interactions that took place throughout the day.

To explore the functions of the Red Tent I shot illustrative footage, known as B-Roll, that documented women's interactions with each other, how they moved through the space, where they sat, what they did, what they talked about, and their emotional responses to each other and the space. I also captured numerous establishing shots of the overall space, the red fabrics, and the light to establish the setting, and present a visual exploration of the stylistic forms of Red Tents. The combination of this visual presentation and the women's interviews addressed the importance that the materiality of the Red Tent played in its function as an empowering space and how the textile space affected women's experiences.

I offered women and young girls disposable cameras to photograph what they found interesting and memorable in the Red Tent—the textiles, the lights, the textures, and the people—without my input. I also requested the use of thousands of photographs from several professional photographers and Red Tent organizers who had photographed their

Red Tents. Together these provided supplementary visual material, as well as offered further insight into the function and impact of the Red Tent. The auxiliary sources captured particularly beautiful and emotional images, which were included in the film.

Visual Research Method Background

Over the last five years there was a growing trend of incorporating video and film and other non-traditional approaches of scholarship into visual research methods and presentations. The following articles are from *Visual Research Methods* edited by Gregory C. Stanczak (2007).

In “Performances, Confessions, and Identities: Using Video Diaries to Research Sexualities” Ruth Holliday documented fifteen video diaries to examine identity issues of homosexual individuals. Holliday used a self-filming method where the participants actively and reflexively documented their own lives. This approach offered a “from within” perspective, which seemed to be the most appropriate method for her research. Like Holliday, I utilized the self-documentation approach when I offered women the use of disposable cameras to document their experience.

Holliday went on to explain how she viewed and coded her final material looking for dominant themes, and similarities and differences. She compared this method of video coding to that of common oral history audio taping practices in folklore and anthropology. Like Holliday, I categorized my material by narrative types and looked for dominant themes. Holliday justified her use of video as a traditional anthropological method that used documentary footage to objectively record other cultures. Holliday quoted Michael

Renov, “in the case of video confessions, the virtual presence of the partner—the imagined other affected by the technology—turns out to be a more powerful facilitator of emotion than flesh-and-blood interlocutors.”²³⁰ Holliday situated her research using a particular method of inquiry. She established a scholarly framework for using video as a narrative collection tool. Sadly, she did not create a film from the video dairies. The author herself claimed that using the videos as a research method was effective, but the final presentation of re-presenting her material in writing and still images was lackluster. She did however state that she envisages a time when her work will be presented on the Internet using video and text.²³¹

“The Symbolism of Video: Exploring Migrant Mothers’ Experiences” by Yolanda Hernandez-Albujar (*Visual Research Methods, 2007*) offered a post-modernist, feminist, ethnographic video method for examining and presenting experiences of mostly undocumented Latin American mothers in Italy. Hernandez-Albujar asserted that using video for her study was essential because it was a medium that could not be ignored, unlike her past and conventional academic publications. Similar to my view of film, Hernandez-Albujar commented, “my assumption is that video does more than just tell a story: It more closely reproduces the feelings, lived experiences, and sensations of the participants. Video methodology allowed [her] to narrate the experiences of migrants mothers in new dimensions that included texture, sound, color, and movement.”²³² Hernandez-Albujar went on to state that we live in an age of visual media and when we see images of “exotic otherness” on television it passes for objective truth, but scholars must use the media to create a new reflexive vehicle where those who are studied are recognized as important

enough to narrate their own lives. “When people endorse this perspective on knowledge and on the information they receive, they create the conditions for the development of critical awareness on dominant discourse, ideologies, and games of power and knowledge.”²³³

Individual Interviews

In my dissertation proposal I had hoped to perform up to one-hundred formal, in-depth, and colloquial individual interviews lasting from five minutes to one hour. I was able to conduct twenty-eight hour-long individual and historical background interviews because of limited participants and interview time.

While I was not able to perform as many individual interviews and focus-groups as I had originally intended, I found that general filming provided an additional opportunity to collect individual stories from women. There are two distinct ways for group conversations to unfold in the Red Tent: The first is conversations among small groups of two to five women. The second form is “the circle.” Many groups do a talking circle in addition to other activities. A talking circle is when a larger group of five or more women gather in the round. One woman speaks at a time and all other women listen. Using this method, I was able to collect stories from 244 women. Each story ranged between five and thirty minutes. Many of the stories in the film came from women talking in a circle. Circles also often use a “talking stick,” which is held in turn by the woman who is talking at any given time. The talking circle and stick are common practices that are borrowed from Native American traditions. As the film illustrates, the talking stick can vary in style. Some are literally decorated sticks, while others are red scarves, and in once instance it was a woman’s

skeletal pelvis. The talking circle is an important characteristic of the Red Tent. Of the fourteen different locations that I filmed, thirteen had circles. Hence, I was able to document numerous conversations among women. To my surprise, the talking circle often yielded similar stories as those of individual interviews and focus-groups.

Here are the twenty-eight individual interviews that I conducted:

Festivals and Conferences:

- Spirit of Womongathering festival, Poyntelle, Pennsylvania
 - Individual Interviews (organized by age):
 - Karly Ann Griffin, 27
 - Laura Wyeth, 30
 - Jamie Waggoner, 33
 - Astrid Grove, 35
 - Rowan Flamm, 40
 - Maryann Hopper, 65
 - Doreen Bryant, 65
 - Beverly Little Thunder, 65
 - Nancy Koenig, 69

Red Tent and Red Tent Temple Groups

- Individual Interviews (organized by age):
 - Eleni Karabesini, 8, Santa Cruz, California
 - Leila Zainab Counihan, 21, Worcester, Massachusetts
 - Maria Barresi, 25, Salem, Massachusetts
 - Keiko Zoll, 28, Salem, Massachusetts
 - Michelle Broaddus, 31, Santa Cruz, California
 - Jessica Prodis, 31, Santa Cruz, California

- Natalie Johnson, 32, Salem, Massachusetts
- Jasmin Starchild, 36, Ashland, Oregon
- Lushanya Echeverria, 36, Baldwinville, Massachusetts
- Chaya Leia, 32, Baldwinville, Massachusetts
- Taica Patience, 44, Santa Cruz, California
- Wendy Lyons, 48, Greenfield, Massachusetts
- Liza Scully, 50, Santa Cruz, California
- Yonette Fleming, 53, Brooklyn, New York
- Susan Weed, 61, Saugerties, New York
- Bonnie Fewtrell, 63, Esperence, New York

The interview questions that were asked of the above participants are listed in appendix #3. I strongly believe that the interviews that I captured were indicative of the variety of women's experiences in the Red Tent. I captured stories from all stages of womanhood, such as teenagers learning about orgasms for the first time, women discussing issues of infertility, women choosing to not have children and regretting it, one woman having three children under three years of age and the difficulties that came along with parenting. For more detail about the stories, I invite you to watch the film *Things We Don't Talk About* or read the script in Appendix #1.

Historical Background Interviews

Woven among emotional-healing narrative sound bites, the film begins with an examination of what the Red Tent is and where it came from. To gather this information, I interviewed the author of *The Red Tent*, Anita Diamant, at her home in Newton, Massachusetts. As a primary informant, Diamant briefly laid out the plot of her book, which

focuses on the menstrual hut—the Red Tent—and provided commentary on the book’s impact.

I also conducted an interview with ALisa Starkweather, the founder of the Red Tent Temple movement. Inspired by Diamant’s book, Starkweather combined her work with the Priestess Path Apprenticeship program, the Women’s Belly and Womb Conference, and her other women’s empowerment work over the last twenty-five years to create the Red Tent Temple movement. I incorporated a filmed interview with Starkweather with other historical-background narratives to establish the mission of the movement and how it is benefitting women. Moreover, Starkweather was my primary contact for the Red Tent Temple at the Women’s Belly and Womb Conference and she provided a directory of Red Tent Temple groups throughout the United States. I conducted an interview with Starkweather at her home in Baldwinville, Massachusetts. While I was there I also conducted additional individual interviews and did general filming for three days.

I also interviewed DeAnna L’am, founder of Red Tents in Every Neighborhood, a large Facebook group, and facilitator of numerous Red Tents on the West Coast of the United States. I interviewed L’am at her home in Sebastopol, California. She created one of the first videos about the Red Tent, “RED TENTS: Reclaim, Renew, Rejoice,” which was filmed at the 2008 celebration of “Menstrual Monday” in Sebastopol, California. This seven-minute-long video is hosted on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQ39pZC6DRs>.

The interview questions that I asked each of the historical background participants appear in appendix #3.

Focus-groups

To explore the kinds of healing narratives that were coming from women's experiences in the Red Tent, I conducted and filmed a series of focus-group interview sessions. As outlined in my dissertation proposal, I had hoped to conduct focus-group interviews at the following locations: Spirit of Womongathering festival, formerly known as Womongathering, in Poyntelle, Pennsylvania, which took place June 3-6, 2010; the New England Women's Herbal Conference, in Eastview, New Hampshire, which took place August 20-23, 2010; and the Women's Belly and Womb Conference, in Shutesbury, Massachusetts, which took place March 19, 2011. My primary contact at Spirit of Womongathering was Astrid Grove. My contact at the New England Women's Herbal Conference was Rosemary Gladstar. ALisa Starkweather was the Red Tent Temple facilitator at this festival. ALisa is also the founder and coordinator for the Women's Belly and Womb Conference. These focus-group interviews were conducted at festival and conference venues because of the large number of potential participants (200-500 women). The interview questions that were asked of each focus-group are reproduced in appendix #3.

I was not able to attend the New England Women's Herbal Conference. Furthermore, because of limited resources and time, I opted to not conduct individual or focus-group interviews at the Women's Belly and Womb Conference so that I could spend more time collecting general footage. I was, however, able to conduct four sets of focus-group interviews at the Spirit of Womongathering festival. I conducted the following focus-group interviews:

Festivals and Conferences:

- Spirit of Womongathering festival, Poyntelle, Pennsylvania
 - Focus-group interviews (organized by age group):
 - Eliza Martin Simpson, 18 and Leonore Tjia, 18
 - Katherine Sheehan Heller, 37, Khrys Expisito, 38, and Jacque Hansen, 40
 - Shelly Graff, 54, and Cherie Ackerson, 56
 - Tracy Baum-Wicks, 55, and Joanne Nicholson, 63

Red Tent and Red Tent Temple Groups

- Sayra Pinto, 39, and Nicole Oxendine, 43, Bethesda, Maryland

Using the film as a springboard for discussion, I implemented a “funnel-based” focus-group approach. According to David L. Morgan (*Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*, 1997), “in a funnel-based interview, each group begins with a less structured approach that emphasizes free discussion and then moves toward a more structured discussion of specific questions.”²³⁴ At the Spirit of Womongathering festival I facilitated four separate funnel-based focus groups. The participants in these focus groups were self-selected, but they were organized by their menstrual and age categories.

- Group 1: Menarche teens
- Group 2: Menstruating women who have not had children
- Group 3: Menstruating women who have had children
- Group 4: Menopausal women (includes premenopausal, menopausal, and postmenopausal women)

It was important to talk to women at these different phases of their lives to show the variety of women’s experiences in the Red Tent. Furthermore, the homogeneity of the focus-groups “not

only [allowed] for more free-flowing conversations among participants within groups, but also [facilitated] analyses between groups.”²³⁵

The importance of doing focus-groups for this research was to document similarities and differences in women’s experiences, attitudes, and opinions in an interactive way and to gather narratives across generational and traditional boundaries. The process also offered me an opportunity to gather evidence on the participants themselves understood their similarities and difference. Moreover, it offered me an efficacious and accessible method of collecting and documenting women’s opinions on the subject through a group-interaction process.

As discussed previously, the talking circle assisted me in collecting conversations similar to those of a focus-group. I believe that observing and documenting the circle conversations was also a successful approach to gathering data. As mentioned previously, the practice of the talking circle comes from Native American traditions. While a focus-group allows more free-flowing cross-talk among women and often includes directed questions, I found that the circle has many similar qualities. First and foremost, most circles have a leader, usually the woman hosting the Red Tent, who initiates the circle, and explains what a circle is to those unfamiliar with it. Many circle leaders often ask questions to guide the women. Once the leader has finished talking, she passes the talking stick to the next woman and then that woman speaks for as long as she wants. While there is no cross-talk in a circle, many of the women do use their share time to comment on other women’s stories or share stories that relate. As in the focus-group, I was able to document stories

across generational boundaries and find similarities and differences among the common stories.

Questionnaire

As stated in my dissertation proposal, I intended to offer women who wanted to participate but did not want to be filmed an opportunity to fill-out a written questionnaire with my interview questions (see Appendix #3). I did offer this as an option to many women, but I found that women either were enthusiastic about being filmed or chose not to participate at all. I had no in-person participants complete the questionnaire. I did, however, use this method to pre-interview participants from various locations throughout the United States to determine whom I would interview in-person for individual interviews. This pre-interview questionnaire was hosted on the film's website. The questionnaire consisted of twenty questions relating to participants' thoughts about the Red Tent. They were also asked to write a narrative about their experience. I received six pre-interview online questionnaires, and of those I filmed one individual interview with Maria Barresi in Salem, Massachusetts. Although the other five women were not interviewed because of time and distance limitations, their responses helped inform the project. I did not use the written stories that I collected from pre-interview online questionnaires because it repeated similar themes that I captured in the film.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a research method in which qualitative insight about the researched subject is gained through an analysis of field notes, interviews, personal journals, letters, autobiographies, and oral accounts. Riessman (*Narrative Analysis*, 1993) affirmed that the “object” of investigation in narrative inquiry is the stories themselves, and using narrative analysis one can examine their meanings.²³⁶ She cited the work of Carol Gilligan (*In a Different Voice*, 1982) stating that feminists expanded the field of narrative inquiry by “giving voices” to previously silenced groups.²³⁷ According to Margaret R. Yocum (“Woman to Woman: Fieldwork and the Private Sphere,” 1985), “women’s personal narratives provide support as they teach other women what is possible for them.”²³⁸ In her article “‘How They Knew’: Women’s Talk about Healing on Kodiak Island, Alaska” (1993) Joanne B. Mulcahy claimed that “women’s narratives assert a continued belief in women’s power.”²³⁹ Their stories affirm positive aspects of menstruation, the value of talking about it, and the idea that today’s women are seeking alternative forms of sisterhood. “The feminine aspect of culture is one of life-transformation,” Mulcahy said. Elaine Jahner (“Women Remembering History as Exemplary Pattern,” *Women’s Folklore, Women’s Culture*, 1985) argued that “the process of discovering patterns, finding traces of the past in contemporary materials, is therefore of special importance in the stuff of personal narratives.”²⁴⁰ Mulcahy further claimed that “beyond enriching our understanding of women’s roles as healers, women’s stories allow us to see how women have perceived periods of radical social change.”²⁴¹ Through this form of inquiry, we can learn about the Red Tent from those experiencing the narrative. It is not enough to simply document the

Red Tent through physical descriptions and transcribed interviews—women need to hear these stories. The film carries this one step further. Women are able to see other women caring for themselves, for others, and being empowered by the Red Tent.

Narrative Analysis

Once I gathered all of the material from the various methods of inquiry (individual and historical background interviews, general filming, focus-groups, etc.) all of the material was transcribed. Using narrative analysis, I looked for common themes in the transcribed document. I used Johnny Saldana's (*The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 2009) methods for coding my themes.²⁴² To find these themes I took the following steps: I looked at each paragraph in the transcript as its own. Then I organized each paragraph into approximately 20 different themes. Each thematic group was then organized by issue (sex, rape, infertility, menstruation, etc.). At this point, it became obvious that about 10 were dominant themes (for a listing of the results that I found please read Chapter 7). From these dominate themes I began to write the script of the film. My analysis of the material when writing the script was threefold:

1. I noticed great diversity amongst my participants, but I found that they shared similar narratives experiences regardless of age, race, and Red Tent location.
2. I chose narratives featuring women who were the most compelling on film.
3. I highlighted stories that showed cross-cultural experiences and that emphasized age differences.

As mentioned in my limitations section in Chapter 1, I expected this study to reflect limited racial diversity. However, when I was analyzing the material I found that I had collected stories from a variety of women, including Caucasian, Native American, African American, and Latina. I also found that their stories showed consistent themes. Hence when deciding which narratives I would showcase in the final film, it was important to me to use these culturally diverse stories, which also reflected ideas from women of different age groups.

Several of the thematic groups had more recurring material than others. This showed me that I had found common topics. If this were a quantitative study, this would have been statistically important because it showed consistency, but because this study was qualitative and because my final method of presentation was a film, I choose material the reflected the best story. As a result I did not include repetitive material. To do this, I selectively and subjectively placed greater emphasis on stories that were filmed well, visually interesting, had good sound quality, and that I thought would be engaging to my audience, while accurately representing women's stories in the Red Tent.

Website

In addition to the more traditional methods of gathering data, I designed and implemented a website that served as a tool for collecting questionnaires, fundraising, as well as serving as a promotional tool for the forthcoming film. The website address is <http://www.redtentmovie.com>.



Illustration 5.3: Snapshot of the website homepage <http://www.redtentmovie.com>

A Website as a Research Method

“Website Design: The Precarious Blend of Narrative, Aesthetics, and Social Theory” by Stephen Papson, Robert Goldman, and Noah Kersey as presented in the book *Visual Research Methods* edited by Gregory C. Stanczak (2007) documented the authors’ website “book” on television commercials entitled “Landscapes of Capital: Representing Time, Space, and Globalization in Corporate Advertising” (<http://it.stlawu.edu/~global/> accessed April 5, 2010). The site consisted of two-hundred pages of written information with corresponding images and videos. This article and website offered a model for presenting visceral and visual multimedia in an electronic website form. The authors applied the most dominant feature that the web has to offer—the hyperlink—to move their readers in a lateral way, thus putting greater power in the hands of the reader/viewer, rather than the author. They argued this was a strength of their design. They also put great emphasis on integrating their visual media, namely images and videos, in the overall design of the site, rather than as an afterthought.

The authors believe that the World Wide Web offered them the most useful, accessible, and widespread medium for their “book,” but the “why is it better?” question continued to pop up as they were developing it because creating a website was not their forté. As they progressed, they continued to fall back on the concept that an interactive website offered a “show” rather than a “tell” method.²⁴³ My website uses a similar approach: It aided me in gathering pre-interviews, soliciting donations for the fundraising campaign, and promoting the film and its research.

Chapter 6:

Things We Don't Talk About: The Film

The Filmmaking Process

This project was organized into five phases of production:

Phase 1 – January 2009 – November 2010: Pre-production

Phase 2 – May 2010 – March 2011: Production

Phase 3 – March 2011 – December 2011: Post-Production

Phase 4 – August 2012 – August 2012: Additional Documentation

Phase 5 – September 2012 – 2014: Distribution

Phase 1: Pre-Production

The pre-production phase included writing my dissertation proposal, drafting up consent forms and interview questions, performing preliminary research, designing the film's website, doing administrative work to secure filming locations, scheduling interviews, and fundraising. Lists of my interview questions are documented in appendix #3 and a sample consent form can be found in appendix #4. As I mentioned in my introduction, I had been a participant in Red Tents prior to beginning this project and I was aware that this was a grassroots movement with little to no scholarly research on this tradition. My preliminary investigation consisted of searching for any published material on Red Tents, all of which were presented in Chapter 2.

In addition to my being a filmmaker and a researcher, I am also a website designer. In this phase, I began to formulate the overall look and design of the branding for the film and the website. The film's website (www.redtentmovie.com) went live in May 2010. I also launched the film's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/redtentfilm) and began to promote the film and build the brand. Since its release, I have utilized the website not only as a promotional tool, but also as a fundraising and research method to gather preliminary interview data. I have solicited and booked numerous filming locations and interviews by sending personal emails.

Fundraising was the most challenging aspect of pre-production and has continued throughout every phase of production. I estimated a budget of \$53,000 to complete this project. I raised \$40,161 and counting. My fundraising began in May 2010 by partnering with artist Teresa Moorehouse Howley, to design a small *4.5 inch x 3.5 inch x 1 inch* Red Tent sculpture to give away as interview thank you gifts. The sculpture served as both a fundraising and marketing tool. The artist donated \$5,000 in sculptures to this project. Each sculpture was donated and was valued at \$40. The sculptures were sold at filming venues and on the film's website. In addition to selling sculptures, I also applied for numerous grants to assist with film expenses. I was fortunate to have received nine grants totaling \$6,250 to support this project. The majority of my fundraising efforts consisted of rallying the support from women in the Red Tent movement to donate. I secured a fiscal sponsor, Women Make Movies, to receive donations on the film's behalf and allow my donors to make tax-deductible donations. Women Makes Movies is a 501(c)(3) non-profit established in 1972. Women Make Movies is a multicultural, multiracial, non-profit media

arts organization, which facilitates the production, promotion, distribution and exhibition of independent films and videotapes by and about women. I launched a formal fundraising campaign on September 15, 2011 by creating and releasing the film's trailer with an attached video request for donations. The trailer has received over 20,000 views on YouTube and Facebook. The fundraising campaign was launched on the film's website, which is where the trailer was featured (hosted by YouTube) and donations were collected using three methods: PayPal, credit card, and check via Women Makes Movies. I publicized the fundraising campaign with a multi-step approach:

1. In preparation for launching the fundraising campaign, I first created an endorsement campaign five months prior to the fundraising campaign. The purpose of the endorsement campaign was to gather organizational support and logos to put on my fundraising materials. This showed that the film had the support of numerous organizations, communities, foundations, non-profits, and other groups. I received twenty-nine endorsements whose logos were featured on the trailer's closing credits, postcards, and donation request letters. A copy of the donation request letter is provided in appendix #5. I have since received forty-five endorsements, which are listed on the footer of the film's website.
2. I created a direct mail campaign, which included a trailer DVD, a letter of support and a request for a donation, a few postcards, a return envelope, and a personalized note. I sent eighty-one packages to family, friends, and colleagues. I had a response rate of 37% and received donations totaling \$6,555.

3. I asked several Red Tent groups if they would be willing to host fundraisers for the film or pass out postcards and letters of support to their Red Tent participants about how to make a donation. For groups that were interested in hosting a formal fundraiser, I provided a kit of materials: A trailer DVD, fifty letters of support, paperwork for submitting donations, fifty return envelopes, and one-hundred postcards. I distributed twelve kits in total.
4. ALisa Starkweather, the founder of the Red Tent Temple Movement, also hosted a large holiday fundraising event for the film called the “Three Wishes Ball & Fundraiser” held on December 17, 2011 in Greenfield, MA. I attended the event and presented the film’s trailer and three additional clips from the film. The event was a ticketed one. There were twenty bands that donated their time to performing music from 1pm-11pm. There was also a family fun area for children, face painting, dance performances, three massage tables, a Red Tent, food for sale, a silent auction, and over three-hundred gifts were donated by people in the Red Tent community to sell in support of the film.
5. I also created an HTML email announcing the trailer’s release, which I sent to my email lists, as well as to my personal, professional, and educational networks.
6. I sent numerous emails to bloggers and websites to ask them to post the trailer on their pages and to announce its release. I also was invited to do three Internet radio interviews to promote the film and the fundraising campaign on the *Holy Hormones Honey* show, the *Donna Virgilio Hour*, and *Laura Out Loud*. The

interviews are archived on the film's website at

(http://www.redtentmovie.com/press_room.html).

7. Lastly, to rally online support to watch the trailer and promote traffic to the film's website, I also created a Facebook posting schedule. For thirty days I spent one-hour each day posting to Facebook pages. These pages included Red Tent and Red Tent Temple groups, Red Tent businesses, organizations who endorsed the film, pages about women, spirituality, menstruation, sexuality, and holistic practices. Due to the interconnectedness of social media, this approach provided consistency and proved to be extremely successful to encourage other people to share the trailer.

Phase 2: Production

Phase 2 of this project was production, which involved filming and performing research in more than twenty-five states over the course of one year. A complete list of where I filmed, who I interviewed, and how I interviewed them was in listed in Chapter 5.

Phase 3: Post-Production

Phase 3 of this project, post-production, was the most time consuming aspect of the endeavor. Post-production included logging and capturing footage from tapes, transcribing the logged footage, synthesizing the transcribed material, scriptwriting, film editing, gathering photographic material and getting licenses to use it, creating motion graphics and animations, choosing music, negotiating music licenses, working with a composer to

create the film score, and working with a sound engineer to fix numerous sound problems and to enhance the overall sound quality.

Once filming was complete, I began to log and capture footage from over one hundred one-hour long tapes into my computer. I did not use all of the materials collected in the final film. The tapes consisted of both interview materials and general filming. This process of logging and capturing footage is very discriminative and my approach was methodical and challenging. First I watched each tape and commented on its content, visual and audio quality, and looked for common themes. I also made notes on how the interviews and general filming answered my specific research questions. Any footage that was not used in the final film was archived.

Once I watched each tape, I went back and captured select footage to bring into my film-editing program, Final Cut Pro. I used a MacBook Pro laptop and a 2TB external hard drive to store the captured footage. I also used one additional backup external hard drive to save my work. Once the process of capturing footage was complete, I began the transcription process. Transcribing was a very tedious job, so I enlisted the assistance of four Madison Area Technical College (MATC) court-reporting students and thirteen women from Red Tent groups throughout the world. I used a file transfer service called Dropbox (www.dropbox.com) to transfer hundreds of aiff audio files that could be listened to using any computer music program, such as iTunes or Windows Media Player. Each transcript was tagged with a file name that corresponded to a video file. In the end, I compiled all of the transcripts into one document, which ended up being approximately three-hundred

singled spaced and double-sided pages. My step-by-step process of how I analyzed the transcribed material and created the film's script was addressed in Chapter 5.

Editing

Once the script was written, I went back to the original footage and used the video file names listed in the script to find the specific clips amongst thousands of other clips. I then assembled the video files into single tracks according to the paper script. The important thing to note about documentary scriptwriting is that sometimes what works on paper does not work on film. I found that several written themes did not match visually, so I needed to work and rework the new story (in video) thousands of times. The process of editing was the most enjoyable aspect of film production for because it allows for creativity and real story-telling. I tend to rely on the script more as a preliminary blueprint rather than a formal guide. The editing process consists of using a combination of interview footage (A-roll), supplementary illustrative footage (B-roll), music, and narration to build the narrative arc of the film.

Things We Don't Talk About is a one-hour long film. During the editing process the film was condensed down from a four-hour long combination of A-roll and B-roll. From start to finish, I worked exclusively on editing the film over the course of eight months. Throughout the process, the film changed many times. The first cut of the film was done in January 2012. After completion, feedback was given by my PhD committee members and from close friends and advisors. As is often the case, I found myself lost in the details of the film and unable to see the whole picture. Many of the reviews that I received showed me

that the film was not indicative of what the Red Tent was *really* about. I also found that when I described the Red Tent in everyday conversations, I often commented that it was a red fabric, tent-like woman-only space where women gather to rest and share the stories of their lives. The first film cut that I created was packed with drama, suffering, and showed the Red Tent as a place where all the hurt women went. Upon further reflection, this is not what the Red Tent was about. In my first cut, I organized the film into common theme-based chapters: sex, menstruation, rape, low self-esteem, and women's empowerment. The film would have likely had an R-rating and did not fulfill the promise of what the space truly offers women and girls. While it is true that these are often topics that come up in women's conversations in the Red Tent, the conversations do not *define* the space. As a result, I decided to start the editing process over and went back to my transcripts to see what else my collected "data" could show me. I soon came to realize that the film needed to be organized not around the common stories, but around the common activities or actions. This included a section on self-care practices, the women's circle, a condensed common stories section, and a community interaction section. I also created a shorter history section, which summarized the nature of *The Red Tent* book, a discussion of who started the Red Tent movement and where Red Tents were located, and how the tradition was rooted in menstrual huts and moon lodges. The second cut of the film also integrated a more clear narrative arc for an audience of mostly women and girls who are interested in films about women, who may have read the book *The Red Tent*, or who currently participate in the Red Tent movement.

Final Stages

Once the editing process was complete there were several additional tasks that needed to be completed before the film was “finished” and ready to be released to the public. One of the final tasks included recording the final narration with actress, Dale Allen. Another task was working with Ruth Mendelson, a professional film composer, to create the musical score. After all of the music was complete and added into the film, I enlisted the help of two professional sound engineers to fix the sound problems that arose from combining different types of microphones when filming and improve all of the audio tracks. Next, I exported the final cut of the film, created a DVD menu, burned a master copy, designed a DVD package design and sent it to a DVD manufacturing company to have copies reproduced.

Phase 4: Additional Documentation

Phase 4 of this project was writing this paper, which served to present the research behind the film, including research questions, methods, and a documentation of the project.

Phase 5: Distribution

Lastly, phase 5 of this project is to do film screenings throughout the world. The world premiere screening of *Things We Don't Talk About* was scheduled for September 15, 2012 in Northampton, MA. The location was chosen because many of the Red Tent participants and donors are from or near the Massachusetts area. I have also begun to book screenings and I hoped to present the film at at least four hundred screenings worldwide over the next two years.

Chapter 7:

Common Themes and Results

Upon further analysis, all of the interviews conducted yielded personal narratives that showed consistent themes, which were suggested in my hypotheses from my dissertation proposal (see below). Excerpts from these interviews were used in the film to dramatically illustrate how the Red Tent functioned as an aid to women's empowerment and advocated self-care and caring for others.

In my dissertation proposal, I formulated a hypothesis based on previous informal interviews that I had conducted at the Womongathering Red Tent three years prior to the start of this study. I expected to collect the following:

- How the Red Tent celebrated women and menstruation
- How it provided women the opportunity to have open conversations and promoted positive ideals for menstruation
- How the experience helped educate women about their bodies, more specifically, about natural menstrual remedies to alleviate cramping.
- Narratives from teens about how they felt about beginning to menstruate, as well as narratives from older women who were menopausal or had hysterectomies
- Stories about birthing information

While my past informal interviews fit into these narrative categories, I was open to documenting all types of Red Tent stories. As it unfolded, I actually found that menstruation played a small role in women's experience and conversations in the Red Tent. Thus my emphasis had to shift.

I collected Red Tent narratives using a variety of methods: Historical background and individual interviews, focus-groups, talking circles, and general Red Tent filming. All of these approaches helped me gather stories about women's experiences in the Red Tent. As shown in the interview questions (appendix #3), the interviews primarily focused on asking participants about the following:

- How would you define a Red Tent?
- Why do you think that the Red Tent has been created?
- Where does the Red Tent tradition come from?
- What do you think is the goal of the Red tent?
- What did you do in the Red Tent?
- Did you have any interesting experiences or stories?

The individual and historical background interviews assisted me in collecting historical accounts and personal stories of what and how the Red Tent movement became a phenomenon. My historical background interview questions most definitely influenced my results. My questions were very specific to the individual and aided me in establishing the history and relationship between Anita Diamant's book, *The Red Tent*, and the Red Tent movement.

As mentioned in my methodology section in Chapter 5, I performed twenty-eight individual interviews. While conducting these interviews, my questions focused primarily on how the interviewee perceived the roles of the Red Tent and the woman's personal experience. I do not believe that my interview questions prejudiced the participants' answers. The intent of this method and these questions was to show women's stories and to answer the following research questions:

- What are the functions of the Red Tent?
- Do women who have experienced the Red Tent have stories about healing or empowerment? If so what are they?

During the interview, I did not ask my participant if they had a Red Tent healing or empowering experience, rather, I simply asked do you have any interesting Red Tent stories. I believe that this allowed the interviewee to direct the flow of the interview and aided me in gathering sincere experiences.

Table 7.1 *Common themes captured from individual interviews*

Most Common	Common	Not as common
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the Red Tent? • Things to do in the Red Tent • Parenting, abortion, loss of children, or not having children • Loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rape • Sex • Menstruation • Love • Life reflections • Growing up • Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The novel, <i>The Red Tent</i> • Self-image, self-esteem, and self-worth • Makeup and physical appearance • Goddess stories • Physical issues (operations, disease, and cancer)

The focus-groups, talking circles, and general filming were very interactive and showed similarities and differences in women's attitudes and opinions across generational and traditional boundaries. The focus-group interviews were designed to

stimulate conversation amongst the women, which was exactly what I found. I conducted the focus-groups in an informal way and only prompted the women with a few questions. I found this approach to be successful because it encouraged the women to carry on a discussion about a prompted topic, but also allowed them the flexibility to deviate to personal anecdotes. The most common topics that were discussed in focus-groups and also in talking circles were topics like sex, menstruation, parenting, abortion, loss of children, and not having children. I found that younger women tended to talk more about why the Red Tent was needed and their discussions with other women about sex. The focus-groups consisting of women who had children spoke mostly about the experiences with raising children or losing children. The older generations tended to provide life reflection stories and discussions about how their life would have been different if they had a Red Tent at a young age. The focus-groups were organized by the women's life stage, hence, I am not surprised by these results. Many Red Tents have women from all stages of life and thus there are similar conversations, but they are taking place between women from different life stages.

As I mentioned in my methodology section in Chapter 5, the talking circles also proved to be an additional method of documenting women's stories. Similar to the focus group, the talking circle provided a group setting where women could share. The woman hosting the Red Tent often served as the "leader" of group and occasionally prompted questions. These questions often focused on talking about the joys and sorrows of life. While I did not prompt the participant's responses during the talking circle, I did find that my attendance and the presence of my camera equipment encouraged the women

to use their share time to talk about the value of the Red Tent and why it was needed in more communities. As a result, I have hundreds of accounts of why women feel that the Red Tent is important. Some examples include:

Karly A. Griffin, age 27

“If I had the power, I'd put red tents and red temples on every street corner, you know, because that's how much it's needed and how powerful the space is.”

Astrid Grove, age 35

“There's a huge shift happening on the planet. I mean, right now is a turning point, and what happens in this time is going to redefine the -- our lives, and so we're, like, filtering out what works, what doesn't work, and recreating a new paradigm.”

Yonette Fleming (aka Reign), age 53

“Once I walked into that space, I realized that this was something that was really needed, uhm in my excitement it so profoundly affected me.”

This shows me that the perceived need for this film and this study was paramount and that the Red Tent was something that women would like to see grow even bigger.

Table 7.2 Common themes captured from focus-groups and talking circles

Most Common	Common	Not as common
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why the Red Tent is needed • Parenting, abortion, loss of children, or not having children • Loss • Sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menstruation • Love • Life reflections • Growing up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The novel, <i>The Red Tent</i> • Self-image, self-esteem, and self-worth • Makeup and physical appearance • Goddess stories • Physical issues (operations, disease, and cancer)

Two stages of general filming in the Red Tent were captured: (1) the installation and construction process and (2) how women used the finished space. In both circumstances participants were instructed to go about their normal activities. The results from the general filming showed profoundly moving and first-hand stories of women having healing and empowering experiences. The individual, focus-group, and talking circle documentation were all experiences that occurred prior the start of this project. Whereas, the general filming provided me with footage and access to stories that were unfolding in front of the camera. This not only offers my audience the most potent source material, but also the most visually poetic and relatable.

Table 7.3 *Common themes captured from general Red Tent filming*

Most Common	Common	Not as common
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things to do in the Red Tent (bodywork, massage, nail painting, reading, knitting, eating soup, drinking tea, sleeping, resting, meditating) • Self-care and caring for each other • Healing and empowering experiences • Why the Red Tent is needed • Women being physically held • ALisa Starkweather inspiring groups of women • Loss • Performances (dancing and singing) • Laughter and jokes • Having fun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting, loss of children, or not having children • Transition into old age • Sex • Menstruation • Love • Life reflections • Growing up stories • Spoken-word performances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to create a Red Tent • Self-image, self-esteem, and self-worth • Makeup and physical appearance • Goddess stories • Physical issues (operations, disease, and cancer)

Chapter 8:

Conclusions

Things We Don't Talk About: Women's Stories from the Red Tent represents unchartered territory. This study and my film showcase a new tradition that is burgeoning throughout the world. The Red Tent movement is a recent phenomenon, which began in 1998, and escalated in 2006 after Anita Diamant's book, *The Red Tent* became a *New York Times* bestseller and the Red Tent Temple Movement was founded and promoted by Alisa Starkweather. Since 2006, women have established at least 173 Red Tents and Red Tent Temples in their communities.* As shown in the film, women are yearning for shifts in culture and the Red Tent is one example of what some women are doing to change history.

I remind readers that I had been a participant in Red Tents, prior to the start of this study. In the interest of transparency, it is important for the reader to understand that I have unique insights into the Red Tent. I created the film *Things We Don't Talk About* and conducted this study because I believed in the power of the Red Tent movement. My interviews and observations reinforced my assumptions of the Red Tent. I have attempted to address how and why the Red Tent is a unique space that transforms women's lives. Through narrative analysis, I learned that women across the country and from many diverse backgrounds and age groups are having similar experiences. By utilizing the methods of individual and historical background interviews, focus-groups, talking circles, and general Red Tent filming, I was able to demonstrate (in the film) that the Red Tent is an

* This number represents the Red Tents and Red Tent Temples that I compiled and documented in *Red Tent and Red Tent Temple Timeline* in Chapter 2.

transformative space because the audience is able to see several stories that show women empowering themselves.

I became aware of how certain narratives have taken precedence and have chosen to include these stories in the film because they are common and thematic examples of what I found to be true of women's experiences in the Red Tent. Obviously, not every narrative that I collected could be included. Ultimately, I believe that we are only able to learn about the Red Tent from those experiencing the it. It was not enough to simply document the Red Tent through physical descriptions and transcribed interviews; women need to see other women caring for themselves, for others, and to hear these stories. Women needed to *see* other women being empowered by the Red Tent. I believe that I have documented the "lived reality" of women's experience in the Red Tent.

Research Objectives

The goal of this project was two-fold: (1) To create an emotionally engaging, character-driven film that explored the Red Tent and showcased women's experiences in the space. (2) To showcase the research and the history behind the Red Tent movement and the process of filming, producing, and editing the one-hour documentary film, *Things We Don't Talk About: Women's Stories from the Red Tent*. This project examined four main research objectives:

1. To identify the functions of the Red Tent.
2. To document Red Tent narratives.
3. To research and record the history of the Red Tent movement and its roots from the menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions.

4. To uncover the design principles and materials that influence women's experiences within the Red Tent.

This document and my film are a testament to the research objectives outlined above.

Objective #1, to identify the functions of the Red Tent, was presented both in this document and the film. The Red Tent attempts to fulfill a constellation of gendered societal needs:

- Celebrate women
- Provide a space for self-care and caring for other women
- Provide a place where women's voices are heard
- Discuss issues about body image, self-respect, and empowerment
- Promote positive ideals of womanhood for girls
- Educate women about their bodies and their sexuality
- Enable open conversations about menstruation, rape, and infertility
- Create a holistic exchange of information about sexual health, pregnancy, and birthing

Objective #2, to document Red Tent narratives, was showcased exclusively in the film and the process of its production and my results were presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

The most common narratives that I documented were the following:

- What is the Red Tent
- Why is the Red Tent needed
- Things to do in the Red Tent
- Self-care and caring for each other
- Healing and empowering experiences
- Parenting, abortion, loss of children, or not having children
- Loss
- Sex

The narrative arc of the film was organized around the above themes. These common topics showed me that women are using the Red Tent as a space to talk about the “things that we don’t talk about;” as a place to take care of one’s self and of other women; and as an outlet for experiencing healing and/or self-empowerment.

Objective #3, to research and record the history of the Red Tent movement, was presented in the film and this document. A list of Red Tent and Red Tent Temple groups was provided in Chapter 2 and a thorough review of literature on the history of menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions was offered in Chapter 3.

Objective #4, to uncover the design principles and materials that influence women’s experiences in the Red Tent, was addressed only in this document, specifically in Chapter 4.

Research Questions

As mentioned in Chapter 1, my research questions changed once I began documenting the Red Tent phenomenon. The most significant changes to my questions included a focus on the Red Tent as an embodied experience rather than on its relationship to menstruation. I instituted this change because menstruation did not play as significant of a role as I had originally thought. Secondly, I deleted the question about the role the Red Tent play in the broader contemporary American New Age Women’s Spirituality movement because the Red Tent movement has expanded beyond that movement. Lastly, I added a question about how menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions have shaped women’s understanding of the Red Tent. Through the process of my research, I found that many Red Tent participants had varying views as to whether Red Tents, as we see them today, existed

in the past. Many participants assumed that women in the past must have used a Red Tent because of Anita Diamant's book. Hence, I felt that it was important to see what scholarly literature could be found.

In the following paragraphs, I will restate my final research questions and my results. Research question #1 reads:

What can we discern about women's attitudes toward their embodied experience within the Red Tent?

We engage the world through our body and we use it as a tool of understanding. Most women who experience a Red Tent have an embodied experience. However, not all participants are able to articulate the effects. The Red Tent is a place where women interact and we do so with our bodies. There is a very clear sense of body symbolism in the Red Tent, both visually and metaphorically. DeAnna L'am is one participant that I chose to emphasize this point in the film. She stated, "A red tent is a womb-like space for women to sit together in circle and support each other and replenish and renew." The space is meant to symbolize a womb. I argue that women's participation in the Red Tent is an embodied experience for two reasons: (1) Red Tent is a gendered cultural symbol for the womb. All of the materials and the design principles in the space echo this symbol. The space is meant to feel safe, nurturing, and loving. (2) It is a place where women's stories, issues, and bodies are addressed and celebrated. Filming women tell their stories provided me with a first-person viewpoint of how numerous women feel about the Red Tent and how it informed their experiences. Women who associate with the Red Tent are exhibiting social trends of the importance of women's community, life reflection, and self-care.

I knew from my own Red Tent experiences prior to the start of this study that many women feel comfortable and open up to address common personal, cultural, and social issues in this space. I could only speak to my personal beliefs about the function of the space, which is why I felt it was important to investigate how other women saw the roles and functions. Hence, I created research question #2, which reads:

What are the functions of the Red Tent?

- a. How does the Red Tent function as a tool for women's empowerment?
- b. Does the Red Tent affect women's feelings about menstruation and other women's bodily or life experiences?

My project objective #1 and this research question were linked. Hence, this list of Red Tent functions is the same as the list mentioned in objective #1:

- Celebrate women
- Provide a space for self-care and caring for other women
- Provide a place where women's voices are heard
- Discuss issues about body image, self-respect, and empowerment
- Promote positive ideals of womanhood for girls
- Educate women about their bodies and their sexuality
- Enable open conversations about menstruation, rape, and infertility
- Create a holistic exchange of information about sexual health, pregnancy, and birthing

The Red Tent functions as a tool for women's empowerment because it provides a safe, woman-only space where women can step away from their daily lives and reflect on and often heal their personal issues. The space also provides women a place to express their opinions and share their stories about life, love, pain, joy, children, etc. in a non-judgmental atmosphere.

As it is represented in the film, self-care is an important function of the Red Tent. Self-care takes many forms and hosts often create different areas within the space where women can do a variety of self-care tasks. These include: crying, singing, dancing, body massages, engaging in face and body painting, telling stories, sleeping, meditating, journaling, sharing poetry, creating artwork, and knitting. Depending on the number of women in the space, these nurturing activities fluctuate between self-care and group-care. Moreover, they serve as a catalyst for conversations among women. As a place to stop and rest, the Red Tent allows women to step outside of their daily activities and helps them acknowledge their part in the cyclical process that is womanhood.

Part B of this question asked, "Does the Red Tent affect women's feelings about menstruation and other women's bodily or life experiences?" The Red Tent most definitely affects the feelings of women, regardless of whether it is about menstruation or other bodily or life experiences. These feelings are evocatively expressed in the film. While this part is more of a yes or no question, I believe that the Red Tent affects women's feeling because it gives them a unique group opportunity to express and reflect on them. One of the most profound examples of this was Ellen Santos' story. As documented in the film, Ellen's story showed how a woman who had not intention of speaking while she was in the Red Tent could experience profound transformations. This example clearly shows that women's feelings can change as the result of their Red Tent experience. And as for the "why" did this happen, I would argue that women's feelings are affected because the Red Tent is bringing together women leaders from numerous walks of life who are tremendously gifted and are able to aid women's empowerment.

Research question #3 was the primary question that intrigued me prior to undertaking this project and ended up being the foundation for the entire film. The question reads:

Do women who have experienced the Red Tent have stories about healing and/or empowerment? What are they?

Many women who go through or witness profound experiences in the Red Tent are deeply moved. Examples of this include numerous stories that are presented in the chapter of the film titled "Things We Talk About." The examples included: having three children under three years of age, living life as an infertile woman and the pain that comes along with that, choosing to not have children and regretting it later in life, discussing issues of aging, and experiencing rape and the process of healing with the help of the women in the Red Tent. The interview with Lushanya Echeverria illustrated that well. She explained that she avoided the Red Tent Temple for years. Walking into a place where it was all red brought her back to that trauma, but over time she was able to overcome this. By listening to the stories of the other women, she found it less frightening. In this example, it is the women in the Red Tent that helped her heal rather than the space itself. This story represents one of many deeply moving stories that were documented in the film.

Things We Don't Talk About documents the stories of women reclaiming their sacredness and their truth. The film chronicles the voices of the Red Tent movement that are sweeping the world. The film shows Red Tents around the nation gifting women with an opportunity to remember, to listen, to know, and to discover what needs to be brought to our communities to help reawaken women's voices. There is a contemporary need for

sisterhood in American culture and a place for fellowship; the Red Tent as a gendered space provides a place for kinship among women. Many women don't even realize what the Red Tent can do for them until they have experienced it. The Red Tent brings women together to give them a sense of personal empowerment by nourishing their desire to find strength from the group, rather than power over another.

The Red Tent is both a gendered space and sacred space. The spatial components of shape, light, color, and textiles modify and complement the Red Tent space and create an effect that triggers and supports connection and that adds to the holistic experience of the space. Research question #4 examined these roles. The question reads:

What role does the design and materiality (color, light, use of textiles, shapes of the created space) of the Red Tent play in its function as a healing (or other) space?

The Red Tent's symbolism and its mission as a nurturing and empowering place are more significant than its specific aesthetics. However by examining the components of the space, I saw how the spiritual dimension was clearly expressed and how it differed from secular spaces. The two most important design elements that I explored in the Red Tent were the use of textiles and the color red.

I used the following categories to explore the roles that textiles play in the Red Tent: textiles as a delineator of sacred space, as a spiritual textile production practice, as a metaphor for embodiment, and as ritual clothing. As my film documents, the textiles in the Red Tent literally form the space and thus create the sacred environment. The fabrics meld together to create a distinctly feminine appearance: soft, smooth, and luscious. I also

showed that creating a Red Tent was a form of sacred textile production. While the women who are building Red Tents are not creating the actual fabrics, many women from my interviews described the process of installing a Red Tent as meditative and healing. There is also an obvious connection to the flowing, draping qualities of fabric that associate it with the womb; hence the pleasing tactility of the fabrics was one of the primary sensory methods that produced an embodied experience for the participants. Last but not least, I established that numerous women in the Red Tent wear red clothing, which I argued was a form of ritual dress that also symbolizes that women *are* the Red Tents. Furthermore, wearing red garments not only created a liminal space, as an embodied representation of a Red Tent, but also as a metaphor for the sacredness of women and their life-giving and menstrual forces.

The second design principle that was examined in this study was the color red. Exploring the history of the color was very important to this study because it laid the groundwork for understanding the Red Tent. Red has played a role in nearly every culture in every period of history. I argued that much of the history of red was wrapped up in its function as a symbol of power—spiritual, economic, social, and sexual. In the Red Tent we also see red as an emblem for power, but it is understood as a representation for self-empowerment, rather than power over others. Furthermore, the color serves as a visual reminder of the creative and nurturing power of women with our ability to produce life.

My final research question, #5 was closely tied to one of my research and film objectives, which was to study and record the history of the Red Tent movement. The research question reads,

Is the Red Tent based in historical practice or is it an invented tradition?

How have menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions shaped women's understanding of the Red Tent?

A thorough analysis of menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions was essential to this project because it showed that the Red Tent was not completely an invented tradition. This research question was not included in my dissertation proposal, but once I began conducting interviews, I came to realize that women have varying ideas about the history of the Red Tent movement and if spaces like it existed in the past. Because of Anita Diamant's book, many participants assumed that the tradition dated to biblical times and was based in the Near East. Furthermore, many Red Tent participants believed that the contemporary practice was one of "reclaiming." In actuality, there is no Red Tent in history as it exists today, but the Red Tent is not a completely new idea. There are menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions all over the world and to this day are still practices in certain cultures. However, the majority of the menstrual hut and moon lodge traditions come from the continents of North and South America and the islands in the Pacific Ocean. Many Red Tent participants are vaguely aware of this historical information. My review of literature showed varying viewpoints of the roles and purposes of menstrual huts. Much of the menstrual hut literature of the 1960's was conducted by men and provided us with a quantitative and simplistic analysis of menstrual huts, whereas, the literature of the next few decades performed by women took a more qualitative approach. Many Red Tent participants are not aware of this early literature or the male bias. However, women do

suspect that there were woman-only menstruation spaces from the past and this idea fuels their desire for gendered spaces that empower women in our contemporary world.

Implications for Further Study

This project was not a comprehensive view of the Red Tent, but rather a specific viewpoint of the movement, using a documentary film as a major research method. I was a participant in Red Tents before I began this project. Therefore, my insider's perspective was biased in favor of offering more women the opportunity to experience the Red Tent and to present those who already participate a new window through which to think about what it means to be a woman who participates in a Red Tent.

This study could be expanded to include documentation of women's experiences from Red Tents and Red Tent Temple throughout the world. There are several Red Tents in the United Kingdom and Australia. This study focused on twelve American Red Tents, but I did receive a great deal of support from the Red Tents abroad, including financial donations and photographs. Some of the photographs were included in the film. This approach could yield a wider viewpoint of this tradition as an international phenomenon and could serve as a comparable model to the stories collected in this study. It would be interesting to examine how the Red Tent began in these countries. Have American Red Tents influenced these Red Tents or have they developed independently or in a parallel fashion as the result of Anita Diamant's book? Additionally questions, such as "are foreign Red Tents modern-day menstrual huts?" and "how do the spaces compare visually?" would be engaging future studies.

While my research on women's experiences in the Red Tent focused exclusively on the actual Red Tent spaces, it is also significant to point out that the Internet has played a critical role in making this a "movement." The Facebook Red Tent groups and pages, as well as Red Tent blogs and other websites, have provided an additional level of social exchange because they provide women a place to continue their Red Tent experiences in a virtual space. Moreover, these online spaces also bring the Red Tent experiences to women that do not have access to a local Red Tent. It would be interesting to explore how the virtual Red Tents are creating similar experiences to these in Red Tents.

Another interesting exploration would be an ethnographic comparison between stories from menstrual huts to those from Red Tents. The descriptions and functions of the menstrual huts in northern Pakistan as featured by Wynne Maggi in *Our Women Are Free* (2001) reads like a Red Tent experience. With a more feminist approach, it would be interesting to explore this further. It could also be valuable to examine women's embodied experiences in menstrual huts and how the spaces potentially serve as liminal spaces. There is very little literature on the Native American moon lodge tradition, but through oral history accounts I do know that women were meant to use their time in the moon lodge to do spiritual work. I would like to see a comprehensive study on moon lodges.

Yet another potential topic that could be explored are the effects of being in red spaces in general. As I have outlined in my review of literature about the color red, it has a long history, but I was not able to find cohesive studies about red spaces. My final suggestion for further study is exploring group self-care spaces in American culture. This could be anything from businesses, to girl's nights, to grassroots movements, like the Red

Tent. I believe that the phrase “self-care” is a gendered idea. It is something that only women seem to do, but I question why. Such an investigation could have been extremely useful to this exploration.

The purpose of this dissertation was to present an undocumented tradition, the Red Tent, and to make a contribution to the body of knowledge about this social phenomenon that is changing our world. It is important to examine our history as it unfolds because the Red Tent represents a paradigm shift in our culture. I hope that this document and my film *Things We Don't Talk About: Women's Stories from the Red Tent* expands the reach of the Red Tent movement. I also hope that this study adds to the growing body of research on women's issues, helps to redirect our gaze to overlooked topics, and offers women the recognition they deserve as providers of historical scholarship.

APPENDICES

Appendix #1: Film Script

Things We Don't Talk About

01:00:00:00

Chapter 1

Visual: Slow fade in to a title screen

B&W title screen: *What do you think of when you hear the words "red tent"?*

Audio: none

Visual: slow fade in to opening credit ***A Soulful Media production***

Audio: Phily_tape3_15: women laughing... *I can't lie. I just am who I am.*

Audio: Hub_RTT_aftercircle_3" women laughing and talking in a crowd

Visual: Slow zoom out on the title ***Things We Don't Talk About***. Elegant transition to include subtitle: ***Women's Voices from the Red Tent***. Subtitle fades out. Fade in: ***a film by Isadora Gabrielle Leidenfrost***

Audio: women laughing and talking

Audio: Alisa_RTT-tape7_9: Woman 1: *I am just feeling it more and more. That the women of the world are gathering.*

Group says: *I say sing it.*

Woman 1: *Yeah? It evokes that getting up.*

01:00:38:02

Visual: Title credits fade out

Audio: Woman 1 begins to sing "Women of the world are gathering" and the other ladies join in.

Visual: Slow fade in on red tent entrance. A woman enters the space. Cut to shot of women singing the song in the red tent.

Lower third: Baldwinville, MA

Audio: "Women of the world are gathering" song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Northeast, PA

Audio: "Women of the world are gathering" song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Northeast PA

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Tom’s River, NJ

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent on a beach

Lower third: Santa Cruz, CA

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Syracuse, NY

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Sebastopol, CA

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Salem, MA

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Bethesda, MD

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: women in red tent

Lower third: Baldwinville, MA

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Philadelphia, PA

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Baldwinville, MA

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Glassboro, NJ

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Grafton, MA

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Baldwinville, MA

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Shutesbury, MA

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Baldwinville, MA

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Women in red tent

Lower third: Yellow Springs, OH

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Two shots of 2 women in red tent. Cut back to Baldwinville, MA red tent where women are singing (finale). Fade out.

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song

Visual: Slow fade in to a title screen saying

B&W title screen: *Women have always gathered together.*

Audio: “Women of the world are gathering” song fades out

Visual: Two photos of the filmmaker in a red tent and filming

Filmmaker: I made this film because I’d been a participant in red tents for many years and I have seen how it’s transforming women’s lives. I am making the film because I believe in the power of the red tent movement and I believe in its ability to really influence a lot of women.

01:03:02:00

Chapter 2

Visual: Chapter title screen *Belly dancers*

Lower third: Red Tents

Visual: Tilt on red tent photo and cut to other red tents

Narration: The red tent is a contemporary tradition of red fabric, tent-like spaces where women gather to rest and to share the stories of their lives.

Short musical break

Visual: Red tent b-roll then cut to interview with lower third

Lower third: Astrid Grove, Northeast PA

Audio: *Astrid_Grove_interview13: ...things are simultaneously happening. You know, there's singing over here, there's crying over here, there's sleeping over here, there's laughing over here, there's cuddling over here, massages going on over here, so all of these things are happening at the same time, self-care and caring for each other.*

Visual: ALisa talking to a group of women. Cut to aerial shot of women stepping out.

Audio: *B&W_tape1_2: ... Now I know some of you have never probably been in anything, totally . . . remotely like this. And some of you this is like home. Where's the furniture, where's the couch?*

(Laughter)

ALisa: So if you are really new at this new at this. If you could just come right out so we can see you and hold you tenderly.

(Clapping)

Visual: Women in red tents

Audio: *ALisa Starkweather 16: ...the red tent temple allows us to see that collectively. We're not alone.*

Visual: Red tents cut to interview with lower third

Lower third: DeAnna L'am, Founder, Red Tents in Every Neighborhood

Audio: *DeAnna_Lam_interview: A red tent is a womb-like space for women to sit together in circle and support each other and replenish and renew*

Visual: Women entering the Red Tent

Audio: *Natalie_Johnsen: . . . it's the place where we are able to check our titles outside and come in as just women.*

Visual: Red tent entrance with a sign that says "Red Tent" then cut to interview shot with lower third

Lower Third: Jamie Waggoner, Northeast, PA

Audio: *Jamie_waggoner_3-3: I think because the red textiles are there in the red temple that you're immediately brought into the energy.... Even those who might be a little closed off when they enter or a little uncomfortable are confronted with it.*

Visual: Red tent installation shots

Audio: *Astrid_Grove_interview5: ...we can feel the stories of the women in the fabric. ... We hang the fabric, and we're held by all that has already happened in the space over the previous years, so it's like this -- this fabric has a story to tell.*

Visual: Red Tent wide shot

Narration: Fabric as a material is inviting and has a feminine energy. The color red also has many womanly qualities.

Visual: Red tents

Narration: This film showcases numerous red tents and red tent temples throughout the United States.

Visual: Red tents

Narration: The Red Tent is many things to many people— it is a womb-like red fabric space, it is a place where women gather, it is an icon, and it is a state of mind.

Break

The concepts were all inspired by Anita Diamant's book, *The Red Tent*. Some women create red fabric spaces to specifically honor their menstruation. Others create spaces where they can specifically honor and take care of themselves, promote women's conversations, or hold workshops and other events for women.

Break

The Red Tent Temple is a grassroots movement founded by ALisa Starkweather to further expand the notion that this is a place where women gather to honor all stages of womanhood.

Break

Some spaces are therefore Red Tent Temples, but they have many similar functions as other Red Tents, and many participants use the terms Red Tent and Red Tent Temple interchangeably. I will refer to both spaces simply as the Red Tent.

Short musical break

01:06:23:01

Visual: Red tents

Narration: This film documents some of the stories that women often hide. It shows how the red tent is providing this unique space for healing.

Visual: Interview setting with lower third

Lower Third: Doreen Bryant, Tom's River, NJ

Audio: Doreen_interview1: *...I think for women to connect with other women is the most important thing, and by doing that, they may discover things about themselves that they didn't know.*

Visual: Red tents. Cut to interview setting with lower third

Lower Third: Natalie Johnsen, Salem, MA

Audio: Natalie_Johnsen_14: . . . *The Red Tent is a do-over switch, it's the reset button.... when you leave the Red Tent, you're -- for a moment or a month or for the rest of your life, you're the woman that you want to be.*

Visual: Red tents

Narration: Red Tents are often held on a monthly basis, however they also take place at numerous annual women's festivals and events throughout the world.

Visual: Interview setting with lower third

Lower Third: Doreen Bryant, Tom's River, NJ

Audio: Doreen_interview: *The red tent here at spirit of women gathering is a place where the women can go with -- whatever age they are -- and talk about things that they may not have been comfortable talking about in a different place.*

Visual: Red tents fade out to next chapter

01:07:34:13

Chapter 3

Visual: Chapter title screen *Belly dancers*

Lower third: How did the red tent start?

Visual: Zoom out on "The Red Tent" book cover

Narration: The Red Tent is a phenomenon and a movement that is unique to women and was inspired by the novel *The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant, published in 1997. The Red Tent became a New York Times bestseller in 2001 and by 2011 it had sold more than 3 million copies and had been published in 20 different languages.

Visual: Tilt on stack of books, then cut to interview shot

Lower Third: DeAnna L'am, Founder, Red Tents in Every Neighborhood

Audio: DeAnna_Lam_interview11: *Women who read The Red Tent resonate with it, and I've heard so many women say, oh, The Red Tent was the best book I've ever read. It changed my life.... It kind of caught women's consciousness by fire. And what that tells me is that reading that book; women remembered that this is sacred.... It shifts women from isolation from thinking that they're the only ones who experience what they experience. It empowers them to realize that, yes, they do need to take time off, and this is what their body needs and what their psyche needs and what their spirit needs and their soul needs.*

Visual: Wide pan on Womongathering Red Tent, cut back to interview setting

Lower third: Eliza Martin Simpson, Northeast, PA

Audio: WG-teens-interview1: *...the first time I came to the Red Tent here, at women gathering, um, that was just like the culmination that was the real embodiment of everything that I'd imagined when I'd read the book. And -- and, you know, then*

obsessed and kind of incensed by reading the book. So it was really like walking into my imagination.

Visual: Slow fade in to a title screen

B&W title screen: *What preceded the modern red tent practice?*

01:09:28:17

Chapter 4

Visual: Chapter title screen *Belly dancers*

Lower third: Menstrual huts & moon lodges

Visual: Menstrual hut animation

Narration: A red tent is not a new idea. Historically and to this day, there are menstrual huts all over the world that have brought women together.

Visual: Interview setting with lower third, cut away to menstrual huts

Lower Third: Anita Diamant, Author, "The Red Tent"

Audio: Anita_diamant_3: *"The Red Tent" is my vision of a menstrual tent, a menstrual hut... I have to say, I invented that vision of the Red Tent that appears in the novel... there are menstrual tents and menstrual huts all over pre-modern civilizations, all over the world. The ones that we know a little bit more about -- the ones that still exist, for example, in Africa -- are not so nice. They are, in fact, places of banishment, and seem like places of punishment.*

Visual: Images of pre-modern menstrual huts

Narration: Unlike the menstrual huts from Africa, many Native American women honor their menstruation by congregating in a moon lodge, which offers a positive experience.

Visual: Interview setting

Lower Third: Beverly Little Thunder, Northeast, PA

Audio: Beverly_little_thunder_interview: *...a moon lodge is where women go when they are having their menstrual cycle.*

Visual: Moon lodge with cut to interview setting with lower third

Lower Third: Beverly Little Thunder, Northeast, PA

Audio: Beverly_little_thunder_interview2: *So traditionally, we didn't have sanitary pads or all of those things, and so women would use moss as an absorbent material, and so a lot of times they just sat on the ground.*

Visual: Moon lodge with cut to interview setting with lower third

Lower Third: Beverly Little Thunder, Northeast, PA

Audio: Beverly_little_thunder_interview: *...In the Lakota tradition, women were*

primarily responsible for a lot of things in the camp, but it was the one time of the month when they had, um, a vacation... So women generally looked forward to going into the moon lodge.

Visual: Interview setting with lower third

Lower third: Susan Weed, Moon lodge, Saugerties, NY

Audio: Susan-weed_2-1: *Many, many women have taken this out and are creating their own moon lodges.*

Visual: Red tent

Audio: Susan-weed_3: *The red tent movement, to me, grew out of the moon lodge movement.*

Visual: Interview setting with lower third

Lower third: Susan Weed, Moon lodge, Saugerties, NY

Audio: Susan-weed_4: *I believe that the moon lodge or the red tent, whatever you want to call it, lives inside of every woman. Because the red tent or the moon lodge is the uterus.*

01:11:32:09

Visual: Interview setting cut to red tent

Lower Third Title: ALisa Starkweather, Founder, Red Tent Temple Movement

Audio: Alisa_starkweather_5: *...So for me, the Red Tent Temple means a place, both inside of our own self and as our being as a women and that of a place in our culture that we're rebuilding and remaking and reinventing for ourselves.*

Visual: Interview setting cut to red tents

Lower Third: Rowan Flamm, Northeast, PA

Audio: rowan_interview5 2: *...I think a lot of women's spirituality is being recreated. There's very little hard and fast historical documents, historical proof of what we used to do. ... I think a lot of the women spirituality movement is reclaiming what we've lost. And the Red Tent is part of that reclaiming.... Is it the same as it was prehistory? No. We don't know for sure what that was. But we can take what we do know, and apply it to our modern life.*

Visual: Slow fade in to a title screen saying

B&W title screen: *How would our world be different if more women could have a red tent?*

01:12:39:10

Chapter 5

Visual: Chapter title screen *Belly dancers*

Lower third: Who goes to a red tent?

Visual: Women in red tents

Narration: Red Tent use a variety of platforms in their communities. However, many are sustained by loving donations.

Visual: corkboard office tiles

Narration: Sometimes it seems like we have nothing in common, But it is important to know that women from all walks of life participating in red tents and are bringing their gifts and dedicating their time and energy to creating these spaces.

01:13:09:00

Visual: Animation of women's photos on a corkboard

Narration: Here are some of the women in this film and what they do in their daily lives.

Visual: Women in red tents

Audio: *Alisa_starkweather_1: My dream of it is that the Red Tent Temple can be for all women everywhere. All beliefs, all different kinds of journeys. All different kinds of class journeys, skin journeys, religion journeys.*

Visual: Red tents

Audio: *rowan_interview5 3: ...it's fine if you don't share these attitudes and beliefs. You can come and have your space too.*

Visual: Women in a red tent

Audio: *Hub_RTT_circle_5: My name is Laney. And once upon a time I did not think that there was a place for me at the red tent.*

Musical break

Visual: ALisa talking in the red tent

Narration: ALisa Starkweather had a vision that many women needed a red tent. Which is why she founded the Red Tent Temple Movement in November 2006.

01:14:29:18

Visual: Women in red tents cutaway from interview setting

Audio: *ALisa Starkweather 16: ... I've always been a great advocate that vulnerability and transparency is our strength. It's not hiding. It's not covering up. ...It's a messy place to be who we really are and to let it be...and it's difficult to expose oneself. But it's worth it because it's our humanity. And every single part of our humanity, every part, not the parts that we think are going to be the parts that other people are gonna*

admire or respect or love, but every part of our being because every being has all of it, the anger, the suffering, the grief, the fear, the terror. ...And we -- we are rising in that -- in that experience of no longer being ashamed, no longer marginalizing, no -- no longer allowing ourselves to take ourselves down from the inside. And we're asking each other not to take each other down by the relationships that we're forming.

Visual: Women in red tents

Audio: Alisa_starkweather9: *...we're all taking responsibility for co-creating that experience, that no one needs to be in -- in charge. I don't need to be in charge. I simply show up and have the gift of watching it unfold.*

01:16:14:02

Visual: Interview setting with lower third

Lower Third: Wendy Lyons, Pittsfield, MA

Audio: Wendy: *I never ventured out of my town. And I got in my car and said I am going to Red Tent.*

Visual: Wendy in red tent

Audio: Berkshire_tape1_5&6: *...And I'm finding more and more that I feel like a woman and I'm feeling more like Wendy and it's because of red tent.*

Visual: Wendy in red tent

Audio: Berkshire_tape1_5&6: *Well, I've been coming to Red Tent now three months and, uh, since I've started coming I've been ...finding out who Wendy is.*

Visual: Wendy in red tent

Audio: ALisa-3-wishe3_1: *before I came to you, my life was dark. And now it is full of light and beauty. And I am wearing color. I never wore color. I never wore beautiful clothes. I felt disgusted about myself. Ah, didn't want to look in a mirror. But now, I am beautiful, I am amazing. I'm awesome because of what you've done and brought Red Tent to my community.*

Visual: Slow fade in to a title screen

B&W title screen: *What makes you feel beautiful?*

Chapter 6

Visual: Chapter title screen *Belly dancers*

Lower third: Self Care

Narration: One of the most important characteristics of the red tent is that it provides a comfortable space that promotes self-care and support for one another.

Visual: Interview setting with lower third cut to women sleeping in a red tent

Lower third: Peyta, Ashland, OR

Audio: Peta_interview3: *...I know a lot of us feel that it's really difficult for us to try and incorporate in our life when we're working jobs and raising children and just doing, doing, doing, but if we don't take the time to be and stop doing for a little while, ...all the doing's really not going to be worth very much.*

Musical break

Visual: Images of women doing self-care and caring for each other

Music: "Red Tent Temple" by Mother Turtle

Visual: Woman talking

Audio: Glassboro_tape2_21: *...I just spoke to my mother today about her generation -- there was three generations in the room -- of women and I said, you know, did you get to recharge your batteries? Did you get to find your space and -- and come home to seven kids and say, "ah, I'm here, welcome." You know, "give me hugs." you know. But no, for that generation it was barefoot and pregnant and you did nothing for yourself and, um, you were there to serve and, um, you know, there wasn't this, you know, maybe once a month I get out and do this. What we get to do and you come home and you feel a better person. I feel a better person when I come here.*

Music: "Red Tent Temple" by Mother Turtle

Musical break

Visual: Images of women doing self-care and caring for each other

Music: "Red Tent Temple" by Mother Turtle

Visual: Woman talking cutaway to women in red tents

Audio: Santa_cruz_red_tent16: *I'm redefining...my personal definition of self-care. It's something that I'm always working on with myself. And, um, and I -- in some ways I feel like in the past I've defined it as like doing yoga and going for walks and, you know, getting enough sleep and eating well and doing all the things I know to take care of myself in that kind of a way, um. And the evolution of what -- what I'm realizing is that it also has a lot to do with -- oh, and the other piece is that it means doing less, because I'm the person that tends to do a lot, and so I've created this story that, well, I must not be taking good care of myself because I do too much and, uh. And what I'm realizing is that it doesn't have to do with how much I'm doing, it's -- more has to do with, um, the energy with what -- the energy with which I'm doing what I'm doing.*

Music: "Red Tent Temple" by Mother Turtle

Visual: Young girl walking into red tent to hug her mom

Audio: Bethesda_RT-tape1_14: *Hi Sweetie.... How did you know I needed that?*

Music: "Red Tent Temple" by Mother Turtle

Visual: Images of women doing self-care and caring for each other

Audio: B&W_tape2_8: *...the more I listened to my voice of my own pleasure . . . the happier I am. The more joyful I am. And then everyone wants to be around me and everyone else feels joyful and happy. Because as women we radiate. When we open and we shine that light out it makes everyone around us feel good.*

Music: "Red Tent Temple" by Mother Turtle

Musical break

Visual: Images of women doing self-care and caring for each other

Music: "Red Tent Temple" by Mother Turtle

01:22:59:24

Visual: Interview setting with cut away to red tents

Lower third: Yonette Fleming, Brooklyn, NY

Audio: Reign_interview_1: *...We have lost a lot of these traditions and in losing that ahh we have lost apart of ourselves.*

Visual: Interview setting with cut away to red tents

Lower third: Yonette Fleming, Brooklyn, NY

Audio: Reign_interview_6: *We need red tents so that women can know their power. ...We need red tents so that women can discharge the shadows. We need red tents so that women can express. We need red tents so that women can be alone and listen and be around each other.*

Visual: Interview setting with lower third cut away to red tents

Lower Third: Jasmin Starchild, Red Moon Menstrual Medicine Movement

Audio: Jasmin_interview7: *What can we do to make this world a better place? This is not one thing. It's not because women want to become more powerful. What happens is, when we get healthy everyone gets healthy. ...When the women go into the red tent it leaves the men together as well so it creates a sisterhood and a brotherhood.*

Visual: Interview setting with cut away to red tents

Lower third: Sayra Pinto & Nicole Oxendine, Bethesda, MD

Audio: Nicole_sayra_interview4: *... And so I don't know that Red Tent is the way, is the only way to do it or that because of Red Tent it will happen, but it's one of those few places in our society where women are coming together just to be.*

Visual: Slow fade in to a title screen

B&W title screen: *Is being in a community like this important to you?*

01:24:14:07

Chapter 7

Visual: Chapter title screen *Belly dancers*

Lower third: Where are red tents?

Visual: Interview setting, cut away to red tents

Audio: Beverly_little_thunder_interview11: *...I as an elder am really, really happy to see this red tent movement, as some people call it, emerging in such a vast area.*

Visual: Animated map with cutaways to red tents

Music: "Ancestors" by Kelliana

Visual: Animated pile of newspapers, journals, and books.

Music: "Ancestors" by Kelliana

01:26:05:21

Chapter 8

Visual: Chapter title screen *Belly dancers*

Lower third: Women's Circles

Narration: Many of the stories in this film took place in a talking circle.

Visual: Women in red tents

Audio: Jamie_waggoner_3-2: *...It just has to be women sitting in circle and holding each other sacred and being willing to listen without speaking or trying to fix anything, just listening to other women speak their truth and to speaking -- speak from their own place of truth.*

Visual: Women in red tents

Audio: Natalie_Johnsen_16: *...in the Red Tent we share those shameful sort of stories that, sometimes they're funny and sometimes they're embarrassing, but in the Red Tent we can share them without shame.*

Visual: Women in red tents

Audio: Kieko_Zoll4: *...they can talk about how dirty or ugly the experience was and know that they aren't going to be judged for it but though don't need to be ashamed at the very least and that's it's heard and that it's received.*

Visual: Woman talking

Audio: Hub-RTT-tape1_12: *...If you want to share, then you hold this, and the most important thing is the listening. So the person holding this has the honor of speaking her truth, and the women listening, your job is so powerful. You're focused on her. You're giving her all your energy.*

Visual: Women sitting in circle at the beach red tent with long red scarf

Audio: Susan-weed_2-1: *We call it the talking stick, but in fact it is a long red scarf.*

Visual: Interview setting with lower third cutaway to circle shot

Lower third: Susan Weed, Moon lodge, Saugerties NY

Audio: Susan-weed_2-1: *We pass that. We sit in age order. WE start with the oldest. The oldest speaks for as long as she wants. Then she passes the talking stick to the next women. And it goes all the way around to the youngest woman. Who of course is sitting next to the oldest women. And in this way we can hear from other women.*

Visual: 3 young girls sitting on their parent's laps in a red tent. One girl is talking.

Audio: Nicole_kids: *...I like the, the circles a lot because we get to like say just anything like how we feel and why we came and stuff like that.*

Visual: Slow fade in to a title screen saying

B&W title screen: *At the beginning of the film, did the words "red tent" only make you think of menstruation?*

Audio:

01:28:16:04

Chapter 9

Visual: Chapter title screen *Belly dancers*

Lower third: *Menstrual Stories*

Narration: Menstruation is often a common theme that spontaneously comes up in women's conversations; however, the red tent is not exclusively a menstruation space, as it is portrayed in Anita Diamant's book, although there are some women who do hold the red tent tradition this way.

Visual: Women in a red tent circle

Audio: DeAnna_Lam_interview4: *...I realized it was time to call other women,*
DeAnna_Lam_interview5: *Every woman there sat in circles -- many times in women's circles and told the story of definitely how she lost her virginity and, again, stories of rape and stories of molestation, of recovery and of triumph, and through all of that, the story of the blood was silent.*

Pause

DeAnna_Lam_interview4: *...and all we did was tell the stories of our first blood. And we were all, including me, blown away by the depth of the sharing, by the fact that that story was silent in most women, that hardly any woman present ever told the story before, and by the bonding that that provided.*

Visual: Women walking into a red tent

Audio: ALisa Starkweather 11: *...people ask, can I come in the red tent temple -- I -- I -- if I'm not bleeding anymore? Of course you can. You can come into the red tent temple if you are -- don't -- no longer have a womb because the stories of that are essential to be told, all of the stories.*

Visual: Women in a red tent cut to interview setting with lower third

Lower Third: DeAnna L'am, Founder, Red Tents in Every Neighborhood

Audio: DeAnna_Lam_interview5: *...regardless of the culture we grew up in or the religion or the belief system or the geographical location we are on Earth, and regardless of the fact that the details of our stories were different, that something resonated for each and every woman with each and every story. We could recognize ourselves in each other's stories.*

Visual: Tilt on the cross-section diagram cut to women talking; cut to teenagers, cut to animation of girl drowning in red wave.

Audio: Hub-RTT-tape1_7: *...I got a problem with that cross-section in the Tampax box.*
 Woman #?: *Mmm.*

Woman 1: *That's not what it looks like, I got a mirror and I looked!*

Multiple women: *...laughter...*

Woman 1: *Where is the hole?*

Multiple women: *...laughter...*

Woman 1: *I mean I've literally made several trips to the downtown drugstore looking for how can I get that thing in? And which hole is it, I don't know, I only see two, am I missing my urinary tract?*

Multiple women: *...laughter...*

Woman 1: *Find that hole, ok? It's all, I'm telling you! These are secrets we don't need to keep anymore. Let's save our daughters the suffering of this mystery where I, and I hear sad stories of little girls trying to hide the blood, or the [gasp], I'm dying, you know; cause nobody's told them, nobody's told them.*

Visual: Wide pan of women talking in a large red tent

Audio: Alisa_RTT_tape9_14: *...Instead of somebody saying, get rid of your period, you don't need it, go ahead and have a hysterectomy, in the women's red tent temple we will say there's other options.*

Visual: Women in red tent cut to interview setting with lower third

Lower third: Leonore Tjia, Northeast, PA

Audio: SWG-teens-interview15: *It's interesting to me how -- how strong the menstrual taboo is in our society...there's still this lowered voice when it comes to, "do you have tampon?"*

Visual: Interview setting with lower third cut away old footage & quest ad

Lower third: Beverly Little Thunder, Northeast, PA

Audio: Beverly_little_thunder_interview10: *...My mother gave me a note to take to the grocery store, and it was for a box of sanitary pads, a sanitary belt, and a can of Quest. And Quest was a deodorant powder that you sprinkled on the pad so there would be no foul odor, and so my earliest message is -- was that this is dirty.*

Visual: Interview setting with lower third

Lower third: Yonette Fleming, Brooklyn, NY

Audio: Reign_interview_5:.... *my first experience of menstruation was of my brother saying " Ill you are dirty". And so that stain, that feeling, that when I am in my blood, I am dirty. So, I am not unique. Women carry these stories in their heart and in their being.*

Visual: Washing hands zoom out

Audio: Sebastapol_tape1_8: *I wash away any, any residues I might have around sense of my blood being unclean. I wash away any anger towards my mom realizing how much she was not welcomed when she came of age.*

Visual: Interview setting

Audio: DeAnna_Lam_interview7: *...when we symbolically wash away, we really actively let go of all the messages or the negativity that we store in our body and in our consciousness from that experience.*

Musical break

Music: "Sacredness" by Shylah Ray Sunshine

Visual: Slow fade in to a title screen saying

B&W title screen: *What would you talk about if you were in a red tent?*

Music: "Sacredness" by Shylah Ray Sunshine continues

01:33:17:06

Chapter 10

Visual: Chapter title screen *Belly dancers*

Lower third: *Things we talk about*

Music: "Sacredness" by Shylah Ray Sunshine continues

Visual: Women in red tents

Narration: All women have stories to tell. Some women have stories about having children or not having children. Other women have stories about experiencing overwhelming sorrow or violence. Women often see themselves differently in each generation and it is helpful for us to talk about these life transitions.

01:33:37:13

Visual: Woman talking

Audio: Arlington_RT_last_tape_1: *...I don't think there's anything other than having three children under three that would force me to accept the level of help that I've, ya know, had to be willing to, to allow in.*

Visual: Women gathering around the woman

Audio: Arlington_RT_last_tape_6: *...So this is one of those moments where we may not know how to love somebody that we don't know that well. Maybe you do know Amanda that well, but just, what do you know as a woman, you would want as a woman. Give it to Amanda.*

Visual: Women in red tent

Audio: Jamie_waggoner_3-5: *In the red tent, women discuss, uh, fertility issues. They discuss infertility issues. They discuss, uh, questions about sexuality.*

01:34:25:21

Visual: Interview setting with lower third

Lower third: Keiko Zoll, Salem, MA

Audio: Kieko_Zoll: *...I sat in the doctor's office and he basically said to me your best chances are IVF or adoption. But you won't be able to have your own children.*

Visual: Shot of woman breastfeeding in the red tent

Audio: Kieko_Zoll: *... I began my healing through the red tent.*

Visual: Keiko in the red tent

Audio: Kieko_Zoll: *...I was reconciling my own sense of identity and who I was as a woman and who could I be as a mother in the future.*

Visual: Keiko laughing in the red tent

Audio: Kieko_Zoll2: *...it allows me to connect in a way that I feel like I have lost so significantly and my own personal idea of womanhood.*

Break

01:34:59:25

Visual: Interviewing setting with cutaway to "heart to heart" quote pillow

Audio: Maryann_interview: *...I had never given birth. And didn't know that fullness that probably many, many women feel. And I just sat with that for a while. And then I thought of, um, what many people tell you when you say you don't have children is "well, you give birth to many other things." And so I use that to comfort myself.*

Visual: Women in the red tent

Audio: Jamie_waggoner_3-5: *...women talk about things that are painful to them. They share -- um, moments of gratitude. They talk to each other about how beautiful one another are. They compliment each other. They tell stories about giving birth to children or to projects or to things that are important to them.*

Visual: Interview setting

Lower third: Karly Ann Griffin, Northeast, PA

Audio: Carly_interview2-1: *...once you enter that space. It's not always comfortable the first time you go in there ... You could be in there ten times and still not really feel okay there. And it takes time for you to be there with yourself and start to open up and start to expand and start to really understand what this is for.*

01:36:29:23

Visual: Interview setting with cutaways to the red tent and photo of her as a child

Audio: Lushanya_Echeverria_1: *...I felt scared because of my -- because of my experience with my, um, own womb, because of, um, traumas that I've had. Um, rapes and stuff....I avoided the Red Tent Temple for years. It's only in the past two years that I've goneAnd so to walk into a place where it was -- it was all red and it immediately brought me to that...just that story of the trauma was such a -- it's such an old one, but I really didn't want to go thereWhen I was seven I was brutally raped by my older brother, and, um, he penetrated me and ripped me open and, um, I went into -- I went -- he put me in the shower and all I could see was the red, the blood going down in the shower and down the drain. And, um, -- and then just being in the hospital and all of the red, all of the blood.*

Pause for musical break

...As time has gone on, ...I've been to more Red Tents and temples ... I've been able to hear the stories of all the women, um, it's not so frightening anymore.

01:38:02:10

Visual: Red tent cut to interview setting

Lower third: Khrys Exposito, Northeast, PA

Audio: SWG_mothers-camera2 & SWG_mothers1 through 4:

SWG_mothers_4: *I attended a workshop that was being held in the Red Temple.*

SWG_mothers_2: *The workshop was for women to get together to have a closed-door conversation about losing children, and I had lost a son a year before, and I was having a very, very hard time with the loss of my son.... Every single woman had a different lost-child story.... it was that kind of space where each woman had a space to speak until she was done speaking.... I found it to be amazing because in the real world I had too many people patting me on the back and telling me to get back to work.*

Visual: Pictures of Khrys' family

Audio: *....We brought our oldest daughter to the gynecologist to hear the heartbeat of our son, and during that traditional, routine experience, they diagnosed that he may have a chromosome disorder.... Trisomy 18.*

Music: "Capture This" song by Cathie Pixie

Visual: Interview setting with slow cutaway to her son's name in white text on black background

Audio: *...there's a phrase in a comic book that says, death. It's not fair, and death looks at the person and says you get what everybody gets. You get a lifetime if it's 40 minutes or if it's 80 years. So my son's lifetime was 40 minutes....*

Pause

...I felt my son with me before I was pregnant, and then I had my son with me in my womb. So his life on this earth may have been 40 minutes but he was with me for a year.

Visual: Interview with cutaways to women in red tent

Audio: *....it was really nice to go to some place where...people were not even just validating it but feeling it with you and had been through some version of the emotions, and that was a really transforming experience.*

01:40:13:24

Visual: Interview setting with lower third with cutaway to her daughter and to her in the red tent

Lower third: Ellen Santos, Baldwinville, MA

Audio: *ellen-backstory: My name is Ellen. I am a mother and a grandmother. And I moved from my big house into a small cottage across from my daughter. And I came out here and my health failed even more. And there was a role change. I became the child and my children became the mother and father. I found this very difficult to accept. And at that time there came a space between my daughter and myself. One day, my daughter said to me, ALisa would like you to come to red tent. And I said, I have nothing to share with red tent. I am a very private person. And I am shy. And so, when I met ALisa at the door, I made it quite plain to ALisa and to Bridget that I would not be talking. And I sat down and after a while, all of a sudden, I was overcome with the need to speak and I ended up in the middle of the circle.*

Visual: Ellen talking in the circle, cutaway to her being held in the circle

Audio: *Alisa_RTT_tape_1_p: ...I was always the caretaker, that's what I saw myself. Always the one who would always be there for my children, and now I feel as though they're responsible for me, and it's very, very hard for me.*

Visual: Ellen being held

Audio: *Alisa_RTT_tape_1_s: ALisa:...we are so happy to have you here. Just keep breathing. In and out. You are cared for. and you're cared for...and you're a grandmother now... you're teaching us how to let go.*

Additional audio: humming—they are singing to her.

Ellen: And I'm okay. I am.

Bridget: I know.

Ellen: I'm happy where I am right now.

ALisa: This is kind of a new place isn't it?

Ellen: It is.

ALisa: You're in a red tent temple.

Ellen: It is a new place. I – I never -- I always disguise and I never tell what's inside.

ALisa: Yeah.

Ellen: This was a first.

Woman #?: And it's.

Woman 2: What did you do? "...Women laughing..."

Woman 3: This is what she does.

01:43:18:21

Visual: Ellen hugging another woman and shots of her smiling and laughing

Audio: ALisa Starkweather 15: *...And there she was, never having ever come in, ever, to any kind of women's circle, any kind of situation, and she knew the place immediately. She thought she would never say anything. And it moved me. It moved me, and it always moves me.*

Visual: Ellen being held

Audio: Alisa_RTT_tape_1_s: *Bridget: I'm so good to see you here.*

Woman #?: And, you know, we need – we need soup makers "...women laughing..." we need grandmothers, we need holders. We – you know, in the place that you're feeling a little displaced, I think you just didn't see that maybe one of your next jobs was to be you know -- the grandmother of the Red Tent Temple. Cuz, you know, you have a lot of love to give. It's so evident.

Visual: Ellen speaking in circle

Audio: Alisa_RTT_tape_4_h: *...And it's places like this, the Red Tent that gives the women the support that they need. And I am so honored to have been a part of this tonight. And I look forward to coming back. Thank you. And thank all of you.*

Visual: Older women in the red tent

Audio: Astrid_Grove_interview3: *....I'm always encouraging the crone women to come and be with us because we need their wisdom.... We need to hear where they've been.*

Visual: Oceana talking in circle

Audio: Hub_RTT_tape1_6: *...I am hearing stories from elders. How many of us get to really talk about this with a woman who's been there. Who's been through all the cycles. Been through life.*

01:45:01:21

Visual: Shot of younger girls

Audio: ALisa Starkweather 11: *...We can have that multigenerational experience where we get to hear the wisdom of the youth and the young and that we -- that the older women can also be renewed and reinvigorated in a time when we need energy.*

Visual: Interview setting with lower third cutaway to women holding child

Lower Third: Laurie Dreamspinner, Yellow Springs, OH

Audio: Untitled-11: *I'm Laurie. I am a village grandmother. I came into my crone hood in the red tent. And we are passing along our stories from our grandmothers and our great grandmothers. And we are helping each other through life transitions that the culture at large does not honor. And we are together create sustainable ways to create a healing community.*

01:45:57:19

Visual: Venus being held by women. Her daughter sits on her belly. Her daughter places her hands on her checks and they kiss. Women sing to her.

Audio: Alisa_RTT_tape_3_a: *I'm really feeling like I need support and -- and self-care that we -- I don't often have the time for...Being a mama, and a workingwoman...*

Music: Woman are singing to "Through it all" by Mother Turtle

Chapter 11

Visual: Chapter title screen *Belly dancers*

Lower third: For our daughters

Visual: Interview setting with lower third with cutaway to teenager

Lower third: Bonnie Fewtrell, Northeast, PA

Audio: Bonnie_fewtrell5: *...If I had had a red tent at a young age, I think my life would have been a lot easier.*

Visual: Wide of shot of older women in the red tent

Narration: It is very sad that many of our foremothers did not have this opportunity to be in circles of women, but the Red Tent serves as a space to teach our daughters differently.

01:47:03:18

Visual: Young girls speaking while sitting on parents lap with 2 other girls

Audio: Nicole-kids: *I don't know if I would encourage younger people, younger kids that me. But I think that I would encourage my age and older. It's kind of, like, a place where you have to let other people speak and it's like it is mostly about being peaceful with each other.*

Visual: Girls in red tent

Audio: *Laura_Wyeth_interview5: ...what would it be like if you were a little girl and you came up in this environment where you can talk about this stuff and you understand about it from an early age.*

Visual: Girls in red tent

Audio: *Astrid_Grove_interview11: ...These girls are -- are able to bring that back with them to their home, you know, and into there lives. Like, I didn't have that. I -- I don't imagine you had that. I don't imagine most of us had that.*

Visual: Interview setting with lower third cutaway to girls

Lower third: Jamie Waggoner, Northeast, PA

Audio: *Jamie_waggoner_3-5: ... you see a lot of young women, curious young women, who are not only asking questions, but they are watching. Their eyes are wide open, and they're watching all these older women to, um, I think, you know, to build their own vision of womanhood.*

Visual: Interview setting with lower third

Lower third: Eleni Karabesini, Santa Cruz, CA

Audio: *Eleni_karabesini_interview2: I felt like I needed a little bit right now because I'm going through a lot... it makes me feel very -- it's very different, so I think it's good for me because it's a different place.*

Visual: Eleni talking

Audio: *Santa_cruz_red_tent15: ...it's nice because I get to hang out with my mom and Astrid and these people that I don't really know, but I'm getting to know them. And it's really a place where I can just come and it's different than my everyday life, so I like it. Um, and it feels like a space where I can just -- I don't know what the word is, like, um, I guess be myself and not have to worry about other things.*

Visual: Kids in the red tent

Audio: *Carly_interview2-4: ...any young woman, before she comes into bleeding, who gets to walk through those doors and touch that space and be touched by the space, it has -- it has a -- it has a protection around her and will be able to go through this world much more whole than someone who has never had that experience.*

Visual: Slow fade in to a title screen

B&W title screen: *How would your life have been different if you had a red tent as you were growing up?*

01:49:19:01

Chapter 12

Visual: Chapter title screen *Belly dancers*

Lower third: A sense of community

Visual: Lots of women in the red tent; zoom out from one woman to a few other women

Audio: Alisa_starkweather9: *...sometimes people think there need to be lots and lots of women to make it be -- to make it count, to make it matter. But even if 1, 2, 3, 6, 12, the smallest amount, it's teaching us something.*

Visual: Women in red tent

Narration: The red tent not only serves as a place for self-care and deep conversations among women, but it is also a place of community celebration with dance, laughter, and songs.

Visual: Women playing guitar and singing with cutaways to other women watching her. The women surprise her with a birthday cake

Audio: phily_tape2_17: *whose happy birthday is it? Oh is that me? AHHHHH...*

Audio: women sing her happy birthday

Music: song

01:50:36:24

Visual: Women laughing

Narration: Laughter is vital part of women's interaction in the red tent. Several groups often tell jokes and do other things that promote laughter. The "Ha Ha meditation" is one example.

Visual: Ha Ha mediation—women' laying on each other's belly and laughing

Audio: Glassboro_tape3_1: *We begin with sister number 1, Diane, (ok), saying simply, 'ha' loud enough to bounce the head that is on her belly. And sister number 2, ha, ha and so on and so on. And so when it comes to you remember your number. Cause that is how many ha's you will be responsible for.*

Audio: laughter

01:51:35:27

Musical break

Visual: Interview setting cutaways to b-roll of Leila holding woman

Lower third: Leila Zainah Counihan, Grafton, MA

Audio: Leila_interview_7: *...One of the things that the Red Tent has taught me is to be totally and unconditionally loving and caring. Because I have had an experience with that and all I've ever wanted to do is give it back.*

(Pause)

...When I witnessed this- this woman who was needing some kind of really strong touch, emotional connection, ...I had to accept and I had to say, "Please let me do that for you."

Visual: Interview setting cutaways to b-roll of Leila holding woman

Lower third: Leila Zainah Counihan, Grafton, MA

Audio: *Leila_interview_7: ...you know, when I hold her it was more than just talking about her problems. We were exchanging -- we were exchanging love and compassion and -- and that's what the Red Tent is about. You know, we're just there for each other.... We can talk about anything, but it's really about the love that we exchange that really heals us.*

01:52:35:22

Visual: Alisa with women in the red tent; slow zoom on old photo of Alisa as a young mother

Audio: *ALisa Starkweather 11: There are many women themselves that never valued who they were. ...And I think that I have a history from my way past, where I was one of those women. And my heart knows what it feels like to not be seen. And to not know how powerful and extraordinary each woman on this planet is.*

Visual: ALisa in circle

Audio: *ALisa_in-circle_1: I think that this world is scared shitless of powerful women. And they are scared. They are scared. And the way that we do that, is we disappear history. And we have disappeared so many women. ...It is because of being who I am and who I have been. It is because I was a teenage mom, it was because I was the waitress, it because I was the chambermaid, it is because I don't have a college degree, it is because I never had any money. It is because I could come into this world and do as much I could do that way, that like...wahhhh... I am valuable. I have purpose. I will put my heart in this world. It doesn't mean that I need the money. It doesn't mean that I need to do anything except for keep being this love. And I will live and die with this love. ...Because I think that at the heart of all of the work that I have ever done with women has always been... you know, all this empowerment, all this self-esteem, all this lifting up, all this being at the back, all this love and support... was really about my own fractured sense that I too was simply another women that couldn't be enough. And I wanted to make sure that there was no woman here, that maybe, carried what I carried, you know, some where down inside.*

Visual: ALisa in larger circle

Audio: *ALisa Starkweather 11: ...I wasn't going to leave this Earth with taking all the beauty that I've seen with my work with empowerment without leaving behind -- seeding something here that would assure that we could have a space. But I hope that everyone realizes that this is much bigger than any single person.*

Visual: ALisa in circle

Audio: Alisa-RTT-tape9_11: *We can heal. I've healed. And it does not mean that because I've healed therefore I'm free, it means, I've healed and now I have a responsibility to lift another woman up.*

01:56:10:26

Visual: Marsia in circle

Audio: Alisa_RTT_tape_3_p: *...I've been in a not-so-great place.*

Alisa_RTT_tape_3_q: *I think I'm in place of feeling a little desperate. I am just feeling like I am not enough right now.*

Alisa_RTT_tape_4_a: *... Close your eyes and open your arms...Maybe you weren't all those things that you thought you were, but what are you that you can claim right here and now in the presence of your sisters. That's not indifferent.*

Woman 2: *I'm enough. I am enough.*

Woman 1: *That's right. Yup, feel it in your body. Yeah.*

Woman 2: *I'm strong.*

Woman 1: *Yeah.*

Woman 2: *And I have something to give.*

ALisa: *Yes you do.*

Alisa_RTT_tape_4_b: *...Woman 2: Anything you want to bless us with from there. Here we are.*

Woman #: *Bless us, oh, Marcia.*

Woman 1: *Go out into the world and "...laughing..."*

Woman 2: *No, really, what do you want to say up there?*

Woman 1: *May we all stand in our power.*

Woman 2: *I can't hear you.*

Woman 1: *May we all stand in our power and be the beautiful women that we are meant to be. Giving forth our gifts, plentifully. Abundantly.*

Woman 2: *And can you feel that for you. Can you say that to you?*

Woman 1: *Yes. I will give my gifts abundantly. I am standing in my power.*

Woman #: *Louder.*

Woman 1: *I am standing in my power.*

Woman #: *Louder.*

Woman 1: *I am standing in my power. "...Women laughing..."*

Woman2: *Well, my queen would you like to come off?*

Woman #: *Our sovereign sister Marsia!*

Women: *laughter*

Women: *clapping*

Visual: Title screen: a few months later

Music: "All We Need is Love" by Wendy Daugherty

Visual: Marsia in large red tent. She stands up in circle and speaks

Audio: B&W_tape4_3:

Marsia: I am a beautiful Goddess.

Women: Wooing, clapping, and laughing

Marisa: Hold on. Let me start again. I am a beautiful Goddess worthy of deep, unconditional ecstatic love, respect, and kindness. Men and women find me attractive and downright sexy.

Women: wooing

Visual: Music montage: all the different red tents

Music: "All We Need is Love" by Wendy Daugherty

Credit roll

**Appendix #2:
Red Tent and Red Tent Temple Timeline**

KEY: RT=Red Tent RTT=Red Tent Temple

Mo	Year	Location	RT	RTT	Organizer (As name is given)	Event
	1997	Newton, MA			<i>The Red Tent</i> book is released	
4	1998	Shutesbury, MA	X		ALisa Starkweather	The Womb of the Goddess
11	1999	Santa Cruz, CA	x		Astrid Grove	
11	2002	Chico, CA	x		California State University, Chico	
8	2003	East Kangaloon, Australia	x		Jane Hardwicke Collings	
8	2004	Santa Cruz, CA	x		ALisa Starkweather & Meredith	Fire Dance
9	2004	New York, NY	x		ALisa Starkweather	Women in Power conference
1	2005	New York, NY	x		ABC Carpet & Home store	In collaboration with Eve Ensler, Vagina Monologues
2	2005	Glastonbury, England	x		Katinka Soetens	
3	2005	Northampton, MA	x		Mother Woman	The Birth Project
5	2005	Mt. Washington, MA	x		ALisa Starkweather	Rites of Spring
6	2005	Poyntelle, PA	x		ALisa Starkweather	Womongathering
8	2005	Petersham, MA	x		ALisa Starkweather	Daughters of the Earth
2	2006	Brooklyn, NY			Unknown	
3	2006	Chicago, IL	x		Unknown	
6	2006	Brooklyn, NY	x		Red Tent Women's Project	
6	2006	Pine Ridge, SD	x		Jasmin Starchild	
11	2006	Baldwinville, MA		X	ALisa Starkweather	Red Tent Temple Movement is founded
12	2006	Oahu, Hawaii			Unknown	
1	2007	Kinnelon, NJ		x	June	
4	2007	Baldwinville, MA		x	ALisa Starkweather	
4	2007	Sebastopol, CA	x		DeAnna L'am	
4	2007	Durango, CO			Unknown	

4	2007	Delray Beach, FL	x		Unknown	
5	2007	Chappell Hill, TX	x		Tina	
5	2007	Santa Rosa, CA	x		DeAnna L'am	
7	2007	Paonia, CO	x		Unknown	
8	2007	Toronto, Canada	x		Kim	
8	2007	Newfound Lake, NH		x	ALisa Starkweather	Northeast Women's Herbal Conference
8	2007	Nelson, BC, Canada	x		Jasmin Starchild	
9	2007	Baldwinville, MA		x	ALisa Starkweather	
9	2007	New Salem, MA		x	ALisa Starkweather	Priestess Path Red Tent Temple
9	2007	San Francisco, CA	x		Unknown	
10	2007	Portland, OR		x	Becky & Ashanti	
10	2007	Burlington, VT		x	Micha Maestas	
10	2007	Columbus OH	x		Unknown	
10	2007	CT		x	Ananda	
10	2007	Bethesda, MD		x	Nicole Oxendine & Tiffany Montavan	
10	2007	Ulster, NY		x	Unknown	
10	2007	Kentucky		x	Becky	
10	2007	Maui, HI	x		Unknown	
10	2007	Newton, MA		x	Julianna	
11	2007	Boston, MA	x		Mischa and Alma Dell Smith	
11	2007	Providence, RI		x	Unknown	
11	2007	Ashford, CT		x	Leah	
11	2007	Manchester, CT		x	Leah	
11	2007	Grafton, MA		x	Oceana	
12	2007	Arlington, VA	x		Tiffany Montavan	
1	2008	St. Johnsbury, VT		x	Becky Colpitts	
1	2008	Falmouth, MA		x	Kim	
1	2008	Peterborough, NH		x	Spinning Sun	
1	2008	Glassboro, NJ		x	Jodi Green	
1	2008	Paris, France	x		Unknown	
1	2008	Nashville, TN	x		Unknown	
1	2008	Louisville, CO	x		Unknown	
3	2008	Bloomfield, CT		x	Ananda and Monica	

4	2008	New Orleans, LA	x		V-Day	
4	2008	Pittman, NJ	x		Unknown	
5	2008	Mashpee, MA		x	Kim	
6	2008	Hopewell, NJ		x	Erin	
6	2008	Seacoast, NH	x		Unknown	
7	2008	Milford, CT		x	Unknown	
7	2008	Atlanta, GA	x		Unknown	
7	2008	County Wexford, Ireland	x		DeAnna L'am	
7	2008	Vancouver, BC Canada	x		Jasmin Starchild	
8	2008	Roermond, Netherlands	x		Cora Emens	
9	2008	Lutherville, MD		X	Marianna, Dawn and June	
9	2008	Atlanta, GA	x		Unknown	
9	2008	Carlisle, PA		x	Jacque Hansen	
10	2008	Seattle, WA		x	Marija	
10	2008	Yellow Springs, OH		x	Mary Beth Wolf	
11	2008	Newmarket, NH	x		Melissa	
11	2008	Lee, NH	x		Melissa	
11	2008	Philadelphia, PA		x	Jess Marino	
11	2008	Kelowna, BC, Canada	X		Unknown	
11	2008	Elkins Park, PA	x		Jess Marino	
12	2008	Campbell, CA	x		Jennifer Penick	
1	2009	Providence, RI		x	Unknown	
1	2009	Syracuse, NY		x	Tracey Baum-Wicks	
1	2009	Hopedale, MA		x	Jean and Lorie	
1	2009	Waterford, VT		x	Sandy, Becky	
1	2009	New Paltz, NY		X	Dharana, Molly, Dana, and Amy	
1	2009	Rye, NH		x	Mary Ann	
1	2009	Montreal, QC, Canada		x	Rita	
1	2009	Milpitas, CA		x	Unknown	
1	2009	Broomfield, CO	x		Unknown	
1	2009	Minneapolis, MN	x		Amber	
2	2009	Easthampton, MA		x	Charity	

2	2009	Greenfield, MA		x	Opeyemi	
2	2009	Birmingham, AL		x	Salix	
2	2009	Bethesda MD		x	Nicole Oxendine	
3	2009	Monroe, CT		x	Lisa	
3	2009	Factoryville, PA		x	Sheryl	
3	2009	Tampa, FL	x		Unknown	
3	2009	Pearland, TX	x		Unknown	
3	2009	Asheville, NC	x		Unknown	
5	2009	Cape Cod, MA	x		Unknown	
5	2009	Victoria, Australia	X		Jane Hardwicke Collings	
6	2009	Tilburg, Netherlands	X		Cora Emens	
6	2009	Salem, MA		x	Natalie Johnsen	
6	2009	Tasmania, Australia	X		Jane Hardwicke Collings	
6	2009	Squamish, BC Canada	X		Jasmin Starchild	
7	2009	Los Angeles, CA	x		DeAnna L'am	
8	2009	Shutesbury, MA		x	Venus Free	
8	2009	Varselder, Netherlands	x		Cora Emens	
8	2009	Scranton PA	x		Unknown	
10	2009	Edmonton, AB, Canada	x		Nathalie Jackson	
10	2009	Oak Ridge, TN		x	Yarrow	
10	2009	Eindhoven, Netherlands	x		Cora Emens	
10	2009	Marysville, Ontario Canada		X	Maureen Walton	
10	2009	Glasgow, United Kingdom	x		Unknown	
11	2009	Abbeyfeale, Ireland	x		Unknown	
11	2009	Sacramento, CA	x		DeAnna L'am	
12	2009	Pomona Qld AUSTRALIA		x	Linn	
12	2009	Madison, WI	x		Unknown	
12	2009	Bisbee, AZ		x	Unknown	
2	2010	Ottawa, Ontario, Canada	x		Unknown	
2	2010	Eugene, OR	x		Amber	

3	2010	New York, NY		x	Carolyn & Ramona	
3	2010	Palo Alto, CA	x		Jennifer Penick	
4	2010	Skillman, NJ		x	Erin	
4	2010	Wilton, NH		x	Nicole Colvin	
4	2010	Hamilton, ON, Canada		X	Lidia Snow Phoenix Tremblay	
4	2010	Terrassa, Spain	x		Unknown	
4	2010	Dingmans Ferry, PA	x		Marjorie Spadoni	
5	2010	New York, NY	x		Unknown	Reveal Conference
5	2010	Bellingham, WA	x		Naomi Siegel	
5	2010	Brooklyn, NY	x		Yonette Fleming	
6	2010	Jamaica Plain, MA		x	Xiola	
6	2010	Prague, Czech Republic	X		Katinka Soetens	
6	2010	Hope, BC Canada	x		Jasmin Starchild	
7	2010	Bancroft, Ontario, Canada		X	ALisa Starkweather	Grail Springs Festival
7	2010	Stockholm, Sweden	X		Katinka Soetens	
7	2010	Gold Coast, Australia	X		Unknown	
7	2010	Southport, Australia	X		Go Girl Enterprises	
7	2010	Vashon, WA		x	Unknown	
7	2010	Canberra, Australia	X		Hollie B.	
8	2010	Schiedam, Netherlands	x		Katinka Soetens	
8	2010	Boulder, CO	x		Unknown	
9	2010	Worcester, MA		x	Jillian Gazzaniga	
9	2010	Corrales, NM		x	Micha Maestas	
9	2010	Katy, TX		x	Tina	
9	2010	Ashland, OR	x		Jasmin Starchild	
10	2010	Kernersville, NC	x		Unknown	
10	2010	Sanford, NC		x	Unknown	
11	2010	Tom's River, NJ	x		Doreen Bryant	
12	2010	State College, PA	x		Kerri Zelmoon	
1	2011	Pittsfield, MA		x	Alisa Blanchard & Angelique Walls	

1	2011	Houston, TX	x		Tina	
1	2011	Charleston, SC			Unknown	
1	2011	Morgan Hill, CA	x		Jennifer Penick	
1	2011	Long Island, NY	x		Jessamina	
1	2011	Eau Claire, WI	x		Deb Farmer	
1	2011	Chesapeake, VA		x	Unknown	
2	2011	Philadelphia, PA		x	Yael	
2	2011	Madison, WI	x		Isadora Leidenfrost	
2	2011	Vic, Spain	x		Unknown	
3	2011	Toronto, Canada		x	Linda	
3	2011	Bolinas, CA	x		DeAnna L'am	
3	2011	Spring, TX		x	Tina	
3	2011	Houston, TX		x	Tina	
3	2011	Carlsbad, CA	x		Unknown	
3	2011	Pawtucket, RI	x		Unknown	
3	2011	New Milford, NJ	x		Unknown	
3	2011	Sebastopol, CA		x	KaliShakti & Shannon	
3	2011	Sunshine Coast, BC, Canada	x		Jasmin Starchild	
4	2011	Tucson, AZ		x	Elisabeth Black	
4	2011	Bend, OR		x	Unknown	
4	2011	Los Gatos, CA	x		Jennifer Penick	
5	2011	Bedford, NH		x	Judi Johnson & Pauline Haworth	
5	2011	Muskoka, ON, Canada	X		Unknown	
5	2011	Catalonia, Spain	x		Unknown	
7	2011	Fort Atkinson, WI	x		Janine Fixmar	
7	2011	Harrisburg, PA		x	Unknown	
7	2011	Lake Selmac, OR	x		Jasmin Starchild	
8	2011	Pearland, TX		x	Tina	
8	2011	Vienna, Austria	x		DeAnna L'am	
9	2011	Baltimore, MD		x	Dawn & June & Ellen	
9	2011	Arcata, CA	x		DeAnna L'am	
9	2011	Ambert, MA	x		Five College Red Tent	
10	2011	Fair Oaks, CA	x		DeAnna L'am	
10	2011	Los Altos, CA	x		DeAnna L'am	
10	2011	Baltimore, MD		x	Unknown	

10	2011	Pembrokeshire, West Wales, UK	x		Becky	
10	2011	Beverly, MA	x		The Healing Center	
10	2011	Sedona AZ	x		Jasmin Starchild	
11	2011	Salt Lake City, UT	x		DeAnna L'am	
11	2011	Queensland, Australia	x		Jane Hardwicke Collings	
5	2012	Santa Fe, NM	x		Unknown	
3	2012	Madison, WI	X		Peggy Ann Poss	
?	?	Boise ID	x		Unknown	Goddess Fest
?	?	Houston, TX		x	Kendra	

Appendix #3: Interview Questions

Focus Group Interview Questions

Menarche teens

1. What do you think of the Red Tent?
2. What did you do in the Red Tent?
3. Why do you think that it has been created?
4. What do you think is the goal of the Red Tent?
5. Did you have any interesting experiences in the Red Tent? Please tell me about them.

Menstruating women who have not had children

1. What do you know about the book *The Red Tent*?
2. How would you define the Red Tent? (What is it and what is its purpose?)
3. In your opinion, does a woman need to be menstruating to be in the Red Tent?
4. Why do you think that it has been created?
5. What do you think is the goal of the Red Tent?
6. How does the Red Tent make you feel about being a woman?
7. Did you have any interesting experiences in the Red Tent? Please tell me about them.
8. What did you do in the Red Tent?

Menstruating women who have had children

1. What do you know about the book *The Red Tent*?
2. How would you define the Red Tent? (What is it and what is its purpose?)
3. In your opinion, does a woman need to be menstruating to be in the Red Tent?
4. Why do you think that it has been created?
5. What do you think is the goal of the Red Tent?
6. How does the Red Tent make you feel about being a woman?
7. Did you have any interesting experiences in the Red Tent? Please tell me about them.
8. What did you do in the Red Tent?
9. Did the experience of being pregnant and giving birth affect your feelings about the Red Tent?
10. Having had children, did the Red Tent influence how you raise your children?

Menopausal women

1. What do you know about the book *The Red Tent*?
2. How would you define the Red Tent? (What is it and what is its purpose?)
3. In your opinion, does a woman need to be menstruating to be in the Red Tent?
4. Why do you think that it has been created?
5. What do you think is the goal of the Red Tent?
6. How does the Red Tent make you feel about being a woman?
7. What did you do in the Red Tent?
8. Did feel that you were welcome in the Red Tent? If so, how?
9. Did the experience of being pregnant and giving birth affect your feelings about the Red Tent?
10. Did the experience change your perception? If so, how?
11. Did you have any interesting experiences in the Red Tent? Please tell me about them.

Individual Interviews Questions

Personal narratives

1. How did you feel in the Red Tent space?
2. What was memorable about the Red Tent space?
3. What did you like?
4. What did you dislike?
5. Did it affect how you feel about your own body?
6. How did the other women affect you while in the space?
7. Is the Red Tent a symbol?
8. What it is a symbol of?
9. How did you feel about the textiles?
10. How did you feel about the color red?
11. What did it mean to you?
12. Why did you decide to participate in the Red Tent?
13. What did you do in the Red Tent?
14. Could you tell me about your experience?
15. Has your life changed in any way after participating in a Red Tent?

Red Tent Organizers

1. Why did you get involved in the Red Tent movement?
2. What role do you play?
3. Did the Red Tent help you? If so, how?
4. How do other traditions, such as religious or spiritual practices like the Moon Lodge influence the Red Tent movement?
5. Does the Red Tent facilitate new healing attitudes?
6. How does it do this?

7. What role does the Red Tent play in the contemporary women's spirituality movement?
8. How do you make a Red Tent?
9. What role do the textiles play?
10. What kinds of textiles are being used to create the Red Tent?
11. How are the textiles chosen?
12. What other materials are being used?
13. Why is the Red Tent red?
14. What does the color red symbolize?
15. How would the Red Tent be different if it were blue or any other color?

Historical Background Interviews

Interview with Anita Diamant, author of *The Red Tent*

1. Can you briefly tell me about your book *The Red Tent*?
2. Is it a feminist retelling of the Bible? If so, how?
3. How did you develop the concept of the menstrual hut?
4. In your opinion, what impact did the book have on women's lives?
5. What did women find most compelling about *The Red Tent*?
6. Why do you think that women liked the concept of the menstrual hut?
7. What does one do in a menstrual hut?
8. What did your characters do?
9. Have you ever been in a Red Tent that someone created? Where?
10. Was it similar to what you envisioned in the book?
11. What did it look like?
12. How did it make you feel?
13. What was memorable about the space?
14. What did you like?
15. What did you dislike?
16. What did you do in the Red Tent?
17. Could you tell me about your experience?
18. Is the Red Tent a symbol?
19. What it is a symbol of?
20. How do you feel about the color red?
21. What does it mean to you?
22. How do you feel about the Red Tent Temple movement?

Interview with ALisa Starkweather, founder of the Red Tent Temple Movement and DeAnna L'am, founder of Red Tents in Every Neighborhood

1. What is a Red Tent Temple?
2. Why did you start this movement?

3. How do other traditions, such as religious or spiritual practices like the Moon Lodge influence the Red Tent Temple movement?
4. Does the Red Tent facilitate new healing attitudes?
5. How does it do this?
6. What role does the Red Tent play in the contemporary women's spirituality movement?
7. Is the Red Tent a symbol?
8. What it is a symbol of?
9. What does the color red symbolize?
10. How are women changing or healing as result of participating in the Red Tent?
11. How do you make a Red Tent?
12. What role do the textiles play?
13. What kinds of textiles are being used to create the Red Tent?
14. How are the textiles chosen?
15. What other materials are being used?
16. Why is the Red Tent red?
17. What does the color red symbolize?
18. How would the Red Tent be different if it were blue or another color?
19. What is your vision for the future of the movement?

Online Questionnaire

Menarche teens

6. What do you think of the Red Tent?
7. What did you do in the Red Tent?
8. Why do you think that it has been created?
9. What do you think is the goal of the Red Tent?
10. Did you have any interesting experiences in the Red Tent? Please tell me about them.

Can you please write a brief paragraph about your Red Tent experience? (Include information about the space (color, light, shape, etc.), what you did in the space, and how the Red Tent made you feel about yourself, menstruation, and perhaps how the experience changed you?)

Menstruating women who have not had children

9. What do you know about the book *The Red Tent*?
10. How would you define the Red Tent? (What is it and what is its purpose?)
11. In your opinion, does a woman need to be menstruating to be in the Red Tent?
12. Why do you think that it has been created?
13. What do you think is the goal of the Red Tent?
14. How does the Red Tent make you feel about being a woman?

15. Did you have any interesting experiences in the Red Tent? Please tell me about them.
16. What did you do in the Red Tent?

Can you please write a brief paragraph about your Red Tent experience? (Include information about the space (color, light, shape, etc.), what you did in the space, and how the Red Tent made you feel about yourself, menstruation, and perhaps how the experience changed you?)

Menstruating women who have had children

11. What do you know about the book *The Red Tent*?
12. How would you define the Red Tent? (What is it and what is its purpose?)
13. In your opinion, does a woman need to be menstruating to be in the Red Tent?
14. Why do you think that it has been created?
15. What do you think is the goal of the Red Tent?
16. How does the Red Tent make you feel about being a woman?
17. Did you have any interesting experiences in the Red Tent? Please tell me about them.
18. What did you do in the Red Tent?
19. Did the experience of being pregnant and giving birth affect your feelings about the Red Tent?
20. Having had children, did the Red Tent influence how you raise your children?

Can you please write a brief paragraph about your Red Tent experience? (Include information about the space (color, light, shape, etc.), what you did in the space, and how the Red Tent made you feel about yourself, menstruation, and perhaps how the experience changed you?)

Menopausal women

12. What do you know about the book *The Red Tent*?
13. How would you define the Red Tent? (What is it and what is its purpose?)
14. In your opinion, does a woman need to be menstruating to be in the Red Tent?
15. Why do you think that it has been created?
16. What do you think is the goal of the Red Tent?
17. How does the Red Tent make you feel about being a woman?
18. What did you do in the Red Tent?
19. Did feel that you were welcome in the Red Tent? If so, how?
20. Did the experience of being pregnant and giving birth affect your feelings about the Red Tent?
21. Did the experience change your perception? If so, how?

22. Did you have any interesting experiences in the Red Tent? Please tell me about them.

Can you please write a brief paragraph about your Red Tent experience? (Include information about the space (color, light, shape, etc.), what you did in the space, and how the Red Tent made you feel about yourself, menstruation, and perhaps how the experience changed you?)

**Appendix #4:
Informed Consent and Film Release Agreement**

I hereby affirm my voluntary participation, and give my permission, in this film by Isadora Gabrielle Leidenfrost (Producer), owner of Soulful Media, for use as part of her dissertation as a PhD candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I authorize the Producer to record on film, videotape or otherwise, my name, likeness, image, voice and performance, and any materials (such as videotapes, photographs, soundtracks, etc.), or location I make available to the Producer. The Producer may edit and use such recordings and may authorize others to use these recordings. And I give full permission for the use of such material for all forms of media presentation, now or hereafter known, including television, film, print media, and on the internet for On-Demand download. My name, likeness, voice and biography, as well as excerpts of the recordings may be used for publicizing and promoting such usage. I acknowledge the Producer's right to copyright the video recordings in her own name or otherwise and I assign any existing rights I have in my appearance in the video recording.

I hereby release and discharge the Producer and the University of Wisconsin-Madison from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of the videotaping, including without limitation any and all claims for libel or invasion of privacy, and for damage to my person, property, or reputation.

I affirm to the best of my knowledge all material authorized, furnished and/or used by me in these recordings is my own original material or material which I have full authority to use for such purposes. I further affirm that the Producer is the owner of all rights in and to said recordings and that no monetary consideration is due and owing myself.

If any location and or artwork, including photographs and personnel property is filmed I hereby grant the Producer permission to use said material. I also hereby grant permission for the Producer to be allowed to bring personnel and/or equipment onto the location and to remove it upon completion.

Signature

Date

Name (please print)

(This is how your film credit will read)

Address

Parent or guardian must sign below if above participant is under 18 years of age

Signature

Date

Name (please print)

Appendix #5: Donation Request Letter



Let's Build Something Together

If all the women in the world lived together in a city of many types of buildings (some tall and well-known, some small and specialized, some old and full of history) then the building representing the movie "Things We Don't Talk About: Healing Narratives from the Red Tent" would be an architectural jewel in the center of town. Although small as of yet, it is built with precious woods that will support incredible growth, rising one "story" at a time. The stories told by women about their wisdom, their tears and their journey create a foundation for others to build upon.

Our girls are growing up inundated by messages about themselves by media, the celebrity world and by their peers. As adult women, we have sometimes forgotten our own voices, even as we have witnessed our mothers' and grandmothers' voices being stifled.

"Things We Don't Talk About" documents the stories of women reclaiming their sacredness, their truth and their voice as changers in the world. We are in a new era of history - the healing of ourselves and our planet will come from the women. This movie chronicles the voices of The Red Tent movement, one that is sweeping the world and signals the clarion call to all who envision a world built around cooperation rather than competition. A world we want to leave for our children, their children and stretching far into the future.

"Things We Don't Talk About" shows Red Tent's around the nation gifting women with an opportunity to remember, to listen, to know, and to discover what needs to be brought to our communities to help reawaken their voices. Bringing a Red Tent to a community is a cooperative effort. Women who participate in the Red Tent contribute in a variety of ways. Some design and assemble the Red Tent. Some make the food. Some are the shoulders to cry on. Others provide the financial backing that allows the experiences to continue. All give so that all will receive.

Please consider donating now to support the vision of "Things We Don't Talk About"

Every little bit helps.

When you donate to projects that are in alignment with your life and that truly serve society's needs, your money becomes the mortar and bricks for the kind of world you would like to live in. This is our only lasting legacy.

Your loving donation will go to fund:

Music Licenses, licensing the rights to newspaper articles, images and news video footage, finishing the sound design, sound editing... to see a complete list visit: <http://www.redtentmovie.com/donate.html>

This film is endorsed by:

To see all endorsements visit: <http://www.redtentmovie.com/endorse.html>



Please consider making a donation to the film.

Select a pledge level that's right for you!

Donations are tax-deductible!

Red Tent Sister (\$50 or more)

You will receive a signed DVD (Summer 2012), a "this film was funded by" credit in the film and on the website, and hugs at any screening you attend!



Red Tent Mother (\$150 or more)

In addition to receiving a signed DVD and the other gifts above, you will also receive the "Red Tent Sculpture" by artist Teresa Moorehouse Howley.

Red Tent Grandmother (\$250 or more)

2 tickets to a screening in a city near you so that you can go on a date with your special someone! (Travel & Stay not included). Plus you will also receive the DVD, the "Red Tent Sculpture" and a "this film was funded by" credit.

Red Tent Friend (\$500 or more)

5 tickets to a screening in a city near you for a Girls Night Out! (Travel & Stay not included). Plus you will also receive the DVD, the "Red Tent Sculpture" and a "this film was funded by" credit.

Red Tent Ancestor (\$1000 or more)

2 Tickets to the world premiere! (Travel and stay not included) and a special signed Director's Cut DVD with deleted scenes (limited edition), a "Red Tent Sculpture" and a "this film was funded by" credit.

Red Tent Angel (\$2,500 or more)

In addition to the benefits at the \$1,000 pledge level, you will be listed in the credits as a member of the Producer's Circle and receive Producer Circle updates, mailings and bonus clips. You will also receive a dinner out with me, the filmmaker when you attend the world premiere or I will cook you dinner. I am a really good cook!

Red Tent Circle (\$5,000 or more)

You will receive a private screening with me, the filmmaker in your hometown for your family and friends (continental US) or I will offer a public screenings where all of profits go to a woman's charity of your choice. Plus you receive everything at the \$2,500 pledge level.

Larger donations are welcome. Please email me info@redtentmovie.com

This project is fiscally sponsored by WMM WOMEN MAKE MOVIES

Women Make Movies, Inc. is the only national multi-cultural women's media organization whose focus is the promotion, production, exhibition and distribution of films by and about women. Established in 1972, Women Make Movies is a 501(c)(3) non-profit media arts organization registered with the New York Charities Bureau of New York State. As the fiscal sponsor, WMM accepts donations or grants on behalf of the filmmaker and takes the responsibility of administering the funds received in support of the development and completion of the film.

This film is endorsed by:

Do you want to endorse the film? Email us at info@redtentmovie.com



The Association for the Study of
Women & Mythology

Lunapads.com
eco positive periods

circle+bloom
Mind-Body Audio Programs for Women's Health



Yes, count me in! I would like to donate to this film.

Name (please print)

Address

(This is how your film credit will read)

Email

Donation Amount _____

Please make checks payable to: Women Make Movies- "Things We Don't Talk About"
You may also pay by credit card.

Credit Card Type _____ (ie: Visa/Mastercard **ONLY**)

Credit Card Number _____

Exp. Date _____

CCV _____

Signature _____

Credit Card Billing Information if different than above:

Name

Address

This project is fiscally sponsored by **WMM WOMEN MAKE MOVIES**

All contributions to "Things We Don't Talk About" are tax-deductible according to IRS regulations. Receipt of donation benefits (DVD, Red Tent Sculpture, etc.) will reduce the tax deductibility of your contribution. You will receive a statement by mail detailing the tax deductible portion of your donation for your records.

Special Note: You will receive your donation "gifts" as they are available. For example, you may receive a thank you note and a Red Tent sculpture at the time of your donation, but your DVD or other item(s) may not be available until the film is complete (summer 2012).

This film is endorsed by:

Do you want to endorse the film? Email us at info@redtentmovie.com



Teresa Moorehouse Howley
narrative sculpture



Gathered Resources
of Women
GROW
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Healing Through • Creativity • Natural Beauty





**WOMEN MAKE MOVIES
FISCAL SPONSORSHIP
CONTRIBUTION CONFIRMATION FORM**

Dear Women Make Movies,

I am making a charitable donation in the amount of \$ _____ for the media project entitled,

_____ by _____.
"Things We Don't Talk About" Isadora Gabrielle Leidenfrost

I understand that the project is fiscally sponsored by Women Make Movies and that this donation will be spent by the filmmakers towards the production and completion of this media project. I confirm that no services or goods were provided by Women Make Movies, the filmmaker or anyone else associated with this project, in exchange for the charitable contribution.

AGREED TO AND AFFIRMED BY:

Signature of Donor _____ Date _____

Print Name of Donor _____

Donor's Relationship to Filmmaker _____

WOMEN MAKE MOVIES, INC., is the only national multi-cultural women's media organization whose focus is the promotion, production, exhibition and distribution of films by and about women. Established in 1972, Women Make Movies is a 501(c)(3) non-profit media arts organization registered with the New York Charities Bureau of New York State. As the fiscal sponsor, WMM accepts donations or grants on behalf of the filmmaker and takes the responsibility of administering the funds received in support of the development and completion of the film.

Upon completion, please return the form to the Project Administrator/Director. If Donor already sent in the check to WMM, you may fax this form directly to WMM at 212.925.2052

This film is endorsed by:

Do you want to endorse the film? Email us at info@redtentmovie.com



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