

The Periodical - Fall 2016

Editors' Note

Once again, as the contents of this issue of THE PERIODICAL demonstrate, members of the SMCR are actively raising the flag of menstrual awareness, health, and research across a wide range of endeavors. And though it may seem like a long way off, plans are already well under way for the convening of the next SMCR conference on the weekend of **June 22-24, 2017** in Atlanta Georgia. So put that date on your calendars – **in ink** – as well as the date of the deadline for the next edition of this newsletter: January 15, 2017. And please don't wait until the last minute to send in your news.

David Linton & Saniya Lee Ghanoui
Co-Editors, THE PERIODICAL

President's Report

Hello Everyone!

I am delighted you are taking a moment to re-connect with SMCR during what I am certain is a busy time of year for you.

As you know, we are only as good and strong as our willingness to support and challenge one another--united in our shared passions for body literacy, reproductive justice and the development of a rich and rigorous evidence base to drive policy, practice and activism.

There's a lot going on along the menstrual front from tax reform to product innovation to even debates as to whether the menstrual cycle affects women's

ability to serve in military combat positions. To our delight, major media continue to show interest in these issues—see, for example, coverage in the [The New York Times](#), [Time](#) and *The Associated Press*.

Our [blog](#) “Menstruation Matters” continues to stimulate with smart commentary and editor Laura Wershler’s weekend round-up of the latest menstrual/menopausal news. Have you checked out our ongoing series: “SMCR Member Profiles?” Are you referring your students and colleagues to the blog?

Our journal, [Women’s Reproductive Health](#) recently published its 2nd issue of its 3rd volume, establishing its place as a key source of high quality feminist, interdisciplinary and transnational scholarship. *Have you read the most recent issue?*

Our 2017 conference team is developing a fascinating and timely program for our meetings in Atlanta this June around the theme “**Menstruation Matters: 40 Years of Menstrual Cycle Research.**” The Call for Proposals will be issued soon.

In the meantime, we’ve been working on a new design (by the very talented Lauren Towles) of our website. Stay tuned for the launch and invitation to add more content to our fresh new face.

As ever, LIKE our [Facebook Page](#) , FOLLOW our [Twitter Feed](#), READ and COMMENT at [Menstruation Matters](#).

There is no question that we are at the center of a growing and diversifying movement. This means we each need to take good care of ourselves so that we can meaningfully shape the discourse and build the knowledge. Take your vitamins. Stay hydrated. This is our moment!

In solidarity,

Chris Bobel, President, SMCR

SMCR BLOG EDITOR'S UPDATE

On May 28th, 2016, the blog of the SMCR, formerly known as **re: Cycling**, was renamed to **Menstruation Matters**. To read about the blog's original name, and the rationale behind the change, check out the blog post announcing [Menstruation Matters](#).

Regular readers of **Menstruation Matters** will be aware that in late June we began posting member profiles, beginning with SMCR board members with research backgrounds. As editor of these profiles, it has been inspiring for me to read about our members' backgrounds, influences, research topics, and commitment to both their work and the society. I knew SMCR was full of accomplished, committed menstrual cycle advocates, but getting to know these members better has been eye-opening. If you've not been following the profiles, I encourage you to do so. I have prepared different questionnaires for members with different interests and involvement with menstrual cycle research and advocacy. If you are interested in having your profile posted on the blog, please contact me directly by email: lwershler@gmail.com

As fall begins, and we look forward to the new website and blog design, **Menstruation Matters** needs new contributors willing to explore, analyze, or opine about the wide range of menstrual-related issues, both those that are being mentioned in the media and those that are not so well publicized. If you are interested in writing for the blog, regularly or occasionally, please let me know.

Laura Wershler

Editor-in-Chief, *Menstruation Matters*, blog of the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research

2017 SMCR Conference

Menstruation Matters: 40 Years of Menstrual Cycle Research

June 23-24, 2017

Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw, GA

Keep your eye out for the Call for Papers in the upcoming weeks!

Members' News

(The following items are printed exactly as received from SMCR members. Rather than edit for consistency of tense or tone, it seemed best to allow all members their own voice and style and point of view in order to reflect the rich variety of their work and activities.)

Diandra Kalish

My name is Diandra and I am the founder and executive director of UnTabooed. UnTabooed is a New York City based nonprofit committed to breaking the taboo surrounding menstruation by providing menstrual health education and sustainable menstrual products to women in need, and promoting conversation among people everywhere. We offer one-hour education workshops covering menstrual health and reusable menstrual products (specifically cloth pads and menstrual cups). We work primarily with homeless and low income girls and women, and on college campuses, but we are passionate about educating everyone, everywhere.

Diana Alvarez

Diana Álvarez is working on her PhD in Multicultural Women's and Gender Studies at Texas Woman's University. Her dissertation will focus on menstrual art on Instagram and the empowerment rhetoric around sharing images of menstrual blood. She will also be presenting on this topic at the National Women's Studies Association Conference being held this year in Montréal, Quebec in Canada. She hopes to continue to fill some of the academic gaps on menstruation and to publish on the topic of menstrual art and social media.

She also continues to take pictures of her own period and its bloody fantastic.

Heather C. Guidone

Endo What? Groundbreaking Documentary Breaks Silence on Common, Devastating Disease

A deep-rooted silence concerning menstruation continues to pervade our culture, with related pelvic pain particularly enshrouded by myths and misinformation; specifically, this lack of conversation contributes to lengthy delays in diagnosis of endometriosis, a disease which often leads to chronic pelvic pain, debilitating menstrual pain, dyspareunia, organ dysfunction, infertility and much more. Significantly affecting the lives of approximately 176 million individuals at an estimated cost burden in the billions, endometriosis is more than just 'painful periods:' it is a priority public health concern with negative impact across every strata of society. There is perhaps no disorder more aligned with menstruation, but the disease odyssey doesn't end there. Rife with societal bias that has long implied pelvic and menstrual pain are simply a "woman's lot in life" not be talked about, vast misinformation continues to enshroud endometriosis, leading to harmful delays in diagnosis and treatments - and even unnecessary hysterectomy in some cases. The persistent myth that endometriosis is taboo and should remain steeped in secrecy or shame must be shattered.

For the first time, an award-winning documentary, *Endo What?*, has done just that.

Award-winning, visionary Producer/Director Shannon Cohn has given us an invaluable resource in the fight for awareness, better research and education. The only film of its kind, *Endo What?* gives viewers an accurate, up-to-date base of knowledge straight from the experts - a vital resource missing until now. At its heart are patients, renowned experts and advocates who are working hard to change the narrative of this disease and have come together to offer authoritative education and improve lives. Praised internationally by the public, physicians, lawmakers and critics alike, The Guardian called *Endo What?* it's "*pick for film of the year because it's truth-telling is powerful and inspirational.*" Newsweek credited it as the "*first step in a plan to educate and organize for change.*"

From its grassroots origins, *Endo What?* has become a groundswell movement towards paradigm shift. Global screenings with interactive, expert discussion panels taking place in schools, community centers and theatres around the world have put endometriosis on the international agenda, and film sales are helping to fund novel education efforts for school nurses and health care providers. *Endo What?* is an essential step in the collaborative effort to promote early recognition, correct diagnosis and gold standard treatment for the disease, and it has revitalized menstrual communication and key conversations we need to be having with our sisters, daughters - and selves.

Lara Owen

Lara Owen recently completed running a two-year study on women's subjective experiences of menstruation and menopause commissioned by an Australian women's advocacy organization, involving 30 focus groups locally plus questionnaire findings from 3346 women in 55 countries (results due for publication in 2017). Lara is now doing research at Monash University, Melbourne, in the Department of Management within Monash Business School, where she is

concerned with two main areas: menstruation in the workplace, and sustainable products, both explored from a broad political economy perspective. She is doing a case study of a social enterprise in the UK on a new flexi-time menstrual policy that she helped to develop, and she is also investigating the effects of sustainable menstrual products both on women who use them (a small qualitative study) and in the wider context of cosmopolitanism, (postcolonial) globalization, and new intersections arising through the marketing, production and donation of sustainable products. She is also very interested in marginalization of the mind-states of menstruation and menopause. She is a member of CROS, (Critical Reorientations of Organization and Society), a research group exploring areas of organizational and economic life that are often overlooked. Lara is the author of "Her Blood Is Gold", first published in 1993. She will next be in the US in August 2017, when she will be keynote speaker at the Justisse Fertility Awareness conference in Vancouver. For more information on her workshops, mentoring webinars, and individual and organizational consulting, please visit laraowen.com or email lara@laraowen.com

Amanda Brief

We at my.Flow have created the world's first tampon monitor. We're out to address the issues of period stigma, shame, anxiety, leakage, and risk of infection, by letting menstruators know in real time how full their tampons are. Our campaign focus is to change the conversation around menstruation. It's currently a taboo topic, even though it is something (over) half the world's population experiences every month, for decades.

Some menstruators are able to tell when their tampon is full, but of those who cannot, many of us err on the side of taking it out early, which is not only wasteful, but incredibly physically uncomfortable. It's about time we had a way to prevent leakage, anxiety, staining and and infection related to leaving tampons in too long.

70% of US women use tampons - over half are ready to buy a product that helps them prevent leakage, while a whopping 82% are ready to buy a product to reduce the risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome. We aim to empower those with a period through insight; bringing the same level of body-awareness and automatic data aggregation to the period that dozens of other products have brought to sleep, exercise, and diet.

Menstrual innovation has been embarrassingly lagging until recently, and no product is currently on the market that addresses these needs for tampons – America’s most ubiquitous tampon solution. We’re here to bring Peace of Mind. Period.

Breanne Fahs

Breanne Fahs has a new book on menstruation coming out November 1st! *Out for Blood: Essays on Menstruation and Resistance* (SUNY Press) is now available for pre-order on Amazon (or, better yet, you can pick it up at your local bookstore if you have them order it). Check out the book description at:
<http://www.sunypress.edu/p-6277-out-for-blood.aspx>.

Susannah Clemence

I am currently researching the real-life praxis of menstrual management in the UK. I'm conducting focus groups of 30-50 year-olds, hearing what menstruators actually do/use, including disposal and laundry, the advantages and drawbacks they perceive, what they would ideally like or improve. Very thought-provoking data so far; the one-off meetings also seem to leave participants with a taste for getting together again with each other to share their experiences and ideas.

Jennifer Weigel

Jennifer Weigel's *Worlds Within* solo art exhibition and advocacy campaign was on display at YWCA Cambridge through September 2016. This solo show featured

yonis based artworks inspired by Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* and Miriam Shapiro's *Femmage* with each work named for a contemporary woman artist. The show raised awareness of the need for feminine care products in homeless shelters, women's centers & pantries and gathered donations for the YWCA's transitional housing program and outreach. Weigel raffled off her artworks as part of this advocacy campaign, with raffle tickets offered to those who donated feminine care products. Sarah Wilson of Sustainable Cycles conducted a workshop on eco-friendly alternatives to traditional femcare products as part of the show; the workshop featured DivaCup, LunaPads and Jade & Pearl who generously donated products to show and discuss.

Marie C. Hansen

Marie C. Hansen recently published the article "What is protest? Feminism, psychoanalysis and methods of social change" in *Gender & Education* journal. The paper deals with the application of psychoanalysis to social movements, with a particular focus on menstrual activism and feminism. Overt forms of activism, such as street protest, are critiqued as aligned to a phallic-symbolic order which places demands upon its subject. Instead, Marie discusses how concepts from Lacan, the Tavistock clinic, and post-relational thinker Robin Brown (2017) can inform activist practice. In addition, Marie is at work co-editing a book, along with Marilyn Charles, titled *Women & Psychosis: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* for Routledge (expected release Fall 2017). Her own chapter in the collection deals with the commonalities in social discourse surrounding postpartum psychosis and premenstrual syndrome (i.e., "unruly hormones") and looks for more psychosocial explanations in the etiology of postpartum psychosis. The book as a whole seeks to bridge the gap between clinical and critical theory by exploring the issue of women and psychosis from a variety of perspectives, including the sociological, historical, biological, theological, psychoanalytic, literary, and psychosocial. First person accounts of psychosis are interwoven throughout the text to foster a dialogue grounded in the experience of the women themselves. The book reflects an over-arching belief that

psychosis does not occur in a vacuum, but is always experienced within a particular socio-cultural context. Particular attention is played to the role of the reproductive female body and sexual trauma in the expression of psychosis.

Hallfríður J Ragnheiðardóttir

My book, **Quest for the Mead of Poetry: Menstrual Symbolism in Icelandic Folk and Fairy Tales**, has been published by Chiron Publications

(<http://chironpublications.com/>)

In the past 12 months, I have given three presentations on the theme of menstruation, the last one at a conference titled *The Snake, the Dragon, and Other Scaly Creatures*, held at the C. G. Jung Center in New York in conjunction with an exhibit of Jung's drawings from the Red Book. In this lecture, which I called **The Snake, the Dragon, and the Menstruating Womb**, I explored snake and dragon as symbols of the menstruating womb in the context of Norse mythology. The driving force behind this talk was the mythical theft of the "mead of poetry" by the god Odin, who shapeshifted into a snake to get at the maiden who was its guardian. The two previous presentations I called **Whom does the Dream Serve**, delivered at the annual conference of the International Association for the Study of Dreams, and **Threshold Experience of the Girl-Child**, presented at a conference titled *Fragile Subjects*, held by the University of Turku, Finland. All three presentations are posted on my website www.dreamsandtarot.is (under [Presentations](#)).

Saniya Lee Ghanoui

In June, Saniya presented at the Media Ecology conference in Bologna, Italy on work she has been doing concerning the use of game/play in sex and menstrual education. She also gave an invited lecture at Stockholm University this summer on sex education films in the U.S. and Sweden.

David Linton

In addition to being a member of the planning committee for the 2017 SMCR conference and co-editor of the Society's newsletter, David has presented menstrual-themed research during the summer at the Early Book Society in Oxford, England and at a conference on childhood and fragility in Turku, Finland, as well as numerous postings to the SMCR blog site.