

The Periodical

Winter 2015



Once again the variety of accomplishments of SMCR members is truly impressive, as the member notes in this issue indicate. And, excitement is mounting in anticipation of this June's conference in Boston where menstrual art, activism, celebration and scholarship will be on full display. It promises to be a richly fulfilling gathering. We hope to publish another issue of THE PERIODICAL just prior to the conference, so put the submission date, May 11, 2015 on your calendar. My co-editor, Linda Eder, and I are looking forward to hearing from you.

And, in addition to reading this newsletter and the new SMCR journal, Women's Reproductive Health, everyone is urged to regularly check out the SMCR blog, re:Cycling. Perhaps better than any other single source, the blog expresses the remarkable range of member interests and insights into the ways the menstrual cycle finds expression in literature, art, advertising, news and a myriad of other social and cultural contexts. It is on the front line of menstrual activism.

Boston, here we come!

-David Linton, **Newsletter Editor**

In this issue:

From the Editor	1
By & About our Members	3
2015 Conference	9
Call for Submissions	10

Deadline for submissions
to the next issue

MAY 11TH 2015

re: Cycling



Depo-Provera and Fifty Shades of Grey—The Movie

February 13th, 2015 by Laura Wershler



Dear Readers: The following post **first appeared** on July 25, 2012, during the media think-piece flurry over the soaring popularity of E.L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy. With the movie opening on Valentine's Day, 2015, I can't wait to find out if or how **Depo-Provera** is referenced as the contraceptive choice made for heroine Anastasia Steele by ob-gyn Dr. Greene, a character I have confirmed via **IMDb** is in the movie. I argued in the post that Depo-Provera as Ana's birth control method was an unrealistic plot device. Commentary on *Fifty Shades* has again started to snowball, but I doubt anyone besides myself will have the slightest interest in this facet of the story. I invite readers who get to the theater before I do to report back in the comments section.

Menstrual Considerations in *Fifty Shades of Grey*

Fine literary fiction it is not, but the *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy by E.L. James can certainly claim to be libido-boosting storytelling. Deirdre Donahue at *USA Today* summarized the books' appeal in **10 reasons "Fifty Shades of Grey" has shackled readers**. She pretty much nailed it. And she's read the books, which is more than can be said for other writers, including **this one** who implied that heroine Anastasia (Ana) Steele signs a contract to become hero Christian Grey's submissive in a BDSM relationship. She doesn't.

Until he meets Ana, Christian's sexual history has included only **BDSM relationships**, those involving bondage, discipline, dominance, submission and sadomasochism. BDSM plays a role in their love story, but the most sadistic thing that Ana submits to is a shot of Depo-Provera. **reCycling** readers know **what I think** of this contraceptive: I. Am. Not. A. Fan.

As a menstrual cycle advocate, I pay attention to **menstrual mentions wherever they appear**. It was impossible for me NOT to hone in on how James handles menstruation and birth control.

Christian quickly ascertains that Ana, a virgin when he meets her, is not using birth control. (His unflinching communication about sexuality is one of the books' most appealing aspects.) As their sexual affair begins, he uses condoms. Within a week or so he asks when her period

is due. (His unflinching communication about sexuality is one of the books' most appealing aspects.) As their sexual affair begins, he uses condoms. Within a week or so he asks when her period is due. (His unflinching communication about sexuality is one of the books' most appealing aspects.) As their sexual affair begins, he uses condoms. Within a week or so he asks when her period is due.

is due. (His unflinching communication about sexuality is one of the books' most appealing aspects.) As their sexual affair begins, he uses condoms. Within a week or so he asks when her period is due. (His unflinching communication about sexuality is one of the books' most appealing aspects.) As their sexual affair begins, he uses condoms. Within a week or so he asks when her period is due.

is due. (His unflinching communication about sexuality is one of the books' most appealing aspects.) As their sexual affair begins, he uses condoms. Within a week or so he asks when her period is due. (His unflinching communication about sexuality is one of the books' most appealing aspects.) As their sexual affair begins, he uses condoms. Within a week or so he asks when her period is due.

We write about...

- Activism
- advertising anatomy
- art big pharma Birth Control birth control pill blogs
- blood boys/men breast cancer Celebrities
- Communication
- drugs estrogen FemCare FemCare advertising fertility
- Girls guest post Health Care
- hormones Humor
- Internet Kotex Language
- Media Men Menarche
- Menopause menstrual suppression
- Menstruation
- oral contraceptive pills
- pads Perimenopause PMS Procter & Gamble research
- shame tampons
- television vagina viral video
- vulva weekend

<http://menstruationresearch.org/blog/>

Women's Reproductive Health

SMCR's new journal is off to a strong start. Volume 1 (two issues) was published in 2014, and the first issue of volume 2 is in press. The Editorial Board asks members to do all you can to drive traffic to the journal's website: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/uwrh20#.VK3a7YdN1SW>. Tweet out the URL, post the URL on your Facebook wall, blog about your favorite articles, and be sure to cite relevant articles in your own writing. Here are some other ways that you can help our journal to establish itself: ask your university or hospital library to subscribe to Women's Reproductive Health; read WRH; submit your research to WRH; ask your colleagues to submit their work to WRH; say "yes" when you are asked to review a manuscript for WRH.

Thanks for your assistance with this important project!



SMCR MEMBER NEWS

The diversity of the SMCR membership is truly impressive made up of artists, scholars, teachers, activists, counselors, physicians, and community leaders. Here are some reports of their more recent activities.

Hallfridur J. Ragnheidardottir - My name is Hallfridur J. Ragnheidardottir. I am a poet and a dream worker with background in Icelandic literature. My book, to which I have given the working title *A Quest for the Mead of Poetry: Menstrual Symbolism in Icelandic Folk and Fairy Tales*, will soon be published by Chiron Publications. The anticipated date of release is June 15th, 2015. What sparked this work was silence. The silence I was faced with when I turned to my heritage to see how menstruation had been dealt with in the past. To my utter amazement, I discovered that in the six volumes of Icelandic folk and fairy tales there was but one tale, *The Witch's Ride*, which dealt with menstrual blood in plain terms. In that moment of truth, it dawned on me how uncritically I had played my part in the secrecy that surrounded this issue. As menstruation is every woman's gift or curse, it had to be woven into the saga of my ancestresses. In search of an answer to the unspoken mystery, I dug into the deeper layers of the familiar material I had grown up with and discovered that the sacred menstrual flow of the goddess trickles through patriarchal myth in obscure poetic language. The

motivating force behind my book, which contains my translation and interpretation of seven tales, was the search for a meaningful connection to this devaluated part of my nature. In August, I will give a presentation on the "Threshold Experience of the Girl-Child" at a conference, titled *Fragile Subjects: Childhood in Literature, Arts and Medicine*, to be held in Turku, Finland.

David Linton - David Linton is once again working with the staff of Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney in an effort to pass the Robin Danielson Act, a legislative effort to improve the regulation of menstrual product content and is also part of a team of menstrual activists planning special events in New York around this year's Menstrual Hygiene Day, May 28. He is scheduled to present his research on the social construction of menstruation at conferences in Finland, Oxford University, and Puerto Rico in the coming months. In addition he has written and performed a series of poems collectively titled "His First Period." The work will be featured at the International Conference on Masculinities in New York City on March 7.

By and About Our Members



Announcing...

Widening the Cycle

A Menstrual Cycle & Reproductive
Justice Art Show

June 4 – 6, 2015
Law School
Suffolk University

Featuring:

Hiba Ali Diana Alvarez **Dana Baker** Holly Bittner **Danielle Boodoo-Fortune** Gabriella Boros **Byron Keith Byrd** Mod Cardenas **Stephanie Dragoon** Derya Erdem **Alicia Everett** Johanna Falzone **Tiffany Paige Gaudet** Ingrid Goldbloom-Bloch **Suzy Gonzalez** Virginia Kennard **Jess Larson** Tory Leeming **Jen Lewis** Isabelle Lutz **Lucy Madeline** Phoebe Man **Sarah Maple** Elaine Marie **Sadie Mohler** Petra Paul **Victoria Paige** Kyle Peterson **Sara Raca** Dafna Rehavia **Mary Rouncefield** Gwenn Seemel **Giuliana Serena** Nichole Speciale **Jena Tegeler** Jennifer Weigel **Deb Wiles**
Exquisite Uterus Resistance Project

Art work by Giuliana Serena

Jen Lewis

By and About Our Members



Josefin Persdotter - REPORT from organization MENSEN, Forum for Menstruation, Swedish NGO

We Swedish menstrual activists and scholars are happy to report that 2014 is nowadays publically called “the menstrual year” in (at least parts of) mainstream Swedish national media. Beginning with a radio-program on menstrual taboo in the summer of 2013 Sweden’s been enjoying something like a menstrual revolution. Read blog post with further details here: <http://menstruationresearch.org/2014/10/24/swedens-year-of-menstruation-is-it-the-menstrual-decade-maybe-the-menstrual-millennium/>

Additionally the Swedish national sex-ed organization RFSU has also taken up the fight and started spreading the word on human rights perspectives on menstruation, and starting to include menstruation as a theme in their educational efforts. See: <http://www.rfsu.se/sv/Sex-och-politik/Fokus-SRHR/Tillgang-till-sexualundervisning/Menskliga-rattigheter/mensatest/> Also the two Swedish parliamentary parties “Vänsterpartiet” and “Miljöpartiet” (which is actually also part of the government) have recently motioned to increase national educational efforts on Endometriosis <http://www.etc.se/inrikes/alliansen-blockar-utbildning-om-endometrios>.

The menstrual year of 2015 was kicked off by leading Swedish newspaper “Dagens Nyheter” doing a two week series on menstrually related themes. Discussing everything from the history of femcare to PCOS, menstrual awareness to youtube-star Clara Henry who talks menstruation (subtitled in English, see e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47WxK9k1Qp4>). Thus we have high hopes that 2014 was not just a hype but a lasting change to the better.

<https://mensenorg.wordpress.com>



20 bortförklaringar till mensbralla



Joan Chrisler - Recent Publications

SMCR members Joan C. Chrisler, Maria Luisa Marván, Jenny Gorman, and Meghan Rossini recently published their article “Body Appreciation and Attitudes toward Menstruation” in the journal *Body Image* (2015, vol. 12, pp. 78-81). Dr. Chrisler also published a commentary titled “A Reproductive Justice Approach to Women’s Health” in *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* (2014, vol. 14, pp. 205-209). Her co-edited book *Women and Aging: An International, Intersectional Power Perspective* was recently published by Springer (2015); SMCR members might be interested in Chrisler and Rossini’s chapter on “Older Women, Power, the Body” and SMCR member Maureen McHugh’s chapter on “Sexuality and Older Women: Desirability and Desire.”

Rosie Sheba - Rosie is new to the scene, launching her business – Sustainable Menstruation Australia (www.sustainablemenstruationaustralia.com.au) in December 2014. Rosie’s background is in evolutionary biology, hydrology, and ecology and she has always been passionate about the interactions between humans and our environment, particularly our water supplies. Rosie became frustrated with

the inefficiency in the field of ecological science, and felt she couldn’t make enough positive change through this career path. The daughter of an active birthing educator, dance therapist and “marvellous menstruation” coach, Rosie’s “Aha!” moment came when she bought a menstrual cup a little over a year ago. As a scuba diving instructor, she loved the convenience of not having to change a tampon in the middle of a dive class. She quickly saw the ramifications of the economic, social, environmental and sanitation benefits if the world’s women converted to using menstrual cups. During a conversation in the bathrooms at the Dead Sea, Israel; in August, she hatched a plan to publicize menstrual cups among Australian women, make them accessible to women from disadvantaged backgrounds, reduce social stigmas around menstruation, and develop menstruation education programs for Australian girls and women. Sustainable Menstruation Australia was born. To spread the message and research for her work, Rosie is joining the Sustainable Cycles team in Austin, Texas and will be riding with them to the SMCR conference in Boston this June. You can contact her: rosie@sustainablemenstruationaustralia.com.au

By and About Our Members



ZanaAfrica - ZanaAfrica equips women and girls with the tools they need to step boldly into the promise of their future and thrive. Across East Africa, 4 in 5 women lack regular access to sanitary pads. We aim to activate women and girls to claim their dignity and power by supporting them with safe, affordable, aspirational menstrual hygiene products that connect them to a larger universe of health resources and information. ZanaAfrica offers a full line of both disposable and reusable sanitary pads, providing women choice through a single, trusted source. Our pads act as vehicles to deliver accurate health information in the form of engaging, illustrated health comics that address the issues women and girls face and offer answers to their most pressing questions about their reproductive health and their options as they navigate puberty and womanhood. Our comics are a product of conversations with over 300 women and girls across Kenya.

Their questions for us have ranged from ‘How many months does one get her period and when does it stop?’, to ‘Why is it that when I am about to reach my period I become moody?’, to ‘How can you control the pain during menstruation?’, and ‘Is it a must for a girl to have a boyfriend?’ We know the questions women and girls are asking and we are using comics as a safe space that they can use to find answers to their questions in a way that is private and referable, providing them with the knowledge and resources they need to make informed decisions. We have launched our first line of comics with our girl-facing pad brand, Nia (‘Purpose’ in Kiswahili), featuring our leading character (also named Nia), who is a well-meaning (yet stubborn) 13 year-old Kenyan girl. The characters that inhabit the Nia



universe—including Nia herself—are personable, dynamic, and, most importantly, flawed. They make mistakes, struggle with tough decisions and learn how to handle complex issues. Our first Nia storyline cover menstrual health management, the physical and emotional changes that take place during puberty and adolescence, difficult decisions girls will face, and defining safe (and unsafe) relationships. Our characters walk alongside girls as they navigate puberty and discover the positive force that they are in today’s world. For more information about ZanaAfrica’s products or our health comics, email Alice at alice@zanaafrica.org.

By and About Our Members



Breanne Fahs

“Cycling Together: Menstrual Synchrony as a Projection of Gendered Solidarity”

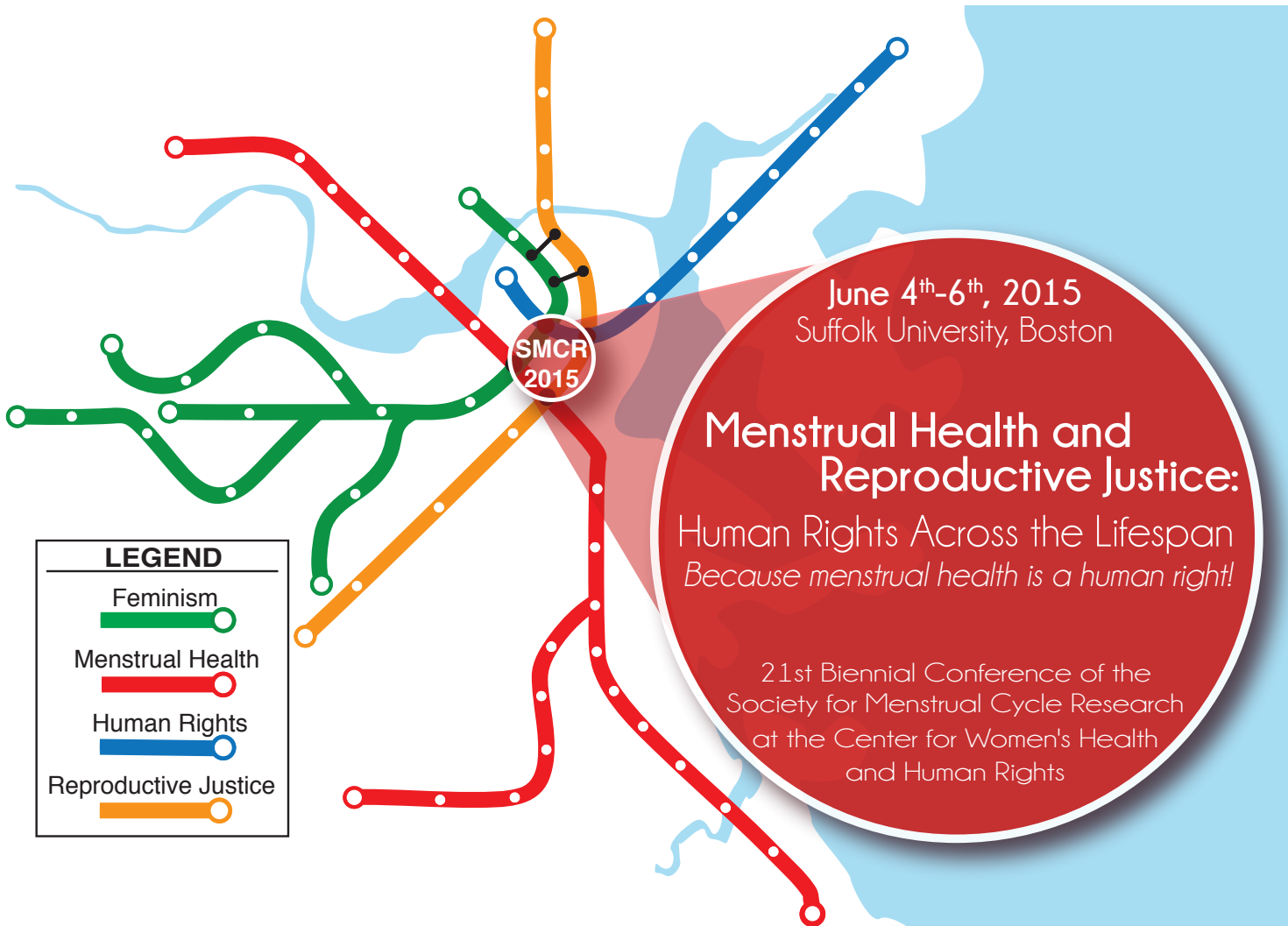
Breanne Fahs, Jax Gonzalez, Rose Coursey, and Stephanie Robinson-Cestaro Arizona State University, Glendale, Arizona, USA

Though researchers have hotly debated the phenomenon of menstrual synchrony—women menstruating in tandem when living in close quarters with one another—no conclusive evidence has proven or disproven its existence. In this theoretical article, we draw from sociological theories of collective identities, psychological research on menstrual synchrony, and relevant literatures on menstrual activism and sisterhood to examine the frequent occurrence of women’s belief in menstrual synchrony despite the lack of evidence that this phenomenon actually occurs. We propose a theoretical explanation for women’s beliefs in menstrual synchrony by arguing that these beliefs serve several functions that enhance gender solidarity: (a) reduction of shame and

taboo related to menstruation; (b) a socially acceptable way of constructing modern “sisterhood”; (c) a method for marking women’s relationship to nature; and (d) a pathway to fight back against sexism and sexist assumptions about menstruation and menstruating women. We argue that women’s belief in menstrual solidarity has blocked efforts to debunk “myths” associated with menstrual synchrony, as women continue to validate, perpetuate, and endorse their menstrual solidarity with other women in a culture that largely devalues both menstruation and women’s social bonds.

Fahs, B., Gonzalez, J., Coursey, R., & Robinson-Cestaro, S. (2014). Cycling together: Menstrual synchrony as a projection of gendered solidarity. *Women’s Reproductive Health*, 1(2), 90-105.

Deadline for
submissions
to the next issue
May 11th, 2015



June 4th-6th, 2015
Suffolk University, Boston

Menstrual Health and Reproductive Justice: Human Rights Across the Lifespan

Because menstrual health is a human right!

21st Biennial Conference of the
Society for Menstrual Cycle Research
at the Center for Women's Health
and Human Rights

LEGEND	
Feminism	
Menstrual Health	
Human Rights	
Reproductive Justice	

Join us for a multidisciplinary and global conference to strengthen our research, activism, clinical service, artistic expressions, and policy. We are working to achieve empowerment and social justice for women and girls everywhere by heightening menstrual health awareness, education, and services.

Conference Highlights

- Keynote by Reproductive Justice Pioneer, Loretta Ross
- Plenary on Menstrual Hygiene Management campaigns around the globe
- 2015 Making Menstruation Matter award presentation to Our Bodies Ourselves
- "Mainstreaming the Flow: (Still) Selling my Soul to Start the Conversation" with Tomi-Ann Roberts
- "Widening the Cycle": A Menstrual Art Exhibit and Plenary
- Poetry Open Mic and Raffle



Loretta Ross

For conference details: menstruationresearch.org/research/2015-conference.
Questions to SMCR2015@uws.edu.au



Call for Submissions

The Unmentionables Film Festival – Vol I: Menstruation

Maysles Cinema

June 14 – 21, 2015

Are you looking to change the conversation around menstruation? Are you interested in demonstrating how this biological occurrence is not simply a "girl problem," but an experience that touches us all in profound and unexpected ways?

If so, we want to hear from you.

The Unmentionables Film Festival is an annual theme-based program that will focus on a different "taboo" topic each year. The inaugural program, Vol. I: Menstruation, will present a week-long exploration of menstruation at Maysles Cinema, an independent film house in Manhattan.

The Festival is currently accepting submissions for narrative, documentary, and experimental short and feature-length films.

Not a filmmaker?

In addition to films and videos, the Festival seeks performances, stories, installations, visual art pieces, literary works, sound art, essays, poems, etc. on the subject of menstruation.

Website: <http://www.unmentionablesfilmfestival.com/>

Facebook: <http://on.fb.me/170rMUB>

Twitter: @unmentionableFF

..... APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Film/Video Submissions

Film and video entries can be submitted online via FilmFreeway.com, by April 3, 2015.

<https://filmfreeway.com/festival/TheUnmentionablesFilmFestival>

Non-Film/Video Submissions

Proposals for non-film/video works can be submitted using the online form on the Festival's website, by April 3, 2015.

<http://www.unmentionablesfilmfestival.com/submissions-2-1/>

Questions? Contact us at UnmentionablesFilmFestival@gmail.com

Tocarra Thomas

Co-Founder / Co-Director

The Unmentionables Film Festival

E: tocarra@unmentionablesfilmfestival.com

W: www.unmentionablesfilmfestival.com