Tidal Waves of Menstrual Knowledge

Historical Timeline of the Provisional Knowledge Surrounding Bodies of People who Menstruate

LITANY
A selection of events throughout time that contribute and impact the provisional knowledge of menstruation

The Golden Age of Menstruation

Hupa Tribe (California)
Menarche is seen as very powerful and celebrated with a flower dance that lasts up to seven days (Pember, 2018).

Tikuna Tribe (Brazil)
At menarche, woman is sent away for one year to live alone and only permitted to have one visitor who is their grandmother. The role of grandmother is to teach traditional skills (Aquino, 2020)

Ambubachi Mela (Assam, India)
A four day festival held during monsoon season to honour the goddess Kamakhya who is believed to be menstruating for these four days (Aquino, 2020)

2000 BC - 35 BC: Old Europe
Menstrual cycle and female body were regarded as sacred until peaceful matrilineal cultures of Old Europe were overturned (Northrup, 2020).

Cleansing Properties (Philippines)
A belief that menstrual blood is healing and wiping it on your face can prevent breakouts (Aquino, 2020).

Ojibwe Women (North America)
Sequester in "moon lodges" to use the time to clean and revive their energy (Remy, 2019).

putting the men in menstruation...

Aristotle believed the female body is flawed and inferior to male.

300 BC: Greece
Aristotle concluded menstrual flow was excess blood that hadn't yet been made into a fetus. He deemed it useless and inert until it encountered semen.

460 BC - 370 BC: Greece
Hippocrates (aka "Father of Medicine") believed hysteria (the Greek word for "uterus") wandered around the woman's body.

1900 BC: Egypt
Earliest record in medical history "theory about aberrant behaviour in women of wondering uterus as root of problems. As a result, Egyptian doctors routinely fed noxious substances to the female patients, hoping to drive the uterus away from the lungs and throat. Alternatively, they placed sweet smelling substances on the vulva, trying to coax it back into place" (p.51, Stein & Kim, 2009).

77 AD: Rome
Pliny the Elder write 37 volume encyclopedia "Natural History" where he includes menstruation as ""[c]ontact with the monthly flux of women turns new wine sour, crops touched becomes barren, grafts die, seed in gardens are dried up, the fruit of trees fall off, the edge of steel and the glean of ivory are dulled, hives of bees die, even bronze and iron are at once seized by rust, and a horrible smell fill the air; to taste it drives dogs mad and infects their bites with an incurable poison" (p.8, Weiss-Wolf, 2017).

400-1500: Middle Ages
In church led society, women with hysteria were tried in church courts anDemd often prosecuted as witches (Stein & Kim, 2009)

1800's: France
Neurologist, Jean-Martin Charcol, makes first scientific argument that hysteria is not womb-wondering but brain-based (Stein & Kim, 2009)

Charcol's famous students, Piere Janet & Sigmund Freud wrote that "women oppose challenge, receive passively, and add nothing of their own" (Stein & Kim, 2009).

The Slippery Slope of HIStory!
Because "women, on whole, are the same as "we" men, therefore, **the male body in medical research, and clinical practice can be used as the norm.**" The male body becomes the prototype of the human body. This attitude persists today. (p. 121, Tavris, 1993)

1700's
Female genitalia is all lumped together and indistinguishable. The belief was that men's and women's bodies are interchangeable and organs are analogous, just turned outside-in (Tavris, 1993).

1600-1800: Denmark & USA
Dutch anatomist, Bodfried Bidloo, creates set of anatomy drawing portraying male and female as the same. Uses genitals, beards, breasts, and hair length to portray sex.

Major transformational shift in belief that women's bodies are the opposite of men's. **Menstruation becomes a symbol of difference.** (Tavris, 1993).

1800's
Scientists in all fields began to emphasize the chasm between masculine and feminine natures, physical and mental. They concluded that all differences between male and female bodies were correspondingly vast, because female development had been arrested at a lower stage of evolution. Women, they said, could be placed on the evolutionary ladder with children, apes and "primitive people"" (p.121, Tavris, 1993).

1857
Edward Tilt - London physician- defended bloodletting (purging blood) to treat menopause because it mimicked menstruation, it could cure hot flashes, headaches and dizziness (p.40, Stein & Kim, 2009)

1898: USA
Dr Lyman Sperry's publication "Confidential Talks with Young Women." Promoted the idea of the intricate connection between the womb and nervous system. His advice to emotional girls was to "think twice before attending parties, picnics, or sleigh rides, which could stimulate a girl right into her own self-propelled menstrual suppression wreaking havoc on her precious fertility" (Stein & Kim, 2009).

1969
Bestselling book "Everything You Always wanted to Know about Sex (But was Afraid to Ask) by Dr. David Reuben claimed that "as estrogen is shut off, a woman comes as close as she can to being a man... To many women, the menopause marks the end of their useful life" (Stein & Kim, 2009, p.228).

Proauctization of the Period. Miseducation by Marketers

1896
Johnson & Johnson introduced the very first disposable pad, "Lister's Towels" (before the 19thC, underwear wasn't a thing) (Stein & Kim, 2009).

1920
Kotex pads went on sale and were bulky, uncomfortable, needed to be attached with safety pins/clips into elastic belts (Stein & Kim, 2009).

US companies become successful at introducing adolescent girls to menstrual products through educational campaigns (Stein & Kim, 2009).

"**Over time, schools ceded the job of teaching puberty education to product marketers** a strange division of labour that exists today" (Shawna Vostral 2000, as cited in Bobel, 2019, p.250).

Topic of menstruation shifts towards "hygiene" and away from fertility.

1940's
Disney is commissioned by Cello Cotton Co. makers of Kotex to animate the "Story of Menstruation" A cartoon shown to approx. 105 million (Stein & Kim, 2009).

1950's-1960's
Menstrual education delivered through FemCare Campaigns as "advertising wrapped in high-minded education" (Stein & Kim, 2009)

1966
"*It's Time You Knew...*" campaign by Tampax, Proctor & Gamble

1952
"*You're a Young Lady Now*" - campaign by Kotex, Kimberly-Clark

1960
"*Very Personally Yours*" - campaign by Tampax, Proctor & Gamble

1930's
Commercial tampons introduced and were clunky, awkward to insert and not especially absorbent (Stein & Kim, 2009).

1937
First menstrual cup patented by Lenora Chalmers but with little success as people didn't want to handle their own blood (Stein & Kim, 2009).

1952
Hysteria is finally disavowed by American Psychiatric Association and officially removed from the Diagnostic and Statistics Manual (Stein & Kim, 2009).

1931
Gynaecologist, Robert T Frank creates the term "premenstrual tension" published in the Archives of Neurological Psychiatry as "feeling of indescribable tension from ten to seven days preceding menstruation which, in most instances, continue until the time that menstrual flow occurs." (Tavris, 1993, p.181).

1973
Self-adhesive sanitary napkins hit the market (Stein & Kim, 2009).

1988
Psychologies Margrit Eichler, at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and two Pscyiatrists at Toronto Western Hospital, Anna Lisa Reisman and Elaine Borins, examined all issues of four professional journals: The New England Journal of Medicine, The American Journal of Psychiatry, The American Journal of Trauma, and the Canadian Journal of Surgery, **found evidence of gender bias in all stages of the research process:** in the very titles of the articles, research design, methods, data collection, and interpretation, and in treatment recommendations. **This bias turned up in American and Canadian journals and cut across all medical specialities.**" (Eichler, Reisman, Borins, 1988)

1980's
Commercial Femcare becomes national scandal over "Toxic Shock Syndrome". 38 girls and women died from "new and improved" superabsorbent tampons liike P&G's "Rely" (Stein & Kim, p.35)

Taking Women's Health into Womxn's Hands

1949
"Second Sex" is published by French Existential Philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir. Regarded as a catalyst to the second wave feminist movement.

1953: Australia
Natural Family Planning (NFP) Billings Center is established to teach Fertility Management by recognizing that cervical mucus is a fertility marker that women can be trained to recognize.

Being successfully taught in over 100 countries with prolonged clinical studies to back up the scientific validity

1955: Quebec
Serena was founded to teach Natural Family Planning (NFP) to couples in a way that promoted Catholic values

"Over fifty years of scientific research and hormonal studies have confirmed cervical mucus is the most reliable signal of fertility" ("About Billings Life", n.d.)

1960's
Birth control pills "The Pill" become available

1963
Betty Friedan's best-selling book "The Feminine Mystique" hits bookshelves putting a voice to the 'problem with no name', raising awareness of the realities of unhappy housewives across suburban America

1970
"Women and their Bodies" (OBOS) 1st edition) Published by Boston Women's Health Collective for $0.75 per copy.

1970's
Women's health collectives spring up promoting DIY Gynaecology, women's circles, self exams

OBOS sells millions of copies worldwide, is revised 9 times and translated into over 30 languages and adapted to local cultural contexts.

1986
National Institute of Health policy established to include women in health research (p.122, Tavris, 1993)

1987
The Justisse Method of fertility awareness is first developed to address the need for fertility awareness education to support menstruators to build body literacy to manage their sexual and reproductive health while respecting individual right and decisions

1995
First publication of "Taking Charge of Your Fertility: the Definitive guide to natural birth control, pregnancy achievement and reproductive health" by Toni Weshler, MPH

2015
Release of 20th Anniversary Edition of TCYOF

Democratizing Vital Knowledge via Digital Revolution

2000's
"Body literacy" is coined by Tathapi - an Indian Women's health Resource organization

2004: New York
Advocates for sexual and reproductive health held a conference "The Menstrual Cycle as a Vital Sign"

2005
"Body literacy" being able to read and understand the signs of your menstrual cycle is coined by Laura Wershler

Paula Hillard, MD, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and Pediatrics at University of Cincinnati College of Medicine stated: "The menstrual cycle is a window into the general health and well-being of owmen, not just a reproductive event (p.56, Laird, 2019).

Society for Menstrual Cycle Research (SMCR) pushing for recognition that menstrual cycle is a vital sing for anyone with a uterus (Laird, 2019).

2015
American College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists (ACOG) issued a statement that menstrual cycle should be considered a vital sign in adolescents.

2015
"The Year of the Period" (NPR)
"The Year the Period went Public" (Cosmopolitan)
#PeriodsAreNotAnInsult

Raising awareness of menstrual justice through public policies and campaigns to address period poverty, and tampon tax

2016
Menstrual Health Hub is registered in Berlin, Germany as a global community working across the non-profit-enterprise world to collectively impact women's health through research and innovation

2017
The Body Literacy Collective is established to serve the fertility awareness community and

The Body Literacy Collective launches the Read Your Body app. Designed through collaboration with fertility awareness educators and charters from around the world

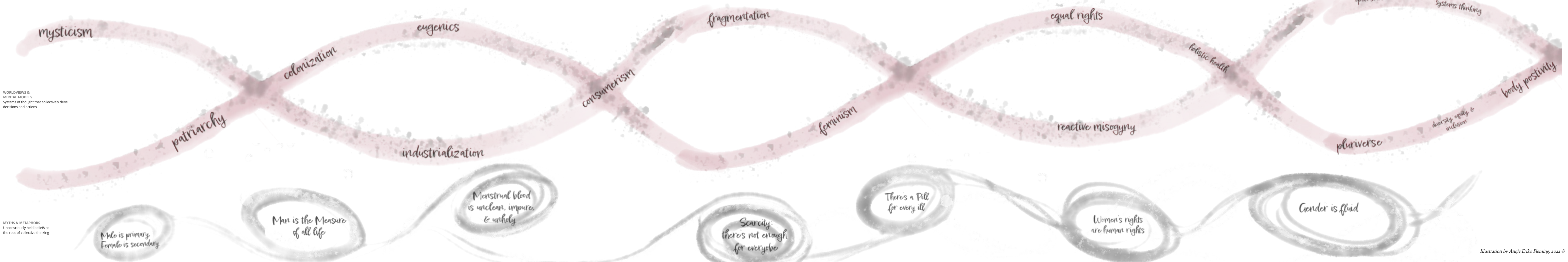
2019
Global Menstrual Health Collective is established in Geneva to amplify efforts of menstrual health movement (including education) to address the lack of sufficient and evidence-based investment.

Wave 1: Ancient Wisdom | **Wave 2:** Ancient History, Middle Ages through 20th Century | **Wave 3:** First Wave Feminism (Late 19th Century - Early 20th Century) | **Wave 4:** Second Wave Feminism (1960's - 1970's) | **Wave 5:** Third Wave Feminism (2000's - Present)

TIME AS NONLINEAR
The past, present, and future overlap as distinct paradigms

WORLDVIEWS & MENTAL MODELS
Systems of thought that collectively drive decisions and actions

MYTHS & METAPHORS
Unconsciously held beliefs at the root of collective thinking



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