

[Thesis: The Genesis of Premenstrual Syndrome \(PMS\)](#)

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By: Zietal, Bianca Keywords: [History of science](#)^[2] [History of diagnosing PMS](#)^[3]

Editor's note:

Bianca Zietal defended her thesis titled "The Genesis of Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)" in April 2016 in front of committee members James Hurlbut, Jennifer Dyck Brian, and Jason Robert, earning her a Master of Science degree.

<https://repository.asu.edu/items/38771>^[4]

Abstract:

This is a project about medicine and the history of a condition called premenstrual syndrome (PMS), its "discovery" and conceptual development at both scientific and socio-cultural levels. Since it was first mentioned in medical literature, PMS has been explored empirically as a medical condition and conceptually as a non-somatic cultural phenomenon. Many attempts have been made to produce scientific, empirical evidence to bolster the theory of PMS as a biological disease. Some non-medical perspectives argue that invoking biology as the cause of PMS medicalizes a natural function of the female reproductive system and shallowly interrogates what is actually a complex bio-psycho-social phenomenon. This thesis questions both sides of this debate in order to reveal how criteria for PMS were categorized despite disagreement surrounding its etiology.

This thesis illustrates how the concept of PMS developed and was informed by the discovery of [hormones](#)^[5] and the resulting field of [endocrinology](#)^[6] that provided a framework for conceptualizing PMS. It displays how the development of the medical diagnostic category of PMS developed in tandem with the emergence of the field of [endocrinology](#)^[6] and was legitimized and effectively medicalized through this connection. The diagnosis of PMS became established through diagnostic techniques like questionnaires in spite of persistent disagreement over its definition. The thesis shows how these medical concepts and practices legitimated the category of PMS, and how it has become ubiquitous in contemporary culture.

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