

The Body in the Workplace

Oct 2020

Welcome to the Body in the Workplace Series!

In this biannual newsletter, we will circulate recent media publications and academic articles that consider the body in the workplace and relevant policy and legal responses. As COVID-19 turns the working world upside down, we are witnessing a critical redefinition of the concept of 'work' and a global reckoning with the vulnerability of the human body. This unprecedented crisis raises an issue so conveniently and frequently ignored in workplaces until now – workers are embodied humans with physiological and psychological needs.

As feminist scholars in the gender and industrial relations space, we think it is timely to turn our attention to the future of embodied work. The COVID-era has brought many issues of interest to work and organisational scholars into the public domain, including the critical role of unpaid care work, the widespread implementation of flexible work-from-home (WFH) arrangements and the devastating economic and human consequences of casualised work. Permeating these conversations, however, is a mindfulness of workers' embodied needs, ranging from the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) for essential workers to support for parents in a WFH arrangement.

Moving forward to a post-COVID era, we hope to gain further insight into how the workplace can make radical strides and offer a truly inclusive and supportive experience for all workers. This means recognising the emotional labour of work while also turning our attention to the physical body at work. While the pandemic has brought the issue of workplace embodiment to the fore, we are reminded that this has long been a subject of feminist struggle, though not one which has always been inclusive of all gender identities and intersectional experiences.

This biannual newsletter is designed to be a resource that builds scholarly awareness of the body in the workplace, the challenges posed by current forms of organizing and regulating work, and alternative possibilities. We plan to circulate resources and materials that shed light on – and make space for – the body at work from a range of disciplinary backgrounds including industrial relations, law, health, political economy, culture and gender studies and media.

We invite you to forward us any articles or publications you would like us to include in the next newsletter. Please send all suggestions with links to sydney.colussi@sydney.edu.au

We look forward to exploring this new and evolving area of scholarship with you.

Sydney Colussi, Elizabeth Hill and Marian Baird

Media

- Wendy Tuohy, 'Australia's first claim for "reproductive leave" gets backing' The Age
- Kellie Scott, 'Getting Support at Work When You Have Your Period' ABC News
- Rachael Revesz, 'In this New Post-Coronavirus World, One Day of Menstrual Leave A Month is All I Ask' Independent
- The New Indian Express, 'Bengaluru-based Firm Horses Stable News is Giving Period Leave to All'
- Sydney Colussi, 'Menstrual Leave – Making Space for the Body at Work' The Leak
- Alexandra Stevenson, 'Shaved Heads, Adult Diapers: Life as a Nurse in the Coronavirus Outbreak' The New York Times
- Geneva Abdul, 'Company's Paid Leave for Periods Takes on A Workplace Taboo' The New York Times
- Sophie Wilson, 'We Must Include Trans Men and Non-binary People When We Talk about Periods – Here's Why' Vogue

Academia

- Barnack-Tavlaris et al 'Taking Leave to Bleed: Perceptions and Attitudes toward Menstrual Leave Policy' (2019) 40(12) Health Care for Women International
- Crawford et al, 'The Ground on Which We All Stand: A Conversation about Menstrual Equity Law and Activism' (2019) 26(2) Michigan Journal of Gender & Law
- Bobel et al, The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstrual Studies (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020)
- Baird, Hill and Colussi 'Mapping Menstrual Leave Legislation and Policy Historically and Globally: A Labour Entitlement to Reinforce, Remedy or Revolutionise Gender Equality at Work?' (under review)
- Beth Goldblatt and Linda Steele, 'Engaging with Law's Menstrual Moment' Australian Feminist Law Journal (forthcoming)

The Body@Work Project and newsletter is convened by Sydney Colussi, A/Prof Elizabeth Hill and Prof Marian Baird, The University of Sydney.