

VRA EAC Community Hour

Wednesday, August 16, 3:00-4:00pm EDT / 12:00-1:00pm PDT

Subseries: Living in a Body in the Workplace

Topic: Article Discussion: [Tackling Taboo Topics: A Review of the Three Ms in Working Women's Lives](#)

Please Note:

- Although the authors refer to these experiences as being "natural" for "women," they can (*but not necessarily*) affect individuals assigned female at birth, not just those that identify as women.
- Menstruation, maternity, and menopause are not universal experiences for all individuals assigned female at birth, nor do these experiences define womanhood.
- The hour is open to all bodies/genders who wish to engage in a discussion about how the three factors mentioned in the article affect individuals experiencing these medical states.
- This article was published in January 2020, which was before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics regarding women in the workforce have likely changed since the article was published.

Moderator: Summer Shetenhelm

Notes: Cindy G. Frank

- Please keep your microphones muted--please use a reaction, raise your hand, or use the chat to indicate that you would like to speak.
- **Video not required**, virtual backgrounds welcome (be mindful of your virtual background selections). Feel free to add your pronouns to your Zoom name.
 - [How to change your name during a Zoom meeting](#)
 - How to provide captions via [PowerPoint](#) or [Google Slides live captions](#)
 - <https://webcaptioner.com/> - Free Captioning Right In Your Browser

- If you'd like to ask a question anonymously, please send your question through a private chat to any moderators listed above.
- **Community Hours are not recorded** for the sake of attendees' privacy and so that all attendees feel safe to express any concerns or questions they may have on various topics.

Attendees are encouraged to take notes under the '[Community Notes](#)' section of this document.

EAC webpage: <https://www.vraweb.org/equitable-action-committee>

EAC email: ea@vraweb.org

Submit a topic for a future Community Hour: <https://forms.gle/cAx7na4FkZSJvHeS7>

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Thank you! [Visual Resources Equitable Action Committee](#)

Discussion Prompts:

- What were your initial reflections on the reading? Did you learn or become aware of anything you hadn't thought about before?
- How can we create a discourse around the three Ms that is inclusive of trans and nonbinary folks?
- Do library/museum work environments create any particular advantages or challenges relating to the three Ms? Particular GLAM departments or job functions? Job status (ex. permanent vs contract)?
- How do we convert stigma to ordinary expectation?

Community Notes:

- Any initial reflections. One main takeaway - dense article. I am a little iffy, but the article seemed to say we don't have 100% evidence that hormonal changes affect moods. But society does have some expectations that hormonal changes do affect moods, health. Does that mean it is my fault?
- That is an interesting thing to think about. Call for more investigation. What about testosterone levels in persons assigned male at birth?
- Is it the hormones or how the hormones affect our sleep, pain levels, emotions?

- What are the side effects? Does that count if changes in your hormones make you feel worse? At what point do we cut off how we feel in our bodies?
- Citing study after study after study where the onus is on the person to prove that they need to alter their schedule. Prove it, bring a doctor's note. Why, why should a person have to share their personal life, their personal health situations?
- How about just give people more sick time. Instead of worrying - have I earned enough time to take time off? You should have the space to manage your health how you see fit. Scenario: a pregnant person had to get a note to use a stool while she was pregnant.
- What can be changed in the workplace to accommodate everyone?
- How about a more humane workplace for all bodies at all phases of life?
- Even after the pandemic, working folks wanting to continue the work from home benefits. Working from home provides situations for breastfeeding, washing your menstrual cup.
- Other health situations like IBS where a person needs access to a bathroom, shouldn't have to walk across an entire museum to use a bathroom facility with the general public.
- What about contract vs permanent employees? What situations might force you to work when feeling less than ideal? A job where the position is not guaranteed?
- The ideal corporate employee as an unencumbered unemotional body.
- We are so accustomed to being uncomfortable that after a while we don't even notice it. There is virtue in being uncomfortable. Ugh
- "Work in a 100 year old building, isn't that great?" But what about the temperature issues, the accessibility issues?
- This comes to light when an able bodied person breaks their leg and suddenly the accessibility issues become so apparent. If we originally created a space that we can all get through, this would work better. Universal design!
- Gendered aspects of work that are tied to vocational awe. The types of work we do, the self-sacrifice. Class-based and gender-based. When someone is innovative, how is that made masculine, and thus excluding everybody else?.
- A 1988 study pointed out that men are equally "moody" while women did not show the stereotypical mood fluctuations expected with the menstrual cycle.
- The pain of the menstrual cycle, different for everyone. Not the pain Olympics. Google "period cramp simulator" There is no Hierarchy of pain
- Interesting that the article brought up menopause. Paying attention to all the M's, when society plays most attention to the sanctity of motherhood. Double edged sword of motherhood - It's so great you are having a baby; you might have a baby, so I won't hire you. Different levels of respect for the middle M.
- What about all our male colleagues who are bosses and have kids. Would you think the same about a Male-presenting boss working, leading the scout troop, extra-curriculars, as a Female-presenting a person doing the same amount of work, kid care, extra-curriculars too.
- Re: perimenopause - no one talks about all the various symptoms that include mental and physical symptoms. Why do I need to try to fit my body to the culture as opposed to trying to change the culture?
- How are we constructing our work in a way to get things done, can we modify our work space? Mental health challenges, hidden disabilities, transitioning, all of it.

- Is it hormones, is it my brain? If you don't fit in this environment, maybe it's the environment.
- Staffing - we were still working from home and so no one noticed a hospitalization. Would that have been different if we were all working in person? More sharing of the workload, cross-training, redundancy spread across several people so we can help each other.
- Combination of work overload and health challenges.
- Like my job but would like the space to like it more.
- Perfectionism, productivity, more is better, competition, hoarding of positions, White supremacy in the workplace. All linked to Colonial and imperialist ways of doing.
- Who is making the decisions? White men of about the same age. Are you giving other voices a platform; or just using the labor?
- 3 Ms could be incorporated into DEI initiatives in the workplace. Disability should be part of DEI programs, but what are the unintended consequences? Wondering what are the unintended consequences? Who is doing the extra labor, and who is being recognized for the extra labor? One person could get recognized for it, but for another person it might be taken as an expected duty but not compensated.
- Flex time, personal leave days for you to use whenever vs structuring sick days vs holidays vs vacation days, etc.
- Bathrooms - my employer provides period products in every bathroom, not just the women's room. Anyone seen the latest Midol ad? Better representation of a not-stereotypical menstruating person.
- Idea of changing tables only in certain gendered restrooms. In a more universally designed world, how about all non-gendered restrooms, with full stall doors, and changing tables and free menstrual products?
- The average person at the average point in their career. How do these Ms affect your career? When certain phases hit people when in different points of their careers. If you are always going from job to job, the security of your job is different and there is no "career" per se that contains early, mid, and late stages. What about blue collar jobs? Service sector, etc.?
- How do we change this? Stop expecting people to explain their health conditions. Use the language of the 3M's.
- How do we implement and normalize universal design? We live in bodies and we have fluctuations in energy, focus. Set the example with language and action. Reach out to your team, how is everyone doing? Trust your coworkers.
- There's no such thing as a bibliographic emergency! Therefore we don't need to act like our jobs revolve around emergencies.

Resources:

- [SEI Inclusive Language Guide](#)