Innovations in menstrual organisation

Redistributing boundaries, capitals, and labour

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Abstract

This thesis explores menstruation and organisation, and is based on two qualitative case studies. Menstrual experience is normatively constructed through a prism of longstanding stigma, which shapes individual and collective organisational conventions. I develop a feminist socioeconomic lens, drawing from Silvia Federici (2004) and Beverley Skeggs (1997), to identify the ways in which menstrual stigma has been mobilised under capitalism to organise and constrain boundaries, capitals and labour. In recent years, new menstrual practices have emerged to potentially challenge stigmatising norms. Informed by a feminist ethnographic ethos, my empirical research investigated the uptake of two such innovations: menstrual cup use in undergraduate students in Melbourne, Australia, and a menstrual workplace policy in a social enterprise in Bristol, UK.

My research aimed to study what happens to organisational and organising dynamics when women and workplaces adopt menstrual innovations. Data gathered included interview and meeting recordings, participant diaries, policy documents, emails, media coverage, and field notes. The key findings were that (i) articulation of menstrual experience increased, (ii) such articulation, along with specific properties of the innovations, generated a broader sense of embodiment permission (which also benefited non-menstruators), and (iii) both innovations accrued social and economic capital through value associations, redrawing lines of power and control in menstrual labour. Such changes were complicated by being both aligned with and disruptive of neoliberal constructs. My thesis contributes to debates in Management and Organisation Studies on the body, capitals and labour; situates menstruation as a locus of entwined topics of interest within Feminist Organisation Studies; and makes a methodological contribution to data analysis in feminist research.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Lara Owen

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Supervision

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Glossary

This glossary includes definitions of key terms and concepts used in the thesis. It also includes terms related to menstruation that are mentioned in the thesis.

Affect: I use the term 'affect' in the psychological sense of a feeling or emotion in an individual that can be discerned by an onlooker. Affect is characterised as distinct from mood (Batson, Shaw & Oleson, 1992): while it can signify a mood, affect can change more rapidly.

Agency: I use 'agency' in the sense of the individual freedom to act, choose, and shape one's own life. Agency is usually employed in sociology in relationship to systemic structure, by which it can both constrained and enabled. Agency is related to other key concepts used in this thesis, such as cultural capital. For example: "the concept of cultural capital, for instance, shifts power and agency back into the hands of those who have restricted access to it" (Skeggs, 1997, p. 166).

Capital: I use 'capital' as in Skeggs' (1997) interpretation of Bourdieu's theory of capitals as "capital movements through social space" (p. 8). In this sense, various types of capital operate together as the basis for a model of class in which status and power are derived from literal and metaphorical worth, perceived through different lenses of value: cultural capital is derived through cultural embodied conceptions such as gender, through cultural goods, and through knowledge and skill; social capital through connections and associations; and economic capital through ownership of and/or access to financial wealth and material assets (Bourdieu 1979, 1984, 1987, 1989). Symbolic capital emerges once a type of capital is recognised and legitimised (Bourdieu, 1979, 1989).

Commons: 'The commons' was originally a term for land that was available to all. It became extended as a political economy term to apply to natural resources more broadly (the common-wealth). The commons has come to mean that which is not owned privately, and its protection and identification championed as a counter-perspective and corrective to capitalism (e.g. Ostrom, 1990). Federici (2004, pp. 71-72) emphasises the historic value and importance to women of the commons as central to their safety, social life, and domestic management, and through which they established solidarity and built community. Enclosure of the (land) commons destroyed the "web of community relations" (ibid) and was accompanied by enclosure of the cultural commons, such as the "marginalization of the midwife" and the knowledge lost through the vilification and burning of transgressors of the patriarchal code (ibid, p. 89). In this thesis I use 'the commons' in all these meanings.

Dysmenorrhea: Dysmenorrhea is an medical umbrella term for all types and causes of uterine pain experienced during the menstrual period. Primary dysmenorrhea is typical in that it is part of the normal physiology of menstruation, and is caused by the actions of prostaglandins that, in effect, apply pressure to the uterine wall to control menstrual bleeding. Such pain has been found to be equivalent in intensity to the contractions in stage 2 of labour when giving birth. Secondary dysmenorrhea

is less common, and refers to pain from a distinct pathology such as endometriosis or uterine fibroids.

Enclosure: I use 'enclosure' to refer to externally-derived constraint to individual agency and capital(s), whether that derives from the fencing of the literal borders of the land commons, or from symbolic borders such as the constraining effects of the fear of menstrual blood. Silvia Federici (2004) identified the capitalist disciplining of women as a central tool in the systematic enclosure that enabled capitalism. My use of enclosure thus includes the social demand to practice restrictive and labour-demanding respectability protocols during menstrual bleeding.

Endometriosis: Endometriosis is a complex condition that can cause extreme suffering. It appears to arise from endometrial tissue (which would normally develop monthly and be shed at menstruation) growing outside of the uterus in clusters that bleed and cause intense pelvic pain and other symptoms. The mechanism and aetiology for this process is as yet unclear. Some research suggests these clumps of tissue may be similar to endometrial tissue but not identical. Women with endometriosis suffer worsened symptoms during menstruation and in particular have severe dysmenorrhea. It is estimated that 10% of menstruators suffer with the condition. The economic toll on individuals and the economy is significant: "The total economic burden per year in Australia in the reproductive aged population (at 10% prevalence) was 6.50 billion Int$." (Armour, Lawson et al, 2019, p. 1).

Ethos: I use the term 'ethos' as "an objectively systematic set of dispositions with an ethical dimension" (Bourdieu 1993, p. 85) and a constituent of habitus.

Habitus: The concept of 'habitus' originated in medieval translation of Aristotle's use of 'hexis', usually translated as 'state'. I use habitus as Bourdieu (1977, 1984) developed it, as the "bodily hexis" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 474) -- the embodied disposition -- governed by tastes and distinctions constituted by and through learned and absorbed habits and structures. Habitus is built up over time and strongly influenced by early childhood experience, emerging from cultural, social and economic origins, and largely subconsciously developed and held. Habitus is expressed and reproduced in both literal and symbolic terms to create social structure, which then acts upon individual agency (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus is thus entwined with class and capitals, and is both individually and collectively derived and (re)produced.

Introjected phallogocentrism: In the 1970s, Jacques Derrida began using the neologism 'phallogocentrism' to refer to the privileging of the masculine (phallocentrism) in the construction of meaning (logos), (e.g. in the essay *Tympan,* 1972, see Derrida, 1982). Elizabeth Grosz (1994) expanded this term to 'introjected phallogocentrism', to describe how patriarchal norms are absorbed by women to become inwardly and often unconsciously turned against their own femaleness, and femaleness in general, while simultaneously valorising and privileging the masculine.

Menorrhagia: Menorrhagia is a medical term for excessive menstrual bleeding (>80 ml per period). Menorrhagia limits activities and leads to distress, fatigue, and in two-

thirds of known cases, to clinical anaemia. There is some confusion among women as to what constitutes 'excessive' bleeding, and doctors may dismiss reports. Rates of reporting to medical professionals vary country to country, which may indicate that cultural issues impact upon seeking medical care. Prevalence of menorrhagia is difficult to assess accurately, but research indicates that most women experience it at some point, most commonly in perimenopause, with 5% of women in the UK presenting annually to medical practitioners, and one in five under the age of 60 having a hysterectomy (treatment of last resort), the majority of which are due to the condition. (See https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3285230/).

Methodology: The term 'methodology' describes the overarching research design principles and/or the whole set of practices and assumptions generating the research, including the *methods* involved (e.g. Bryman & Bell, 2003).

Neoliberalism: 'Neoliberalism' is a critical political economy term used to describe the laissez-faire nature of free market economics, particularly in the context of its social, cultural and economic consequences, such as cuts in public spending, most recently positioned as 'austerity measures' (e.g. Fraser et al, 2013). Current usage of the term 'neoliberalism' dates from the late 1970s/early 1980s with the end of the mid-century dominance of Keynsian state responsibility (social democratic) ideology and the beginning of 'trickle-down' economic theory and practice. Contemporary neoliberalism is characterised by financial and corporate deregulation, the sale of public assets and lowered business taxation, and related sociocultural trends that relax previous limits and taboos (Gammon, 2012).

Onto-epistemological: I use 'onto-epistemological' from a feminist, post-Cartesian position in recognition that knowledge emerges through the entanglement of what is being researched with the ways and by whom it is being researched. Specifically, I take inspiration from Barad (2007, p. 185) who argued that "Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse".

Primitive accumulation: The accumulation concept (with its implied sense of 'original') was first identified by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) and refers to the resources that initially fuelled capitalism. Marx (1867) asserted that original accumulation was primarily derived from the enclosure of both land and workers. Federici (2004) uses 'primitive accumulation', which is an old translation of Marx's *ursprüngliche akkumulation*. While it is generally accepted now that the better translation for *ursprüngliche* is 'original' or 'originary' (Morris, 2016), Federici's term has the benefit of echoing something of the nature of the practices that mobilised the accumulation, such as land grabs achieved through violent means.

Relational ontologies: Relational ontology emphasises the relations between and among entities, (such as subject and object, self and others, humans and artefacts,

and individuals, groups and systems), and is influential in developing methodology to research organisational dynamics (e.g. Kyriakidou & Özbilgin, 2006). Relational ontology is philosophically contiguous with concepts such as onto-epistemology and intersubjectivity in centring connections, involvements and interdependencies rather than particularities and singularities.

Respectability: Beverley Skeggs (1997) identified how working-class women employ respectability protocols as a compensatory mechanism for low social, cultural and economic capitals.

Transgression: Silvia Federici (2004) developed the term 'transgression' in the context of the enclosure (control) of women through witch-hunts coincident with the entrenchment of capitalism. In Federici's argument, women who lived or behaved outside the bounds of heteronormative, patriarchal norms were deemed to be social transgressors, with such positioning used to justify their murder in order to control the broader female population. From this basis, I develop the term 'reproductive transgression' and apply this to menstrual respectability codes and the enclosure of the menstruating woman.

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction to menstruation & organisation

My thesis is concerned with the organisation of menstruation, a cyclical and near-universal element in women's lives that has long been stigmatised (e.g. de Beauvoir, 1953; Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013b). Such stigmatisation has affected the inclusion of menstruation as a topic of research in Management and Organisation Studies (MOS). By the organisation of menstruation, I refer to multiple modes of organising and being organised, in private and in public contexts including workplaces and organisations. These modes of organising include: the organising nature of menstruation itself, with its cyclical pattern and biological imperatives; the practices through which women manage menstrual blood, time and symptoms; the ways organisations and institutions variously ignore, constrain, acknowledge and enable menstrual cyclicity and wellbeing through working practices and facilities; the ways in which corporations organise menstrual management and conceptualisations through product design and marketing discourse; and, increasingly, the ways in which governments and international institutions frame and engage with menstruation, for example through commodities and concepts of poverty and lack.

Behind the expressions of these modes of organising is a broad organising principle historically predicated on stigmatisation and based on an androcentric worldview (e.g. Young, 2005). Research has shown how such broadly-based menstrual stigma manifests through silencing (e.g. Murray, 1998; Pascoe, 2007) and self-objectification (e.g. Sveinsdóttir 2017; Spadaro, 2018) to entrench and normalise (introjected) misogynistic prejudice (e.g. Grosz, 1994). These effects are reproduced

through practices of menstrual organisation such as disposable menstrual product use and marketing (e.g. Erchull, 2013; Grose & Grabe, 2014), and workplace expectations and behaviours (e.g. Roberts, 2002; Sayers & Jones, 2015).

In this thesis, I focus empirically on innovations in two modes within menstrual organisation: *menstrual products* and *menstruation in workplaces*. In this introductory chapter, I briefly outline the context, theory, methodology, findings, and contributions of my research, and explain how the thesis is structured.

1.2. Menstruation in Management & Organisation Studies

A Management and Organisation (MOS) orientation is pertinent, interesting and useful to bring to bear on the topic of menstruation, where commodification, organisational culture, bureaucratic principles, and cultural reproduction all come together to organise menstruation in distinct ways. Yet, menstruation in general is under-researched, and this is certainly the case in MOS.

Feminist scholars in MOS have noted "the radical otherness of menstruation in the context of the workplace" (Kenny & Bell, 2011, p. 166), and have empirically observed in broader studies how menstruation is a locus of body disciplining, embarrassment and shame at work (e.g. Trethewey, 1999). However, there has been little empirical research focused directly on the topic within the discipline. In a groundbreaking article on online discourse about menstruation in the workplace, Sayers and Jones (2015) argued that menstruation "should be a required topic for organizational studies" (p. 94). Grandey et al (2019), writing in the Journal of Management, note that the difficulties at work imposed on women for bearing the brunt of the embodied responsibility for

reproduction, including menstruation, have been underacknowledged and under-researched.

In recent years significant alterations have occurred in public conceptualisations of menstruation (Weiss-Wolf, 2017; Bobel & Fahs, 2018), giving rise to new organising and organisational practices. As yet, there have been few studies on the organisational impact of such alterations to conventional menstrual behaviours and attitudes. Thus, in addition to the general lack of research on normative menstrual practices, there are new areas of management and organisational experience that warrant study from a MOS perspective. Menstruation is a rich site for study that brings together organisational experience and structuring of gender, embodiment, stigma, and cyclicity with their socioeconomic and human relations. As such, and given the contemporary interest and activity, this is a vivid moment to study this long-neglected topic within the MOS discipline.

1.3. Theoretical development overview

Within MOS, my thesis is situated in Feminist Organisation Studies (FOS) (e.g. Acker, 1990, 1998; Calás & Smircich, 1996, 2006, 2014; Gherardi, 2010; Benschop & Verloo, 2016). FOS is an umbrella term for feminist analysis within MOS (Grosser & Moon, 2019). Such work explores the gendering of workplaces and of organisational life more broadly, as well as the gendering of ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies within the discipline, and the politics of academic research and careers. Scholars whose work can be situated under this umbrella have been concerned with feminist research methods (e.g. Helin, 2013), feminist writing methods (e.g. Harding, 2013), and women scholars' relationship to the academy (e.g. Pullen, 2018). This sub-

discipline has been strongly influenced by psychosocial gender analysis from a post-structuralist perspective (e.g. Fotaki & Harding, 2017) but is also home to socialist, materialist, and material feminist perspectives concerned with organisational topics. FOS contributes to a growing body of work on feminist resistance to social norms (e.g. Pullen & Vachhani, 2018) and new developments in feminism(s) in organisational contexts (e.g. Bell et al, 2018).

Several scholars whose work can be positioned as contributing to FOS have been central to efforts to research ways in which the gendered body is constituted and positioned within the workplace and in organisational contexts more broadly (e.g. Acker, 1990; Trethewey, 1999). Gendered socioeconomics and gendered embodiment, both theoretically pertinent to my thesis, are themes that can be found across various theoretical positions within FOS. I suggest that gendered socioeconomics has received relatively less attention compared to other aspects of gender in organisations in MOS, and part of my theoretical contribution comes from my development of it in this thesis.

In scoping out and supporting my research, I draw from three main literature streams situated within and beyond FOS: gender, work & embodiment (e.g. Acker, 1990; Mavin & Grandy, 2016a, 2016b; Riach et al, 2014; Trethewey, 1999; Tyler, 2011;); gender, capital and feminisms (e.g. Skeggs, 1997; Federici, 2004; Fraser, 2009, 2013; Prügl, 2002, 2015; Rottenberg, 2017, 2018a, 2016b); and Critical Menstrual Studies (e.g. Bobel, 2010, 2018; Kissling, 2006; Rostvik, 2018; Vostral, 2010, 2019). In the latter category, menstruation as a topic forms a connective tissue between critical studies in several disciplines, including Organisation Studies, Economics, Management, Marketing, Art and Art History, History, Anthropology, and Culture, Women's, and Gender Studies.

Bringing these streams of literature together allows me to draw connections between the ways female embodiment stigma in organisational contexts is broadly mobilised to entrench gendered norms that systematically disadvantage women; the modes through which capitalism suppresses and oppresses women and uses female labour; and the specific ways in which menstrual stigma is both enacted and disrupted. The combination of organisational embodiment theory and bodies at work research in FOS/MOS, feminist political economy and socioeconomic analysis, and specific critical multi- and inter-disciplinary work on menstruation allows me to build a picture of the organisation of menstruation, and supports conceptualisation of the multiplicity of organisational effects found in my data.

Working more specifically out of this background, I develop a feminist socioeconomic theoretical framework centred in the work of Silvia Federici (2004) and Beverley Skeggs (1997). Silvia Federici exposes the historic relationship between the systematic othering of women and expropriation of their reproductive labour with the entrenchment of patriarchal capitalism as a hegemonic socioeconomic structure. Beverley Skeggs identifies how low social and economic capitals combine in women's lives to thwart self-worth, and how this loss is compensated for through respectability protocols infused with fear and anxiety. Both of these analyses inform each other and speak to menstrual conceptualisations in a socioeconomic context. Key concepts developed out of their work for this thesis explore women's experience of *enclosure, the commons*, and *transgression* (from Federici), and *habitus, capitals* and *respectability*

(from Skeggs).[1] These key themes form a framework for the conceptualisation of my findings and subsequent discussion.

1.4. Research & methodology overview

Development of "an anti-oppressive feminist praxis" (Kelly et al, 1994, p. 28) remains ongoing, and is crucial to developing research in specific areas of life in which women have been systematically oppressed, such as menstruation. I have taken a feminist perspective to all aspects and stages of my methodology, from research question (RQ) development through to data analysis and writing up. I allowed an iterative approach to lead me to a single broad and open research question: *What happens to organisational and organising dynamics when women and workplaces adopt menstrual innovations?*

To explore this question, I studied two contemporary innovations: the menstrual cup and the menstrual workplace policy. This choice came about initially because they were each a contemporaneously active site of menstrual reorganisation: it was only later that I began to understand just how interwoven they were. I performed both studies in urban, Global North situations: while some research has been undertaken on menstrual cup use and menstrual workplace practices as separate issues in the Global South (as discussed below), there has been very little in the Global North and/or from an organisational perspective, and certainly no studies that have looked at both matters simultaneously.

[1] See the Glossary (p. viii) for definitions of these terms.

The extant studies in the Global South were informative and offered indications for my own empirical research. In Africa, menstrual cups have been found to have a largely positive effect upon women's lived experience of menstruating in terms of comfort, economics, autonomy, and ability to continue working while menstruating (Beskinka et al, 2015; Mason et al, 2016). In Asia menstrual workplace accommodations are more common than elsewhere, and are traditionally positioned as 'menstrual leave'. Studies suggest that traditional blanket menstrual leave, in which all menstruating women are entitled to either one or two days off every month, is problematic and rarely utilised in the contemporary world of work (Chang et al, 2011, 1). More recent research and media articles have focused on the negative constructions and outcomes of traditional menstrual leave (e.g. King, 2019; Wilder, 2019) noting that such practices are located in countries with poor records of gender equality. However, there is no empirical research published to date on other ways of accommodating to the menstrual cycle in the workplace and in the Global North.

I undertook my two case studies with relatively small cohorts: the first concerned the uptake of menstrual cups in eleven young women undergraduate students in Australia, and the second explored the adoption of a menstrual workplace policy in a social enterprise in the United Kingdom staffed by 32 employees. These studies were informed by a feminist ethnographic ethos (inspired by Skeggs, 2001) and further conceptualised through Sullivan's (2002) development of bureaucratic and charismatic modes of analysis (building on Bakhtin). My own analysis draws from multiple data sources, including interview and meeting recordings and transcripts, participant diaries, policy documents, emails, media coverage, and field notes.

1.5. Findings overview

The findings of both case studies demonstrated ways in which the cup and the policy recast boundaries related to menstruation, particularly in terms of increased articulation of embodied experience. These boundary changes in turn reshaped social and cultural capitals surrounding menstruation along with assumptions of capital accumulation and normative practices controlling and organising labour.

Staff in the workplace study developed a term, "the permission field", to describe the organisational changes wrought by the menstrual policy. The lived sense of a boundary shift was vividly expressed through this term, which I found was also applicable to the menstrual cup study. Menstrual cup users experienced a change in the permission field in several ways, including having less work to do surrounding menstruation, less anxiety in its management, an altered embodiment experience of their own blood and anatomy, and more conversation with family, friends and partners about menstruation and menstrual blood. In the workplace study, the new permission field extended to non-menstruating staff, who also felt more permission to "bring their bodies to work". The perceived needs of the body became easier to articulate and allow for. Such articulation extended not only into organisational meetings and discussions, but to international mainstream media.

1.6. Contributions overview

This thesis advances knowledge on menstrual innovations and organisation and more broadly contributes to the theorisation of gendered organisation and embodiment in Management and Organisation Studies and specifically in Feminist Organisation Studies. The thesis also contributes to knowledge on feminist research methods through

the development of a dual analysis technique to capture affective dimensions in a study on a stigmatised topic.

For example, this thesis contributes to embodiment theorisation in MOS by its finding that male/non-menstruator embodiment is influenced by new approaches to menstrual embodiment; to FOS and Critical Menstrual Studies through its findings of the paradoxical effects of menstrual innovations; and to feminist socioeconomic theory by its indications that innovations in permissions and practices surrounding menstrual embodiment can generate capitals rather than deplete them. In addition, I identify the outlines of nascent redistributive flows that support menstrual experience, in contrast to the longstanding utilisation of menstruation as a means to stigmatise women and constrain their socioeconomic status.

1.7. How this thesis is structured

The literature review is embedded within Chapter 2 on background and context, and Chapter 3 on theoretical development. Chapter 4 presents an overview and justification of the methodology and research design used in this study. Findings from my two case studies are structured conventionally in two parts, as *The cup* (Chapter 5) and *The policy* (Chapter 6), with the two studies analysed together in the discussion (Chapter 7). The thesis itself is structured through a dual bureaucratic and charismatic lens, which shows most obviously in my methodology, particularly through the technique I developed for data analysis, and in my writing up. The conventional (bureaucratic) sections form the bulk of the writing, with a section of 'charismatic' writing situated in between the two findings chapters and nominated as an 'interlude'. This section of "writing differently" (Gilmore et al, 2019), consists of two pieces of self-

reflexive "dirty writing" (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008) which give a glimpse into how my own menstrual experience influenced my research and how my research in turn affected me, with attention to what this might indicate about doing research on a stigmatised topic. These two pieces act as an alternate mode of expression (Pullen, 2018; Sinclair, 2018; Weatherall, 2018), representing something of the 'drop down' that some of my participants referenced as a way of conceptualising the experience of menstruation.

2. Background & context

Chapter introduction

This chapter establishes the broad social and economic context of my research.

First, I look at key issues informing the normative organisation of menstruation, and ways in which research has shown menstrual stigma to filter down and through organisational practices.

Second, I explore recent disruptions in menstrual organisation, which arise in a context of neoliberalism in tension with post-Global Financial Crisis counterpolitics, and manifest through a surge in menstrual activism entangled with new technologies.

2.1. Organising menstruation

2.1.1. The social, political and economic construction of menstruation

Menstruation is normatively organised through its stigmatisation (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013b). From the earliest feminist writing on menstruation (de Beauvoir, 1953) to the present (e.g. Barnett, 2019), the ubiquity and persistence of menstrual stigma is a central and recurring theme. Feminist scholars have noted the political nature of menstrual stigma; how it is rooted in patriarchal social construction (e.g. Laws, 1990), and sustains global gendered oppression (e.g. Bobel, 2018). The abjection of the menstruating woman has been and continues to be identified as a significant factor in female self-objectification (e.g. Roberts, 2004), impacting on and impacted by consumption narratives (e.g. Davidson, 2012) and practices (e.g. Lamont et al, 2019), and in working life (Roberts, 2002; Grandey et al, 2019).

Stigma is evidenced through individualised strategies designed to conceal menstrual status and allow the menstruator to 'pass' as if she is not bleeding (Vostral, 2010). The feminist political theorist Iris Marion Young (2005, p. 1) described the complex messaging about menstruation that "compels girls and women to conceal their menstrual events" and creates "the misfit between women and public places such as schools and workplaces." Stigma constructs menstrual experience as abject and therefore unspeakable, generating injustice. Young noted how the "unfairness associated with the social response to menstruation" (ibid, p. 1) and "the social oppression of women as menstruators" (ibid, p. 2) are evinced through women having to work while in menstrual pain. Medical science reflects this lack of acknowledgement, and has been slow to research menstrual physiology, symptomatology, and treatments, resulting for example in a lack of research funding and a diagnostic delay of 7-10 years for the debilitating and still poorly understood condition of endometriosis (Seear, 2009; Armour, Sinclair et al, 2019). At the same time, menstruation has been relentlessly pathologised, with an increase in the prescription of suppressive hormonal medication in recent decades, delivered through a regulatory function termed the "gyniatric apparatus" by Gunn and Vavrus (2010), that produces "an almost lifelong technology of medicalized self-surveillance for women" (p. 113).

While conventional organisational mechanisms -- products, pharmaceuticals, and other concealment practices -- may support women to work outside the home, they have also been shown to disadvantage menstruating women in terms of long-term, sustainable social and material wellbeing (e.g. Saz-Rubio & Pennock-Speck (2009); Malefyt & McCabe, 2016), while benefiting big business (Kissling, 2006; Vostral, 2010, 2019). Indeed, menstrual stigma has been effectively utilised in patriarchal capitalist

societies to simultaneously profit from and diminish women. Economically, menstruation is constructed as an individual issue that women pay for without question. Until recently, in most developed countries, menstrual products were considered to be "luxury items" and garnered the highest rate of sales tax (Bennet, 2017; Weiss-Wolf, 2017). When the idea has been mooted of women being paid during time off when menstruating, there has been immediate and vociferous outcry on social media (Sayers & Jones, 2015).

However, despite the detrimental impact of menstrual stigma on women's status, finances and wellbeing, feminism has been relatively silent on the topic. Grosz (1994) explored why it was difficult or even impossible for second wave and post-structuralist feminisms to address menstruation, as part of her development of the concept of introjected phallogocentrism[2]. Bobel (2010) examined this aporia in the context of third wave feminism and the simultaneous marginalisation and development of menstrual activism. Even now, mainstream feminism is still reluctant to address the role of organisational norms in reproducing menstrual stigma. Bobel and Fahs (2018, p. 159) note that while menstrual activist causes such as 'period poverty' may have become adopted by mainstream feminist advocates in recent years, this shift has "dulled its radical edge through a neoliberal engagement with menstrual *management*" [their emphasis] which they note serves the "technology of passing" (Vostral, 2010). In many contexts, stigmatising language persists in descriptions of menstrual artefacts and practices, for example through the normalised association of the terms 'feminine hygiene' and 'sanitary' with menstrual products and their management (Chrisler, 2011,

[2] See the Glossary p.ix, and Chapter 3 pp.50-52, for explanation of introjected phallogocentrism.

2013). Such literature points to the intractability of menstrual stigma, but also to the potential challenge to existing masculinist hegemonies represented by innovations that potentially disrupt this stigma.

2.1.2. Menstrual stigma and individual experience

Effects from menstrual socialisation in individuals have been found to be complex and contradictory, resulting in anxiety-producing tensions. Mary Douglas (1966) pondered upon the purity demand of menstrual socialisation, and noted that it was informed by pollution stigma. This prejudice persists in the highly monetised contemporary obsession with 'feminine hygiene' and the motif of idealised women wearing white in menstrual advertising (Laws 1990; Erchull 2013; Jackson & Falmagne, 2013). Young (2005, p. 10) noted the contradiction of a "healthy biologic process" that nonetheless "must be hidden", and observed that, "In everyday life these requirements of concealment create enormous anxiety." Rather than learning about one's own body, which might counter such anxiety, Young identified how "In contemporary advanced industrial capitalist societies, much of what we learn (about menstruation) is how to consume "hygiene" products" (ibid, p. 7). Similarly, Malefyt and McCabe (2016) found that despite being influenced by the medicalised, commercialised problematisation of menstruation, women nonetheless considered their periods to be "natural" and consequently desirable, merging these opposing perspectives into an uncomfortable and paradoxical female identity.

Stigma surrounds the entire act of menstruating, but is primarily focused upon menstrual blood, the most obvious signifier of menstruation. Menstrual blood has long been conceptualised on a negatively-constituted spectrum that runs from minimisation

through taint and abjection to dangerous pollution (e.g. Douglas 1966), in many societies and religions (Buckley & Gottlieb, 1988). As such, it is nigh impossible to grow up without being infected with prejudicial assumptions surrounding menstruation that are rooted in masculinist onto-epistemologies (Grosz, 1994), such as that of course any display of menstrual blood is transgressive (or at least cringe-worthy); that of course menstruation should be entirely dealt with in private; and that of course employers should not have to pay women to have time off from work while menstruating (Young, 2005).

Erving Goffman (1963) identified stigma as a stain or mark that sets people apart as spoiled or defective, and of course, menstrual blood is powerful in its capacity to literally stain. Goffman found that stigmatised individuals suffered profound psychological, social and material consequences. Goffman's work on stigma was published in the same year as the onset of second wave feminism (usually taken as the publication of *The feminine mystique* by Betty Friedan in 1963). He did not directly reference women's issues, and indeed was later strongly critiqued by American feminists (Deegan, 2014). Yet his theorisation of stigma has subsequently been important to feminism in understanding the stigmatised nature of female minds and bodies (West, 1996). Menstrual scholars have used Goffman's identification of stigma to critically study how menstruation is experienced and managed (e.g. Newton, 2012). Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler (2013b) utilised Goffman's stigma thesis in pointing out the debilitating impact of menstrual stigma on women, by reviewing psychological research showing "how the stigmatized status of menstruation has important consequences for [women's] health, sexuality, and wellbeing" as well as for social status (p. 9). Several socio-medical studies have shown that while menstrual suffering may not be wholly

caused by menstrual stigma, it can be exacerbated by it (e.g. O'Flynn, 2006; Seear, 2009; Armour, Sinclair et al, 2019).

A code of silence surrounding menstruation (Murray, 1998; Pascoe, 2007) developed along with the requirement to conceal menstrual blood, and even in some cultures to banish the menstruator entirely. The dual concealment of matter and articulation can be viewed as an integral part of a larger patriarchal dominance strategy that renders women "other" (de Beauvoir, 1953), detaching men from obligation to accept or engage with female corporeality other than to satisfy their own desires and/or to procreate. In such a worldview, 'woman' is merely a disadvantaged version of a man, and her reproductive embodiment an unfathomable "dark continent", as Freud characterised it (Irigaray, 1985, p. 40). Similarly to how female circumcision has traditionally been enforced by older women (Shell-Duncan et al, 2018), menstrual shame-laden codes of behaviour were, and still often are, passed down and policed by mothers and grandmothers, whether consciously in alignment with patriarchal codes and/or to protect girls from embarrassment, shame and ridicule (Murray, 1998). Whatever the motivation, such training is related to *respectability* (a concept I will return to in depth), which Skeggs (1997) identified as a method used by women to offset low status and associated metaphorical and literal capital. Social historians of twentieth century menstruation in Australia have found that "menstrual etiquette" (Laws, 1985, 1990), evidenced for example through menstrual concealment, became more practiced, more required, and more effective as the century progressed (Murray, 1996, 1998; Pascoe, 2007, 2015). Such instruction induced in girls the notions that it was both their responsibility to deal with menstruation without complaint, and their fault if they experienced pain or distress to the extent that they can no longer carry on regardless

(Murray, 1998). The silencing requirement continues to be communicated effectively to girls, whether by behavioural modelling or direct instruction (Pascoe, 2007).

2.1.3. Menstruation in workplaces and organisations

Silencing implies a matter that is considered either shameful or (merely) personal, or, in the case of menstruation, both. The private construction of menstruation means it is not normatively considered a matter for the workplace to engage with. This allows the public, organised world to ignore the realities of menstruating, and indeed, to legitimately appear unsympathetic to any related suffering (Young, 2005). However, the difficulty of embodying a sexed and gendered taboo for several days every month is more than a personal issue, because the taboo serves a masculinist hegemonic agenda that underlies organisational experience. Girls attend schools and women work and study in organisations in which that agenda is still very much in play, embedded within organisational life: "The gendered organization operates beyond and beneath the level of ideas and debates, infiltrating everyday experience" (Pullen et al, 2017, p. 106). The experience and reality of menstruation leaks into the organisational space and is constituted by it, even when women are compliant with the silencing demand and perform the requisite concealment strategies. Workplaces and institutions normatively require material concealment of all the signs and signifiers of menstruation, and women are judged in terms of their personality and professionalism if they fail in this regard. Roberts et al (2002) found in an empirical study that when a woman accidentally dropped an unused tampon in the office, she was perceived as much less competent and less likeable by colleagues than when she similarly dropped a hair clip. Workplaces expect women to be present for work while menstruating even if fatigued and in pain,

and to behave as if they are not experiencing a menstrual cycle at all (Young, 2005; Vostral, 2010). More broadly, stoicism, denial, and pretence are socially and economically rewarded, while genuine needs and related affective expressions are not (Pullen et al, 2017). The organisational requirement that women meet strict respectability protocols in the management and organisation of the experience and effects of menstruation has been identified as causing unnecessary suffering and distress (Young, 2005), and to increase self-objectification and correspondingly diminish self-worth and sense of embodied 'rightness' (Roberts, 2004).

The bias implicit in and evinced by the systematic stigmatisation of menstruation has been complicated within organisational contexts by the longstanding masculinisation of the workplace (Acker, 1990; Trethewey, 1999). This bias is not restricted to menstruation, and indeed, menstrual stigma signifies broader prejudice regarding women's embodiment. The norms of industrial and post-industrial working life collide uncomfortably with women's reproductive function in general. Grandey et al (2019) suggest that the "natural experiences" of menstruation, maternity and menopause all constrain careers. For example, in recent years, research has shown how women struggle to navigate the workplace during menopause (Geukes et al, 2012; Bariola et al, 2017; Hickey et al, 2017).

Yet women need to enter the workforce and make a living, women have the same rights as men to ambition for professional fulfilment, and economies need women to labour outside of the home. As mentioned above, in section 1.2., Management & Organisation Studies (MOS) has been somewhat slow to grapple with the normative disjunction between the female reproductive body and the workplace (Grandey et al, 2019). While feminist sociologists and historians have contributed significantly to

knowledge on menstruation in its sociocultural context, especially in the past decade, there are few published empirical studies on menstruation with an organisational focus. Some scholars based in other disciplines have commented on the importance of menstruation as a potent organisational and consumer issue. Kissling (2006) and Davidson (2012) analysed the wider political-economic imperatives behind the commoditisation of disposable menstrual products. Malefyt and McCabe (2016) identified a paradoxical gendered discourse in menstrual product advertising campaigns, and Saz-Rubio and Pennock-Speck (2009) elucidated the impact of menstrual product advertising on identity formation. In MOS, Sayers and Jones (2015) explored the vitriol of the social media backlash against a proposed menstrual leave policy in New Zealand.

Aside from these themes, what little relevant literature exists in or is strongly related to MOS has tended to focus on menstruation as a medical issue, in line with the broader medicalisation of menstruation. Laura (2017a) discusses the increasing reliance of doctors on the "technological response" to menstrual 'irregularities' in which "normal physiological functions such as observable discrepancies in hormonal rhythms and menstrual cycle lengths become medicalised and prescriptively regulated by years, or even a lifetime of drug therapy" (p. 25). Some of this literature is illuminating in terms of the lived experience of menstruation in the workplace. A breakthrough qualitative study (O'Flynn, 2006) on the relationship between "menstrual etiquette" (Laws, 1990), the lived experience of menstruation, and the seeking of and quality of medical attention, studied 43 women in inner-city London in a representative ethnicity cohort. O'Flynn (2006) noted that "menstrual management is a concealed issue and as such is difficult to study", finding that "management of menstruation was prominent in

interviews" as a source of anxiety and concern (p. 955). O'Flynn's research found that "the need to conceal evidence or reminders of menstrual bleeding was particularly important" (ibid, p. 950). Such concealment was achieved through both verbal (such as dissembling) and non-verbal (such as altering dress and changing activities) means. O'Flynn observed that women's concerns surrounding menstrual management were heightened in the workplace. She noted that "a woman will not explain absence from work or difficulties in carrying out duties by explaining that she is menstruating", increasing difficulties in managing symptoms, and perhaps the extent of those symptoms, particularly for women with little autonomy at work (ibid, p. 953). O'Flynn concluded that social stigma surrounding menstruation caused even mature women to be more reluctant to seek medical help for menstrual symptoms than for more acceptable problems. Accordingly, she considered that medical management needed to be more sympathetic and to understand that women would be reluctant to disclose the extent of their suffering (ibid, p. 956), an observation that is also relevant for management in workplaces and organisations more broadly. O'Flynn's study gives a vivid picture of the physical, emotional and social misery women can experience while menstruating at work, and makes the point that most of this symptomatology is not considered pathological (ibid, p. 952) from the perspective of Western medical diagnostic criteria. The typical nature and ubiquity of menstrual pain (dysmenorrhea) in particular is echoed in Armour, Parry et al (2019), and Armour, Parry, Manohar et al, (2019) with the finding that a steady figure of 71% of young women (aged under 25) experience dysmenorrhea across socioeconomic and geographic categories. This statistic indicated that menstrual pain is both typical and common, and is thus a significant hidden factor in organisational life.

Without exploring the effect of stigma on self-confidence and articulation, Herrman and Rockoff (2013) found "no robust evidence that menstrual problems affect the earnings of women, and our estimates suggest that menstrual problems explain less than 1% of the gender gap in earnings" (p. 21). Their study did not include any qualitative data, which could have given a more nuanced perspective on job choice and career progression, especially among symptomatic women. In contrast, a rich qualitative sociomedical study by Kate Seear (2009) found that women with endometriosis (a debilitating condition affecting around 10% of the menstruating population) do what they call a “third shift” in self-care, performed in addition to their paid and unpaid work, which negatively impacts upon their available energy for their career. The economic toll of endometriosis is significant: Armour, Lawson et al (2019, p.1) found that the costs of endometriosis (for the individual and society) are AU$30,000 per woman per annum, and that "the total economic burden per year in Australia in the reproductive aged population (at 10% prevalence) was 6.50 billion."

Two studies pinpoint workplace stress as a contributory factor in menstrual symptoms (Fenster et al, 1997; Lawson et al, 2014). Gamberale (1985) found that the impact of menstrual symptoms on performance was only evidenced in women in high-demand situations such as athletes, a study which warrants repetition and again, a more qualitative approach. More recent studies indicate that the positive effect of exercise on menstrual pain is significant even when mild exercise is undertaken. Armour, Ee et al (2019) found that low-intensity exercise taken during the month, and not necessarily during the period, resulted in a reduced experience of menstrual pain, suggesting that overall physical fitness and possibly the regular amelioration of stress through exercise may be factors in menstrual health and wellbeing, as well as more generally.

It is notable that much of this research is very recent, and not performed by known MOS scholars. Key areas of menstrual experience in organisational life remain unexplored. For example, no research on the impact of menstrual stigma on self-worth and how that might relate to workplace issues has been published. The psychological literature on gendered microaggressions in the workplace (e.g. Sue, 2010) offers some hints as to the negative effects on menstruating women -- and on workplace relations -- of the cultural normalisation of menstrual stigma through 'jokes' such as expressions like "on the rag" and "PMS-ing", directed at women who show signs of irritation, moodiness or non-compliance. Basford et al (2014) identified the prevalence of subtle gendered microaggressions in workplaces and how they disproportionately impact women (p. 340), noting that: "Prejudicial beliefs may lead some to deny working women's ongoing challenges, potentially causing women to feel their struggles are invalidated" (ibid, p. 341), which has particular relevance for menstruating women at work. As detailed above, scholars in various disciplines have identified the damaging impact of stigma-induced concealment of menstrual symptoms (O'Flynn, 2006) and diagnostic delay (Seear, 2009) on long-term health and job prospects. Such a general and pervading sense of stigmatisation is likely to impact the self-esteem of menstruating women, and accordingly their sense of permission to ask for what they need in organisational contexts, not only with regard to menstrual needs but also in terms of status and pay. Recently, scholarship on Identity Theory and Ontological Security Theory (e.g. Browning & Joenniemi, 2017) has linked self-esteem and confidence to show how positive self-regard contributes to sense of belonging, inherent "rightness", security and sense of stability, and, it can be surmised, to workplace confidence and the capacity to request promotions and salary increases. Seear (2009) identified how endometriosis

can skew career trajectory and interrupt progress. Grandey et al (2019, p. 3) identify how particular career stages are more impacted than others by common menstrual experience. Young women tend to be more symptomatic than older age groups and thus struggle with menstrual symptoms at the start of their career. Older women in the perimenopausal phase become again more symptomatic (with heavy bleeding, for example, being more prevalent in the years leading up to menopause) just as they are establishing themselves in leadership positions (ibid, p. 3). Grandey et al also note that little attention has been paid to the impact of menstruation on the ways that normative constructions and conditions of workplaces can make menstruation more difficult for some women in some occupations (p. 21).

Workplaces and menstrual products are organisationally interwoven: the creation of the (highly profitable) disposable menstrual product (DMP) industry coincided with the movement of women into the workforce, and helped to enable that transition (Vostral, 2010). Vostral applies the term 'passing' to the menstruating worker, in the same sense as it is used in race relations, and observes how the manufacturing of disposable products was an important technological innovation that transformed women's ability to pass as non-menstruators and to maintain the required appearance in workplace settings. Yet women's psychological wellbeing has been injured through the marketing of these products (Erchull, 2013; Malefyt & McCabe, 2016), at the same time as women have been helped in the practical terms of blood management. The longstanding pollution taint associated with menstruation has been cynically employed in product marketing for commercial gain (Kissling, 2006; Rostvik, 2018) through, for example, the use in advertising of white clothing and blue liquids from the 1960s on, as a counternarrative to the realities of stains and red blood, in what has been effectively

a form of gendered cultural gaslighting. The very first, apparently innocuous, ads from Kotex set up these future developments: "By enticing women to enact and reproduce Western culture's proscriptions against their own bodies, Kotex set into circulation a "modern" understanding of menstruation in which women's cultural participation is encouraged yet circumscribed by their inevitable biological incapacitation" (Mandziuk, 2010, p. 42-43) through which the "insidious genius of consumer culture was in finding a way to turn the physical sign of woman's potential resistance against her" (ibid, p. 44). The marketing of such products as essential 'sanitary' items marked menstruating women as forever dirty and leaky, (and thus in need of 'hygienic' interventions and control), rather than as usefully different, such as being emblematic of the cyclical nature of embodied reality, as menstruation has been constituted in many pre-industrial societies (e.g. Knight, 1994; Buckley & Gottlieb, 1988). Disposable products are commonly employed as a proxy for menstrual bleeding in workplace protocols, in humour, and in the illustrations for articles in mainstream media and posts on social media. Use of a proxy indicates an issue of some kind with the actual matter at hand: in this case, the issue is menstrual blood, long stigmatised, and the overall experience of menstruation with its accompanying symptoms.

In recent years, the premise of the supposed reproductive lives of "paleo" women (living in paleolithic times) has been used to argue for the redundancy of menstruation and in favour of menstrual suppression (Coutinho, 1999). Suppression of menses through hormonal medication has been constituted as a pragmatic choice and a sensible way for women to cope with the inconveniences of menstruation, especially at work. Gunn and Vavrus (2010, p. 113) identify how new drugs for menstrual suppression (e.g. Seasonale), "mark menstruation as a disorder whose numerous symptoms must be

stopped for the good of everyone" and that "to do otherwise risks a social-symbolic death." The nullification of the menstrual cycle is normatively seen as an easier option than a direct challenge to the lack of accommodation to the menstrual cycle in schools and workplaces. Menstrual suppression has become normalised as more and more women use hormonal contraception in the extending years before first childbirth (Rottenberg, 2017), and due to this medication will not experience an ovulatory menstrual cycle. Taking the Pill all the way through the cycle and skipping the bleeding part is an easy thing to do, and can be managed autonomously. Yet research shows that women still consider regular menstruation (whether from a 'normal' bleed or a Pill withdrawal bleed) to be "natural" and welcomed (e.g. Newton & Hoggart, 2015; Malefyt & McCabe, 2016). And while recent studies suggest that menstrual suppression is becoming increasingly acceptable to women (e.g. Fiala et al, 2017) especially in women who experience intractable symptoms, scholars have expressed concerns regarding the absence of longitudinal studies given the reliance on exogenous hormones and their implications in reproductive cancers, while noting that so far the practice appears to be safe (e.g. Panicker, 2014).

2.1.4. The business of menstruation

Stigmatising messaging surrounding menstruation has been mobilised through corporate activity, not only to exercise (reproductive) controls over women, but also to make profit from problematisation (Kissling, 2006). Menstruation is conventionally conceptualised as a problem that can be solved by commodities, mass-marketed in the forms of pharmaceuticals (Gunn & Vavrus 2010; Kissling, 2013) and disposable menstrual products (Bobel, 2018), resulting in an "individual-level solution rendered through the

market—a classic neoliberal approach" (ibid, p. 253). Such 'solutions' constitute a significant element in the "practices and discourses that define and frame the female body as pathological or otherwise in nearly constant need of maintenance" (Kissling, 2013, p. 493).

Valuations of the "global feminine hygiene product" market vary from USD20.62 billion in 2017 with a 6.5% growth rate over the next seven years[3], USD24.35 billion/5.7% growth[4], and USD37.5 billion (2018) with projected USD52 billion by 2023.[5] High profit margins are contained within those figures. Tallies of market share by product type vary between 45-55% for pads, 10-30% tampons, 15-20% liners, 5-8% cups, and 19-30% cleaning/deodorising products largely linked to menstruation. The plurality of the hormonal pharmaceutical industry makes it harder to value in terms of menstruation, but the value of hormonal contraception (HC) alone is valued to be USD 26.5 billion p.a. by 2026[6] and is relevant to a discussion on menstruation because of the undocumented number of young women prescribed HC to 'regulate' their periods as well as often unmonitored use of HC to manage menses through suppression. The analgesia pharmaceutical industry must also be factored in, as over-the-counter (OTC) pain medication allows many menstruating women to work while bleeding.

The menstrual marketplace is shaped globally by an oligarchy of multinational corporations. Two multinational corporations (MNCs) dominate the menstrual product market in much of the world, namely Proctor & Gamble (Tampax, Always, Whisper)

[3] https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/feminine-hygiene-products-market
[4] https://www.credenceresearch.com/report/feminine-hygiene-products-market
[5] https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2019/05/20/1828964/0/en/Global-Feminine-Hygiene-Products-Market-2018-2019-Forecast-to-2023.html
[6] https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2019/07/01/1876745/0/en/Hormonal-Contraceptive-Market-Size-Hit-US-26-5-Bn-by-2026.html

and Kimberley-Clark (Kotex). Johnson & Johnson, (now owned by Edgewell Personal Care as of 23/10/2013) manufactures Stayfree outside of the US, along with Carefree and o.b. worldwide, and is also a major international player (and 2nd in the OTC analgesia market behind Bayer AG). Unicharm dominates the Asian market, which is the most rapidly growing market segment, now outselling any other region. Latin America, the Middle East and Africa are seen as the next regions of substantial market growth. The menstrual product industry has received a significant boost from the actions of governments, NGOs and menstrual activists to increase the availability of menstrual products worldwide and especially in the Global South.[7] Menstrual cups are newly included as a market category in menstrual product industry reports, with varying reports of their market share, but consensus that it is rising rapidly especially in new markets.[8]

The dominance of a small number of very large companies helps to explain the uniformity of stigmatising messaging, and the impact of neoliberal capitalist tropes in the marketing of menstrual products. Several scholars have argued that such business activities cause harm and suffering in menstruating women (e.g. Bobel, 2018; Erchull, 2013). High percentages of menstruating girls and women report varying degrees of physical, emotional, mental, and material distress and/or suffering related to menses (Armour, Parry, Manohar et al, 2019), and it has been argued that this suffering is exacerbated by normative commercial, organisational and institutional practices and

[7] "Rising initiatives by various organizations and governments to raise awareness and to eliminate taboo surrounding menstruation are anticipated to bode well for the market. In addition, social media has been vital in bringing awareness about hygiene and other related topics. For instance, Women's Voices for the Earth, an environmental organization conducted an awareness rally in May 2017 to raise awareness about feminine care and women's products." https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/feminine-hygiene-products-market

[8] E.g. https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/feminine-hygiene-market

assumptions. Lee and Sasser-Coen (1996) noted the links between menstrual commodities, corporate profit and the disciplining of women's bodies: "Self-discipline and policing through the everyday acts of feminine bodily care and the use of menstrual products and other commodities perpetuates corporate capitalism at the same time that it creates disciplined bodies" (p. 69). The marketing approach of DMP manufacturers has been shown to increase self-objectification (Erchull, 2013) and to have an adverse impact on female identity construction (Saz-Rubio & Pennock-Speck, 2009). Indeed, the success of the disposable menstrual product (DMP) industry is predicated on reproducing menstrual stigma as a means of creating a market. Grose & Grabe (2014) found that self-objectification correlated with negative responses to "alternative menstrual products": a synonym for reusable menstrual products (RMPs). Similarly, Lamont et al (2019) found that while, "Responses to using RMPs have been overwhelmingly positive" (p. 1), reluctance to take up RMPs and instead to continue using DMPs was directly related to higher levels of menstrual shame and self-objectification.

The corporations who profit from the business of menstruation have been strongly criticised in recent years as contributors to unsustainable consumption practices and to price-gouging of an essential item (both of which factors became important in my research on the menstrual cup). The corporate problematisation of menstruation socially constructs it as individual, private, and personal (Kissling, 2006). In neoliberal capitalist societies, emphasis on the individual is centred, giving rise to inequalities which disproportionately affect women and other minorities (Fraser, 2010; Prugl, 2013; Rottenberg 2017, 2018). Neoliberal capitalist constructions of profit-as-paramount, along with austerity measures targeted at the low or unpaid, have supported

a menstrual product industry in which prices have risen to the extent that 'period poverty' now exists in the Global North, where significant numbers of girls and women routinely cannot afford to purchase the menstrual products that they need (Bobel, 2018). In addition, the menstrual product industry has been accused of failing to safeguard consumer health, which has made RMPs more attractive. Vostral (2010, 2019) has shown how the industry has delayed alerting consumers to known dangers concerning their products, most dramatically in the Toxic Shock Syndrome scandal (1975-1982). A long term issue has concerned product ingredients: DMPs were conventionally constructed of cotton with potentially dangerous carcinogenic effects of dioxins used in the industrial bleaching process. Today it is estimated that 90% of most DMPs consists of plastic[9], avoiding the dioxin issue, but in turn creating a significant environmental problem through the pollution of oceans and landfills by products that will take centuries to degrade, and will in the process kill and maim marine life. Such industrial practices are further complicated to the detriment of consumers by government protection: the profit of the DMP industry is protected by an absence of legislation demanding that ingredients be disclosed. As well as being lax about DMP regulation, governments have also been complicit in using menstruation as a source of revenue, by imposing luxury sales tax on essential menstrual products.

To sum up, there is a thickly woven skein of connections between the organising structures of capitalist work, consumption, and commodification with regard to menstruation. These are enmeshed with and reproduce dominant beliefs that circulate

[9] It is difficult to get clean data on the extent of the use of plastics in menstrual products, as DMP manufacturers do not disclose ingredients. Friends of the Earth offer the figure of 90%, (https://friendsoftheearth.uk/plastics/plastic-periods-menstrual-products-and-plastic-pollution) but this seems to be derived from a manufacturer of RMPs https://www.natracare.com/why-natracare/plastic-free/.

and inform the practices of menstruation along with women's lived experience of ways the apparently 'outer' experience of everyday (working) life intersects with the apparently 'inner' experience of cyclical corporeality. Indeed, the extraordinary power of capitalism and the deep internalisation of its values is demonstrated in a system which makes women pay luxury sales tax on disposable menstrual products and at the same time refuses them paid time (or for most, any time) off work when menstruating, or even, in some occupations, to be able to use the toilet when they need to. Despite a century of feminism and significant progressive changes in the lives of women, in organisational contexts menstruation is still either overtly vilified and/or minimised to the point of erasure. Significant profit is generated by an oligopoly of multinational corporations through the problematisation and stigmatisation of menstruation. Yet, recent disruptions to patriarchal capitalist hegemony more broadly (such as #MeToo and Extinction Rebellion) and to menstrual norms more specifically (such as Period Poverty initiatives) suggest changes in the longstanding social construct of menstrual stigma. This new menstrual politics is being enacted through a combination of activism and new technologies, as I will discuss in the next section.

2.2. Reorganising menstruation

2.2.1. Overview of contemporary trends

Contemporary disruptions to normative menstrual behaviours offer signs that a significant reshaping of menstrual experience is taking hold in social and economic contexts. Gunn and Vavrus (2010, p. 19) have pointed out that the practices of the gyniatric apparatus, although designed to minimise the perceived inconveniences of the

female body while maximising profits, have had the unintended consequence of stimulating a counterpolitics.[10] In recent years there has been a sharp rise in the publication of menstrual research: papers with 'menstrual' in the title numbered 170 in 1990, 351 in 2000, 443 in 2010, and 1565 in 2019.[11] Similarly, the past decade has seen a steep increase in articles in the mainstream press on menstrual activism.[12] Since around 2016, menstrual rights have begun to be spoken of by non-governmental organisations as "human rights".[13] Contemporaneously, multiple avenues -- legal, political, material and social -- have been pursued to improve conditions surrounding menstruation (Weiss-Wolf, 2017). In 2019, the Times newspaper reported on "how periods became big business", citing a "new generation" determined to celebrate embodiment and know their own (fertile) bodies, and whose enthusiasms are newly seen as a business opportunity by makers of RMPs and 'femtech'.[14] In advertising, the conventional anxiety-producing mechanisms of product promotion have begun to be resisted and reshaped, starting with the Bodyform commercial (2017-2019) that showed menstrual blood in its realistic context for the first time -- as red, and running in a thin stream down the inside of a woman's thigh -- along with articles analysing the ad's content and impact (Rostvik, 2018; Owen, 2019).

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[10] The concept of *counterpolitics* was developed by Gordon, 1991, quoted in Gunn & Vavrus, 2010, 19.

[11] Data from a search in the Monash library system for all papers in all disciplines with 'menstrual' in the title, performed on 6/1/2020.

[12] As far as I can ascertain, the first of these articles in the Anglophone press was published in The Guardian (UK) in 2009. https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/oct/02/menstruation-feminist-activists

[13] See for example: https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/27/menstrual-hygiene-human-rights-issue

[14] "The generational divide is never more apparent than between Generation X mothers and Generation Z daughters. Rachel, a friend who has two teenagers, rolls her eyes: “All they do is talk about their cycles. I admire the openness, but I wonder how they’ll fare at university, let alone in the workplace." https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/how-periods-became-big-business-txldjd9gq

While this 'new' perspective on menstruation builds on the work of menstrual activists since the 1970s, it is reasonable to surmise that it would not be achieving such widespread influence were it not for a combination of socioeconomic influences. First, neoliberalism supports a breakdown of social taboos, which enables new markets (e.g. Gammon, 2012). Second, the revival of feminism evinced through the #MeToo movement has enabled broader public conversation on women's rights and needs (e.g. Bell et al, 2018). Third, the rapidly growing biotech industry combined with ubiquitous smartphone usage has created a market for menstrual cycle tracking, a potent business opportunity both in terms of users adopting it and the personal information it generates and that can be sold on. Indeed, the Times (U.K.) on 8/8/2019, reported that the femtech market, largely constituted around menstrual cycle tracking apps, is estimated to be worth USD50 billion (£41 billion) by 2025.[15]

2.2.2. The impact of neoliberalism

The use of menstrual stigma to promote profit through disposable products and pharmaceuticals has become more sophisticated over time, influenced by an increasingly neoliberalised version of capitalism. With the "renewed disembedding of markets" (Fraser, 2013, p. 237), capitalist hegemony has morphed into a semi-borderless power structure with more nebulous values and actors, retaining the power of profit as motivation while allowing greater flexibility in a rapidly changing world of increasingly sophisticated technology. Yet, neoliberalism can be seen to have enabled the dissolution of the menstrual taboo, by turning the breakdown of (and fascination with) taboos into

[15] https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/how-periods-became-big-business-txldjd9gq

profit (Gammon, 2012). Simultaneously, neoliberal capitalism has concretised certain constructions of gender, constraining some women (such as those working in corporate offices) into a more tightly enclosed version of the feminine through, for example, expectations of clothing and footwear (Mavin & Grandy, 2016a).

Tensions between the need to perform constant neoliberal performative busy-ness in androcentric workplaces versus the desire to experience innate cyclicity and authenticity are influenced on the one hand by menstrual stigma and associated internalised misogyny, and on the other by the growing popularity of (neoliberal) self-care concepts such as wellness and wellbeing. This complex entanglement of gendered and embodied needs, desires, and notions both stimulates and complicates the movement now known as menstrual activism.

2.2.3. Menstrual activism

Nancy Fraser (2013, p. 1) identified the ways in which "neoliberalizing forces succeeded in defusing the more radical currents of second-wave feminism" and expressed the hope that "a new insurrectionary upsurge" will manage to "reanimate them". Menstrual activism in some of its aspects is a candidate for inclusion among such an insurrection. In recent years the longstanding positioning of menstruation as an abject matter has begun to be successfully challenged by activists working to reshape cultural norms. Activist effort has focused on speaking up -- refusing to continue being silent -- about the ways in which women suffer due to unacknowledged menstrual difficulties and prejudices (e.g. Barnett, 2019), organising collectively to support women in practical and emotional terms (e.g. the 'Melbourne Period Project'), and even celebrating the menstrual cycle as a source of embodied self-knowledge (e.g. Pope &

Wurlitzer, 2017; Hill, 2019) and situating it as the fifth vital sign of health (Hendrickson-Jack, 2019).

The menstrual activism movement began in the 1970s and grew very slowly until the explosion of interest in both feminism and activism post the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, fuelled by new forms of (social) media. Menstrual activism today uses multiple platforms of social media along with stigma-busting art, writing, and performance, as well as legal, political and scholarly channels (Weiss-Wolf, 2017; Bobel & Fahs, 2018). Over the past decade menstrual activism has attracted an entirely new level of both grassroots and celebrity interest and support, a swell of recognition and activity forged in and supported by the recent resurgence of popular feminism (see Bell et al, 2018). Recent successes include the repeal of the 'tampon tax' in many countries, greater availability of menstrual products and outreach to those suffering from 'period poverty', and the introduction of improved menstrual education in schools (Weiss-Wolf, 2017). While historically much of the funding and labour for such enterprises has come from women themselves and often performed for little or no financial reward, there are signs of institutional change in this regard. For example, in 2018 the Scottish government announced a plan to end 'period poverty', followed in 2019 by the UK government.[16]

Menstrual activists continue to energetically address a swathe of issues including product cost, availability and content; education and sports accessibility; healthcare and

[16] It is notable that the UK Conservative government's allocation of GBP2 million to a vague pledge to 'end period poverty worldwide' was significantly surpassed in focus and commitment by the more progressive, social policy oriented Scottish and Welsh governments, who allocated GBP 5.2 million and 2 million respectively to identify and resolve period poverty in their countries, both of which have much smaller populations than England or the U.K. as a whole.
See: https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/period-poverty-taskforce-government-plan-uk-procter-gamble-penny-mordaunt-a8930721.html
https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/aug/24/scotland-to-offer-free-sanitary-products-to-all-students-in-world-first.

medical research; and workplace rights and practices. As a result, menstruation has never been more culturally visible, or less silent. This visibility has a cost, in that women are also more vulnerable to attacks surrounding menstruation on social media (Sayers & Jones, 2015), and a kind of duality of freedom combined with increased vulnerability. In academia, while there has been a slow burn of scholarly effort on the topic since the 1970s, the recent rise in articulations and activism surrounding menstruation has in turn both informed and inspired far more academic research across disciplines into menstruation than hitherto.

This surge in menstrual activism has been enabled by, but also exists in potential conflict with, new technologies.

2.2.4. New technologies

The timeline of menstrual activism shows a major shift in public interest from 2009 on, coinciding with mass uptake of the smart phone and the pervasion of social media into everyday life. The rapid surge in menstrual activism over the past decade is thus entangled with new technologies, which operate in three broad categories:

a) New technologies of social, economic and political interaction such as social media, crowdfunding, and online petitions.

b) New technologies of product manufacture such as menstrual cups and underwear, which utilise new fabrics and manufacturing methods.

c) New digital 'femtech' apps used on smart phones which track the personal menstrual cycle.

Such technologies are redrawing the communication, commodification, and socioeconomic positioning of menstruation. Allied with increased levels of menstrual

awareness and activism, new technologies are reshaping the menstrual landscape towards practices that, proponents aver, offer safer, healthier products and lifestyle behaviours, and more knowledge of the body through cycle-tracking apps.[17]

While reusable products have been around since the 1940s in the form of rubber cups, and forever in the form of cloth, new silicone technology has allowed the menstrual cup to be made of much more comfortable material, and new fabric technologies utilising space science absorbency have transformed the old cotton flannel pads into the new 'period underwear'. Both disposable and reusable products are also now being made from more sustainable crops, such as bamboo. New understanding about the toxicity of plastics and microparticles have alerted women to the potential dangers in using conventional disposable menstrual products, which are now largely made of plastic. The rise in environmentalism and sustainability politics has led to a new industry in reusables, and this agenda appears to be powerful enough to disrupt notions of abjection surrounding menstrual blood.

The two innovations I researched for this thesis are representative of this broader revolution in menstrual conceptualisation (Weiss-Wolf, 2017; Bobel & Fahs, 2018). Furthermore, the topics I selected represent the two main interwoven arenas from which capitalist enterprise profits: the first of which is constituted around menstrual blood (and the marketplace), and the second around menstrual time (and the workplace). Given the historic use of the management and organisation of menstruation to oppress women and enact a masculinist agenda, I was aware that any study of

[17] For example, see https://www.theguardian.com/careers/2019/jun/24/femtech-flourishing-how-women-led-health-technology-is-changing-the-sector-for-good

innovations that are constituted as manifesting progress needed to pay close attention to the potential for co-option and reproduction of stigma.

Chapter summary

Normative, stigmatised constructions of menstrual organisation are being currently met by a vivified counterpolitics in the form of a practical and ideological menstrual activism with new global reach, supported by social media and new technologies. It is thus a particularly fascinating and potentially fruitful time to study menstruation in organisational contexts.

In the next chapter I consider how theory can be employed to support such investigation, given the complexities of the long term effects of stigma on how menstruation is conceptualised, and how this in turn shapes how it is lived and organised.

3. Theorising menstruation

Chapter introduction

My theoretical position centres on the entanglement of patriarchal capitalism and women's (reproductive) bodies. In line with common practice in Management & Organisation Studies (MOS), my theorisation draws not only from my home discipline (Clegg et al, 2006, p. 4), but also from other social studies disciplines: here primarily from Political Economy, Sociology, and Social and Economic History. I develop my theoretical framework by drawing from feminist or feminist-influenced theories within these disciplines, with specific focus on the work of Silvia Federici (2004) and Beverley Skeggs (1997). This framework is underpinned by gender and organisation theory developed in MOS, chiefly from scholars in Feminist Organisation Studies (FOS), and is applied to the organisational and organising aspects of menstruation.

Given the lack of prior research in menstrual organisation, I used data from my early empirical research for this thesis to support the theory-building which then informed my later empirical research, my evolving research question, the methodology of the fieldwork, my chosen strategy for data analysis and of the PhD as a whole, and the thesis discussion. This iterative method of theory-building in tandem with fieldwork is supported by feminist theory, which in the context of longstanding patriarchy often needs to primarily derive from long-sidelined lived experience (Skeggs, 1997) and, I suggest, perhaps especially when a female-specific experience such as menstruation has been and still is being systematically stigmatised, and therefore under-researched and often hidden from view.

In this chapter, first I address embodiment theorisation in MOS. Second, I discuss feminist theoretical perspectives on menstruation. Third, I begin to craft a socioeconomic theoretical framework for menstrual organisation based on Silvia Federici's analysis of the relationship between women's reproductive rights and patriarchal capitalism, and on Beverley Skeggs' analysis of the lives of working-class women and how respectability codes are used to offset loss of capitals. I weave MOS theorisation into my analysis of Federici and Skeggs to develop theory applicable to menstrual innovations.

3.1. Theorising the (menstruating) body in organisations

Both Organisation Studies and Philosophy have had a "constrained relationship" towards the body (Thanem, 2016, p. 276). Thanem organises embodiment scholarship through its main topics and varying philosophical positions to explore how the body has been theorised in MOS over the past few decades. He notes that embodiment theorisation is characterised by "overlapping concerns" that indicate how "distinct conceptualizations of the body are not necessarily unique to one paradigm, and individual writers have drawn eclectically on concepts and ideas from different paradigms in one and the same text" (ibid, p. 277).

My research followed Thanem's identification of the main areas of scholarship in MOS on the body in terms of the broad philosophical basis for the qualitative methods I used and developed. However, in terms of my theoretical framework, I made the choice not to centre embodiment theory (as might have been expected in a MOS context) but instead to work with embodiment theory to build socioeconomic theory. It is certainly the case that an understanding of embodiment theory is critical to

developing a theory for menstruation in organisational contexts. Yet while embodiment theorisation is much broader than simply 'the body', it does still have some limitations in terms of theorising menstruation and menstrual innovation. Central to an understanding of such limitations is the argument that the topic of menstruation has dwelt for long enough in a highly-controlled and individualised (Gunn & Vavrus, 2010), medicalised (Laura, 2017 a, 2017b), and (dis)embodied (Grosz, 1994) silo of gendered stigma that has occluded understanding of its socioeconomic and collective relations (e.g. Laws, 1990; Bobel, 2018). As I will discuss in subsequent chapters, my fieldwork gave rich data on such relations, and my study participants were articulate on the socioeconomic context of their experience and choices in menstrual organisation.

I begin this section with a brief overview of embodiment theory on the (gendered) body at work, before going on to explore two key concepts pertinent to menstruation: the absent/marginalised body and the transgressive body. These two focal areas have a particular bearing on the development of this thesis, as they tie into my theorisation drawn from Federici and Skeggs.

3.1.1. The (gendered) body at work

The gendered nature of the workplace is "masked through obscuring the embodied nature of work" (Acker, 1990, p. 139). Acker identifies the "disembodiment of organizational structures and work relations" as "part of the larger strategy of control in industrialized capitalist societies, which, at least partly, are built upon a deeply embedded substructure of gender difference" (ibid). In a gendered economy that disadvantages women, their embodiment -- which manifests as different to male

embodiment most obviously through reproductive health -- is systematically ignored at work and in organisational settings more broadly (Young, 2005; Grandey et al, 2019).

Within this disembodied context, prevailing trends of neoliberal capitalism have generated a mainstream culture in which the body has become conceptualised as increasingly fluid in identity, performance, and presentation. The new plastic body is relentlessly commodified. This is an expected continuation of capitalist enterprise, foreseen by Marx's (1846) concept of the 'thinking body', which contributes to current debates on the ways "the body is (re)produced in a society in which biological space…is being infiltrated and colonised by a capitalist logic" (Bates, 2015, p. 128). Such commodification has heightened normative practices through which the body is manipulated at work into an "organizational body" (Tyler & Hancock, 2001, p. 25).

Correspondingly, perspectives on embodiment in MOS have become increasingly theoretically active, and have been influenced by the development of feminist scholarship. Thus far, we might understand MOS embodiment debates as shaped by three major theoretical developments: the postmodern, the body, and the new materialism turns. The postmodern turn (from the 1970s on) spawned new thinking on the body in terms of power relations and social construction. While this opened up MOS to wider and more exciting considerations than mundane managerialism of bodies at work, at the turn of the millennium Dale (2001, p. 16) noted that "even in these works there is still very little explicit exploration of issues of the body and embodiment". The postmodern emphasis on discourse maintained elements of Cartesian dualism, such as the reification of mind over body, and has been critiqued by feminist scholars accordingly (e.g. Jaggar, 1983; Grosz, 1994). The political theorist Lois McNay (1991, 2000) argued that key tenets of continental philosophy limit the body to subservient

positioning, such as in the ways power relations that use the body as a weapon against the subject have been theorised. McNay (1991) noted how the notion of social inscription (e.g. Foucault, 1979; Butler, 1993) creates a (passive) body seen as vulnerable compared to the intellect, which is situated as being more robust.

While Cartesian dualism lingered within postmodernist discourse, according to feminist scholars such as Jaggar (1983), Grosz (1994) and McNay (2000), it is also the case that phenomenology, postmodernism and poststructuralist feminism had a stimulating impact on conceptualisations of the body in both theory and methodology in organisational scholarship (see e.g. Thanem, 2006; Philips et al, 2014). While such theoretical developments have been critiqued as tainted by an unconscious androcentric position (e.g. Grosz, 1994), nonetheless the body in organisational scholarship began to be seen in a more imaginative and holistic light. This development is evidenced by the sociological body turn of the early 1990's; the recognition of the body's role as an "absent presence" (Shilling, 1993); and new understandings of the body's part in co-creating organisational life, as in, the "mutual constitution of bodies and organising practices" (Hassard et al, 2000, p. 2). Study of the body was particularly taken up by critical scholars in MOS exploring feminist and queer topics: minority body marginalisation being both a mirror for and an effect of body and gendered marginalisation more broadly (e.g. Brewis et al, 1997; Linstead & Pullen, 2016; Thanem, 2004). The body turn supported increased research into the relationship between the social and the material, and can be seen on a philosophical continuum with the next significant (post postmodernist) development affecting both feminism and organisation theory: the new materialism.

As the turn towards the new materialism (e.g. Barad, 1999; Coole & Frost, 2010) has developed, strongly influenced by feminist scholars and philosophically allied to materialist and socialist feminism, an increasingly dynamic understanding of matter and therefore of the body has begun to take shape. Of particular note is the shift in emphasis to a fleshy, animated body that, while continuing to be marginalised, nonetheless has the capacity to be agentic, generous, and intelligent (see McNay, 2000; Diprose, 2002; Bennett, 2010 respectively). This more interesting and proactive 'body' has engaged MOS researchers and has begun to achieve greater inclusion in journal articles and compilations. Yet with limitations: Kenny & Fotaki (2015) observed that with a few notable exceptions (Hancock & Tyler, 2000; Pullen & Rhodes, 2010, 2014), "the materiality of the body tends to be omitted" in the extant literature on an 'ethics of difference' (p. 187).

In this developing field of enquiry, MOS theorisation on embodiment is a vivid but still somewhat outlying area of knowledge that has so far had limited traction into workplace practices and organisational norms. The conceptual separation of bodies at work from the situations they labour within continues, with management structures, skills, and politics "still deemed separate from the bodies that enact them, experience them and are targeted by them" (Thanem, 2016, p. 278). Management is still dominated by the concept of the 'ideal worker' as disembodied, masculine, and white (Acker, 1992; Bendl, 2008; Liu & Baker, 2016; Meriläinen, 2015). Correspondingly, needs surrounding women's bodies continue to be ignored or minimised in the workplace, for example through insufficient toilet facilities, and protective clothing designated 'unisex' but actually designed for male bodies (Criado-Perez, 2019). Mainstream workplace practices are still enacted without adequate understanding of inequalities and the specific ways

in which women are disadvantaged. Women's bodies at work have been shown to be comparatively neglected and silenced, and considered to be disruptive and unruly (e.g. Brewis & Sinclair, 2000; Sayers & Jones, 2015). The impact of such inequalities means that theorisation to support research in addressing the neglected area of menstruation has become a matter of some urgency (Grandey et al, 2019). There are some fascinating new theorisation strands in MOS that are especially pertinent to menstruation, such as temporality and the "body politics of surprise" (Jack, Riach & Bariola, 2019, p. 2), but which I do not have the space to develop in this thesis.

In the next two sections I begin to work in dialogue with a MOS approach to embodiment in two specific and longstanding areas that are relevant to menstruation in organisational contexts.

3.1.2. The body as absent/marginalised

While Shilling (1993, p. 19) famously described the body in sociology as an “absent presence”, Dale (2001) made it clear that taking account of the presence of the body does not mean simply adding the body back in. Rather, awareness of absent presence provokes the need to understand exactly how absenting the body has shaped the field. Not only is the body 'absented' in itself in the conventional workplace, but specific bodies at specific times are particularly marginalised. Patriarchy has marginalised the female body as a means of controlling and diminishing women (e.g. de Beauvoir, 1953; Young, 2005). Cartesian dualism diminished and conflated the categories of 'body' and 'woman' (Jaggar, 1983), rendering menstruation a prime target for absenting in public life. The developing literature on the impact of marginalisation of (women’s) bodies at work (e.g. Riach et al, 2014; Riach & Warren, 2015; Salmela et al, 2018; Criado-Perez,

2019) is relevant to theorisation on menstruation in MOS. McNay noted that, “a revised understanding of agency has long been the explicit or implicit concern of feminist research devoted to the uncovering of the marginalised experiences of women” (2000, 10).

Menstruation is not merely absent as an inconvenience or oversight: it is absented through deliberate gendered stigmatisation (Young, 2005). This stigma renders the menstruating body particularly absent. When menstruation is stigmatised it becomes polite to ignore it; when it is ignored it becomes strategic to minimise it. Marginalisation of women is magnified in the context of menstruation, traditionally constructed as an abject (perhaps the most abject) activity of female biology. Women are socialised to absent their menstrual blood from others' sight, and often from their own vision through the use of absorbent tampons. They are taught very early on that one of the most humiliating things they can do is to expose their menstrual blood, especially in the public sphere (Mazaj, 1995; Young 2005), and that they must learn to pass in society as non-menstruators (Vostral, 2010).

The absenting and marginalisation of menstruation plays out in organisational practices. As an "absent presence", its absenting nonetheless influences and reflects organisational theory and norms. The menstruating woman who fails to adequately conceal her menstruating status is perceived to have reduced competence and likeability at work (Roberts et al, 2002), suggesting that menstrual marginalisation impacts upon women’s authority and popularity in the workplace. Women may be more inclined to suppress menstruation through medication in order to avoid such embarrassment and loss of agency. The paradox of the apparently fertile (young) yet non-menstruating woman fits better into a workplace culture which pretends

menstruation does not exist, and thus does not by its cyclical nature disrupt a masculinist working pattern (Gunn & Vavrus, 2010, Kissling, 2013). When menstruation is disappeared, it 'fits' better with workplace rhythms that may not necessarily suit the majority of working women.

Mention of menstruation was until very recently considered taboo in public contexts, other than through coded, sanitised advertising for products designed to hide menstrual blood (Rostvik, 2018). When menstruation cannot be spoken about in workplaces, women cannot ask for what they need in terms of support (Sommer et al, 2016), and menstruation cannot be managed other than within a frame of personal responsibility and concern (Trethewey, 1999). Thus, menstruation is constructed as a matter for individual responsibility. The absenting and marginalisation of menstruation broadly and especially in public settings means that society and organisations normatively bear no social or economic responsibility for the wellbeing of menstruating women, including when they are at work, a milieu in which health and safety is otherwise taken as an obligation of the employer. So despite menstrual taboo and its related restrictions being produced systemically, organisations have no expectation placed upon them regarding any responsibility of care for menstruating women (Young, 2005).

Thus, the menstruating body is a particular instance of the *absented* body, and such marginalisation has repercussions on organisational and organising practices.

3.1.3. The transgressive body

While every body is a potential source of transgression through leaks, smells, sounds, illnesses and inconvenient urges (e.g. Riach & Warren, 2015), feminist scholars

have argued that the female body is considered at greater risk of transgression and is trained to behave in a more controlled manner than the male body (Young, 1980), and is disciplined in particular ways in the workplace (Trethewey, 1999). Thus the female body has less latitude when it comes to being transgressive, and given the relative complexities of the female body in terms of its reproductive function, more ways in which to transgress. Such restrictions and controls operate on multiple levels, from appearance through to speech, physical comportment, and other behaviours.

Mavin and Grandy (2016a, 2016b) have identified ways in which the female body in the conventional, corporate workplace is an uncomfortable and bounded body, expected to wear constraining business attire such as fitted clothing and high heels. Such constraints can amplify the discomforts of menstruation. The realities of bloating, cramps, and bleeding are easier to ameliorate and deal with when wearing comfortable and relaxed clothing. When the female body is already more controlled than the male body, and menstruation is stigmatised, again here we have another way in which women receive the message that the workplace is not their place. They are the interlopers into a male space which is a non-menstruating space.

Mandziuk (2010, p. 44) noted that "menses symbolically represent the threat of the unruly, marking women as different and disruptive." Theoretically, the positioning of menstruation as unruly is dependent upon privileging the male body. Operating differently to many workplace norms of predictability, the menstrual cycle can represent unruliness in (androcentric) organisational contexts, as part of the 'overflowing' of women's bodies that threatens order in the workplace (Trethewey, 1999). While menstruation possesses its own organising function, and organises women's behaviours and experience itself as a consequence, as a biological cycle such

embodied organising can conflict with pre-arranged schedules and non-cyclically based constructions of the working day. While menstruation is normatively conceived of as regular, in experience its timing is more usually inexact, and vulnerable to influences that can be hard to ascertain in advance, such as stress, travel, diet, and health. As an act, menstruation is prone to be messy in multiple ways: to leave stains, to cause sudden pain, and to demand randomly timed urgent visits to the bathroom. If the body norm was the menstruating women, there might then be free pads and tampons available in bathrooms, rest spaces to use as needed during the day, and a dress code that is practical, comfortable, flattering to multiple body shapes, and demands little thought at the start of the day.

As an unruly, messy, "volatile" body (Grosz, 1994), the menstruating body transgresses conventional, masculinist organisational norms on multiple fronts, and this conceptualisation contributes to perceived difficulties surrounding its organisation at work.

3.2. Menstruation in feminist theory

This section explores different streams of feminism and how they engage with menstruation. Understanding these various streams of feminism in relationship to menstruation is important to my thesis because it helps to explain in greater detail not only why menstruation has been disregarded and minimised as a feminist issue until recently, but why menstruation has now come more to the forefront of mainstream interest and activity. In broader terms, beyond the scope of this thesis but relevant in organisational terms, the relationship between feminisms and menstruation helps to illuminate why and how factions have developed within menstrual activism that express

philosophical disagreement with each other. These elements all influence the changing ways in which menstruation is experienced organisationally and in organisations, and how theory can develop from and with these changes.

A small yet significant body of feminist literature has exposed ways in which longstanding assumptions surrounding menstruation have been socially constructed to reinforce patriarchal control of women (e.g. de Beauvoir, 1953), by diminishing women's sense of embodied agency and acceptability (e.g. Young, 2005). Some feminist scholars have argued that menstrual stigmatisation was a "key building block" (Moloney, 2012, p. 1) in the construction and entrenchment of the patriarchy (see also Mazaj, 1998). Women's Studies scholars more recently have analysed the ways in which menstrual stigma continues to play a significant role as a bulwark of androcentrism and have noted the ways in which the economic use of menstrual stigmatisation has specifically developed in capitalism's current neoliberal manifestation (Kissling, 2006; Bobel & Fahs, 2018).

Yet it is notable that until recently mainstream (popular) feminism appeared reluctant to engage with the topic. In general and until recently, feminism and feminist scholarship have been slow to take up menstruation, and it remains under-researched. The lack of attention to menstruation in Feminist Organisation Studies is a case in point, especially when one considers the extent to which menstrual matters readily fall under an organisational and indeed a Business School lens, being concerned not only with organisation broadly, but also with human resources, marketing, business and economics. So far the only monographs published on menstruation and business have come from the disciplines of Women & Gender Studies (Kissling, 2006) and History (Vostral 2010, 2019).

I begin by exploring the influence of liberalism and neoliberalism on popular feminism, and why those related perspectives have so successfully functioned to constrain the development of mainstream feminist critique on menstrual organisation. Then I look at the specific ways in which different streams of feminist theory have approached menstruation, and consider the influences from these on the opening up of meaningful discourse on menstruation, with a focus on organisational contexts.

3.2.1. Feminism, liberalism & neoliberalism

Longstanding, deeply embedded stigma has contributed to the pattern of menstruation being under-researched, including within feminist scholarship (Grosz, (1994, pp. 205-7). As Women's Studies scholar Chris Bobel has noted: "feminist scrutiny of the politics of menstruation pales in comparison to feminist engagement with other aspects of women's lives" (2010, p. 29). Why would this be so? I suggest the answer lies in two interrelated areas: the difficulty of tackling an entrenched taboo like menstruation (with its associated lack of entitlement accrued to the menstruator), and the "introjected phallogocentrism"[18] within feminist philosophy more broadly.

Internalised misogyny within feminism is rooted in masculinist philosophies that conflate 'female' with (inferior) body, and 'male' with (superior) mind. The body has long been inherently tied into patriarchal constructions of power and meaning (Jaggar, 1983; Grosz, 1994). Cartesian dualism has pervaded philosophy since the 17th century with deep-seated notions that the mind and the body are separate, that the mind is superior to the body, that 'mind' is more associated with masculine and 'body' with

[18] For definition, see Glossary, p. ix.

feminine, and that these givens are reflected in men being superior to women. This *a priori* tenet of human relations has influenced every area and every level of the organisation of life in politics, medicine, industry, work, education, and the personal and domestic sphere. While many feminist scholars have contributed to the analysis and deconstruction of Cartesian normativity from the 1970's on, and have identified its pervasive impact, its traces have persisted, particularly at the more stigmatised reaches of women's lived experience and, insidiously, within liberalism.

Alison Jaggar, in *Feminist politics and human nature* (1983), showed how liberal political theory, from its origins, was influenced by the "dualistic metaphysics and individualistic epistemology" of Descartes (p. 29), which belied liberalism's supposedly progressive and inclusive stance. Jaggar argued that "normative dualism" is inherent in liberal political theory, and "generates a conception of equality that is biased against women" (ibid, p. 42). Normative dualism privileges men by their association with the superior function of 'mind' and by the corresponding binary association of women with the inferior 'body' (ibid, p. 46). As Jaggar elucidated: "Of course, both men and women have both minds and bodies but, throughout the Western philosophical tradition, women have been seen consistently as being connected with (or entangled in) their bodies in a more intimate way than men are with theirs." (ibid, p. 46). Jaggar pointed out that because women have been seen as closer to nature as well as more committed to reproduction, they have been constrained by being seen as destined by their biology to perform the mundane tasks of life. Men, with their superior minds and less burdened bodies, have instead been free to contribute creatively and intellectually to society through making culture.

Jaggar focused on the main political theories (largely originating in the 19th century) of liberalism, Marxism, radicalism, and socialism, and explores their relationship to key streams of thinking on feminism, nature and the body. Elizabeth Grosz, in *Volatile bodies* (1994), took a similar line to a range of 20th century theories, with a focus more on personal life, exploring philosophy, psychoanalysis, neuroscience, and phenomenology before landing at feminism and her assessment that it is tainted by (her term of) introjected phallogocentrism. Taken together, these two works provide a wide range of evidence that the intellectual work of the 19th and 20th centuries was dominated by highly persistent and deep-seated masculinist bias which has perseverated into the feminist project and into ideas about the body, especially its entanglement with the feminine and nature, and its related perceived inferiority to the 'masculine' mind.

What is generally referred to in popular culture as 'feminism' is mainstream feminism which has significant overlaps with liberal feminism (e.g. Jaggar, 1983; Tong, 2018). This school of feminist thinking emphasises equal rights, individualism, and choice, and is most apparent in mainstream organisational contexts with their emphasis on roles, qualities and strategies such as leadership, personal resilience and the individual career path. However, liberal feminism has long been critiqued by other feminisms for being superficial and for continuing to privilege the masculine (McLaughlin, 2003) and for being insufficiently "robust enough to undo women's oppression" (Tong, 2018, p. 3).

Liberal feminism is largely synonymous with second wave feminism (1963 on). This movement was chiefly concerned with the crucial development of women's economic autonomy in a man's world in which mention of menstruation could be used

against women, to 'prove' just how unequal and unreliable they would be in the workplace. The short-term solution to this dilemma was to deny the realities of menstruation and avoid the conversation about just how women work while in pain, and navigate androcentric workplaces with their lack of sufficient female toilets (Criado-Perez, 2019) and aversion to menstrual signs (Roberts et al, 2002).

Neoliberalism has largely replaced liberal feminism (Rottenberg, 2018b) as the new "popular feminism" (Sarah Banet-Weiser, 2018; Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2017). Neoliberal feminism further utilises the individualism of liberal society to place strong emphasis on ongoing self-care, in order to create the perfected neoliberal female subject (Rottenberg, 2018b). This constant work on the self is related to a hyper-capitalist, hyper-individualising perspective in which "all activities and practices are understood as investments that aim to appreciate the value of the self-as-firm" (Rottenberg 2018b, p. 2). Emphasis on the perfected self, and the ways in which the pursuit of this goal is framed by neoliberalist political and cultural influencers such as Ivanka Trump and Gwyneth Paltrow, have importance for understanding how menstruation is being newly constituted and perceived in contemporary life. For example, a 2019 Financial Times article, *How to make your menstrual cycle work for you,* focused on the individual woman to shape her menstrual experience at work, rather than exploring new ideas that situate accommodations to the menstrual cycle at work as an organisational responsibility.[19]

While the deregulation that broadly characterises the neoliberal era has allowed for the dismantling of many taboos, including the menstrual taboo, accompanying

[19] https://www.ft.com/content/b7ce753c-4fba-11e9-8f44-fe4a86c48b33?fbclid=IwAR2W0P0Byv3SZ4mL5YTZbXG8MCrZXIKUcIsfNVH-a-rN9sShhTDA0Yiwhkw

socioeconomic policies have exacerbated existing class and gender inequalities. Such inequalities can manifest through the irrelevance of mainstream feminism to certain groups of women. Beverley Skeggs' study of working-class women in *Formations of class and gender* explored the lack of relationship the women in her study had with feminism. "The women did not recognise themselves as the subject 'woman' of most feminist discourse" (Skeggs, 1997, p. 139). She highlights the 'otherness' of working class women in relation to the broad class of 'woman' and noted how this hegemonic relationship plays out through class to situate working class women on the outer fringes of an already marginalised social category (which then also allows the dominant class to continue to employ them effectively as servants through the low-paid, low-status care industry). This example can be applied to the otherness of the menstruating woman, with her lowered social and economic capitals relative to women in other parts of the menstrual cycle (see section 3.3.1. for more on menstrual status analysed through Skeggs's class and capitals thesis) and who has to work harder to maintain a classist respectability in the management of menstrual flows. Thus the menstruator is beyond the pale even in the context of some, especially mainstream, feminist discourse. Skeggs notes that the developing entitlement stances of the 1980's (perhaps the beginnings of the neoliberal co-option of feminism into the myth of 'having it all') were irrelevant to the women in her study: "Their conceivability structures did not enable them to think that they were entitled to many things" (ibid, p. 144). This observation can equally be applied to the menstruating woman while menstruating, or when thinking of menstruation, whose sense of entitlement within the menstrual experience has historically been constituted through stigma, which does not allow for much entitlement at all. Without a sense of

entitlement to real attention, menstruating women are much less likely to do research or be researched, and menstruation correspondingly less likely to be theorised.

3.2.2. Feminisms & menstruation

Feminist theory is plural and complex. As McLaughlin states: "The long legacy of feminist theorising is a continuum of overlapping ideas and priorities" (2003, p. 186). While all feminisms are concerned with the role and status of women in society, some versions emphasise sex difference and valorise the feminine (such as ecological, cultural, and neopagan feminisms); others conceptualise an 'ideal' woman, who is feminine in embodiment while masculine in performance (such as liberal and neoliberal feminisms); and others problematise sex and gender binaries as falsely constructed and terminally tainted (such as social constructionist and postmodern feminisms). In terms of the relationship to work and organisations, neoliberal feminists recommend "leaning in" to corporate life (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013), while socialist and/or materialist feminists see this as a capitulation, identifying capitalism itself as enmeshed within the perpetuation of patriarchy. These varying perspectives are reflected in different perspectives on menstruation.

As a snapshot view of feminism's streams and their relationship to the topic of menstruation, I designed a chart, see below (separated into two sections for space reasons). My aim in creating the chart has been to map key elements of some of the major relevant feminisms in organisational contexts, and to briefly identify where they are located philosophically and practically with regard to menstruation, menstrual activism, and menstruation in organisations. I position this work in dynamic terms, mapping the historical shifts that have been influential and those that are currently in

process, both to understand where contemporary perspectives on menstruation arise from and where they might be headed.

This chart was inspired by the table, 'A summary of feminist approaches' by Calás and Smircich, first published in 1996 and updated as "The woman's condition: same or different?" in 2006. A more concise chart was contributed by Benschop and Verloo in 2016, which narrows the types of feminism from seven to four. Here, I extend the work of the previous charts by orienting my analysis of feminisms towards understanding organisational menstruation within feminism. I have selected the categories of feminism in this updated chart because of their pertinence either to contemporary Organisation Studies, to menstruation, or to both. I have dissolved divisions between epistemological, political, and ideological categorisations, and between academic scholars and popular figures: I have allowed these usually discrete categories to sit in the same chart as examples of the influences brought to bear on conceptualisations and expressions in the politics of menstruation, in an era in which trans-national and trans-class information is more available, and cultural influences more entangled, than they perhaps have ever been.

Calás and Smircich, (1996, 2006), identified seven types of feminism and explored how they influenced MOS. They began with liberal feminism, as the most mainstream and commonly accepted version. They then detailed radical, psychoanalytic, Marxist, socialist, poststructuralist/postmodern, and third world/(post)colonial feminisms. In this analysis, I have retained liberal feminism due to its influence on mainstream perspectives and, following Calás and Smircich, use it as a starting point. I include socialist feminism because it speaks specifically to ideas surrounding menstrual labour, the body as a site of struggle, and the influence of class on menstrual experience. I also

include poststructuralist/postmodern feminism largely because, although its overriding emphasis on discourse has been challenged in recent years, it is still having a considerable impact, especially in the development of non-binary language norms and in positioning feminism within a larger understanding of culture post the assumptions of the modernist project. However, for purposes of space as well as relevance, I integrate postcolonial feminism into social constructionism; omit psychoanalytic feminism as no longer so prevalent in feminist discourse and in organisation theory; and mention Marxist and radical feminisms in the context of other feminisms, rather than giving them entire columns. (I explore Marxist feminist ideas later in this chapter in the context of Federici's work.)

The first three categories I employ (liberal, socialist, and poststructuralist) are the three types of feminism in the original Calás and Smircich chart that were also identified by Benschop and Verloo (2016) as being most relevant in contemporary organisations. I also include social constructionist feminism from the Benschop & Verloo chart, (although it can be argued that this is not a form of feminism per se, but an epistemological stance supportive of feminist analysis).

The next three categories were not included in either of the earlier charts. I include eco/cultural and neopagan/Goddess feminisms because they have paid attention to menstruation as a significant factor in women's lives (Bobel, 2010) and continue to influence menstrual activism and related innovations in menstrual care, legislation, and workplace practices. The last category, neoliberal feminism, is the most recent development to be articulated and critiqued in MOS and in society and in academia more broadly. As mentioned above, this paradigm has significant implications for menstruation, organisation, and related embodiment issues, and I include it as a

separate category to liberal feminism because of the extent to which it has reshaped earlier mainstream perspectives.

CHART A: Feminisms and Menstruation Part One

Type of Feminism	Liberal (mainstream)	Socialist	Social Constructionist	Poststructuralist
Era and History	Originated in 18th – 19th C political theory. First articulation Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" (1792). Assumes rationality, mind/body dualism, possibility of neutrality. Focus: • Getting the vote. • Getting jobs. • Equality. • Breaking through the glass ceiling. • Beginnings of 'choice' and 'having it all' narratives.	1960s on (First use of term in U.S. 1972). Combines key tenets of Marxist/materialist and radical feminisms to conceptualise the oppression of women as rooted in the mutual constitution of capitalism and patriarchy. Focus: • Women's financial autonomy • Labour practices • Political justice • First intersectional theory: gender & class	1990s on, preceded/informed by radical and socialist feminisms and the women's liberation movements of the late 1960's. • Allied to the 'Third Wave' of feminism. • Intersections of gender, class, race and ability. • Has some connection to postcolonial feminism.	1980s on. Poststructuralism, inspired by posthumanism, began in French postmodern epistemological critique of identity, which challenged gendered assumptions through identifying social subjugation of the subject, who cannot be free of bias as everyone is inculcated into and part of a gendered world.
Main Tenets	• Gender equality is a crucial and ethical step for humanity. • Gender equality broadly means women can do what men do. • Women can do what men do and still be 'feminine'. • The keys to gender equality are social, and are achieved through education, reproductive rights + legislation, and workplace equity.	• Women's oppression is rooted in multiple inequalities. • Sex/gender cannot be understood and inequalities resolved without reference to class and economics. • The body is a site in which inequalities manifest and are constituted. • The material aspects of being female are sites of specific kinds of struggle.	• Differentiates 'sex' and 'gender'. • Gender attributes are entirely socially created. • The oppression of women has to be understood in the wider context of other oppressions and power relations such as race, class, education, global location. • Body created through social constructs and habit/patterning (Bourdieu).	• Notion of 'woman' is overdetermined and thus impossible to assess or authentically experience due to misogyny, thus is best deconstructed out of existence. • Anti-foundationalist. • Favours discourse, noting instability of symbolic systems. • Body is socially created through power relations & inscription.

Proponents & Influencers (e.g.)	• Mary Wollstonecraft • Betty Friedan • Germaine Greer • Gloria Steinem	• Zillah Eisenstein • Sheila Rowbotham • Barbara Ehrenreich • Donna Haraway • Silvia Federici	• Simone de Beauvoir • Joan Acker • Candace West & Don Zimmerman	• Helene Cixous • Julia Kristeva • Michel Foucault (Lacan) • Judith Butler
Criticisms of	• Assumes dominance of cisgender needs. • White dominant + racially privileged. • Limited by convention. • Capitalist/selfish: becomes neoliberal feminism. • Women become 'social males' in power positions.	• By lib fem: threatens the fundamental economic premise and success of capitalist society. • By post-struct. fem: Focus on material realm prosaic and insufficiently intellectual. • By rad fem: Heteronormative. • By social con. fem: White-dominant.	• Tends to ignore and/or relegate biology. • Represses physical experience: does not support integrating lived experience of the body into self-understanding or political analysis.	• Denies the subject's ability to challenge its construction and affecting dominant norms. • Colludes with the neutrality stance of liberalism to create a detached view oblivious to suffering.
Relationship to Menstruation	• Disconnected from body + 'down there'. • Disavows menses; favours suppression. • Unconsciousness of bias: introjected phallogocentrism + internalised misogyny. • Considers menstruation to be a problem already solved in Global North by education, the Pill, + disposable products.	• Lays groundwork for analysis of menstrual stigma related to organisational practices and economies by its focus on reproductive labour, motherhood and the maternal role. • Combines the materiality of women's lives (embodiment and economies) in a class and gendered analysis (see Skeggs 1997)	• Menstrual experience is entirely socially constructed. • Menstruation is interesting to study and observe as an expression of a gendered construction. • Social constructs + post-colonial awareness challenge both liberal feminist focus on Global South + neopagan romanticisation.	• Post-structuralist feminist writing on abjection, fluids, and leaking informs menstrual analysis. • Although Foucault did not discuss the gendered effects of male dominance on the female body, his identification of the power/knowledge complex helps explain menstrual abjection and shame.
Current Direction re Menstruation	• Recent signs of breakthrough by menstrual activism into mainstream feminism. • Workplaces still resistant to accommodating realities of menstruation but more conversation is happening.	• Recent revival of anti-capitalist activism along with feminism suggests a renewed socialist and allied materialist feminism which speaks positively for a reduction in menstrual socioeconomic inequalities.	• Social constructionist theory lends support to understanding the extent and significance of menstrual norms and expectations.	• Post-structuralism still influences social science in academia but new materialisms are amending/superse ding, allowing for discussion of social *and* biological factors.

CHART A: Feminisms and Menstruation Part Two

Type of Feminism	Eco/Cultural	Neopagan/Goddess	Neoliberal
Era and History	1970s on, mostly US, some elements absorbed into mainstream feminism + neopaganism. Recent revival. • Antecedents in 19th C ideas of women's virtues. • Influenced by Gaia theory of Earth as Mother. • Influenced by Buddhist/Asian concepts of the feminine. • Allied to neopagan, spiritual and Goddess related feminisms.	1960s on. • Popular in California, UK (e,g, Glastonbury), Australia, Europe. • Currently experiencing a revival among younger women especially category of the witch e.g. #witchesofinstagram. • Allied to eco/cultural feminisms. • Some tenets shared with alternative psychotherapies + healthcare. • Some tenets commercially allied to neoliberalism e.g. GOOP.	Onset 1980s on, analysed as impact on feminism 2000s on. • An extension/replacement of mainstream liberal feminism. • Increasingly dominant in 21st C along with neoliberalism more broadly. • Early signs: Helen Gurley Brown, Cosmopolitan, Sex And The City. • Individualistic. • Supported by social media, reality aspirational tv, narcissistic, acquisitive culture.
Main Tenets	• Women have special connection (enhanced spiritual access) with the Earth and the natural world. • Women are closer to the Earth and to the realm of 'body' because of their embodied experiences. • The capacity for motherhood gives women more compassion for living things. • Thus, women can show the way in environmentalism.	• Identifies with lore and practices of indigenous cultures e.g. Native Americans, Celts, perceived matrifocal ancient societies. • Transformation and healing of gender-related oppression are possible through ritual, right living, and 'tribal' belonging. • Support achieved through cult-like groups of neo-covens: personal change marked ritually + materially by romantic, rural, and 'historical' lifestyle, new names. • Value of building sisterhood(s).	• High value placed on self-care, fitness, youthfulness. • Lean-in doctrine challenges historical exclusion of women. • Primary values are worldly success and worldly power. • Overtly but still manipulatively aspirational to masculinist ways of wielding power. • Espouses amplified version of liberal feminist having-it-all doctrine. Look uber-female: high heels, cosmetic surgery. Act uber-male: confident, assertive.
Proponents & Influencers (e.g.)	• Mary Daly • Adrienne Rich • Charlene Spretnak • Lama Tsultrim Allione	• Starhawk • Jean Shinoda Bolen • Carol P. Christ • Zsuzsanna Budapest	• Gwyneth Paltrow • Sheryl Sandberg • Oprah Winfrey • Jane Fonda
Criticisms of	• Essentialist: wants to preserve gender differences. • Gynocentric. • Unaware of contamination of category of 'woman' by misogyny. • Makes false equivalence of 'woman' to 'earth'. • Valorises female traits.	• Essentialist: wants to preserve gender differences. • False nostalgia for imagined matriarchy in ancient times. • Delusional; childish; reliant on magical thinking. • Unaware that glorifying and romanticising the feminine may be a compensation for misogyny.	• Only for the privileged. • Narcissistic. • Insufficiently acknowledges and incorporates the humanist and ethical elements of feminism. • Classist in that overly focused on leadership roles and upper/middle class concepts e.g. work-life balance.

Relationship to Menstruation	• Identifies how disposable menstrual products cause pollution of rivers, seas and land. • Identifies how mainstream historical disaffection from menstrual blood is emblematic of detachment from Earth and nature. • Advocates changing behaviour at menstruation as contribution to environmental efforts.	• Menstrual cycle is acknowledged along with other natural cycles. • Menstrual blood is revered and seen as having magical ('magickal') powers of transformation. • Neopagan/Goddess circles are largely where a receptive audience first found/developed a shame-free repositioning of menstruation.	Two strategies: • Adopts privileged (e.g. GOOP) version of neopagan glorification. • If working, suppress menses through medication. • (Reflects Victorian split in 'types' of women: middle class 'lady' or working class stalwart.)
Current Direction re Menstruation	• Environmentalism is gateway for many menstrual activists; for developing menstrual cycle awareness; and in terms of product choices. • Environmental aspect of menstrual product awareness connected to social equity and initiatives to end 'period pverty'.	• Some neopagan groups and teachers are adopting the Red Tent as a means of gathering women together and strengthening community. • Increasing mainstream focus on cyclicity and human wellbeing: also shows in the growing relationship between menstrual self-care and neoliberal wellness narratives.	• Observable in mainstream media articles emphasising menstruation in terms of individual self-care, cycle 'empowerment' and 'wellness trends.' • Critiqued by menstrual scholars and activists on basis of growing social awareness of structural inequalities, needs for social justice, similar to/aligned with Occupy movements, #MeToo.

The chart demonstrates an unsettled debate within feminisms, reflected in attitudes to and perspectives on menstruation, which has a ripple effect when it comes to studying menstruation in MOS. It is particularly important to be able to distinguish tenets and assumptions in mainstream feminism from other streams of feminism, in order to see where menstrual innovations sit and are articulated in the context of shifting notions of acceptable feminism in a neoliberal era. Despite emerging from 'feminism', menstrual innovations may still be constituted on the basis of views predicated on masculinist constructions of female embodiment and associated lack of privilege and entitlement.

3.3. Towards a socioeconomic theory of menstruation

As outlined above, menstruation as organised in the Global North has received little attention in the context of feminist theory building. This lack persists despite the great potential menstruation offers as a site of social stigma, economic deprivation, and suppressed meaning that holds information about background and unconsciously held beliefs, hidden motivations, and denied or secret experience, all of which impact personal and public life. My thesis works to address this lack by drawing together and elaborating upon the work of Silvia Federici and Beverley Skeggs, two key feminist scholars who apply socioeconomic approaches to issues of gender. While I am aware of their larger bodies of work, I focus on a key text for each: *Caliban & the witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation,* by Federici (2004), and *Formations of class and gender: Becoming respectable*, by Skeggs (1997). Basing my theoretical framework upon their work allows me to conceptualise and illuminate the interplay between capitalist systemic structures, institutionalised sexism, and organisational practices, and to explore how this shapes and indeed defines menstrual experience. Both Federici and Skeggs detail how social and economic factors produce gendered forms of inequality that disadvantage women. This is starkly evident in the case of menstruation, an experience that has not only been used to belittle women and demean them socially, but also to detract from their economic status.

3.3.1. Silvia Federici: Enclosure, transgression, & the commons

In *Caliban & the witch* (2004), Federici's thesis is based on her analysis of how capitalism emerged out of patriarchy, is sustained by it, and continues to generate

globalised worker oppression. She has two main interlocking aims. The first: "to rethink the development of capitalism from a feminist viewpoint, while, at the same time, avoiding the limits of a "women's history"" (ibid, p. 11), concerns the need to resist the enclosure of women's experience into 'women's history' (supported by her example, I resist the enclosure of menstruation into embodiment, see pp. 39-40 of this thesis) and that instead, women's experience must be seen as central to social and economic history. Federici's question arising from this perspective -- "What do we learn about capitalist development, past and present, once we examine it through the vantage-point of a feminist perspective?" (ibid, p. 12) -- is not only necessary to ensure women's experience is taken seriously, but to fill crucial epistemological gaps. This leads to her second aim, which is to pinpoint contemporary interconnections between women's oppression, capitalism, globalisation, and incursions on human rights, and to show how these are part of a pattern which replicates the onset of capitalism: "the worldwide return, with the new global expansion of capitalist relations, of a set of phenomena usually associated with the genesis of capitalism" (ibid, p. 11). Federici identifies the manifestations of this trend as a significant new round of enclosures in the form of land grabs leading to new diasporas and increased persecution of migrants, coinciding with intensifications of violence against women along with attempts to introduce new draconian laws controlling female reproductive choices. Through this observation she integrates feminist scholarship with Marx's identification of the inherent instability of capitalism, which fuels its perpetual state of crisis (see *Capital,* 1867). The connection Federici makes here shows how neoliberalism is the latest incarnation of a longstanding pattern of periodic highs and lows, predictably occurring within a profit/growth-obsession and imperialist domination model that defies stability. She identifies the ways

that women suffer disproportionately within such a greed-based and risk-focused system.

Federici applies Marx's concept of "primitive accumulation" (also sometimes translated as "originary accumulation"[20]) to explain "the profound transformations that capitalism produced in the reproduction of labor-power and the social position of women" (p. 63). Marx asserted that primitive accumulation was a necessary precursor of capitalism. The combination of expropriated land along with the separation of workers from the means of production provided both an initial supply of capital, and the means by which capitalism could continue. Accumulation is a fundamental *and* ongoing element of capitalism, which depends upon a steady supply of expropriated capital, that is to say, capital accrued from the appropriation of resources taken from the commons and the common people.

Caliban and the witch contributes to my theoretical lens by providing an account of how patriarchal capitalism 'encloses' the female body and its biology as part of this ongoing process of accumulation and expropriation. Federici asserts that women's unpaid labour both enabled the origins of capitalism, and continues to support it through a) reproduction and the fertile female body that carries, nurses and raises the next generation of labourers (a function which includes menstruation as part of the fertility cycle), and b) unpaid labour in households, and low and lower-paid labour in the workplace. Federici identifies this undervalued contribution of women (and concomitant disempowerment) as a historical precondition for the success of capitalist economies based on wage labour. In Federici's view, the establishment of this lynchpin

[20] See the Glossary, p. xii, for disambiguation of these translations.

of capitalism was undertaken systematically, initially not just through enclosure of land and goods, but through the enclosure of women's bodies and practices, whose subservience was instilled through fear tactics, such as attacks on 'transgressive' women in the form of the witch-hunts. Such strategies shifted the narrative of patriarchal power relations such that it created a mass acceptance that female labour was not worthy of monetary compensation, in the process devaluing the feminine and making a norm out of the notion that areas of life associated with women were less important and less valuable than those associated with men. While Federici never directly references menstruation, her thesis gives a template for understanding how attitudes to the menstrual cycle and the shaping of menstrual experience are intimately linked with the broader processes of capitalism.

Federici shows how the witch-hunts of the early modern period in Europe were related historically to the enclosure of the commons. This significant phase in the diminishment of women's social and economic power in Europe occurred concurrently with a land grab that, as Marx observed, fuelled capitalism by supplying free resources to the ruling class that were then used to generate ongoing profit and power, while simultaneously destabilising the peasantry who, without access to communal land, had no choice but to work for their new landlords. Federici was alerted to the relationship between increased female vilification and the establishment of capitalism while living in Nigeria in the 1980s, when a similar process took place in which women deemed to be transgressive were denounced as witches, just as a significant land grab displaced tribes from their communally-held land.

Federici argues, converse to the conventional historical perspective in which capitalism is seen as a liberating economic organising force that ended feudalism and

serfdom, that it was instead far from liberating and was developed to subvert rising communalism. Indeed, she asserts that capitalism was a reactionary method of organising the economy. After the plagues and wars of the 13th and 14th centuries in Europe, rapid population decline meant that labour was scarce. As a result, 15th century workers for a while had more power and demanded more pay and rights. Following a relatively brief period of success, they were beaten back and down by the expropriation of the common land on which they had depended for millenia.

Federici asserts that capitalism disempowered women for three reasons: first, that women were guardians of several aspects of the commons and actively resisted enclosure. Second, women were individually and collectively powerful at the local level, and valued by their communities (not only as reproducers and nurturers but also because of their skills as healers and food suppliers). Third, capitalism needed a source of expropriated capital, and women's free or low-paid labour formed a significant element of this. Thus, the disempowerment of women was a prerequisite for the success of capitalism. Indeed, Federici refers to "the capitalist disciplining of women" as a fundamental element in the takeover of the commons (ibid, p. 10).

Federici's analysis emphasises social dependency and relational ontologies.[21] Working counter to the mainstream feminism of the time in which she was writing (early 2000s), her focus rests squarely on the collective experience of womanhood. She positions the traumas of being female as systemic, and situates the rationale for their construction at the macro level of political economy, arguing that women were targeted in order to neutralise them as a source of resistance, as well as to claim their labour.

[21] See the Glossary, p. x-xi, for definition of relational ontology.

When she writes: "For the witch-hunt destroyed a whole world of female practices, collective relations, and systems of knowledge that had been the foundation of women's power in pre-capitalist Europe, and the condition for their resistance in the struggle against feudalism" (ibid p. 103), she is challenging the neoliberal notion of the 'sealed' individual -- the 'atomistic' subject -- and instead reinstating a tribal view of a class of women being systematically undermined. She later details how the witch-hunt impacted on women's relationship with their bodies: "Just as the Enclosures expropriated the peasantry from the communal land, so the witch-hunt expropriated women from their bodies, which were thus "liberated" from any impediment preventing them to function as machines for the production of labor" (ibid, p. 184). She situates this incursion into women's embodied integrity as an exacerbation of the enclosure that had already begun with the theft of the commons: "For the threat of the stake erected more formidable barriers around women's bodies than were ever erected by the fencing off of the commons" (ibid, p. 184). This focus is matched by Federici's encompassing aim in writing the book. Early on she states that understanding the oppression of women within the context of the struggle for the commons "is crucial if we are to find an alternative to capitalism" (ibid, p. 10).

In terms of the subject formation of the *witch,* Federici's conceptualisation of medieval views of the witch archetype has much crossover with traditional popular notions of the menstruating woman with her supposed ability to spoil food (Lawrence, 1988) and disturb 'normal' life in other ways (Buckley & Gottlieb, 1988). Federici (2004, p. 11) positions the witch in collective terms as "the embodiment of a world of female subjects that capitalism had to destroy: the heretic, the healer, the disobedient wife, the woman who dared to live alone". A woman had to live under the control of a man or

men; she could not be autonomous and self-determining. Women designated as witches often were effectively employed by the collective in the reproductive realm, such as being midwives and herbalists, or they were personal transgressors such as adulteresses, the childless, and the promiscuous. Either way, female transgression was almost entirely constituted around reproduction. From Federici's work I develop the term 'reproductive transgressor' to describe women who cross the borderlines of acceptable female behaviour within patriarchy, including the menstruating women who claims her right to menstruate in her own way and who dares to articulate her menstrual needs.

Federici describes the reproductive transgressor when she speaks of: "the woman who exercised her sexuality outside the bonds of marriage and procreation" (ibid, p. 184). In terms of woman-as-healer, women's sphere of medicine was enclosed during this time: "with the persecution of the folk healer, women were expropriated from a patrimony of empirical knowledge....that they had accumulated and transmitted from generation to generation" (ibid, p. 201). (Federici counters the view of the Enlightenment as a liberation represented by modern scientific male-dominated medicine.) Capitalism is ahistorical in that its discourse is located in the present and imaginary future, for example, the Stock Exchange is future and risk-based. A depth of knowledge held by women and based on a naturalistically-determined past and on a non-commodified present posed a threat to a temporality construct always focused on future profit. Pertinent to the status of women in terms of the commons, capitalist-related ahistoricity also plays into narratives that valorise 'management' and hierarchy over community (Grey, 1999).

Federici submits evidence of a systematic downgrading of women's autonomy as capitalism strengthened: "Women could not have been totally devalued as workers and

deprived of autonomy with respect to men without being subjected to an intense process of social degradation; and indeed, throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, women lost ground in every area of social life" (2004, p. 100). Federici argues that during this time-frame, tenets of misogyny we still see today were codified and enforced (ibid, pp. 186-192): rape and prostitution were institutionalised, and in the process woman became the sexualised, criminal scapegoat: "Certainly we can say that the language of the witch-hunt "produced" the woman as a different species, a being suis [sic] generis, more carnal and perverted by nature" (ibid, p. 192). Non-procreative sexuality was seen as demonic and anti-social and punished accordingly (ibid, p. 192). Women's sexual pleasure was detached from cultural expression so that it became written and spoken about primarily in the contexts of male gratification and procreative productivity.

In the new capitalist organisation of work, "every woman (other than those privatized by bourgeois men) became a communal good, for once women's activities were defined as non-work, women's labor began to appear as a natural resource, available to all, no less than the air we breathe or the water we drink" (ibid, p. 97). Federici notes that the capitalist organisation of the waking day was dependent upon concretisation of the sexed power-difference. She states, "The power-difference between women and men and the concealment of women's unpaid-labor under the cover of natural inferiority, have enabled capitalism to immensely expand the "unpaid part of the working day" and use the (male) wage to accumulate women's labor" (ibid, p. 115). I apply this analysis to menstruation as another accumulation-by-proxy in which women perform two tasks simultaneously, in which menstruation is the unrecognised work, as woman's work is perceived as relative to man's. Federici goes on: "in many cases, they have also served to deflect class antagonism into an antagonism between men and

women". Here she shows how gender and class work together to systematically other women, (a point which will be augmented by Skeggs). Federici ends this part of her analysis by summing up: "Thus, primitive accumulation has been above all an accumulation of differences, inequalities, hierarchies, divisions, which have alienated workers from each other and even from themselves" (ibid, p. 115). This last reference can be applied directly to menstrual politics and its normative cultural framing, which can be seen to have alienated women from themselves.

In this "battle against the body", Federici quotes Weber regarding capitalism making acquisition "the ultimate purpose of life" at the expense of enjoyment and the body. She notes how, "Capitalism also attempts to overcome our "natural state," by breaking the barriers of nature and by lengthening the working day beyond the limits set by the sun, the seasonal cycles, and the body itself, as constituted in pre-industrial society" (ibid, p. 135). In capitalism, both time and the body become commodities that are modes of accumulation, rather than innate rights related to concepts of soul, creativity and being, and intrinsically linked to natural cycles. She adds that Marx, too, "sees the alienation from the body as a distinguishing trait of the capitalist work-relation" (ibid, p. 135) and indeed, Marx, drawing from Feuerbach, considered there to be an innate human creativity that is stifled by capitalism.

Thus, Federici sets the stage for building a menstrual theorisation in political economy terms, by laying bare the multiple ways in which capitalism has accumulated women, women's bodies, and their natural body rhythms, and robbed them of an 'essential' integrity, creativity, and joy.

While overall Federici's thesis is compelling, at times it suffers from a lack of specificity due to the difficulty of researching women's lives during that time period.

Sexist practices surrounding work, education, and whose voice had the right to be heard, have meant that almost all the extant premodern and early modern historical record was authored, preserved, and reproduced by men. There is a concomitant lack of data on female lived experience, especially from the woman's point of view. However, Federici could perhaps have further addressed oppression of women in contemporary early-capitalist countries elsewhere, beyond the example of Nigeria. Her time frame does not lend itself to a class analysis of women's experience as capitalism developed further, and for that, as well as for an ethnographic lens focused on the specificities of women's lived experience, I turn to the work of Beverley Skeggs.

3.3.2. Beverley Skeggs: Habitus, capitals, & respectability

Skeggs' 1997 work, *Formations of class and gender: Becoming respectable*, is concerned with the 12 years of ethnographic research that Skeggs undertook with 83 working class women in a small town in northwest England. At the start of the project, her subjects were all young women studying caring skills at a Further Education College. Her longitudinal study extends into their adulthood and employment as care-workers: some become wives and mothers, and all grapple with the complexities of social and economic positioning lived on the wrong side of both class and gender divides. Skeggs here is primarily influenced by the class analysis of Bourdieu (1979, 1986, 1987, 1989), and she builds on his concepts of habitus and capitals[22] to develop her theory of respectability. Skeggs identifies respectability as a means of classist distinction-making and control, and as a key element in women's self-identification and value system. Her

[22] See the Glossary for definitions of habitus (p. ix) and capital/capitals (p. viii).

analysis reveals her cohort to be preoccupied with and governed by a concept of (middle-class) respectability they can never measure up to, given that it is derived from a habitus imbibed from birth. The impossible quest for middle-class acceptance results in tentative and easily damaged self-worth, and the development of a variety of strategies, including defensiveness, low expectation, and temporary glamour, in order to cope and survive.

Skeggs uses a class lens to show how respectability protocols are employed as a balm to lack of and loss of social and economic status. She notes that it is easy to ignore the concept of respectability if you already have it by merit of your birth, upbringing and education: "It is rarely recognised as an issue by those who are positioned with it, who are normalized by it, and who do not have to prove it" (ibid, p. 1). Men of all classes have had more flexibility around respectability -- allowed to swear and sweat for example -- yet all women have been constrained by it to varying degrees. Skeggs links respectability to class, and class to gender. "By using respectability as an analytical tool this book aims to reinstate class in feminist (and) cultural theory...the category 'woman' is always produced through processes which include class and classifying produces very real effects which are lived on a daily basis" (ibid, p. 2). While gendered respectability constrains women of all classes, respectability codes most oppress those who have no chance of fully embodying them. Respectability manifests as a classed discourse that operates to control and limit working class women in particular ways. Skeggs details the ways in which the attainment, maintenance, and subversion of respectability are key preoccupations of working class women.

Skeggs does not mention menstruation specifically, but her work is highly pertinent to the subject. Her identification of respectability codes speaks to the cultural

construction of menstruation and its inherent respectability demand via concealment protocols such as avoiding blood showing on clothing and hiding menstrual products. Such behaviours are passed from mother to daughter and enforced in schools as part of girls' training in respectability, containment, and not causing offence to others. Such actions are performed for the 'gazer' and make menstruating life more cumbersome for the woman herself. Even with all this effort to conceal, like the working class women in Skeggs' study, the menstruating woman may only succeed in not being disrespectful, which is not quite the same thing as achieving respectability.

Skeggs' identification of working-class women's lack of various kinds of capital (working from Bourdieu) and their struggle to attain capitals, shows how this lack and struggle relates to their tenuous sense of self-worth. I extend this relationship between respectability and self-worth into an analysis of the status of the menstruating woman and her correspondingly limited capacity for self-care while bleeding. Skeggs shows how the least respectable you are on a scale of class and gender, the least right you have to take care of yourself. I consider how the menstruating woman has lowered levels of economic and social capitals and thus has to make extra effort to maintain respectability, which is achieved by silence, concealment, and pretence, none of which help her with self-care. Every month women experience a temporary loss of status when they menstruate. Menstruation is a cyclical event that disrupts availability for sex and work. Within a profit-driven patriarchal corporate capitalist context both of these factors instil and reproduce zero to low levels of social and economic capitals, while the historically stigmatised status of menstruation means it has no cultural or symbolic capital. Low/no capital is a potent reason with capitalist society to explain why menstruation has been under-researched medically, while being simultaneously

problematised and psychologically pathologised. Menstrual pain is trivialised, while the entire menstrual experience is corporately problematised for profit.

In the same way that respectability protocols are tied into class, so they are reflected in social, cultural, and economic capitals. Socially sanctioned behaviour during menstruation is culturally constructed to support status needs that have middle-class and working-class differentiations, reflected in different types of work. While menstrual leave in Asia is reportedly taken up in factories by low-status workers, a study in Taiwan found reluctance to use it due to fears of the impact on career security and progress (Chang et al, 2011). In a similar vein, menstrual suppression medication is marketed towards aspirational women as a path to individual empowerment (Woods, 2013). This is a reversal of Victorian patterns in which middle and upper class women were considered to need menstrual rest, while working class women were deemed less sensitive and could battle through regardless (Owen, 1993).

Skeggs notes that, "The women of this study are aware of their place....One central feature of the research is how the positions they occupy are rarely accommodated with comfort....the uneasy sense of standing under signs to which one does and does not belong (Butler, 1992)" (Skeggs, 1997, p. 4). A difficulty with and/or a reluctance to identify as menstruating is similarly influenced by being on and off. The non-menstruator belongs in the world in a way that the menstruator does not.

Working from Bourdieu's model of class based on "'capital' movements through social space" (ibid, p. 8), Skeggs describes his four types of (metaphorical) capital -- economic, cultural, social and symbolic -- in terms that are readily applicable to menstruation, and detail the ways in which it has until very recently had very little capital. For example, Skeggs' statement that "Femininity brings with it little social,

political and economic worth. It is not a strong asset to trade and capitalize on" (ibid, p. 10-11) pertains strongly to the uber-female actions, discourses and practices surrounding menstruation. In terms of class formation within the already under-capitalised class of female, "Bourdieu's economistic metaphors are useful for understanding how access, resources and legitimation contribute to class formation" (ibid, p. 9). I suggest that the menstruating woman has the least respectability and is at the bottom of the status totem pole. Dependent upon other specificities such as race and class, when menstruating she may have the least capital of any fertile-aged woman at any time, thus making menstrual suppression very attractive to ambitious women who are highly status sensitive.

Skeggs employs another term from Bourdieu when she notes how, "The media as an institution can produce *symbolic violence* against the working classes" [emphasis mine] (ibid, p. 11). Advertising about menstruation delegitimises it, for example by casting menstrual blood as so beyond the pale that it has to be disguised as *blue* liquid, when all other forms of (faked) blood are normatively shown as red. Such advertising is a form of symbolic violence against menstruating women, by insisting that menstrual blood is different from other types of blood, and is so transgressive that it must be hidden from sight in all possible ways. Thus it cannot even be symbolically accurately represented and instead must be disguised as a different colour. Bourdieu's concept of capital is that any kind of capital is only usable if it can be translated into a form of symbolic capital, and thus 'used' in the market in some way. Skeggs notes that "Symbolic capital is powerful capital...If one's capital is delegitimated then it cannot be traded as an asset; it cannot be capitalized upon" (ibid, p. 10). Similarly, the lack of capital accruing to menstruation and its concomitant de-legitimisation lead to a paucity of

menstrual research and menstrual education. Women cannot know their menstrual experience if every message they get is that it has no legitimacy to warrant proper study, accumulation of knowledge, and overt dissemination of that knowledge. Yet menstruation is a part of them, so the contagion of stigma becomes an ontological marginalisation of the woman herself. Skeggs discusses 'passing' (ibid, pp. 82-95) as a class 'improvement' strategy among her cohort, and similarly, by performing the correct concealment behaviours in order to pass as a non-menstruator (Vostral, 2010), passing becomes a desperate measure to cover the delegitimised self in a disguise of respectability which then becomes the only form of capital one possesses. This explains why so much anxiety develops around menstrual practices, especially in young girls unfamiliar with the protocols and procedures of blood management. Furthermore, education alone is not enough without systemic social and organisational change. As Skeggs observes: "Proximity to the 'right' knowledge and standards does not guarantee acceptance. They just generate more awareness of how 'wrong' your practices, appearance and knowledge actually are" (ibid, p. 15). This danger applies to the double bind of menstrual awareness and explains why women have resisted it.

Skeggs discusses how women are taught to care for others, but not to care for themselves because: "Their self is for others" (ibid, p. 65). Working women will exhaust themselves caring for relatives, such as in organising the family Christmas (Pullen & Vachhani, 2011). Similarly, women often report finding it very difficult to take time off during menstruation due to caring commitments. The persistence of 'grin and bear it" stoicism as a menstrual practice is correlated with capitals and respectability. The requirement that women care for others means they must not focus on self-care, unless, as Skeggs found, self-attention is related to occasional pampering and glamour, which

accrues status in capitalist society because you spend money on it and appear wealthier. There is a 'right' sort of caring woman (Skeggs, 1997, pp. 67-71), whose caring is constituted in terms of her femininity, a sexed and gendered quality that demands she put others first (as in for example, the unborn child in the anti-abortion argument). Within the construct of the feminine carer, 'caring about' is conflated with 'caring for'. Thus she must care more about her family than anyone else, and when working in a care capacity, must care about those she cares for. Extending this argument to consider menstruation, if a feminine woman is one who puts others first, then a menstruating woman taking time out for herself is selfish, and not feminine. Reiterating the abortion construction, she is not pregnant and is in the action of shedding a potential life/nest. Unlike menstruation, pregnancy does accrue capital, as the woman is creating a new being for the labour force.

"The 'caring self' is both a performance and a technique used to generate valuations of responsibility and respectability" (ibid. p. 69). So self-care accompanying menstrual acknowledgement, constructed as 'selfish' and as part of the non-respectable dimension of womanhood, threaten to diminish this carefully constructed and vulnerable sense of self-worth based on "the caring self". The construction of the carer runs very deep and persists over time even when other aspects of social training have been let go: "what had remained was a firm subjective construction as a carer" (ibid, p. 71). Subjectivities collapse into the family: "Guilt was a constant presence in their commentaries about families" (ibid, p. 71). Little wonder then, that women have historically been subservient to the imposed menstrual taboo and unable to shape subjectivities that include it without self-objectification and self-diminishment.

Skeggs identified caring as part of "feminine cultural capital" (ibid, p. 72). She

found that caring demanded constant reiteration and reproduction: "Their investments and practices generate an individualistic, intuitive form of caring dependent upon external validation and continually subject to scrutiny in which they are consigned to forever proving themselves through the reiteration of reproductive caring performances" (ibid, p. 72). This, in women who identify primarily as carers, menstrual shame may be exacerbated when menstrual symptoms prevent them from caring for others. Research has shown that menstruation can impact upon relationality: for example, that women with endometriosis find it harder to care for others during menstruation (e.g. Seear, 2009), and that menstrual shame correlates with sexual reticence (Schooler et al, 2005). Although part of the reproductive stream, menstruation at the time it happens serves no one else directly, so there is no externalised caring implicit within the act. Instead it is a time of a few hours or days in which the body demands self-care, and which women may be (or may feel) less able to provide care outwardly, or to engage in intimate relations with others. This then reproduces menstrual shame into shame about not being loving or caring enough. Instead of being oriented to self-care, women may 'prove' their validity through the reiteration of reproductive *anti*-caring performances towards themselves, often managed through complaint (Ahmed, 2017).

In the world of Skeggs' working class subjects, "Hygiene is a strong signifier of respectability and of good caring practice" (1997, p. 65), a finding which is echoed in the insistence of the hygiene narrative in the menstrual product industry. She goes on to specify how hygiene produces the 'good' subject: "The 'right' practices enable them to recognize and produce themselves as subjects in alignment with the standards and judgements of others. These standards help to produce the measure of respectability"

(ibid, p. 66). Such practices also generate self-objectification: "In the processing of good and bad practices, the women themselves become the objects of classification" (ibid, p. 66). Again here we can see the double bind of menstrual awareness: it is 'easier' to practice menstrual forgetting. "Through the processes of evaluation doubts and anxieties are created about their own previous caring experience: this helps to devalue rather than reaffirm the cultural capital they brought with them" (ibid, p. 67).

Skeggs further develops her ideas on respectability in the production of the subject: "Framed by class relations that placed working class women in a relationship of continually proving themselves as adequate to the scrutiny of others. This means that their production of subjectivity is always open to scrutiny by others" (ibid, p. 67). This can be applied to menstruation and gender relations, for example, when men tell women they must be premenstrual if they are annoyed. This scrutiny also means that women are disallowed their own subjective experience of menstruation. It also explains why many girls at menarche do not tell their mothers, and often do not tell anyone, that their period has begun: they fear any scrutiny on the stigmatised experience in which they feel at sea. Meta-analysis of cross-cultural research shows the impact of menstrual experience on psychological health, with a consistent reduction in self-esteem at menarche and during menstruation (Hennegan et al, 2019). The self-esteem drop at menarche is reiterated with every subsequent period in women who are unable to develop a non-objectified and non-stigmatised relationship with themselves when menstruating.

On the topic of the absent presence of the menstruating body, Skeggs sheds light through her denotion of class as "the structuring absence" (1997, p. 74) in the lives of working class women carers. Similarly, menstruation is a structuring absence for

women, in that they are trained not to speak of it, and to work hard to pass as non-menstruators while menstruating (Vostral, 2010). Skeggs notes the impact on the working-class of the broad British injunction not to talk about class (1997, p. 76-77), and the same nullification effect is apposite in the case of menstruation. Considering that, "There may not be a fit between positions and dispositions" (McCall, 1992), imagine having menstrual cramps while at work on a busy reception desk. When there is no legitimacy for a position, there can be no adjustment, such as in the white working-class sexualised woman and the menstruating woman, who therefore accrue no symbolic capital. "They cannot adjust themselves to being in that category" (Skeggs, 1997, p. 81-81) which makes it impossible to ask for whatever is needed. Skeggs notes that the impossibility of adjusting within an illegitimate position "became apparent when exploring how the women constantly emphasized their movement from the category of working class through *improvement*" (ibid, p. 82, my emphasis). A corresponding motif in menstrual discourse surrounds menstrual suppression, and the pride with which women can speak of 'skipping' periods, with a sense that at last they are in control of an impossible biological destiny. Skipping periods produces a constantly respectable 'normal' non-menstruating body: "Producing oneself as respectable becomes the means by which internal regulation and the specific policing of bodies occurs." (ibid, 130).

3.3.3. A feminist socioeconomic framework for menstrual organisation

While neither Federici nor Skeggs explicitly mention menstruation in their work, combining Federici's analysis of reproductive labour (and the related oppression of women's freedoms) as a resource expropriated by capitalism, with Skeggs' analysis of

respectability as a compensation for loss of capitals, provides a scaffold from which to build a theory of menstruation that incorporates and unifies key elements of menstrual experience. This then lays the foundation for a more complete understanding of the organising and organisational effects of menstrual innovations in this thesis.

Combining the analysis of Federici and Skeggs allows me to arrive at the following sequence of understanding:

i. That the resources fuelling patriarchal capitalism originated in part through the expropriation of women's labour, and continue to do so.
ii. That patriarchal capitalism's economic reliance on the unpaid/low-paid labour of women is directly related to external control of female reproductive experience.
iii. That these historical forces gave birth to a classist respectability agenda (focused on female reproduction/sexuality) that continues to constrain, undermine (and even directly attack) female corporeal acceptance and agency.
iv. That these mechanisms continue to devalue women and keep them 'in their place' while using their labour and time for inadequate recompense.
v. That associated manifestations of women's lower socioeconomic status include increased vulnerability and self-esteem (relative to men), both caused by and causing lowered social and economic capital.
vi. These multiple factors are exacerbated in the field of reproduction through a variety of power and control mechanisms, which include menstrual stigma.

From this theoretical standpoint, respectability practices are employed by women to offset the capital loss of menstruating. The menstrual respectability code reproduces prejudicial and somatophobic menstrual behaviours, along with inhibition and shame.

Six keyword concepts emerged from the work of Federici and Skeggs that speak to my developing theorisation of menstruation. These are *enclosure, the commons* and *transgression* from Federici, and *habitus, capitals* and *respectability* from Skeggs. By combining these I arrived at three interwoven building blocks for my framework:

1. *The (old) commons / enclosure / habitus.*

2. *Habitus / capitals / transgression.*

3. *Respectability / transgression / the (new) commons*.

These are each summarised below into glimmering themes which come further into play when applied to my findings, and will emerge again in the discussion.

1. *The (old) commons / enclosure / habitus.* Habitus is dependent upon routine and place (Bordieu, 1993). Enclosure ended the status of the 'common people' -- the people of the commons -- who shared an asset in the form of land from which they could subsist (Federici, 2004). Enclosure thus destabilised habitus. In the stress of this transformation, women were disproportionately disempowered and demeaned (ibid) as well as their labour being expropriated. Redressing such enclosure of the female body might then enable re-stabilisation and more secure habitus.

2. *Habitus / capitals / transgression.* Habitus, which Skeggs uses from Bourdieu's theoretical oeuvre (e.g. 1979, 1986, 1987, 1989), is a formative element in the production of the subject. According to Skeggs, a destabilised habitus combined with lowered social and economic status leads to a quest for compensatory respectability and glamour in order to secure capital value (1997). This quest is infused with a survival need to manage

the threat of being objectified (and vilified) as a reproductive transgressor (Federici, 2004). Habitus encompasses ethos[23]: values of commonality and mutuality changed when capitalism took hold and destroyed/altered the habitus which had been held in common agreement for centuries. Correspondingly, in the destabilisation of ethos, perceptions of transgression altered. Women were made vulnerable during this transition (Federici, 2004) and became the focus of redrawn transgressions and associated new laws and penalties. Changing such concepts of transgression might then alter women's sense of belonging and associated embodied and material rights.

3. Respectability / (new) transgression / the (new) commons. Defining a social group as transgressive provokes the need to find ways to subvert the abjected position. Codes of respectability surrounding menstruation developed to offset the capital loss (Skeggs, 1997) of the transgression of menstruating. The revivification of the idea of the commons post the Global Financial Crisis coincided historically with challenges to menstrual respectability codes, which were critiqued for the ways they constrained and stigmatised women and menstrual experience. New transgressions emerged via social media in a counterpolitics. If the commons is indeed being revivified, this shift could relate to and be reflected in new/changing menstrual norms, especially as these are related to innovations in menstrual practices.

Chapter summary

This chapter has delineated a theoretical framework for this thesis. Menstrual stigmatisation has played out in organisational contexts through longstanding silencing

[23] See the Glossary (p. ix) for definitions of 'ethos' and 'habitus'.

and marginalisation, and more recently through individualised neoliberal concepts of self-care that are dependent upon and contribute to a polluting industry. By working with the socioeconomic theories of Federici and Skeggs, I developed a conceptual framework which allowed me to develop a feminist methodology for researching my participants' experience of a new menstrual product and a new menstrual workplace policy.

4. Methodology

Chapter introduction

This chapter details how I developed a methodology[24] aligned with the feminist perspective that underpins this thesis, and describe the methods used. In brief, I developed a qualitative, ethnographically-informed methodology underpinned by a feminist onto-epistemological[25] framework.

Beverley Skeggs (1997) situates methodology as the underground foundation of theory, in recognition of its onto-epistemological significance and its often buried and unacknowledged positioning. "Methodology is the archaeological foundation from which theories are constructed....theories are inseparable from issues of epistemology and method" (ibid, p. 38). Our understanding of the nature of reality, of how we know what we know, of how we conceptualise new data, and of how these elements combine to contribute to the gradual accretion of knowledge, are all underpinned by methodology: by *how* we (re)imagine the journey of research, by *who* we are as researchers, and by the *ways* in which we go about collecting and analysing information about our world. Like microbes in the soil, the busy and rigorous activity of data collection and analysis has a circular, generative relationship with the more fluid and airy nature of concepts, which both inform and create method, and are refined and developed afresh through new methodological theory and practice. For this reason, more than simply for coherence and neatness, chosen methodology (overarching study design), details of methods (research questions, data collection, and data analysis),

[24] See the Glossary for distinctions concerning ways the term 'methodology' is used in this thesis (p. x).
[25] See the Glossary for definition of 'onto-epistemology' and justification of its use (p. x).

theoretical perspective (conceptual lens and assumptions), and epistemology (ways of knowing, and scholarly 'home') all need to align in order to produce rigorous social research (Crotty 1998, p. 2). Bhattacharya (2017, p. 6) adds *ontology* to this list of criteria. This addition is important in developing feminist research beyond masculinist constructions of reality.

In studying menstruation, I explore an element of women's lives long stigmatised and suppressed, and socially constructed for the exercise of patriarchal control (e.g. de Beauvoir 1953; Young 2005). In developing my methodology and methods, I became aware of how the knotty, stigmatised background to my research topic reverberated onto my process of studying it. Not only does the ingrained masculinist bias against female corporeality in general, and menstruation in particular, affect the relevance ascribed to menstruation as a topic for theorisation, it also influences how one develops a methodology for studying it.

To return to my opening quotation: Skeggs positions methodology as the "archaeological foundation" of theory. In this thesis, my argument situates menstrual taboo as another kind of foundation: as a significant element in the structure of the patriarchy and further, as detailed in the previous chapter, as a key constituent of the success of patriarchal capitalism. A consequence of the newly vivified menstrual activism is to not only expose this foundation but also to dismantle it, in which process menstrual acceptance can become a means by which feminism both demonstrates and finds a deeper strength (Bobel, 2010; Fahs, 2016; Weiss-Wolf, 2017). To investigate this phenomenon in organisational contexts, I focused empirically on two ways in which menstruation is being reorganised in contemporary life, in order to better understand what happens when the material actions and commodities of the menstrual experience

undergo significant alteration, provoked and supported by a newly politicised and vocal menstrual activism. The symbolic resonance of both instances of archaeological foundation -- my methodology and my topic -- will become apparent throughout this account of how I built a methodology with sufficient structural and theoretical integrity to serve my topic and my research participants.

Like Skeggs, who herself worked in a care home before going to university, I was already directly involved with some of my participants when I began my research. In the workplace study my association with the organisation originated in my work for them as a pro-bono consultant on the policy. This relationship continued during my fieldwork (with ethics approval from my institution and board approval from the organisation), albeit in a limited, need-based manner in which I was more of an occasional sounding board. During the cup study, I was involved as an expert on menstruation at the academic institution my participants attended, where I gave a talk on the history of the idea of the "Red tent" and contributed an audio explanation of cup use to an exhibition on blood. In addition, as an established writer and researcher on the topic of menstruation, my earlier work was sometimes known to participants. I needed to take account of this positionality in my methodology (see especially pp. 94-99). I became aware that while these sometimes multi-level relationships gave me access and credibility, the level of involvement also took a toll on me. I learned to practice a type of reflexivity through writing that allowed me to stay mindful to my own process as well as those of the participants (see the Interlude section between Chapters 5 and 6).

The following three sections outline and justify my research design and methodological approach. Section 1 explains my epistemological basis and the corresponding commitments that informed my research design. Section 2 delineates the research design from initial conception and case study details through interview style to data management. Section 3 concerns my data analysis and the development of an analytic schema that could support and reflect my feminist commitments and my theoretical framework, leading to iterative and abductive[26] development of findings. Section 4 addresses the limitations of the research methodology.

4.1. Epistemological commitments

A primary epistemic belief in ethnography is that people's stories, often gathered through interviews, are legitimate and important sources of knowledge (e.g. Skeggs, 1997). As a sociologist, Skeggs used an ethnographic methodology in *Formations of class & gender* (1997) by talking to women working in care homes. As a young academic in the 1980s, she had become aware that "There has been a marked tendency in recent years to move away from talking and listening to those outside of academia" (ibid, p. 2). Her goal was to remedy this lack by showing how "theory can be radically transformed if others are let in on the conversation" (ibid), a powerful political idea with strong implications for method and for theory building, and which was strongly in my mind as I set about designing my methodology for a topic in which silencing has been a norm.

In pursuit of this goal, Skeggs aimed to show how direct engagement through "talking and listening" can be used, in this case to illuminate the lived experience of a

[26] In abduction, a theoretical approach is used to inform the data analysis in the anticipation that the analysis may further develop said theory (Fotaki & Harding, 2018, p. 192).

cohort of working class women with low social capitals. Her concern was to cut through the bias of privilege, to get to the roots of sociological knowledge of an underclass by recording subjective lived experience and generating theory from it.

In the following three sections I describe and discuss the feminist (and) ethnographic basis of my methodology, in the context of the discipline of Management & Organisation Studies (MOS).

4.1.1. Ethnography in Management & Organisation Studies

Methodology in MOS is grounded in the social sciences, and is increasingly qualitative in approach, evidenced through a "quiet methodological revolution" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. vii). Qualitative research "locates the observer in the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 6). In order to understand what people experience, think, believe and do, the researcher goes outside the laboratory and into the agora, the home, the workplace to gather data, necessitating different data collection methods and techniques of analysis than those used in quantitative research.

Early qualitative work in the social sciences was largely positioned as ethnography (Parker, 2012). Classical anthropological ethnography "seeks to understand human groups (or societies, or cultures, or institutions)" (Madden, 2017, p. 16), and "was once seen as a long-term commitment where researchers sometimes lived with communities for years, with a 12–18 month stay typical" (ibid, p. 17). Such immersion is rarely possible given the strictures of the contemporary PhD timeline, and is not always ideal or necessary for more bounded qualitative research. Instead, the notion of research that is ethnographically-informed has developed, in which one applies techniques and commitments of ethnography to a case study of particular aspects of social or cultural

or institutional groups (e.g. Janesick, 2000; Perkins, 2013). In MOS, this method has long been applied to case studies of workplaces and other organisational contexts, including when researching stigmatised 'dirty' topics (e.g. Ackroyd & Crowdy, 1990).

A core humanistic commitment from early on in the development of sociological ethnography has been *verstehen* -- literally, *to understand* -- usually translated in the social sciences as *interpretive understanding*. Verstehen, a core non-positivist stance, was first elaborated on in the sociological context by Max Weber (Platt, 1985), and has come to refer to the interpretive, participatory, and empathic mode of social research particularly favoured by anthropologists, feminists, and some sociologists and organisational scholars. Allied techniques that support verstehen and which I incorporated into my ethnographically-informed methodology include:

1. The ethnographic participatory position of **stance of intimacy.** This is a central technique of ethnography, with the key tenet being that "power differentials between researchers and the researched are broken down" (Gray, 2017, p. 449).
2. The ethnographic concepts of **emic** and **etic** awareness (loosely, *insider* and *outsider*). *"Emic"* and *"etic",* while deriving from *"phonemic"* and *"phonetic"*, do not only refer to language and context, but also to what is considered meaningful (Angrosino, 2011, p. 73). The centrality to social science research of understanding these distinctions, and in particular of considering the emic perspective through an inductive analysis, has been noted and explored by many organisational scholars, (e.g. Gill and Johnson, 2010, p. 173).
3. Researcher awareness through **reflexivity**. Regular reflection by the researcher on their own positionality, cognitive biases and privilege aims to clarify and balance biases and projections. While reflexivity is intended in part to offset the

subjectivity of the researcher through a rigorous commitment to honesty regarding feelings and reactions, it can also offer illuminating perspectives on the matter and cohort being studied.

4.1.2 Feminist ethnography in Management & Organisation Studies

Beyond the broad qualitative research commitment to verstehen and associated practices, feminist scholarship in organisational research requires strategies for engaging with the manifestations of a sexual hierarchy "at the service of a project of domination", created and supported through "exclusionary organizational politics that privilege the minority while impoverishing the majority" (Fotaki & Harding, 2018, p. 2).

Accordingly, feminist organisational methodology follows key feminist theoretical, conceptual, and empirical commitments. Since the 1960s, feminist scholars across disciplines have been developing and refining theories and methodologies to accurately and sensitively study the lives of women, discussed in depth for example by Reinharz (1992) and Skeggs (2001), and anthologised in Cudd and Andreasen (2005) on feminist theory, and Hesse-Biber (2012) on feminist research methods. Feminist methodology cannot be captured by a single approach: as Reinharz (1992) determined, there is no single feminist method, but more an array of perspectives brought to bear on methodology as a whole, a strategy she argues has lent feminism robustness and strength. Instead of a specific method or set of methods being associated with a related feminist onto-epistemology, the majority of feminist methodologies share certain core commitments, such as the emphasis on relationality, the connection with activism, the challenge to privileged positions, and the engagement with "'new' questions that place women's lives and those of 'other' marginalised groups at the centre of social inquiry"

(Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 3). These continue to give rise to methods that are “mindful of hierarchies of power and authority in the research process” (ibid, p. 4). As such, these core commitments emphasise themes (including the commons, activism, and the centring of women's experience) that I could connect with my theoretical framework from Federici and Skeggs, and that were pertinent to the study of the silenced and stigmatised topic of menstruation with its 'new' developments.

Chief among these commitments is a corrective position vis-à-vis methodology that arises out of and in tandem with pre-existing masculinist ontologies and epistemologies. Due to the masculinist bias of prior knowledge, the study of women cannot be solely based on existing theory, and indeed one must be careful to assess existing theory for masculinist bias (Jaggar, 1983; Grosz, 1994). Thus, contrary to masculinist and positivist modes of knowledge production, feminist methodologies are primarily inductive, being informed by the material received and found rather than by pre-existing theory. Furthermore, while feminist theory is largely created *in*ductively from the data (rather than from hypotheses), feminist scholars also engage with an iterative process of generating knowledge which is *ab*ductive, in that there is a mutually nutritional relationship between theory and data (e.g. Fotaki & Harding, 2018). In this manner, during the entire process of research on a topic, one is continually working back and forth between and among theory, extant literature, research methods, data analysis and writing up. So while I write this chapter as if my research was a linear progression from methodological theorisation through to developing findings, in fact, aside from the bounded period of data collection in the field, all the various aspects of the surrounding research process continually interwove and informed each other.

The field of MOS has been influenced by feminist perspectives on the subject-object distinction. Feminist methodological scholars have critiqued and problematised the traditional 'scientific' reifying of the *objective* (di)stance of the researcher, instead adopting a position of *subjectivity*: of parity, intimacy, and relatability with research participants (e.g. Skeggs, 1997). Acceptance in MOS of the validity of utilising subjectivity in (feminist) organisational research has more recently been extended by a growing understanding and conceptualisation of the *intersubjectivity* of human -- and human/non-human -- relationships, in which organisations have been a particularly fruitful example of 'co-creation' (Borgerson, 2010). The intersubjectivity perspective, in which relational and reflexive onto-epistemologies are key, draws on hermeneutic phenomenology and Bakhtin's interactive dialogism (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 92). "Intersubjectivism draws on a relational ontology to explore the relational, embodied, and intersubjective nature of human experience" (Cunliffe, 2011, p. 664), in which knowledge is generated through "embodied and intersubjective knowing, that may be understood through *radically reflexive* practice" (Cunliffe, 2008, p. 129, my emphasis). The ethics of the intersubjective enfolding of beings is theorised in Kelly Oliver's argument for "an intersubjective ontology of the ethical relationship" (Oliver, 1995, p. 194) in which there is an inseparability of benefit or harm among constituent beings or matter, and in which witnessing is a two-way street (Oliver, 2001). Such arguments urge feminist methodology towards more loving and inclusive methodologies, which can amplify and transform verstehen into a "consistent, careful, thoughtful and informed" craft (Cunliffe, 2011, 666) with a moral, even spiritual dimension. I perceive such feminist methodology as characterised at its best by a position of open-eyed, immersive

solidarity in the researcher, in which *withness* (Shotter, 2008) is equally enjoined with *witnessing* (Oliver, 2001; Borgerson, 2010).

Once I clarified for myself my commitment to an open, perceptive-yet-immersive way of working, that at its centre operated in solidarity with my participants while nonetheless being a witnessing observer of their experience who was willing to be witnessed herself (and by herself), I was able to articulate the core values that could support and hold my methodology throughout.

4.1.3 Embedding core values into my methodology

Through reflecting upon these key tenets of feminist ethnographic and organisational research I developed a schema of core values. These methodological imperatives were applied at all stages of my research; in the development of my research question and the enactment of my data collection and modes of data analysis (see tables 1 & 2, pp. 99-100). I was also conscious of embedding these values and standpoints within my approach to how I communicated my findings and contributions, chiefly through writing but also through speaking. Additionally, I engaged in an iterative, open process with key participants to check and clarify the writing up of my research by checking drafts of papers with them and asking for their feedback.

The core values I developed were:

a) "Withness" and "witnessing"

Given the nature of my position -- regarding the workplace study, as a pro-bono consultant, and regarding the cup study, as a published 'expert' on the politics of menstrual products -- an intersubjective stance was a given from the start. I was inescapably "intimately involved in the relational and situated moments of making

sense" (Cunliffe 2011, 665). Accordingly I embraced *"withness"* (Shotter 2008) and *"witnessing"* (Oliver 2001) in a reflexive hermeneutic of working with participants in a conversational style in interviews and in meetings, to explore how we mutually interpreted and understood the engagement of menstrual innovations in organisational life.

b) Stigma-sensitivity

As a historically silenced part of women's lives around which physical and psychological suffering is often constituted, research on menstrual lived experience demands a specific kind of sensitivity in order to not cause more harm, and to elicit information beyond that which has normatively been socially sanctioned as permissible to share. Incorporating an understanding of how stigma works to oppress communication was essential in order to frame a research process that would feel safe enough for women to divulge their experience surrounding menstruation. To gather substantive and accurate data, I wanted to create a methodology that could elicit information that would customarily have been privately held. Such methodology must therefore take account of several factors: the effects of long-term suppression and prejudice on women's perceptions of their own lives and bodies; the ways in which women customarily express themselves concerning gendered customary behaviours in general and menstruation in particular; and how stigma impacts this awareness and expression by amplification. Stigma-awareness led me to be particularly awake to affective dimensions in interviews and to develop methodologies accordingly. Such accommodations included using a diary-based method in the menstrual cup study. This method allowed the possibility that participants could first of all contemplate their relationship with the cup and their uptake of it in privacy.

c) Courage

In examining the lived experience of menstruation in public life, and in making public an experience long categorised as 'private', I was exposing, and asking my participants to expose, part of the collective underbelly, involving a set of often unconsciously held dictates that oppress women and concern a matter people are trained to fear and shy away from. I felt a commitment to not gloss over the demand I was making both on myself and on the research participants in tackling a stigmatised subject, and did what I could to help them feel supported and at ease. I asked questions about how others had responded to their involvement in the research as a way of allowing them to speak about negative as well as positive responses and ways in which they felt undermined as well as ways in which they felt supported. Courage was also required in my reflexivity praxis and helped me to develop ideas surrounding feminist demands and women's habituation into vulnerability, exposure, and self-sacrifice.

d) Rigour

This commitment is a conventional one in research broadly. I wanted to create a robust strategy that would support a truthful account of my research, and was aware there were some potentially complicating factors. It was important that I acknowledge to myself the impact on my research of my 'insider status' (McNulty, 2012, 425) as a long-standing menstrual activist, researcher, and writer. On the positive side, this gave me *access* to and *credibility* with my research participants and associated helpful networking. My background had the benefit of giving me a deep knowledge of the field, which ensured a kind of *reliability*, in that I came into my research with some understanding of its complexity and specific issues. Yet, even though theoretically I was concerned with collapsing false distinctions between (inter)subjectivities and

objectivity, I recognised that the challenge to research performed by a researcher with insider status is that there will inevitably be bias, (for example in terms of my own preconceived ideas and prior understandings), due to the probability of habitually-generated epistemological assumptions. I countered this potential threat to research trustworthiness by periodically checking *confirmability* (a method for ensuring 'objectivity') through peer debriefing and with my supervisory team, and by practicing *reflexive awareness* throughout, including when performing interviews. I initially had to work on my fluidity between the roles of author/'expert' and researcher, especially when interviewees mentioned having read my prior work: I initially reacted with self-conscious embarrassment when this happened, but realised I could respond more graciously without altering my focus being on the participant. In addition I practiced other methods to support rigour: I was concerned to ensure that I took research *trustworthiness* into account (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 281). I kept an *audit trail* of the processes I went through in both developing and performing the analysis (Lincoln &Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The multiple elements in the data analysis for each of the two studies generated a limited kind of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) in addition to the multiplicity of data types gathered. While I did not foreground the importance of thick description[27], it contributed to an overall breadth and depth of data that possibly supported the future usefulness of the study in terms of *transferability.* I further supported these established methods by using the thinking around them as a springboard into the rigorous technique I developed for my data analysis.

[27] I did not foreground the importance of thick description because (i) I was doing ethnographically-informed research, rather than an ethnography per se, and (ii) in the light of recent critique on the limitations of Geertz's approach, see Tholen, 2018.

e) Holism

This value concerns the need to honour and respect the multidimensionality of the human beings involved and the fullness of the subject. Taking a holistic approach is a primary value in ethnography (Creswell, 2013, 95) and it became particularly pertinent when it came to my data analysis, and was a prime impetus for the dual method I devised (see section 4.3). A commitment to holistic thinking was strong overall in my research because of the incompleteness of how women have been expected to navigate their reproductive lives and 'ownership' of their bodies, and the ways in which such a significant element of being embodied as female as having a menstrual cycle can be cauterised in a patriarchal system (e.g. de Beauvoir, 1953; Young, 2005). By foregrounding menstruation as an experience, my research was bringing into focus a sidelined, even abandoned, element in how women navigate organisational life.

f) Sustainability

This value speaks to a desire to make the most out of my resources: the time I had available; the networks I already interacted with and those I built up during my research; and the data I collected and the analysis by which I 'understood' them. This value has a strong interconnection with holism: it reminded me to respect and integrate the wholeness of the process and the participants in how I worked with the raw material provided by my fieldwork, as well as how I took care of myself as a researcher (see the 'Interlude' section in between chapters 5 and 6).

While these core values were held throughout the research process -- from developing my research question to writing up -- they are perhaps demonstrated most vividly in my methods of data collection and data analysis as represented in the following two tables.

TABLE 1: Core values & data collection

PROCESS → VALUE ↓	Description	Challenge	Example of Approach
Withness and *witnessing*	My social and professional situation with participants meant that the only honest position I could take was to 'be with' while at the same time putting 'myself' aside.	Finding and maintaining the mental and psychological fluidity to move between different subject positions.	I had a discipline of including reflexive commentary while writing up daily fieldwork notes. In this way I 'used' myself as a subject.
Stigma-sensitivity	The felt need for privacy surrounding menstruation fosters a social code that this is not something one should talk about other than with intimates or medical professionals.	In order to gather substantive and accurate data, I needed to create a methodology that could elicit information that would be customarily privately held. What methods support women to open up around a stigmatised area of life?	Cup study: using the diary method of data collection, so women wrote to themselves first, in a private place and time of their own choosing. Workplace study: developing relationships of trust with key staff members and offering pro bono expertise for six months before formal data collection began. Being a participant observer gave me an honorary insider status that engendered trust.
Courage	Stigma rules through fear of exposure. Thus courage was necessary, because I was asking my participants to expose a matter society trains people to fear and shy away from.	Women may be unaware of how deeply menstrual stigma has infected their fear/courage regarding open communication and exploration. This means there is an *edge* to get over.	I developed simple relational strategies to elicit open communication. I modelled a relaxed, non-judgmental, unafraid attitude to talking about menstruation. I built on initial diary and interview responses to gently encourage insight and consideration of lived experience.
Rigour	Research trustworthiness was a primary concern. To the conventional elements of institutional ethics approval, the audit trail, reflexivity, and peer/supervisor confirmability, I added my insider status as another source of reliability and which had the benefit of my readily gaining the confidence of research participants.	I did not find rigour to be a problem in constructing the data collection process as it has been well attended to in feminist research.	Maintaining accepted levels of rigour of feminist organisational research. While remaining ethical and correctly-boundaried, I was friendly and egalitarian and did not take up a stance of professional distance during the data collection process.
Holism	A holistic perspective on data collection involves being able to see close detail and the bigger picture concurrently.	How to get grounded, specific information without losing sight of the overall picture?	I used multiple methods of data collection to build as much of a thick description as possible for a limited ethnographically-informed study. In interviews, I paid attention to 'small' detail while also being awake to the meta scale of the situation, for example, the looming eviction faced by the organisation in the policy study.
Sustainability	Closely allied to holism, sustainability in data	How to make the most use of the	I made copious notes, took photographs, and kept a eye out

	collection requires a commitment to understanding usefulness.	limited time available in interviews and participant observation?	for unexpected information that might have a use down the track.
Alignment with feminist framework	Feminist research has a history of innovating in data collection and this continues to develop.	How to contribute to the continuing scholarship on data collection in feminist research?	I made it explicit in emails and interviews that I valued all aspects of participants' menstrual experience and viewpoints.

TABLE 2: Core values & data analysis

PROCESS → VALUE ↓	Description	Challenge	Example of Approach
Withness and *witnessing*	Being with and witnessing included mining my own experience for building empathetic connection.	Overcoming my own resistance to painful memory and to current experience (see Interlude section, pp. 188-194).	I used 'dirty writing' as a technique for uncovering my deeper thoughts and embodied experience while analysing my data. In this way I became more aware of menstrual trauma at work.
Stigma-sensitivity	Stigma may be revealed through subtle cues, not always noticeable in a transcription of an interview.	How to avoid reproducing stigma by performing data analysis in an unconscious masculinist paradigm?	I listened closely to interviews and developed a system for tabulating my perceptions as well as literal content. This factored in how stigmatisation shows through affect.
Courage	(1) Existing feminist organisational research makes little mention of data analysis. (2) Need for an analytical process which factors in courage/fear in a stigmatised topic.	How to perform data analysis in line with feminist onto-epistemology?	(1) I had the courage to name the problem and seek a solution. (2) I looked for indications of courage in my research participants in my analysis.
Rigour	Feminist scholarship largely adopts *reflexivity* in analysis as the remedy to positivism in terms of rigour, which can perversely make women scholars even more vulnerable.	How to create a coherent thesis that does not sacrifice integrity for a positivist kind of rigour?	I question the application of reflexivity in feminist scholarship as a band-aid to issues of rigour. I am developing a view that rigour needs to be reconceptualised for feminist analysis.
Holism	Conventional data coding from transcripts can miss out precious data and fail to do justice to the whole of the research encounter, such as ignoring tone and strength of voice, and accompanying indicative affect.	How to capture nuanced data while still satisfying the conventions of data coding in qualitative research?	I performed two sets of analysis, one for written data (coding transcripts of recorded interviews) and one for aural data (listening to interview recordings).
Sustainability	An ecological ethos involves using as much of the given material as possible.	How to make the most of a wealth of data without privileging the most easily coded part, i.e. transcripted words?	I included affect, latency, and material conditions in my analysis.
Alignment with feminist framework	Extant literature on feminist research makes little mention of data analysis.	How to perform data analysis in line with feminist onto-epistemology?	Developing a data analysis method which honoured anti-logos as well as logos.

4.2. Research design

This section is concerned with the methods employed in my data collection and data management in the performance of my two case studies, which were designated as a holistic single case study in the cups research, and a multi-method single case study in the workplace research. The designs of the case studies were embedded in an ethnographically-informed feminist organisational methodology, and so were necessarily qualitative, interpretive, in/abductive, and iterative (e.g. Fotaki & Harding, 2018).

The two studies each focus on a different level of analysis. The cup study was concerned with individuals and the policy study with an organisation. Correspondingly, for the cup study, I engaged with individuals on the uptake of an individual product: the menstrual cup. For the policy study, I engaged with an organisation in the context of a new organisational development: the design and implementation of a menstrual workplace policy.

While my overall methodology was ethnographically-informed, both pieces of fieldwork were conceptualised as case studies, defined as research on a distinct and bounded topic in each case. Researchers performing case studies have made good use of ethnographic concepts in understanding their work, for example, use of emic issues, emphases on verstehen, context, and developing a holistic understanding (Abma & Stake, 2014). Unlike Creswell (2013), who positions 'Case Study' as one of five major approaches to qualitative research on a par with 'Ethnography', here I follow Stake (1995) who delineates the case study not as a methodology but as a bounded choice within a broader context. In the cup study, participants were organising menstrual blood management in a new way by using a menstrual cup. In the policy study, the

organisation as a whole was engaged in changing its organisational practices surrounding menstruation at work. So while the studies dealt with different levels of analysis, each was concerned with an innovation, was bounded by that innovation, and engaged with the same circulation of ideas surrounding a substantive change to an arena long organised around stigmatisation. I conceptualised both the cup and the policy as an artefact with its own story, which lent additional justification for using the frame of the case study.

4.2.1. Data collection

Data collection was performed over a 21 month period, from October 2016 to June 2018, with a prior period of four months in which relationships were built with the organisation in the policy study.

Both case studies were undertaken through fieldwork conducted in a naturalistic manner (Stake, 2000, 2006), in order to "understand with minimum intervention the particularity of a case in its ordinary situation from multiple perspectives" (Abma & Stake, 2014, p. 1150). The method of naturalistic case study research is in keeping with an ethnographically-informed methodology, with data collection being performed as much as possible in the habitual surroundings of the participants, guided by what works best in the moment. Naturalistic case study "relies on a humanistic commitment to study the world from the human perspective" (ibid), a position that informed my research throughout.

My choice of these two cases was supported by my earlier, broader context research (see Chapter 2). As I was interested in the wider context, in addition to my focus on interviewing direct participants about their specific uptake of the innovations,

I also interviewed board members, men, and managers in the workplace case study; incorporated a question about friends, family, and co-workers into my interviews in both case studies; took note of comments made otherwise about others' reactions; asked participants about their broader commitments to sustainability; and made careful note of any comments they made about related topics such as feminism and social justice, and in the case of the policy study, media involvement. In addition, to better understand the sociopolitical and socioeconomic structures and stances within which these individuals and organisations were situated, and the ways in which these were contemporaneously in flux, I performed additional interviews, attended related conferences and gatherings, and followed menstrual activist activity on social media. Specifically, during the period of my PhD study I engaged in several public forums with intellectuals influential in shaping research and policy concerning knowledge surrounding medical and social aspects of the menstrual cycle, and efforts to promote menstrual education and improve menstrual care. I conducted lengthy interviews with two institutional experts, and made a side study of menstrual activism on Twitter. I gave three conference papers during the period of data collection, two of which were at Organisation Studies conferences and one at a Fertility Awareness Education conference. Feedback and discussion arising at these conferences fed into my research and pushed me into deeper reflection through having to craft my developing knowledge and ideas for different audiences.

My fieldwork journey, including access to participants, was guided more by luck and serendipity than any other mechanism. Ethnographic scholars have noted the value of serendipity in ethnographic practice (e.g. Walcott, 2010; Rivoal & Salazar, 2013). I allowed serendipity to be a significant influence on how my fieldwork and growing

understanding developed. Encounters travelling to and while at the events mentioned above and that arose in my use of social media also contributed to my research, in line with the commitment to serendipity. In general, I allowed myself to be open to coincidences as I was going about my fieldwork, and they were abundant. I considered all these explorations to be data collection, and have detailed them here in the interests of research transparency. Even if some elements did not emerge at the forefront of the thesis, they all contributed to the deep background of my growing understanding of my topic.

4.2.1.1. Data collection: The cup study

The cup study was a holistic single case study of the first three menstrual cycles of menstrual cup use which involved diary and interview methods. The term *holistic* used here builds on Abma and Stake (2014), who identify holism as an intrinsic element in naturalistic case study research. Holism is also a key element in ethnography and a core value of my methodology. How holism manifested in this case study was that the two parts of data collection were two sides of the same coin: the diary the participants kept while they were going through the process of getting used to the cup informed the interviews that took place at the end of the three cycles. In turn, the interviews largely discussed the three cycles recorded in the diaries, which gave me the opportunity to build on and through the material they had already commented (or not commented) upon. This gave participants the opportunity to go into additional detail and perhaps to begin to process any difficulties. The diaries were both informative to me and a reminder to the women in the interviews about their experience, in case they had forgotten or backgrounded their experience since, especially considering that in some

cases there were long gaps between the menstrual cycles in question due to contraception and/or illness.

The artefact used in this study was a silicon menstrual cup manufactured and distributed by an Australian company based in Perth. Silicon menstrual cups are a sustainable method of menstrual management that has become popular in the last few years due to improved technology and materials (the availability and means to produce softer but still resilient silicon), and due to the popularity of reusable products more broadly. The only Australian manufacturer of menstrual cups agreed to donate cups for my study. They had no expectations of me or of the study in return, although as a courtesy I sent them a report of my findings.

Access was serendipitous: a few months after I started my PhD I emailed the director of the new Science Gallery in London with some questions about an article on the neuroscience of menstruation that he had written and which had just been published in a national newspaper. Following our subsequent phone conversation, he connected me with the art director at their sister project, a new Science Gallery located within the main campus of the University of Melbourne. Staff members at this new interdisciplinary educational gallery were in the process of planning its first exhibition, on the theme of 'Blood'. The art director asked me if I would like to be involved in the exhibition and associated events, and offered assistance for my menstrual cup research, (part of their remit was to support research). Accordingly, I did a podcast on menstrual cups that became an aural exhibit, and spoke at an evening event on red tents and the use women are making of the fantasy artefact created by Anita Diamant in her bestselling eponymous novel. I was introduced by the Science Gallery team to a Melbourne University academic who had written on menstruation in entertainment

media, and who ran a Gender Studies module. She helped me to contact potential students for the study (see next section for details), while the Science Gallery office acted as a pick-up point for the free cups as it was a convenient location for my participants, being on the same campus and adjacent to the building they attended for Gender Studies tutorials.

Criteria for taking part in the study were that the participant had never used a menstrual cup before and that they were currently or very recently based in the city of Melbourne. The rationale for these criteria were that I wanted to study issues arising through initial uptake of the innovation (as with the workplace policy), and I wanted to bound the case study within a specific demographic of participants who were living in an urban, progressive context, (again, as with the policy study).

Sampling was purposive and convenience-based. Research participants were sourced initially from undergraduate students at the University of Melbourne via the above detailed academic networks. Initial sampling was followed up by snowballing through friendship circles. With one exception, the eventual participants who completed the study were studying (and in most cases also working) in Melbourne at the start of the project (some moved subsequently). All were aged between 20 and 24 years. The one exception to the undergraduate and Melbourne-dwelling status of the eventual participants was a recent graduate who had recently moved from Melbourne to Castlemaine, which anyway is a hip, bohemian town in country Victoria with many ex-Melburnian residents.

The recruitment process was initiated through an email by their professor, that I had written and that described my research. The email offered female students the opportunity to opt in to the cup study by emailing me directly. Once they wrote to me,

I responded with a more detailed explanation of the research and a consent form. This letter explained that once they had enrolled in the study they would receive a free menstrual cup and would be asked to complete a diary for the first three menstrual cycles in which they used the cup, and then attend an interview with me at a convenient location for them. They were also told that they could drop out at any time if they wished. If interested on this basis, they were invited to opt into the study via email, send me the digital signed consent form, and then arrange with me to collect a free menstrual cup from a location of their convenience (mostly at their university; a few who lived or worked more locally to me collected their cup from my university or my home). After signing up for the study, they were sent a further letter with information about how and where to collect their cup, and how to keep their diary (which was however they wanted, digitally or in hard copy), with a few suggestions of what they might want to record in it (following questions from participants about this). Cup collection was anonymised, with each participant being assigned a number, and I would let the Science Gallery office know which numbered cups had been signed up for. Out of 22 cups collected, 11 women completed the study.

In terms of data collection method, most interviews were conducted in person in an otherwise empty and quiet room in the Science Gallery building on the main University of Melbourne campus. Two interviews were conducted at my home office because the location was more convenient for those participants. Three interviews were conducted via Skype because the participants had moved away from Melbourne since the start of the study.

Interviews were recorded digitally via my phone, or in the case of Skype calls, directly onto my computer. Diaries were mostly sent to me as digital documents via

email, with one given to me in a physical notebook. Data from this study include records of emails; participant diaries (handwritten or digital); recordings and transcriptions of interviews; and field notes, largely made immediately after interviews.

The data I initially focused on for formal analysis were the recordings and transcripts of the interviews, as these in most cases gave a broader and deeper level of information than the diaries. I then read through the diaries again to augment the interview data, which in a few cases was revelatory at that point, and added significantly to my understanding. Participants varied in whether they were more revealing of inner feelings within the relative privacy of the diary, or in the context of our conversation.

4.2.1.2. Data collection: The policy study

The policy study was a multi-method single case study of the introduction of a menstrual workplace policy for the staff of Coexist, a social enterprise running Hamilton House, a building of 500 workspaces and several large community rooms, located at a central junction in the Stokes Croft neighbourhood in the city of Bristol, UK. I designated this a "multi-method" study because I spoke with, met with, and recorded (either via field notes or digitally) both individuals and groups, and I also spent time hanging around, doing my own work in the big open-plan office while being available for random chats and cups of coffee, going for lunch with staff, meeting people spontaneously on the stairs and at the front desk and so on. The organisational meetings and gatherings I attended ranged in size from six people to 200, but were mostly around 15-20 people. As a participant observer over an 18 month period, I developed a wide range of data which all fed into my eventual analysis.

The artefact in this study was a policy document concerned with the introduction of a workplace agreement on menstruation at work. Coexist wanted to formalise a way of giving some accommodation to menstruating women at work, rather than expecting them to work regardless. The concept of 'menstrual leave' originated in Asia as a traditional health-related practice. Discussion on the topic began to show up occasionally in media and social media from around 2014 onwards, evidenced by articles in national newspapers and conversations (and indeed, vituperative arguments) on social media, largely in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and India (e.g. Sayers & Jones 2015). This move towards interest in menstrual leave was linked chronologically to the development of menstrual activism and the growing awareness surrounding menstrual wellbeing, along with the development of more flexible working patterns in work more broadly, enabled through digital technology and associated occupations. The organisation I studied was the first I had heard of in a Global North context that wanted to develop a formal policy embedded in their broader workplace agreements, rather than simply having an ad hoc unwritten policy that women could go home if they had menstrual symptoms. For this reason, as well as my existing relationship with the organisation (more on this below), I opted to study an organisation in the U.K.

Access was serendipitous: in the knowledge that I had previously done research on the topic of menstrual leave for a women's advocacy organisation, the People Development Manager (PDM) at Coexist, the social enterprise, sought out my expertise to assist them with the development of their own menstrual workplace policy. I agreed on the proviso that I perform any work for them pro bono, given that, pending supervisory and ethics approval, I might want to do research on the policy for the PhD I was about to commence. This did indeed eventuate, and a few months later, with

Coexist board ratification and Monash University supervisory and ethics approval, (MUHREC approval number 0680; see Appendix C), the pro bono working relationship was formalised to include my doing fieldwork for my PhD. In my time spent in the company offices, in organisational meetings, and in group and individual email discussions, I was to greater or lesser extent a participant observer who contributed to the development of the policy under discussion, and whose expertise was actively sought by the organisation.

The criterion for taking part in the interviews was that the participant was either a current member of staff and/or on the current board of Coexist (some people had dual roles).

Sampling was purposive and convenience-based. The sample of interview participants was drawn from the Coexist staff and board. Participants were aged 27-43 at the time of interview, lived in Bristol, UK, and consisted of 12 women and 1 man.

The recruitment process was initiated through word of mouth and direct contact. Before I was able to do a site visit, the PDM talked with the staff about my research (which had by now been ratified by the Board) and asked if they would like to talk with me, in which case they could email me and we would set up a time to Skype. Five interviews were done in this manner between January and May 2017. In June and July 2017 I spent extended time at the Coexist office in Bristol, and I announced in group meetings that I was available to do interviews if anyone was willing to talk with me and share their thoughts and experiences regarding the policy. People came up to me after the meetings to make a time to talk. Participants opted in via email or in person on site. Emails and turning up for interviews and meetings operated as implied, de facto consent.

In terms of data collection method, apart from the initial Skype calls, interviews were done on site, in otherwise empty offices and rooms in the building that Coexist ran. Out of a work pool of around 32 employees and board members, 13 gave interviews (some multiple times at various stages in the policy's development) and almost all were present at meetings I attended. As mentioned above, I attended several organisational meetings at Coexist, at which I took field notes, and some of which I also digitally recorded.

Interviews were either recorded directly onto my computer (Skype calls) or digitally via my phone (in-person interviews). Data from this study include records of emails and policy documents (sent as attachments to emails); recordings and transcriptions of Skype interviews, on-site interviews, and organisational meetings; field notes of on-site visits and my ongoing reflections, and of organisational meetings and friendly conversations either in passing or over coffees and lunches; and print, radio and TV media coverage. The data I focused on for formal analysis were the recordings and transcripts of the interviews. Organisational meeting recordings and field notes were used as supplementary data but were not foregrounded in my data analysis.

4.2.1.3. Data collection: Situational contexts

Each group represented a fairly homogenous sociocultural context, with its own language and semantic constructions, attire and diet, worries and aspirations. Both groups were largely white, middle-class, well-educated, and living in a hip, urban context: Melbourne and Bristol share many cultural similarities as university cities replete with cafes, bookstores, vibrant indie music scenes, and longstanding bohemian, counter-cultural institutions. However, my two groups were from slightly different

generations (early 20s for the cup study, and 30s for the policy study) as well as being in different countries and hemispheres. I was not studying them from a geographic standpoint so I did not analyse the difference in country/hemisphere, which was anyway probably muted by the cultural similarities of Melbourne and Bristol. But it was clear that the relatively small difference in age had a marked impact on their perspectives. For example, the older group was more likely to have been pregnant and/or had children and were less likely to be using hormonal contraception. Accordingly, understanding of their own menstrual cycles was markedly different between the two groups, as a function of this relative experience. In social terms, their different association with mainstream thinking (see Table 3, Appendix A) meant, for example, that the cup cohort was far more interested in the (neoliberal) notion of convenience than the more countercultural workplace participants.

In addition, I was different to them: while we spoke in English and shared similarities of cultural and educational background, as a woman in the post-menopause life phase, participants were of different generations and reproductive contexts to me. Consequently I was aware to ask questions and to analyse data based on a sensitivity to using language and perspectives that participants could easily relate to, and to make sure that we understood the same things by the terms that were used. I had reasonable confidence in doing this due to my teaching experience on menstruation with their age groups, and my research on it over the preceding years in which I had worked closely with younger women. Before and during my PhD I was engaged with social media groups focused on menstruation that included younger women in conversations.

A further temporal aspect of my research concerned the time taken to do qualitative research. Both studies took longer than I had thought they would at the start,

and for that reason I was later glad that I had had the opportunity to begin both cases relatively early in the PhD process. In the field it is impossible to know how much time it is going to take to gather meaningful data (or indeed, what 'meaningful' will turn out to be), or how the matter in question will develop during the time you have available.

The cup study was relatively contained in terms of data but took a good deal of time and effort to organise. The study took longer than I had anticipated, partly because of the difficulty of getting unconnected individuals through the hoops of a research process with several stages. More of an impact came from new norms in the use of hormonal contraception to suppress menstruation. This has become normalised to the extent that it significantly interrupted and delayed regular menstrual cycles in the study participants, some of whom took up to a year to have the required three cycles. (If I were to design the study again, especially if working with a larger cohort, I would make it a requirement that participants were not skipping periods, although the open nature of this study did mean that I gathered accidental data on that aspect.)

The policy study took up the most time and generated by far the most amount of data. This research took longer than anticipated because of the time taken to arrive at consensus regarding the policy and the interruptions in that process due to the existential threat to the organisation, which developed after I had begun my fieldwork.

4.2.1.4. Interview strategies and questions

The interviews, in line with my qualitative, naturalistic case study model (Stake, 2014), were open-ended. I used a semi-structured phased interview strategy, beginning with very open questions, and asking more focused "elaborating questions" (Vuori, 2017, 66) as the interview progressed. I had two templates of questions, one for the cup study

and one for the policy study, which shared basic demographic questions and a worldview question on sustainability. Most of the time I did not have to ask all the questions on my list directly but could allow the conversation to unfold. As people spoke naturally following their own associations and train of thought, I was able to cross off the specific areas (in my own mind) that I was curious about. The interview questions were developed based on my research question, and were also informed by my understanding (from prior research) about what people would talk about naturally from starting with an open-ended question such as: "Can you tell me something about your experience of using a menstrual cup/menstruating at work". As I was interested in relating different levels to each other, I asked questions from micro, meso and macro levels in both studies: a) personal questions, b) organisational questions, c) big picture political and worldview questions. Often I had the opportunity to ask these questions in an individualised way by taking something the participant had brought up and asking them to elaborate. The lists of questions were clarified iteratively after the first few interviews had been completed.

4.2.2. Data management

I kept the data materials (transcripts, diaries etc) for each study separately, in computer folders and where necessary, in physical folders ordered by date received or created. My ongoing field diary also lived both on the page and online -- in notebooks, Word documents, and phone notes -- and included both studies along with other relevant activities, experiences, thoughts, and information that arose along the way.

I used multiple data collection methods and various techniques to keep, group and find them. While my online data was orderly, my physical note-taking was more

messy and random. I used phone notes and small notebooks in which I could write about whatever came my way, allowing me to move iteratively between different elements of the research in my note-taking and hence, in my awareness and understanding. In a material version of Geertz's 'thick description', I allowed and grew messy piles of papers, notes, and books on my desk and wall space, the only criteria for which was that they were only related to my thesis. These various types of data interacted differently than they would do in my orderly online filing and influenced my thinking and writing in a different way. The entanglement of data allowed for synchronicity and chance to enter into the data collection and analysis, and to be noted under a variety of material circumstances and not only when I was at my desk.

The formal interviews and the organisational meetings were all professionally transcribed.[28] Online data was managed in a combination of Word and Excel documents. Although I originally intended to transfer these along with information from non-digital sources (selected entries from participant diaries and my own diaries) to NVivo for data analysis management, in the end I decided that I preferred manual coding in Word documents and Excel spreadsheets, and found that these methods enhanced the iterative and abductive nature of my work. The remaining hand-written material from field notes was written up online and manually coded.

4.2.3. Ethical design and protocols

This research was undertaken in accordance with Monash University Human

[28] I had additional audio material from other phone calls which I did not have transcribed, but which were included in my secondary analysis along with other more casual data such as from emails and random conversations that I had recorded in my field notes. This subsidiary data also informed my findings.

Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) rules and regulations, and was granted an approval certificate in October 2016 (see Appendix C). The original certificate covered the workplace case study, and was successfully amended twice to take account of changing circumstances: first, adding in the menstrual cup case study, and second, getting permission from MUHREC to use the real names of the organisation and the main spokesperson at Coexist, when publicity and a TED talk had rendered anonymity meaningless. I informed the organisation and individual concerned that this means quotes can be attributed to them in the future for example by journalists, and they gave written permission regardless.

While respect for participants is part of ethical research practice more broadly, it becomes paramount when working with an oppressed population in order not to reproduce trauma. As detailed above, I utilised the list of core values in my interactions with participants, and employed a relational ontology and intersubjective approach to my fieldwork, analysis and writing up. I paid particular attention to issues arising that were related to the stigmatised nature of the topic and where participants may have experienced trauma. I placed respect for the lived experience of the study participants as a key value at all stages of my work. This influenced not only how I framed questions and conducted interviews, but also how I analysed the data deriving from what were often emotionally charged accounts of trauma related to menstruation, or suppressed feelings based on a learned 'grin and bear it' stance. I placed a high value on sympathetic listening skills in interviews, in meetings, and when listening back to the data (Helin, 2016).

4.3. Data analysis

While it was relatively straightforward to integrate my core values into my data collection methods and to situate myself satisfactorily within a lineage of feminist organisational scholarship, I found this approach more difficult when it came to using the methods of conventional data analysis in my discipline. As has already been discussed, feminist scholarship has itself been inflected by the long history of androcentric philosophy. In terms of methodological process as it is currently practiced, this introjected phallogocentrism (Grosz, 1994) perhaps lingers most evidently in the area of data analysis. This section details how I developed a dual analysis technique that combined a way of documenting data derived from listening to raw recordings along with coding the transcriptions of those recordings. In this manner, I was able to develop a coherent schema for data analysis that was sufficiently rigorous for my discipline, and at the same time respected the core values of my research and was aligned with feminist commitments.

4.3.1. Developing a (feminist organisational) data analysis method

Anthologies on feminist scholarship rarely focus on methodology (e.g. Cudd & Andreasen, 2005). Even in feminist works dedicated to methodology, there is a lacuna surrounding data analysis, other than analysing-through-writing (e.g. Woodiwiss et al, 2012). For example, in the *Handbook of feminist research*, (Hesse-Biber, Ed, 2012), there are few mentions of data analysis and no mention of data coding. Pillow and Mayo, writing on feminist ethnography, ask, "Is there a feminist method of analyzing data?" (2012, 196) and then move straight to writing method and the importance of reflexivity.

If onto-epistemologies give rise to methodologies (and vice versa), then there must be a way to perform a feminist method of data analysis when using a feminist philosophical and experiential basis.

In *Feminist Ethnography* (2001), Beverley Skeggs pointed a possible torchlight into the future when she wrote: "just as there are multiple routes into ethnography, there are many different feminist ways through it" (p. 428), while she accepted that for the time being: "Many feminist ethnographers will still be located in traditional disciplines and will have to conform to their regulations" (p. 435). Just as feminists have feared that articulating the reality of menstruation at work would blunt women's career paths, so feminist scholars feared that feminist methodology would "circumscribe the impact of feminism" (Dickens, 1983, in Skeggs, 2001, p. 429) and appear merely defensive. Skeggs went on to explain that, "Rather feminists have *tactically crafted* ethical and political stances out of feminism more generally and applied these to the research process." (ibid, p. 429, my emphasis). In conclusion, Skeggs states: "Whether this 'attitude' [referring to the ethnographic ethic] can do justice to the careful, scholarly, rigorous analysis that has been carried out over long periods of time, with intensity and pain, remains to be seen; but as a recommendation for vigilance it may finally introduce the arguments of feminist ethnographers into the main-male-stream." (ibid, p. 437).

If "Ethnography is probably the only methodology that is able to take into account the multifaceted ways in which subjects are produced through the historical categories and context in which they are placed and which they precariously inhabit" (ibid, p. 433), this is also true of the ethnographer, who is herself produced by her historical context (the knowledge of which is part of her reflexive commitment). This means that feminist ethnography and associated feminist methodology must and will continue to develop.

Accordingly, here I argue, as others in my discipline have done -- for example regarding feminist methods of relating with participants (Helin, 2016) and feminist writing methods (Pullen, 2017) -- that it is now time to stop bending to the 'main-male-stream', and instead stand for a feminist methodology throughout. This aim has yet to be comprehensively or persuasively applied to data analysis in MOS, other than through writing techniques (Pullen & Rhodes, 2016; Pullen, 2018; Helin, 2016; Weatherall, 2018). There is recent scholarship working to progress feminist data analysis in the field of education (e.g. the work of Elizabeth St. Pierre) and when using sociomaterial theory (e.g. Lupton, 2018) but these techniques of, effectively, mulling and meditating one's way through the data by reading and re-reading while writing and rewriting, may not be considered sufficiently rigorous within MOS. However, there is little indication of what might be considered rigorous beyond data coding that emphasises written sources of data such as interview transcripts. In *Gender and the organization*, one of the most recent and comprehensive texts on Feminist Organisation Studies, Fotaki and Harding (2017, p. 192) have just one paragraph, in an appendix, on their data analysis, in which they employ standard template coding.

This matter becomes particularly pertinent when analysing data derived from research with marginalised and oppressed groups (with which feminist scholarship is concerned), who may experience being the 'subject' in research in certain ways, due to the long term effects of bias and stigma. I considered how each participant's interview data had its own integrity as a human story. The women in my research were engaging with innovations with (to greater or lesser degrees) the dual aims and effects of destigmatising menses and making menstruating life easier (as evidenced by their comments linking menstrual stigma and the user-friendly nature of both the use of

menstrual cups and the workplace policy). This meant that each went through a journey of discovery. This 'journey' needed to be captured, and the data analysis method had to be flexible enough to do that. Conventional coding works well for an 'any more comments' box in a largely quantitative study, for example, which will elicit two or three sentences of static information, but by splitting a developmental *story* into sentences or even 'chunks', (Miles et al, 2014), it does not have the breadth or fluidity to deal with changing opinions over time.

As I listened to the interview recordings, I realised that each one had a particular *intensity of data*[29] which I wanted to find a way to capture in my analysis, and which I realised was dependent upon me being able to retain its holistic impact. At the same time I wanted to be forensic enough to be able to locate themes that arose throughout the set of interviews. I wanted to both honour the participants' experience and squeeze the greatest use from the data. So I needed to find a method that would include both the whole *and* the fine granular detail of the interviews.

4.3.2. Bureaucratic and charismatic analysis

Following Sullivan's (2012) Bakhtin-inspired notions of *bureaucratic* and *charismatic* modes, I developed a holistic method that generated two sets of data analysis. I performed coding of the transcribed content of the interviews in the conventional manner (e.g. Saldana, 2013), in a more *bureaucratic* mode (more objective and theme-based), and listened to recorded interviews and tabulated a range of affective information and material conditions in a more *charismatic* mode (more subjective and

[29] Thanks to Dr. Jenny Helin for contributing this term, upon reading an early description of my data analysis technique.

participant-based.) This dual method allowed for the capture of intensity of data in a manner that took reliable account of the fullness of participant contributions and delivered a breadth and depth of information, while at the same time honouring the demands of rigorous and systematic analysis. Analysing my raw data through these two perceptual modalities allowed me to suspend the analytical flattening that inevitably occurs when the entire data corpus is immediately placed under the same lens. In this case, such a method would have neutralised and minimised the affective dimension that I wanted to capture, particularly as I was dealing with a stigmatised topic. By allowing a focus on affect in the charismatic element of the analysis, I vivified the subject and the ontological lived experience of the research. Once this stage of analysis was complete, I was able to bring together the two sets of data analysis to inform my findings and discussion.

To explain further: Sullivan (2012) works from Bakhtin's distinctions of *pravda* ('truth as lived') and *istina* ('truth as abstract') to develop two simultaneous analytical methods to satisfy different epistemologies and thus generate a greater unity of data. Bakhtin (1993) "makes much of these distinctions as signifying different sides of the same idea" (Sullivan, 2012, p. 6). These different sides of the idea may even be contradictory, or at least, manifest in ways that can talk past each other, consisting of the *'logos'* (literally, the words) and the *'anti-logos'* (literally, what is not/cannot be gleaned from words).

In the case of my data, the *logos* was the actual words spoken, and the *anti-logos* was largely the paraverbal and affective dimensions conveyed in the interview through other means than words, which could include tone, intensity, volume, movement and any other ways that emotion is conveyed through speech, voice and body. Another way

of conceptualising this dichotomy is to consider data analysis by code/theme as *istina* ('truth as abstract) and analysis by participant/subject as *pravda* ('truth as lived'). In the event, I came to a method which included both dimensions of the *pravda/istina* distinctions in both sets of data, by noting which participant said what in my coding (thus allowing for location of the individual storyline within the bureaucratic), and by recording the charismatic analysis in a (bureaucratic style) table. Thus I arrived at two different sets of analysis, one of which was primarily based on logos and the other on anti-logos, but both of which had elements of their apparent opposite.

Sullivan explains charisma in the analytical process as a function of the personality of the scholar/writer, and largely positions it in terms of how research is communicated through speech or the written word. Here I extend Sullivan's idea of 'charisma' to mean the way the scholar 'feels' will do full justice to their raw material, and the development of an analytical strategy with the flexibility to enable this particular quality and the data it reveals to be seen and communicated.

Feminist commitments can animate the distinction between bureaucratic and charismatic. For example, the charismatic mode allows the 'personal' to manifest legitimately in analysis. Sullivan notes that "for Bakhtin, true knowledge of the most important issues–is there a God, what does it mean to live authentically–only comes from a personal participation." (2012, p. 5). The collectively-authored rallying call of "the personal is political" has been a key tenet of (second wave) feminism since the 1960s and which, consistent with the call's message, individual feminists have disavowed being the sole author of (Hanisch, 1972). The phrase has been used to cut through the assumptive hegemony of masculinist constructions of 'reality'. Bakhtin's articulation of the relationship between acknowledging personal experience along with accessing the

truth -- as abstract and as lived -- renders him an ally for the development of feminist theory and methodology, and particularly in terms of listening (Helin, 2013). The feminist commitment to openness can both inform and utilise Bakhtin's distinction, in order to illuminate the process by which the personal becomes political, beyond reflexivity and self-exposure. Sullivan (2012, p. 65) remarks that in charismatic analysis, "an audit trail is difficult here", and this is particularly the case in the context of the (quite literally) charismatic and mostly male anthropologists he references as his inspiration for turning to Bakhtin to better conceptualise their methods. As a feminist (willingly) bound by principles of accountability, I was wary of falling into the entitlement assumption implicit in the (masculinist) charismatic academic approach. Thus I performed my charismatic analysis in a somewhat more bureaucratic manner, in that it can be audited to some extent by its direct reference to the raw data which was carefully noted. As Sullivan notes: "some charismatic elements (e.g. making choices) come into bureaucratic procedures and some bureaucracy can come into the write-up through following guidelines" and stresses that, "In this way, a good analysis should depend on its authority from both bureaucracy and charisma" (ibid, p. 66).

The dual method was also animated by my specific feminist commitments in the two case studies. The method was stigma-sensitive in that it allowed me to work behind the possible screen produced by introjected menstrual stigma and allied self-objectification, and to work around the normative constructions of being transgressive and compromising social capital in speaking of menstruation. For example, the dual method allowed me to capture the diffidence and uncertainty with which participants spoke of *personal* symptoms, when in the next breath they spoke confidently about *collective* actions to better support menstrual experience. The dual method also

reflected and mobilised my core commitments to rigour, holism, and sustainability, by using my data more fully than only using transcripts might permit.

There were several benefits to the dual method beyond the wholeness of data, depth of analysis, and adherence to feminist core commitments it facilitated. Combining an in-depth analysis of the affective dimension along with a word-based analysis of what was said enabled me to observe any tensions between the two. This expanded my sense of the veracity of my analysis, as human beings are complex, contradictory, and often say one thing while doing another. On the other hand, moments of unity can speak to significance. The use of dual analytical methods also helped me in terms of having an open-ended relationship with my data, in which I understood that findings remain unfinished and provisional, and that data continues to move and reshape understanding.

4.3.2.1. Charismatic analysis method

For the charismatic analysis, I developed a method focused on listening to recordings. It became apparent to me early on in the analytical process that I was going to lose valuable data if I relied only on its textual version. By attending to the auditory information within my data, I was able to include nuance, affect, latency, implications and other subtleties in my analysis. It became apparent that such auditory and sensory attention was crucial when dealing with a subject that has been historically silenced.

I developed a systematic iterative and contemplative method for analysing my audio data that combined listening, thinking, reading, and writing. In total, I analysed 15 hours of audio-recorded content, comprised of 25 recordings of individual interviews: 11 from the cup study and 14 from the policy study.

I was first introduced to the idea of listening to recordings (whether or not in addition to reading transcripts) in a blog post by Yiannis Gabriel (2014). Further reading brought me to the work of Mauthner and Doucet (2011), whose analyses of motherhood, postnatal depression and housework, used listening as part of their method. Like my own work, their research areas concerned stigmatised areas of women's lives that historically lacked wider social support for free articulation.

In terms of how to develop a suitable method, Gabriel (2014) describes listening to interviews while driving in his car and then writing down his impressions on arrival at his office. I find driving in city traffic too distracting for attentive listening, so I listened in my home office, during times when I knew I was unlikely to be disturbed. However, I did take note of Gabriel's point about letting the subconscious absorb the material and not rushing to analyse, so I endeavoured not to write too much while listening, so that I could really pay attention.

As I listened, I had the associated transcript in front of me on my computer screen, open as a new version (so I retained the original undisturbed). I used the Word comments facility to note particular emphases and affects in the spoken content of the interview and to make notes on the content as I experienced it when listening. I either listened to a whole interview if less than 20 minutes long, or to 20-30 minute sections. At the 20 minute point I would pause the recording to write in an Excel spreadsheet in the various themes (categories of content) I had devised. I then allowed a 20 minute period to think about and write down my impressions of the interview, with a focus on what I had *heard,* with as much of the 20 minutes being thinking/pondering time as I needed. I repeated this writing up process at 20 minute intervals with each recording. In practice, I found that in most cases, depending on the density of information at all

levels, I developed a method that focused on listening and writing notes directly onto the Excel sheet, and then annotating the transcript following the completion of listening.

After I finished listening to the recording, I read the associated transcript through slowly and thoroughly, with the comments window visible. During this part of the process I was particularly awake to latent content. If I felt there was anything I did not understand or wanted more clarity on, I re-listened to the recording and/or reread the transcript as many times as I felt I needed, while making notes in the spreadsheet. Sometimes I took a break of a few hours in between listening to the audio and completing writing up, which allowed me to digest the various levels of the material more completely.

Using this iterative method, each audio recording took between two and four hours to analyse (with more time spent later when I came back to review the data in thematic terms when writing up and formulating my findings more formally). I came out of the process with an annotated transcript and a written up analysis that included several levels of content, recorded on the transcript, on an Excel spreadsheet and sometimes in another Word document, depending on the range and intensity of the data.

The levels of content that I devised were selected in order to capture intensity of data. The first level concerned *affect*[30]: How did this individual appear to be feeling in the moment? How was this shown? Did feeling states change much throughout the session? Was there a spike in possible affective expressions and at what points? In the

[30] See the Glossary for definition of how I use the term 'affect' (p. viii).

written up analysis each of these observations was related to a specific statement or event in the interview. Here I also noted the influence of relationship interactions on affect, such as if a participant appeared shy or distant when asked certain questions, or if they noticeably warmed up following a sympathetic comment from me.

Second was the *literal content*. What was emphasised? What subjectively stood out to me in the content? Was anything surprising? Was anything similar to other interviews? Was anything repeated, either in this or in prior conversations?

Third was *latent content* which applied to thoughts, feelings and experiences that were inferred but not articulated directly, as well as what was implied through what *was* said. I was mindful to not only pay attention to manifest content, but to also keep an eye out for latent content. Included here was absence of affect, especially when anything one might reasonably assume could be *affecting* was spoken about. I kept a mirroring set of notes on the subtle, the implied, and the unsaid. This mirrored notes set had two columns: what was inferred but not overtly stated; and what was not said but that one could reasonably imagine would be an underlying concern. For example, latency came into play when women stoically shrugged off severe and incapacitating menstrual pain as *"just my period"*. Implied in the combination of the pain and the shrug was a whole world of conditioning, resignation, and concealed hurt and rage. Where was this burden absorbed? For example, was it ever forcefully spoken of? Did it sit in the psyche along with birth and other experiences concerning embodied femaleness? Did women convert it into other forms of complaint (Ahmed, 2017)? Did it influence how they trained their daughters to anticipate menstruating? What resources did they draw on to cope with being in that much pain in a public situation in which they had to pretend it was not happening? Did they reflect on how the situation would play out if they had more

privilege? If they did not have to work? If they did not have to stand and smile all day? If menstruation were not unmentionable in public (and often in private)? This string of questions arising from one observation demonstrates how latency occupies a significant place in the study of a minimised and taboo topic.

Fourth was the *material content*: included here were details from my field notes (sometimes including photographs) about study participants' appearance and attire, the ways in which bodies and voices were employed during the interview/meeting, the location of the interview/meeting, and other material data. Here I noted interruptions and competing demands, and if I should consider taking circumstances into account as a possible influence on affect and content, such as whether this was a first or second meeting; on Skype or in person; on their territory or mine; or occurring on a very hot day.

Fifth was the *organisational content*: what was said about workplaces and the organisation of time, blood, and bodies. Included here were not only perceptions regarding the effect of the organisation on the experience of menstruating, but also the effect of menstruation on the organisation. (This affected both studies, as women in the menstrual cup study often volunteered comments about how using the cup altered their experience of menstruating at work).

Sixth was the *socio-political perspective*: anything in the recorded interview/meeting that directly pointed to information concerning where a worldview appeared to position study participants onto-epistemologically, especially vis-a-vis bodies, gender, and work.

I had two further sections, one for 'other' comments, contexts or perspectives that did not fit elsewhere, and one for any analytical thoughts I had during or immediately after being immersed in the interview.

While this process of analysis was at times reliant on my subjective interpretation of the data (especially concerning affect and latent content), I endeavoured to stay grounded and specific, and if I had a noticeable reaction, for example through identification or projection, I noted this accordingly with my initials.

Throughout this analytical process, I aimed, and mostly managed, to maintain a relaxed and open state of mind, taking care not to rush or stress about what I was doing. I arranged my schedule so that I could do as much of the work as possible without a deadline in the day that would make me unconsciously hurry myself. Before each interview, I often meditated for a short time, and I always did some deep breathing. I often felt a little nervous before starting an analysis, more so than I had done before doing the actual interview, which in part I put down to my sense of responsibility regarding doing justice to the participants and their material, which perhaps related to the intimate and troubled nature of some of the conversations. This nervousness was also closely related to a sense of excitement about the richness of the data. Initially I made an effort to calm this nervous excitement down, but as my analysis progressed I realised it was like stage fright, and was actually useful in giving me a slightly higher level of awareness during the process of listening. As I performed each analytical step methodically, and deliberately more slowly than I usually work, I noticed that my thinking (and forms of non-mental awareness) had the time and opportunity to expand, clarify, and deepen concerning what had transpired and what was revealed in the interview. It was noticeable that when I felt finished with a recording, it would take me

a few minutes to be able to let it go and to calm back down to a less acute level of awareness.

The feeling of being 'done for now' with each transcript was subjective. I noticed that I would become aware of it first in my body, which would either make a stretching movement or even just get up from the chair without me really thinking about it. The sense of an ending would also come to my attention in a secondary way through my dog, who would often come into my office from her self-appointed guard post outside in the hallway, and nudge my arm as I was finishing up an analysis. Presumably she was responding to a signal from my own body, a change in breathing perhaps, which signalled not only a shift in attention, but an indication of completion. I did one interview in a session, and then took a significant break and did some other work or activity: I found that with that level of concentration on a participant, I needed a gap in order to be able to fully focus on the next person.

I give the above description in the interests of transparency of process, as an example of a technique long used in ethnography but which has often been left unspecified, remaining part of the mysterious *charisma* of the anthropologist. Borkan (1999) describes this process as 'immersion/crystallization' or I/C (a term initially coined by Crabtree and Miller as one of their four idealised analytic styles) and notes that "much of anthropological writing is based on this type of analysis; however, the masters of this discipline rarely detail the intricacies of their methodology" (Borkan, 1999, p. 180). He discusses I/C as a potentially fruitful method dependent upon the researcher's capacity to slow down and be open to "uncertainty, reflection and experience" (ibid, p. 181). Borkan stipulates that along with data, time, patience, and reflexivity, the researcher needs to have a personality type congruent with this style of

research: "This includes the ability to be contemplative, a sense of rigor, and a facility to 'listen deeply' (Stein, 1994) to individuals, organisations and to the data itself" (ibid, 181).

This method had several benefits. It was an honest replication of my data collection experience. It preserved the integrity of my participants. It gave a detailed understanding of the *intensity of data* that would otherwise have been lost. It linked affect to content, and was a record of the materiality of the encounter. However, it did not give me the sufficiently fine-grained content analysis that would allow me to readily find and group quotes in themes for discussion.

4.3.2.2. Bureaucratic analysis method

In order to develop a satisfactory method of *bureaucratic* analysis, I consulted a selection of mainstream texts customarily used in Management & Organisation Studies (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Crabtree & Miller, 1998; Saldana, 2013; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Cassell et al, 2018). Here I found much more detail on types of coding, but often justified from a positivist perspective that did not fit with my onto-epistemological position. Consequently, I picked the one that seemed to have the most flexibility and detail, and developed a textual coding schema largely drawn from Saldana (2013) and from Miles et al (2014), which I adapted for a feminist analysis. Here I describe that developmental process.

(i) Using codes

Charmaz (2001) describes coding as the "critical link" between data collection and the explanation of the meaning of the data. Saldana explains this relationship thus: "In qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes and

thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection categorization, theory building and other analytic processes. Just as a title represents and captures a book, film or poem's primary content and essence, so does a code represent and capture a datum's primary content and essence." (Saldana, 2013, pp. 3-4).

Saldana (2013) further defines a code as "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data." While Miles et al (2014) define codes as "labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (p. 71), they also acknowledge that a code could be a straightforward, descriptive label. Miles et al (2014, p. 71-72) employ the concept of 'chunks' to describe the material a code is attached to: "Codes are usually attached to data "chunks" of varying size and can take the form of a straightforward, descriptive label or a more evocative and complex one (e.g. a metaphor)". As to what constitutes appropriate data for coding, Saldana (2013, 3) states "the data can consist of interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journals, documents, drawings, artifacts, photographs, video, Internet sites, e-mail correspondence, literature, and so on".

Saldana (2013) develops a method for how to move coded data from the raw code to a set of information that lends itself to developing findings and subsequent discussions. First comes what Saldana terms *First Cycle coding*, i.e. what has been described above, the location of a topic and the extraction of data that illuminates that topic. "The portion of the data to be coded during First Cycle coding processes can range in magnitude from a single word to a full paragraph to an entire page of texts to a stream of moving images" (Saldana, 2013, p.3).

The next step is to analyse this coded data into the *Second Cycle*, in which "the portions coded can be the exact same units, longer passages of text, analytic memos about the data, and even a reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed this far" (ibid, p.4). By identifying this level of analysis as a further element of coding, Miles et al (2014) go so far as to aver that "coding *is* data analysis" (p. 72). They identify the mechanics of this process as an efficient way of managing data: "Codes are primarily, but not exclusively, used to retrieve and categorize similar data chunks so the researcher can quickly find, pull out, and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, hypothesis, construct, or theme" (ibid). When I read this text I was aware of a discordant note relative to my own perspective on my data. In line with broader themes of my thesis, I was more interested in working thoughtfully and deeply than in working quickly. Indeed, despite working within the timeline of a contemporary funded full-time PhD, I tried to incorporate an ethic of slow and thoughtful scholarship into my working manner (e.g. Berg & Seeber, 2016) which I see as having specific benefits for qualitative work (Ulmer, 2017) and being aligned with feminist commitments, such as not being violent and heroic/masculinist towards oneself in one's academic working practices (Bordo, 1986). However, I could identify the value in clustering and how it abets the later stages of the analytical process: "Clustering and the display of condensed chunks then set the stage for further analysis and drawing conclusions." (Miles et al, 2014, p. 72.). Here my charismatic side objected to the ugliness of this language, so I eschewed the word 'chunk', and thought of the extracts on a continuum of *word, sentence, section.* And in terms of speed, in performing coding in this prescribed manner, the task was so relatively mechanical that I did find it supported a speedy mode of attention. Another way of positioning this is to say that I proceeded as quickly as I

could, just to get to the end of it. While I could see the value of the finished product, I experienced none of the deep, embodied pleasures of thoughtful, considered scholarship in *the doing* of it, as I had had with the charismatic analysis.

(ii) Performing the first cycle of coding

Initial coding was partly deductive (from the literature -- chiefly my two main theorists Federici and Skeggs -- and from my prior research) and partly inductive (informed by my experiences in the interviews). Coding was further developed inductively.

In line with my feminist methodology and commitment to holism, I assigned a number to each participant and attached that to any extract taken from their data, so that I could always refer back to the overall context from which the data had emerged. In this manner, I avoided what I felt would be a dehumanising method of detaching data from the whole picture (and developmental process over time) of the individual who had contributed it.

Bureaucratic coding inevitably requires a hierarchy of codes. In NVivo these are called *parent* and *child* nodes. Miles et al use *primary* and *secondary*. Others use *top level, second level,* etc. I preferred to use *tree, branch,* and *leaf*[31] for *main topic, category* (deductive or inductive), and *first level coding* (raw data in images, words, sentences, or sections of text). This schema reflected my early sense of the methodological relationship of theoretical foundation/roots/underpinning moving somehow upwards and outwards, through a process of data collection and analysis, to concepts and new theorisation. This gave me a ready visualisation for the data which felt more organic

[31] I felt tree, branch and leaf were a good fit with my data, even though these terms are used in quantitative data analysis.

than using only a table or spreadsheet, and did not either infantilise the data through language or make the levels more or less important, while signifying the growth process of coding development. This also aligned my methodology from start to finish with the injunction that codes have "some conceptual and structural unity" (Miles et al, 2014, p. 82).

Miles et al (2014) detail sixteen types of coding that one's data may fall into. I found that my data could be described by five of these:

Two "elemental methods":

a) Descriptive coding: Most often a single noun or short phrase. Summarizes the basic topic of a passage of data (ibid, p. 74). For example, my first line codes of *menstruation; menstrual cup, menstrual workplace policy*.

b) Process coding**:** Uses gerunds for "observable and conceptual action in the data". "Processes also imply actions intertwined with the dynamics of time" (ibid, p. 75). For example, my branch codes of *Feelings about/attitudes to menses* and *Nature of period now.*

Two "affective methods":

a) Values coding**:** Concerns worldview/perspective and includes values, attitudes and beliefs (ibid, p. 75). Examples from my coding include *Reasons for trying cup; Sustainability & the policy; Policy and the larger world of business/orgs.*

b) Evaluation coding: "Judgments about the merit, worth or significance of programs or policy" (ibid, p. 76). Examples from my coding include: *Benefits of the cup; Downsides of the cup; Initial thoughts on policy.*

Also of value was simultaneous coding: when two or more codes apply to one 'chunk' of data.

Several codes were shared across both studies. These were: *First period; Contraceptive use, effects on cycle/bleeding; Feelings about/attitudes to menses; Nature of period now, including regularity, symptoms; Impact of the cup/policy on experience of menstruating; Sustainability & the cup/policy; Others and the cup/policy.*

(*iii) Performing the second cycle of coding*

Second cycle coding generates pattern codes, which are: "explanatory or inferential codes, obtained by grouping first cycle codes (summaries of segmented data) into a smaller number of categories, themes or constructs" (Miles et al, 2014, p. 86).

Pattern codes are *meta-codes* that "pull together a lot of material from First Cycle coding into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis" (ibid, p. 86). In multi-case studies like mine, pattern coding "lays the groundwork for cross-case analysis by surfacing common themes and directional processes" (ibid, p. 86). A further iteration emerges when one maps the pattern codes into a chart. This provides a new way of perceiving and building upon on the conceptual framework (ibid, p. 88).

Once I had completed both the bureaucratic and the charismatic elements of my data analysis, I read through the tables of the first cycle coding of the interviews and the tables created from listening to the interviews. As I read, I made notes on emerging patterns (Miles et al, 2014) to generate my second cycle coding. So my second cycle coding was where I began to unify the data from both the bureaucratic and charismatic analyses. I noted this data in three documents: one for each of the two studies and one for thoughts concerning where the two studies met and shared interlocking, overlapping or similar themes.

4.3.3. Iterative, abductive development of findings

'the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the "findings" are literally created as the investigation proceeds'

Guba & Lincoln (1994, p. 111)

Data analysis does not begin only after data collection (Borkan, 1999), or with coding (Weatherall, 2018), even if it is often written up that way. For example, ethnographic data analysis can be said to begin in the field with the writing up of notes in which the researcher selects from and interprets the day's experience (Atkinson, 1992). I would go a step further and follow Borkan (1999) who states, "for some, the process [of analysis] starts at the very beginning of the iterative research cycle, *before* the first data have been gathered" (Borkan, 1999, p. 183, my emphasis). I can certainly say that my data analysis began in my head during the interviews and other data collection experiences, continued when I wrote up my notes, developed further when I listened to recordings, and again when I first glanced at transcriptions as they came into my mailbox piecemeal fashion. This process was iterative: my interview questions and technique were tweaked along the way based on my experience with prior interviewees and other participant encounters. "Insights may crystallize *while* the first data are being collected, assisting with the identification of early patterns." (ibid, my emphasis.) The insights I was already accumulating became somewhat firmer when I later read through the completed sets of transcripts more carefully, all at once when they were all available to me. When I began data analysis, this process became more systematic and formalised. While I already had a good idea of the main descriptive codes (from my preliminary

coding from the early stages of research and from the literature), I was mindful to open myself to information I might have missed during those early and sometimes more spontaneous moments of data assessment. For example, I became much more aware of affect and latency at this later stage, which inspired me to develop the charismatic method of analysis. During the process of data analysis I continually stopped to reflect upon the larger picture of the themes I chose to focus upon, with awareness of themes I was distancing myself from or putting aside to look at later. During and immediately after the interviews I tended to be focused more on spoken content than on feeling tone, which meant I missed spotting the important shifts in some interviews between uncertainty and confidence as the subject matter changed. I remedied this later when listening to the recordings during a phase of concentrated data analysis. I found that when I listened back to the recordings at this later stage, I *heard* a shift in levels of apparent confidence in women's voices that was dependent on what aspect of menstruation they were discussing (e.g. trauma vs. relief at acknowledgment and support) and this became a valuable finding stemming from the charismatic analysis.

As I engaged with the second cycle coding process, I took notes wherever data particularly spoke to my theoretical framework based on the work of Federici and Skeggs, and of any associated conceptual glimmerings, in order to generate an abductive analysis of my data that could contribute to feminist organisation theory. I also noted anything that did not obviously fit into this framework but which sparked my interest. The next step was to allow time for contemplation of the patterns that had emerged from each study, and make further notes, which became a file on developing findings. I then read through all the rest of my fieldwork data, including the transcribed meeting notes from the menstrual policy study, the diaries of the cup study participants, emails,

written up field notes and original field diaries. From these, I made note of anything that either supported one of the developing findings from the formal data analysis, or that appeared to be an additional theme. If the latter, I went back into my coded data to see if I could locate that theme in the formal analysis. If not, I searched the raw data again for amplification of the potential theme.

Throughout this process I used key points from my main theorists as touchstones to guide my conceptualisations of the data, and made notes about theoretical links within my data. For example, themes of *transgression* (from Federici) and *respectability* (from Skeggs) were explicated through the mentions of menstrual shame and blood pollution in the cup study, and in the policing by mothers of their daughters' use of the cup and their worries concerning menstrual hygiene. The theme of *the commons* (from Federici) and of women's *capital(s)* (from Skeggs) was reflected in the egalitarian nature of the Coexist staff's consideration for other women's menstrually-related needs, and in their role as a social enterprise that effectively acted as a piece of common land in the centre of Bristol and which was fighting against property capitalists for its existence during the time period of my fieldwork. The notion of *the commons* also showed in my ongoing relationship with the participants' experience of my findings, for example, when I checked with my research participants on the content of an article on the policy prior to publication, working from the ethos that it was their work too.

By interweaving my theoretical underpinnings with the generation of my data analysis template, my data analysis became abductive (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). For example, my theoretical understanding of the role of silencing in stigmatisation informed my decision to see what happened if I repositioned my analysis from a primary focus on reading transcripts to a dual focus that incorporated listening to recordings.

The results of that inquiry reinforced my understanding of the latent impact of menstrual stigma on affect in self-reported experience in organisational contexts.

In order to identify and conceptualise my findings, I applied the methodological framework to the analysed data. I built a list of themes by reading through the bureaucratic first cycle coding in depth. As I went, I augmented and/or revised my provisional second cycle coding (which had been mostly done at an earlier stage, towards the end of the first cycle coding). I made notes of links between comments, making sure to go beyond the obvious to not only include words and phrases that fit into existing ideas I had, and words that jumped out at me, but also to note elements I had not anticipated or did not understand; comments that provoked feelings in me that niggled or troubled; participant self-observations that surprised me; and participant insights that excited me. This process had an agricultural rhythm: it was a gathering, a search for fruit, and a winnowing down to essence. Patterns, connections and narratives organically began to emerge as I read and contemplated the analysed data, and became further clarified as I wrote them up.

In the initial stage of this harvesting I pulled out words, sentences, or sections of talk in a patterned way by focusing on the data as descriptive (Miles et al, 2014). I then moved that to a conceptual level by linking between and among the findings, patterning them and grouping comments together, often in new ways. I also reread the cup diaries and my workplace field notes in the middle of the process of second cycle coding to remind myself of how the participants wrote and spoke about their experience in the moment, and added notes from these to my developing lists. In this task I adopted a similar frame of mind to the way I had engaged in the process of analysing the charismatic data. I sat on a day-bed surrounded by print-outs, and read slowly without

pressure to complete, making notes as I did so. When I got tired or restless I would get up and do something else. It was often in these pause moments that a conceptual realisation would clarify.

For example, I had a lot of comments describing how the menstrual cup had altered the experience of menstruating (usually for the better) in a variety of ways. The second cycle code I initially ascribed to this was: "Menstrual cup improves experience of menstruating". I baulked at the word improvement, which sounded rather positivist, and amended this phrase to the broader: "Menstrual cup uptake gives rise to new experience of menstruating". I soon realised this was insufficient, as the nature of the change expressed went deeper than merely "new". My next iteration was: "Menstrual cup acts as a conduit for transformative experience". This was not quite right either: 'transformative' sounded both vague and possibly grandiose, and 'conduit' was too tubular an inference to be the right word to accompany a cup, which after all is a receptacle rather than a pipe. And while these categories were incrementally becoming more conceptual, they were not yet combined to move my analysis forward. In this specific case, they did not give any indication of how such comments were often framed in a context of surprise and gratitude in the participant, with an accompanying suggestion of the possibility of radical change. Neither did they cover the three participants who still felt they had a way to go to get used to the cup, and who were somewhat borderline about continuing with it. In a moment when I was away from my data I realised this whole direction could be encapsulated as "uptake of the menstrual cup can alter the experience of menstruation in *unanticipated ways*." This relatively austere clarification opened me into a stream of thought on habitus. In a similar manner, other individual codes, related descriptions,

and developing themes and conceptualisations came together and were refined, to generate a corpus that was more than a sum of its parts.

My methodological framework came into play throughout this process, as the charismatic analysis informed my thinking surrounding the bureaucratic data, being already in my awareness. But I also took this other information stream to another level by giving myself a stage of deliberate focus in applying the charismatic analysis to the second cycle coding. Once I had completed the refinement of the second cycle coding I went back to my charts of the charismatic information and read the two together iteratively, moving back and forth between them, making notes as I went. I found that the bureaucratic could be enlivened, disturbed and/or finessed by the charismatic. Sometimes the charismatic dominated, introducing a significant dimension and leading the finding. As I wrote the findings up, I found the charismatic information entered the conceptual analysis as if it were a kind of marbling that ran through the coded findings, vivifying and colouring them.

4.4. Limitations

Both case studies were purposefully limited: first by size, and second by specificity of the issue under research. Numbers of direct interview participants were kept to under 15 in each case study. While this smallness allowed me to spend more time with individual participants and in related organisational settings, it narrowed the potential for transferability.

Both case studies were also limited by demographics of participants due to the bounded nature of the case study design.

The research was also limited by time and by being a solo researcher. There was not enough time to include all my data in my analysis, or to study a longer time period in the enactment of the two innovations I was studying.

My dual data analysis method was satisfying to undertake and reaped useful data, but it took a lot of time to perform.

5. Findings: *The cup*

Key to chapter

- Participant interview responses are in italics, with participant pseudonym and date of interview following their quote.
- Similarly, diary entries are in italics, with pseudonym and 'diary entry' after the quote.
- Interviewer questions and comments are in bold italics.

Chapter introduction

This case study explores how menstruation becomes a (differently) organising phenomenon through the menstrual cup, including how use of the menstrual cup re/organises daily and working life. The findings emerging from my data analysis identify ways in which key aspects of identity, status, and relationships with self and others were re/organised through uptake of the menstrual cup, by binding people, things and ideas together in new ways.

The participants in the cup study were aged 20-24 years old and were all undergraduates or recent graduates with, in most cases, demanding study, work and intimate lives. This busy-ness was reflected in their needs surrounding menstruation and in their attitudes to the menstrual cup, and to the research itself. Over the course of the study, it became clear that it was not always easy or straightforward for them to complete their participation in a project that involved several not uncomplicated stages.

Almost all those who completed the study had noticeably confident and open demeanours, and all appeared to be unembarrassed to share intimate details about their lives with me, both in their diaries and in the interviews. This in itself is a finding, suggesting that people were perhaps more likely to be drawn to participate in the study because of their situated position. I bore this in mind as I analysed my data. At a personal level, I found these young women impressive. I experienced them as bold, clear-minded,

and sharp-witted. They were claiming the world as a place in which they had the right to openly exist, including the right to bleed. They were the daughters of at least two generations of (liberal) feminism, and as such, they held contesting priorities that they attempted to 'balance'.

5.1. The menstrual cup as a unifying good

This section explores the considerations participants gave for being willing to experiment with the cup in the first place. I explore the emphasis participants accorded to the notion of the cup as "a good thing" that was supportive of several social *goods*, and how *good(s)* emerged in their accounts of organising and being organised by the cup and by menstruation. I look at how *good* becomes constructed in relationship to a menstrual product and menstruation (which after all, has been normatively constituted as *bad*), and how this *good* is mobilised relationally between menstruation and other concepts. I then focus on two of the most frequently remarked upon *goods* given as justifications for cup use: sustainability and convenience. The two other main reasons given for cup uptake -- feminism and menstrual minimisation (forgetting) -- are introduced here but explored in greater depth later in the chapter.

5.1.1. The menstrual cup as a 'good thing'

When I listened back to the interviews and as I read the diaries, I was struck by how often and with what emphasis the menstrual cup was expressed in terms of being "good" and "a good thing", that made participants "feel good" in various ways. When asked, ***"What motivated you to want to try using a menstrual cup?",*** the crux of

participant answers was that the cup was *"good"*. Furthermore, they understood that the cup supported the social *goods* of sustainability, convenience, feminism, and menstrual minimisation (forgetting). These concepts of the good and of goods related to the cup were strongly held, and were often expressed in terms of a shared commonality of value among their peer group. Several of the main conceptual themes that will emerge not only in this section, but later in this chapter, are informed by participants' comments surrounding these notions.

Daisy entered the study wanting the cup to be *a good thing* for financial reasons. *"I want it to be a good thing because you can just buy one every five years or so, so it's fantastic for women who are experiencing financial difficulty and so on, anything like that...."* She elaborated on the *good* of the cup by linking it with charitable outreach efforts to geographical areas she saw as being deprived in economic and resource terms: *".....so that would be great in terms of activism if we could provide menstrual cups for women in the Northern Territory or overseas, that kind of thing."* Daisy then returned to her own needs: *"And even just for me as a uni student, like I work a lot but I also spend a lot so it's nice to not have to keep buying tampons all the time." (Daisy, interview, 28/9/17.)*

For Daisy, the sustainability of the cup was blended as a *good* with its potential for helping disadvantaged women. While the theme of the *good* of reducing the use of disposable products was expressed by all participants, like Daisy they often positioned it as the starting point in a list of goods. These analytical chains of goods allowed participants to frame the cup in particular contexts, in which categories were linked. For Geri, the cup's utility as a sustainable product was *"a good thing"* which extended to a feeling of goodness in herself, and then to the goodness of thrift: "*It did like greatly reduce*

the amount of sanitary products that I was using and that was a good thing, I did feel good doing that, and it saves money obviously." (Geri, interview, 8/2/18.)

Similarly, others referenced the combined environmental and economic *goods* of the cup. "*Yeah, and that's a really good like way of saving money. That too, and also it's a lot more ecological, saving the environment slowly, so that's good too." (Ellie, interview, 4/10/17.)* Environmental sustainability and convenience were also often referenced together: *"It was largely the environmental effect, because I was thinking if I could stop using all this disposable stuff, and also, it sounds a lot more convenient anyway, so why not just use it?" (Beth, interview, 21/9/17.)*

Feminism was another social good linked to the menstrual cup. Belonging to feminist peer groups was cited as a reason for wanting to try the cup. Beth belonged to a private Facebook group of feminist undergraduates and recent graduates, which had influenced her decision to try the cup. "*I probably would have been more reluctant to try [the cup] had I not been in a [feminist] Facebook group where people talked about it a lot and were encouraging other people to try it. Otherwise I probably would have been like ugh, what's that? No way." (Beth, interview, 21/9/17.)*

The above excerpts illustrate ways in which the participants' conceptualisations of their valued subjectivities -- such as their personal identification with sustainability and with convenience as *goods* -- form part of a shared worldview which bundles environmental, economic and energetic sustainability with convenience-oriented feminism. The ease of agreement in the participants with the elements of this bundle indicates they adhere to and are influenced by what Skeggs (2009, p. 626) identified as the contemporary "moral economy of person production". Such collections of philosophies and beliefs are complex in that while they can appear to be progressive

and community focused, they can also be an expression and tool of neoliberal capitalism that promotes individualisation "reliant upon access to and operationalisation of specific social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital" (ibid). In the context of the cup study, the participants' worldview bundle gave rise to a thematically interrelated set of rationales for trying the cup and for persisting with it that were often paradoxical. For example, participant perspectives on the cup show that this bundle includes an anti-consumption narrative allied to minimisation, in which 'less is more', while at the same time being inflected by the pro-consumption narrative of the new thing being the best thing.

Indeed, the diaries and interviews often revealed how use of the cup signified the participants' membership of a distinct social group, which identifies as progressive, environmentally-conscious, and feminist. Thus, not only were the goods of sustainability and feminist-aligned convenience considered to be acceptable reasons for using the menstrual cup, but further, being an artefact that satisfied so many contemporary criteria, participants expressed that the cup was also *cool*. *"I spoke to a few of my friends before the study when I was first talking to you about it. I was like, Oh, it's really cool, I want to do it, and they were like, Oh, maybe I'd do it too." (Ellie, interview, 4/10/17.)* The theme of sharing the news of the new cool thing came up several times: "*I've been like "guys, I'm trying this new thing, it's really cool"." (Harriet, interview, 28/3/18.)*

Ellie clearly articulated the worldview bundle and cup use in one sentence, going so far as to say that the cup facilitated *"everything you want a period to be": "The ones who use it [the menstrual cup] are like, 'Oh, it's the best thing ever', you know, it's like it saves the planet and it's also convenient, it's cheap, it's everything you want a period to*

be, yeah, you know, and you just sort of go through your period instead of having to stop and think about it, which I found is true." (Ellie, interview, 4/10/17.)

From Ellie's perspective, which was expressed in similar terms by the whole cohort, this amalgamation of benefits of the cup -- sustainability, convenience, thrift, and 'forgetting' -- combine to make a *good* thing *cool*, at least in the relatively progressive and privileged environment of a highly-ranked university. Being considered *cool* gives the cup a social capital that is very different to the negative social capital of conventional disposable menstrual products. The social capital of the cup as shown by the participants in the study appeared to have developed in stark contrast to the conflicted worth of the 'sanitary' and 'hygiene' concepts associated with conventional menstrual products. (Indeed, as I will explore in sections 2 and 3, for some women, using the cup dismantled previously held attitudes that stigmatised menstrual blood and by association, menstrual products.)

The various *goods* associated with cup use were both bundled together and referred to separately as irrefutable benefits. They were spoken about together or individually as reasons for the perceived superiority of the cup both in itself and relative to disposable pads and tampons. The positive attributes of the cup were manifest in several social good criteria that participants considered important: in terms of environmental and economic sustainability, wellbeing effects and practical convenience. In this way, the varying goods were united into a pluralist worldview, in which menstrual cups were positioned as a culturally alternative and morally (and often, but not always, practically) superior product to conventional methods of menstrual management.

As high-achieving students at a prestigious university, it is not surprising that the participants in the study were concerned with *goodness.* They themselves evinced good behaviour. Some of this, but not all, had what was possibly a socially gendered slant: their emails were chatty and warm as well as polite; they looked after their menstrual cups according to the instructions, and they often thanked me for them. In the way of social goodness generally, (not necessarily gendered), they were well-socialised, personable, diligent, polite, and nice. They were reliable in keeping their cup diaries and they were punctual for appointments. They showed concern for the environment, and for thriftiness. Given that they completed all the steps of the research, perhaps they were among the goodest of the good. Did they consider that using a *good* product made them a 'good girl' or a 'good woman'? Or vice versa: does the menstrual cup, in the hands of an alert, personable and educationally privileged young woman, become *good*? Did their relative (class) privilege make it that much easier for them to adopt a potentially abject object and turn it instead into *a good thing*?

As this section has begun to explore, the *good* of sustainability was a major element in a shared worldview that supported uptake of the cup. In the next section I investigate these empirical findings concerning sustainability more closely.

5.1.2. Fulfilling sustainability

In terms of the specifics of the goodness of the menstrual cup, environmental sustainability was the leading motivation participants expressed for wanting to try using the cup: *"It's just crazy the amount of sanitary products that are used once and then [go to] landfill, so that was my main motivation to try it [the menstrual cup]." (Harriet, interview, 28/3/18.)*

All except one participant (who cited feminist reasons as primary, see p. 155), spoke of environmental concerns as their primary reason, which not only *was* a 'good', but made them feel good. By 'fulfilling sustainability', I refer to the sense evinced by participants of being fulfilled by the glow of performing sustainable actions, as well as of fulfilling the sustainability agenda by using a menstrual cup.

Sustainability was a concept on which participants demonstrated they felt on solid ground ideologically. They expressed no ambivalence regarding 'sustainability' as a primary good. No one hesitated or equivocated when speaking about sustainability as a goal: its righteousness was a given. Participants spoke of the environmental benefits of the cup confidently, even passionately at times. "*I love that it's not something you're throwing away after every use, and that it's something that you can use and use and use over again, so you're really cutting down on your waste, which I love." (Ivy, interview, 29/3/18.)*

This unequivocal passion, signifying the sense of being committed to and convinced by the good of sustainability, was indicated not only by what participants said, but also how they said it. Their voices tended to be strong and enthusiastic on the topic of the environmental good of the cup. They felt certain about environmental concerns, and that it was an issue of particular importance for their generation. *"I just think it's so much better to not be spending lots of money every month on single use products and I think that's probably generational too that people in their teens and early twenties are realising like, Oh my God, if we don't do something now about saving this planet then it's probably going to just disappear before we know it." (Harriet, interview, 28/3/18.)*

As well as sustainability being acknowledged as a generational concern to which they felt a sense of belonging and identification, several participants made connections between their immediate friendship circles, the menstrual cup, and the environment: *"It's just one of those things that's kind of hit our circles recently so a lot of people are thinking about it [the menstrual cup] and we're sort of a group that are concerned about the environment." (Jennifer, interview, 12/4/18.)*

Participants also referenced broader sustainability concerns such as economic and energy sustainability. Almost all participants coupled the environmental impact with economic worthiness, positioning using a cup as a progressive move in terms of consumption *and* thriftiness: *"I just think it's a better option for sustainability and financial reasons." (Jennifer, interview, 12/4/18.)*

Most of the participants in the cohort mentioned being conscious of the environment in their broader consumption and lifestyle decisions, such as being vegan or vegetarian, riding bicycles and taking public transport, and having an overall philosophy of valuing reusable objects, creating less waste, and owning less stuff. Participants associated the use of the menstrual cup with these other sustainability practices. They spoke of the menstrual cup as an equivalent object to other items they owned that they considered to be part of a sustainable lifestyle, without distinguishing these items in terms of where they were used relative to the body (see section 3.3 on interiority and exteriority). Several participants referenced a locally made brand of reusable coffee cup, the KeepCup, as an equivalent artefact to the menstrual cup, and one also cited lunchboxes: *"It's like buying a KeepCup…I'm very passionate about the sort of waste situation that we're faced with at the moment and I think that people need to be taking more responsibility for just having like one thing of things, do you know what I*

mean, like using a container for lunch, the KeepCups, that sort of thing." (Kristen, interview, 16/5/18.)

For some participants, sustainability awareness was rooted in their upbringing: they referenced coming from families who practiced environmentally conscious lifestyles, and explained how they continued to be deeply committed to sustainable practices. Beth had recycled from childhood, was vegetarian, voted Green, and was trying to buy less stuff. She linked the menstrual cup with her newly fitted IUD as being more minimalist, less bother, creating less waste and pollution, and being similarly long lasting. *"Kind of similar thing to the cup I guess. It was like there's another option that means I don't have to worry about taking pills or using condoms or doing anything.... it's [the IUD] in there for 10 years so I don't have to worry about it for 10 years which is great." (Beth, interview, 21/9/17.)* Daisy had lived off the grid since childhood: *"At home where I'm from in New South Wales, we're off the grid, we have solar energy, we aren't connected to town water or anything, so that's kind of the normal that I know." (Daisy, interview, 28/9/17.)* Kristen's family were staunch sustainability practitioners: *"At my dad's house we have a waste-free household pretty much, like we make our own yoghurt, everything goes in the compost, or we have like a landfill kind of thing for bones" (Kristen, interview, 16/5/18.)* Kristen's father was also her doctor and was in favour of the menstrual cup, and her stepmother already used the cup. Similarly, Daisy had already tried and liked some reusable menstrual underwear, purchased for her by her mother.

These backgrounds appeared to be supportive for uptake of the menstrual cup, especially given the emphasis participants gave to the positive environmental impact of its use, which Beth, Daisy, and Kristen referenced multiple times in their interviews. However, maternal and/or paternal support based on environmentalism did not

necessarily translate into ease-of-use: Beth had difficulty with the mechanics of the cup that remained unresolved; Daisy was nervous to try the cup and still felt it was 'foreign' by the end of the study; while Kristen had considerable anxiety about insertion, difficulty with extraction, and feared the cup would cause internal damage, (although when she did insert it, she loved the sense of "freedom" it gave her). These participants wanted to continue using the cup for the environmental benefits, but this was coupled with not inconsiderable anxiety about its use. In addition to their cohort's sense of responsibility for making sustainable choices as consumers, people who have grown up in environmentalist households may have experienced sustainability as a moralised pressure from an early age, which may cause more tension in adulthood than in those with a less environmentally-focused early upbringing. Such tension could manifest in difficulties surrounding the mechanics of cup use, as other participants articulated that they found being relaxed was helpful to successful adoption of the cup.

For Claire, feminist concerns outweighed sustainability as a motivation for trying the cup: *"I really wanted to just explore it on a feminist and social level, more so than I don't like using disposable products."* However, she still evinced her awareness of the environmental impact in the next sentence: *"And yeah, I guess on an environmental level as well it was like this [disposable products] is so much waste. Surely these products don't break down very well, you know." (Claire, interview, 21/9/17.)* Claire stressed the point of difference between what her peers said and her own opinion, yet when she spoke of feminism and the cup, her comments were contextualised through sustainability.

5.1.3. Enacting convenience as competence

Participants reported they had heard from friends that the cup was more convenient than other menstrual products, often linking this with its sustainability. Beth, who struggled to use the cup, still considered it to be "convenient", mostly through what she had been told by others. "*[The menstrual cup] just makes everything more convenient." (Beth, interview, 21/9/17.)* Several participants indicated that convenience was a priority in their lives, and that the cup scored highly as part of a quest for anything convenient, particularly when it lessened the disruption they experienced surrounding menstruation. *"[The menstrual cup] definitely has the potential to make it a less stressful time, just the stress of making sure that you've got stuff in your bag. Yeah, it [your period] doesn't have to disrupt your life so much." (Daisy, interview, 28/9/17.)*

The convenience factor was given as an acceptable reason to adopt a new habit and break a pattern of brand loyalty traditionally informed by older female relations (sisters, mothers) and sustained throughout menstruating life.[32] In a similar manner to the normalisation of planned Caesarean sections as 'convenient', so the menstrual cup organised bleeding more 'conveniently', in such a way to be seen as an expression of competence. The conceptualisation of the cup as the most 'convenient' choice echoes this broader neoliberal valuing of the ordered reproductive body, with its adherence to timetabled, structured life.

[32] The formation of new habits in menstrual product choice is in line with developments over the last decade in disposable menstrual product marketing. As early as 2013, menstrual product manufacturers were emphasising taboo-breaking new products as a way to expand the contracting developed world market for disposables. ""It is important to target young consumers right when they are entering the menstruating age because of brand loyalty," says Tamara Bartels, industry analyst for tissue and hygiene at Euromonitor International. "These brands are selling a lifestyle product instead of a commodity. Color packaging and a taboo-breaking marketing approach appeal to young consumers."" (McIntyre, 2013).

Along with sustainability, participants spoke of the cup's convenience as a merit of the artefact. Indeed, artefacts and practices that combined convenience and sustainability were seen as having especially high value and therefore were worth adopting and integrating into habitual life: *"[My friends who use the cup] have all raved about the convenience and environmentally friendly aspects of the cup." (Ellie, diary entry.)*

Similarly to sustainability, convenience was taken as an unassailable good. Participants identified the convenience of the cup specifically with ease-of-use in the workplace, through minimising the impact of menstruation during the working day. Convenience was constituted around not having to change the cup during the day while at work and obviating the need to carry replacement products around. This convenience was understood as not only temporal (relating to their awareness and use of time and related commitments) and practical (the physical labour and artefacts involved in dealing with menstrual blood), but also relieved the emotional labour participants associated with menstruation, which they largely expressed in terms of 'thinking about' and 'noticing'. In this manner, convenience was seen as simultaneously rational and emotional, to the extent that it was 'life-changing': *"I'd heard a lot as well from people I know just saying like, it's changed my life, like now I don't even notice that I've got my period." (Harriet, interview, 28/3/18.)*

For some, the convenience of the cup was located on a par with 'convenient' contraception as a means to not have to think about their reproductive bodies. Beth considered convenience in the context of her own (reproductive) emotional and physical labour when she compared the cup with her IUD: *"Just having something in there that I don't have to tend to all the time."* Similarly, she elaborated that above all she

felt the cup was seen as a good thing among her peers because of: *"Not wanting to have to think about it [menstruation]."* ***"Is [that] an important motivation?"*** *"Yeah." (Beth, interview, 21/9/17.)*

The high value placed on convenience in terms of 'not having to think about it' raises the question of what 'not having to think' might be shorthand for, or is standing in for. Was convenience valued because it allowed participants not to have to think about or be bothered by their period in a time-pressured world? And/or that it deferred thinking about the body in a particular way? It also raises the question of the relationship between *convenience* and *care*, "irreconcilable as structural oppositions" (Jackson 2018, p. 2516), yet apparently united in the cup, as they are in cleverly-marketed foods (ibid). These questions are answered to some extent by other parts of the data corpus (see section 3.4. on forgetting).

In the ways convenience was spoken about, it appeared to be a proxy for adult competence. 'Not thinking about' their reproductive function as an effect of convenience allowed participants to proceed unfettered into the adult lives they saw before them, with anticipated busy careers and long-term relationships. Similarly to the cool eco-consumption narrative surrounding the cup, its convenience factor rendered users as good neoliberal subjects, by fulfilling a gendered aspect of neoliberal capitalist demand that the (woman) worker be capable of juggling the domestic and the workplace spheres without interruption of the latter. The emphasis in the words of these young women, pre-career and family, on already looking for ways to manage such competing demands, indicates how deeply the notion of woman as juggler has entered media discourse, the public sphere and personal considerations. The capacity of the cup to hold a day's blood also speaks to the demand of organisational life more broadly, in

that the body's needs in terms of its leakages and other material effects are situated as secondary to the ordered productivity of the workplace. Accordingly, a product that disappears these needs, even more successfully than a tampon, is considered to be a boon.

5.2. The menstrual cup as an artefact

The menstrual cup is a distinct artefact that is radically different to other methods used to manage menstrual bleeding. Shaped like a chalice and constructed of soft yet robust silicon, the menstrual cup can be used for 5-10 years without the need for a replacement. As such, over time it becomes a well-known material part of the user's life, employed at regular intervals, placed inside the body for several days each menstrual cycle, and taken in and out to be emptied every 6-12 hours.

In various ways, the specificity of the cup as an object both speaks to a feminist-influenced reimagination of menstruation and also to the traditional materialised stigmatisation of menstrual bleeding, themes of which emerge throughout my findings. In terms of the artefact itself, use of the menstrual cup involves a very different way of dealing with menstrual blood. As my research focused on the first three cycles of cup use, the learning process was a significant element in participant interviews and diaries. In line with previously reported experience, (and why the study was designed to run over three menstrual cycles), by the third cycle most of the participants were able to use the cup easily and had got over any early practical, physical, and psychological issues with insertion, extraction, and cleaning.

This section begins by exploring the learning journey the participants went through in those first three cycles, through identifying the various strategies employed

to develop intimacy with the materiality of the cup as an artefact. In the second sub-section I develop further findings concerning how the cup as an artefact was imbued with feminist ideas, and how participants conceptualised use of the cup as part of a feminist repositioning of menstruation; and in the third, how the cup was conceptualised as an artefact simultaneously of utility and transformation: as an agent of change, as a receptacle of blood, and as a repository of notions.

5.2.1. Investment, involvement, engagement

Uptake of the menstrual cup involved becoming accustomed to an entirely new material artefact for dealing with menstrual blood and organising menstrual behaviours and routines. Some participants found that learning to use the menstrual cup was straightforward, and were almost instantly at ease with its use. A few found using the cup to be difficult and stressful for various reasons, and had still not become comfortable with it by the end of the trial period. Most had a mixed experience that got better over time. It appeared to me that a high proportion of those who invested time and imagination in learning to use the cup early on quite quickly figured out how to use it. This process included making a relationship with the cup as an artefact. Those who did not seek help and/or had people in their lives who were wary of the cup, tended to, figuratively speaking, hold the cup at arms' length. Their narratives also suggested they were undecided about their continued use of the cup by the end of the trial period.

The majority, who found the cup easy to use from the start, spoke and wrote about a general affective state of relief: they felt freed up by the cup, and were very happy with it. Those who persevered and figured it out were pleased they had done so, both with the cup and with their own persistence. For example, Harriet wrote in her diary that she

felt anxious for the first two periods but by the third was fine. All those who had yet to develop confidence with cup use said they would carry on trying, with an affect of doggedness that was not always convincing. Some members of the cohort reported enjoying the process of learning to use the menstrual cup, even when they found it difficult. *"It was fun. Like I went into it with an open mind. It was pretty difficult at times just taking it out, that was my main issue. I finally got better [at that]." (Geri, interview, 8/2/18.)*

This sense of enjoyment mixed with challenge appeared to extend to a feeling that they, their body, and the cup were in a partnership learning how to use it. *"I found it really stressful at the start…it did cause thrush [from soap irritation] and that was frustrating…then the second cycle it was oh, this is annoying because I've kind of got the hang of it but it's [still] irritating, but by the third period I'd got it right." (Fay, interview, 31/10/17.)*

This 'partnership' extended to knowledge sources online: several participants referenced searching in YouTube videos, Facebook pages, and other online forums for advice about insertion, extraction, and washing the cup: *"Like you just need some coaching and so that's why I turned to those online pages which was good." (Kristen, interview, 16/5/18.)*

For some, peer feminist groups played a significant role in sharing information and offering encouragement: *"So people post on there [Facebook young women's feminist group] saying I got the cup, I don't know what to do and this happened, this happened, this happened and people just, you know, usually like a big huge thing of comments of people going try this, do this, keep trying it, keep doing it, it'll work." (Beth, interview, 21/9/17.)*

In some cases, women were also helped by those around them to persist with the cup. Harriet, who at 24 years old, was a little older than the rest of the cohort, and living with her boyfriend, found that he was a supportive partner in terms of cup uptake. *"I have been openly discussing my 'cup journey' with my partner and he has been helping me relax when I panic about it getting stuck inside me forever!" (Harriet, diary entry.)* Harriet's partner was male, and this short quote sums up a revolution in terms of openness about menstruation, a next level beyond asking a boyfriend to pick up a box of tampons in the supermarket.

The sense of learning to use the cup being a shared act extended to coping with menstruation more broadly, and to the relationship between 'self' and 'body': *"Now when I have my period it's a co-existing thing, it's not like oh, I'm stuck at home all day, I can't do this and I can't do that." (Ellie, interview, 4/10/17.)*

As with any repetitive body task, this 'partnership' was only consciously experienced until they had got used to the cup, at which point it became automatic. *"Period 3: It's definitely feeling like it's easier. I barely notice it." (Harriet, diary entry.)*

Some participants were able to use the menstrual cup straight away without any problem, even when they considered their periods were quite heavy. Ivy felt she bled quite a lot, yet she had a relatively seamless uptake experience.

> ***Period 1, Day 1:*** *I have had a completely leak-free and stress-free day.*
>
> ***Period 1, Day 2:*** *Last night was a breeze - no leakage or discomfort at all during the night.* She went climbing and zip-lining all day: *The cup has once again kept everything in and has been completely unnoticeable.* And then went to work in the evening: *not a single worry or feeling was had while I was serving drinks like a mad woman.*

Period 1, Day 3: *Today was my first chance removing and replacing the cup in a public toilet, which I thought went well but I think the limited space meant I didn't get to the right spot, so the cup was noticeable for the next 6 hours of work. On the plus side though, not a single leak after 4 hours of work, 4 hours of study, and another 6 hours of work!*

Period 1, Day 4: *Now that my period is coming to an end I'm loving the fact I can tell how much I'm bleeding and [can] figure out from that whether or not I need to use the cup at night.*

Period 1, Day 5*: the cup served me well at the beauty salon today when I went to get my bikini line lasered -- super discreet and comfortable. Tbh I bloody love this thing. (Ivy, diary entries)*

Ivy's diary can be interpreted as a high performance of cup-adoption, and indeed, she was a competitive athlete. The level of her engagement and commitment to the process of learning to use the cup was significant, and she even extended her diary to her fourth period, by which time she noted that she was confident enough in the cup to go out dancing wearing white shorts.

Participants like Ivy who adjusted to the cup well and quickly sometimes had backgrounds that were supportive and/or had given them training in terms of the (female) body. Ivy was a veterinary student, while Jennifer was a medical student, who also had an easy time with cup uptake. On Jennifer's first attempt she wrote:

Period 1, Day 1: *As a medical student, I felt quite confident about my anatomy and what angle to put the cup in.*

Period 1, Day 3: *I am feeling very comfortable with it [the cup]. (Jennifer, diary entries)*

Similarly, Claire, who had been interested to use the cup for its feminist and social implications more than for environmental reasons, and who adjusted to it easily, spoke of her mother's role in educating her about her reproductive anatomy and physiology: *"My family's very open; my mum's quite a strong feminist. I remember my mum giving me the period talk and it was all very relaxed and she drew diagrams like okay, this is what's going to happen." (Claire, interview, 21/9/17.)*

Some increased their level of involvement with the artefact by exerting agency over their cup by modifying it, such as cutting off its stem. To use the terminology they used, they 'hacked' their cup in this way, exercising agency over the artefact itself, and adapting it to suit their needs. They found the cup more comfortable internally without the stem, once they realised it was not necessary for extraction but was only there to facilitate picking the cup up when it was external to the body. Two participants found that washing the cup with soap caused thrush so they learned to wash it without soap, despite the cup manufacturer instructions. Those who struggled with the cup were less likely to make these changes early on: it was as if they were afraid of the cup itself, and/or felt they would make a mistake if they altered it in any way.

For those who had unresolved difficulty with the cup by the end of three cycles, sustainability continued to be a high value and a justification for persisting with it. Geri

had started off well but had been put off by the intervention of her mother who insisted that she sterilise the cup with every insertion, so was not using it that much, and was still justifying its use on sustainability grounds rather than from her own experience. *"I still wouldn't use it every single time I don't think, but when I did use it it did like greatly reduce the amount of sanitary products that I was using and that was a good thing." (Geri, interview, 8/2/18.)*

Daisy felt that even after three cycles it was still a foreign body she was uncertain about, but similarly, she still referenced the ecological benefits. *"It still feels a bit foreign. Like I like it because I like what it is and what it does and I like its role....but it does still feel foreign." (Daisy, interview, 28/9/17.)*

Similarly, the early theme of convenience continued to be evident in justifications for cup use. For most, whatever the extent to which they had accepted the cup as a regular artefact in their lives, the overriding personal benefit was being able to leave the cup in for much longer stretches of time than conventional products: *"Yeah, not having to deal with it for like 12 hours, I just think it's great." (Kristen, interview, 16/5/18.)*

Participants found that with what they perceived as a light to normal flow, (which most of them reported having, with light flows sometimes related to being on hormonal contraception), the cup could be left in all day, and only needed to be taken out and emptied once in the morning and once in the evening. They referenced this temporal factor particularly regarding its convenience for their working lives, and how this marked a significant point of difference from any other menstrual product. All those who adjusted well to the cup reported that using the menstrual cup made the working day much easier: they did not have to take replacement products to work (as they were

already wearing it); and they felt that the cup allowed them to forget about menstruation at work.

5.2.2. The menstrual cup as a feminist artefact

Here I explore what participants had to say directly about feminism and the cup in tandem with their comments on the material nature of the cup. I explore how the physical properties of the cup as a cultural artefact functioned as an (re)organiser of experience and perception that were reported in the context of feminism.

Several of the participants referenced feminism directly in terms of the cup being a feminist object that contributes to a broader feminist repositioning of menstruation. Around half the participants had recently taken a unit together in Gender Studies as part of their undergraduate degrees, and some referenced this class in their interviews and diaries. Despite (or because of) most of the cohort studying it, there was at times some confusion about what constituted feminism. For example, Beth (who had taken Gender Studies as part of her Politics and Philosophy degree) reported the extent to which her *"feminist Facebook group"* helped her with the cup. But when I asked, *"**So did people talk about the cups in the context of feminism?**"*, she replied *"I'm not sure, I think it just comes under that umbrella of this is a good thing for women"*, as if that were different to feminism. (*Beth, interview, 21/9/17.)*

Use of the menstrual cup was directly observed by some participants as a feminist act and the cup itself as a feminist artefact. Claire had recently written an essay on menstrual products, their marketing, and feminism, in which she had become aware of *"the discourse around menstruation and the underlying messages that disposable [menstrual] products have…and I was like well, this is ridiculous, some of these kinds of*

notions [that] periods are toxic." From this background, she asserted that: *"This [the cup] is important as a feminist issue".* Claire also related feminism to having a sense of unease with disposable products: *"I was feeling highly uncomfortable with using disposable pads and tampons, considering all that they represent in feminist discourse." (Claire, interview, 21/9/17.)*

Participants said that 'feminism' made it easier to talk about periods and to learn how to use the cup. Beth wrote in her diary about finding tips for its use through her feminist contacts. Ellie, who came from an Indian/Malaysian background with significant strictures surrounding menstruation, found that by her third cycle she was quite relaxed about using the cup at university, and referenced 'feministic' attitudes as influential.

> ***Period 3, Day 3:*** *I've been feeling a lot more comfortable with my periods nowadays, it just sorta comes and goes. It's not tiring, exhausting or painful anymore.*
>
> *Wearing it [the cup] in public spaces isn't a problem and talking to people here at uni where everyone has similar mind sets (being less traditional and relatively feministic) is easy. (Ellie, diary entry)*

Such participant comments indicate that the menstrual cup forms part of a set of new behaviours embraced by the young feminists in the study, and is becoming a key artefact in their communal group identity. They made reference to discussions with fellow students on feminism and on gendered injustice regarding menstruation, and specifically on the menstrual cup and what a liberating boon it is for women at work: *"I*

spoke to a girl in my class about this, right, because we were talking about how periods are limiting people who work, and I told her like using a menstrual cup I don't have to worry anymore because it gives me the confidence that a pad or a tampon doesn't give me." (Ellie, interview, 4/10/17.)

Similarly, participants' thoughts on feminism were often articulated as part of a contemporary, progressive, and fashionable worldview that foregrounds issues of social justice. Nevertheless, their thinking surrounding the cup largely evinced a mainstream, neoliberal attitude to menstruation in which minimisation of menses was a primary goal. Like Ellie, all participants spoke about how the cup removed some of the more difficult elements of menstruating in workspaces, helping them to organise their menstruating day with less effort: being able to keep the cup in all day, and not having to visit the bathroom so often. Not having to change the cup also freed them from the stigmatised signs of menstruating, such as carrying and changing products in public contexts where products might be seen or wrappers heard. In the ways the participants spoke about 'freedom' and 'feeling liberated', liberation was understood to be enacted through a more successful disappearance of menstruation than that allowed even by tampons. *"I would say it [using the cup] was basically like using tampons but better because, yeah, you don't have to remember to bring them anywhere, you can leave them in for a lot longer and they're kind of the same level of discreetness as a tampon. Actually I suppose they're more discreet as well because, yeah, there's no string as well, like it's all completely internal.* ***And you haven't got to dispose of anything****. Yeah, there's no wrappers." (Fay, interview, 31/10/17.)*

Hiding menstruation more successfully was associated with freedom and the non-menstruating state. Because participants associated the addenda of tampons and pads

with the possibility of being shamed by association with menstrual stigma, the cup protected them. Kristen positioned the feeling of absence of menstrual ephemera when using a cup as being her "normal" condition, while her usual menstruating state was not "normal": *"The freedom I guess is about, you know, like [no] strings and bits of padding and toilet paper and just like oh, just stuff down there, like it was just good, everything was just away and it just felt like normal kind of thing, mmm." (Kristen, interview, 16/5/18.)*

The cup was spoken about as facilitating what participants conceptualised as a feminist repositioning of menstruation. From their perspective, 'feminism' helps to vanish menstrual blood, and is predicated on the invisibility and discreetness of the cup. They expressed ideas that situated cup use as a radical reimagination of menstruating that helped them move away from shame-based practices, which they did not see as being complicated by or in any way related to notions of minimisation. They spoke of how menstruation and menstrual blood have been conventionally positioned, and of their understanding that it is a sensitive, complex area. For example, several participants showed awareness of menstrual stigma as perpetuating gendered power relations that disadvantage them, for example: *"It's suicide to talk about periods in front of boys [in high school]." (Claire, interview, 21/9/17.)* They sometimes had strong reactions to these. For example, Claire discussed how angry she felt when her long-term boyfriend reacted with aversion to her (clean) menstrual cup. *"He saw the little pink bag in my bathroom cupboard and he calls out, "Is this a present?" I was like no, it's a menstrual cup. "What's that?" It's a little cup that I put inside my vagina and it catches my blood. "Ooh", drops it. I was like it's not something to be scared of. He's like "No, I don't really want to talk about it. It just makes me so angry because he's quite open, you know, I wouldn't be dating him*

if he wasn't open to me telling him, you know, I've got period pains, just make me dinner and be nice to me, and he's usually very good about it. But this idea that a little cup catching blood really kind of wigged him out a lot and he just couldn't really deal with it. And I guess if you showed a guy a used tampon they'd probably have the same reaction." (Claire, interview, 21/9/17.)

Claire did not differentiate a used tampon from a clean menstrual cup in a bag, inferring that her boyfriend's reaction to either was comparable: that any artefact associated with menstrual blood was abject, whether or not it had menstrual blood on or in it, in the present moment. She was confused by her boyfriend being fine with menstruation in the abstract (making dinner, being sympathetic) but not with its materiality (touching the bag that held the cup).

Claire used her diary to reflect on feminism and menstruation. She wrote about the potential discrepancy between her competing values of sustainability, feminism, and comfort:

> *I've had a few thoughts about the menstrual cup, as a product and as a symbol. As with any feminist issue, I think the personal is political (or can become so if you want it to be), yet the menstrual cup kind of walks a strange line. On one hand, I want to use non-disposable products that are better for the environment and do not perpetuate patriarchal norms of menstruation and on the other hand, I just want to feel comfortable when I'm on my period, whether that's with tampons, pads or whatever else. (Claire, diary entry)*

Claire was aware that from an environmentalist perspective, the non-disposable nature of the cup gives it merit, which accrues to the user by association. Furthermore,

she considered that the cup does not *"perpetuate patriarchal norms of menstruation",* which normatively enforce stigmatisation of menstrual blood and advocate disposing of it on a disposable product to reduce contact or exposure to its taint. Yet, Claire knew that sometimes, like at night while sleeping, she actually would prefer to use a disposable pad. Her comments on this suggested that she was conflicted about cup use. Perhaps she felt her own comfort was not as worthy an end to strive for as the goals of confronting patriarchy and being sustainable. Such comments evince contradictions, tensions and collusions between the eco and mainstream feminist agendas within the context of neoliberal capitalism which places (workplace) performance (and performative sustainability?) above comfort and ease (and in particular ways for women, see discussion, chapter 7, pp 287-289).

5.2.3. The menstrual cup as agent, receptacle and repository

The menstrual cup as an artefact is distinct from other ways of managing menstrual blood because menstrual blood collects in it, rather than being absorbed by it. (Even other reusable products such as washable cloth pads and period underwear rely on absorption.) The cup's placement in the vagina also means the blood is held in an anaerobic environment, preserving its colour. On removal of the cup, participants found that the collecting of blood within it renders the blood visible in its original condition, which is very different to how menstrual blood appears once it has soaked into a pad or tampon. This 'collecting' of the blood in turn makes the cup an artefact in a way that pads and tampons are not. In addition, unlike disposable products which get flushed or thrown away, the cup is an artefact that is owned and kept and cleaned and maintained. Participants spoke of the cup in agentic terms with regard to their blood:

they spoke and wrote of the cup 'collecting' blood, and 'causing' leakage. Even its relationship to their feminism was conceptualised agentically, as in *"the menstrual cup kinda walks a strange line." (Claire, interview, 21/9/17.)*

The cup could also be seen as a catcher of blood, as in *"a little cup catching the blood" (Claire).* Use of the word *little* in this comment, in response to a critical boyfriend, was presumably meant to render the cup innocuous. The cup was also conceptualised as a receptacle to their own agency, as their own body was *"filling up a little cup with blood" (Claire).* As the women spoke, the cup also became a de facto repository for other matters, and a facilitator of experiences allowed by the specificity of the object. For example, participants mentioned that when using the cup rather than absorbent methods, they *saw* their blood more vividly, as it collected in the cup in an unchanged condition: *" Yeah, I suppose it's more just real, I guess, because I don't know, but pads and tampons always kind of inoculate you from your own body in some ways because you don't really have to deal with it in its pre-absorbed form. So yeah, I suppose it's just the reality of what your body is doing is kind of more....**Bit closer to you, closer to your experience?** Yeah." (Fay, interview, 31/10/17.)*

Several of the comments about the cup as repository focused on what the participant identified she was *not*. Ivy positioned herself as *'not squeamish'* and said she recommended the cup to others based on whether or not she considered them to be squeamish: *"I'm one of the people who's not at all squeamish about that and I kind of found it almost entertaining to be able to take it out at the end of the day and be like, Oh so that's where I'm at, like it was really heavy this week or yeah, and so like when I did talk to friends about it and like actually discuss it with other people I would be kind of like recommending*

that they did or didn't use it based on the fact that some people are a bit more squeamish about that kind of thing whereas I found it totally fine." (Ivy, interview, 29/3/18.)

Other participants were often careful to minimise or rationalise their experience with their collected blood, taking the time to say that it was **not** powerful, or **not** profound. When I asked Jennifer, *"**You mentioned right at the beginning about how it's different seeing the blood. Do you think that's having any effect on your sense of yourself when you're bleeding or your sense of your blood?**" she answered, "I mean not in any sort of profound way but I think it is really interesting. Particularly at first it was like, Oh yeah, so that's sort of what comes out." (Jennifer, interview, 12/4/18.)*

Even participants who got on well with the cup, like Ivy, still thought that menstrual blood was offensive. I asked her, *"**Do you think people get used to seeing their [menstrual blood in the cup]?**" She replied, "I reckon so, yeah. So I think it would be like the first couple of times they'd use it they'd be like "this is really gross" but it's not like you're really getting your hand covered in it or anything. (Ivy, interview, 29/3/18.)*

Ivy's comment suggests that *"getting your hand covered" in* menstrual blood would be *"gross"*. Somewhat surprisingly, comments about how much blood participants were exposed to were minimal, other than scare stories where *"the blood went everywhere"*. Geri told a cup disaster story about her sister and her girlfriend: *"She [the sister's girlfriend] was wearing it [the cup] and it got full and they were on a road trip and she had to stop on the side of the road and take it out but she had so much trouble trying to get it out that my sister had to try and get it out and then the blood just went everywhere. I don't think she's like very good at dealing with her period, like I never had something like that happen." (Geri, interview, 8/2/18.)*

In several examples, women judged each other for failing to manage their period through the cup. Squeamishness and inability to stop blood going "*everywhere*" were seen as evidence of being deficient in some way: such as being *"not very good at dealing with her period"*. Squeamishness was related to having the competence (both mechanically and psychologically) to *"deal with"* a stigmatised substance, which was acceptable when sufficiently contained, but not when there was more of it than expected or in the 'wrong' place.

As a receptacle, the cup is entire unto itself in its utility, unlike disposable absorbent products, which need to be carried, concealed, and disposed of, and entailing boxes, wrappers, and strings which must also be hidden and carefully got rid of. As material items, disposable products are more complicated than cups. Modern disposables have been developed in specific and highly marketable ways that render them replete with addenda which are visible and sometimes audible. These include the strings on tampons which women often feel they need to conceal carefully, for example in the gym or on the beach; wrappers which make a noise in public toilets (which some find embarrassing and wish to conceal) and need to be disposed of, along with boxes and packets, as well as the used product.

Amelia reported that when using the cup she felt a lot more at ease when staying over at her boyfriend's place because she did not have to throw anything away: *"I spend a lot of time at my boyfriend's house and he also lives with his family, so in the past I felt uncomfortable with having the rubbish from a product, and for example like he doesn't have any menstruating people in his family at the moment, so I would be the only one using the bin in the bathroom so I would take it all away with me, but now I can use that [the cup], like there's a sink and everything." (Amelia, interview, 14/9/17.)*

Amelia's comment makes it clear that she works hard to avoid any discomfort in others that might be caused by her menstrual products, as well as to avoid the stigmatic association of menstruation accruing to her own image in the eyes of others. Working to avoid the discomfort of others -- either by concealing materials and/or one's menstrual status -- is labour demanded by respectability strategies aiming to circumvent menstrual stigma. Through stigma, not only is the menstruating woman abject, but any material item associated with menses is also deemed abject. These constructions are part of a gendered norm in which men are ipso facto of the world, and that world does not menstruate. Thus the ephemera associated with menstruation can cause 'righteous' offence, as illustrated in the previous section by Claire's boyfriend's reaction to her clean and covered cup.

5.3. The menstrual cup and the re/organisation of menstruation

So far I have written up my findings in such a way as to explore how the uptake of the menstrual cup surfaces a swirl of both unifying and contradictory perspectives that inform a contemporary worldview in a specific demographic. In this section I continue my account to suggest ways that they reflect and reveal changing ideological perspectives and dynamics surrounding menstruation and menstrual blood. Here, some of these themes become more universal, applicable to female reproductive experience throughout the life span, and to embodiment more broadly.

I have hinted at how the cup begins to reorganise menstruation, a theme I deepen in this concluding section of the findings and will return to in the discussion. Here, I focus on the unanticipated and affective dimensions of cup use and what these suggest, before developing three short sub-sections on ways the menstrual cup complicates

menstrual stigma, gives rise to new indications of interiority and exteriority, and illuminates the paradox of 'forgetting' and awareness in women's reproductive experience and in embodiment more broadly.

5.3.1. Affective dimensions of menstrual cup use

The affective dimensions[33] of menstrual cup use emerged through the charismatic analysis of the data.[34] As one would expect in a selection of 11 people, they ranged from very confident to quite shy, although overall they were articulate, bright, and present. Anxiety was a factor in many of the diaries and interviews, but it was mostly discussed or written about as something to be got past by applying common sense and patience to the situation.

Participants had often spoken to friends and had read about menstrual cups online before enrolling in the study, yet the reality of using one often caught them by surprise, in unanticipated ways. For example, they were surprised by the volume and the nature of the blood: *"I guess you never really see how much blood you're bleeding until you see it like in something." (Harriet, interview, 28/3/18.) "I was actually surprised how bloodlike it is, because when it's on a tampon I've always thought it was a bit thicker." (Fay, interview, 31/10/17.)*

Participants reported relating to their menstrual blood in a new way because of the cup, and enjoying that they now knew more about it. Fay noted that using the cup impelled her to engage with her period: *"To just address your period and quite literally*

[33] Affective dimensions include both externally apparent emotions and internally experienced feelings. The combination of the interviews and the diaries gave the opportunity to explore both. (e.g. Damasio, (1999), *The feeling of what happens: Body and emotion in the making of consciousness.*)
[34] Please see Appendix B for a table showing the range of affective dimensions in both the interviews (my perceptions and participant expression) and the diaries (their introspective comments).

address what it looks like is something that I've never really had to do before." (Fay, interview, 31/10/17.) Seeing the blood had a strong affective impact and was described in both revelatory and confounding terms. Amelia was amazed to find her menstrual blood *"beautiful",* an affective experience that confounded her conditioning of menstrual blood as being *"gross". "When I like pour it [menstrual blood] into the toilet and see the colours, it can be like actually quite an authentic, beautiful experience." (Amelia, interview, 14/9/17.)* Harriet experienced a rapid stream of new thoughts and feelings, including the epiphany that her blood could be used as a fertiliser: *"When I first used it [the cup] I was like oh my God, look at all that blood, like that's crazy. And then I was like actually it's not that much really, like it's just a little bit, and then I got all like excited like what, could I put it on plants, like I wonder if it helps things grow better, and then yeah I think it was like quite I don't know if 'powerful' is the word but to see it is quite not empowering but just like exciting. I think I just found it exciting to see it. Maybe because I hadn't before." (Harriet, interview, 28/3/18.)*

Using the cup put participants in direct sensory contact with their menstrual blood, which 'forced' them to confront their own prejudices and to acknowledge complications such as whether menstrual blood was different to 'normal'. *"Strangely the menstrual blood makes me feel uncomfortable in a completely different way to other blood." (Claire, diary entry.)*

In Ellie's case, she experienced what she felt to be a radically new experience when using the cup, menstruating for the first time with no anxiety, pain or discomfort. She was particularly surprised by the cessation of previously debilitating menstrual pain: *"I don't know why but there was just no pain....normally I'm like heavily medicated and I'll just stay in bed. Using the menstrual cup I don't have anxiety [about bleeding through]. It*

makes periods a lot easier. I don't look at my period as a burden any more." (Ellie, interview, 4/10/17.)

For those who adjusted easily to using the cup, unanticipated effects centred around its liberating impact on daily life, especially when going out all day to work and/or study. Such effects included participants' relief at being able to leave the cup in for 12 hours at a time, not having to carry extra products around, and developing confidence in the security of the cup versus other products.

The sense that the cup made life easier was also the case with women who had initial difficulty using it: *"I'm glad that I persisted with it [the cup]…it is really worthwhile. Being able to just put something in at the start of the day, forget about it, and then address it at the end of the day, is a lot less hassle than changing tampons." (Fay, interview, 31/10/17.)*

As participants became accustomed to using the cup, their perspective focused less on bigger picture ideas like sustainability and more on their personal experience of the material and emotional impact of using the cup. My analysis of the data showed a wide range of affect surrounding cup use in practice that was much more divergent than the near unanimous initial sense in their imagination of *why* they would use the cup. Here are two examples of contrasting sensation, feeling and self-identification relating to liberty and leakage. While Kristen felt immediately *"a lot freer",* Beth felt *"generally gross".*

> *Well it was kind of just like new and exciting. It didn't really feel that different, yeah, it was just a new experience I suppose but it was really freeing. I felt a lot freer than when I would wear a tampon. Like I was*

still cautious about leaking but once I realised that it wasn't going to leak it felt pretty good. (Kristen, interview, 16/5/18)

Bad day at work and really bad period cramps. Feeling generally gross. Cup leaked profusely all day, like I had been wearing nothing at all. Soaked pad through within the first hour but I was too busy to do anything about it all day. I was wearing a black skirt so didn't really care. Feeling a bit like a 14 year old girl. (Beth, diary entry)

Kristen noted that as a new experience, using a menstrual cup was *"really freeing"*, and better than a tampon once she realised there was no leaking. In contrast, for Beth, using a new product she could not yet manage, and having a bloody skirt as a result, reminded her of being 14 years old, a comment which in the way she said it was funny at the time, but implied a sense of not being able to cope. But she found that she *"didn't really care",* because her black skirt meant the blood was not obvious to observers. Despite how *"generally gross"* she felt, she was too busy to make herself feel more comfortable. Like Claire's comment about feminism and the cup, for Beth, her personal comfort and any fear of showing blood on her clothing was secondary to the demands of her work.

These divergent affects were directly related to whether or not they 'leaked' blood while wearing the cup, and were not in this study related to other indications of confidence. (As I noted earlier, participants in the cup study tended to be confident and open, but this confidence and openness did not necessarily correspond with successful cup use. Beth, for example, was strikingly confident in person, but did not get the hang of using the cup during the trial.)

These comments suggest the extent to which leakage of menstrual blood concerns women, yet here Beth exhibited an insouciance surrounding leakage that belies the menstrual taboo narrative. She wanted to get on with the day rather than bother with the difficulty of getting hold of fresh clothing. Beth had already talked about how much she wanted to just ignore and forget menstruation, and here she is able to do so even when she is leaking blood.

These two comments represent a dichotomy in experience based on the factor of leakage. Other dichotomies concerning menstrual shame emerged from the comments. Beth's acceptance of wearing a blood stained skirt all day showed a certain insulation to the burden of menstrual shame. Other comments about accidental sightings by others of their menstrual blood or products showed more vulnerability to shame, such as Amelia's anxiety about using menstrual products while at her boyfriend's house, or Claire's anger at her boyfriend's distaste towards the cup.

Affect related to menstrual shame was contradictory: sometimes women related to traditional shame-related events like leakage with concern, and at other times they laughed it off. Almost all said they had spoken to others about the cup, which demonstrates a new social norm surrounding menstruation. However, as this section has shown, the affective dimensions surrounding use of the cup and the reaction to unanticipated effects were complex, contradictory, and even chaotic, suggesting a traditional pattern in the midst of significant disruption.

5.3.2. Liberation and vulnerability

As I have begun to show above, menstrual cup use complicates menstrual stigma by both relieving *and* reproducing conventional associations. While participants felt

liberated by the cup, they also showed that, in certain ways and at least temporarily, they felt more vulnerable.

On the one hand the cup relieves the burden of menstrual stigma through its association with the moral high ground via sustainability and convenience *goodness*. Boyfriends, families and peer groups were in favour of women using the cup for these reasons, and participants themselves felt virtuous through its use. This virtue effect combats stigma by increasing merit associated with menstruation, and thus augments social capital. The women detailed this virtue of the cup through various avenues: through the cup's sustainability positioning, economic practicality, and convenience, and by its effect on reducing anxiety regarding leaking, and the changing and carrying of disposables. On the other hand, they also spoke of ways that cup use reproduced stigma through provoking stigma-induced fears, evinced chiefly through respectability concerns. These concerns showed as anxiety regarding leakage, ongoing questions surrounding how to clean the cup correctly, and fear of the possibility of offending others and/or being seen as stigmatised/abject through revealing the cup to an intimate or changing the cup in a public toilet.

As detailed in the previous section, use of the menstrual cup also put participants in more direct contact with their own menstrual blood, 'forcing' them to examine their responses and to acknowledge complications such as whether menstrual blood was different to other blood and if so, in what ways and to what effect. The cup brought menstrual blood stigma to the forefront in some key relationships (for example with mothers and boyfriends) and confronted participants with how they and others conceptualised menstruation and menstrual blood.

Geri's experience with the cup was affected by her mother's fears. Geri's mother was anxious about the hygiene of the cup and insisted her daughter boil it between each insertion, which effectively sabotaged her use of the cup going forward by making it much more burdensome. Geri found herself feeling less inclined to use her cup because of her mother's intervention. While enthusiastic at the start, she noted in her diary that during her first cycle: *"My mum scared me saying, "How do you know if it's disinfected?"* In the interview Geri explained further: *I went into it okay but then my mum was like, "Oh, how do you know it's sterilised? Is this like a product that's had a lot of research on it? I don't like the idea of this," blah, blah, blah, and then she kind of got into my head and I was like oh. So I did get like pretty thorough at cleaning it. Like on the instructions it said to sterilise it between every cycle, like in hot water, and [instead] I did it every single time I used it. That was kind of a burden so I didn't use it that much because of that reason" (Geri, interview, 8/2/18).* Nonetheless, in her diary Geri reported using the cup for 12 hours straight in her second menstrual cycle. She notes attributes of the cup related to its hygienic potential: *"I do like how easily the silicon cleans, but I'm worried about not properly sterilising it and having some bacteria germinate in me overnight."* In her third cycle she was still very concerned about hygiene and was increasingly less inclined to use the cup, writing: *"My mum really got in my head."* Geri's diary became increasingly concerned with such fears, and ends with the words: *"I do worry about the hygiene thing and if in the future they'll find out the cup is actually dangerous."*

Geri still lived at home, so by virtue of proximity she was more exposed to her mother's fears. In the study overall, cleanliness arose as the most persistent aspect of menstrual stigmatisation post cup-uptake, which is not surprising given the ways the freshness narrative surrounding menstruation has developed in the marketing of DMPs.

The close association of the words *hygiene* and *sanitary* with *menstruation* has been used as a proxy for the traditional stigmatising of the menstruating body. Yet it was also noticeable how many women did not speak about this, and appeared unabashed about leaking or unfazed by concerns about cleaning their cup.

Participants spoke directly about feeling both liberated by the cup yet also more vulnerable. Harriet talked about the support her boyfriend gave her in using the cup: *" I suppose at the beginning like I was a bit scared, I was like, "It's too hard, I'm not using it", and he was like, "You've just got to persevere." He was like, "I've spoken to someone before and they said you've just got to push through the hard bit." He's like, "You've got to go for it." And I was like, "Okay, I'm going to do it, it's going to be alright" and so it was sort of like brace yourself, I'm going to put it in again, see if it works." (Harriet, interview, 28/3/18.)*

While Harriet experienced this 'push through' and 'brace yourself' advice as supportive, it stands in contrast to the method of Amelia, who spoke of how she relaxed her body by having a warm shower and *"patiently just breathing before inserting it"*. In conventional gender terms, 'push through' and 'brace yourself' speak to a masculinist heroic conceptualisation, while 'patiently just breathing' is a gentler, less traumatic way of learning to use the cup, and one that engages the partnership of 'self' and 'body' in a more trusting, relaxed and protective manner.

5.3.3. Interiority and exteriority

In the study, menstrual cup use revealed complex conceptualisations of interiority and exteriority in relation to the body, with multiple relationships between interior and exterior at play. Some women reported preferring the feeling of blood flowing out rather than being held in a cup or absorbed into a tampon, so they would use a pad at night;

others preferred the invisibility and lack of any mess when using the cup, and preferred to use an internal product all the time. Those who talked about seeing their menstrual blood as part of cup use reported that, after the initial surprise at the blood being different than they had thought, they liked seeing their unadulterated blood in the cup, and consequently understanding how much, what type, and what colour it was. They also liked forgetting menstruation through an internal product and found that the cup is even more discreet than a tampon because it has no string and no wrappers.

While the cup is worn internally, participants often referenced it as if it were external to them, saying *"I wore the cup" (Claire)* and even, *"I slept in the cup" (Ellie),* as if it were a protective garment, vessel or nest. These varying notions of interiority were linked with intimacy/familiarity with self and others. Using the menstrual cup is more self-intimate than other products as it involves putting one's fingers *inside* the vagina further than required to insert a tampon, as well as *seeing* and *touching* menstrual blood. Participants valued their ability to do this, and saw sisters and friends who baulked at using the cup as *"squeamish"* and *"not in touch with their body"*.

Yet, as detailed in section 5.1, participants did not distinguish between the interiority of the cup and the exteriority of their other reusable items (such as coffee cups and lunch boxes). The lack of differentiation between items placed inside the body (including the IUD) and those worn outside raised several questions. It may tell us something about how participants view their bodies as either an extension of the organic world, or alternatively, as a repository for goods and objects. Or that the vagina is not consistently conceptualised as being entirely inside, instead being conceptualised as a passage, for example, *"I couldn't get it [the cup] out. It had gone so far up my passage" (Kristen, interview, 16/5/2018)*. Perhaps the constitution of the vagina as a *passage*

situates it more as a conduit between outside and inside, rather than actually being inside, or being an entity in its own right. As such, in women's bodily imagination, does the vagina occupy a space more like a border or hinterland between the internal and external, and not quite belonging to either category?

5.3.4. 'Forgetting' and awareness

As well as reducing impact on the planet, participants noted that the cup reduced the impact of menstruating on themselves: *"The cup is a way to manage it [menstruation] in a way that it's almost like it's not there anyway, so I suppose in some ways it's minimising the impact as much as possible, which is good."* (*Fay, interview, 31/10/17.*) To use Fay's phrase, *"minimising the impact"* was a perceived effect of cup use that had resonance with both sustainability and convenience, and by inference, with the external and internal, public and private, worlds. In Fay's comment, the desire to minimise the impact of menstruation to the point where *"it's not there"* and *"which is good"* positions menstruation as a part of life that *should* be minimised. Using the cup allowed participants to forget about menstruation all day and to feel a greater sense of agency and relaxation over the management of their menstrual blood. For example, the cup absolved them of the need to carry and use replacement products, thus freeing them during the working day. This freedom also applied in the evening, as a social benefit: *"Not worrying about having to change pad or tampon e.g. when going out at night." (Diary entry, Amelia.)* The women in the study all made it clear that they wanted to be able to forget about menstruating while out in the world (while not always or necessarily so in private), and they wanted to not be made to feel bad about it by others in their lives or

by social expectations. They wanted to have to think about and attend to menstruation as little as possible.

Yet while the cup offered this expressed sense of freedom, at the same time it foregrounded elements of menstrual materiality and menstrual stigma that participants may not have considered before, or if they had considered them, had been more able to ignore. While some aspects of this engagement pleased them, (learning about their menstrual blood, for example), in other contexts this confrontation with materiality could be an irritation or worry, particularly surrounding the material fact of menstrual blood and associated concepts of hygiene and sanitary practices. As detailed above, concerns related to menstrual stigma were sometimes provoked by anxious, fearful or disgusted comments from mothers, sisters, friends, and partners. So while the women found they could forget about menstruation all day at a practical level, they also found themselves challenged to think and talk about menstruation more by their experiences with the cup and related communications. In addition, they were experiencing their menstrual blood in a new way that demanded consideration. They now had access to information about the quantity and nature of their blood, which for many was experienced as revelatory. This also changed how they *owned* the blood. Perhaps for the first time, it became *their* blood, related to broader issues such as their overall health, rather than *the* blood, soaked up and indeterminate on a quickly disposed-of tampon.

Chapter summary

The main finding of the menstrual cup case study is that cup use quickly alters not only the direct experience of menstruating, but also associated conceptualisations of menstrual blood, bleeding and bodies, in private and in public settings. The findings

developed in this section reveal the menstrual conceptualisations of a cohort of apparently not atypical, well-educated, urban-dwelling young Australian women, all of whom spoke or wrote from a perspective of wanting to be able to *forget* menstruation so they could go about their day unencumbered. At the same time, their feelings were ambivalent because the cup 'acted' as both a source of ease *and* a source of provocation. All the study participants found that using the cup provoked new feelings and thoughts about menstruation, which were the very opposite of *forgetting*. They spoke and wrote about developing feelings of pride, delight, and agency as well as anxiety, fear and failure, about an aspect of their lives which they had previously identified as an inconvenience associated with embarrassment and even shame.[35] This new awareness impacted their sense of their embodiment more broadly as they referenced overall health and their changed awareness of their blood and reproductive structures.

The progressive worldview bundle espoused by participants persuaded them of the viability of the cup by legitimising its use, exonerating it and them from certain aspects of the menstrual taboo. But that was only the beginning of a transformative process, because, unlike other menstrual products, the artefact of the cup collects menstrual blood rather than absorbing it. Thus, when participants began using the cup it altered their experience of menstruation by exposing them to both the sensory experience and the nature of their menstrual blood.

In terms of the applicability of the menstrual cup to the ideological bundle, the cup is an effective strategy for destigmatising menstruation and in particular menstrual

[35] It is impossible to say to what extent this new consciousness was provoked not only through the cup but also because they were enrolled in a study and asked to keep a diary, and knew they would at some point be interviewed about their experience. It is reasonable to assume that the research study context had an effect.

blood. Yet by 'forcing' engagement with menstrual blood, cup use is complicated by the persistence of menstrual stigma. Such complications arise because inevitably, the newly awakened engagement with menstrual blood facilitated by the cup collides with another part of the bundle: the neoliberal feminist notion that menstruation should be experienced as minimally as possible. This 'disappearing' and 'forgetting' is part of the attraction and success of the cup, yet appears to operate in direct contradiction with another 'successful' aspect of the cup: the knowledge and familiarity with menstrual blood that it permits.

Interlude

"What I did not anticipate was how emotional the research process would be."

(Skeggs, 1997, p. 15).

The piece below was written in two sittings, while I was attempting to start the data analysis for the menstrual workplace policy (see next chapter). I situate it as an interlude written "differently" (Gilmore et al, 2019), and as a counter-piece to "respectable knowledge" (Skeggs, 1997, p. 17), rather than as a conventional chapter in line with the rest of the thesis. It is different in style and it comes from a different place in me, and yet it speaks to the heart of the matter. Like a menstrual period, it is an interruption to 'normal' life, and to what Cixous called the 'masculine libidinal economy' (in Philips et al, 2014, p. 313).

Written in two clear blasts in the manner of "dirty writing" (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008), this outpouring was an attempt to process intense emotional and somatic feelings. Such feelings arose out of researching a stigmatised topic through which women suffer, through which I had suffered, and was now suffering again. Only later did I realise its raison d'être in the thesis and decide to include it.

As well as being an example of feminist self-reflexivity, this writing illuminates my research process and the topic of my research through a different level and a different perspective of commentary. Working as a counter to masculinist, normative practices of academic writing that train academics to cauterise (female) personal expression in order to fit in (see Pullen, 2018), such writing brings the possibility of clarity through direct experience.

April 28, 2019

I very quickly became overwhelmed when I began doing the second cycle coding for the menstrual workplace policy research. I kept having to put the pages down and take deep breaths. Eventually I realised this reaction might be data in itself, so I stopped to take a break and process my feelings. This is the writing that emerged during that break.

I was thinking, "but I was fine emotionally doing the menstrual cup coding", if 'fine' means detached and able to proceed with the task untroubled by my personal feelings. Somehow the level of distress in those accounts was more manageable, even when a few of the women were clearly disturbed by difficulties they had using the cup, and even when all showed at least traces of the impact of menstrual stigma on their sense of self and on their journey through life. The young women in the cup study tended to be upbeat, even laughing, as they spoke; for most of them the cup made things better, so they were happy about what we talked about; and they were young and appeared to be quite resilient and socialised into taking things lightly. And perhaps because the research was focused on the cup, the interviews and diaries had a practical slant which soaked up some of the menstrual trauma always present in such a shamed part of female life.

But this morning, when I began rereading the workplace first level coded data for themes, I felt an enormous wave of empathy for women everywhere trying to deal with bleeding at work. I felt something in my body, a vulnerability and sense of deep hurt. I imagined that reading those accounts brought back my own experience of struggling at work while menstruating. Yet I did not have any personal memories arise: it was more this visceral feeling of wounding and accompanying empathy for the details in the accounts I was reading. Was there something in the two studies that evoked different reactions in me? Was there a reason this was happening at this stage of my PhD?

First, I considered that despite my long experience in the field it was likely that I was still sensitised to menstrual trauma and affected by the stress of researching it, which I had been doing on and off for 30 years, and full-time for the past six years. In the context of the intensity of research demanded during this phase, and in the last three by the PhD, I had to consider that this stress was most likely cumulative. Perhaps as I was doing the second data set analysis later in the process, I was becoming less buffered to the emotive power of the data. Second, I recognised there was a qualitative difference in the affective dimensions of the workplace research relative to the cup study. I considered that these were the stories of women older than the cup cohort, some of whom had lost jobs due to menstrual symptoms and most of whom had had experiences of humiliation, shame, and pain in the workplace. Some of their accounts were described in great detail, and were deeply affecting. These women, unlike most of the younger women in the cup study, had grown up in a different context, before menstrual activism became a known movement endorsed by celebrities. But due to recent cultural changes and to their own countercultural perspectives, several of the participants had thought about their menstrual experience quite deeply, and had moved beyond the accepted cultural narrative of menstrual minimisation and suppression. Their awareness of how and why they had suffered at work surrounding menstruation was complex and developed: they were not hiding their pain and suffering from me, and it leapt out at me from the printed transcripts.

Then I remember that during the two months I worked on the findings for the cup study, I had gradually become aware of a growing sense of mild soreness in my vagina while I was working. I had put this down to some post-menopausal lack of estrogen, or maybe sitting too long at the computer. I had not considered it might be related to the

work I was doing. Now I was reading about women in pain, being doubled over in agony and fainting at work; losing jobs, promotions and prestige as a result; feeling humiliated, embarrassed and ashamed. It dawns on me that the soreness was a response to the cup study, and now, on top of that, I am having an emotional reaction to the workplace study. The sense of internal soreness gets much stronger as I write. It is accompanied by a tightness in my chest and a barrage of feelings, that as I write are slowly emerging into differentiation. I want to burst into tears but I know they are not really 'my' tears; my body feels internally sore but I know it is not really 'my' soreness. I don't know how I know this. In this state, I want to lie down and cover myself with a blanket, yet the researcher is stronger and she makes 'me', the emotive, affective 'me', write down everything as it comes up. I am worried I won't have the stamina in my nervous system to see this through but I know the only way to move forward is to allow this complex of feelings to come out. I feel tired, I feel hot, I want to go and watch TV and forget about this. It is all too hard. Having a woman's reproductive system is too hard. I feel sad. I am grieving for the unacknowledged burden placed on women everywhere. Menstrual stigma is too huge and it has roots into everything we think about ourselves as woman. The category of woman is infested with shame.

I suddenly remember what it is like to bleed, the iron smell of the blood, the sense of one's centre of being descending to the uterus, the way the pain shapes your movements and actions. The downward pulling tug of cramping. The sensation of hot blood coming out of the vagina, the desperate need to lie down. The women in my study talk to me about this, they are uncensored in their communication about what it really feels like to bleed in public spaces, to bleed at work, to have to hide the vulnerability, the pain, the unsteadiness. One says she used to faint from the pain at work, and when she came to,

she would feel so embarrassed. I have a memory now, (they are starting to come up as I write), of fainting in the bathroom as a teenager when I got out of the bath, leaving a smear of blood on the edge of the bathtub, my younger brother finding me in a heap on the floor, telling me I had left blood there, no judgement, he is worried about me. But I feel like I have done something wrong. I am confused by the faint, I am confounded by what my body does once a month. It does not fit with the world in which I live. There is no way to have the reality of menstruation within the context I live in, so I feel sore and embarrassed. There is no menstrual space in which to have my own biology. It has been stolen from me by a world ruled by men and by the lust for money that turns my monthly emissions into profit for big business. I am told at school I cannot have time off for my period, or miss games (two hours of brutal hockey outdoors on a freezing cold day, try that with menstrual cramps and heavy bleeding); the doctor says everything is normal, that I should take over-the-counter pain medication and learn to live with the discomfort. At 18, I go on the Pill and my periods virtually stop, but the Pill makes me anxious and depressed and after two years I take myself off it. I fail an important exam at university because I have such bad cramps during it. There is no one I can talk to about this. Later, when I go to work, I daren't even ask if I can take time off. I take painkillers, wear a tampon and a pad to make sure I don't leak, and put on a brave face. I have to cycle to work in the snow and wind. Bleeding. All I want is to lie in bed with a hot water bottle, but there is no way to ask for that and still get paid. I have a few years of struggling silently with holding down jobs while bleeding, until I manage to become self-employed and master/mistress more of my own time. I encourage those who work for and with me to take time off if they can when they are bleeding. I do research on cultures where women take time off when they bleed, cultures where women's cyclicity is factored into the organisation of domestic

and working life. I write a book about it. It gets some attention but the world carries on much the same. At times I despair of meaningful change, especially as the narrative of menstrual minimisation and medicalisation appears to strengthen and dominate, aligned with neoliberal feminism. But then, menstrual activism goes mainstream. People are talking about menstruation in public for the first time. The term 'smashing the menstrual taboo' starts popping up all over the place. 25 years after my book was published, a company in the UK introduces a menstrual policy. I am fortunate enough to be awarded a scholarship and to be able to study it for a PhD. Now, three years later, I am writing up my findings, and in the words of Ruth Weatherall, and like her experience with the women she studied in a domestic violence context, I realise with humility and a sense of weepy relief, that "I am undone by these women". And now, I begin to cry. I get very hungry, and now I understand why I have had an insatiable appetite since I have been writing up this research. I eat to calm the anguish, I eat to ease the pain. I sit through the urge to eat for a few moments. The pain everywhere in me, body and heart and soul, is easing, but I am aware it is not done yet. There is more to learn from it. I look at the clock. With a shock I realise I started writing this two hours ago. It is time to eat.

May 7, 2019

The soreness in my own body has ceased, and appears to have transferred to soreness in my psyche. I go slowly with my work. I can still feel resistance to going into the data. This time coincides, aptly, with the publication of an article on menstruation in the workplace in the Financial Times, for which I was interviewed a month previously. I am disturbed to see the headline is: "Make your menstrual cycle work for you", when I was asked to contribute to an article on what organisations can do to accommodate women's

cyclicity. The article frames the issue as concerning women becoming more productive by tracking their cycle, rather than about systemic change. My contribution is still specific to menstrual policies, but nonetheless, by being in the article at all I feel complicit in a neoliberal agenda that emphasises the role of the individual and implicitly absolves the systemic context of meaningful involvement. My sense of exhaustion is magnified by this and by new legislation restricting abortion rights in the U.S.A.

The weight of patriarchal insistence that women's reproductive labour be given for free, the indoctrination that it is all our burden, feels like a huge and oppressive structure that works easily, almost without effort, against the struggle for the genuine liberation of women. This structural mechanism is well-oiled and automatic, whereas my interventions feel amateurish and stuttering in comparison, and are, I fear, bound to be subtly sabotaged with ease. I feel as if I have spent my life chipping away at part of the foundation of a vast, massively bulwarked wall. I've not been alone, of course; there are many others using similar chisels. While the wall is starting to show cracks, it is so big and so ancient and so stubborn, and there are so many economic and social vested interests still running off it, that when I see it in my imagination I fold into hopelessness. Yet I refuse, writing this, to let that hopelessness take over. I dig deeper. I remember this has happened many times before and that every time, 'something' has got me up off the hopeless floor, out from under the depression duvet, and has given me the energy to continue. Every time that has happened my arguments have become stronger, my resolve more sophisticated, my understanding deeper. Strands of thinking that were once wavering in a void start to link up. I weave a tighter epistemological web. I go back into my findings to find out what will emerge this time.

6. Findings: *The policy*

Key to chapter

- Participant interview responses are in quote-marked italics, with participant pseudonym following their quote.
- Similarly, meeting and field notes are in italics with source in brackets.
- Interviewer questions and comments are in bold italics.
- All images copyright Lara Owen.

Chapter introduction

This chapter is more multifaceted than the preceding findings chapter on the menstrual cup, largely because the workplace policy directly involved organisational and media dimensions as well as individual experience. In a long introduction I give more detail on my ethnographic experience, introduce the participants, and lay the groundwork for understanding the specific organisational context. These introductory sections are followed by three sets of findings. *Reimagining menstruation at work* explores the early inspiration phase in which the policy was an unformed yet powerful idea, which captured the organisational and public imagination, and set off a media storm. *Innovating a menstrual policy* tracks the development of the policy and how this both mobilised and contributed to the habitus of the organisation and the commitment of the board and staff to a progressive vision. The third section, *Menstrual policy as solidarity,* is concerned with the policy as an expression of various solidarities, in which new permissions surrounding common embodied experience were articulated amid a turbulent period in the life of the organisation. This reclamation of embodied cyclical experience both challenged and drew upon the Coexist organisational habitus, and that of the wider community in which it was situated and which it served.

The setting

Coexist was a social enterprise which at the time of my research ran a large community building in Bristol called Hamilton House. Bristol is progressive relative to other cities in the UK, with a strong student presence, a renowned music scene, and left-leaning governance. Hamilton House is located at the main junction in Stokes Croft, a bohemian area in the city centre just beginning to be gentrified. On a summer's day when I began my on-site fieldwork, I could have been in Melbourne's inner North. There was the same mix of run-down Victorian buildings and more recent apartment blocks, and the same plethora of cafés, bikes, shorts, posters and street art.

Coexist's community venture began in 2008, when a group of social activists rented Hamilton House, an unprepossessing 1960s building that had previously been a Lloyds Bank training centre.

Over the next decade, Coexist turned the six-floored, three-winged building into a labyrinthine community arts and event space used by thousands of people every week, and home to a plethora of projects. By 2017 when I first visited, Hamilton House was transformed: it held a large cafe/canteen, an art gallery and shop, dance studios and wellbeing rooms, event spaces, a reading/writing room, and studios rented cheaply by approximately 500 local makers and artists. Hamilton House was also the centre for Coexist's outreach programs such as the Community Kitchen, which brought immigrants, refugees and the homeless into the community via the bonding and universal delight of cooking and eating. Every Thursday they prepared a low-cost lunch open to all, at which hundreds of people would gather in the event space upstairs next to the new kitchen.

Hamilton House had outward signs of British semi-anarchic, socially critical thinking, including its own Banksy mural, "The Mild, Mild West", a commentary on the warm and fuzzy nature of Bristolian culture.

The lift was rackety and the building clothed in ongoing arrangements of scaffolding, but the atmosphere inside was warm, collegial and energetic. There was a hippie vibe, with veggie burgers and alternative therapies, candles and tie-dye. It was like a year round, static summer festival. (In the short British summer, both young and middle-aged flock to weekend festivals, and indeed, festival attendance was often talked about in the Coexist office and in planning meetings.) The reception desk was always busy, with a steady flow of people in and out of the building all day and into the evening, and a constant buzz of activity.

To give a sense of the size of the Coexist operation during the time period of my fieldwork, the 2017 audit showed that Coexist had had a reach to 2.5 million people and that the businesses operating out of Hamilton House had had a collective turnover of £21 million in the previous year. Coexist itself as the management company of the building had a turnover of £622,000 for the year. "Each year the building receives over

500,000 visits, hosts over 10,000 events, and provides over £100,000 worth of free events, talks, music and exhibitions." ('The Evolution of Another World', Coexist funding proposal 2017)

The timeline

The timeline within which the menstrual policy was enacted is important in my analysis, because the policy and the staff involved were not the only actors in this empirical phenomenon. During the period of my research it became apparent that the policy was situated within and influenced by an increasing entanglement of various human and non-human actors. These actors were chiefly the individuals reimagining menstruation at work, (including but not restricted to those writing and using the policy); the evolving artefact of the policy; and the organisation and its public context. This latter was situated within a media rich world in which Coexist's existential problem was emblematic of a broader issue: the struggle between the commons and a property-based gentrification which benefitted the few at the expense of the many. In this chapter I suggest that menstrual (re)organisation was constituted *through* this entanglement.

For over a decade, the Coexist team had poured an enormous amount of effort into turning a drab building into a beloved community hub used by hundreds of local residents every day. However, this well-intentioned and often inspired and effective work was now under existential threat from urban gentrification. Sixteen months after the policy was first imagined and while it was still bedding down as a part of organisational life, Coexist was formally told that the building owners might not be open to further extension of its lease, as they were considering selling all or part of the building to housing developers.

This existential threat became entangled with the menstrual policy, due in part to the unprecedented media storm that had erupted when the organisation initially announced the intention to create such a policy. The policy thus became part of the organisation's cultural capital at a time in which it was campaigning to survive. The development of the policy was slowed by the organisation's attention to pressing existential matters, and because staff began leaving to find more secure employment with their positions often left unfilled, due to precarity and cutbacks. Thus, the policy became enmeshed with and emerged out of a time in the life of the organisation of rapid growth, vision, and media coverage occurring alongside growing uncertainty, despair, and existential threat. These elements had a refractive relationship between the policy and the organisation. (Please see Appendix B for a table of the timeline of the policy set alongside these key events in the life of Coexist.)

The fieldwork

I first encountered Coexist because of the menstrual policy and its accompanying media storm. In March 2016, the Herald Sun, an Australian newspaper, contacted me to ask for my opinion about 'menstrual leave' in the context of Coexist's announcement that it would implement what was at the time called a "Pioneering Period Policy." A few months later I met up with Bex Baxter, the Coexist People Development Manager, to discuss the development of the policy. Bex was the longest-serving member of staff involved in the menstrual policy--she had been at Coexist for eight years at this point, almost since its inception--and she was also a long-term Board director who had held the position of Board Chair.

The following summer, I spent time at Hamilton House over a six-week period, attending meetings, doing interviews, having coffees and lunches, hanging out with whoever was around, and doing my own work at a hot desk. This fieldwork was supported before and after by email, phone and Skype contact with several employees and board members, which contact extended into an 18 month period overall.

Within this timeframe, I performed 14 'formal' interviews with individuals, of which five were done in the first half of 2017 over Skype, and nine in person later that same year during my extended visit to their workplace. The participants I interviewed individually were aged between 27 and 42 years of age at the time of interview. One sat on the Board but did not have a paid role; all the others were working staff members, some of whom had dual roles as Board directors. All were female and of menstruating age, except one, 'Oscar', who was male. Oscar worked as the Office Manager and in that role he had overall responsibility for office work progress, so needed to be aware of who was in and out of the office on any given day.

Thus, the participants who were interviewed were (most of) those directly involved with the menstrual workplace policy. I spoke with some of these participants multiple times at different stages of policy development. In addition, due to the media attention the policy received, men working in marketing and press relations also became involved in policy discussions. Consequently, I also met with the public relations team as well as with other non-menstruating members of staff who had felt the impact of the policy. In addition, I attended several organisational meetings at which most staff and board members were present. Two of these were specifically about the development of the menstrual policy. I also attended a community meeting of several hundred people about the future of the building and of Coexist. This meeting

was made up of stakeholders including the landlord's representative, Coexist staff and volunteers, plus many of the artists, writers, artisans, dancers, musicians, healers, other businesses and hot-deskers who rented work spaces and event halls in Hamilton House, along with members of the public who regularly attended trainings, workshops and other events in the building.

While the bulk of my findings emerged out of iterative analysis of the individual interviews, I also worked from the transcribed recordings and contemporaneous notes from the larger meetings, and I reference comments and observations from these. In addition, my immersion in the field informed my broader understanding of the organisation and its ethos and practices, and my field notes also illuminate my findings.

6.1. Reimagining menstruation at work

In this first group of findings I explore the local conditions that allowed for a radical reimagination of the organisation's responsibility for women's wellbeing at work. I examine the ways in which individual experience provoked and supported the menstrual policy, how the policy reflected broader organisational values, and how the merging of individual and organisational ethos within the Coexist habitus engendered and supported collective enthusiasm for creating a policy.

6.1.1. Highlighting menstrual needs at work

One day in early 2016, Bex[36] saw a member of staff on the front desk *"white and bent double with pain, who said, "Don't worry, it's just my period""*. In that moment Bex

[36] Bex is the only member of staff who does not have a pseudonym. The usefulness of a pseudonym was obviated by her public status regarding the policy. She has become well-known in public domains as the instigator of the policy, through appearing on major news outlets including the BBC, and doing a TED

realised that as People Development Manager, she needed to do more to support women menstruating at work. This epiphany arrived in her mind in two parts: a problem and a solution. First, she realised that the existing unwritten practice of institutional kindness regarding menstrual needs at work was insufficient. Second, she decided that Coexist needed a written policy to formally justify women's right to take time out when menstruating. *"Even though we were very open and going "go home", they were still embarrassed, still kind of like "no, I don't want to be seen – this can't be seen as the reason for not being able to work". And it just made me think there needs to be a policy around this that everybody agrees to, that everyone celebrates, and [that] supports everyone. And it was just as innocent a thought as that and I just started to do it." (Bex, interview, 10/2/17.)*

It is noteworthy that Bex thought *"there needs to be a policy around this"*, considering that Coexist was not a strongly policy-driven organisation. Practices rather than policies were generally favoured, and the organisation tended to eschew normative ideas that policies would solve problems. Oscar, the office manager, told me of his early concern that the menstrual policy was being highlighted when other areas, such as disability access and child-safeguarding, did not have policies, although there were clear practices in place.

Bex felt that ad hoc kindness from management in moments of duress concerning menstruation would no longer suffice. She had come to the understanding that menstrual stigma rendered women embarrassed and ashamed at work, and thus unable to claim and enjoy the right to 'take space' for their period, even when unwell. As a

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talk. She expressed a preference for her real name being used in this thesis, and was made aware of possible outcomes such as the extraction of quotes by the media. This development was cleared by my research project's ethics committee (MUHREC).

result, any well-meant but informal suggestion from management to go home would either not be acted upon at all or would be acted upon with accompanying feelings of diminished self-worth.

Bex described this realisation as arising out of *"nowhere"*. Yet on further questioning, it turned out she had been exposed to various influences that coalesced in her thinking that day to induce a revelatory moment. For example, the year before she had been at a festival where she had attended a talk on honouring the menstrual cycle, given by a woman who invited her employees to take a day off when they are bleeding. Bex herself had suffered debilitating menstrual symptoms for 30 years. *"I've had dysmenorrhea [menstrual pain] for pretty much the entire time I've had menstruation. I would dose myself up [for work] with far too many tablets, but if I didn't catch it in time I would faint and then be in agony. I found myself doing that in all sorts of places and usually getting a warning sign when I started to yawn. I'd have this yawning fit and then I'd go oh, no, it's gonna happen. So there were little signals that would happen and the stress was...[pause, silence]....carrying on when that was happening in those first few days [of bleeding] was next to impossible. It would actually make it so much worse [to carry on as normal]. So, yeah, there was a lot. I remember always feeling just a bit embarrassed that something so extreme was going on and it was very hard to hide." (Bex, interview, 22/2/17.)*

Bex had not thought earlier to instigate a written policy based on her own experience of menstruating at work: rather, it was her compassion for another woman's suffering that allowed her to dream up the notion of a policy. Indeed, it was noticeable that when Bex spoke to me about her own menstrual experience, her vocal affect was tentative and quiet, yet when she spoke about the menstrual policy her voice became

confident and strong. The idea of the policy, and her moment of compassion for a fellow worker, appeared to generate confidence in her. Indeed, it was not until she saw someone else in the same position as herself that she found the confidence to step outside normative behaviours of suppression, shame, and minimisation and to insist that the organisation itself needed to change. Her compassion for another woman, for whom she had an organisational responsibility, allowed her to think about organising menstruation at work differently. *"I think it was like an evolutionary thing in myself around my journey with it as well. It just kinda came to me as though I was ready to see something wider and I suppose because of the responsibility of managing a lot of women at that time. So yeah, it just came to me that that was really important for Coexist to be acknowledging it [menstruation]." (Bex, interview, 22/2/17.)*

Bex had historically felt uncertain about the real responses of her colleagues to her menstrual pain, particularly her male colleagues. She linked her uncertainty to her sense that the men in the organisation had no way of understanding what really happened to her when she bled, given that menstruation was not spoken about at work or adequately contextualised as a reason for taking time out from the workplace. She worried that she was being judged by them, and was aware that she judged herself. She had come to the realisation that without discussion on the topic, such uncertainty and anxiety linked to menstruation would persist. And even though Coexist prided itself on being a progressive organisation, its hierarchy was still predicated on gender lines. Until recently, almost all Board members had been men. *"Even though people were empathic, I didn't really feel that I was in a context that people understood it [menstruation] fully. I've always felt like maybe they were blaming me for not looking after myself enough or something. So that all happened even in Coexist, even being in such an open organisation.*

I was the only female on the Board for a very long time, for most of the last five and a half years, and even though all the men were very open and forward thinking, there was still this feeling of do they really mean that? Do they really know? Are they just pretending or being ethical? There was just this sense of [feeling] judged, or I felt this sense of I might be being judged anyway, and I was judging myself." (Bex, interview, 22/2/17.)

In Bex's analysis of the situation, being able to speak about menstruation at work, and better still, normalising its discussion, was central to her understanding of how the situation could be improved. Stigma silences. Silence allows stigma to persist. If something cannot be spoken of, it is impossible to ask for accommodation to it.

If Bex was the 'mother' of the policy, Polly embodied it. She was the member of staff whom Bex had seen *"bent double and white as a sheet"* at the reception desk when the idea for the policy first emerged. Polly was closely involved throughout the instigation, development, and enactment of the policy. As Front-of-House Manager, Polly's feedback was pivotal in shaping the policy to recognise the particular strains of menstruating in a front-facing role, which turned out to be the work context in which women felt most need for time off during menstruation. Such roles involved constant public interfacing and relentless interpersonal demand. It was often impossible to take a break from the front desk in a building that was always busy with people coming and going. Later, Polly took on responsibility for the policy, eventually becoming the People Development Manager (after my research was completed). Her experience of menstruation had a powerful impact upon her life, yet she expressed herself about it, especially early on in the policy process, with uncertainty and diffidence, echoing Bex's affect when she spoke of her symptoms. *"I know that the first day [of my period] I'm not okay and I need to just go home. I tend to get kind of ill. I get quite hot and cold, I tend to*

get diarrhoea, I tend to feel sick and [in] a lot of pain and tend to not really feel comfortable standing up so I tend to just lie down or at least want to sit down or like hobble around. The hardest bit is really, really intense waves of kind of cramps. I'm not really sure.....it comes in like waves of just really, really intense, really, really, really bad [pain] and then it will die off a bit and then it'll come back again and that might go on for kind of generally between four and eight hours or so, so it just kind of writes me off a little bit. I tend to feel quite sensitive as well and a bit feeble, I guess. I end up just feeling like no, I can't do that, I'm really not capable, I just need to lie down, I'm going to cry, you know, like it tends to totally, yeah. I don't know if feeble is the right word but that's kind of how it feels, I guess." I asked her, ***And if you're at home, how do you feel then? Do you feel feeble then or is that in relation to being at work, that the sense of feebleness comes over you?*** *She replied, "I guess I probably feel it a bit at home but I just don't put any pressure on myself so it doesn't matter. I try to – yeah, I don't know, I just go with it. I'll lie down. I might have a book if I can feel up to reading a bit. Sometimes it can help to try and distract myself. I might put something on my iPad and watch something or just lie on the sofa or in bed." (Polly, interview 1, 3/3/17.)*

Polly's statement about the first day of her period, *"it just kind of writes me off a little bit"* is a combination of a strong phrase, *"writes me off"*, with the qualifiers *"just"* and *"a little bit"*. But the description of what happens to her does not match *"just"* or *"a little bit"*. It is clear from her description of her menstrual pain that it makes the performance of a normal working day stressful for her.

Polly's sense of *"feebleness"* is directly related to the pressure to perform. Left to her own devices, she is able to relax, and this means she feels better able to cope and feels better about herself. It is notable that her experience of her menstruating self is

context-driven, dependent upon whether she is at work or at home. Her self-objectification (which locates her as an object for use rather than as a being with value in her own right) leads her to feel bad about herself when her symptoms affect her work performance. The impossibility of succeeding at being an object of use when she is menstruating engenders a sense of hopelessness when she is menstruating at work. On the other hand, the sense of being *"written off"* and *"feeble"* is not present in her sense of herself when she is at home. Indeed, there she is more able to be herself, to more simply be a woman who has a body and who menstruates. When she menstruates at home, she feels a legitimacy that she does not feel at work: she feels significantly differently about herself when she is in an environment in which it is comfortable for her to menstruate, and in which her embodied needs take precedence over normative organisational expectations of performance.

Like Bex and Polly, Tara had suffered at work when menstruating and similarly *"had really bad periods from the word go, from being 12 [years old]"*. Tara worked with Polly on the reception desk and also managed the shop, which was positioned in the reception hall. Tara was diagnosed with endometriosis in her twenties, and subsequently lost a job because of the condition. She became self-employed as a market trader until she had some acupuncture and then a baby, after which the endometriosis improved enough for her to return to paid employment. *"I thought [the idea for a menstrual policy] was brilliant because I had lost a job because of my periods. I had endometriosis so I was like bleeding for three weeks and then having a bit of a week off. It was always really bad. I'd be fainting and vomiting and just really, really painful, and I just couldn't even stand up and I was having so much time off work that it was just like well, I*

can't really do this job, so then I had to stop. I became self-employed, and I did that until a few years ago [when came to work full-time at Coexist]." (Tara, interview, 21/6/17.)

Tara told me that doctors had told her pregnancy could help her endometriosis, and indeed, her health improved after she had her first child, and she was able to go back to work. Tara's story shows how her menstrual health governed the type of work she could do as well as when and why she had a child. Endometriosis had an impact on her self-esteem, sense of value to society, career development, healthcare choices, and finances. Furthermore, she felt hopeless when she lost her job because of the disease. At the time there was no social and little medical understanding of the endometriosis and the only support she received from conventional medicine was a long-delayed diagnosis and the recommendation of pregnancy as a solution. While having a child did turn out to be a turning point for Tara, it would not be a curative or even a feasible option for many women, as, apart from all the other factors that might be in play, endometriosis in some women causes infertility.

Other staff members had menstrual symptoms but felt more able to perform a working day, to varying degrees. Queenie preferred to come to work in order not to lose income. Accordingly, she would practice presenteeism (being at work while feeling sick or under the weather) when she had her period. As a back office worker, it was usually possible for her to work less diligently or effectively while still appearing to be at work. Yet she recognised that if the policy meant she would get paid anyway, she would prefer to stay at home. But she would not have taken a day off during her period if she had to pay the time back later, or as a sick day: she was articulate about wanting to preserve her days off for doing *"nice things". "I do get bad periods but I have this attitude that I would rather be at work and miserable than at home miserable. I'd rather save my time*

off to do nice things and so yeah, like today I feel like it would be a waste of a day off to be at home feeling rubbish, so it's just always made sense to come to work and just sort of work through it. So yeah, I kind of thought that, but then today when we were discussing the fact that maybe it doesn't need to be made up in time, it's like oh okay because then you're not wasting your day off, you're actually taking that time for yourself and doing what you need to do because you won't be so productive today. (Queenie, interview, 20/6/17.)

Here Queenie directly referenced her period as being a less *"productive"* time, even though she was in the office. I interviewed her on the first day of her period, so her account of her day was vivid and immediate. *"Me being here is almost pointless. I've responded to a couple of emails, I've sat in on a couple of meetings, but yeah, other than that.... I'm not that busy in terms of work coming in [right now] but I have projects I really need to be cracking on with and I just can't face it, and I don't know if it's the heat or my period but it's the combination, today I'm like I don't even want to think about it." (Queenie, interview, 20/6/17.)*

Queenie's idea of productivity shows that to her, measurable output constitutes productivity, whereas resting and relaxing fall outside of her sense of achievement, even if these would support 'productivity' at other times.

Rachel had a more nuanced sense of what work was and was not possible or desirable during menstruation. She managed the Wellbeing Department and was also a massage practitioner there. Her period had always affected her at work. *"The first couple of days in my cycle they're always quite challenging and they have been since I was 11 when I started my period." (Rachel, interview, 21/6/17.)*

Rachel made a connection between the type of contraception she now used and her ability to work during her period, and felt she had *"no choice"* but to *"surrender*" to the pain now that she had an IUD fitted. She went on to explain that *"surrendering"* meant doing less and tailoring her work to her cycle. In particular, she was aware that for *"administrative picky work it's not good because of the mental fog involved"*. On the other hand, she felt that given her personality, she was better at fundraising during her period as she was more *"aware"* of herself, less pushy, and better at simply connecting with people. *"Interestingly in the fundraising sometimes that [working during my period] leads to me getting better results because I'm getting aware of myself. So it's interesting how it plays out, it isn't always like a negative thing. I'm just like I'm fucked and so then you just connect with people, which I think probably – like not that I want that all the time -- but like it's quite a good lesson because [otherwise] I kind of push quite a lot." (Rachel, interview, 21/6/17.)*

Rachel was happy to surrender doing detailed work when menstruating, but acknowledged that her *"mental fog"* also rendered her more relatable, which facilitated a different kind of work. Her sense that menstruation meant she was *"fucked"* -- in terms of normative behaviours and a focused, alert mindset -- meant that instead she benefitted from manifesting a kinder, less forceful, and more receptive version of herself. She conceptualised her menstrual cycle as offering opportunities for different ways of being, and did not self-objectify to the point where she felt expected, or expected herself, to perform as a machine of use.

Somewhat similarly, Suzanne and Willow, who worked together running the Community Kitchen, felt that menstruation affected their mental and emotional states. Neither of them particularly experienced physical symptoms other than some fatigue,

but noted that there was a substantive difference in how they felt and thought during menstruation that was distinct from the rest of the month. *"I don't particularly suffer with like any kind of difficult periods. I don't have like a physical kind of difficulty but it does impact my kind of mentality and my emotional state." (Suzanne, interview 21/6/17.) "I feel that my emotions change quite a lot. [I want to] just leave early because now after a day working I feel quite tired." (Willow, interview, 21/7/17.)*

Running the Community Kitchen was a front-facing role involving considerable interaction with a not always predictable public. Willow saw her fatigue as more emotional than physical, suggesting that emotional labour is particularly tiring during menstruation, as spoken about by other women in front-facing roles.

While most of the menstruating employees had some menstrual symptoms and felt the need for some time off during their period, not all said that menstruation had an impact on them at work. Meg, the Finance Administrator, had a relatively asymptomatic experience of menstruation, yet did not ignore her cycle. She had a high level of awareness of her reproductive system and health, having successfully practiced natural fertility awareness for both contraception and conception. *"Maybe a little bit of pain but yeah, I can go about my job normally, so it doesn't really interfere at all." (Meg, interview 24/3/17.)*

Pain was also a signifier of menstruation, and its absence highlighted grief in the non-menstruator. Nell often had amenorrhea (absence of menstruation) and when she did (rarely) menstruate, she had symptom-free, very light periods. At the time of her first interview, Nell had not menstruated in over a year. She spoke about her sense of exclusion with reference to pain when the menstrual policy idea was announced. *"I felt excluded because everyone was talking about their periods....I remember just saying it, cos*

it built up and up and up in like this meeting that we had when it first all came in. I said actually, I don't have them at all. You know, okay, I don't have pain but I also don't feel like a woman so maybe that's, you know, yeah, I felt quite excluded and sad." (Nell, interview, 22/2/17.)

It is noteworthy that Nell indicates through this comment that despite her feelings surrounding her personal menstrual experience vis-à-vis discussions on the policy, she felt secure enough in the organisation to vocalise her distress at being the only female non-menstruator in the room. Indeed this vocalisation may have lent her the strength to confront her menstrual health issues more directly. She later told me that, following the interview with me in which she had shared her concerns about the irregularity of her periods, she had been inspired to go to her doctor to find out why she was not menstruating. She spontaneously menstruated the following month, which she attributed to having finally focused on her period instead of ignoring it, making a connection between her cognitive, purposeful attention and the physiological act of bleeding.

Other staff were similarly vocal regarding a sense of certain mysterious elements of menstruation. Two women went further than others in expressing ideas about the value of taking time out during menstruation regardless of symptomatology and in the context of gaining attributes such as "wisdom" and "powers". Both Verity (the Operations Manager) and Xena (Board Chair) had done some training in menstrual awareness (sometimes called *menstruality* by staff). While neither of them had particularly symptomatic periods, both felt it was valuable to honour the cycle and take some time out to rest, even if they did not always do so. Verity explained how she had been taught by Jewels Wingfield, a *menstruality* educator, that *"dropping down"* during

the period was *"where the wisdom was"*, and that taking a *"drop day"* was beneficial for body and psyche. *"You need to go and have a day in a cave. It's not about necessarily being sick or not being able to work but actually it's about prioritising the gift that's available to you by having that time." (Verity, interview 4/7/17.)*

Even though she appreciated her period as a time to "drop down", Verity let me know -- immediately following the comment above -- that she had not taken any time off at Coexist because she had been too busy. She expressed her ability to work through her period as meaning she was "luckier" than some of her colleagues. Her comment evinces some of the contradictions inherent in developing "menstrual awareness" within a deep-seated cultural context of minimisation and stoicism related to menstruation. "*Here I've not taken any time. I got home early once, that was like oh my God, I know I need to get into the cave. I was really fatigued, really painful, but generally I'm one of the luckier women with my period, for sure, although some months it's harder and whatever, I am always grateful for having a bleed because I feel like it just drops everything that you've been carrying for that month, like pwhhh this massive relief, but yeah I haven't taken any time off." (Verity, interview 4/7/17.)*

Similarly to Verity, Xena spoke of *"the powers it gave you"* to practice menstrual cycle awareness. She spoke of a woman who taught *"menstruality"* as being *"extraordinary"* and *"quite special",* and several times made comments about the menstrual cycle and menstrual awareness with a sense of awe. The perspective of *menstruality* also mobilised ideas about the menstrual cycle involving shifts in 'productivity' during the month. *"You know, what we're saying particularly with the menstrual policy [is] that you need rest and to be away from work, not [just] because your body needs to just like sort of lie down--your mind needs to lie down because you're not*

being productive at that time, because you're tiring yourself out and therefore you're not honouring when you're able to be super-productive later on [in the month]." (Xena, interview 9/11/17.) Here, as with the Financial Times article on menstruation and productivity (see p. 53), the idea of the productivity of the individual and the organisation are conflated within a context of self-care: if the individual menstruator does not rest when the body wants it, they will not be able to serve the organisation through what Xena calls "super-productivity" in the middle of the month.

Taken overall, the main finding in this section is that the ways participants spoke about their experience of menstruating at work showed significant variation in the axes of strategies, needs, symptoms, beliefs and ideologies. Experiences ranged from acknowledging personal need for strategies to cope with highly debilitating symptoms (Bex, Tara, Polly), to less intense symptoms that still impacted work (Queenie, Rachel, Ursula), to mental and emotional effects but no physical symptoms (Suzanne, Willow), to no symptoms at all and no felt need for rest or any special perspective (Meg, Nell) and to a sense that resting was useful regardless and that menstruating had a spiritual dimension (Verity, Xena). Nevertheless, despite this diversity of experience, perspective, and belief, those members of staff who did not feel the need to take any time off themselves and/or who did not hold countercultural beliefs about menstruation were supportive of the policy (see section 6.3. on the policy and solidarity) and all were willing to speak openly in meetings and in interviews with me.

The sense of being united in the development and enactment of the policy was emblematic of the strength of the ethos shared among Coexist staff, characterised by an ideological and behavioural flexibility while holding certain values strongly. In the next

section, I explore this sense of identification with the core values of the organisation as a factor in support for the menstrual policy.

6.1.2. Mobilising the habitus of the progressive organisation

This section explores findings related to the ways staff expressed the sense of immersion in a distinct habitus within which the menstrual policy was emblematic of a consciously held ethos. (Again, I use "ethos" in the Bourdieusian sense in which it is a constituent of *habitus*, (Bourdieu 1993, p. 85)). I had never lived in Bristol, but I had had several friends there over the years and visited occasionally. When I told my friends that I was going to be doing research at Coexist, they were excited. It was clear from their responses that Hamilton House held a place of affection and respect in the community and was associated with positive social change. Indeed, from within the organisation, Oscar spoke enthusiastically about how the Coexist ethos extended beyond the staff and to all the people using the building. *"It's amazing, like of the over 1,000 meeting room bookings every single one of them is about societal change. You know, there's probably about 5% are just business meetings. When you look at the titles of the things or the people who have booked them, I'd say 95% [are] social causes and otherwise all the people in the building are attracted by our values." (Oscar, interview, 4/6/17.)*

Coexist was conceptualised by those who worked there as an organisation with a progressive and caring identity. They spoke about it as *"an open organisation"* that people *"fell in love with" (Bex),* and as a *"really understanding organisation" (Polly)* towards its staff.

While those who worked at Coexist held a strong sense of service to their community and felt deeply embedded within it, *"Coexist people"* was nonetheless a

category distinct to *"non-Coexist people"*. The menstrual policy became another point of difference. Meg said, *"I feel like I'm a lot more clued up [about menstruation] than a lot of my friends, like non-Coexist people."* This idea of *non-Coexist people* and *Coexist people* speaks strongly to the sense of personal identification that staff felt with the organisation. Staff spoke of their communications with people who did not work at Coexist, and positioned themselves as carrying a progressive message to them. Meg described explaining the rationale of the menstrual policy as an *"eye-opener"* to outsiders. "*I've spoken to one of my other friends who doesn't work for Coexist about it [the menstrual policy]. I think that might've sort of been an eye opener for her, just about how your body goes through a natural cycle and how to work with it rather than against it." (Meg, interview 3/24/17.)*

In such a context, inventing a policy that could trailblaze a 'new' form of awareness was appealing, and showed how *Coexist people* were distinct from *non-Coexist people.* It fit the organisational identity to be forerunners and to break a mould, perhaps especially one constituted around a taboo. By being pioneers, (the policy was originally called the *Pioneering Period Policy*), Coexist was (re)establishing itself as a particular kind of insider organisation. Menstruation, a phenomenon normatively excluded from organisational consideration and discourse, became reversed into an insider position within the special context of a distinctive habitus.

In terms of the make-up of Coexist staff and who came to work at the organisation, sometimes staff were hired from within the immediate orbit, such as Tara and Ursula, while others had moved to Bristol specifically to work for the organisation, such as Verity and Willow. In their interviews, staff members often expressed the feeling that the organisation was a natural fit for their own values and preferred ways of working.

Coexist was seen by staff as an exemplar of a flexible, responsive, and welcoming organisation. They saw working there as an opportunity to be directly involved in creating meaningful community change, and that they also could *"be the change"*. In this vein, the menstrual policy was seen as potentially an example to other organisations. Early on, Bex spoke about how she saw Coexist as a cultural influencer and how the menstrual policy fitted into this larger social role. *" It [the menstrual policy] felt like just a really basic, natural human right. I realised Coexist straddled the mainstream and the alternative worlds and would be a great organisation for getting positive information about menstruation out there....and that [it] could be a really great example to other people to see that we're doing that." (Bex, interview 10/2/17.)*

The menstrual policy, especially when conceptualised as *"a basic, normal human right"*, was a good fit with Coexist's habitus and the ethos embedded within that. Moreover, it could be said to valorise it. This was perhaps another reason why a formal policy was so appealing. The idea of the menstrual policy *"made them [Coexist staff] really fall in love with Coexist even more, just going, wow, we're in such a great organisation that we can do this." (Bex, interview 10/2/17.)* Several staff members and board directors expressed pride that the policy was being discussed at Coexist. For Polly, the organisation was already a trailblazer in its HR practices, but she felt that the discussion surrounding the policy took this to a new level. She stressed the power of the new vocalisation of menstrual concerns. *"The reality is I think we were already treating everyone and giving everyone the space or whatever they needed whenever they weren't feeling their best or feeling like they couldn't be at work, do you know what I mean? That's what Coexist is already like as an organisation and so in some way having a policy wasn't*

necessary, but I think that what was really more interesting is the conversation about it and opening it up and getting it talked about more." (Polly, interview 3/3/17.)

Similarly to Bex's conceptualisation of the menstrual policy as a *"human right"*, Suzanne spoke about the policy in terms of its appropriateness for Coexist's *'humanistic ways of working'*. While Suzanne herself did not feel she would often need to use the policy, she felt it spoke to an ethos that was central to Coexist. She felt *"passionate"* about the policy, and situated it as a feminist project, in that it was coming from *"an angle of like feminism." (Suzanne, interview 21/6/17.)*

Several staff mentioned that they worked overtime and did not always take their holiday entitlements, as indicative of their commitment to the organisation and how that related to their values. This was also used as proof against inferences in the media that the menstrual policy was a way of getting more time off. *"At other times we are like worked to the bone on a very low wage and people go above and beyond their hours and capacity and passion and experience to deliver something that Coexist feels passionate about, or we as a team feel passionate about. So I think that feels like very in sync with the menstrual policy so in that sense I feel very passionate about it." (Suzanne, interview 21/6/17.)*[37] Similarly, Oscar stressed the commitment of staff: *"We also have a very strong commitment from the staff who work here and we all work a lot of voluntary hours and, you know, we're motivated by the values of the organisation and so if someone's taking time off they're not skiving." (Oscar, interview 4/6/17.)*

[37] It is notable that Suzanne here makes a distinction between what *"Coexist feels"* and *"we as a team feel"* by which she meant the Community Kitchen. This indicated some separation between the identities of the organisation as a whole and an individual team, yet they are still spoken of as having the same goals. This semi-independence prefigured by 18 months the successful establishment of the CK as a legacy project when Coexist folded and may have contributed to CK's solidity after the closure of Hamilton House.

This intrinsic sense of unity with the organisation was expressed by Ursula, who arrived at Coexist just before the March 2016 workshop and the surrounding media storm. She remembered being *"really excited"* and *"in love with the whole building"* and deeply impressed that people could work and live together in accordance with their ideals, *"not up a mountain"* but *"existing within the society"*. She also noted that the outside excitement and interest in the menstrual policy indicated to her how much people needed it *(Ursula, interview, 4/7/17).*

Xena's role as a board director lay in supporting Bex's idea from the start, and in connecting her with people already teaching about menstrual cycle awareness. Xena spoke about how Coexist was ideally placed *"because of its culture and because of its openness"* to introduce a menstrual policy. Xena stressed that this *"sort of work"* offers the possibility of *"empowerment*" for *"both women and men." (Xena, interview 9/11/17.)*

The culture that Xena referenced was further articulated in the document Coexist produced in May 2017. This document was part of their attempt to secure the future for Hamilton House as a community resource, an effort that failed when the landlords finally made clear their decision to sell to apartment developers. The Coexist proposal, entitled "The Evolution of Another World", characterised Coexist people and associates as "cultural catalysts" and "changemakers", and made a plea to funders to recognise the pressing need for a "beacon for change in perpetuity.....for seven generations into the future".

The idealism of the Coexist ethos was shown in the language used to describe their vision for a future "vibrant and beautiful world". There was a tacit recognition of past youthful folly: "From creative, chaotic and anarchic beginnings, Coexist CIC has grown up"; "we have done a lot of learning over the years". The document itself was still

charismatic in tone and focused on selling an idealistic vision, but also contained practical plans for making the building more inclusive and accessible. The document acknowledged the criticism that it was seen by some locals as being "for posh hippies", and detailed future initiatives for opening the building to the wider culture in the area. "Coexist has turned Hamilton House from a derelict building into a treasured Bristol institution. All of this has been possible through the love and commitment of thousands of souls - people who know that a bright future comes from working together; people who choose to put people and planet before personal financial gain; people who believe that together we can make a difference." (Coexist Proposal, 2017, 6.)

Denoting individuals as "souls" points to a spiritual association in the way Coexist positioned its identity, developed its ethos, and understood its habitus. Putting "people and planet before personal financial gain" prefigured the international Extinction Rebellion movement which would erupt two years later. This eco-spirituality was explicitly linked to the events and facilities that Coexist supported in Hamilton House and also to the care and wellbeing of staff. Later on in the document, the menstrual policy was included in the proposal as an example of Coexist's role as innovators in wellbeing in the workplace. By mid-2017 when the document was written, the menstrual policy was embedded in the habitus of Coexist and was an integral part of how the organisation was presented to the public. The following extract, with its emphasis on "global coverage" indicates how the policy was seen as adding cultural capital to the organisation. "Apart from sharing our vision, values and approach for creating sustainable communities, Coexist are also innovators for how to deliver wellbeing in the workplace. In 2016 Coexist received global coverage for its “pioneering period policy”

Valuing Natural Cycles - bringing to the world's attention the importance of natural cycles and how they impact wellbeing in the workplace." (Coexist Proposal, 2017, 21.)

Bringing natural cycles "to the world's attention" was in origin an accidental by-product of the idea to create a menstrual policy. A press release to a local newspaper about the plan to establish a policy set off an international media storm that put Coexist on the cultural map in a completely new way. This sudden and febrile attention had an impact upon the policy, the organisation and its members.

The interwoven influences of vocalised individual menstrual experience with the habitus of the organisation made the policy possible. Initially the policy appeared to be a seamless fit that would be straightforward to implement. In the following section, my findings constellate around influences that complicated the policy's development.

6.2. Innovating a menstrual policy

In the first part of this section I explore the media storm that arose when Coexist went public with its intention to implement a menstrual policy. My findings here focus on how the impact of this attention influenced both policy development and the role of the policy within the organisation. In the second part of the section I examine how the policy developed internally. I denote the obstacles to implementation, investigate how feedback functioned through a collaborative, non-hierarchical approach, and explore how this evolved into a strategy of embedding the policy within and among existing organisational policies.

6.2.1. Surviving the media storm

In late February 2016, when the policy was still only an idea, an initial brainstorming daylong workshop, open to the public, was announced in the local Bristol press. I was not yet in touch with the organisation and did not attend the workshop, but immediately became aware of the furore of international media attention the announcement attracted.

As is the way with memory, there were contrasting explanations within Coexist of how the announcement came to be and what the motivation was behind it. While the day became characterised over time by some as a press conference, the initial motivation had been to find out more about new ideas on menstruation and to develop ideas on how a policy should be enacted. In a Skype interview in early 2017, Bex told me: *"I had no idea the impact that it would have with media or anything. It was just quite innocent, I'm gonna do that for my staff." (Bex, interview, 10/2/17.)* Later, when I asked her how the media storm was started, she said: "*It was a simple tell the Bristol Evening Post [from a Board director] and then it went viral internationally. The motivation was that we believed it was a controversial idea that a company would create a menstrual policy as an asset to organisations and its people. I wanted to stimulate conversation and offer a reframe to the world. I always wanted the conversation to go wider." (Bex, email, 18/7/19.)*

Both statements are no doubt true: this is an example of how an alternative organisation can hold an idealistic vision for the wider culture -- to dream a better future for humankind -- but still be shocked when that matter comes to positive public attention. At such a moment, 'present' and 'future' collide. Even in the aftermath, there remains an identification with both the intention to reach out and *"offer a reframe to*

the world", and an underlying belief that the message is too radical for the present context. Motivation is thus positioned as simply *"innocent",* local and specific. First, such worldly 'success' of the vision is impossible to imagine because it is an existential threat to the radical. Second, to be calculated and overly ambitious would threaten the spiritual remit to have pure motivation, and is too normative and capitalist a stance to adopt, again without threatening the identity of the radical. This paradox of idealism echoes the Coexist funding document and its focus on the future as being "another world."

As an organisation, Coexist was unprepared for the onslaught of media attention, and staff had had no or little media training. The initial round of media brought the organisation sudden public attention that went beyond its locality. For several weeks, the organisation was barraged with media calls from publications internationally. These first articles featured photographs of the (young and photogenic) Coexist staff in their relaxed but nonetheless professional looking office. Writing in the Guardian, Steven Morris reported thus (emphasis mine):

> *"Coexist, where 24 of the 31 staff are women, is no ordinary company. It manages Hamilton House in the city's bohemian Stokes Croft quarter, running the space for artists, activists and community organisations. There is a restaurant called The Canteen, and Banksy's Mild Mild West mural showing a teddy bear throwing a petrol bomb at riot police greets visitors.*
>
> *Baxter said: "There is a misconception that taking time off makes a business unproductive – actually it is about synchronising work with the natural cycles of the body. For women, one of these is their menstrual cycles.* ***Naturally, when women are having their periods they are***

> ***in a winter state, when they need to regroup, keep warm and nourish their bodies. The spring section of the cycle immediately after a period is a time when women are actually three times as productive as usual.***
>
> *My team here have always been very generous –* ***I've been able to take time off when I've needed it, but always put it back in again****. But until now there haven't been any formal guidelines. For too long there's been a taboo surrounding periods – I have women staff telling me they're ashamed to admit they're in pain. I want us to break down that shame and replace the negativity with positivity. Both men and women have been open to the ideas, especially from the younger generation."*
>
> The Guardian (2/3/16)

The quotes in bold reference an idea about the phases of the menstrual cycle as equivalent to the four seasons of the year and the relationship this is thought to have with productivity. This concept is sometimes spoken of as part of *menstruality* and has been pioneered by women such as Alexandra Pope, the menstrual educator hired by Coexist to speak in the morning of the March 16 workshop (before a group discussion facilitated by Bex in the afternoon). Several staff told me later that they had found Pope's teaching to be inspirational, and that it had introduced them to alternative ways of conceptualising and managing menstruation that they found valuable. (While there was broad agreement on the value of honouring the cycle, not all staff embraced such conceptualisations as the seasonal analogy, and Bex herself later said she found it too prescriptive.)

Not all the media attention was positive, and Bex underwent some gruelling questioning on television and radio that she had not been expecting. She was fairly

sanguine about the experience, but other staff spoke about the difficulty of watching her be attacked in public for doing something they felt was motivated through genuine altruistic concern. Arguments against the policy were repeated across different forms of media and in social media comments. Such arguments were chiefly that a policy was not necessary, that women should carry on dealing with periods in private, that the focus on menstruation highlights women's vulnerabilities and would "put back the feminist project 100 years", and that women would abuse the policy to get more time off work, even perhaps lying about their menstrual status. Some critical comments focused on the concept of paid leave rather than on flexibility, and these were particularly concerned with perceived unfairness relative to male colleagues if women were to be paid while not at work. Yet, *"most of the backlash or concern however was from women who were worried they would become less employable, generally men seemed to support the idea and show empathy." (Bex, email, 9/8/19.)*

Some staff members expressed reservations about the real value of the media attention, especially when there was talk of using the policy to further promote Coexist. Polly felt that the media attention had become more highly valued than the policy itself, and voiced her objections. *"An email went around last month and it said now we're introducing it [the policy] to Coexist and then we're going to launch it later in the year to the media and I'm like what is all of this launching to the media? Having seen how it was represented through media all over the world, often quite inaccurately, I feel like we should be doing this first and foremost for us, creating something that works for us. I guess having something in place to deal with the media if it comes along, which I doubt it would in the same way again anyway, but it felt like something went a little bit like skew-whiff with it, for me, in terms of how the media were involved." (Polly, interview 3/3/17.)*

Polly's sense that *"we should be doing this first and foremost for us"*, was in tension with the desire of others to use the capital of the policy -- seen in terms of its value as an innovation that sparked controversy and hence media interest -- to help raise the profile of Coexist and emphasise its progressive credentials during a time of existential threat. But Polly was listened to. She became the person in charge of the policy, and ideas about using it to *"sell the Coexist brand"* faded. And indeed, once the policy was in place and operating quietly and peaceably, the media became less interested in it. Bex was asked to give a TED talk in December 2018, which brought the matter back into public view. In mid 2019, Bex reported continuing to receive occasional media requests for interview, often from foreign organisations, which have resulted in a number of more thoughtful articles. But the media storm of the early announcement has never been repeated. Indeed, breaking the ground of the *idea* of the policy was more interesting fodder for the mainstream press than the work of actually developing and grounding the policy. At the same time, despite the controversy surrounding the policy, there was also a good deal of positive feedback from the public. The media interest gave the early stages of the policy a public validity and showed Coexist that, as an organisation, it was onto something.

6.2.2. Developing the menstrual policy

While the media interest in some ways affirmed the relevance of the policy, it also appeared to affect the policy's development, which stalled for three months until Bex and I met up to discuss it. I wondered if all that febrile media attention, by shining too bright a light too early, had paralysed the energised and enthusiastic process with which the policy had begun. Or was it that developing a first time policy would have been

difficult for any organisation? Policies in Human Resources are increasingly template-based[38], and there were no templates for a menstrual policy.

Bex found herself exhausted in the aftermath of the media storm. Despite considerable interest and positive input from the world outside Coexist, the negative comments and hostility rendered her initially more cautious about asking for too much and being perceived as making women employees less desirable. In terms of writing the policy, without a template to work from, she felt stuck. The ideas she had been discussing focused on the concept of menstrual leave, but she felt this had become bogged down in questions of how much leave people should be able to take before they stopped being paid. Or would a blanket one day off a month be taken by everyone regardless of their symptoms, as in Asian factories? It seemed impossible to craft a policy which would allow for the variation in need among workers. When she and I met in June 2016, I suggested she frame the policy more around flexibility than around leave, as a way to get started. This broke the logjam, and she quickly wrote a first draft of a policy, which she emailed to me for comment. My input was mostly to do with clarification, and with avoiding difficulties I was aware of through my knowledge of workplace policies and my prior research on menstrual leave elsewhere in the world.

This first draft of the policy began with a justification concerning menstruating women's needs at work, followed by a proposition about how the policy would be developed, and a values statement about trust. The draft stressed that the policy was open to all staff to give input.

[38] For example, see Anonymous. (2009). Research and Markets: Top 50 HR Templates Bundle: The 50 Most Essential HR Templates That Every Business Needs. M2 Presswire. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/444137964/

Excerpt from Coexist Menstrual Policy FIRST DRAFT

Our proposition

Initially, there will be a 6 month learning process that will explore solutions to any personal/organisational barriers/tensions that arise. The menstrual policy below will be used to explore the parameters the organisation can accommodate to, and also the changes that may need to take place in order to embrace the aspirations of the policy fully.

Please be made aware that this is a working policy and is in keeping with our open platform policy, encouraging all members of staff to feel empowered to openly discuss, dispute and design policies to support themselves whilst also supporting Coexist.

Our trust ethos

Coexist operates within a culture of trust. Should you need time away from work, it is assumed to be a genuine request, and that we are working together towards our collective core purpose and approach. (Policy version 1, 24/8/16)

The policy itself was designed in conventional flexibility terms, in that time out of work during menstruation would be paid back at other times of the month. Speaking from my role as pro bono consultant, I recall that we were aware that a conventional flexitime arrangement was likely to be insufficient to address women's needs, and/or could be troublesome to implement. However, we wanted to see what the feedback would be, given that the idea of paying time back had already been articulated by Bex, for example in the Guardian article. My memory of this time is that it felt like walking

in the dark with a glimmering torch made only of intention and good will, but we had to start from somewhere.

The flexibility requirement was initially phrased thus:

> ***Flexi-time*** *- Flexible working hours are offered to support the health and wellbeing of female staff. This can be anything from one hour (resting in the wellbeing rooms) right the way through to up to two days off work. Time taken away from work up to two days is treated as time in lieu (to be made up at other times of the month). When more time is needed, such as for women dealing with endometriosis, absence will be deemed as time off sick. Wellbeing issues related to menstruation will be treated case by case. (Policy version 1, 24/8/16)*

This was a straightforward flexibility arrangement in which women would pay back the amount of time they took off for menstruation in direct terms by working the same number of hours at another time in the month. Alternatively, they could take "time off sick", but of course that would possibly mean the necessity of getting a medical note and would certainly mean they would lose part of their sick pay allowance.

In the draft policy, there were also sections on education for staff, training for managers, the importance of communication within working groups, and the option of working from home without losing pay. Staff were assumed to have opted into the policy but could opt out if they chose to, with no need to give any justification.

The policy was circulated around staff for feedback in August 2016, before the planned test phase from January to June 2017. During this feedback period, Bex was in the process of leaving Coexist as a fulltime worker, although she continued to support the policy development voluntarily and stayed on as a board director. Chief

responsibility for the policy now shifted to Nell, who became the new People Development Manager. Also at this time, I began my PhD and formally altered my relationship with Coexist from pro bono consultant to doctoral researcher, and a statement to that effect was ratified by the Board.

Polly immediately questioned the ideas of flexitime and of formalising a policy, both of which she felt could result in women feeling less free to take the time they needed. This marked an important turn in the development of the policy. Up until now, the story had been Coexist versus/with the world, with Bex as spokesperson. Now the story turned towards internal disagreement about how the policy should be constituted. *"I have to question 'flexi-time'- "Time taken away from work up to two days is treated as time in lieu (to be made up at other times of the month)". On FOH [Front Of House] we generally have our rota set in advance, and when using the menstrual policy to take some time off the desk, it may not be possible to make that time up within that month. From my experience we have always had an unwritten 'menstrual policy' which has included supporting staff and treating us as individual women with different individual needs. In my time at Coexist I have probably had a week off work overall due to having really tough periods and going home early on various occasions. This might be 1 hour one month, 4 hours another month and I haven't made this time up and it wasn't ever expected by my LM [line manager]. I believe other Coexist employees have done the same." (Polly, email, 25/8/16, edited for concision.)* This email was the first mention of the distinction between FOH and the back office, which became important in the development of the policy.

In response to this feedback from Polly and other staff members, the section in the policy was revised to better explain the reasons for flexibility and to attempt to offer more wiggle room around "paying time back" (significant sections in bold, below). The

rewrite acknowledged that the nature of some jobs, especially front-facing roles such as Front-of-House and Wellbeing, made flexibility problematic. For the first time, contingency planning was mentioned, but only in the form of using bank staff. The wording "help to neutralise any potential stigma that could be associated with menstrual leave" indicates that the working group was still concerned about potential backlash, and that some residual fear of criticism remained, following the media ambushes Bex had endured earlier in the year. The rewrite also shows how detailed the thinking was at this stage of the policy, and how much care was being taken to satisfy the needs of all workers and of the organisation.

3. Flexible working arrangements

Coexist acknowledges that taking time off from work naturally impacts the business and its members of staff. However, the purpose of the policy is to provide practical and fair solutions, ("fair" meaning celebrating and valuing difference rather than having to be the same as someone else or another group), that raise cultural awareness across the entire organisation, supporting the departments and wider business to thrive. By doing so the organisation endorses a culture of trust, that puts the optimum health and wellbeing of its staff at the forefront of its development. ***This flexitime model also allows for fair working practices and will help to neutralise any potential stigma that could be associated with menstrual leave.***

The nature of the Coexist multi-faceted business means that ***some female staff are less able to be flexible with their time than others, due to shift working (especially applicable to staff who work Front of House and in Wellbeing).*** *Events staff can be tied to events that demand their time too, but with increased cycle awareness, trust and support*

among the whole team and Board of Directors, and ***a policy that grants full permission to use flexitime, the more ease female staff can feel to plan ahead, utilise bank staff contingency and continue their duties without judgement, fear or shame.***

Flexi-time *- Flexible working hours are offered to support the health and wellbeing of female staff. This can be anything from one hour (resting in the wellbeing rooms) right the way through to up to two days off work. Time taken away from work up to two days is treated as time in lieu (to be made up at other times of the month).* ***Women can choose how to categorise their time off depending on their needs, whether as flexitime menstrual leave or time off sick.*** *When more time is needed, such as for women dealing with endometriosis, absence will be deemed as time off sick. Wellbeing issues related to menstruation will be treated case by case.*

Working from Home *- Some roles will allow female staff to have the option of working from home or alternatively to use a quieter space away if preferred. This can be discussed with your line manager to clarify the best options. (Policy version 2, 1/11/16)*

The policy was then left alone for six months to see how it worked in practice. There was an agreement that meetings would be scheduled the following June and July (2017) to make any needed changes to the policy following the experimental time period. There was an overt offer of openness to feedback by email or in person to the PDM in the interim.

During this time period I interviewed five staff members over Skype. While solidarity with the idea of the policy remained strong, more criticism of the policy in practice began to emerge. For example, while Polly had initially felt positive about the

policy when it was in the idea stage, as it became written up and practiced she became concerned that it concretised practices and did not sufficiently allow for individual needs, and in so doing actually took away *"freedom"*. Polly felt that the policy needed to be as non-specific as possible in order to encompass individual differences. Polly saw the policy as part of a *"rule book"* that could hamper freedom as much as allow women humanistic consideration at work, indicating that she could see the potential detriment in codifying what had already been an accommodating work culture.

Some staff felt that attention to the policy had not been consistent enough. A sense that the policy went in and out of view was of concern to some employees and the source of some irritation.

> *"And now I don't know, I don't really know what's going on. It's not talked about ever. I mean, the trouble is there's always other priorities within Coexist." (Polly, interview, 3/3/17.)*
>
> *"I mean there was a huge media campaign around it but in terms of how it's happened in practice, kind of non-existent in my experience. Don't know at all what's happening with it. It feels like it went up and then went [banging sound as she hit hand on desk]. That was my experience of it. I feel I know more about it from being friends with Bex than I do from being an employee at this organisation implementing it." (Rachel, interview, 21/6/17.)*

These articulations indicated that claiming the right to centre the policy was felt as a struggle some of the time. Polly explained her sense that the menstrual policy had been abandoned once Bex had left, even though Bex was still involved on a voluntary basis in meetings and in redrafting the policy following feedback.

"From your perspective could you tell me how the policy was developed and is being introduced in the organisation? You said a bit just then, it sounded like you had plenty of access to giving feedback and you felt the feedback was listened to. Is there anything else about the way it's been introduced that you have any thoughts about?"

"To be honest it's a little bit tricky cos obviously Bex kind of was developing that and she then left Coexist [as a worker]. She's not actually here working with the team....and it felt like ***it was her baby****, she created it and it feels like it has been a bit kind of dropped since. I ended up speaking to Bex cos we were all away on a vision day in the autumn and we all went for a big long walk. Actually day to day I could try and send her an email but there's no like face to face time. It doesn't really feel like it's been held." (Polly, interview, 3/3/17.)*

Indeed, as one of the longest serving members of staff, Bex's absence on a day-to-day basis was keenly felt. In addition, the person who took over the role of nurturing the menstrual policy as PDM was Nell, who by her own admission, took some time to warm up to the idea of the policy, and had no need to use it herself. Perhaps Polly's words -- *"it doesn't feel like it's been held"* -- felt particularly poignant to me because of the ways in which women already feel abandoned by society with regard to their (menstrual) embodiment, and letting the menstrual policy slip when there was at last a chance for acknowledgement and accommodation was hurtful. Polly's comment also suggests that a new and radical policy needs to be closely shepherded through an organisation.

Three months later, just before I went back to the UK to spend more time at the organisation, I was able to speak with Oscar, the office manager, who told me: *"We've had one or two conversations in our weekly management meeting and the opportunity has been made available to people who want to feed in with more detail, and so I know a couple of people have had strong criticisms of the policy." (Oscar, interview, 4/6/17.)*

Clearly there had been some robust discussions in the interim. I wondered what I would find on my return to Bristol.

6.2.3. Cooking over a high heat

Back at Coexist in June 2017 to see how the policy was progressing, I found the organisation beset by difficulty. The landlords had recently declared their lack of ongoing support for the organisation. Bristol, and much of the UK, was in the throes of an unusual heat wave. With no air conditioning, the offices were stifling. Suppressed tensions surrounding the policy had been on a slow simmer during the previous six months. Now it was a time for a face-to-face meeting to try to figure out what was not working.

Bex, five members of staff, and myself met to discuss how the policy was bedding down. The following is a précis of my field notes of the meeting.

Field Notes: Tuesday 20/6/17
11am-12pm. Menstrual Policy meeting *[audio-recorded]*

- *7 total: Bex and me plus five staff (Nell, Polly, Tara, Queenie, and one other not interviewed individually). All female.*
- *Faster, clearer meeting than the others I have attended here. Everyone speaks. I contribute when asked questions, to clarify what I understand*

about 'menstrual leave' in other contexts, and to articulate/support (glimmering) staff clarifications of their needs.

- *Key points: Women making most use of the policy as it currently stands are those who interface with public i.e. Front of House team and Events team. FoH team email each other now about their periods, know when each other's periods are due (using an app) and coordinate accordingly. They do not want to pay back hours but instead want to detach productivity from hours worked concept, saying they pack more into an hour mid-month and this balances out whatever time they take off or any presenteeism when menstruating.*
- *Decisions: Notion of flexibility re paying back hours formally abandoned. In order for women to feel they can take time off, menstrual policy needs to be related to Contingency Policy and Trust Statement Policy. Policy to be redrafted, and follow-up meeting scheduled for a month's time.*

Several key findings emerged in the meeting. The first concerned *organisational roles:* the applicability of the policy was dependent upon the workspace in which it operated and the extent to which women had control over their workspace and worktime. Managing menstrual symptoms while at work was easiest for those working in the back office, who could practice presenteeism or work from home, and most difficult for those interacting with the public in Front-of-House, the Events team and the Community Kitchen. (Polly had earlier in an interview included Wellbeing team as also front-facing, but none of them attended the meeting and their input was not included at this point.) Women in front-facing roles faced a logistical impossibility of taking time out without abandoning their post, unlike being able to take a break or work more slowly for those sitting at a desk in the back office. The emotional labour of these

positions was discussed: Polly noted the relative difficulty of dealing with difficult customers (which sometimes included homeless and/or drunk or otherwise intoxicated people) when menstruating and especially when in pain.

While the notion of *flexibility* in terms of paying back time was useful during the development phase to ascertain what was needed, the notion of paying back time was impossible for women in some roles and was rejected for the whole organisation. Flexibility was retained as a concept framing the policy, but not in a quid pro quo manner. Instead, the policy became linked to *contingency planning* which allowed women to take time off in good conscience, knowing that their area of responsibility was being taken care of.

This version of flexibility did not involve a quid pro quo payback of hours. The *detachment of productivity from hours worked* marks a break in the normative contract of "the worker" versus the "entrepreneur" or C suite employee. Staff strongly voiced their sense of being more productive at other times of the month, and in less time, and stressed that this obviated the applicability of directly associating *time spent* with *work performed*.

Use of the policy was made more efficient through *forward planning via digital technology*. The shared use of a cycle tracking app by the FoH team shows how a creative working practice was borne out of the policy space. The FoH team did this on their own, and were able to come back to the working group to show how effective it was in helping them plan the month's schedule in advance to allow women to have time off when they were likely to be menstruating.

Linking across policies was a key factor in the functionality of the policy. The menstrual policy was linked to the Contingency policy and to the Trust Statement, thus

embedding menstruation within an existing policy context, rather than keeping it in an unwritten accommodation/working practice context. This was seen as an important step in legitimising the needs of menstruating women.

I was able to interview Polly in the afternoon following the meeting. She reflected on the feeling she had had before the meeting that the policy had been diluted by pressures from the outside world, and that she was pleased it was now back on a more radical track.

> ***"So how satisfied were you with the conversation this morning? Did you feel that it moved things forward?"***
>
> *"Yeah, I thought it seemed really good. Do you know what? It made me realise [the policy draft] felt like it was being come at in a way of like okay, there's so many different things we need to take into account here further than just Coexist and making it work for Coexist, like that feeling of oh we don't want to rock the boat too much, we don't want to go too far with this, we've got to consider how we're going to present it to the world and how it will be taken, and, with that view, I can see that it was probably written really well for that…but then it left a little bit of dissatisfaction with some of us in the team, so it feels like if there's real openness to that being actually made more – like bringing it back to us even more – I feel like if we want to use the word "radical" like yeah, let's do that. I mean all we can do is see how it goes again." (Polly, interview, 20/6/17.)*

The follow-up meeting (4/7/17) focused on organising the details of the contingency planning, but did not introduce any fundamentally new ideas to the policy. It was noted that when experiencing menstrual symptoms, people do not want to have to get into a long conversation or be responsible for sorting out their own replacement,

so the burden on the menstruator was simply to send a text to their manager. It was also clarified that the term flexibility would still be used and that the policy would be called a *Menstrual flexibility policy.* It was agreed that *flexibility* did not refer to a quid pro quo paying of time back, but to "*flexibility detached from hours worked and instead attached to productivity, meeting goals, overall performance through the month",* with an understanding that menstruating women had a right to be flexible with their hours as long as this was done in a clearly communicated manner. The same day, I saw a list drawn up of personnel who were capable of running the front desk as part of the contingency protocol, which was immediately printed out and pinned to the notice board for reception area staff.

The heat applied to the policy worked to cook it to completion. Once the policy was redrafted accordingly following these two meetings, everyone agreed upon it. After some slight word and syntax changes for clarity, the policy was ratified later in the year by the Board. And just in time: Coexist was being overtaken by the need to sort out the existential crisis provoked by the threat of the sale of the building, and the focus had shifted away from anything not directly related to that effort.

6.3. Menstrual policy as solidarity

As the last section detailed, the development of the menstrual policy was temporarily frozen by the media storm, but eventually cooked through by a workshopping process with staff. While the media storm paralysed the policy for a while, it also influenced the organisational imagination about the potential broader benefit of the policy for Coexist's social capital. The development and publicising of the

policy was entangled with the organisational habitus and its perceived special values. Conflict within the organisation surrounding the policy constellated around issues of freedom and particularity, concerned with who Coexist saw itself to be: an organisation that exemplified certain core values. Central to these core values (and evinced through the ways participants spoke of the organisation and public documents created during the period of my fieldwork), was a commitment to solidarity with each other and with the surrounding community. In this section, I further explore the relationship between the policy and the fortunes of Coexist in the context of solidarity.

The connection between the policy and solidarity in part emerged out of and appeared to be strengthened through the various ways in which the policy both revealed and refracted layers of permissions in the workplace. The reorganisation of menstruation at Coexist, through the introduction of a menstrual policy, changed the organisation through generating new pathways for solidarity and in the process, reshaping normative permissions. First, I look at the broadening of various layers of interwoven permissions at work. Second, I chart how the policy itself acted as a form of solidarity and a symbol of commonality, while noting that this was complicated through the background of exclusion/inclusion which continued to play out.

6.3.1. Generating the 'permission field'

The various layers of permissions that I describe in this section are conceptualised from the perspective of the commons. These permissions were key both to the original idea for and the subsequent enactment of the policy, and became more numerous than anyone conceived of at the start. The permissions built a new version of an ancient idea of menstruation-as-commons and placed an implicit value on the shared experience of

menstruation, and along with that, the responsibility of non-menstruators to accommodate to it. Even the early term for a concept that underpinned the policy -- *the permission field* -- evokes the commons as land that is owned by all.

> *When women feel the need to call upon time away from work, there is* ***a clear permission field*** *to share their needs with their line manager with the emphasis being on self-management and the investment in themselves, and therefore, Coexist. (Coexist menstrual policy, first draft, July 2016, page 4)*

The term *"the permission field"* was used by Bex in the first draft of the menstrual policy. No one in the organisation could remember who had first used the term, or where it had come from. I wondered if it was being used elsewhere, but it does not show up in Google searches. Long before the policy was drafted, Bex had spoken about staff not really feeling *"the permission"* to go home -- even though that was an unwritten policy -- and that this was a main reason for instigating a formal policy. Whatever its genesis, the term 'permission field' worked for Coexist, and it became a shorthand phrase used to describe the flavour of the policy's impact upon the organisation. I found it helpful as a way of conceptualising some of my data. Through the lens of permission, the menstrual policy highlighted layers of permissions in the organisational context.

The first of these was *the permission to acknowledge menstrual needs in public*. Women are trained not to speak of their menstrual experience or needs; menstruation has traditionally been constructed as an unacceptable subject for public discourse. In the past decade such longstanding silencing and minimising practices have been challenged by menstrual activists and in new workplace policies on menopause. By

acknowledging menstrual needs in a formal policy that included open communication as a crucial element in the way the policy was constructed, Coexist became an organisation in which everyone felt 'permitted' to talk about a subject that had until very recently been taboo. They had a practice of doing a check-in at the beginning of meetings, and here women began to contribute their menstrual status, with no embarrassment. This had the effect of normalising the menstrual cycle while being open about their state of mind and body.

The permission to acknowledge menstrual needs in public demanded and could only function in the context of *the permission to claim an empathetic response from the organisation*. Menstruation has traditionally been an area of life that has garnered little or no sympathy from organisations or institutions. For example, from the early 20th century, doctors were trained to tell women their period pain was all in their minds and that they should ignore it (Murray, 1996). At Coexist, there was a pivotal moment in a meeting about the final policy draft, in which Polly and Tara, upset about the lack of clarity about what flexibility really meant and whether they would have to pay time back, realised that their needs as reception desk workers could be placed front and centre in the development of the policy. Someone said, not for the first time, "You know, it's your policy, these are just suggestions." This comment elicited a look of dawning comprehension on Polly's face, that yes, the organisation really meant this and she really could make the policy (and thus the elements of her life that it impacted) the way she wanted and needed. She did not have to feel as if she was outside the policy, asking for something that would never come, an embedded assumption that was particularly evocative in the normative context in which the menstruating woman is excluded and made a pariah. The social conditioning that women will never get what they need when

they menstruate began to dissolve. A moment later, there was a suggestion that the menstrual policy be formally linked to the contingency policy (which already existed and was a system for substituting workers in the case of absence). I was standing at the reception desk later that day when the contingency list for the front desk was produced, with fifteen names on it of people who could be called upon to immediately take over. There was a tangible feeling of relief from staff when it was pinned to the notice board. The organisation was taking concrete steps to make it not only possible but easy for women to go home when they had menstrual symptoms.

Speaking about menstruation in public, breaking down the enclosure of taboo/'privacy' meant there was now a social and organisational *permission to bleed and experience the effects of menstrual bleeding without having to dissemble*. This is linked to the first permission, but also has a subtle importance as a point on its own. When people are taught to say one thing when they mean another -- saying one has a migraine or stomach ache instead of saying "I have my period and I need to go home" -- it diminishes the validity of what they are saying, experiencing and doing. Normalising talk of menstruation at work altered the sense of validity of the menstruating and female body.

Developing the policy inevitably meant encountering conflict, perhaps especially in a consensus-driven organisation (although evidence from social media suggests that menstrual policies generate gendered conflict in any context). This then was another permission elicited by the policy: *the permission to feel and express conflict*, to process it and then experience the liberating sense of all viewpoints being accounted for and contributing to the eventual agreement. Developing the policy in a process-oriented, organic and non-hierarchical way meant that listening to different needs was necessary

and built in. The only way to arrive at a workable policy was to hear all viewpoints. This sometimes became conflictual when people entered the conversation with a legacy of being sidelined and ignored with regard to their menstrual needs. They needed to be invited in and assured that their contribution was considered essential. Those doing the inviting (the policy writers) had to mean what they said about building consensus, and trust that any conflict that was revealed could be satisfactorily resolved.

An effect of the policy was to broaden discussion of and consideration for bodies at work. This *permission for non-menstruators to acknowledge their bodies* was evinced when non-menstruating staff reported to me that they felt they now had more permission to, as they put it, *"bring their bodies to work"*. In the meeting check-ins, men began to volunteer how they were feeling physically and mentally in the present, rather than focusing on reporting their achievements and activities. They also reported being more likely to go home early if they felt tired or under the weather. In this way, the menstrual policy had the effect of softening the atmosphere in the workplace by reducing masculinist stoicism, denial and presenteeism surrounding embodiment. This can be extended to the possibility that the menstrual policy leads to a broader re-embodiment of the whole organisation.

This effect of destigmatising the realities of embodiment was reflected in a greater sense of *permission to think about the health of the menstruating body and seek medical help*. For example, Nell had initially felt resentful about the menstrual policy and that it did not speak to her specific situation concerning the loss of her periods. In our first interview (spring 2017) I suggested that she might want go to the doctor to find out why. When she did so, that week she began to menstruate again, which she identified as

happening because she was focusing on her cycle rather than trying to repress her period because it was inconvenient.

These layers of permissions in the organisational context were supported by various existing and developing attributes and practices. These supported the policy itself and facilitated broader 'permissions'. The initial decision to create a policy required courage to embark upon it in the first place. Then the media storm demanded courage to navigate and perform within. The development of the policy demanded that many members of staff engaged with it and found the courage to speak about it in public.

In this case the organisation had an overtly progressive agenda and a commitment to humanistic management, which gave rise to a supportive organisational culture. In addition, members of the organisation thought of Coexist as radical and revolutionary, so pioneering a menstrual policy was a good fit with the organisational image, ethos and identity. User-driven policy design and modification also appeared to contribute to the successful development of the policy. As a new type of organisational artefact, it was critical to the policy's success that everyone was on board. As menstruation is experienced with individual variation, it was necessary to develop a model that was flexible enough to work for everyone, so all opinions and needs were sought out and listened to.

Strategies for enacting the policy took account of the impact of menstrual stigma on women and on organisational assumptions and norms. Books and articles were made available to staff and they were encouraged to use work time to read up about menstrual health and wellbeing. Line managers were asked to be mindful of menstrual needs when planning work, schedules, and rotas. The organisation also drew in outside expertise

both to inspire the policy initially (Alexandra Pope) and to consult on and research the policy (myself).

The initiation of the policy provoked wider conversation about the body at work and about cycles more broadly. This helped to get everyone involved as stakeholders in the policy, as it became contextualised as part of a formalisation and expansion of existing practices at work surrounding embodiment beyond menstruation.

As this analysis of permissions indicates, the policy was entwined with and further expressed in terms of solidarity. Several staff members spoke about the menstrual policy directly with a sense of solidarity, whether or not they had menstrual symptoms themselves.

6.3.2. Understanding policy as solidarity

The theme of solidarity was complicated by an underlying narrative of exclusion surrounding menstruation that cropped up throughout the interviews. Exclusion arose in various contexts, from Tara having been historically excluded from a previous workplace permanently because of her menstrual symptoms, to Polly and Bex and others contemporaneously excluding themselves from the workplace due to pain and other symptoms, and Nell feeling excluded at the start of the policy discussions because she did not menstruate regularly or have strong menstrual experiences. Exclusions persisted in menstrual behaviours at Coexist: during the development and implementation phases of the policy it was notable that women with menstrual symptoms or even simply wanting a rest did not request to use a wellbeing room where they could lie down and be quiet while menstruating at work. Even though this option was mentioned many times, in the policy and in policy meetings, it was never seriously

taken up. Menstruating staff who were symptomatic, whether physically or emotionally, preferred to be at home and to temporarily exclude themselves from the world of work.[39]

Exclusions could be purposeful and agentic, such as staying at home, which in the context of the contingency protection of the policy appeared to be experienced as benign. Or, exclusions could be experienced as stigmatising, oppressive, and self-negating, such as menstrual pain not being taken seriously in conventional medicine. Nonetheless, in the context of historical exclusion, the impetus to hide away when menstruating must at least be examined for the possibility of protection from externalised and internalised objectification.

The history of exclusion surrounding menstruation renders the sense of solidarity generated at Coexist around the policy even more noteworthy, even while it complicates the sunny narrative of group support. Early on in the process, Meg felt proud to be part of an organisation that was thinking of a menstrual policy, and expressed a deepening sense of solidarity with other women as a result.

> ***So given that your periods are not really something that disturbs you at all, when you heard the [idea of a] menstrual policy being talked about in your organisation, what did you think about it?***
>
> *I felt really proud to be able to be part of it and just really – it just made me feel really amazed about women's bodies and what happens to them and that oh, yeah, like this, oh, this totally makes sense, like we've never thought*

[39] Women with conditions that worsen during menstruation, such as endometriosis, may exclude themselves or be excluded permanently from the world of work (Seear, 2009; Armour, Lawson et al, 2019).

about it before and [I am] just really proud that somewhere that I work is interested in it. (Meg, interview 3/24/17)

Nell spoke of how her understanding of the value of the policy developed over time, as she saw how the policy benefitted her co-workers, and as she developed more understanding of what they experienced when trying to work while in pain. *"I think over the last year that we started talking about it I kind of warmed to it more and more because I've seen it in practice benefitting other women who I can only but completely empathise with what they're going through. I've seen them physically being affected and I don't think you can really appreciate the benefits of having flexibility with work and looking at this policy until you've physically seen someone white as a sheet or in pain or being like almost physically sick and go oh, right, okay....we need to do something, we need to be thinking about this more seriously and it's not just for soppy people, this is a literal biological thing, so I got more on board and behind it as the months went on." (Nell, interview 22/2/17.)*

The idealism underpinning the policy changed in nature as the policy was developed and used. At the start, there had been a focus on what could be identified as neoliberal constructions, in that there was an emphasis on the role of the individual and on maximising the productivity of the cycle. As well as Bex's quote that she had always paid the time back, *("I've been able to take time off when I've needed it, but always put it back in again"),* the early Guardian article (2/3/16) was subtitled, "Bristol firm says letting women take time off during menstrual cycle will make workplace more efficient and creative", an assertion that was supported by Bex's words in the interview and by Alexandra Pope's lecture at the brainstorming day. This emphasis shows the policy was initially justified as a way to improve efficiency and creativity in the workplace (a

traditional business case' argument often used in diversity initiatives). This direct link between the specific wellbeing of menstruating staff and workplace efficiency may be grounded in the reality of a cyclical embodied phenomenon (although as of now, there is little empirical data to support such a link beyond wellbeing more broadly). However, such a linkage can also be seen as a way to make menstrual accommodations acceptable in a capitalist society predicated on specific, value-laden notions of productivity.

Over time it seemed that most Coexist staff became more prosaic and less romantic about the menstrual cycle. In the second round of interviews no one spoke about how productive they were during ovulation, or mentioned their cycle in terms of seasons of the year. The focus moved more towards wellbeing and the practicalities of how to make accommodations to the cycle that worked both for individuals and for the organisation. This was highlighted in the 'rebellion' against paying back time and the concern that formalising a policy could make more work for already overstretched women, not less. This approach centred women's wellbeing and provided back-up when needed, without taking refuge in productivity fantasies or justifications. That this pragmatism rooted in lived experience developed at Coexist over time perhaps reflected the underlying ethos of the organisation. The organisational core beliefs were grounded in the commons: while Coexist might temporarily embrace alluring neoliberal constructions, these did not endure within the context of a social enterprise predicated on interdependent community politics.

A repeating theme from the early interviews through to the Coexist funding document centred around the sense that the menstrual policy was a representation of the best of Coexist. This was highlighted when the organisation entered its period of significant existential crisis. During its development, the menstrual policy became

linked temporally and existentially with the dissolution of Coexist's strong association with Hamilton House. When the commons of Stokes Croft was threatened by capitalist urban gentrification, it became symbolically and ideologically linked with the menstrual policy in the minds of Coexist staff and possibly more widely. The policy became emblematic of the organisation's solidarity with the commons. Seen from the perspective of being 'guardians' of a building, Coexist's solidarity with the commons was evinced by turning a disused building into a community resource. From the perspective of being a guardian of women's embodied integrity, the policy's acknowledgement and accommodation to an otherwise abject and abandoned element of women's lives allowed menstruation instead to become a source of wellbeing and even embodied wisdom.

As time went on, participants increasingly spoke about the policy in the context of the existential threat. They simultaneously expressed pride in their sense of belonging to a progressive organisation; concern over the threat of losing the building; and acknowledgment of the value of the menstrual policy. Comments about the identity of Coexist, its current precarity, and how that related to the menstrual policy also demonstrated how closely participants felt bonded and identified with the organisation and by extension, with the policy. Such organisational pride and bonding though, even when constituted in terms of a broader solidarity, paradoxically also had an exclusionary element, in that it perhaps concretised notions of "non-Coexist" and "Co-exist" people and contributed to a sense of specialness that alienated as well as drew people in.

Despite raising significant funds, Coexist's proposal to buy Hamilton House was rejected by the landlords, who gambled on getting eventual planning permission for converting the building to high-end apartments. (At the time of writing, more than two

years after Coexist's bid was rejected, the owners have yet to succeed in this aim.) Hopes for a solution ebbed and flowed, but then in December 2018, Coexist was suddenly evicted. Attempts were made to find a way of taking the expertise and community capital built up over a decade into a new location, with partial success for some of the group's community activities. In August 2019, the remaining Coexist group took the difficult decision to formally disband the CIC and to officially disperse its various projects to other locations in the community, and move onto new ventures. The Community Kitchen was particularly successful in this endeavour, finding a suitable new home, moving their whole kitchen apparatus over to it, and keeping up an unbroken service throughout the disruption of the loss of Hamilton House. This blossoming of the Community Kitchen is noteworthy in terms of the direct links of various types of commons that this project makes between the land, food, and bringing a diverse, multinational community together to share vast meals. Indeed, the alchemy of cooking can be seen as a translation point between the commons and the needs of the individual, which with the Community Kitchen's commitment to refugees became all the more poignant.

Coexist has many other legacies, and one of these is the menstrual policy. This too can be seen as a translation point between the individual and the commons. The fortunes of the policy and the organisation appeared linked in a dance of both formation and dissolution. At the same time as Coexist was given its eviction notice, Bex was recording a TED talk on the menstrual policy, invited at the last minute to fill a spot vacated by a long-scheduled presenter. While the organisation which had birthed it dissolved, the artefact of the policy waxed in influence. This patterning of ebb and flow, dissolution and formation, echoes the cyclical nature of the menstrual cycle itself, as a

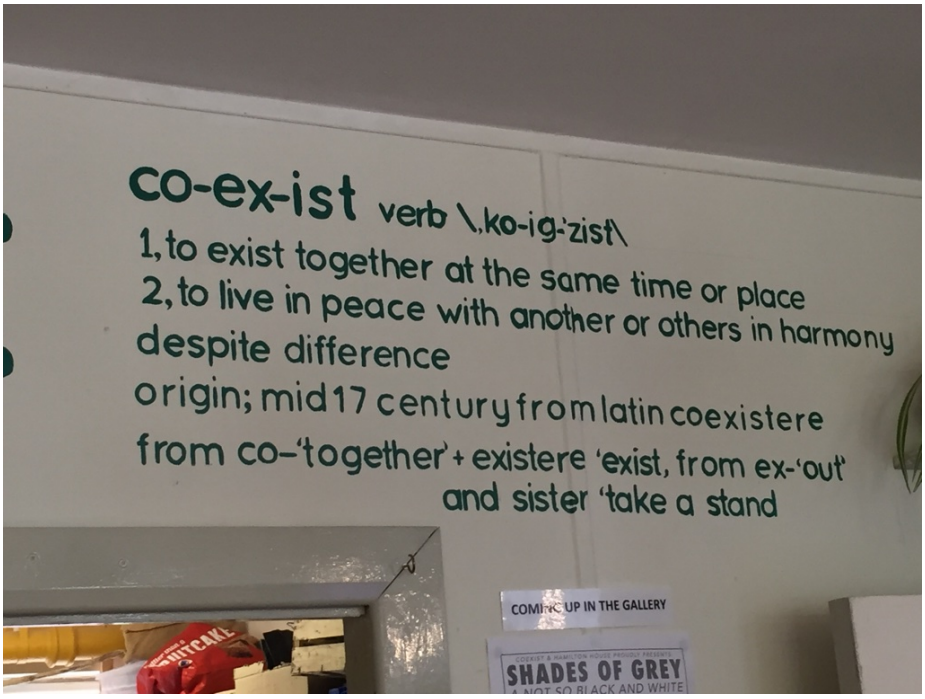
phenomenon and as an experience. Placing this ebb and flow within the context of the commons, as a part of 'natural' life sidelined by the ways capitalism constitutes 'work' -- both in terms of space and pace -- further links the policy and the organisation. The menstrual policy was an attempt to regain the commons of embodiment by placing the universal lived experience of menstruation as a value on a par with business and the collective socioeconomic world. When the organisation was excluded from its physical home, it lost its place and, eventually, its identity. The social capital accrued to the organisation by the menstrual policy, which put Coexist on the public map internationally, was not sufficient to counter the gentrification trend. Nonetheless, Coexist's legacy includes a formal policy detailing a way of imagining work that emphasises solidarity with the commons through acknowledgment of women's embodied needs, a representation of the cycles of waning and waxing that organises all life.

Chapter summary

My findings in this chapter have been organised through the interwoven relationships between the individual, the organisation, and the commons. Relationships between and among these areas of organisation were highlighted by Coexist's menstrual policy. I have explored how key elements of these relationships were reflected in the manner though which the policy was conceptualised and developed, and how it was affected by, and in turn affected, the world in which it was situated. The ways in which participants spoke about their individual experience of menstruating at work showed a wide variation. Yet these individual differences did not appear to influence the participants' solidarity with other staff. Nor did individual differences impact upon their

sense of the value of the policy to both the organisation and the wider world. Indeed, the gradual and feedback-focused development of the policy allowed for an arrangement which staff felt they co-created, co-owned, and shared in together, regardless of their individual need. This increased a sense of communal bonding with regard to the policy, a shared sense of the policy's value, and awareness of its place within the broader ethos of the organisation.

As an end note to this chapter, given the importance of the commons in conceptualising my findings, it is worth noting that the term 'coexist' was first coined in the 17th century, in an era before industrialised capitalism, and in which communal resources were still integral and often considered sacrosanct in the organisation of human life.



7. Discussion

Chapter introduction

In this chapter, I begin by briefly recapitulating the building blocks of the new knowledge emerging from my research. My theoretical framework is rooted in feminist socioeconomics and draws key concepts from the work of Silvia Federici (2004) and Beverley Skeggs (1997): namely, *enclosure, the commons*, and *transgression* from Federici, and *habitus, capitals,* and *respectability* from Skeggs. My empirical research into menstrual cup uptake and a menstrual workplace policy was based on methodological imperatives that would assist me in drawing out participant thoughts and feelings along with observing organisational impact. This strategy helped me to understand and conceptualise the ways in which these two innovations in menstrual organisation impacted upon individual and collective organising and organisational dynamics.

In this discussion chapter, I work with the metaphor of the border to explore how the menstrual innovations in my studies redrew boundaries of articulation and embodiment to reshape capitals and labour. The metaphor of the border has been used previously in Management and Organisation Studies (MOS) to discuss embodiment and gender in organisational contexts. For example, Kenny & Fotaki (2015) have drawn on Ettinger (1953) to discuss the "matrixial borderspace", in which the maternal sense of embodied caring for the other is brought to bear in organisational settings. The border metaphor has been used specifically to discuss women's reproductive issues at work (e.g. Grandey, 2019). In this thesis, border imagery is a connecting concept in my theoretical framework, linking Federici's theorisation of the enclosure of women with Skeggs'

understanding of the restrictive limitations of respectability codes. My participants used language that evoked the border when they spoke of having greater 'permission', in articulation and in action, to be both more open and more agentic concerning their menstrual bleeding and cyclicity.

The first section is divided into four points. First, I briefly discuss menstruation as a bounded and enclosed experience with low social, cultural and economic capitals[40], structured through a respectability habitus controlled through fear of reproductive transgression. Second, I discuss how the two menstrual innovations evoked increased and different speech surrounding menstruation, reflecting and encouraging changes to the menstrual respectability code and associated capitals. Third, I explore how this new articulation of needs and experience and the concomitant rise in menstrual capitals was part of an overall shift in the organisational 'permission field', reshaping women's menstrual enclosure and organisational embodiment norms more broadly. Fourth, I look at what my studies show about the boundaries of work with regard to the organisation of menstruation, exploring arguments of menstruation as reproductive labour that also requires extra labour to be compliant with menstrual respectability. Through the conceptualisation of the boundary as a metaphorical organising principle, the four strands in this first section address how the uptake of the two innovations contributed to the alteration and/or reproduction of normative organising and organisational practices surrounding menstruation.

My second section draws these strands together using the metaphor of the commons, looking at ways in which the two menstrual innovations contributed to a

redistribution of resources, and considering how contemporary feminism contributes to and is possibly altered by such developments.

7.1. Extending boundaries

7.1.1. Boundaries of menstruation

Menstruation as an act is broadly constituted in a bordered manner -- on and off, bleeding or not-bleeding -- with different behaviours warranted inside and outside the various social and material boundaries of the menstruating body. In such ways the bodies of women have been enclosed and controlled.

Menstruation itself can be experienced as a borderland activity: conceptualised as a liminal time during the month (Owen, 1993) in which the menstruator temporarily inhabits a borderland between times of not-bleeding. The larger part of the cycle, the non-bleeding part, is designated as 'normal', for example, through advertising. The perceived normality of not-bleeding was a conceptualisation echoed by some of my study participants. The condition of being 'on' (as in bleeding) has been and remains situated as significantly different to the rest of the month: variously constituted as special and more spiritual (Buckley, 1988); unspeakable despite being a "healthy biologic process" (Young, 2005, p.10); more than usually leaky and abject (Kristeva, 1981); a temporary disturber to the production of food (Lawrence, 1988); and so unclean as to be banned from places of worship and sometimes from the outside world entirely (Douglas, 1966). The sense of being different when bleeding and the cultural designation of the menstruating woman as different occur in a context in which women experience pain and discomfort along with a stigmatised material emission. As such, menstruation may

be experienced by women at work as one of the more powerful experiences of the borderland, even if in contemporary culture menstrual experience is relatively downplayed.

The threat of transgressing the borders of respectability (the *enclosure*), with visual signs of menstrual blood, causes fear and anxiety cross-culturally (Buckley & Gottlieb, 1988). Such borders are historically longstanding, yet the focus on the literal menstrual stain is merely the obvious, material manifestation of an insidiously complex taboo that negates and even vilifies female cyclical embodiment (de Beauvoir, 1953; Young, 2005).

These constructions of the bounded nature of correct menstrual behaviour become heightened in the public world of work, where women are trained to pass as non-menstruators (Vostral, 2010). Such enclosure increased as the 20th century progressed. The workplace as a setting is imbued with specific, unspoken assumptions and demands surrounding the social borders of menstruation (Roberts, 2002). These demands constitute a respectability code for menstrual bleeding, behaviour and organisation. The following sections explore some of the ways in which the distinct boundaries enforced through menstrual respectability were challenged and changed through the innovations in my two studies.

7.1.2. Boundaries of speech

In both the cup and the policy studies, menstrual experience and menstrual organisation became more discussed, both in public fora and with families, partners and friends. This increased articulation arose in the context of a broader collective movement self-styled as *menstrual activism,* that rejects stigmatised self-objectification related to menstruation and aims to improve menstrual experience. Such activism is

demonstrated through an increasingly active presence in social and mainstream media and bleeds into commercial activity through the introduction of an increasing array of menstrual innovations. I found this increased vocalisation to be fascinating in the context of a matter that has been historically and profoundly silenced (Pascoe, 2007). Why now, and why so strongly now? Several discussion points emerged from my analysis.

First, increased vocalisation concerning menstruation, a previously hidden and silenced topic even sometimes between mothers and daughters, (Pascoe, 2007), indicates the softening of and a challenge to a previously powerful taboo. The breaking of taboos is a feature of neoliberalism, which offers a "social tabula rasa" (Gammon, 2012, p. 521) and a strategy of "breaking off relations with an external world that no longer reflected back the same ideal" of social and economic "freedom" (ibid). Thus, collective tolerance for and acceptance of collapsing taboos has risen in the neoliberal era (especially in the Global North), and so the taboo of menstruation has been easier to break than hitherto. Indeed, the term 'breaking the taboo' is commonly, even overly, used in the self-promotion of menstrual activists and educators and sustainable product manufacturers, indicating that as a concept, taboo-breaking is considered to accrue value and stimulate markets, and thus has a potential impact upon economic, social and cultural capitals.[41]

Second, speaking up about a previously low-status topic can be seen as a reflection of changing "metaphors of capital" (Skeggs, 1997, p. 8)[42]. My research suggests that a

[41] The topic of the psychological and socioeconomic genesis and function of taboos and their changes during the neoliberal era, and how this plays out in the context of menstruation and menstrual activism, warrants further discussion, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.
[42] See the Glossary for explanation of metaphorical capital (p. viii).

shift in menstrual articulation occurs contiguously with changes in the status of menstruation, which has begun to accrue new social and cultural capital, in a direct inversion of its previously stigmatised status. In the urban progressive demographic groups of my two studies, it has become 'cool' to challenge menstrual stereotypes. In both studies, the 'cool' status of the specific innovation rendered it a topic for open discussion that developed rather than diminished social capital to the person or organisation engaged with it, whether this engagement was through direct use or as a support. In the cup study, knowledge about the menstrual cup was considered to be of high value, primarily due to the cup's sustainability and associated environmental 'wokeness'. Such knowledge was widely shared by individuals in public fora online, and represents a new form of cultural capital, particularly to younger generations raised with environmental concerns. In the workplace study, the decision by Coexist to initiate a menstrual policy generated intense international media interest, largely, it appeared, because of the controversy surrounding the idea that the workplace might accommodate to women's cyclicity, but also out of sympathy for a long-neglected topic. The actual policy garnered less fevered attention, indicating that shocking ideas have greater immediate cultural currency than workable solutions to problems. But later, Bex Baxter was invited to give a TED talk on the impact of the menstrual policy on the organisation, indicating interest in the effects of the innovation. In both studies, participants and their communities wanted to talk about these innovations in public settings because they were excited and inspired by several elements which they variously expressed as being: the breaking of a taboo; the claiming and embracing of a suppressed embodied experience; and the discovery of new ways to practice sustainability and enact convenience.

Third, while my data suggests that this new vocalisation signified greater confidence and solidarity (and furthermore, produced it), it also increased vulnerability to criticism and control. The confidence gained was perhaps somewhat tenuous and could be compromised, and some participants in both studies still showed significant anxieties surrounding their individual experiences of menstruation. (It is important to note that *enclosure* and *respectability* do not simply restrict, but also protect, at least while menstrual stigma is still in evidence as a social norm.) My methodology was an important factor in capturing valuable subtlety of the data in this regard, particularly in the method I developed for analysing interview recordings. When I focused my analysis on affect and tone of voice I found that the women in my studies often spoke tentatively and hesitantly when talking about their own traumatic experience of menstrual pain, stains and vulnerability, but confidently when speaking of group efforts to dismantle stigmatising practices and of solutions that could benefit other women (e.g. see p. 209). Solidarity was a significant factor in developing confidence, indicating that individual confidence needed the boosting effect of group support. This hesitancy of speech when speaking of the personal realm indicates that despite all the talk of breaking taboos, respectability is still a concern. The introduction of both innovations was complicated by such fluctuations in confidence and self-objectification. While there was an appearance of increased confidence, at the same time I experienced some difficulty in getting participants in the menstrual cup study through the research cycle, which sometimes appeared to be related to hesitancy surrounding both menstruation and the innovation itself. Similarly, there was a stop/start quality to the development of the workplace policy and a sense of hurt in some participants who felt criticised in the media and at times that the policy was being neglected within their organisation (and by

extension, their menstruating selves). Participants in both case studies asked for researcher support to shepherd the innovations through to consistent uptake. Some examples of elements that challenged the development of confidence in users included: a mother's concern about sterilisation and hygiene regarding cup use; critical comments in media and on social media; and the loss of Bex, the initiator of the policy, to the daily workplace. Sooki et al (2016) have shown in a recent meta-analysis that the relationship with the mother influences menstrual outcomes. Bex was the mother of the policy, and in both studies, in a sense I became a 'mother' to the participants, answering their questions and encouraging them to persist through my attention and presence.

Fourth, contemporaneously, menstrual concerns are being vocalised most readily through material solutions, which may have a limiting effect on any liberating boundary shifts. True to one of the central remits of a capitalist, materialist society -- to make profit from what is made -- contemporary menstrual activism has placed a large focus on menstrual products, to the frustration of some long-term menstrual scholars and activists (e.g. Bobel, 2018). While there is a potent element of menstrual activism that aims to educate (and also to shock and disturb) through images, writing and actions that confront stereotypes and respectability codes, the mainstream activism sanctioned by governments has so far focused on using products to alleviate 'period poverty'. In a flurry of activity that amounts to a "product fever" (Bobel, 2018, p. 88), multinational corporations have been quick to jump aboard, in the realisation that the results of menstrual activism in this context (lower taxes, spotlight on the need for products) enable them to develop their markets (Lahiri-Dutt, 2014; Bobel, 2018). Thus, institutionally sanctioned speaking-up about menstruation is allowed and supported by a relatively limited change in the menstrual respectability code that continues to benefit

capitalist enterprise, particularly when this has so far been aligned to the traditional notion of 'hygiene' as a menstrual focus, and increasingly to contemporary cultural trends of sustainability and convenience. It is no longer considered rude to talk publicly about menstruation in many contexts, but so far, largely when this is done in a context of charity (period poverty), 'sanitation and hygiene', and materiality (menstrual products). The affective states invoked by cultural attitudes and embodied experience, such as concerns about not successfully passing as non-menstruators (especially at work), experiences of inner knowing associated with menstruation (e.g. Owen, 1993; Pope & Wurlitzer, 2017), and worries about menstrual health (with the exception of endometriosis, which has a powerful lobby), tend to remain normatively unspoken and unaddressed.

7.1.3. Boundaries of embodiment

Allied to new levels of vocalisation and confidence was a shift in the 'permission' to menstruate and to identify needs surrounding menstruation, and claim the right to meet these. These permissions had an impact on the broader context of embodiment for participants and organisational life in both studies. I used Coexist's own term of the 'permission field' as a jumping off point to identify multiple layers of redrawn permissions in my analysis of the policy study. I also found I could usefully apply the concept of permissions to the cup study.

First, the permission to acknowledge menstrual needs in public demanded empathy. Drawing on Diprose's (2002) concept of "corporeal generosity", Pullen & Rhodes (2014) develop their previous (2010) work on the role of embodiment in generating a hospitable and inclusive organisational ethos, to identify "an affective

dimension where bodies move and respond to other bodies" (p. 7). My findings speak to these ideas on corporeal ethics by showing ways in which body-to-body responsiveness supported the establishment of new organisational practices. In the policy study, a menstrual policy could only be enacted in a context in which there was permission to claim an empathetic, body-to-body response from other bodies in the organisation. The policy originated in a response from one body to another body, when Bex saw Polly bent double with pain while trying to work on the reception desk. In the cup study, empathy was experienced in the permission to freely share information among peers, in person and online. In so doing, participants claimed and received the support of other women, and in several cases, also discussed cup use and management openly with partners, friends and family. In both studies, this empathetic body-to-body response was largely positioned as non-hierarchical. Learning to use the cup in a communal manner via friendship groups and online fora, and developing the policy collectively, meant that non-hierarchical, empathetic, body-to-body listening and responding to different needs was built into the uptake of the innovations.

Second, breaking down the enclosure of taboo and the normative construct of menstruation as 'private', (Murray, 1998, Pascoe, 2007), meant that in both studies there was now a social and organisational permission to bleed and experience the effects of menstrual bleeding without having to dissemble. The women in both studies articulated ways in which they now felt able to be overt with their menstrual status at work; to observe, speak about and relate to their own menstrual blood; and to use a menstrual artefact they could discuss with intimates and in public. Normalising vocalisation of menstrual needs, status and experience altered the sense of validity of the menstruating and female body.

Third, paying attention to menstrual needs began to alter the embodiment experience of menstruators. The shift in the 'permission field' signalled a change in the perceived and experienced political and discursive borders of the phenomenon of menstruation which appeared to refract onto the lived experience of menstruating. In the cup study, women spoke about how the artefact of the cup allowed for a deeper understanding of embodiment through greater intimacy with menstrual blood and the anatomy of the vagina. In the policy study, the formal artefact of the policy legitimised the discussion of menses in order to plan working life and ensure wellbeing. Women extended articulation of their menstrual needs (including when they were not menstruating) beyond their intimate relationships and into the workplace. Both studies showed that through the use of their respective innovations, menstruators felt a greater sense of permission to think about the health of the (menstruating) body and to seek medical help when necessary. Some participants spoke about their need for the softening experience of 'dropping down' during menses. Women in both studies spoke of living within rather than against the body and the cycle. In such a manner they found they worked differently when innovations facilitated them paying attention to menstruation, whether by relaxing instead of pushing through the pain when bleeding, or using a product that visually engaged them with their non-absorbed menstrual blood. Such changes elicited a softer, less hard-edged approach to their own embodiment and towards others. For example, one participant felt that her menstrual state was more helpful for attracting donations than her more pushy, 'normal' state. Another found her unadulterated blood to be in reality quite beautiful, and that this evoked a new perspective on her female embodiment.

Fourth, while an exclusion/inclusion theme did emerge in the findings of both studies, overall it appears that when 'outsiders' were brought into the innovations by association, greater ease with embodiment came about in non-menstruators through relationships with menstruators who were vocalising their needs and experience. In the workplace study, some staff found that the policy allowed greater permission for non-menstruators to acknowledge their bodies and to "bring their bodies to work". Men who had previously felt their own embodiment needs to be off limits in the workplace reported feeling more able to discuss their own embodiment at work and meet their own needs, for example by going home early if they felt unwell. Indeed, the menstrual policy showed the beginnings of softening the atmosphere in the workplace by reducing some of the customary masculinist stoicism, denial, and presenteeism surrounding embodiment. While some women in the cup study occasionally evinced signs of feeling superior to those who did not or could not use a cup, they were also very ready to share their experience and help others to work out how to use it.

Such developments signal a softening of embodiment conceptualisations more broadly, and even that menstrual innovations can act as softeners and relaxers of gendered and embodiment related boundaries of respectability, acceptability and compassion in organisational life. Thus menstrual innovations can be seen as facilitators of a broader reorganisation beyond the individual menstruating body.

7.1.4. Boundaries of work and nonwork

Menstruation is a form of embodied and involuntary labour that happens at work and at home, and in the borderland between. In addition, the respectability codes surrounding menstruation require labour to ensure compliance. Such respectability

behaviours form part of the reproductive labour normatively seen as being outside the borders of work (Grandey et al, 2019), and that indeed, must be invisible while at work (Roberts, 2002). However, as an example of the counterpolitics to the gyniatric apparatus (Gunn & Vavrus, 2010), growing awareness of the social construction of menstrual experience appears to be disrupting neoliberal medicalised notions of how best to cope with menstrual boundaries at work. Some women are reluctant to use medical means to manage menstruation at work and like the women in my case studies, are keen to seek other solutions. For example, McMillan and Jenkins (2016) in a study of women aged 18-25 found that "historical bias and stereotypical prejudices were identified by this group of young women within the marketing of menstrual suppression products and, as such, were dismissed as inauthentic to the menstruation experience, reflecting a form of menstrual activism" (p. 1).

Writing on "the three M's" (menstruation, maternity and menopause), Grandey et al (2019) apply border theory to reproductive labour in the workplace. Drawing from the work-family literature, they employ the metaphor of the border to explain conflicting demands, distinctions and behaviours in "work" and "family/nonwork", (ibid, 16) between which boundaries must be crossed and borders navigated (see Ashforth et al, 2000; Clark, 2000). Grandey et al contrast the notion of a clear separation between "work" and "family/nonwork" with women's experience of work while menstruating, pregnant, lactating or menopausal, positioning reproductive life experience as where "work and nonwork blend" (ibid, 16). The menstruating woman is engaged in "nonwork" while she is at "work", where she inhabits a "borderland" (ibid, 16) in which boundaries between domains become blurred. Such women workers are constant "border-crossers" (Clark, 2000, 747) in between two interwoven life areas, and such demands can be

stressful. "Borderlands present challenges when domains are very different" (Grandey et al, 2019, 16). Women find that juggling awareness of reproductive 'nonwork' while focused on 'work' can present conflicts of attention and concern. Indeed, my research gave many examples -- such as Beth working all day in a bloody skirt and Bex finding a co-worker "bent double with pain" -- of ways in which the physical and psychological demands of menstrual "nonwork" generate complex decisions and stressful situations in the workplace. In applying Grandey et al's concepts of 'work' and 'nonwork' with regard to reproductive labour to my research, I found several ways in which the assumption of such a dichotomy warranted critical analysis.

First, the designation of menstruation as 'nonwork' does not take into account either the effort -- the work -- involved in menstrual (reproductive) labour, or the ways in which capitalist enterprise has expropriated such labour. Beyond the involuntary physical effort involved in menstruating and replenishing blood lost, women perform various types of labour in order to manage menses: shopping for menstrual products and pharmaceuticals, laundering clothing and linens, and self-managing symptoms. Women engage in time and effort to pass as non-menstruators and to ensure menstrual blood does not stain clothing, seating or bedding. Building on Federici's identification of reproductive labour as an unpaid resource for capitalism, I suggest that constituting menstruation as 'nonwork' is a social construction favouring capitalist enterprise and disfavouring the menstruating woman.

Second, as workplaces are traditionally constituted on androcentric lines (Acker, 1990), there has been a lag in accepting the plurality of women's work/labour, and in developing concepts of justice concerning women being paid for performing reproductive labour. Indeed, the constitution of menstruation as "nonwork" can be

viewed as an example of introjected phallogocentrism, and a continuation of 20th century norms of dissembling and passing (Vostral, 2010), enabling fertile-aged women to work outside the home as if they were not menstruators. This new norm of menstrual management, supported by disposable menstrual products, was created in a normative workplace context in which women felt they had no choice but to adopt masculinist working patterns and expectations, even when this might be at the expense of their own biology (Acker, 1990; Trethewey, 1999; Mavin & Grandy, 2016b).

Third, while the menstruator may daily cross the boundary between the spheres of work and home, perhaps dressing and behaving differently in each, the body does not appear to differentiate between where bleeding occurs. The blood and the pain come, and the need is present to manage both, whether at work or at home. Any difference in menstrual experience at work and at home arises from the need to conceal menstruation at work even more so than at home, leading to yet more labour, and the potential that stressful and physically demanding work can exacerbate menstrual symptoms (O'Flynn, 2006). While some menstrual labour might happen in the literal borderland between work and home, (such as shopping on the way home from work), the body is bleeding throughout; it does not stop bleeding because one is in a space that does not acknowledge it, such as at 'work'.

Fourth, historically parallel with changes in practices of menstruating at "work" and at "home", boundaries surrounding menstruation have altered. Historians of menstrual culture (e.g. Murray, 1996; Pascoe, 2007) have shown empirically how the boundaries enclosing menstrual experience became stronger during the 20th century, with privacy and concealment a growing concern as women entered the workforce in increasing numbers. A highly profitable industry in disposable menstrual products

(Kissling, 2006) quite quickly developed from the 1920s on, and promulgated specific ideas about menstrual management through widespread marketing (Mandziuk, 2010). The effects of this industry were to make menstrual behavioural boundaries more exacting, constituted through increasingly codified stigma surrounding both the visible signs of menstruation (Vostral, 2010) and social strictures regarding its mention (Pascoe, 2007). In order to be considered acceptable in the masculinist world of work, the menstruator has had to learn to pass as a non-menstruator. Indeed, as a way of avoiding the detrimental effects of stigma (Goffman, 1963), passing has become increasingly important and valued as a workplace strategy for women (Vostral, 2010). The capacity to pass has been helped by the growing availability and acceptance of pharmaceutical menstrual suppression which has increasingly been recommended by doctors (Repta & Clarke, 2013) and managers, especially in certain occupations (e.g. Trego & Jordan, 2010). This gradually changing perspective towards menstruation as 'nonwork', as a biological event newly constituted as non-essential, allows for minimisation. This stance supports pharmaceutical suppression in order to facilitate being at 'work'. Such strategies were resisted in the menstrual policy study, where the unmedicated nature of menstrual experience was articulated openly and accommodated to, in a direct disruption of contemporary organisational norms. Conversely, in the menstrual cup study, passing became easier due to the cup obviating the need to carry replacement products and to change them regularly during the day.

Despite facilitating passing, the menstrual cup, first invented in 1937, has taken more than 70 years, despite its efficacy, to become anywhere close to mainstream acceptance,. While in part because disposability generates significant profit, comments from mothers and partners in my case study as well as from participants indicated that

the cup raised entrenched respectability and transgression concerns. One of the initial anxieties about the cup was that it might cause leaking and in turn lead to more menstrual labour as well as shame. Similarly, resistance to menstrual workplace policies has been strongly expressed. Sayers and Jones (2015) describe intense reactions in New Zealand media and social media to the idea of workplaces accommodating to the menstrual cycle through 'menstrual leave'. In my case study on the menstrual workplace policy, one of the main criticisms of the policy from outside the organisation concerned whether women might be *paid* for menstruating, as if this were an affront to decency and unfair to men, which in turn evoked anxiety among the policy writers and users. These concerns evince the persistent androcentrism of the workplace (Acker, 1990), and the gendered structure of capitalist enterprise more broadly (Federici, 2004).

Such reactions also indicate that divisions of work and non-work surrounding menstrual organising and organisation are in a process of recalibration that stimulates responses of anxiety, conflict, and opinion. In the cup study, the management of menstrual blood became easier during the working day, reducing the amount of labour needed to pass as a non-menstruator, and giving the young women in the study a greater sense of freedom and ease when menstruating at work. At night though, the labour associated with menstruation was found by some women to be intensified by the need to empty and wash the cup and deal with non-absorbed blood. In the policy study, menstrual labour was accepted as part of work, and the decision was made to pay women when menstruating based on their own assessment of whether they felt they could/should attend the workplace or not. To support menstrual labour, the workplace provided a contingency arrangement that made it easier for menstruating women to stay at home if they felt they needed to, or to go home if their period began while they were

at work. The policy was made easier to enact through contemporary changes to working practices, such as digital technology now allowing some workers to work from home (which development has begun a process of deconstructing hard boundaries of 'work' and 'home' in some industries). In terms of menstruation, this can mean that at the time of the month when getting dressed and made-up and braving public transport is felt to be burdensome, women can instead work from home. For some of the women in the policy study, being able to work from home on the first day or two of the cycle made menstruating much less stressful, which has implications for long term mental, physical and reproductive health and wellbeing. Yet despite these accommodations, some women did not use the policy, while acknowledging that they felt more fatigued if they worked through their period as usual.

To draw together these various points: the designation of menstruation as 'nonwork' in the androcentric workplace, changing boundaries of women's 'work' and 'nonwork' and increasing enclosure of menstrual experience, all contribute to understanding why changes to menstrual labour and its organisation evoke resistance and complex outcomes. My research shows that the two innovations I studied were experienced as both disruptive and supportive of the normative boundaries between work, non-work, and reproductive labour.

7.2. Towards a menstrual commons

My research suggests that the menstrual innovations I studied can be seen as elements in reconstituting a (women's) commons. By 'commons', I mean a way of living (that is, ways of organising society) in which resources (in the deepest and broadest

sense) are understood as being held by and for the collective rather than primarily or only by and for the individual. Historically, the commons supported the sharing of resources in a way of life that had specific benefits for women. Federici (2004, pp. 71-72) explains: "Beside encouraging collective decision-making and work cooperation, the commons were the material foundation upon which peasant solidarity and sociality could thrive. All the festivals, games, and gatherings were held on the commons." Federici details how the social nature of the commons had a particular importance for women, lending them safety, solidarity, subsistence and autonomy.

Awareness of the commons today runs counter to prevailing neoliberal capitalist orthodoxy, in which the individual and individually-held resources are reified. Such centring of the individual benefits the few: in an era in which fame for doing very little is held up to young people as a worthy goal, very few of them will actually achieve such fake celebrity status. Even fewer will reap the economic bounty of a system that creates billionaires along with homelessness and malnutrition in the richest countries in the world. As Federici asserted in her earlier work as well as in *Caliban and the witch* (2004), and as the participants in the workplace case study believed and worked towards, such inequities call for a counterpolitics of radical commonality to wrench back control of resources for the collective. Such movements today include environmentalist groups such as Extinction Rebellion, revivified calls for nationalisation from the labour movement, and separatist calls for national sovereignty from previously colonised states. Some of the menstrual activism giving rise to organisational innovations is philosophically contiguous with this larger movement and in some cases, conscious of this relationship and intention.

In the context of menstruation, this urge to recreate a commons manifests through changes in labour relations, capital accumulation, and gender politics. There is a generosity and compassion in menstrual activism, borne out of an understanding that much of the suffering entailed in the universal experience of menstruation in women's lives is unnecessary and is a tool of patriarchy rather than a biological inevitability. As such, menstrual activism and related menstrual innovations are emblematic of the feminist movement and represent a flowering of its intentions to correct gendered socioeconomic imbalance and contribute to a better society. But any innovation growing in the soil of neoliberalism will be influenced (either pro or contra) by neoliberal imperatives, despite the best of intentions. The innovations I studied demonstrated the tension between ideals and pragmatism in movements that position themselves as progressive. At the same time, such movements may only be possible *because* of the relative narcissism of neoliberalism, which supports the upending of taboos and the centring of the self in ways that can enlighten as well as be merely avaricious.

7.2.1. Redistributive flows

Both artefacts had redistributive effects emanating out from boundary shifts in menstrual organisation. Women in the cup study had more time and money; women in the workplace study had more time for self-care and for themselves, and more money in that they changed the practice through which they had hitherto given their menstrual (reproductive) labour for free. Both cohorts were able to reduce significant elements of their emotional labour concerning menstruation: in the cup study through not having to think about buying and changing disposable products; in the policy study by reducing

anxiety surrounding menstrual symptoms and not being able to work as effectively as they might feel they should.

In so doing, territories and liberties were re/claimed, and in Federici's terms, a women's commons began to be more firmly re/established. Yet such changes were not without complication, and demonstrated tensions between different, entwined strands of 'progressive', urban conceptualisations and assumptions. The liberating effect of the menstrual cup at work, with its sustainability credentials and greater convenience, allowed for a sense of 'doing the right thing' on multiple fronts, yet also further entrenched neoliberal values and norms through enabling the 'forgetting' of menstruation at work, and more successful 'passing' as non-menstruators. In the policy study, participants held conflicted views about the publicity surrounding the change in their working conditions, experiencing a spotlight that embraced but also heightened their sense of being radical outsiders in broader social terms.

Uptake of the menstrual innovations in my two studies demonstrated interwoven and significant shifts in labour and capital power relations. These were chiefly produced in the workplace study by the decision, at the behest of women workers, to detach productivity from hours worked and to be paid for time spent menstruating regardless of how much work they did. In the cup study, use of a reusable product that they owned meant that menstruators were detached from disposability profits and the MNC market oligopoly. In the first example, the commons was revivified along with the rights of women to manage their own biological experience without reference to an androcentric perspective. In the second example, respect was augmented as the women felt they were doing the right thing for the environment. Both innovations engendered the possibility of greater sustainability by protecting the materials used and the bodies involved. Both

innovations were experienced by participants as empowering, through altering relationships with female embodiment to reduce menstrual shame and related self-objectification, which have been linked to confidence and capacity for self-care (e.g. Sveinsdóttir 2017; Spadaro, 2018). The rise in social, cultural and economic capitals that occurred as effects of the innovations is notable in the context of menstruation, which has in most cultures and contexts had low capitals, which is related to stigmatisation (Goffman, 1963; Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013b). This change in capitals in turn influenced labour relations. For example, as the idea of the workplace policy began to garner support, so the women involved gradually became more assertive about asking for what they needed, bringing about systematic change. In a capitalist system, labour conditions are more likely to be changed to benefit workers when increased capitals give workers the confidence to be more assertive and less compliant, which traits correlate with higher incomes (Risse et al, 2018).

My research was undertaken in relatively privileged environments, with participants who began their journey of altering menstrual behaviour from a position of high social, cultural and economic capitals relative to many other women in the world. Those in the workplace study were white, for the most part well-educated, and socially valued in their radical, left-wing community; those in the cup study attended an elite university. Both cohorts lived in highly-resourced Anglophone cities during peacetime. Perhaps the status these privileges afforded them -- even if they were not personally wealthy or politically powerful -- allowed for experimentation with new menstrual practices without fearing the potential loss of respectability habitus, which in most cases appeared firmly planted enough to lessen the constraint of menstrual taboo. They had the confidence to embrace an innovation with the potential to disrupt their

respectability habitus, yet this action in itself augmented their confidence not only through the innovation itself but also through the opportunity to act for the collective and to experience solidarity in the process. These various sources of confidence -- from background privilege through current status to the effects of the innovation -- all supported changes in lines of power and control in labour relations arising out of the innovations. In both case studies, participants took back control: in the workplace study from the oppressive nature of normative menstrual practices and workplace conventions of silencing and suppression (Young, 2005), and in the cup study from the expense and environmental context of the disposable menstrual product industry (Vostral, 2010, 2019).

Such changes occurred in workplace labour *and* in menstrual labour. Use of the menstrual cup reshaped the type and extent of menstrual labour, by reducing the time, effort and funds required to manage menstrual bleeding, especially during the day, when women are most likely to be menstruating in organisational contexts. Women in the workplace study were effectively paid for their menstrual labour. Women in both studies felt relieved from the emotional labour required by menstrual passing (Vostral, 2010). Altering normative conceptions of 'work' and 'non-work' to include the extra labour women do as menstruators emerges from socialist and materialist feminist understanding of ideas of work and of women's reproductive labour as an (unjustly) unpaid resource that fuels capitalism (Federici, 2004). Such alteration of normative notions of work with regard to menstruation is also supported by the endometriosis research of Seear (2008, 2009) and more recently Armour et al (2019), in which endometriosis is understood by women to be a "third shift" on top of 'work' and 'family/nonwork'. Applying the lens of the commons is particularly useful here: in an age

of (neoliberal) individualism it is customary to view menstruation as an individual experience, which perspective is strengthened by menstruation's stigmatised construction as "private". However, when we instead take the position that women's reproductive labour is work for the collective -- indeed, for the continuation of the human species -- then paying women when they menstruate and/or supporting their access to products which reduce menstrual labour are acts of communal support and recognition of the extra labour of embodiment performed by women throughout their lives.

One of the criticisms levelled against the notion of menstrual workplace policies has been that they will unfairly advantage menstruators and thus create new inequalities, as identified in social media by Sayers & Jones (2015). The obvious riposte to this is that women have been systematically disadvantaged and so any swing of the pendulum the other way will only be due recompense. But that argument does not hold water with men protecting their privilege (and sometimes with women who are dependent upon them). With regard to contemporary critique by menstrual activists arguing that menstrual leave policies are unworkable (e.g. King, 2019), it is important to clarify that the Coexist policy was not a 'menstrual leave' policy offering paid blanket leave to menstruators, but instead offered a variety of flexible accommodations to women depending on their needs, in the context of an organisation that understood the political nature and personal impact of menstrual taboo. My research shows that in such a context, unfair advantage is not necessarily experienced or taken. Rather than disadvantaging non-menstruating workers, my study found that non-menstruating workers can find benefit in the broader ramifications of a menstrual workplace policy in promoting health and wellbeing at work. Such outcomes may be more likely when a

policy is carefully crafted for the specific needs of the organisation and its workforce. At Coexist, practices evolved which drew non-menstruators into both the planning and enactment of the policy, such as menstruators discussing their menstrual status -- matter-of-factly and without apology -- in open meetings, and male colleagues being involved in publicity surrounding the policy. Making accommodation to the menstrual cycle was seen within a broader context of acknowledging all natural cycles as part of human experience. As a result, men did not appear to feel excluded, and several spoke to me about how the menstrual workplace policy had helped them to inhabit their own embodiment with more care and respect. Similarly, the menstrual cup study showed evidence of benefiting the collective as well as the individual, through its superior sustainability and economic cost vis-à-vis disposable and reusable cloth menstrual products. Such values were enthusiastically adopted by the male/non-menstruating partners of participants.

7.2.2. Menstrual innovations & feminism

In my early chapters I began a discussion on different schools of feminism and how they have related to menstruation as well as to each other. My two studies may be used to highlight such tensions and differences, particularly between neoliberal feminism and more radical feminisms potentially disruptive of capitalism. On the one hand, neoliberal feminism is aligned with pragmatism as a strategy for success in a still-masculinised workplace, with women exhorted to "lean-in" to the corporate world (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013). In the context of menstruation, such pragmatic choices include using easily-available disposable products, suppressing menstruation through pharmaceuticals, and concealing menstrual status at work (Vostral, 2010; Gunn &

Vavrus, 2010; Kissling, 2013). Such practices form part of the coping arsenal of the neoliberal female subject (Rottenberg, 2014). On the other hand, for example, ecofeminism prioritises sustainability, and radical feminism prioritises the centring of women's lived experience. The menstrual cup in its daily efficiency and invisibility at work functioned as a near-perfect neoliberal artefact, while the public discussion emerging out of its use and the exposure at home to the realities of menstrual blood stimulated a counterpolitics to neoliberal orthodoxy. The workplace policy was a dream of the radical feminist commons yet sought mainstream acceptance through neoliberal knowledge producing outlets such as the BBC and the TED talk. The two studies also demonstrate how tensions related to menstruation arise *within* mainstream (neoliberal) feminism. Now that sustainability has become a (conflicted) mainstream goal, (for example, shown by recycling becoming normative in middle-class households yet being inadequately managed by local and national governments), neoliberal feminism is embracing certain ecological practices. Yet such practices collide uncomfortably with the main thrust of capitalism to ever-increase productivity (e.g. Klein, 2015). The cup study exemplified this tension through the paradox of forgetting and remembering; the workplace study through difficulties and controversies with uptake and implementation.

These tensions emerge out of competing needs and lifestyle imperatives in the contemporary context of neoliberal capitalism. In the conflicting experience of menstrual innovations shown in both studies, the mixed message of feminism influenced by neoliberalism can be seen in play (Rottenberg, 2017, 2018a, 2018b). Neoliberal capitalist society, while notionally supportive of women's financial autonomy and career ambitions, nonetheless largely assumes the right to the free labour

of reproductive-age women, who run households, get pregnant, lactate, menstruate and go through menopause while working fulltime outside the home and, in some cases, pursuing highly demanding careers. Neoliberalism emphasises the individual and the right to choose, but backgrounds the systemic injustices that continue to oppress and exploit women (Bell et al, 2019). It has been argued that neoliberalism and neoliberal feminism do not offer deep-seated meaningful change for women, but more the successful adaptation of patriarchal capitalism to use women's desire to engage in public life more effectively for profit, and to "resignify feminist ideals" (Fraser, 2009, p. 108). Thus, neoliberal capitalism still burdens women with the patriarchal bias of dual or triple work/life roles, and resists meaningful recognition of the burden of reproduction. Women are not 'supposed' to take the time to look after themselves when at work, even when bleeding and in pain, hence Beth works all day in a bloody skirt (see p. 180) and Verity is careful to say that, despite her beliefs in the powers of menstrual rest, she has never taken time off for her period (see p. 218). Women's personal sustainability in terms of their wellbeing is impacted on a daily basis by the sheer amount of tasks and performances they are expected to manage. In terms of performative sustainability, busy women are often expected to recycle, remember to carry reusable shopping bags, use public transport when they can, and constantly be aware of and change their purchasing patterns to appropriate products from appropriate organisations. This complex messaging filters into an additional burden for the menstruator: to perform as 'usual' while bleeding and at the same time, increasingly, to perform sustainably. The performative strain of neoliberal capitalism infects attitudes to sustainability with perfectionist guilt, such as Claire (see p. 171) feeling conflicted when she finds menstrual pads more comfortable than the menstrual cup at night. So Claire places her own

comfort as secondary to other, external reasons to use this menstrual product or that, Daisy and Kristen try very hard to use the cup even though it is difficult for them (see pp. 154-155). Although such adaptations were less in evidence in the workplace policy, the constructions of *menstruality* can become an unwitting form of neoliberal over-organising/control of women's lives. Keeping track of the cycle and changing behaviours accordingly can, in the surveilled, perfectionist world of the good neoliberal female subject, be another form of tyranny when mapped on top of the over-demand of contemporary working life. If the subject feels she has to take time off during her period in order to be a good feminist menstruator, she can become torn between competing demands.

Thus, while the women in my studies might appear to be engaged in radical innovations, they may still be behaving as good neoliberal subjects, now burdened with an individualised sustainability/lifestyle agenda on top of the need to conceal, pass and dissemble. In this sense there can be an element of self-negation in use of the cup and the workplace policy, and this is does not conflict with neoliberalism. My varying findings in terms of neoliberalism, feminism and the goals of *comfort* and *convenience* give rise to several questions: Is it always feminist to use a cup? Or could it, for some, be more feminist to feel fine about not always wanting to use the cup and preferring disposable or cloth options if they found these more convenient or comfortable? Is it always feminist to enact and utilise a menstrual workplace policy? Or does it open women up to yet more surveillance, critique and inequality in ways which detract rather than enhance their wellbeing and autonomy?

These are important questions without easy answers. I have contextualised this discussion with regard to the *good* of the innovations in disrupting respectability

protocols (Laws, 1985, 1990; Skeggs, 1997), and building solidarity, dismantling enclosure and revitalising the commons (Federici, 2004). Yet I resist reifying these grand aims and glimmering outcomes as necessitating women's sacrifice in order to achieve them. The context of the organising and organisational dynamics of menstruation can help here. Placing the focus on organisational dynamics can perhaps dial down the rhetoric of *menstruality* and of perfectionist, performative sustainability. To get back to basics: menstruation is a near-universal experience for fertile-aged women, and for most happens around 25% of the time for fifty years. For many, that is a large part of the life cycle in which to endure unsupported and stigma-inflected discomfort along with the material and emotional labour demanded to manage and conceal menstrual bleeding. As such, my two case studies demonstrate that ameliorating the menstrual burden in organisational ways that can be quite straightforward (such as increasing awareness about menstrual cups and addressing the burden of front-facing staff) can have profound social effects without demanding that women continue to sacrifice their wellbeing. In addition, such moves appear to have broader implications, beyond the menstruator. My studies indicate that acknowledgement of menstrual needs has positive effects on the sense of embodiment in non-menstruators.

Such organisational changes can only emerge in an atmosphere of reduced stigmatisation, but they in turn destigmatise. Through this destigmatisation, my research suggests that menstrual innovations can offer a way of (re)theorising and (re)stimulating the commons. Making 'common' individual and group knowledge about the cycle and the body, sharing the realities of menstrual experience, and embracing new ways of claiming menstrual rights, are powerful interventions for women living through an aggressively individualistic era. My research indicates ways in which such

interventions strengthen the sisterhood along with deepening intimacy with (male) partners and trust with co-workers.

Chapter summary

Women's embodiment, labour and capitals have been controlled, constrained and used in specific ways within capitalist societies. Innovations in menstrual organisation challenge gendered assumptions and practices regarding commodification and labour relations. The menstrual cup disrupts the fetishistic commodification of disposable menstrual products. The menstrual workplace policy disrupts the gendered inequalities of the androcentric workplace. In the dyad of the individual versus/with the collective, these menstrual innovations afford ways of reconstructing a (women's) commons that strengthens individual wellbeing, confidence and capitals, through increasing and normalising articulation and solidarity surrounding a female-only biological experience.

My analysis of the affective dimensions of the interviews indicates that women, individually and as a collective force, can become stronger through sharing their knowledge and needs of their reproductive bodies. In both of these innovations, women increased their sharing of menstrually-related information in unprecedented ways, collectively opening up concerning personal menstrual status, needs and experience, and co-learning how to use a sustainable product. The women used multiple means to share information: face-to-face contact, media interviews, cycle tracking apps to group-determine work schedules, and social media to solve product-related problems. Contrary to significant previous menstrual innovations, such as the disposable pad and the tampon, articulation in a context of open sharing was paramount to the success of uptake of both innovations in my case studies.

This research outlines the new constellation of a menstrual commons with the potential to translate into a strengthening solidarity to women everywhere. Such a solidarity suggests a force that can restrain free market neoliberal capitalism and redraw the (gendered) borders of capitalism's reach.

8. Conclusion

8.1. Contributions

Elizabeth Grosz (1994) identified the aporia in menstrual theorisation despite decades of feminist scholarship. She considered (writing in the early 1990s) that the work on a truly feminist psycho-somatology had yet to be done: "It would involve producing new discourses and knowledges, new modes of art and new forms of representational practice outside of the patriarchal frameworks which have thus far ensured the impossibility of women's autonomous self-representations" (ibid, p. 188). This thesis, written 25 years later, can be read as an example of the growing movement to map and generate such self-representation. As such, here I highlight four areas of contribution, three theoretical and one methodological.

This thesis contributes to feminist socioeconomic theorisation on organisational dynamics in MOS. First, the thesis takes a novel approach in interweaving the work of Silvia Federici (2004) and Beverley Skeggs (1997) to build a theoretical framework for understanding organisational dynamics concerning menstruation, which delineates concepts that support a socioeconomic analysis of menstrual perspectives and practices. Second, I identify the outlines of a nascent redistributive process affecting markets (through disrupting the disposable product market) and labour (through challenging non-cyclical norms in the workplace). This finding suggests that innovations in permissions and practices surrounding menstrual embodiment can redistribute capitals.

This represents a disruption to the normative assumption that menstruation is so stigmatised it can only deplete capitals if acknowledged.

Specifically with regard to gender and embodiment, this thesis contributes to several related strands of scholarship in MOS and more specifically, in Feminist Organisation Studies. My research identified ways in which reorganisation of the materiality of menstrual experience through an ethical frame of sustainability (of products and wellbeing) influenced organising and organisational dynamics. As such, it contributes to the literature on corporeal ethics (e.g. Pullen & Rhodes, 2010, 2014; Kenny & Fotaki, 2015). The participants in my two case studies enthusiastically embraced the uptake of the innovations, suggesting that stigmatising socialisation surrounding menstruation is now quite fragile, perhaps especially when confronted by sustainability politics. By exploring the menstruating body as a site for positive change for women, and through the finding that the two innovations positively influenced organisational actors beyond menstruating women, the thesis contributes to "a trend in feminist research whereby the female body is seen as a source of opportunity" (Bell et al, 2019, p. 17) such as in Jack, Riach & Bariola (2018).

In addition, I contribute new knowledge in Feminist Organisation Studies by working from the charts of Calás and Smircich (1996, 2006) and Benschop and Verloo (2016) to add menstrual perspectives into a version of their respective analyses of different streams of feminism (see Chart A, pp. 58-61). Related to this chart, I contribute to current debates in FOS and in Critical Menstrual Studies through my identification of ways in which my two case studies highlighted tensions between feminisms, particularly in the light of menstrual innovation acting as both a disruptor and enabler of neoliberalism.

The thesis makes a methodological contribution which applies to research on stigmatised topics and to data analysis in feminist research. I developed a rigorous data analysis method to take account of affective dimensions when doing research on potentially stigmatised and traumatised populations. I show how these techniques can surface important data that could otherwise remain unidentified.

8.2. Implications & future trajectories

The thesis has implications for gender relations through its findings on the experiences of non-menstruators. In addition to my findings concerning female/menstruator embodiment, I found that male/non-menstruator embodiment can be positively influenced by new approaches in menstrual organisation. In the workplace study, non-menstruators experienced personal benefit from the highlighting of authentic embodiment-related needs. In the cup study, the sustainability attribute of the cup drew in male partners as supporters and interested parties, generating more openness and intimacy in some relationships. Both studies also were sites of some conflict with non-users of either the policy or the cup, with the workplace study exciting fervent public discourse in the mainstream media and on social media, and the cup study surfacing fears, prejudices and opinions about menstrual blood in partners, friends and family members.

Another implication of my research is its potential influence on menstrual activism. This exploration of menstrual innovations makes a contribution to menstrual activism by identifying strategies by which women can resist longstanding gendered disadvantage in organisational contexts, to reshape menstrual practices and

organisation. The thesis clarifies some of the pitfalls and tensions that may be encountered in so doing.

Both of my case studies suggest several directions for future research. In terms of study size, it would be interesting to see if larger studies in both contexts delivered findings beyond those identified here, or if a small in-depth qualitative study, focused on a single artefact and using data from multiple sources, can succeed in this context in uncovering the main themes. Similarly, if the demographic were broader in each case -- for example, in terms of class, race, age, and current life situation -- would a wider range of responses emerge, and if so, what would these be?

In terms of time, longer-term or longitudinal studies would feasibly offer more reliable and different data. For example, a study concerning the impact of use of the menstrual cup over a longer period of time would be needed to find out the relationship, if any, between ease of uptake, success of use, and longevity of use, and what factors support or prevent consistent use. This might show the extent to which those who were not happy with the cup after three cycles would persist and learn how to use it successfully, and if those who appeared to have a seamless uptake continued to use the cup. A longer term study would also offer the possibility of revealing if and how ambivalence about 'forgetting' versus the increased awareness of menstrual blood was resolved. This might go some way to answering the question of whether use of the menstrual cup over time obviates the need for suppression and minimisation of menstruation, by 'allowing' the act of menstruating to take a place in such a way that is not felt to be disruptive of normative workplace rhythms.

Such a study could in turn feed into a longer term study of menstrual workplace policies by examining the connections between self objectification, product choice,

and temporally-related and cycle-sensitive labour practices. Young women (see *How periods became big business* in the Times 8/8/19) are reported to have much higher interest in menstrual cycle awareness than previous generations. Media reports indicate that the current 14-25 year old age group are routinely using new digital and fabric technologies to manage menstruation, and are much more open to reorganising workplace rhythms based on knowledge of the cycle than were their older sisters and their mothers.

Such innovations are reshaping menstrual experience in ways that disrupt self-objectification based on stigma, but potentially replace it with new forms of control such as cycle tracking apps which can be open to outside scrutiny and marketing manipulations. We have yet to see what happens with data harvesting of women's menstrual cycle information, but the prospect is concerning. A wider study could aim to capture the complexity of a range of new practices through which women attempt to organise their menstrual cycle, and further examine the impact of such innovations on individual menstrual organising and on organisational life more broadly.

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Appendix A: Case studies

Table 3: Case studies details

Research Study → Details of research ↓	**Menstrual Cup Use**	**Menstrual Workplace Policy**
Research type	A holistic single case study	A multimethod single case study
Focus of study	The first three cycles of menstrual cup use.	The development and introduction of a menstrual workplace policy.
Location	Melbourne, Australia	Bristol, U.K.
Organisation	University of Melbourne	CoExist, a social enterprise in central Bristol, around 30 employees + board members running a large multipurpose arts building.
Participants	Undergraduates and recent graduates	Employees + board members
Ages of participants	20-24	27-43
Gender of participants	11 F	12 F, 1 M (formal interviews); 16 F, 6 M (meetings)
Time period of study	April 2017 -- June 2018	October 2016 -- December 2017
Size of study	• 10 diaries (average 3 pages). • 11 interviews (130 pages of transcripts, average length 30 minutes). • 425 emails with participants.	• 14 individual interviews (145 pages of transcripts; average length 32 mins). • 3 organisational meetings (62 pages of transcripts; 2.5 hours) + 5 more hours of meetings attended, field notes taken. • 7 iterations of 6 page policy document. • 360 emails with participants. • 6 recorded hours of phone calls, approx. 10 hours more with notes taken. • 10 media articles + TV/radio spots (sample).
Data sources	• Participant diaries. • Interviews, 8 in person, 3 over Skype on video. • Emails. • Researcher observation.	• Interviews, most in person, some over Skype on video. • Organisational meetings. • Policy documents. • Emails. • Phone calls. • Media: TV, radio, print, online. • Participant researcher observations.
Data types	• Audio recordings (some also video). • Transcripts. • Digital and hand-written diaries. • Emails. • Digital and hand-written field notes.	• Audio recordings (some also video). • Transcripts. • Digital policy documents. • Emails. • Media articles and tv spots. • Digital and hand-written field notes.

Table 4: Case study contexts

Case Study → Details↓	**Menstrual Cup Uptake**	**Menstrual Workplace Policy**
Focus of bounded case	First three cycles of menstrual cup use.	First year of the implementation of a menstrual workplace policy.
Associated organisations	• A mainstream prestigious Australian educational institution in the Group of Eight. • A new international gallery project associated with education and promoting innovative scientific perspectives and artefacts. • An Australian manufacturer of silicon menstrual cups.	• The host organisation, a UK social enterprise involved with property management and social justice initiatives. • A large downtown centre in Bristol UK, with work spaces for 500 artists and creatives, and community functions for the inner city. • International media.
Sociocultural context	Comments from study participants indicated that they largely shared a subcultural affinity I characterised as *insider progressives.* As students at a long-established and often top-ranked Australian university, they had a relatively high status among their peers and in terms of their perceived immediate futures.	Comments from study participants indicated that they identified to greater or lesser extent with a subcultural affinity I characterised as *countercultural progressives.* They saw the policy as part of the expression of their organisation's well-articulated countercultural, social justice-focused perspective and identity.
Participant concerns and interests	Participants initially were sampled via a gender studies course, followed by snowballing which involved Facebook posts to the friendship network of one highly social participant, and a young women's undergraduate feminist group. Participants tended to express interest in feminism, social justice, and sustainability. They spoke of these factors in the context of their families of origin and their developing personal lives and partnerships as well as their academic interests.	Participants all worked at the host organisation. They largely expressed interest in sustainability, ethics of organisational responsibility, and wellbeing. They spoke of these factors with regard to their personal health, their work/life balance, their partners and families, and the overall mission of the organisation.
Participant affect overview	Almost all participants appeared confident, upbeat and optimistically future-focused. Those at the upper end of the age bracket were graduates who were a little less confident about their futures.	Participants were idealistic and diligent, with some worries about the future due to the looming existential threat to the organisation from their landlords.

Table 5: Introducing the cup study participants

The following table introduces the cup study participants by pseudonym, age, living situation, and occupation. I include living situation here to give a sense of their domestic intimates and influencers, (which in most cases had an impact on their uptake of the menstrual cup), and to give an approximation of where participants were situated in terms of their transition into adulthood. I include occupation and the nature of their studies to give an indication of the interests they were embracing in their choice of study area and the concepts they were possibly being exposed to in that process, and which are referenced in their comments. The table demonstrates how the material and relational circumstances of the participants' lives largely place them in a transitional phase between dependence and independence in which they were establishing autonomy from parental norms. This life phase perhaps rendered them particularly open to experimentation with a new form of menstrual product.

	Pseudonym	**Age**	**Living situation**	**Occupation**
A	Amelia	20	At home with her family of 5 (two sisters). Often at boyfriend's place, who also lives with his family.	Student: BA History and Gender studies.
B	Beth	22	In share house with boyfriend and another couple.	Student: BA Politics and Philosophy.
C	Claire	20	Shares apartment with female friend. Long-term boyfriend.	Student: BA Psychology and Gender Studies.
D	Daisy	21	Shares house with two other women. Boyfriend.	Student: BA Politics and Sociology
E	Ellie	20	At home with parents and younger brother. Single.	Student: BA Gender Studies and Criminology.
F	Fay	22	At home with mother and brother. Has long-term boyfriend.	Recent Law graduate, going to do postgraduate Law.
G	Geri	21	At home with parents, 2 older siblings live away from home. Single.	Recent Arts graduate, going to do Master's in Journalism.
H	Harriet	24	Rents a house with long-term male partner.	Graduate: BA Fine Arts, now artist and working in hospitality.
I	Ivy	21	Was in Melbourne at start of study, has now relocated her BA to Perth. Staying with friends. Single.	Student: BA Arts.
J	Jennifer	22	In college accommodation. Single.	Student. Medicine. Final year.
K	Kristen	22	Lives with parents in both their homes. Single.	Student: BA.

Table 6: Introducing the workplace study participants

The following table introduces the interview participants by pseudonym, age, organisational position and where they worked, and length of tenure at the organisation. I include their job and work location because *where* in the building people worked and *what* they did turned out to be crucial factors in their response to the menstrual workplace policy. I include length of tenure as a possible indication of depth of affiliation with the organisation and sense of commitment to its ethos, which again, was a significant factor in the development of the policy. The relationship between participants and the organisation came up frequently in the interviews.

	Pseudonym	**Age**	**Position in the organisation**	**Length of tenure at time of interview**
L	Bex[43]	42	Board director. Ex People Development Manager and instigator of the menstrual policy. Occasional front of house.	8 years.
M	Meg	31	Finance Administrator. Back office.	6 years.
N	Nell	30	People Development Manager. Back office.	1 year.
O	Oscar	35	Office Manager. Back office.	1.5 years.
P	Polly	29	Front-of-house Manager.	4.5 years.
Q	Queenie	29	Events team. Back office.	1 year.
R	Rachel	33	Wellbeing Department Manager. Back office.	4 years.
S	Suzanne	30	Community Kitchen Coordinator. Board director.	6 years.
T	Tara	37	Shop Manager. Front of house.	5 years.
U	Ursula	31	Workshop facilitator.	15 months.
V	Verity	36	Operations Manager. Board director.	1 year.
W	Willow	29	Community Kitchen Coordinator.	6 months.
X	Xena	27	Board Chair. No paid role.	2.5 years.

[43] Bex is the only member of staff who does not have a pseudonym. The usefulness of a pseudonym was obviated by her public status regarding the policy. She has become well-known in public domains as the instigator of the policy, through appearing on major news outlets including the BBC, and doing a TED talk. She expressed a preference for her real name being used in this thesis, and was made aware of possible outcomes such as the extraction of quotes by the media. This development was cleared by my research project's ethics committee (MUHREC).

Table 7: Coexist menstrual policy timeline: Key events & processes

January 2016	• Bex Baxter, the People Development Manager (PDM), has the idea for creating a menstrual policy.
February 2016	• Discussions among board, PDM, and staff about policy. • Staff at this point total 32, of which 24 are female and of menstruating age.
March 2016	• March 1: Press release to local paper announcing public talk and intention to create a menstrual policy sparks an international media storm. • Mainstream media descend on Hamilton House. • March 16: Brainstorming day of talks and debate on the idea of a menstrual policy, open to the public. Almost all staff and board attend.
June 2016 -- December 2017	• Development and refinement of the menstrual policy in collaboration with staff and board, with some external advisory assistance.
April 2017	• Coexist learns landlord is considering taking back Hamilton House to develop gentrification housing. • Coexist begins bid to purchase building for community needs.
May 2017	• Coexist publishes "The Evolution of Another World" proposal, detailing goals attained and future plans. Identifies menstrual policy as cutting edge part of the organisation's cultural capital.
July 2017	• Community meeting with all stakeholders about the existential threat to the Coexist project. Landlord's representative appears intransigent and evasive.
August 2017	• Coexist proposal raises funds to buy the building, but is turned down as purchaser by landlord.
December 2017	• Final menstrual policy ratified by board after 18 months of experimentation. • Staff number fallen to 17 (4 male, 13 female). • Annual lease not renewed. • Coexist proceeds on rolling monthly renewals.
December 2018	• Bex Baxter gives TED talk on the menstrual policy. • Landlord abruptly takes back Hamilton House after 21 months of uncertainty.
August 2019	• After attempts to continue in another building collapse, Coexist closes down its CIC and separates into ongoing legacy projects in various locations in Bristol.

Appendix B: Data analysis (concise examples)

Table 8: Affective dimensions in menstrual cup study (direct quotes in italics)

	Pseudonym and age	Affective dimensions in interview	Affective dimensions in diary
A	Amelia (20)	Positive, upbeat. Very articulate, fast talking. Decisive, careful, helpful, engaged. Open, forthcoming.	Matter of fact, short diary. Easy uptake. Glad for social benefits: *not worrying about having to change pad or tampon e.g. when going out at night*. Feels less *stress of having to dispose of used sanitary products when I'm at my boyfriend's house*.
B	Beth (22)	Friendly, upbeat, laughing throughout the interview. Tall, strong, confident, well-dressed.	Detailed, emotionally descriptive diary. *A bit sceptical*. Cup leaked: *gross* and *inconvenient*. *Very frustrated and covered in blood.* Dreams about cup: *it had changed into a grenade, I was horrified!*.
C	Claire (20)	Quiet voice; thoughtful. Open, friendly, funny. Discussed her own passionate feelings on the politics of menstruation.	Elaborate diary, detailed notes, includes found illustrations and memes about menstruation. Some anxiety, uncertainty to start with, quickly ameliorated by actual experience. Thoughtful: *Strangely the menstrual blood makes me feel uncomfortable in a completely different way to other blood.*
D	Daisy (21)	Groany, rather inhibited voice. Quite open and friendly, yet shyer than the others so far. A bit nervous and worried if her answers were right.	Never found cup entirely comfortable but wanted to continue using it. *I want it to be a good thing*. Uptake disturbed by Implanon-caused menstrual irregularity and lack of lubrication.
E	Ellie (20)	Muted to start with. Warmed up considerably. Became very engaged and lively as interview progressed. Extremely enthusiastic about cup as artefact. Spoke candidly about cultural tensions re vaginal insertion: conventional Indian family; grew up in Malaysia.	Very detailed notes. Found that cup relieves pain and anxiety. *The cup relieves period related anxiety as it gives me the freedom not to have to worry about having enough tampons on me*. By third cycle still talking about the absence of anxiety and pain. *I'm feeling a lot more comfortable with my periods nowadays.*
F	Fay (22)	Fairly quiet demeanour but very forthcoming and appeared relaxed talking about intimate material. Open about her bleeding difficulties with the Pill.	Concerned about stress. Arranged first use *in a stress-free situation.* First try at extraction was a *very stressful process.* Next time *even more stressful. At this early stage, it feels as if the cup is making my period experience simultaneously more and less stressful/ inconvenient.* By third period *I'm really glad I've figured out how it works for me.*
G	Geri (21)	Nice, even, open, 'good'. Very anxious about the hygiene of the cup.	Handwritten, detailed, diligent, disclosing diary. Details mother's interventions about hygiene and the cup and how it affected daughter. *My mum scared me. I fear that in the future they'll find out the cup is actually dangerous.*

H	Harriet (24)	Laid back. Friendly but a little wary, and quite cautious with comments. Less confident than the younger participants.	Detailed on emotional response to cup. 1st period: *It was a lot easier than I was expecting so I am worried I didn't do it right but how wrong can it be?* 2nd period: *Felt far less anxious but still not confident.* 3rd period: *I barely notice it.*
I	Ivy (21)	Very enthusiastic about the cup (mentioned she loved it about 10 times) and about the research.	Very enthusiastic, energetic, natural diary full of slang, exclamation marks and material detail. *Tbh I bloody love this thing.*
J	Jennifer (22)	Direct, straightforward, factual.	Confident. *As a medical student, I felt quite confident about my anatomy and what angle to put the cup in.*
K	Kristen (22)	Anxious, rushed. Very enthusiastic about idea of cup, but difficulties using it in practice.	No diary but sent me email with details of experience, which showed distress surrounding both menstruation and cup. *I also have an extremely irregular cycle so it's been difficult to keep trying it out and practising getting it out!*

Table 9: Effects of menstrual cup use: unanticipated by participant (direct quotes in italics)

Unanticipated effect	Illustrative quote
Can spend whole day out and not have to change menstrual product	*Yeah, I definitely liked the fact that I could spend the whole day at Uni and then come home. It was good because it just kind of was out of my mind. It was just like oh, yeah, okay.* (Claire)
No need to carry menstrual products	*I suppose the difference is there's only one time where you need to think [to] make sure you have this with you because then it's kind of just there the whole time. And then it's in you. Yeah. The rest of the week also.* (Fay)
Cup is more discreet than a tampon (no need to carry around and get out of bag; no string; no wrappers; no disposal of item)	*I would say it was basically like using tampons but better because, yeah, you don't have to remember to bring them anywhere, you can leave them in for a lot longer and they're kind of the same level of discreetness as a tampon. Actually I suppose they're more discreet because there's no string, like it's all completely internal.* (Fay)
Using the cup feels cleaner	*I think it feels a bit cleaner…like because there was no leaking and there was no pulling things out, like pads are a bit gross because it is just sitting there all day whereas this is quite clean…clean it out and it's not creating so much waste.* (Daisy)
Changed the way she attends to her period	*It's almost like it's kind of saying it's getting you to take time out from your day a little bit to just address your period and quite literally address what it looks like, which is something that I've never really had to do before.* (Fay)
Using the cup lessened her menstrual pain	*My cramps weren't as bad when I was using the menstrual cup, that's why I really liked using it. The first time I used it I think it was only like an hour of cramps during the four or five days which was really good….it made the whole period very easy and I don't know why but there was just no pain.* (Ellie)
Using the cup increased knowledge of the vagina	*I definitely feel like I'm more comfortable with my vagina having used it [the cup], like it stretches pretty wide, like I don't feel it when it's inside me, like I don't know, it's pretty cool.* (Geri)
Menstrual blood is different than she thought	*I think not necessarily a different feeling towards it but just like a different knowledge of it, knowing how much I bleed now, like it's a lot less than I thought and like it's way more watery than I thought it'd be as well.* (Geri)
Seeing the blood in the cup makes it more knowable, may help with health monitoring	*Yeah, I suppose it's more just real, I guess, because pads and tampons always kind of inoculate you from your own body in some ways because you don't really have to deal with it [blood] in its pre-absorbed form. So yeah, I suppose it's just the reality of what your body is doing……you can kind of see that more obviously if it's the sheer volume of liquid, you can judge that a bit better and you may be tipped off to a problem.* (Fay)
Feels freer using the cup	*It was really freeing. Like I felt a lot freer than when I would wear a tampon. Like I was still cautious about leaking but once I realised that it wasn't going to leak it felt pretty good.* (Kristen)
Feels does not have to worry about period now	***Which one [change] are you most excited about?*** *The fact that I don't have to worry about my period, that time of burden any more, that's really good.* (Ellie)

Appendix C: Ethics approval

1. Ethics Approval Certificate granted 10/10/2016

MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee

Approval Certificate

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

Project Number: 0680
Project Title: An Exploratory Study of Menstruation in the Workplace
Chief Investigator: Professor Gavin Jack
Expiry Date: 10/10/2021

Terms of approval - failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

1. The Chief Investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst your hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. Amendments to approved projects including changes to personnel must not commence without written approval from MHUREC.
7. Annual Report - continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report.
8. Final Report - should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected completion date.
9. Monitoring - project may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
10. Retention and storage of data - The Chief Investigator is responsible fo the storage and retention of the original data pertaining to the project for a minimum period of five years.

Thank you for your assistance.