

Veranstaltungen des Sonderforschungsbereichs: Strukturwandel des Eigentums
Wintersemester 2023-24

Bodies, power and property in transnational reproductive economies

Lecture series organized by Stefanie Graefe, Irina Herb, Susanne Lettow in the context of the research project
Property in the human body in the context of transnational economies of reproduction.

November 22, 2023, 4-6 pm

Amrita Pande (Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town): *Labour, Property and the fertility industry: Notes from Dalit and Black feminist thought*

The hegemony of western ethics and liberal feminism is best captured by the singular emphasis on individual self-determination and questions of autonomy and choice in any discussions around reproduction. This primacy given to “choice” and individual rights is fundamentally based on liberal conceptions of politics. In the past decade, feminist scholars have cautioned against an excessive reliance on the rhetoric of choice because, one, it romanticizes people’s ability to make their own decisions and conceals the structures of power that shape these decisions. Two, this belief in the liberatory power of choice minimizes the responsibilities of being the bearer of such choices. In this presentation, I focus on the fertility industry (the industry for fertility treatments, reproto-genetic technologies and third-party reproduction, for instance, egg and sperm donation and surrogacy), to argue that the emphasis on reproductive rights and choice, is not just analytically insufficient, it is politically inadequate in addressing issues of justice embedded in this rapidly booming industry. I am not the first one to say this – the reproductive justice movement, initiated in the 1990s by a group of Black reproductive health activists frustrated with the linear emphasis of the women’s movement on pro-choice discourses, argued that access to reproductive health services is impacted by lived and intersecting experiences based on race, gender, class and sexuality. In this presentation I connect this argument to my broader critique of the production/reproduction binary in analyzing the fertility industry. I draw from Ambedkar’s writing (particularly his writings on stigma & labour), Black feminist thought on reproductive justice and Dalit Feminism on sexual labour to argue that, for any discussion about justice to hold sway, there is an urgent need to go beyond the bioethical critique of commodification of life and instead conduct a Dalit Black feminist analysis that reveals the multiple complexities of a fundamentally stratified and highly racialized labour market.

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December 6, 2023, 4-6 pm

Laura Mamo (Health Equity Institute, San Francisco State University): *What’s queer got to do with it? Building an integrated theory of Queer Reproductive Justice*

This talk builds on growing critical inquiry on Queer Reproductive Justice to define an integrated theory of Queer Reproductive Justice. The talk will focus on the ‘queer’ as it conjoins with reproductive justice to ask in what ways Queer Reproductive Justice may be a tool for liberation. Building on Marcin Smietana and Charis Thompson’s 2018 edited collection on *Making Families - Transnational Surrogacy, Queer Kinship, and Reproductive Justice*, this talk will further bring queer reproduction in dialogue with theories of ‘stratified reproduction’ and ‘reproductive justice’ to propose how to continue to build political and intellectual solidarities.

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January 10, 2024, 4-6 pm

Daisy Deomampo (Associate Professor of Anthropology, Fordham University): *The Price of Eggs: Racial Capitalism and Notions of Value*

Oocyte (egg) donation, or the process by which a person provides eggs to another for the purposes of assisted reproduction, is a thriving aspect of the fertility industry. My focus on Asian Americans, the fastest-growing minority group in the country and the group most likely to seek third-party eggs in their own pregnancies, offers a critical perspective on the intersections of race, reproduction, and capitalism. In this lecture I consider how

eggs become valued and commodified. How do ideas about race influence notions of value in the context of egg donation? How is value extracted and circulated? How might the value of eggs reflect racialized notions of worth and quality? By illustrating how eggs become valued as forms of capital—racialized assets to be shared, purchased, and sold—I argue that racial capitalism is intrinsic to egg donation, with consequences for how donors themselves treat their assets and frame their eggs in ways that may increase their value.

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January 24, 2024, 4-6 pm

Elizabeth Lanphier (Department of Pediatrics, Philosophy, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, University of Cincinnati): *Reproductive Justice and Reparations: Property, Trauma, Inheritance*

Reparations for reproductive injustice in the form of property transfer present a potential puzzle for reproductive justice if, as I have previously argued, property and its lineages rooted in unjust acquisition and transfer run counter to the aims of reproductive justice. Given the problems of property, I reject a self-ownership account of reproductive rights, which perpetuates patriarchal and colonial oppression and extends rights to some while withholding them from others. Yet another inherited form of injustice is intergenerational trauma, sources of which include patriarchy, colonialism, and reproductive injustice. In this talk I propose a trauma informed approach to reparations in response to reproductive injustice that 1) resists property-based accounts of reproductive rights and self-ownership and the unjust mechanisms of property inheritance; 2) attends to the injustices of inherited intergenerational trauma; and 3) offers a plausible model of shared and collective responsibility for past and present harm.

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February 7, 2024, 4-6 pm

Kean Birch (Institute for Technoscience & Society, Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, York University Toronto): *Venture capital and reflexive expectations in biotech financing*

Social studies of expectations are premised on the notion that the future is brought into the present, and thereby expectations about the future come to shape our actions, decisions, and practices in ways that performatively bring about the imagined future. In this article, I examine how venture capitalists and others understand, construct, and deploy future expectations in biotech financing. I do so to analyse how these reflexive efforts configure the valuation and investment decisions of venture capitalists and others in their orbit. I build on analytical perspectives in STS and adjacent fields such as organization studies and economic sociology that analyse the role of expectations – manifested as stories, narratives, and accounts – in social action. To do so, I unpack how reflexivity comes to configure valuation and investment decisions, and the objectives they rationalize.

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