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Title:

Precarious labor: Ukrainian egg donors in transnational reproductive migration

Abstract:

As one of the few countries in Europe that endorses the commodification of donor egg cells, Ukraine becomes a popular destination for couples that seek conception. These transnational ova donation arrangements generate traffic in human gametes and medical migrants and lead to uneven use of reproductive technologies across borders. The scholarly consideration of the politics of ova-donation in Ukraine is particularly important since it indicates the colonization of the new reproductive markets and biologically available populations in the post-Soviet states. In this paper I analyze the discourses of egg donors, donor recruitment agencies and infertility clinics in Ukraine to examine how biopower constructs the subjects of egg donors along the lines of race, gender and class and enacts the frames of recognition that render their re/productive clinical labor precarious. The production of the bodies of egg donors as “desirable” to international recipients is accompanied by the persistent erasure of the labor that these bodies perform since it doesn’t comply with the motherhood mandate for women. Moreover, my research takes into account different ways in which egg donors exercise their agency in making use of ova donation as a source of profit and participate in certain local and global economic arrangements.