



Introduction: Reproductive Justice and Transnational Feminism

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This volume represents a cross-disciplinary effort to understand transnational feminist struggles for reproductive justice. We use the concept of *transnational feminism* to grasp the emergence of a historical subject—feminism—that despite its heterogeneity constitutes a central voice in gendering democracy and engendering citizenship. We use the concept of *reproductive justice* to underline an understanding of struggles for abortion rights that expand and challenge liberal feminist notions of women’s choice. Finally, we explore the counter-movements and strategies to restrict access to abortion and suppress reproductive justice: specifically, the establishment of religious fundamentalist, right-wing and neofascist coalitions threatening women’s and sexual minorities’ rights worldwide.

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The reproductive justice movement, according to Ross and Solinger (2017: 168), has an enormous agenda:

It aims to build a world in which all children are wanted and cared for, in which support exists for families of all sizes and configurations, and in which societies give priority to creating the conditions for people to be healthy and thrive in the United States and globally. (Ibid.)

The tradition of reproductive justice, rooted in Black feminist thought, provides a space to think of gender and sexuality as broader experiences and locations within racial capitalism (Gilmore, 2022) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). Reproductive justice as a concept was established in 1994 by the group Women of African Descent for Reproductive Justice, based in Chicago. These activists/scholars pointed to the exclusion and marginalisation of working class, LGBTQ, Black women and women of colour when abortion rights were narrowly inscribed in pro-life or pro-choice discourses. They also asserted that an intersectional analysis of women's reproductive journey provided a different understanding of needs and visions, beyond individual choice and individual rights.

According to the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, founded in 1997, reproductive justice grasps 'the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities'. The concept of reproductive justice challenges the isolation of abortion rights from other fundamental social justice issues and introduces the notion of reproductive oppression linked to economic injustice. Reproductive justice includes the right to exercise autonomy over family structures and the right to have children.

As editors of this volume, and as feminist scholars working in the field of Gender Studies in Sweden, we have found the concept of reproductive justice relevant for our own research on migration and racial regimes, law and social justice, and care work in neoliberal welfare capitalism. We also see the relevance of the concept in grasping political processes shaping people's lives through migration and deportation policies, which separate families and impact women's reproductive journeys in fundamental ways. From our own vantage point—a small country in the Global North which has seen the rapid rise of right-wing populism—we can see how racist discourses translate into fearmongering and moral panic around childbearing and childbirth, creating a political environment in which even

self-professed feminist social-democratic elected officials talk about restricting the possibilities of migrant women to choose for themselves their number of offspring. Realising that such discourses—as to whose fertility is viewed as a promise, and whose as a threat—are just as central as discourses and policies around the right to abortion, is at the core of the tradition of reproductive justice.

Struggles for the right to abortion must include struggles for the right to parent. Sociologist Dorothy Roberts explored in *Killing the Black Body* (1997) the criminalisation of pregnant Black women in the US, which blamed them and their children for a number of social problems through the construction of stereotypes about Black mothers as ‘unfit mothers’ and ‘welfare queens’. These discourses and practices are present in European nation-state strategies within the race-migration nexus, where migrant women’s bodies are considered a threat, a problem and a burden.

The concept of reproductive justice highlights the phenomenon of reproductive oppression, including control of girls’ and women’s labour. It makes it possible to develop a more inclusive vision of the variety and heterogeneity of women’s reproductive journeys. It illuminates the need to explore the tension between the existence of abortion rights and the practical access to abortion for women located in diverse peripheries. This is something that feminist scholars have emphasised in recent years. For instance, in their book *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*, Ross and Solinger (2017) illustrate how abortion rights are connected and should be claimed for the furtherance of reproductive dignity and safety, such as holding the resources to access healthcare, having a job that pays a living wage and being able to live free from racism.

The reproductive justice paradigm thus highlights other fundamental issues such as the criminal justice system, child welfare policies, the situation of trans people and especially trans people of colour, as well as migration policies and immigrant detention systems that frequently target and separate families. In our view, the most fundamental contribution is the link between reproductive justice and economic justice which frames issues of sexual and reproductive health as profoundly social and political (Bakhru, 2019). Working through an understanding of interconnected systems of oppression, the concept of reproductive justice expands analysis (Avery & Stanton, 2020) and provides a useful frame for healthcare professionals that may contribute to challenge their implicit bias and the way these biases shape diagnosis (FitzGerald & Hurst, 2017; Sudekkaarne & Blell, 2021). It could be argued that the focus on sexual education, birth

control, abortion access and maternal care are well-established agendas within a reproductive rights paradigm. However, these agendas are transformed if understood from the standpoint of vulnerable groups of women (Chiweshe et al., 2017; Chrisler, 2012). Centring the experiences of groups that historically, and still today, have been defined as ‘socially undesirable reproducers’ (Gomez et al., 2018) is to challenge reproductive injustices.

It is against the background of reproductive justice claims, transnational feminism, and anti-genderism that this book sets out to analyse some central tendencies and issues within the realm of abortion and reproductive rights. The selection of cases grasps the efforts of feminist scholars to both identify the continuity with earlier struggles for the right to abortion and, at the same time, challenge narrow and problematic notions of “women and minorities” in reproductive health scholarship and public practices (Yirgu et al., 2020). The case studies are crafted to capture diversity within this common framework. A special concern for an intersectional analysis provides the frames through which struggles for reproductive justice are understood in the different chapters.

The cases have also been selected to illuminate both the shared transnational scale of feminist mobilisations and the distinctive local settings. While most feminist literature focuses on feminism mobilisation and anti-gender movements within global centres of power (Amanda, 2021; Hartland et al., 2020), this volume—inspired by the tradition of Southern Theory (Connell, 2007)—focuses on countries located within peripheries in the Global North and in case studies of countries in the Global South. The aim is to grasp the heterogeneity of struggles and the diverse meaning given to reproductive justice at local levels, within a transnational frame.

While the topics of the chapters bridge one another, the case studies are organised in two sections: transnational feminisms for reproductive justice and restrictionist movements, neo-racism and anti-gender agendas.

TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISMS FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

We open with an account of one of the most vibrant feminist mobilisations in the twenty-first century—the one around the struggle for legal, safe and free abortion in Argentina. In her chapter ‘In Green and White: Feminist Struggles for Abortion Rights in Argentina’, Diana Mulinari explores the ultimate success of the movement, arguing that it has been the fruit of

decades of collective efforts. She also shows how this kind of struggle is embedded in the history of the country and intergenerational experiences of resistance against the dictatorship.

In the third chapter of the volume, “Enough Is Enough”: Strike, Affective Solidarity and Belonging Among Migrant Women from Poland Living in Trondheim’, Agata Kochaniewicz analyses transnational mobilisations in response to the Polish state’s further restriction of the abortion ban. She explores what happened when protests travelled to Norway and how they unfolded among the Polish diaspora there. In her case study, she discusses positionalities and affects of this type of transnational mobilisation in performing solidarities and building alliances.

The fourth chapter, ‘Everyday Bordering and the Struggle for Reproductive Justice in Ireland’ by Sarah Bodelson, drawing on the fieldwork with activists involved in repealing the Eighth in Ireland, engages with the implications of borders upon access to and organising for reproductive justice. The focus is on the migrant and ethnic minority bloc during the March for Choice 2019 in Dublin. The aim is to understand the production and possible contestations of bordering in relation to reproductive justice.

The following chapter by Alva Persson, ‘¡Aborto YA!—Feminist Strategies in the Struggle for Easy, (Legal,) Safe and Free Abortion in Chile’, examines a range of performative and discursive articulations and strategies in the feminist mobilisations around abortion in Chile, another Latin American country that has witnessed mass protests including issues of reproductive justice in recent years. The aim is to analyse how these are grounded in epistemologies of embodied resistance to past and present biopolitical and anti-gender regimes. Here feminist struggles for easy, legal, safe and free abortion unfold as part of a broader struggle towards the democratisation of Chilean institutions and society, among such other struggles as against classism and racism.

The chapter by Chia-Ling Yang, ‘Competition and Change in the Discourse on Abortion in Taiwan’ offers an analysis of reproductive politics and struggles over access to abortion in Taiwan. The chapter shows not only the transformations of the discourses, most importantly concerning birth control and birth rate, but also the ways in which some tropes are used by both sides of the struggle. The chapter also addresses how intensification of feminist mobilisations goes hand in hand with the increase of religious conservative counter-movement.

RESTRICTIONIST MOVEMENTS, NEO-RACISM AND ANTI-GENDER AGENDAS

A main argument in this volume is about a continuity between earlier forms of coercion of specific groups of women, and the establishment of restrictionist social movements and coalitions aiming at decreasing women's and sexual minorities' rights. Schaeffer (2014) differentiates between on the one hand aspiring and altruistic, on the other restrictionist movements. The first two are what are generally seen as democratic social movements—transformative and inclusive. In contrast, restrictionist movements are exclusionary, often based on sexist, nationalist and xenophobic ideologies, defending social inequality and opposing processes of democratisation (2014: 12). David Dietrich (2014) speaks of social movements in defence of privilege. An understanding of restrictionist movements requires a feminist analysis of how the state acts upon patriarchal norms, but also how legal systems are operationalised.

The book brings together several contributions in which different far-right, anti-gender and religious fundamentalist mobilisations are analysed, with particular focus on the ways in which issues of reproduction are being brought in and framed in these mobilisations. In addition to this, some chapters engage in the broader issues of the role of the state and the law in the regulation of reproductive justice.

Rebecca Selberg and Marta Kolankiewicz's chapter entitled 'Rights Claims in Anti-abortion Campaigns in Poland and Sweden' explores how rights claims have been used in anti-gender mobilisations in attempts to restrict access to abortion. Two examples are analysed here: one of the lawsuits in Sweden by midwives claiming to be discriminated against due to their objection to performing abortion as part of the job description, and a Polish civic legislative initiative aimed at restricting the prevailing abortion legislation in cases of foetal anomalies. The chapter argues that, while it can be observed that there is a broader trend in a transnational anti-gender movement's appeal to the law, anti-abortion rights claims are articulated in different and context-sensitive ways.

The chapter 'Italy's Foetus Cemeteries: Reproductive Justice, Anti-gender Stances and Neo-Catholicism' by Alessia Ibba, analyses the burial practices on aborted foetuses in Italy. It shows how these practices operate through shaming and how—together with the possibility open to health

professionals to conscientiously object, with the limited use of medical abortion, and with the limitations established by the law concerning assisted reproductive services—burials impact reproductive justice in Italy.

The chapter ‘Millennium Development Goals and Women’s Reproductive Health and Justice in African Countries in the Era of Global Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism and Fundamentalism’ written by Beth Maina Ahlberg, Jecinta Okumu and Sarah Hamed, examines the (shortcomings in) articulation of women’s reproductive health and rights within millennium development goals (MDGs). Drawing on their research, the authors are interested in deconstructing how these kinds of international instruments constitute an attempt by the Global North to steer development in the Global South. In particular, they focus on the ways in which the application of the gag rule by Global North funding agencies restricts access to sexual and reproductive rights, including abortion, in the name of protecting the unborn.

A somewhat different focus is given in the chapter ‘Parenting the Nation: State Violence and Reproduction in Nicaragua and Sweden’ by Erika Alm and Linda Berg. Here the authors address the issue of how state power is exercised through the governance of reproductivity. They use Nicaragua and Sweden as two examples where debates about reproductive justice highlight tensions in the projection of a state that cares for its citizens. The chapter explores the complexities of how states formulate biopolitical regimes that target reproduction and how the same states negotiate struggles for reproductive rights.

The book closes with a chapter that also engages in the Swedish case to further develop the concept of reproductive justice. In ‘Exploring Swedish “Family Planning”’: Reproductive Racism and Reproductive Justice’, Paula Mulinari, Marcus Herz and Matilda Svensson Chowdhury analyse political discourses and governmental policies on reproduction through the conceptual lens of reproductive racism. After introducing some historical background on how sterilisation and abortion have been used in Sweden, the chapter moves towards an analysis of the Swedish political landscape at the nexus of migration, gender and racism, identifying the role played by public institutional professionals in its shaping and reproduction.

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