

TRANSNATIONAL KOREAN STUDIES PRESENTS

BODIES FOR SCIENCE AND NATION

REPRODUCTION, BIOECONOMY, AND NATIONALISM IN SOUTH KOREA

Yeonbo Jeong, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences
Sungkonghoe University

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Green Table Room, Sun God Lounge, Price Center West

Abstract: This presentation examines how the understanding of women's bodies as resources for science and nation has been constituted in South Korea since the 1960s by analyzing reproductive tissue economies in birth control, assisted reproduction, and biotechnology. Technological nationalism has been mobilized to use science and technology as necessary tools for the country's economic growth and empowerment in South Korea. Reproductive bodies and tissues are important materials for the development of reproductive technology and biotechnological research. In this context, women and other marginalized bodies have been conceptualized as resources for either scientific experiments or for national economic development, and as a means of national policy. This nationalist discourse combined with scientific advancement shapes what it means to be a "good citizen," a "good woman," and the concept of "good reproduction," all of which overlap with the ideas of gender, sexuality, disability, race, and class. Although the conventional norms of gender, family, and reproduction are often reinforced in this context, they are also being contested with the rise of feminism in Korea. Rather than seeing the Korean case as a "particular" or "exotic" phenomenon, this presentation suggests it as a symptom of the transnational flow of capital, ideas, materials, and bodies.

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For more information contact:
Email: koreanstudies@ucsd.edu