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SYMPOSIUM: MAKING FAMILIES

Migrant extractability: Centring the voices of egg providers in cross-border reproduction


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Michal Nahman is an anthropologist working at the crossroads of medical and political anthropology. She has conducted research in Canada, Israel/Palestine, Romania, Spain and the UK. Her work centres around the interweaving of reproduction with national, border, migration and economic concerns from a feminist technoscience studies and anthropological perspective. Her book *Extractions: an Ethnography of Reproductive Tourism* (Palgrave, 2013) draws on a study of transnational egg donation and in-vitro fertilization between Israel and Romania at the time of the second Palestinian 'Intifada'. She has made an ethnographic film, 'Atomised Mothers: a Film about Isolation, "Austerity" and the Politics of Parenthood' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gOYsr4iYiM>).

Abstract This paper explores reproductive justice from the perspective of those at the beginning of the value chain of reproduction. This vantage point of egg providers can help lend important insights into the wider processes of family-making across borders today. It centres on ethnographic research conducted on contemporary cross-border egg provision performed by female migrant workers in Spain. Through this intersectional perspective, we stand to gain deeper insights into cross-border reproduction more widely. Egg provision can be a way for migrant women to gain temporary financial benefit. In a system that does not provide equal access for migrants to work and care, female migrants make themselves extractable commodities. As such, they are both a commodity and a worker at the same time. The example of female migrant workers providing eggs can be used to reflect more generally on egg provision, and on cross-border reproduction and reproductive justice models as used in queer cross-border family-building. Taken within the broader framework of reproductive justice, and with the struggles of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender cross-border reproduction in mind, the paper begins by asking how three intersecting inequalities due to (1) migration/citizenship, (2) joblessness/contract working and (3) race facilitate the industry of cross-border reproduction? In what ways do female migrant workers mobilize their reproductive potential, including time, whiteness, other racial/phenotypic similarity to commissioning parents, and unstable work lives in cross-border egg donation? The paper ends with an argument for focusing analytical and political attention on the needs of those providing eggs; the most prized material resources for cross-border reproduction. 

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Introduction

The internal and external pressures to reproduce position women and men around the globe in a complex relationship with one other, where one group aim to gain social 'dignity' through parenthood, whilst another group strategically turn themselves into an extractable resource and reproductive worker in order to survive. One 'group' (and I use this term loosely, for commissioning parents and egg providers are anything but a cohesive group of people) can be found taking out second mortgages, loans and credit cards in order to afford to become global consumers of cross-border reproductive services (because it is too expensive or unavailable 'back home') (Speier, 2016). Meanwhile, the other 'group', largely financially precarious women/mothers, living abroad, are providing eggs in exchange for money in order to afford to care for their children and families, complete their studies or just survive (Almeling, 2011; Marre et al., 2017; Nahman, 2016). It is this entwined economic and migratory relationship that forms the backdrop to this paper about the experiences and voices of female migrant egg providers in Spain. Whilst the overlaps between migration and reproduction have been explored more broadly recently (Erel, 2007; Erel and Reynolds, 2018; Gedalof, 2009), few have explored the significance of migration for cross-border reproduction in depth (Inhorn, 2015; Nahman, 2016). Through examples of egg provision practices, I broadly ask how three intersecting inequalities of (1) migration/citizenship, (2) joblessness/contract working and (3) race facilitate the industry of cross-border reproduction? In what ways do female migrant workers mobilize their reproductive potential, including time, whiteness, other racial/phenotypic similarity to commissioning parents, and unstable work lives in cross-border egg donation? In other words, if being an extractable source of cheap labour is a state of being for female migrant workers, how does this intersect with their reproductive labour potential with respect to the egg donation industry?

People who find themselves in need of fertility treatments are coming to depend on the 'bioavailability' (Cohen, 2005; Nahman and Weis, forthcoming) of women who themselves require financial means to survive and raise their own families. This bioavailability requires employing women who are willing to make themselves 'extractable'. This type of relationship has been documented extensively in other arenas such as domestic labour and child care by sociologists studying the 'care deficit' in richer countries in relation to the intimate labour provided by women in poorer countries (Dunaway, 2013; Salazar Parreñas et al., 2016). Here, it is being thought of in relation to the ways in which infertility and its associated industry produce relations and positions that, although varied, are also mutually constitutive within a global economy of value and effect. These intimate relations between differently positioned women and men, for instance, are becoming a new norm (Franklin, 2013).

Whilst this new norm embeds itself globally, there are also emerging discourses that shape and are shaped by it; for instance, the discourse of 'human rights'. From online discussions among in-vitro fertilization (IVF) patients, to policy discussions and advertisements for reproductive services, it seems that fertility is being cast as a 'human right' of sorts.

Within these discourses, the definition of a human right is being stretched to encompass the right of certain groups of people to reproduce. For instance, at the time of writing (Summer 2018), there have been mass protests of tens of thousands in Israel about the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people to surrogacy and other health rights in Israel.¹

Meanwhile, in the UK, National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines encourage the National Health Service (NHS) to provide up to three cycles of IVF. There has been an extension of practices of egg sharing and of social egg freezing (Baldwin et al., 2015). Concomitantly, in recent years, there has been a 'liberalization' of the laws around egg donation, with the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, the UK body that oversees reproductive practices, permitting an egg donor to help create up to 10 families (<http://www.hfea.gov.uk>). This is a particularly expansive number. In tension with this liberalization and with the NICE recommendations, according to a study by Fertility Friends UK, 80% of clinical commissioning groups in the UK actually fail to provide the recommended three cycles of IVF (http://www.fertilityfairness.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/IVF_Infographic-2016.pdf). This has resulted in much discussion in the media and social media regarding the rights of UK women and men to receive treatment for fertility on the NHS.

From the above example from the UK, it appears that having a baby of one's own is an important and deeply felt need as to become a 'right' that is produced in a legal sense in the UK and other national contexts as generously as possible. This resonates strongly with research in Israel, where the right for Jewish people to bear children was deemed so important that Israel became the country with the highest support for IVF per capita in the world (Kahn, 2000; Nahman, 2013). Meanwhile, other European states have made egg donation completely illegal, leading commissioning parents to feel that their right to have a child has been taken away, or that the only route towards achieving this right is through crossing borders for assisted reproductive technology (ART). Cross-border reproduction is a new consumer 'choice' that is framed as a right by those consumers mentioned above, in a context of state facilitation of these practices.

Meanwhile, clinics, whilst making no promises regarding physiognomic similarities, encourage people to imagine having children who look like their parents through descriptions of donors (Kroløkke, 2014; Nahman, 2013). This leads to an intersectional type of hoping of the socially precarious, in which average people in rich countries find themselves trying to adhere to rigid notions of family and kinship by blood. Where being a parent involves having to justify that your children look like you. With reduced or non-existent welfare states, people experience the dual pressures of wanting to have children in order to satisfy multiple internal and external pressures, and wanting to raise children in a good, healthy environment. It appears, in this respect, that we have decided, as a society, that having a baby is a

¹ Only approximately 1000 people have been on recent Israeli protests to the new nation state in Israel that defines Israel as an exclusively Jewish nation state.

human right if you are white and/or in the wealthier ranks. However, we have not decided that having support when you have a baby is a human right. So, even in instances of racial privilege, there is the experience of the tensions of economics of 'austerity' where support for the social reproduction of labour power, or parenting as it's popularly known, is devalued as are the citizens who provide it (i.e. carers, nannies, parents). Taking these multiple pressures of wanting, and affording, to conceive children, together with the ability to then raise these children, is a deliberately critical perspective. It moves us away from a discourse of rights towards a sensibility for justice.

If we examine the definition of reproductive justice offered by Ross, part of the 1994 group of black feminists in the USA who offered this tool to repro politics, she states:

Reproductive justice is based on three interconnected sets of human rights: (1) the right to have a child under the conditions of one's choosing; (2) the right not to have a child using birth control, abortion, or abstinence; and (3) the right to parent children in safe and healthy environments free from violence by individuals or the state (Ross, 2017: 290).

As such, the very definition of reproductive justice centres around human rights. The generous legal framing of the right to ART in some countries involves very particular understandings of 'the human' and 'justice'. For instance, how common is the knowledge in mainstream Western society that Sub-Saharan Africa experiences extremely high rates of infertility? There is a politics to why this type of elision is the case (Hörbst and Wolf, 2014). We can ask many questions based on this and other elisions. For example, given this infertility crisis in Africa, why are embryos not donated by Christian organizations such as Snowflake to women in Africa? What are the cultural social perceived 'risks' of African women bearing white babies? What of the rights of refugee and migrant women to access fertility treatments, given what we know of the traumatic effects of migration upon health? How can lesbians, gay men, trans and queer people more broadly gain better access to fertility treatments and care?

There is insufficient space to attempt to answer all these questions in this discussion, but they are important questions to raise in order to open up this issue of the connections between discourses of reproductive rights of commissioning parents and reproductive justice for egg providers. Yet there is another dimension of the definition of reproductive justice that I take as central here and that is worth examining.

The other aspect of the definition of reproductive justice that is central here is that of race and the whiteness of the majority of egg providers, which stands in (re)productive tension with their economic marginalization – resulting in their extractability. If we examine again what Ross has argued regarding reproductive justice, she suggests that at the centre of '... its foundational analysis [is] a critique of the ideology of white supremacy as it temporally affects reproduction' (Ross, 2017: 292). Thus a discussion of reproductive justice that omits race seems to miss the point. Inspired by this definition, an intersectional view involving an understanding of global 'stratified reproduction', oppression and inequalities frames this paper (Colen, 1986; Crenshaw, 1991). The quotes below, conducted with Northern and Eastern

European women, show that whiteness operates within a racial economy of reproduction as an added extractable resource. I suggest that an understanding of the ways in which class and race inequality and injustice occur within global reproductive practices can be better achieved by in-depth examination of the experiences of the egg providers themselves, and centring their voices. What we need first is a deeper understanding of the whiteness of migrant egg providers.

It is insufficient in this field of study to leave the 'white' category unexamined, the unspoken-about centre of the world. Women who provide eggs are racialized in very particular ways. In their majority in this study, the Romanian, Ukrainian, Latvian and Russian women residing in Spain whom I interviewed are not just white but 'postcolonial white', having come from the racialized margins of Europe (I also interviewed two women from Germany, one woman from Italy, one woman from Colombia and one woman from the Philippines). The 17 women interviewed in this study were all migrants to Spain, and most of them were white and from Eastern and Northern Europe. According to Marre et al. (2017), migrant women comprise approximately 25% of egg providers in Spain. Whilst the study of minoritized whiteness has been rightly criticized for putting whiteness once again at the centre of discussions of race and racism, it is clear that 'postcolonial whiteness' is a category worth employing here, since postcolonial whiteness represents those who would be conventionally identified as white but who, in the context of my research, come from the margins of Europe. Migrants are a prime example of racialized white people (López, 2012). This is not only a racialization that is pan-European (Kroløkke, 2014). Rather, thinking postcolonially helps to remind us that Western and Northern Europe act in a colonial relationship with the rest of the continent. Egg provision, as an extractive process, works by relying on the extractability of some women, in some ways similar to the extractability of their national home markets and lands. This extractability has been demonstrated in research about egg providers who are not migrants, such as American women (Almeling, 2011; Thompson, 2005); Spanish women (Marre et al., 2017) and Romanian women (Nahman, 2013). It is apparent from the data below that the intersection of labour/health and social precarity caused by migration, and racial desirability results in added pressure on women who provide eggs. Their extractability is linked inevitably to egg providers' material needs (their willingness to work unstable hours and contracts) and racial desirability (their physiological appearance, or similarity to commissioning parents, as opposed to a shared national identity or perceived kinship) (Homanen, 2018; Nahman, 2013; Thompson, 2005).

In extracts from interviews, the whiteness of the majority of egg providers is one of the least remarked upon reasons for the desirability of the women. This whiteness presents itself as self-evident, as whiteness does, and not requiring explanation other than that the donors 'resemble' the recipients. Occasionally, the desirability of European appearance is reaffirmed when the non-desirability of 'indigenous-looking' Latin Americans is raised. The women in this study, who are normally desirable to wider society only as low-wage workers in caring or domestic roles, become highly desirable as a cherished source of imagined similarity

(through whiteness) to commissioning parents, and, in fewer instances, through non-whiteness to black, South East Asian and South Asian commissioning parents (Kroløkke, 2014; Gunnarsson, 2015; Thompson, 2001). It is the combined extractability of the donors and their racialization that enables this to happen.

The postcolonial whiteness of the providers can be overlooked once their eggs are used to produce babies for British, German, Danish, Dutch, American or other commissioning parents. I found a very similar process of the erasure of the undesirable (geopolitical) dimensions of white Romanian women providing eggs to Israelis in a study of cross-border egg donation between those two countries (Nahman, 2008, 2013). Thus, this imagined racial similarity helps those who may have other types of imagined 'lack' as citizens – those deemed 'unable to reproduce', and/or who are LGBT and therefore threaten compulsory heteronormative citizenship.² It helps them to be parents and to appear to be biogenetic parents (this paper will not dwell too much on this aspect of the discussion, but is one way in which it connects with the rest of this special issue). The very fact that migrant European donors are desired by clinics and commissioning parents for their whiteness, at the same time as they are desirable to the states that they have migrated to as cheap workers and undesirable as migrants, shows the deep 'institutionalization of European colonialism' as Alfred Lopez suggests in his book *Postcolonial Whiteness* (López, 2012: 19).

In interrogating this concept of whiteness, we get a more refined understanding of the racializing processes of global reproduction. The extracts from interviews below do not contain any direct reference to whiteness, because that is not how race operates with regard to whiteness. It is there, and highly structuring, without needing to be referred to in discussions by donors at all. The women often reiterate what they have been told of their desirability by clinics regarding their physical features, hair and eye colour, beauty, weight and youth. However, whiteness remains largely – as it is in society – hegemonic and uncritically accepted.

The rest of this paper is an analysis of research conducted on the migration–reproduction nexus through the example of cross-border reproduction and 'migrant extractions' in Barcelona, where I have conducted a 2-year ethnographic study of the experiences of migrant egg 'providers'. In the Spanish context, women migrants are 'extractable' due to being both gendered females and migrants, needing employment and requiring means to financially support their children. In the economy of cross-border reproduction, they are both labourers and a commodity at the same time. Providing eggs is something they

may see as a job, or as replacing the need for a job by using a bodily resource.

Context

I led an ethnographic study in Barcelona in 2016–2017.³ There were two partner clinics initially, and recruitment was conducted in the early stages via these clinics and then via snowball sampling. Ethnographic observation was conducted in clinics, and in Barcelona more broadly. I followed the political changes in Spain during the time of the project and before, from the rise of the political party 'Podemos' to the Catalan Independence announcement. I spoke to people resident in Barcelona about their views of the political and economic shifts in order to 'sense the political', a method of understanding culture developed by Yael Navarro-Yashin (2003).

Twelve women who were not born in Spain were interviewed. Four follow-up interviews were conducted, with a total of 17 interviews. The women were aged between 20 and 34 years. They came from Romania, Latvia, Germany, Italy, Russia, Ukraine, Colombia and the Philippines. The women had disclosed that they had provided eggs between one and seven times. Due to the restriction that women only provide eggs for up to six children within Spain, the women may not have been completely forthcoming about the number of eggs donated. Payment per donation is approximately €1000. The local minimum monthly salary is approximately €622 (2016 data).

Spain is the largest European hub for cross-border egg donation, performing 50% of European egg donation cycles (Ferraretti et al., 2017). It is clear that along with being seen as a place where donor eggs are highly available, and will resemble parental physiognomy, Spain is also seen as desirable for a relatively inexpensive and efficient service with high levels of care. However, the women who donate this biological material to create both families and financial profit to clinics are largely invisible (Marre et al., 2017; Nahman, 2013). Their health and well-being is very difficult to track and has not been tracked. We know that migrants experience health issues related to intersecting inequalities, such as being foreign, racialized and having unequal access to economic/material resources (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012).

Female migrant workers comprise approximately 25% of the egg providers in Spain (Marre et al., 2017). Spain provides approximately 50% of the egg donations in Europe, with approximately 18,000 donations reported at the last Europe-wide register of donations (Ferraretti et al., 2017). It is in this context that I have conducted an ethnographic study of egg provision by migrant women in Barcelona. The women participating in this study came largely from Eastern Europe and Latin America. They were recruited through two reputable IVF clinics with sizable cross-border patients from Northern Europe, who desire donors who look similar in terms of skin, eye and hair colour. The reproduction of whiteness in this case involves women who are desirable for their physical traits, but their social class and migration

² The naturalizing of the kin relation between commissioning parents and their imagined children can only work if the women providing eggs look 'similar', racially speaking, to the parents. In my experience, in previous research, parents who did not look conventionally 'European' took an approach of 'lightening' or Europeanizing. This was done in order to 'whiten' themselves via their children (Nahman, 2006). At the same time, there is also the risk of being 'outed' as (in addition to being 'infertile') being racially undesirable. As such, this is very complex from the vantage point of commissioning parents.

³ With generous funding from the University of the West of England, Bristol.

status are hidden from the view of recipients. Indeed, they are presented as middle class for the recipients through various practices. Their migration stories of work, im/mobility, and home and belonging form a rich site in which to expand what is known or thought of when people imagine an egg donor. This type of thinking about reproduction and migration together has been important in order to complicate how we think of both, and much greater exploration is needed (Gedalof, 2009). These intimate stories are cultural sites where citizenship (Roseneil et al., 2013) and race are reproduced.

The interviewees generally came to Spain on their own to escape their home economies, to look for jobs or to study; or with children, parents or siblings. They were mainly employed in relatively low-status jobs, including cleaning, cooking, air hostesses and catering. One was a student, and one owned a bakery and provided eggs 'as a summer job' when business was low. Financial precarity was a significant outcome of the data from second interviews, 1 year after the first interviews. There are indications that, in the first interviews, women presented an image of the 'good donor' to us as researchers, as they do to the clinics, which they hope will gain them a repeat invitation to donate. In these first interviews, women seemed more reluctant to indicate that they were donating due to a need for money. In the second interviews, 1 year later, they were often more forthcoming. It is not possible to draw conclusive answers from this regarding financial instability as motivation, but the data indicate some effects of economic factors on women who are both low paid and migrants. It is this intersection between being a migrant, racialized as white and being a low-paid worker that is drawn out of the following ethnographic accounts.

Making oneself extractable: centring voices of female migrant workers

Alina⁴: [I work] in catering. I make adverts. And people contract us to prepare food for them. But what does that mean? [laughs] – It's a catering business with two lorries. We have two lorries and prepare food inside. We also deliver ready prepared food, but we also cook in the lorries. And get up at 4 am, arrive at work at 4:30 in the morning. We lift and set up all the tables and chairs, we get there at 6, 6:15 sometimes, then we need to have it all set... and then we have to be there until [much later]... [I]f I

didn't have to come here [to the clinic] I would have to stay there. Yesterday I arrived at home at 10 pm.

Alina, a woman who originally migrated from Romania to Spain, was a 30-year-old mother of two at the time of this interview. Her children were aged 1 and 5 years. She talked of her sleeplessness and exhaustion during the interview, and explained that, in her current job, she wakes early in order to be there at 4:30 am to start, which adds to the tiredness. She explained that she had saved enough money to migrate to Spain from doing odd jobs in bakeries and launderettes since she was 14 years of age.

When I interviewed her at the café located in the same complex as the clinic, she indicated ambivalence about her migration to Spain:

Michal: Do you like living here now?

Alina: [very sober voice]. You get used to it.

Michal: Do you think you will stay in Spain?

Alina: Yes.

Michal: Ah, your whole family is here now.

Alina: We all live in the same home – it's a stressful situation. But for the time being, it's what we have. [Takes a very audible breath in] ...Mama, my brother, and we three, as a family. On the one hand, it is good because she helps me with my son, stays with him when I am off to work. It's a support. But on the other hand, there is a lot of criticism – 'that's not good', 'that's not good', 'that's not good' [annoyance].

Alina's story brings into clear view the tensions of precarious working, with unsociable hours, waking at 4 am, and returning home at 10 pm. Were it not for the support of her family, she would have no one to care for her son. For her, the dual pressures of family and work conspire to make life challenging, whilst coming to the clinic from her job in the catering lorry is almost viewed as preferable (otherwise she would still be at her job, with all of its attendant pressures). The pressure on a migrant mother with family criticizing her parenting, with the non-availability of other jobs and the need to save money to support herself and her family is similar in many ways to the pressures on other egg providers. Yet she is even more marginalized in that other forms of work are not available to her. Egg provision can be preferable, allowing for time away from the environment of harsh working conditions, and providing the opportunity to earn more money quickly. Her migrant status is significant as well, in her coded response above; when I asked her if she likes life in Spain, she replied, 'you get used to it'. The labour of 'having to get used to' being a foreigner, including pressures of living in another country, daily interactions in a foreign language, eating different food and being from a nationality (Romanian) that is generally not so well treated around Europe, indicates how postcolonial marginalization is a factor in Alina's egg provision. In contrast to what she has to endure with work and with being in a different country to her birth, egg provision does not seem so onerous.

Julia was a 20-year-old student from Germany who had come to Barcelona to study. In contrast to Alina, Julia was a Western European citizen. It is interesting to note that, for her, the pressures that led her to provide eggs are more akin to many other non-migrant egg providers, in terms of using

⁴ All names are pseudonyms. Many of the interviews were conducted using a translator and/or interviewer in the woman's native language. This means that the dialogue with the women occasionally appears irregular to a native English reader. I have kept some of these irregularities in order to convey a sense of the translation process and of the woman being interviewed making herself understood to an English-speaking interviewer. The process of translating oneself to someone who is not a speaker of your mother tongue is painstaking. It is part of the daily existence of many migrants, that helps to 'other' them in their experiences. It seems ethnographically useful to have the reader experience some of the challenges of translating the self, and to keep a sense of ongoing translation apparent in the text.

it as a gap filler in her income. However, mobility still plays a role in her narrative. She uses her own geographic mobility to enable herself to get out of difficult financial straits. When her funding for university ran out, she decided to become an egg provider. She was highly informed about any risks and effects on her body. She stated:

[A]nd they were straightforward in advertising that you can earn €1000, and I thought 'wow, €1000 that is a pretty high amount' and I considered and considered it. And the deciding factor, more or less, was that it fit well time-wise in terms of my departure (from Spain). Two days before I left for Berlin, I had my aftercare appointment, and after the first two semesters of my studies, I decided upon returning to Germany. And the German government study finance support office notified me that I wouldn't receive [money] in the coming 2 months, because I would be in-between two blocks of study and was like 'hm, ok, I could really use that money' and so I thought 'hey, those €1000 will come in really handy if you don't want to drain your parents until you find a job' and so I thought 'so why not?'

For Julia, egg provision did not become a viable reality until her government funding for her university studies ran out. She frames egg donation as something that one can do instead of a job, or instead of asking one's parents for support. Most of the women narrated providing eggs as a stopgap when work was low or in order to supplement their income. This is similar to much of the research on egg provision, where both altruistic reasons and reasons of financial need are expressed (Almeling, 2011). Marre et al. (2017) indicated the way in which high unemployment rates in Spain also contributed to the rise in local egg donors.

Julia came across as a middle class student who was seeking independence from her parents. Whereas Alina sought escape from work, and financial support for her family, Julia sought to finance herself through her studies, citing time as a factor that contributed to her providing eggs. That is, egg provision fit well with her needs to travel back and forth between Germany and Spain. These two somewhat contrasting examples highlight some of the tensions of mobility and immobility for differently positioned migrant egg providers (Nahman, 2011).

Victoria was a 34-year-old, seven-time egg provider, originally from Ukraine, who had lived in Barcelona for 10 years at the time of the interview. Victoria explained how she got into egg provision:

My mom came here, and she introduced me to the daughter of her friend. She worked in a different clinic, and she told 'come to us, you make money and make a person happy!'

Through her expat community, Victoria was drawn into egg provision through the promise of earning money.

Victoria stated that she first attended a different clinic to the one we were interviewing her in:

And I didn't want to (go through with it). I was really scared. I didn't want. And in the end she *convinced me* and I tried once – but then my husband already objected to me doing that – and I didn't do it anymore. And this time, it was also one of my friends who donated at this clinic, and she told me 'come with me, you are struggling to make ends meet'. [emphasis added].

We see here the mixture between the practicalities of ameliorating her own financial precarity through egg provision, helping someone else to have a child (she was a mother of four herself), and her own fear of donation at the start. However, financial pressure and the words of a friend who had also provided eggs led her to do it again. It is clear that egg provision can be something one has to be convinced to do, even for a precariously positioned migrant.

For Ieva, a woman from Latvia who worked as an event hostess, the temptation to supplement precarious short contract labour with egg provision was strong:

Ieva: Well me,...I wasn't working. I had a 6-month contract, then a 3-month contract, then I worked as a hostess at events, but only like two times a week. Michal: Not steady. Ieva: Not steady. So I said, 'Why not? €1000. Ok for me.'

Job insecurity was central to Ieva's account. For her, egg provision was interpreted as being akin to a form of contract labour. Similar to the Indian female workers who turned to surrogacy as a form of additional contract labour presented in Rudrappa's (2015) book *Discounted Life*, this is a form of 'clinical labour' (Cooper and Waldby, 2014) that migrants can take on in order to cope with the deleterious effects of crossing borders and cultures.

The racialization of the women is something not easy to 'see'. As mentioned earlier, whiteness presents itself through its absence. However, the reason why the women in this study were so desirable is that the majority of clients at these clinics were looking for eggs that would result in children who looked like them. For many commissioning parents, there exists a desire to preserve an imaginary of biogenetic kinship. This works by taking minoritized subjects such as Eastern European migrants, and making legitimate white subjects out of their donated reproductive substance. Another postcolonial white subject, Daniela, is introduced below. Through her, we see this notion of postcolonial whiteness manifest more clearly.

Daniela was a four-time egg provider, originally from Colombia, when she was interviewed in 2016. She was one of the few non-European providers interviewed. In her words, she had provided eggs four times until she found a better paying job:

I didn't have money. So I just – it was that, or, I don't know. I didn't have money. I needed to do something. And I couldn't get a job, because I didn't have papers.... European papers, to enable me to have a job. If you don't have those, you can't work. You are illegal. So – that's why. Because if not ... (...) if you don't need the money, you don't search for these things.

As a woman from Latin America, Daniela looked Southern European. She had dyed blonde hair and light brown/olive toned skin. She did not 'look indigenous' in the way that the workers in the Spanish clinics tended to discuss Latin American indigeneity. Her being perceived as not looking indigenous was a racializing of her as 'white' and therefore acceptable. This meant that her eggs would have been desirable to a Spanish or other Southern European or Arab commissioning parent. She embodied the postcolonial white subject. Through discussions with clinicians in Spain, it has become apparent that

they are careful when they select providers from Latin American countries to ensure that the child does not look indigenous, which, in the context of Spain, is considered an undesirable phenotype.

Here, the intersection of her racialization, migrant status, and economic and legal precarity formed the core of Daniela's justification for taking on egg provision. She indicates that desperation can form a driver for migrants, and suggests that the law can stand in the way of securing gainful employment. When she states, 'if you don't need the money, you don't search for these things', the phrase 'these things' is a euphemism, not only for egg provision but for earning money through problematic means that commodify the body. Daniela was one of few women who discussed lacking legal status to work in Spain, but this dimension also forms part of the nuance about cross-border egg provision we get from the voices of the providers themselves.

Returning to Victoria, who worked one steady job and took on other jobs working in a factory and a shop in addition to her first job, the lack of work opportunities for migrants was emphasized thus:

It's not easy to find work, especially for foreigners it is not easy, at all. But it's necessary to go and search, go and ask and go and search... There was a period, when I gave birth to the third child, and I received maternity leave, and that year I didn't work at all, but received money. So now I work from 5 pm onwards, and then I took another job, like from 6 am to 2 pm in a factory, or other such kind, so I am able to combine working with egg providing.

Victoria illustrates how working part-time, shift jobs can enable taking on egg provision as it leaves a few hours in the day for attending clinic appointments. The fragmented and low-paid nature of her employment are facilitative of her providing eggs. This is similar to experiences of egg providers more widely, who may be mothers working numerous part-time jobs and who are low paid.

Victoria continued:

I don't know... to be honest, for me [egg provision] was an exit from a situation where I had little employment – because, that money (that you get for egg provision) is material help – it allows something at a given moment – for school, celebrations, paying things for the children. When I became single, I was on my own. I didn't have support – that is difficult here to live on your own. In order to live properly, you need two earners – with a friend, a female friend, to allow yourself other expenditure – but I didn't have any of that. And then there is the fourth child – who needs care and so on. And once I had paid for rent and for school and for all the bills, nothing was left. And then there is a moment when you want to get something for yourself and cannot – and other girls experience alike. One (woman in a clinic) told me 'desire for something [for yourself will come so] give a gift to yourself and to somebody else'.

Victoria demonstrates clearly the material lack of so many women in society where steady and sufficient income is difficult for many to achieve, and where – often for pragmatic reasons – people join forces to pool earnings in order to live and survive. This is the case not only for migrant women, but can be more extreme in the case of migrants. Economic crisis in Spain, the effects of migration and a

sense of one's own financial instability push female migrant workers to seek or come to an acceptance of providing eggs. This process of moving across borders under constraint, being a worker who struggles to find steady paid labour, being a mother (in many of the cases), and – at the same time – being white (or of an ethnicity the clinic requires in order to satisfy commissioning parents' requests) is what makes them extractable. They use their own extractability as a type of paid reproductive labour to clinics. In this sense, they are both a commodity and a labouring subject at the same time.

In the first interviews, women often suggested that they were providing eggs altruistically, echoing some of the bioethical literature on the subject (Pennings et al., 2014). However, interviews with the same women 1 year later indicate that the logic of financial need emerges quite significantly. Their combined social status as migrant, female, mother, and often from countries deemed to be on the margins of Europe or from Latin America is what drives their extractability. This intersectional view of how one is extractable gives a clearer view of the politics of reproduction. They are migrant workers who find niches in an increasingly unstable global market of labour. This perspective produces a different image of egg donors than that presented by the wider egg donation industry. Whilst they are protected by medical and ethical systems that guard against their bodily exploitation, the system of financial reward for their egg provision ensures that they are economically exploited workers who sell their labour power to clinics in order to earn money to support themselves. Being migrants, they are particularly vulnerable to such economic exploitation.

Being able to donate many times with no limits other than a law, which they can (and do) easily evade, not truly knowing the risks, turning themselves strategically and repeatedly into a highly prized reproductive worker and extractable commodity means that their bodies are not simply bioavailable or biodesirable. Their fleshy life-giving bodies are a material lived negation of the liberal notions of freedom and safety that the European legal system is meant to ensure.

As Daniela, introduced above, said, 'I am worried, because I need the money, the mom is worried because she needs the baby, and the clinic just need the money. Everyone cares. Cares and not cares.' Here Daniela highlights the mutual entanglement between the commissioning parents and the egg provider. She constructs her own extractability and position in the relations through notions of caring and who cares about whom or what. We are left with the slightly ambiguous, 'and not cares'. Egg providers' extractability is formed precisely at the junction of the ability of everyone 'to not care', in a sense, about making her extractable.

Conclusions

Migration, and a combination of the effect of crossing borders, legal systems, cultures, practices of citizenship and discriminatory employment, increase the need for female migrant workers to exploit their reproductive capacities and whiteness. It is both about, and precisely because of, the intersections of their femaleness, their foreign origins

and economic instability that women are desirable and extractable. The discursive and material mechanisms for realizing their extractability reside directly in these mutually supporting inequalities and the particularity of their mutual entanglement.

This analysis of the experiences of migrant egg providers both confirms and extends our understandings of egg provision in the social sciences. Whilst it has been shown previously that women provide eggs in their home countries out of economic need (Almeling, 2011; Gupta, 2012; Marre et al., 2017; Nahman, 2011, 2013), the particularities of precarious labour, unstable family arrangements, visas and health implications of migration lend another dimension that helps to deepen the understandings of the workings of transnational reproductive politics as well as lending insights into race/racism, the migration–reproduction nexus and women’s work. Making oneself extractable and being desirable for one’s imagined racial and other qualities are processes that happen in many other repro-national (and transnational) contexts (Almeling, 2011; Gunnarsson, 2015; Gupta, 2012; Gurtin, 2011; Inhorn, 2015; Kroløkke, 2015; Marre et al., 2017; Schur, 2017; Whittaker and Speier, 2010; Zanini, 2011). Centring egg providers’ perspectives and voices in these other studies seems an important intervention. In particularly strained economic and political times, such as the West is currently experiencing, the examples in this paper allow us to see the contradictory ways in which egg providers negotiate becoming extractable.

Every time a white donor is matched with a white commissioning parent, we have a reinstatement of ‘race’ (Homanen, 2018; Nahman, 2013). Built into this reproduction of whiteness is the reproduction of the inferiority of what is not white. Built into it also is the inequality of the minoritized white subjects (through being migrants, marginal Europeans and/or working class) whose bodies are made extractable by themselves and the clinic, and a global set of relationships that require racial ‘kinship’ involving looking similar.⁵ The act of cross-border reproduction in surrogacy and egg donation when it comes to white commissioning parents (and there is a flourishing market of reproduction across racialized groups) can therefore be viewed through the lens of reproducing whiteness. Parental desire for a baby becomes a moment of race production, not just a procreative one (Strathern, 1995).

The notion of ‘reproductive justice’ has had a resurgence and expanded application into the area of cross-border reproduction, IVF, surrogacy and egg donation. It has, in some instances, been cast as being about the rights of certain (often privileged) groups to reproduce. As this special issue demonstrates, the need to look at it from the perspective of queer and other subjectivities is very important. I suggest that the perspectives of egg providers should be central to this discussion. Their perspectives inevitably present a view of these practices from the vantage point of racially desirable and socially and economically marginalized subjects. It is not possible to simply

say that egg donors are ‘exploited’ along lines of migration, race, gender and class. This paper has presented an intersectional analysis demonstrating that the ways in which they become ‘extractable’ are unique and specific. Female workers who provide eggs in exchange for money undergo processes of making themselves extractable, and they do so for varied reasons in different historical time frames and political–economic contexts. Migrant women who do this lend a view of an even more deeply extractable population than local donors given the instabilities and vulnerabilities that are specific to these experiences. If we employ the notion of reproductive justice to apply equally to egg providers as it does to those commissioning eggs and surrogates, we have potential for a greater sense of the ‘justice’ aspect of reproductive justice.

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⁵ It must be added here that for non-white donors and commissioning parents, there also exists a process of reproducing race, or sameness, as in the case of South East Asian and South Asian commissioning parents who want a donor who will reflect their own appearance.

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