

PhD Dissertation Proposal

**«Women’s Bodily Citizenship and Assisted Reproductive Technologies in Postcommunist
Context: Case of Russia»**

Introduction

Technologies of “artificial fertilization” have been widely used since the birth of Louise Brown in 1978. However, first studies of the invitro fertilization emerged only in the late 1980s – early 1990s. By the beginning of XXI century, these studies had become a separate sub-discipline of the Assisted Reproduction Studies. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of “artificial fertilization” remains poorly understood from several points of view: medical, biological, demographical, social. One of the reasons for that is because the phenomenon touches upon “extremely emotional and morally contentious issues of life” (De Jong, Tkach 2009).

Unsurprisingly, both public and personal opinions with respect to ARTs remain polarized. In addition, ARTs are an object of an intense media debate, which is especially notable in the Russian context (De Jong, Tkach, 2009). The case of women’s bodily citizenship development in Russia is special, because the construction of discourse about Russian women’s bodily citizenship has been heavily affected by the existing political regime.

The communist totalitarian regime played a role of such a factor in XX century. Nowadays, in the context of worldwide “democratic recession”, scholars define Russian political environment, which became more restrictive since mid-2000s, as “semiauthoritarian”, “hybrid”, “soft authoritarian” or “hegemonic authoritarian” regime. Meanwhile, feminist scholars argue that in postcommunist context “patriarchal, neotraditional ideology” has been developed. According to that ideology the political system and reproductive policy are characterized by “sexist policies and practices” (Johnson, Saarinen, 2013).

As the contemporary scholars point out, discourse about the use of ARTs in Russia has an ambiguous character. On the one hand, it is an instrument of the bio-power of the state; on the other hand, it is a part of women’s reproductive rights in the Russian neo-conservative context, characterized by the turn to “traditional values”, in which the use of ARTs is not seen as independent reproductive strategy (Stella, Nartova, 2015).

However, there still exists a general lack of academic knowledge regarding the connections between the ARTs and the women’s bodily citizenship. Moreover, there are no

studies, which address the issues of ARTs in the Russian context of the women's bodily citizenship. This gives grounds for the following research questions: How are discourses on ARTs constructed in Russia? How these discourses influence the women's bodily citizenship in Russia? How could the issues dealing with ARTs be incorporated into the bodily citizenship theoretical framework? Therefore, the goal of my research is to analyze the discourses about the use of ARTs in Russia and to develop a more profound theoretical understanding of women's bodily citizenship concept.

This paper starts with a brief literature review on citizenship, considered in the frame of gender studies. I continue to explore the concept of bodily citizenship in my theoretical framework, arguing that it represents the most suitable approach to study Russian media discourse on ARTs. Finally, I examine the expected outcomes of my prospective research.