

Junghun Oh
UC San Diego

Let Us Show Our True Lives: How Korean Activist Mothers of People with Developmental Disabilities Create Epistemological Resources in Society

Mothers of people with developmental disabilities (DDs) in South Korea have long fought on behalf of their children for disability justice in welfare laws and policies. The scope of their struggles is wide; they not only strive to improve the social and material conditions of their children's lives but also the epistemological conditions for disability justice (i.e., the social understanding of disability) to enhance the visibility of people with DDs and their families who care for them as well as the intelligibility of their narratives. In so doing, these women attempt to convince other members of society of their demands. Then, how have these women created epistemological resources to pursue disability justice and welfare policy for fairness and equity for the disabled? In this presentation, I will demonstrate two kinds of social ignorance that these activist mothers have faced in Korean society; then, I will introduce their militant and aggressive strategies – occupation and kinship abandonment, shaving heads, and kneeling. In so doing, I will explore how these women intentionally and unintentionally transgress the gendered norms and motherhood ideology in Korean culture to achieve their goals.

Junghun Oh is a Ph.D. candidate in the department of Sociology at UC San Diego. She is currently working on her dissertation titled *Caring for Hermeneutical Justice: Mothers' Social Struggles for Disability and Care in South Korea*. Based on the fifteen-month fieldwork and an analysis of a ten-year archive, she discusses how Korean activist mothers of people with developmental disabilities redefine their social identities while imagining alternative arrangements of care through disability rights and policy changes.