

Liston, 2006). Whilst epidurals can and do slow labour, it is not via the mechanism she states and the quote itself if taken out of context from a paper that in fact seems to demonstrate that epidurals do not lead to more caesarean births.

From a public health perspective she again sometimes seems to lack a crucial understanding of the physiology of birth. On page 16 there is the startling ecological fallacy that, because the USA has a rate of caesarian that is far too high, “Vaginal birth, then, is unquestionably safer for women and babies than are c-sections.” It is true that a rate of caesarian section above a small amount, the World Health Organisation (WHO) provides a baseline figure of 5–15% as appropriate (WHO, 1985), increases maternal morbidity and mortality. However, what is true for the population is not always true for the individual, and a rate that is too high will contain the rate that is most beneficial. There are a tiny minority of pregnant women who need a skilled and affordable surgeon to save their lives. Globally, most women do not get this help (Stanton & Ronsmans, 2008). She does contextualise this later in the chapter, but I found such a bald and unquestioning statement at odds with an otherwise reasonably considered work on the delicate balance between choice and safety in birth.

One of the most valuable elements of Morris's book is her vigorous debunking of the “too push to push” myth. That women are the ones choosing caesarian sections seems happily no truer in the USA than it is in Europe. This issue is clouded by the coding of birthing events in the UK, for instance, if a woman with a breech presentation is given the option of a caesarian, but told her baby could die if she does not accept, this is still recorded as ‘maternal choice’. Morris discusses the “subtle framing” of ‘choices’ in maternity and as both a mother, a midwife and a medical anthropologist I recognised the experiences her participants related to her. She tells us that it is not as simple as just manipulating the presentation of risk, but that the whole organisational model is set to make certain decisions ‘more right’ than others.

“Women are invited to exercise unlimited autonomy within the limited range of choices presented to them by the medical profession”.

[Pg. 150, quoting Veronique Bergeron]

Though on the surface Morris's work is a feminist critique of the “c-section epidemic”, there seems to be more weight and time given to the professionals' analysis of the problem. Women are very much the passive patients in this research and their voice is plaintive in the tone of her work. Like the systems she criticises, women are created victims by her framing of their experiences

This basic omission of the study, women's active voice, is perhaps because Weberian analysis of an organisation is often culpable of oversimplification and of a lack of focus on the wider cultural aspects of human action. Therefore, the mothers in Morris's book (and as patients) are very much situated as the ‘done to’ group, and the solutions she presents for them are from the position of the vulnerable trying to regain some power; “women should take independent child-birth education classes” (pg. 155).

On a superficial level this is true, women are vulnerable within the maternity services and ‘fighting’ the system from

within is often not possible. My question would be however, not ‘how can we be less vulnerable’ but ‘what is it in our society that creates this vulnerability’.

In summary, Morris book only answers the following key question in part: A woman giving birth is a powerful being at her most powerful moment; how has the business of birth, and the politics of gender, led to such an extreme reversal of the story?

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Phoebe Pallotti
School of Public Health, The University of Sheffield, UK
E-mail address: p.pallotti@sheffield.ac.uk

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Dilemmas of adulthood: Japanese women and the nuances of long-term resistance, Nancy Rosenberger. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu (2013). ISBN: 978-0-8248-3696-2 209 pp.

Dilemmas of adulthood is based on a longitudinal study. In 1993 the author located and interviewed single Japanese women who were then between 25 and 35 years of age; she then interviewed the same women in 2004. One of the strengths of the book lies in the long-term relationship that Nancy Rosenberger had with this group of about 40 women. As a cultural anthropologist, Rosenberger (2001) has successfully traversed the “anthropological moment.” She began exploring the lives of some of the women in her book *Gambling with virtue*, where she tracked the changes in women's lives from the 1970s through the 1990s. The present book focuses on women who came of age in late-modern Japan, a period that is also referred to as the era of neoliberalism, late capitalism and postmodernism (p. 20).

Rosenberger found that some of the women remained single, some were married with children, others were married with no children and a few were cohabiting (although usually secretly). One of the main contributions of the book to the growing study of women and gender in Japan is the heterogeneity of the women. Studies of women in Japan have tended to focus on urban areas, thus the opportunity in this book to listen to the

voices of rural women and women from a provincial city is valuable. The coexistence of narratives of women from different social classes is also of special value. That some of the women reside in Tohoku, one of the areas strongly associated with the 2011 triple disaster, makes their cases even more interesting (see the Epilogue). The book is written in an accessible manner and is full of vignettes, quotes from interviews and personal narratives as well as the thoughts of the anthropologist, who is highly familiar with the sociocultural context of the narratives.

But the book aims at going beyond women's narratives. It has an all-inclusive theoretical goal. As reiterated by the author, the theoretical mission that she took on is investigating the nature of long-term resistance. Rosenberger even shares with her readers her initial concern regarding "to what extent could [I] tell this story in terms of agency and resistance and still be fair to the stories these women were telling [me]?" (p. 4). The ambiguities in the women's narratives made Rosenberger reluctant to speak in terms of agency. However, as she openly discloses, she finally found the concept that "fits": "long-term resistance," especially as articulated by Comaroff and Comaroff (1991), who wrote about a "tense middle ground between the said and unsaid" (p. 11).

Starting from the Comaroffs, Rosenberger draws on other general theories offered by scholars including Melucci, Ortner, Foucault and Bourdieu. From Melucci she takes, for example, the idea that women participate in a "new kind of social movement that features the ambiguous, uncertain resistance" that she has found among the women. According to Rosenberger, this kind of resistance is "not an active, organized rebellion" (p. 46). Following Melucci (1989), Rosenberger suggests that through their dissatisfaction with the "cultural code," women develop self-reflection and the ability to think about themselves and their world (esp. pp. 46–48).

The book is abundant with theoretical evidence, as well as some empirical evidence, that supports the use of "long-term" resistance as an analytical tool to look at people's lives. However, my main point of criticism lies exactly at this totalizing theoretical aim. I certainly believe that as cultural anthropologists we should endorse a theory-generating approach to our ethnographies. However, "theory" in anthropology should always be generated from the field and not be imposed on it. In other words, while the idea of

long-term resistance that is characterized by hesitant steps in the midst of the pressure to conform is backed up by some of the narratives in the book, mainly of those categorized as "successful singles," it does not necessarily apply to other cases, for example, "mothers at home" or "caretakers." Moreover, this attempt to construct a general theory ends up with some of the main ideas not fully explained. To mention a few examples, I was left with no satisfactory explanation as to what the "cultural code" refers to. Is it merely "the cultural expectations of self-sacrifice a woman must fulfill in entering her husband's household and making a family" as implied on p. 47? Or, is it more than that? Do women really sacrifice themselves in building a family? *All* women under *any* circumstances? What do they sacrifice? Another example relates to Melucci's idea of "new social movement". According to Rosenberger, "young people and women" (see p. 47 and p. 158) develop dissatisfaction with the cultural code, but is it only young men yet also women at any age? And what about the influence of social class and marital situation?

To summarize, the main contribution of the book is the heterogeneity of the stories and rich narratives it provides. At the same time, the book might have been improved if heterogeneity (or, even better, flexibility) would have been maintained theoretically as well.

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Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni
Tel Aviv University, Israel

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