

Bio

Pamela Runestad, PhD

Pronouns: she/her/hers

Assistant Professor of Global Health Studies

Allegheny College

520 N. Main St.

Meadville, PA 16335

Title

A collaboration between mother and baby: Sophrology in maternity clinics in Japan

Abstract

Scholars of health and medicine have long recognized that behaviors and dialogues related to reproductive labor and parenthood reflect national ideals of gendered citizenship, as well as cultural differences in biomedical practice and the structure of healthcare systems. In contemporary Japan, which is suffering from a decreasing birth rate as well as a lack of childcare facilities although there is a socialized medical system, some women are opting out of marriage and childbearing altogether. But for those who do have children, experiences of pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care are more varied and more international than typical narratives about it Japan - both domestic and foreign - typically suggest. In this paper, I draw on ethnographic research conducted at a small, rural maternity clinic in central Japan that specializes in Sophrology - a “natural” birthing method invented by a Colombian psychiatrist-neurologist who was interested in Buddhist meditation and yogic practice - to illustrate how ideas about health and wellbeing are constantly circulated and rearticulated to fit evolving ways of being Japanese.