

## Summaries of articles

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# SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

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## **Unity and diversity in feminist research and action**

*Huguette Dagenais*

In this introduction, the author presents the diverse contributions (four articles, two research notes, a review essay and a dossier), contained in the volume 4, number 2 issue of *Recherches féministes*. The four articles treat respectively the problem of identifying women in the field of « women and development » (Marie France Labrecque) ; women of the Third Reich (Monique Moser-Verrey) ; Idola Saint-Jean, a Quebecer feminist (Diane Lamoureux) and women artists of the Spanish Basque country (Lourdes Méndez). They are followed by two research notes bearing, one on women's movements in Brazil (Elisabeth Souza Lobo) and the other on how to develop a feminist practice in the field of occupational health (Karen Messing), and a dossier on feminist experts testifying at tribunals, presenting three personal experiences (Micheline Dumont, Claudine Baudoux and Cécile Coderre). The author notes the following recurrent themes : the importance of transmitting a feminist tradition ; the public-private dichotomy ; the link between the force of feminist struggles and the violence in the reactions they provoke, and the transformation of language in order to acknowledge women.

## **Women and development : who are these women ?**

*Marie France Labrecque*

Women, hierarchies, development and research constitute the main themes of this article which calls attention to the multiple hierarchies in which women live. Based on data from the peasantry of rural Yucatan in Mexico, the article emphasises the importance of taking into account the daily settings in which women evolve in order to understand the hierarchies which characterise their lives. The author attempts to show how this approach, focused on the multiple dimensions of women's daily lives, allows researchers to challenge different concepts and to question the dominant approaches in the domain of development.

## **Women of the Third Reich**

*Monique Moser-Verrey*

Women's Studies concerned with women and fascism tend to be more critical in the nineteen eighties than they were in the seventies. Instead of only condemning the male oriented Nazi system, they try to understand the implication of women in the deadly mechanism of the Third Reich. A general overview of this issue shows the image of German women in the twenties and thirties and comments on women's associations and movements, their struggles, their submission and finally their dilemmas and errors, as they appear in literature and research.

## **Idola Saint-Jean and feminist radicalism between the First and Second World Wars**

*Diane Lamoureux*

For us, suffragists usually appear as bourgeois women, totally outmoded if we consider their ideas and their tactics. However, the feminist movement that developed between the two world wars was as diversified as it is nowadays. Taking Idola Saint-Jean as a prism, it is possible to enlighten this feminist past and reconsider it in the larger context of the development of a social reform movement. This, in turn, allows us to evaluate the radical content of Idola Saint-Jean's political thought, which is characterized by such ideas as democracy and social justice as well as an acute feeling of the antagonism between men and women, feeling structuring her political action.

## **Men see differences, women do not : women artists in the field of artistic production**

*Lourdes Méndez*

Looking at the concept of the sex/gender system from a theoretical point of view, the author analyses the interactions between women artists, their work, their social and sexual identity and their struggle to obtain social legitimacy. The analysis of these interactions brings to light a symbolic universe where women experience conflicts and contradictions individually. These conflicts and contradictions are fundamentally manifested in the sex/gender system which perpetuates social relations of domination between men and women.

## **Women's movements and political representation in Brazil (1980-1990) : the gender of representation**

*Elisabeth Souza Lobo*

In this note, the author examines the Brazilian literature on social movements and on women's participation in these movements, looking in particular at those based on daily life and on the articulation of private and public practises (mothers' clubs, urban social movements, demands for daycare, lodging, etc.). She further looks at the emergence of questions concerning citizenship and equality and at women's representation in political and union institutions. She concludes that, in Brazil, the deep involvement of women in social movements has not brought them political legitimacy.

## **How can we develop a feminist practice in occupational health ?**

*Karen Messing*

An incident is described which gave rise to speculation on the relationship between feminist researchers in occupational health and safety and the women workers under study. A researcher studied the work activity of women who clean toilets in French trains. In order to portray the difficulties of this work, she wished to photograph the women at work. Some women objected to being photographed during the cleaning activity. It is hypothesized that the class difference between researchers and workers may conflict with the concordance of interests based on feminist analysis. Researchers' own working conditions may reinforce the effects of class differences, interfering with feminist research in occupational health and safety. Solutions are proposed which involve changes in the research granting system.

## **Sex and gender in language : fifteen years of feminist research in the United States and West Germany**

*Claire Michard, Catherine Viollet*

This article analyses feminist research orientations dealing with sex and language which evolved in the United States and West Germany from 1970 to 1985. With regard to their own work, the authors try to determine in a general conclusion the implicit sociological and linguistic postulates underlying the American and German research.

## **History in the box**

*Micheline Dumont*

In 1988, an historian prepared a testimony in a discrimination case presented at the *Commission des droits de la personne*. This experience offers the opportunity to suggest a few ethical and theoretical reflexions on the links between feminist research and the political reality of women.

## **The expert on the stand : reflections on a testimony at the *Commission des droits de la personne***

*Claudine Baudoux*

The author was asked to testify for the defense in a case of systemic discrimination in front of the *Commission des droits de la personne*. In this analysis of the ambiguity surrounding the roles of researcher, expert and feminist researcher which she was expected to perform simultaneously, she concludes that feminists have to participate in such a process, without entertaining illusions as to the results, in order to avoid leaving the « stage » empty and make a breach in the patriarchal system.

## **Accusation withdrawn : an account of testifying against a distributor of pornography**

*Cécile Coderre*

In May 1985, there was a law suit against the distributor of an issue of *Penthouse* magazine that was the object of controversy. Within the women's movement, judicial actions to oppose the pornographic industry are subject to contestation. Nevertheless, a certain number of women realized that these action had to be done. This essay exposes the context in which the trial took place as well as the issues at stake.