

Summaries of articles

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Théorie, méthode, pratique

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SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

Theory, method, practice : singular points of view, plural approaches

Huguette Dagenais

The articles contained in this issue of *Recherches féministes* illustrate three strong trends in present day feminist research. S. Deguire and K. Messing's article on health status indicators and C. Bernier's on Francophone identity discourses in Ontario pursue the feminist critique of pseudo neutral scientific production and sexist biases. A second trend is the closer attention now devoted to feminists themselves, for example, in their knowledge production, as done here by M. Vatz Laaroussi, D. Lessard, M.-E. Montejo and M. Viana; in their grass-root organizations, analyzed by G. Côté and M.-A. Couillard; in publishing, as in M.-J. des Rivières' note of the popular magazine *La Vie en rose*; and in their actions for the recognition of women's generic competencies, as described here by C. Solar. A third trend, particularly in Quebec, is the collaboration of feminist researchers with government and other institutions in producing information that can directly influence decisions affecting women. It is illustrated here by T. Hamel and M. Morisset's article on women's involvement in agricultural production and by F. Richer and L. St-Cyr on women successors on family farms in Quebec. This issue would not have been complete without some insights from the Huairou NGO Forum and the Beijing Fourth UN World Conference on Women, presented here through the testimonies of three Quebecuers, M. Beauregard, M. Malavoy and G. Hofmann Nemiroff, who participated in these conferences.

Is the study of work absence gendered?

Suzanne Deguire and Karen Messing

For over twenty years, feminist researchers have examined sexist biases in the natural sciences, often in the health sciences. This article reports on such biases in occupational health concerning the choice of health status indicators. Several researchers have proposed that sick leave might be a useful indicator of occupational health problems in employment sectors where work accidents are infrequent, for example in jobs traditionally assigned to women. The authors examine 45 studies of employment absence in order to relate the potential determinants of absence to the sex of subjects and characterize the treatment of sex as a variable. Three-quarters of the studies examined did not take into account work, life experiences and biological factors specific to women.

Feminist and intercultural methodology : a multifaceted alliance

Michèle Vatz Laaroussi, Diane Lessard, Maria Elisa Montejo and Monica Viana

This article deals with the conditions of production of an area of knowledge linking feminism to cultural pluralism. It is based on a study of immigrant women identity strategies in the Sherbrooke area, an experience which involved women as researchers, interviewers, and participant-subjects. The article explains the principles and strategies of the feminist approach and the intercultural current which informed methodological choices. It also analyzes the difficulties and uncertainties which confront researchers engaged in the production of knowledge linking women and culture. The authors emphasize, as the "analyzer" of this process, the entire range of interactions produced within and between the three groups of women in the study.

Women and ethnicity in French Ontario

Christiane Bernier

This article assesses current discourses on francophone identity in Ontario. More specifically, it compares the discourses on sexual and ethnic dimensions of identity, and it identifies similarities and differences between the two. This analysis is based on a study of forty texts published between 1978 and 1994. Where the two discourses diverge, their differences are a consequence of different theoretical positions with regards to minority issues. Where the two discourses converge, their similarities are a result of the nationalist ideology that animates them both. Finally, the limits of both discourses are made apparent: neither accounts for the pluralism and diverse identities that exist in postmodern societies.

The determinant factors in women's involvement in agricultural production in Quebec

Thérèse Hamel and Michel Morisset

The last fifteen years allowed the women working in agriculture to get organized within a Federation and to claim legal recognition. A program providing grants for the establishment on farms, put in place by the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation, facilitated their access to property. With a broad survey, this article analyses the work performed by women on farms, makes a portrait and scrutinizes the efficiency of the program to facilitate access to property.

Women successors on family farms in Quebec

Francine Richer and Louise St-Cyr

Daughters taking over the family farm is an emerging economic and social phenomenon. Research performed in the eighties has exposed the role played by women in the field of agriculture: either as collaborators or as partners, women were not always given credit for their work nor was their importance recognized. Traditionally assisting their spouses, women have evolved on the farm as in other walks of life to a level at which they now sometimes share equal partner status with their consort. This article indicates that daughters who participate in the running of Quebec family farms follow a peculiar path in that their ownership aspirations are thwarted by the ever-present father-son succession tradition. It recounts the story of 15 women who succeeded in this most difficult endeavour. Beyond the socio-economic data related to the individuals, their families and their businesses, the authors demonstrate the extent to which the succession plans have for all intents and purposes ignored daughters as likely inheritors, irrespective of their avowed interest and strong ties to the family farm.

Individual itineraries for a collective project: women working in feminist grass-root organizations around Quebec City

Ginette Côté and Marie-Andrée Couillard

Through its quest for autonomy, feminism allows women who have not had the occasion to do so, to inscribe themselves into modernity. To achieve this collective project, grass-root organizations have been created in order to empower women. Among those involved in these groups, some are proud to claim their feminist allegiance as a political strategy, others confine themselves to offering services while others still say they work towards more happiness for women. Most of these women are well educated; some receive a salary for their work while others do it on a voluntary basis; some do administrative tasks while others intervene directly into women's lives. Various life itineraries underlie these different practices as revealed by the 30 interviews carried out in grass-root groups of the Quebec City area. The data gathered during this research is used here to identify various personal itineraries which, while they all participate in this collective project, are not without causing some tension whenever they intersect.

***La Vie en rose* (1980-1987) : a colourful feminist magazine**

Marie-José des Rivières

From 1980 to 1987, in the mist of Quebec's feminist media culture, *La Vie en rose* sold on average 20 000 copies per issue. This research note analyzes the evolution and the disappearance of this tri-monthly, and later monthly, magazine. It describes its objectives, its contents, and its readers, as well as the importance it gave to literature, particularly short stories. Can a feminist «combat» periodical survive in the mediatic jungle?

Questions de compétences or household work and the labour market

Claudie Solar

This article presents *Question de compétences*, a training kit which was elaborated in a joint venture between COFFRE, Relais-femmes and the Canadian Institute for Adult Education (CIAE). Through a feminist critique of prior learning assessment and competence assessment which first developed in North America through a male perspective, the author sets forth an appreciation of the training tool and its original contribution to the definition of generic competences related to housework.

Around Beijing : Huairou NGO Forum 1995

Micheline Beauregard

The NGO forum on women was held at Huairou from August 30th to September 8 1995, in parallel with the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women going on in Beijing. The author was a participant at the Forum; she reviews the event, emphasizing the rise of conservatism she could sense. She also presents a new international francophone network which was formally created at Huairou.

When all the shouting's over : was it worth it?

Greta Hofmann Nemiroff

This article describes the general conditions which prevailed at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women and its NGO Forum in Beijing. In particular, the author focuses on the UN Conference and on the intellectual and political struggle between fundamentalist and «family values» forces and feminist theoreticians and activists on issues pertaining to women's rights versus cultural practices, women's reproductive rights, and the rights of lesbians to be protected from discrimination. She concludes with an account of the resolution of these conflicts in the final wording of the *UN Platform for Action*.