

## Summaries of articles

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# SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

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## **Hidden knowledge, ignored care, institutions to redefine : a feminist research program on women's health**

*Micheline Beauregard and Maria De Koninck*

This introduction examines the evolution of feminist reflections and studies in the field of health research, emphasizing the convergence of present preoccupations toward epistemological issues. The authors insist on the necessity to challenge not only established assumptions but also the modes of construction of knowledge on women's health and on the problematics which concern them.

## **Care practices in peril : between necessity and exclusion**

*Francine Saillant*

This article analyzes recent writings on care practices. The following dimensions are examined. First, care practices are defined by their content and their domestic and professional expressions, and by their links with the social production of health. In addition to their content, caring practices imply moral values and attitudes showing the importance of affective involvement and protection. As systems of knowledge, they receive little social recognition, in spite of anthropological confirmation of their importance in the survival of human populations. Finally, the present social crisis concerning care practices is discussed.

## **Health, the invisible production of women**

*Geneviève Cresson*

How can one present lay persons' work in the field of health care when it is recognized neither by sociology, nor by professionals, nor by women themselves, its main producers? Paradoxically, an indirect approach through different discourses of mothers who deny the existence of such work, underestimate it, or insist on its limits, permits one to explore its complexity and to give full importance to the social relations in which this lay work is accomplished and takes its full meaning.

**"I was born in my parents' bed" - Contribution to the study of home birth in Marseille at the beginning of the twentieth century***Anissa Hélie*

This research brings back to life the memories of now elderly mothers. Oral investigation becomes a precious source of information; through individual women's experiences appears a reality which transcends a strict family framework. This is an evolving reality, however, since critical events for home delivery were occurring in France during the first decades of the 20th century : changes in obstetrical techniques, generalization of hospital birth and integration of midwives as salaried health auxiliaries into the medical system.

**Becoming a nurse : the expression of a culture of caring in the twentieth century***Johanne Daigle*

This article deals with learning systems for nurses in hospital schools. Retracing the historical path of many generations of students, one discovers the making and application of the "nursing culture" in the twentieth century. This culture was built within a system of unequal relations in which the access to knowledge was dependant upon the feminine ethic of voluntary service, women identifying with a caring role. How does one become a nurse? The evolution of professional training within a model institution, namely the Jeanne-Mance School of the Montreal Hotel-Dieu Hospital, from 1901 to 1970, serves as an example illustrating this proposition.

**Towards the recognition of the arduousness of women's jobs***Karen Messing*

Today, twelve years after the publication of *Women's Work, Women's Health*, the vast majority of research in occupational health and safety concerns only men. However, cashiers still suffer from back problems and varicose veins, sewing machine operators from inflammations and hospital workers from exhaustion and insomnia, among other problems. The researchers' delay in recognizing these problems can be attributed not only to sexism but also to the fact that research tools have developed as a function of traditional male jobs and are not well adapted to the study of women's work.

**Risk-associated alcohol consumption among working women :  
an expression of professional discomfort**

*Pauline Morissette*

Results presented here are taken from a qualitative research made with twenty-five women belonging to various professions and categorized as having a "risk-associated consumption" of alcohol under the SMAST (Short Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test). The study aimed at identifying the social conditions leading to this consumption and its development. This article is divided into three parts. First, the evolution from social drinking to "risk-associated consumption by women and the reasons why they choose alcohol are discussed. Then, three types of circumstances leading women to risk-associated consumption are presented and, finally, three evolutionary models are described : regression, habit and progression.

**Influence of health professionals' work environment on their attitudes towards battered women**

*Yann Le Bossé, Francine Lavoie et Geneviève Martin*

Despite their importance in the identification process of battered women, physicians and nurses report very few cases of wife abuse in their practices. Fifteen physicians and five nurses were interviewed as part of a research on health professionals' attitudes toward battered women. One finds that the work environment contributes to the under-reporting of battered women. The authors conclude that this situation, added to the presence of unfavorable attitudes among health professionals towards battered women, raises the need to reconsider medical practice in health services.

**Men and women : the great disagreement  
The hidden causes of the "procreatic revolution"**

*Anne-Marie de Vilaine*

Through a brief review of the critical literature on the conception of universal "Man", including an overview of some psychoanalytic interpretations of sexual differences, the author invites us to reflect on the underlying principles of research on medically assisted procreation. She sees as its finality the extinction of our historical conception of the human being, the final solution to "Man's maternity envy".

**Procreatics and social norms***Marie-Josèphe Dhavernas*

New reproductive technologies (NRT) are widely condemned by French feminists. Their consequences are far-reaching : they challenge the notion of maternity, of biology as fate and of reproduction as a metaphor. Many consider NRT as an attack on the collective identity of women and a danger of alienation towards medicine. However, if women manage to have their say in the control of those new technologies, possibilities of personal choices will be increased and the construction of gender associated with bodily constraints will be subverted. Global refusal of NRT does not preclude their existence, but only control over them in a feminist perspective.