

Summaries

Volume 12, numéro 1, 1999

Femmes, État, société

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/058040ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/058040ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Revue Recherches féministes

ISSN

0838-4479 (imprimé)

1705-9240 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

(1999). Summaries. *Recherches féministes*, 12(1), 193–195.

<https://doi.org/10.7202/058040ar>

- **Rethinking the State
New Feminist Scholarship**
Dominique Masson

Over the last decade, the limits of classical feminist state theorizing have been underlined by a new feminist scholarship on the state. The revisions proposed by the latter strike a middle ground between the voluntarism of liberal approaches and the determinism of more structural ones. Anchored in the notion of political struggles and of «balance of forces», these revisions reorient the analysis from «The State» to the specificity of state forms. They also restore analytical and strategic meaning to women.

- **Social Housing Policies and Programmes at the Crossroads**
Anne-Marie Séguin and Paul Villeneuve

In Quebec, social housing policies and programmes are somewhat complex. They involve a number of actors from both levels of government: The federal government and the government of Quebec. Presently, public involvement in social housing is undergoing a major restructuring of poorly known consequences. The federal government is altogether disengaging from public housing, while the Quebec government continues to be involved but differently, with a stronger reliance on market mechanisms and, as proposed in a 1997 document, with a scenario aimed at devolving to municipalities the management of low cost public housing. This proposal meets with strong criticisms and raises important equity issues. In general, the ongoing restructuring of government action is not gender neutral since women are the first beneficiaries of social housing programmes which constitute, for them, a fundamental question with multiple dimensions.

- **Nursing Practices, Home Support Service
and Ambulatory Shift in Québec**
*Hélène David, Esther Cloutier,
Johane Prévost and Catherine Teiger*

The ambulatory shift in Québec's health network has required an extensive reorganization of professional practice. An exploratory study carried out in the home support section of a local community service centre (CLSC) revealed some aspects of this question and showed how the nurses have experienced and reacted to the new conditions. In addition to their function as caregivers, the nurses are also case officers. This means that they play a coordinating role that includes interaction, evaluation, planning, implementation, supervisory and control duties. In a context dominated by the cost reduction logic, the extent of the nurses' duties appears to have been significantly underestimated. Their new role as case officers is paradoxical as a source

of self-value because the increased responsibilities, although interesting, have nevertheless created a number of difficulties for the nurses.

—• **Women and Caring Work**

The Experience of Female Caregiving in the Saguenay Area

Nicole Bouchard, Claude Gilbert et Marielle Tremblay

The withdrawal of the State in the field of health services rises important questions in our society. Tasks of care and support done in the natural environment, particularly within families, are basically taken on by women, for these tasks are an extension of domestic activities. Empirical data from a research in the Saguenay area help authors to demonstrate how the transfer of a portion of the responsibilities of health care from State to natural environment may contribute to strengthen the mothering role of female caregivers and stress isolation and absence from the public sphere. The valorization that women can get from caregiving is supported by justification systems and symbols. From a typology developed by Paul Ricœur, the authors prove that caution must be applied towards these systems, for they can generate individualism and asymmetrical relationship between the female caregiver and the person cared for.

—• **Nation, Natality, Politics
and the Representations of Women**

Josée Bergeron et Jane Jenson

Since the early twentieth century, the majority of feminists and other progressive social groups have been critical of natalist discourses supporting conservative nationalist visions. Consequently, the relationships between natalism, nationalism and the equality of the sexes have often been conflictual. The present article attempts to explore the reasons that explain these relationships and to analyze them, both in France and in Québec. Factors both of convergence and of divergence emerge from this comparative study. The two natalist discourses have not influenced the same state institutions in the two cases and, in both cases, their influence has varied significantly over time. We further note that these distinctions result from the different role played by French and *Québécois* feminists within the state.

—• **Quotas or Parity
Implications and Arguments**

Bérengère Marques-Pereira

The article examines the arguments on quotas and parity from two angles: on the one hand, the denunciation of women's political exclusion, and on the other hand, the legitimation of their political inclusion. The article points out the value of parity in comparison with quotas and emphasizes the parity's ambiguities. Parity do not resolve the dilemmas between universalism and particularism, equality and difference. But its demand has the merit to put the women's political under representation on the public and political agenda.

—● **Gender and State Politics in Central and Eastern Europe**

Jacqueline Heinen

Social policies represent a major question for the transformations at stake in Central and Eastern Europe, since ten years. In a gender perspective, they are doubly important as they contribute to define the profile of citizenship, and thus the statute of individuals within society. The article puts into light a number of changes in comparison with past orientations and underlines that a bit everywhere in Eastern Europe, the present policies mean a degradation of daily life for an important majority of women. In the light of what has happened more specifically in Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria, this paper tries to evaluate the weight of state intervention and the impact of social policies in terms of practices and representations.

—● **Women and the Argentinian State**

Silvia Chejter

A description of contemporary relations between women and the argentinian state needs a look backwards to the period since 1945. Indeed, it was then that women's right to vote was first adopted and that advanced beneficial social rules were introduced. The present paper compares this period to the current period of globalization and cutbacks and describes the new responsibilities of the State regarding citizens as well as the consequences of the new politics. The way in which these politics affected women and positively or negatively influenced the realization of their gendered collective aspirations is also examined.