

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and
Social Sciences

Great Plains Studies, Center for

October 1996

Review of *Rethinking Restructuring: Gender and Change in Canada* edited by Isabella Bakker

Barbara L. Marshall

Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Marshall, Barbara L., "Review of *Rethinking Restructuring: Gender and Change in Canada* edited by Isabella Bakker" (1996). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 304.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch/304>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Rethinking Restructuring: Gender and Change in Canada. Edited by Isabella Bakker. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. ix+292 pp. Tables, notes, and bibliography. \$C55.00 cloth (ISBN 0-8020-0702-3).

Any observer of the recent politics and economics of Western democratic states will be familiar with the starting point of this collection: that there has been a significant shift in governing practices related to global economic restructuring, informed by a “neo-liberal consensus” that favors shrinking government and deregulating economies. This book tackles the implications of this trend in Canada, but with the specific aim of demonstrating the simultaneous “gender erosion and intensification” integral to restructuring. Isabella Bakker has assembled some of Canada’s finest feminist scholars to explore the often contradictory effects of current political-economic strategies on the Canadian (and global) gender order and, as a result, provides a significant challenge to the assumptions underlying the “neo-liberal” consensus. Bakker’s excellent introduction sets out the epistemological presuppositions of a focus on gender as a category of analysis, offers

an overview of key shifts in Canada's policy environment, and effectively contextualizes and previews the specific issues to be explored by the contributors to the collection.

The first section of the book focuses on labor market restructuring and the state. Pat Armstrong, reviewing changes in women's and men's labor market participation rates, occupations, wages, hours, and conditions of work during the 1990-1992 period of restructuring, argues convincingly that, rather than improving women's labor market experience, restructuring related to globalization has entailed a "harmonizing down" for many men. She goes on to caution that the continued emphasis on strategies of privatization, deregulation, and decentralization will exacerbate this tendency. Barbara Cameron looks at federal training programs during the 1972-1995 period, teasing out the assumptions about gender informing the design of training programs, and traces the effects of what amounts to a series of "paradigm shifts" in federal training policy. M. Patricia Connelly and Martha MacDonald's study of home health care in Nova Scotia provides an interesting example of how women are disproportionately affected by strategies of labor market "flexibility," in particular as they are manifested in public-sector restructuring. Jane Jenson looks at women and part-time employment, examining the impacts on women's economic well-being from both the shift away from full-time work as the "norm" and the range of their possible responses.

The book's second section focuses on the state and its relationship to its citizenry. Suzanne Bergeron's "The Nation as a Gendered Subject of Macroeconomics" is an excellent overview of the relationship between nations, economies, and the construction of gender. Janine Brodie's examination of the rhetoric and implications of social security reform in the wake of the retreat from the Keynesian welfare state concentrates on the gendered impact of the decline of "social citizenship." Lisa Philipps looks at the relationship between tax policy and the gendered distribution of wealth, arguing that the latter has been relatively ignored in policy debates and that deep-seated, highly gendered assumptions underlie Canada's taxation system.

The final section, "Globalization(s): Challenges and Alternative Strategies," links restructuring in the Canadian context to broader international trends. The authors of two articles here deal with international trade agreements: Christina Gabriel and Laura MacDonald on the gender and race implications of the NAFTA, and Marjorie Cohen on the restructuring effects international trade agreements have on the public sector and their gendered implications. Belinda Leach's study of homework demonstrates how this

increasingly popular strategy buttresses gender, race, and class inequalities, both in Canada and internationally. Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis, through an examination of Canada's foreign domestic worker policy, show the links among global patterns of underdevelopment, the Canadian state's strategies of structural adjustment, and the reinforcement of racialized and gendered citizenship distinctions. Finally, Joanna Kerr considers what kinds of strategies of resistance and alliance might be effective in countering the negative impacts of restructuring at home and abroad.

This is an outstanding collection in terms of both the quality of the individual contributions and its overall structure and scope. Theoretically sophisticated, but grounded in careful analyses of concrete issues, it exemplifies the indispensable contributions of feminist analysis to an understanding of Canadian political economy in an era of global restructuring. **Barbara L. Marshall**, *Department of Sociology, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario*.