

Centre International de Formation Européenne
Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales
Academic Year 2002-2003



**Development of Gender Relations
in the Context of Social Transformation
The Case of Bulgaria**

Velislava Chakarova

Research Advisor: Matthias WAECHTER, Ph.D.

Directeur du D.H.E.E.I, Lecteur au DAAD

May 2003

Thank you:

Matthias Waechter, Ph.D.,
Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, Nice

Valérie Charpentier
Responsable du service de documentation, IEHEI, Nice

Ursula Frübis, M.A., Freie Universität, Berlin

Prof. Nikolai Genov, Dr. Sc., Freie Universität, Berlin

Ani Nikolova, Varna Free University,
“SOS Families in Disgrace” Association

Yann Dautais

my parents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	4
<u>CHAPTER I</u>	6
1. <u>THE CONCEPT OF GENDER</u>	6
1.1. <i>Definitions</i>	6
1.2. <i>The Term “Gender” in Eastern Europe</i>	11
2. <u>SOCIAL EVOLUTION OF GENDER</u>	12
3. <u>CULTURAL ASPECTS OF GENDER</u>	14
4. <u>MAJOR FEMINIST THEORIES – THE WESTERN DEBATE</u>	20
4.1. <i>Historical Overview</i>	20
4.2. <i>Reform Feminist Theories</i>	30
4.3. <i>Gender Resistant Feminist Theories</i>	38
4.4. <i>Gender Rebellion Feminist Theories</i>	44
5. <u>POLICY APPROACHES TOWARDS WOMEN’S EQUALITY – GENDER MAINSTREAMING</u>	46
<u>CHAPTER II</u>	51
1. <u>EVOLUTION OF GENDER RELATIONS IN BULGARIA</u>	51
2. <u>BULGARIA AFTER 1989: THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION</u>	62
2.1. <i>Women and Employment</i>	63
2.2. <i>Women and Politics</i>	65
2.3. <i>Women and Entrepreneurship</i>	68
2.4. <i>Women and Civil Society</i>	70
2.4. <i>Gender-Mainstreaming Initiatives – Towards Gender Equality</i>	74
3. <u>NATIONAL GENDER-RELATED LEGAL FRAMEWORK</u>	76
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	80
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	82

Introduction

“Out of discord comes the fairest harmony...”

Heraclitus of Ephesus, 6th century BC

Scientifically organized, the debate on women’s issues appeared no more than a century ago but I am convinced it has also existed long back in history, as we are made to live together – women and men – and in this joint adventure, inevitably, we search for our place and predestination.

The position of the women throughout the history has been shaped by different cultural attitudes evolving from folklore traditions, religious beliefs and social organization. This statement is still valid for present times when cultural diversity and interaction are influenced also by modern means of travel, making the big distances look smaller, and the new images, created by the media world. However, in spite of the bigger chances for enlargement of our cultural horizons, we still tend to close our minds for what is different, trying to quickly make it fit in our familiar structures, or even to transform it according to our taste.

As a theoretical approach, women’s studies appeared first in the industrially developed Western society. Most of these studies focus on analysis of North American and West European social context, but the practical advice that they provide is proposed as suitable for every part of the world. In fact, the cultural parameters of every society are different and it is rather difficult to establish a model adequate to all social environments.

The numerous feminist theories created in the twentieth century are significantly important as they give a structure and a system of an existing debate. They all cover specific aspects of women’s external relations with society and the internal questions, raised within themselves. All this theoretical knowledge is based on the presumption of gender *inequality* and is used for development and

implementation of various gender-related initiatives aiming to restore the broken *equality* between women and men, from Latin America and Africa, through Asia and the Middle East to the Near East and Eastern Europe.

After the political transformations at the end of the 1980s, the countries of Eastern Europe became a subject of many discussions about their future development and a possible integration to the European Union. This process often resulted in reports that were more bounteous of recommendations on all aspects of life, including those of women's position, than focused on thorough research of the specific cultural features, differing this region's countries from one another.

The purpose of this thesis is to present the concept of gender relations, confining to the existing main theoretical argument, and to follow their evolution and attitudes in the concrete social context of Bulgaria. My work is structured in two chapters. The first one treats the notion of gender, its cultural aspects, theoretical framework and worldwide developed gender-related activities. The second one studies the social perception of women's position in Bulgaria, as well as the established practices and policies in terms of gender equality.

I decided to write on this subject as I was interested in the socio-cultural aspect of women's issues and I wished to find out for myself where the borderline between the respect for cultural traditions and the interference for changing them, should be. By the completion of this work I do not have the answer yet. The debate remains open.

Chapter I

1. The Concept of Gender

1.1. Definitions

The term “gender” has been used since early 1970s to denote culturally constructed femininity and masculinity as opposed to biological sex differences. Arguing that gender is a constitutive element in all social relations, the concept became helpful for those who wanted to stress sexual differences without having to deal with biological determinism.

When discussing gender, we generally refer to the social differences and relations between men and women, which are learned and transformed¹. The term gender does not replace the terms sex, which refers exclusively to biological differences between men and women. The term “gender” itself has an Anglo-American heritage and is more often used by English speakers.

A more detailed analysis of the etymology of the word shows that its origins date back to fourteenth century and come from the Middle English “gendre” and the Middle French “genre”/“gendre”, which root is the Latin “gener-“, “genus”, meaning “birth, race, kind”².

In most definitions the term is presented from two aspects: as a grammatical category in language, and as social behaviour distinguished on the basis of their reproductive roles.

In language, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica³, *gender* is a “phenomenon in which the words of a certain part of speech, usually nouns, require the agreement, or concord, through grammatical marking (or inflection), of various

¹ ABC of Women workers’ rights and gender equality, ILO, Geneva, 2000

² The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary located at www.m-w.com

other words related to them in a sentence. In languages that exhibit gender, two or more classes of nouns control variation in words of other parts of speech, typically pronouns and adjectives”.

In other dictionaries⁴, the term is explained as a subclass within a grammatical class (as noun, pronoun, adjective, or verb), that is partly arbitrary but also partly based on distinguishable characteristics (as shape, social rank, manner of existence, or sex) and that determines agreement with and selection of other words or grammatical forms.

As far as the second meaning of the word is concerned, there is a variety of definitions produced by social sciences and feminist theories, and most of them are developed in comparison with the concepts of sexuality and sexual differences.

In everyday life, the term *gender* is used to refer to the distinction between women and men, while the term “sex” and “sexuality” can be reserved for erotic activities, desires, practices and identities. However, these working definitions are not always used in a same way by feminists. For example⁵, psychoanalytical theorists have long disliked the sex-gender distinction, seeing sex, gender and sexuality as closely bound together, and they frequently use the term “sexuality” to encompass what other feminists would call gender. The term is more used in the English language, while in French the word *sex* is still preferred, or sometimes “social sex”⁶. In spite of the terminological differences and disagreement among some feminist theorists, the word’s explanation cannot be excluded from the notion of sex. Moreover, in order to understand gender, a brief outline of both terms’ characteristics is necessary to be made. What is the difference between the concepts of sex and gender?

³ Encyclopaedia Britannica located at www.britannica.com

⁴ Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2003

⁵ Mitchell, Juliet and J.Rose (eds), *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne*, London, 1982

⁶ Jackson, Stevie, *Theorising Gender and Sexuality*, in “Contemporary Feminist Theories”, New York, 1998

Societies tend to attribute all kinds of meanings to the two sexes. Over time, their cultural meanings have developed into gender roles or identities we call masculine and feminine, or male and female. For most people, gender identity and biological characteristics are the same. There are, however, circumstances in which an individual experiences little or no connection between sex and gender; in *transsexualism* for example, biological sexual characteristics differ from gender characteristics.

The concept of gender is socially constructed, it reflects the differences between and within cultures, and includes variables identifying the differences in roles, responsibilities, opportunities, needs and constraints. Sex, on the other hand, is biologically defined and determined by birth, universal and almost unchanging.

At the beginning of gender studies, the field was called “sex roles”. The perspective of sex roles is psychological and focused on individual attitudes and attributes. According to the sex-role theories children learn from their feminine attitudes that prepare them for their adult roles. Many sex-role characteristics remain fixed for life.

The gender roles define what is considered appropriate for men and women within the society, social roles and division of labour. They vary greatly from one culture to another, as well as from one social group to another within the same culture, and change over time and under different circumstances, like war or sudden crisis. Gender roles are influenced by race, class, religion, ethnicity, economic situation and age.

Gender roles are social roles ascribed to individuals on the basis of their sex. The term gender differs from sex because it refers specifically to the cultural definition of the roles and behaviour appropriate to members of each sex rather than to those aspects of human behaviour that are determined by biology. Thus, “giving birth is a female sex role, while the role of infant nurturer and care giver

(which could be performed by a male) is a gender role usually ascribed to females”⁷.

The term *gender* is used to describe a set of qualities and behaviours expected from men and women by their societies. A person’s social identity is formed by these expectations which stem from the idea that certain qualities, behaviour, characteristics, needs and roles are “natural” for men, while other qualities and roles are “natural” for women. The “gendered” masculine and feminine identities are constructed through the process of socialisation, which prepares them for the social roles they are supposed to play.

Caroline Moser⁸ defines gender as “the differences between women and men within the same household and within and between cultures that are socially and culturally constructed and change over time. These differences are reflected in: roles, responsibilities, access to resources, constraints, opportunities, needs, perceptions, views, etc. held by both women and men. Thus, gender is not a synonym for women, but considers both women and men and their interdependent relationships”.

The issue of gender goes beyond the processes of a subjective sense of maleness or femaleness. A set of behaviors that are considered "normal" and appropriate" for the sex are ascribed by society. The ascribing of gender roles leads to assumptions about how people will behave. Once these assumptions or expectations are widely accepted, they may begin to function as stereotypes. A stereotype is a generalized notion of what a person is like based only on characteristics such as sex, race, religion, ethnicity, or social background. For example, in Western culture, men have been expected to behave independently, aggressively, and not emotionally. Women have been expected to be passive, submissive, and dependent.

⁷ Nelson - Online Dictionary of the Social Sciences, located at www.socialsciencedictionary.nelson.com

⁸ Moser, Caroline, *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training*, London, 1993

Stereotyping has clearly influenced the ability of women to succeed in traditional male arenas such as sports and professional careers. Stereotyping also influences the sexual health and behavior of women, who naturally find conflict with assumptions and expectations that they be passive, submissive, dependent, emotional, and subordinate. Despite the limiting impact of rigid, stereotypical gender roles, many men and women behave in a manner remarkably consistent with the norms that these roles establish. Socialization refers to the process whereby society conveys behavioral expectations to the individual. These expectations are reinforced by family, school, workplace and media.

Judith Lorber ⁹sees gender as “a social status and a personal identity, as enacted in parental and work roles and in relationships between women and men. Through the social processes of gendering, gender divisions and roles are built into the major social institutions of society, such as economy, the family, the state, culture, religion, and the law- the gendered social order.”

In her book “Paradoxes of Gender”, Judith Lorber offers a new paradigm of gender – gender as a social construction and institution. Her concept of gender differs from previous conceptualizations as it is not focused on the individual and interpersonal relations, although the gender construction and maintenance is set by personal identities and in social interaction. She sees gender as “an institution that establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life and is built into the major social organizations of society, such as economy, ideology, the family, and politics, and is also an entity in and of itself.” As is true of other institutions, gender’s history can be traced, its structure examined, and its changing effects researched.

According to the author, Western society’s values legitimate gendering by claiming that it all comes from physiology – “female and male procreative differences”. She argues that gender cannot be equated with biological and physiological differences between human females and males. Western societies

⁹ Lorber, Judith, Paradoxes of Gender, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995

have only two genders, “man” and “woman”. Some African and Indian societies have a gender status called “manly hearted women” – biological females who work, marry and parent as men; their social status is “female men”.

For the individual, gender construction starts with assignment to a sex category at the birth. A sex category becomes a gender status through naming, dress, and the use of other gender markers. As soon as children start to talk, they refer to each other as members of their gender. Later, adolescents approach each other, as expected, in a gendered way. Parenting is also gendered with different roles for the mothers and the fathers, as well as there are different jobs for people of different genders. But, nevertheless, today gender roles change. Gender differences are maintained or blurred according to the level a certain social group is traditional.

1.2. The Term “Gender” in Eastern Europe

Being connected with the social changes in the last decade and, thus, a relatively new term used in Eastern Europe, I consider it appropriate for this paper to discuss how the word is translated and understood in a social reality, different from the one of the countries the word originated from. For the last fourteen years of transition, the category of “gender” has gained greater visibility and significance in Eastern and Central Europe. From one side, theorists and activists who are engaged in gender politics in the region try to “translate” the established diverse feminist ideas and practices, mainly coming from the West, into the local idiom, while from the other side, they try to explain the East-European experience to the international community. The question of translating the term “gender” across cultures is rather complicated when the concept does not exist in the target language or culture. “This is the case in French and most Slavonic languages, including Bulgarian. In the post-Soviet bloc countries the term “gender” (in its broader socio-cultural meaning) entered the respective

cultures both in and as translation after the political changes of 1989”¹⁰. The absence of feminist theory based on the experience of East European women which can help articulate their concerns and analyze the transitory status of post-socialist women, adds additional difficulties to understand the “imported” terminology. “Most East European women (including scholars and translators) have been already trained in repetition and false uniformity for years on end, so that we have internalized to a great extent the universal (male) point of view, although we have also retained our female sensitivity. Thus, in the process of translating Western feminist texts, East European feminists often feel split: reading and interpreting as both a man and a woman, always as “other”. Additionally, we have been trained to speak and write in rigid ideological clichés and patterns, to tone down sexual and erotic nuances of meaning, and now, all of a sudden, it has become necessary to learn to translate creatively feminist texts whose language is so playful, disruptive, flexible and full of puns (contrary to common expectations that feminism presupposes a dry, ideological and indoctrinaire style of expression)”*. After nearly fifty years of “equality and freedom” under communism, some major concepts of the Western feminist movement sound cynically in the East European context. The concepts of “feminism”, “women’s rights and emancipation” and “women’s activism” are often associated with leftist ideological projects, because of the long-term subjugation of the individual to the collective communist practices. That is why the terms “gender”/“gender issues” are preferred to “feminist”/“women’s issues”.

2. Social Evolution of Gender

According to some authors, the transformation of physiological sex differences into gender statuses dates back to early human societies in the Paleolithic period, and are linked to “the use of fire, the inventions of tools to make food acquisition more efficient, value-laden social relationships, and the sense of

¹⁰ Slavova, Kornelia, *Translating Gender-Related Texts/Politics In/Out of Context*, Sofia University, 2001

time”*. Anthropological and ethnographic data shows that for foraging humans of that time individual abilities and not sex differences were a priority. Margaret Power¹¹ describes the organization of foragers as “extraordinary egalitarian” system of smaller and larger groups. Finding food in order to survive, was their only task and work. The main sources of food were the wild vegetables and fruits, and grass-eating animals. Men, women and older children were equally participating in gathering food. The main “labour” tools were the digging stick, the knife and the carrying sling. Later, these tools were developed and replaced by more sophisticated ones. This made the hunting practices more efficient but at the same time demanded new hunting skills like spear throwing and archery. The processing of the skins and meat of the killed animals required shelters and more people. The increased food production meant also increase of fertility and more children. All these new conditions led to division of labour of early humans and development of new roles. Under the new circumstances, women, especially pregnant and nursing women, were foraging for plants and small animals, cooking and taking care of the clothing and the shelter place, while men were hunting. This division of labour became an efficient way to produce food and children, and later resulted in creation of kinships and more sophisticated social organizations.

Other authors argue that subordination of women in the ancient world became institutionalized with the rise of urban societies and rise of the archaic state. Archaeologists’ findings of Neolithic settlements of Asia Minor show that women have had “a favourable and possibly even a privileged position”¹². According to anthropologists, the numerous statues of goddesses, found in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece, provide evidence of women’s high perception at that time. When the ancient village settlements developed into urban centres, which later

* same author, see Slavova, Kamelia

* see Judith Lorber, “Paradoxes of Gender”, as quoted above

¹¹ Power, Margaret, *The Egalitarians, Human and Chimpanzee: An Anthropological View of Social Organization*, Cambridge, 1991

¹² Ahmed, Leila, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993

grew more complex, the city-states arose. “The growth of urban societies and the increasing importance of military competitiveness further entrenched male dominance and gave rise to a class-based society in which the military and temple elites made up the propertied classes. The patriarchal family designed to guarantee the paternity of property-heirs and vesting in men the control of female sexuality, became institutionalized, codified, and upheld by the state”^{*}. The women became men’s property, the children of a marriage belonged to the father, and the laws were made by the men. “One god (a father-lord-king) replaced the goddesses of fertility... Many parts of the world, such as Africa and Melanesia, retained a high status for women, but in Western civilization and its culture and social patterns, property-owning men came to have much more power and prestige than the women of their class well into the modern era”^{*}.

3. Cultural Aspects of Gender

The world is a smaller place now than it has been ever before. Media, travels and immigration, changes in the attitudes concerning racial, ethnic and religious discrimination, have made people from many countries more diverse and aware of this diversity. Each one of us sees the world from our own, often, limited point of view. What we see of the others is filtered by our assumption that our way is the “normal one”, while others’ is strange and exotic. We have more opportunities to learn from each other now than ever in the past, opportunities that could let us see that, in fact, the “normal way” consists of rich variety of cultures, and that we are just a small part of it.

As a systematic theoretical approach, the gender problematic emerged firstly in the industrially developed Western society. The biggest part of these studies is focused on analysis of North American and West European social context. In spite of this, the solutions of scholars and experts are proposed as universal and

^{*} see Leila Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate, as quoted above

^{*} see Judith Lorber, Paradoxes of Gender, as quoted above

applicable for every part of the world. And if, for whatever complicated reason they do not work now, specific conditions should be created, so “they work in the future”! In reality, models established with specific cultural parameters of one society are not always successful when tried in another social environment. The cultural characteristics that are not included in the model often appear as a barrier.

When we talk about "culture" we often mean intellectual products and different arts. A more comprehensive understanding of culture describes its components as: material culture (technologies and economics), social institutions (including social organization, education and political structure), beliefs system and religion, aesthetics, and language. Another use of "culture" comes to explain the beliefs and practices of the society, particularly where these are seen as closely linked with tradition or religion.

Gender identities and gender relations are essential facets of culture as they determine the way daily life is lived not only within the family, but also in society as a whole. Gender influences economics, politics, social interactions and individual needs. It undergoes variations over time and across culture and is important for the formation of the family and the community. One of the most comprehensive definitions of culture was proposed at the World Conference on Cultural Policies held in Mexico in 1982¹³ : "Culture... is... the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs."

Gender functions as an organizing principle for society because of the cultural meanings given to being male or female. This is evident in the division of labour according to gender. In most societies there are clear patterns of "women's work" and "men's work," both in the household and in the wider community – and

¹³ UNESCO website on culture and development, located at www.unesco.org/culture/

cultural explanations of why this should be so. The patterns and the explanations differ among societies and change over time.

Each society, to some extent, makes up its own set of rules to define what it means to be a woman or a man. For example¹⁴, in China and in the Chinese American community in the United States, until the first part of twentieth century, it was common for young girls to have their feet bound. Small feet, “golden lilies”, were considered a sign of beauty and refinement. The binding kept the feet not only from growing to full size, but it deformed them and prevented them from developing the normal strength, needed for walking, thus, making it difficult for a woman to walk unassisted. After getting married, the average young Chinese woman was expected to serve her mother-in-law, and submit to her husband.

While the specific nature of gender relations varies among societies, the general pattern is that women are subordinate to men, they have fewer resources at their disposal, and limited influence over the decision-making processes that shape their societies and their own lives. Women’s subordination is reflected in inequality and differences between women and men within the family and community, as well as in all social, economic, cultural and political interactions and relationships between people. Patriarchal social structures and institutions are sustained and strengthened by value-systems and cultural rules which propagate the notion of women’s inferiority. Every culture has its example of customs which reflect the low value placed on women.

Changes in gender relations are often highly contested, in part because they have immediate implications for everyone, women and men. This immediacy also means that gender roles – and particularly women's roles as wives and mothers – can be symbols of cultural change or cultural continuity.

The political potential of such symbols is evident in the ways that religious and political movements have focused on women's roles. This has served to highlight

¹⁴ Lips, Hilary, and Virginia Cyrus, *A New Psychology of Women: Gender, Culture and Ethnicity*, Mayfield Publishing Company, Columbus, 1999

adherence to religious or cultural values – and resistance to other cultures' influences. However, religious beliefs and national identity are important to women. In the Islamic countries, this is evident in the efforts by different groups of women to review interpretations of religious texts and to reaffirm values and traditions that support freedom and dignity for women. Cultural values in those countries are constantly evolving rather than fixed and that there are different interests intervening in the process. Views about the role of women and about gender equality that are held by one person or group will not necessarily be held by others, as well as, views will differ among women and men.

From one side, having different lives, the Middle Eastern women are a real enigma for the Western mind. Generally, these women are seen as manipulated and controlled by men, lacking human rights and freedom.

In the Middle East, Islam stresses the idea of a public morality which is to be enforced collectively. In this respect, Islam has acquired a political nature, although original Islamic sources are rarely mentioned by governments. Of course, Islam is not the only explanation of women's position in the Muslim world, as the implementation of Islamic codes varies from country to country. However, the status of women is influenced by it and cannot be understood without reference to Islam.

On the other hand, because of differences of cultural attitudes, Western women are also hard to be understood by people living in Islam societies. As stated in Imam Khomeini's viewpoint on women¹⁵, "woman's true greatness and identity have been sacrificed at the altar of Western materialist philosophy in worship of the two gods of Western man: the economy and the pursuit of pleasure. Women are to a great extent either used to promote and sell goods or to promote and sell themselves".

¹⁵ The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, The Position of Women from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini, Teheran, 2001

As quoted by the Iranian Ministry of National Guidance, Ayatollah Khomeini says "Women are not equal to men, but neither are men equal to women...their roles in society are complementary...each has certain distinct functions according to his or her nature and constitution." Due to the belief that men are more capable leaders, their roles have primarily been in the "public sphere." Women's position has continually been directed into the "private" sphere which includes the domain of family and home¹⁶.

Although many Western feminists would argue that separate positions are inherently unequal, many Muslims would disagree. In fact, Islamic feminists feel that if Islam was "perfectly realized" women would attain equality with men despite these differences.

In traditional Jewish society, women were seen as separate from men's world too. Women's obligations and responsibilities were different from those of men. Women were discouraged from pursuing higher education or religious pursuits, because if they were engaged in such pursuits, they might neglect their primary duties as wives and mothers. Women were not obligated to perform as many commandments as men are, and were regarded as less privileged. The combination of this exemption from certain commandments, as well as woman's obligations at home, often has had the result that women had an inferior place in the synagogue or kept them away from it.

The role and position of the woman, especially in early and Medieval Christianity, was similarly seen by the Christian Church. Women were primarily seen as mothers. "Devotion to Mary, the mother of God, grew as Europe grew. She stood erect in stone, on cathedral portals, gazed radiantly from sunlit windows, and cradled her child on painted walls and panels, wept in four and five entwined voices in domed choirs"¹⁷. However, in the last twenty years, the history of women in ancient Christianity has been almost completely revised. As women

¹⁶ Spivey, Courtney, *The Invisible Society: Women in Middle Eastern Culture*, paper located at <http://www.is.rhodes.edu/modus/96/Spivey.html>

¹⁷ King, Margaret, and Catharine Stimpson, *Women of the Renaissance*, Chicago, 1991

historians entered the field, they brought with them new questions, developed new methods, and sought for evidence of women's presence in neglected texts and new findings. For example, only a few names of women were widely known: Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Mary and Martha, the sisters who offered him hospitality in Bethany. To some extent, the names of these women symbolize the perception about women, having been dominant for ages in the Christian world. However, the stories of these women that we know well are recently being re-discovered. Some modern scientists¹⁸ talk about new discoveries of texts in Egypt, according to which, Mary is presented as an influential figure, a prominent disciple and leader of one wing of the early Christian movement that promoted women's leadership. Theorists argue that all evidence about women's prominence, throughout the centuries, has been modified, declared heretical and in many cases erased. Thus, women's roles in Christian society remained limited and their capacity to contribute to its development damaged.

In modern times, having been a substitute for religion over four decades, the communist ideology created practices and attitudes, at first sight, opposite to those, created by the religious institutions. Women were seen, above all, as active participants in the communist party life, who had to contribute to the development of the communist society. That is why, some years after this period, the practice in the post-communist countries shows another example¹⁹. There the rhetoric of "women's equality" is still associated with the propaganda of the past communist period. Recently, there was a new attitude – "free to be a woman and feminine" – free of the requirement to be in the labour force, which, unfortunately, has been referred to as a benefit of the transition by politicians and officials. However, women's organizations have noted that these slogans serve to justify discrimination against women when there are too few jobs for all, and these

¹⁸ King, Karen, *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity)*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. 2000

¹⁹ Bridger, Susan., *No More Heroines? Russia, Women and the Market*, London, 1996

organizations have been struggling to participate in the labour market and to maintain their human rights.

As it can be seen, all cultures have something in common: they all include strong ideas about women's roles in society and what it means to be a woman and feminine. What makes them different are cultures' rules and expectations about the above issues, and the different time scale in which these concepts change for every culture.

4. Major Feminist Theories – The Western Debate

4.1. Historical Overview

Feminism is “a social movement whose goal is raising the status of women”²⁰. Many times in the past, men and women have proclaimed women's capabilities and have tried to improve women's social position. As an organized movement, however, feminism appeared in the nineteenth century in Europe and North America.

Feminist theories seek to analyze the conditions which shape women's lives and to explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman. Feminists refuse to accept that inequalities between women and men are natural and insist that they should be questioned.

Women are not a homogenous group. They are differently located and represented within global social contexts. The national, ethnic, family, class and sexual related differences between the women are very important, as well as those of language, education and employment. These differences are often hierarchical and produce inequalities among women themselves, and as a result, not all women perceive in the same way feminists' arguments.

²⁰ Lorber, Judith, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, New York, 1998

Each country has its own tradition of feminist thought but in spite of this, feminist ideas have always crossed national boundaries. In the past, theory has been dominated by white Anglophone feminists from Britain, Australia and especially US. More recently, there are new visions that complement and challenge the feminist debates, making them more sensitive to cultural differences and international issues.

As feminism has evolved, theorizing has taken many different directions and forms. Feminists are constantly reflecting on their ideas, sometimes modifying and developing their positions in response to debates and challenged from other feminists. There are many feminist theories describing and analyzing particular features of women's issues and studies: Liberal Feminist Theory, Marxist and Socialist Feminist Theories, Feminist political Theory, Feminist Anthropological Theory, Black Feminisms, Post-colonial Feminist Theory, Lesbian Theory, Theory on Gender and Sexuality, Feminist Linguistic Theory, Lesbian Theory, Psychoanalytical Feminist Theory, Postmodern Feminist Theory, Feminist Media and Film Theory, and some few other theories. As detailed theoretical analysis is not a primary aim of the present work, I will briefly outline below only the central moments of feminist theoretical thought.

The first feminists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fought for rights that many women of today's world have – the right to vote, to own property and capital, to inherit, to save earned money, to study in a college, to argue cases in court. These rights were denied to women of every social class, ethnicity and religion.

The theory that reflects the visions of the feminists of nineteenth century in their fight for women's rights, came out of liberal political philosophy, according to which all men should be equal under the law and no one should have special privileges or rights. Of course, "when the United States of America was founded, that concept of equality excluded enslaved men because they were not free citizens, as well as women, no matter what their social status, because they were not really free either. Their legal status was the same as that of children –

economically dependent and borrowing their social status from their father or husband”* .

First-wave feminism’s goal was to get equal rights for women, especially the right to vote. In the United States, women did not have right to vote until 1919. In many European countries women received this right after the World War I, in repayment for their war efforts.

Today, women in nearly all countries have the same voting rights as men. But they did not begin to gain such rights until the early 1900's, and they had to overcome strong opposition to get them. The men and women who supported the drive for woman suffrage were called *suffragists*.

In the United States, changing social conditions for women during the early 1800's, combined with the idea of equality, led to the birth of the woman suffrage movement. For example, women started to receive more education and to take part in reform movements, which involved them in politics. As a result, women started to ask why they were not also allowed to vote.

Suffrage quickly became the chief goal of the women's rights movement. Leaders of the movement believed that if women had the vote, they could use it to gain other rights. But the suffragists faced strong opposition. Opponents argued that men could represent their wives better than the wives could represent themselves. Some people feared that women's participation in politics would lead to the end of family life.

The drive for woman suffrage gained strength after the passage of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave the vote to black men but not to any women. In 1869, suffragists formed two national organizations to work for the right to vote – the National Woman Suffrage Association, and the American Woman Suffrage Association.

* see, Lorber, Judith, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, as quoted above

In 1869, the Territory of Wyoming gave women the right to vote. The Utah Territory did so a year later. Wyoming entered the Union in 1890 and became the first state with woman suffrage. Colorado adopted woman suffrage in 1893, and Idaho in 1896. By 1920, 15 states--most of them in the West--had granted full voting privileges to women. Twelve other states allowed women to vote in presidential elections, and two states let them vote in primary elections.

A woman suffrage amendment was first introduced in Congress in 1878. It failed to pass but was reintroduced in every session of Congress for the next 40 years. During World War I (1914-1918), the contributions of women to the war effort increased support for a suffrage amendment.

In 1893, New Zealand became the first nation to grant women full voting rights, and a measure for the enfranchisement of women, introduced by Richard Seddon, was carried in September 1893. In 1902, Australia gave women the right to vote in national elections. The vote has been extended to all adult women both in the states (the first being South Australia, 1894, the last Victoria, 1908) and for the Commonwealth parliament.

Other countries that enacted woman suffrage during the early 1900's included Britain, Canada, Finland, Germany, and Sweden. It took until 1906 for all women in Finland to have voting rights, until 1913 in Norway, 1918 in Germany, 1921 in Sweden, and 1928 in UK.

The Russian October Revolution in 1917 gave women equal rights. However, the emphasis was on work in the collective economy, and parental care and child care were provided by the state, so women could be both workers and mothers.

During the mid-1900's, France (in 1944), India (in 1950), Italy (in 1945), Japan (in 1947), and other nations gave women the right to vote.

In India, Sarojini Naidu headed a deputation of the Women's India Association, which met with the British viceroy to demand the vote in 1919. The Indian

National Congress supported woman suffrage. In 1950, soon after Indian independence, women were granted the vote.

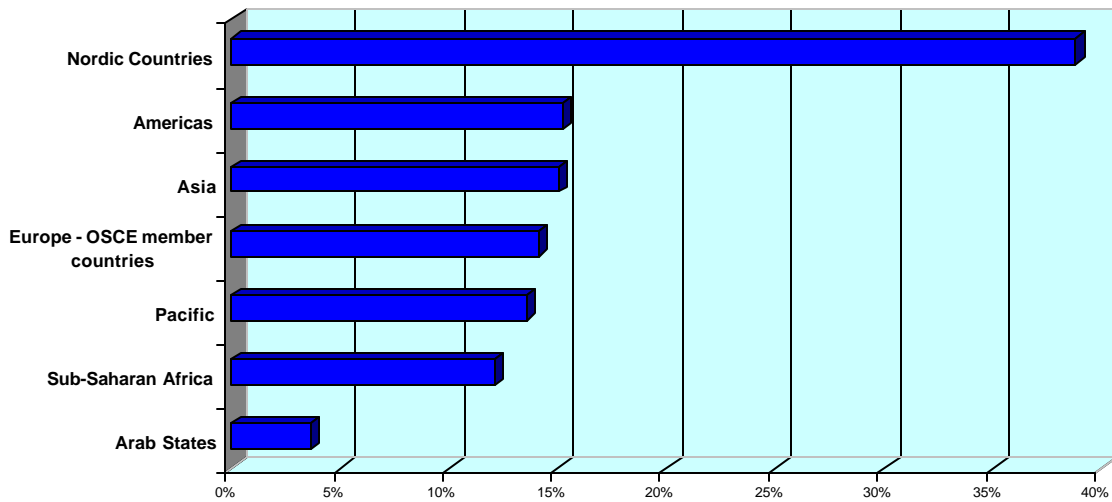
In Japan, Ichiwaka Fusae and other women activists established Fusen Kakutou Domei ("Women's Suffrage League") in 1924. They succeeded in gaining the right to organize and attend political meetings, from which they had previously been barred. In the 1920s one of the two major political parties supported woman suffrage. The Japanese military took control of the country in the 1930s and quashed all democratic movements, including the movement for woman suffrage. After the Allied nations defeated Japan in 1945, Japanese feminists and women staff officers of the Allied Occupation cooperated in proposing that the new Japanese constitution should enfranchise women. They hoped that women would use the ballot to make the Japanese nation less warlike, and that women would raise their children to believe in peace and democracy.

In the Philippines, women were allowed to vote in 1937. This was during the Commonwealth period under the American rule. However, several Filipinas have been actively engaging in networking with other women suffragists from all over the world.

In China woman suffrage was granted only after establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

In the Middle East and North Africa, suffrage was first given to the women in Lebanon (1952), Syria (full women suffrage in 1953), Egypt and Pakistan (1956), Tunisia (1959), Algeria (1962), Iran and Morocco (1963), Jordan (1974).

Political Representation of Women



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2000

In 1994, Oman became the first of six Gulf Arab monarchies to allow women to vote and run for public office.

Qatar has extended suffrage to women in municipal elections. Most of the electorate being male, women have won only two seats in each of the subsequent three council polls. However, women from other states in the region are still fighting for their right to vote. Saudi Arabia, Dubai and Brunei do not allow both women and men to vote.

In Kuwait, the suffrage movement has a long history. In 1971, following a conference on women's issues in Kuwait, a bill was submitted to the National Assembly granting full political rights for women. The bill was only supported by 12 of the 60 member of the Assembly. Subsequent legislative initiatives for women's suffrage were introduced in 1981, 1986, 1992, and 1996 but political support has never been strong enough. In May 1999, the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, issued a decree granting women full political rights to vote and to stand for office. On 23 November 1999, the National Assembly rejected the decree by a two-thirds vote. In July 2000, five members of the National Assembly again presented a bill in Parliament to amend Kuwait's

electoral law, granting women political rights. The bill is pending and has not to date been considered by the Parliament.

As the countries of Africa, Asia, and Central and South America broke free of colonial control after World War II and set up independent governments, they also gave their women citizens the right to vote. In South Africa white women were given suffrage in 1930, and blacks in 1994, in Senegal and Togo – in 1945, in Cameroon – 1946, in Cote d'Ivoire – in 1952, in Ethiopia – in 1955, in Congo and Kenya – in 1963.

Suffrage was the main goal of women's liberation in the first wave of feminism, but rights concerning property, earnings, and higher education gave women a chance for economic independence. These rights were vital for raising women's status of dependence on their husbands, and for giving widows and single women possibility to live on their own.

However, modern feminist view on women is less unified and is much more fragmented than it was in the nineteenth and beginning of twentieth centuries.

The *second-wave* feminist movement* began after the World War II, with the publication in 1949, in France, of Simone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex". The book describes the current status of the Western women and argues that men dominate women and set life standards and values and thus form the "first sex", women being the "second sex". De Beauvoir sees women inequality as a social creation, rather than a biological consequence.

Until the sixties the second-wave feminism was not an organized political movement. Since this period, feminism started to contribute to social change by analyzing women's situation and proposing political and legal solutions. The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed an upsurge of youthful left activism throughout the Western world. This was the context in which the Women's Liberation Movement emerged, along with others such as Gay Liberation and Black Power.

* as presented by Judith Lorber in her book "Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics", quoted above

It was a period of excitement and optimistic belief in the possibility of radical social change. Feminist work of this period was largely active but it was written mainly by young, white, university-educated women. This early theory tried to understand the reasons for women's oppression and overturn the male dominated social order.

Further, there are other feminist theories that are now being called the feminist "*third wave*". They challenge the existence of two sexes, female and male, and argue that there are more sexualities and genders. They point to studies of sexual orientation which have shown that neither homosexuality nor heterosexuality is always fixed for life, and that bisexuality is widely spread.

According to Judith Lorber, as stated in her article "The Variety of Feminisms and Their Contribution to Gender Equality", the feminist theories of twentieth century can be grouped into three broad categories. These are gender reform theories, gender resistance theories, and gender rebellion theories. *Gender reform theories* aim "to change the content but not the structure of the gendered social order"²¹. *Gender resistance theories* consider the gendered social order so oppressive to women that "women should not cooperate with it". *Gender rebellion theories* challenge the structure of the gendered social order by questioning the division of people into two genders.

Each one of these three groups of theories is focused on different aspect of social life. Gender reform feminists work on women's role in the family and the economy. Gender resistance feminists focus on violence and sexual oppression against women, and on promoting women's experience and knowledge. Gender rebellion feminists focus on the processes and symbols that build and maintain the gender order.

Gender reform feminists (liberal, Marxist and socialist, development) have made visible the discriminatory practices over women. The beliefs about women and

²¹ Lorber, Judith, "The Variety of Feminisms and Their Contribution to Gender Equality", in "Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics", New York, 1998

men, prevalent during the sixties and seventies of twentieth century, tended to stress differences between them. In comparison with women, men were seen as stronger, smarter and more capable than women. Mothering was women's strength and responsibility, so women were seen as mothers first of anything else.

Gender reform feminists want women to be valued as much as men and to be free to participate in the social life as they choose. The goal of gender reform feminism is equal participation of women and men in all life aspects.

Gender resistance feminists (radical, lesbian, psychoanalytic) claim that the gender cannot be made "gender-neutral"* as men's dominance is too strong. Just like gender reform feminists, gender resistance feminists make visible the hidden daily practices that allow men to control women's lives. They call it *patriarchy*, a concept referring to men's domination introduced by Marxist feminism. In the seventies, gender resistance feminists presented a *gender ideology*, which values and beliefs were justifying the gendered social order. Gender resistance feminists argue that gender inequality has been legitimated by major religions that see men's dominance as God's will. Some feminists think that the best way to resist men's oppression of women is to form a woman-centered society and create a woman-oriented culture and ethics. This approach is called cultural feminism and is a trend within the radical and lesbian feminism.

In 1970, two American feminists published books that were seen radical as distinct from the strong liberal reformist current: Kate Miller's "Sexual Politics" and Shulamith Firestone's "The Dialectic of Sex". In Britain, where Marxism had stronger influence, Juliet Mitchel published her "Women's Estate" a year later, a book which was written within a Marxist framework. Marxist and radical feminism quickly became defined as two major and opposing tendencies within the women's movement.

* See same article of Judith Lorber, quoted above

At this time, feminism was also having an impact within the academic institutions. Many activists in the movement were students, lecturers and researchers whose feminist concepts influenced their academic work. The academic world itself was an arena of struggle for feminists. In academic fields women were still a minority - a powerless and youthful group – but they had political skills deriving from their activism. Within established disciplines, women were exchanging ideas and feminist knowledge. “Sociology is a good example since it was one of the first disciplines on which feminism made a real impact. A landmark was the British Sociological Association conference in 1974 which was held on the theme of “Sexual Divisions in Society”. Subsequently a Women’s Caucus and a Sexual Divisions Study Group were set up ensuring that women became better represented within the BSA and feminist ideas began to gain a wider hearing within the discipline as a whole. Women in sociology were involved in campaigning for courses on women within the discipline and were also instrumental in establishing Women’s Studies as a distinct academic field”²².

The growth in feminist intellectual work led also to the establishment of feminist academic journals. In US, *Signs* was launched in 1976; in France, *Questions Feministes* was founded in 1977 and was later succeeded by *Nouvelles Questions Feministes*; in Britain, *Feminist Review* was published in 1979. In 1978 the first truly international women’s studies journal was established, *Women’s Studies International Quarterly*, which later became *Women’s Studies International forum*. These journals were crucial in the development of feminist thought and were providing a forum for debates and ideas at a time when other journals were reluctant to publish feminist works.

Gender rebellion feminists (multiracial, social construction, post-modern) aim change in the gender order by undermining the boundaries between women and men, female and male, heterosexual and homosexual. By questioning these dualities, gender rebellion feminists claim that no group should be favoured over

²² Jackson, Stevi and Jackie Jones, *Thinking for Ourselves: An Introduction to Feminist Theorising*, in *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, Edinburgh, 1998

the other one. They see both personal and group identities as constantly shifting, and there is always possibility for individual and social change, and new ways of organizing work and family.

Academic feminism and the changes in feminist politics made the feminist theory more diverse and more focused on the particular, rather than on the generality of women's situation. The recognition of differences among women has become a central theoretical issue in its own right. Thus, women were no longer thought of as a homogenous group sharing a common identity.

Although much of the feminist movement of the twentieth century has happened in the developed industrialized countries, there have also been important struggles for women's rights in African and South American countries. In the Middle East, women have fought for recognition of their social rights at their own pace and with the traditional precepts of Islam. In Asia, the problems of overpopulation and poverty have raised the need to face gender-related issues.

4.2. Reform Feminist Theories

The feminisms of the 1960s and 1970s have their roots in liberal political philosophy that developed the idea of individual rights and in Marx's critics of capitalism. According to the classification of Judith Lorber, they consist of liberal feminism, Marxist and socialist feminism, and feminism of development. Some theorists²³ refer to feminism of development as "post-colonial feminism". This is the term that I also prefer to use in the present work as it gives better idea about the specific context in and from which it has appeared.

²³ Mills, Sara, Post-Colonial Feminist Theory, in "Contemporary Feminist Theories", Edinburgh, 1998

4.2.1 Liberal Feminist Theory

The liberal feminist theory claims that gender differences are not based on biology, and therefore that women and men are not all that different. If women and men are not different, then they should not be treated differently under the law. Women should have the same rights as men and same work opportunities.

Another question that is still being debated is related with parenting cares. Liberal feminists argue that gendered characteristics, such as women's parenting abilities, may seem biological, but are in fact social products. Their proof that mothering skills are learned and not inborn, for example, is that men learn them, too, when they end up with responsibility for raising children alone.

Liberal feminism has developed important theories to explain the existence of gender segregation of jobs (men work with men and women work with women), as well as gender stratification of hierarchies (men are always at top managerial positions). The theory of "gendered job queues" argues that the best jobs are kept for men of the dominant racial ethnic group. When a job no longer pays well, dominant men leave it to other men from disadvantaged racial ethnic groups or to women.

The main contribution of liberal feminism has been to show women's discrimination. It says that biological differences should be ignored in order to achieve gender equality. Liberal feminism has been successful in breaking down many barriers to women's entry into formerly male-dominated jobs and professions, in helping to equalize wages, and in legalizing abortion. But liberal feminism has not been able to overcome the prevailing belief that women and men are intrinsically different. The way women are treated in modern society, especially in the working place, still brings large gaps in salaries, job opportunities, and advancement.

Politically, liberal feminism is focused on visible sources of gender discrimination, such as gendered job markets, non equal salaries, women's career development.

Liberal feminists use anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action programs to fight inequality, especially in the job market.

In the United States, the gender equality in the workplace and at home is concentrated in the middle and upper class, where people are more likely to have good jobs and steady incomes. The Scandinavian countries have achieved gender equality through welfare state benefits to everyone. They have more women in higher position in the government and in policy-making positions than the rest of the world, including North America and the rest of Europe.

However, most of the women in the world live in countries where few people have a high standard of living. Their economic and social problems bring gender inequality that needs different feminist theories and politics.

4.2.2. Marxist and Socialist Feminist Theory

During the 1970s, Marxist and socialist feminist theories blamed the economic structure and the material aspects of life as the main source of gender inequality. Many feminists looked at Marxism as a means of answering the question of gender inequality – not only those who identified themselves as Marxists, but also others seen as radical feminists. The women's movement emerged in a period of widespread radical Left activism. Marxism offered an analysis of systematic oppression built into the social structure. Women's subordination was no longer seen as natural or biological, but social in origin.

The Marxist and socialist theories are based on historical materialism, which says that every major change in production, changes the social organization. In preindustrial times, women were taking care not only of the home and children, but were also growing food, sewing clothing, and other work that allowed the family to live. The industrial revolution of the nineteenth century brought a major change – production work was transferred from the home to the factories, and household goods became mass-produced goods.

Marx's analysis of the social structure was supposed to apply to any social characteristics, as well as to women. However, the only difference here was that until the end of the nineteenth century, married women in capitalist societies were not allowed to own property on their own name, and the profits from business they ran or the wages they received belonged legally to their husbands.

Although Marx and other economic theorists of that period recognized the exploitation of wives' domestic labour, it was Marxist feminism that proposed analysis of the gendered structure of capitalism. Marxist feminism argues that the exploitation of women's work, both in the home and in the marketplace, is the prime source of gender inequality.

Marxist feminism theorists described marriage as an economic necessity, as a woman rarely makes enough money to support herself and her children in capitalist economies. According to the above theory, a wife earns her husband's economic support by doing housework and taking care of their children. According to the French feminist Christine Delphy²⁴, within the domestic mode of production, men constitute a class of exploiters that benefit from women's labour and the women are the exploited class. Women's housework and child care makes it possible for men to go to work and children to school. Mothers reproduce the social values of their class by passing them on to their children. The Marxist feminism initially proposed that all women should get paid for housework and childcare, but such a payment, either directly or indirectly still makes the women dependent on their husbands, placing them in dangerous situations in case they become widows or get divorced. Later, the theory points out another solution, similar to that of the liberal feminism, according to which, all women should have permanent full-time jobs. For a mother, this means affordable and accessible childcare services. In many industrialized countries the governments provide financial support to all mothers. The benefits include parental care, paid maternal leave, maternal and child health services, allowances each month for each child, free education, and childcare services.

²⁴ Delphy, Christine, *L'ennemi Principal*, Paris, 1997

Every mother, in most European countries, receives some or most of these benefits. These services make it possible for all women to be both mothers and economically independent. In the former communist countries there was similar practice too. Some feminists argue that this solution to gender inequality only substitute the dependence on a husband for economic dependence on the state.

In her paper “Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex”, presented at the Wellesley College in 1975, the American economist Heidi Hartman reveals the dual systems theory in Marxism feminism – an analysis of patriarchy and capitalism as twin systems of men’s domination over women. “The present status of women in the labour market and the current arrangement of sex-segregated jobs is the result of a long process of interaction between patriarchy and capitalism... Men will have to be forced to give up their favoured positions in the division of labour – in the labour market and at home – both if women’s subordination is to end and if men are to begin to escape class oppression and exploitation... Capitalism grew on top of patriarchy; patriarchal capitalism is stratified society par excellence. If nonruling-class men are to be free they will have to recognize their cooptation by patriarchal capitalism and relinquish their patriarchal benefits. If women are to be free, they must fight against both patriarchal power and capitalist organization of society”.

In feminists’ debates patriarchy was a highly contentious concept. Hardened Marxist feminists argued that women’s oppression was rooted in capitalist social relations, they were seeing patriarchy as a product of “bourgeois feminism” and opposite to class struggle. On other side, other feminists recognized male domination as a feature of modern society and not necessarily related to capitalism. They saw the concept of patriarchy as ahistorical, describing past societies based on the “rule of fathers”²⁵.

Marxist and socialist feminisms were the foundation of an influential theory of gender inequality that raised the question of division of labour in the family and in

²⁵ Barrett, Michelle, *Women’s Oppression Today*, London, 1980

the workplace. Nevertheless, in countries, where mothers are provided with paid leave before and after the birth of a child, and childcare services, the problem with gender inequality has been solved. The political solutions based on this theory improved women's material lives but the burden of housework and children care was left mainly on women's shoulders. Women in the former communist countries had what liberal feminism in capitalist economies wanted for women – employment and state financial support and childcare services, but male-dominated government policies put the state's interests before those of women. This shows that the Marxist and socialist feminism does not change women's status but only reforms the social order.

4.2.3. Post-Colonial Feminist Theories

These theories, known also as “development feminist theories”, deal with issues on women's exploitation in the post-colonial economy. Economic exploitation of women in countries on the way to industrialization is seen as greater than in developed countries. Development feminists point that working women in developing countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, are paid less than men workers, whether they work in factories or at home. In order to survive in rural communities, women grow food, work in the household and earn money any way so they can supplement their husbands' wages.

Development feminism uses theories of colonial underdevelopment and post-colonial development, as well as Marxist and socialist feminist theories, to analyze the position of women in the global economy, with an emphasis on newly industrializing countries.

The resourced and labour in developing countries is the outcome of centuries of European and American colonization. In these countries, men workers were favoured in mining and large-scale agriculture, while women in food production and exportable crops, such as coffee, and extraction of raw materials.

After they became independent, many investors from wealthier Western countries set up business in the developing countries. The consequent economic restructuring and industrialization disadvantaged women. Men workers are hired for better paid-manufactured jobs, while paid a lot less. For example, in the maquiladoras, factories at the Mexican border, where up to 90 percent of the workers are women, better working conditions, higher pay and modern equipment are provided only for young single women, while older women taking care of children are employed only by smaller, less modern factories.

Post-colonial theorists consider that there were a range of different colonial and imperial relations during the nineteenth century which still have a major effect on the way the cultures have been shaped. Some researchers* argue that the colonial and imperial context was “sexually coded”, with sexual meanings. In the nineteenth century there were many novels and paintings representing “exotic, sexually submissive and inviting women”. These fantasies dominated Western men’s mind. Actually, the colonial lands were seen by European men as places where they could act out their sexual fantasies in a way which was not possible in their own countries back home. Even the colonial landscape was represented as a “virgin territory opening itself to imperial penetration. Thus, Africa and the Americas had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination – a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears”²⁶. According to McClintock, the figure of the “white woman” is central for developing the concept of racism. Within the Victorian period there was a great fear of degeneration of the British race because of mixing of blood. The stereotype of the pure, white woman was used as “a standard against which the mixed race of the indigenous woman could be judged and in accord with which the British civilization could be seen as superior”* .

* see Sara Mills, quoted above

²⁶ McClintock, Anne, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Imperial Context*, London , 1995

* see Sara Mills, quoted above

Another viewpoint presented by post-colonial theorists relates to the cultural differences between the European colonizers and the local people. As the anthropologists Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock state in their book “Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives”²⁷, it is evident that at the beginning of colonization of the New World, the European adventurers, missionaries and officials had little knowledge about the patterns of communal and egalitarian relationships among the native populations. In many pre-colonial societies women’s position and work participation was equal to that of men. European patriarchal models were imposed to local people and this deprived indigenous women of property and personal autonomy and restricted their social roles. These practices continued as the colonial territories were integrated into the world capitalist system of production, and were used even after those countries gained their independence.

The concept of women generalized a “last colony”, which is presented in the work of the German feminist scholars M. Mies, V. Bennholdt-Thomsen, and C. von Werlhof “Women: The Last Colony”²⁸, provides a new interpretation of Third world women issues. The authors argue that the relationship of post-colonial workers of both genders to Western companies is similar, in some ways, to the relationship between women and men worldwide. Women and colonies are both seen as low-paid or non-paid producers, subordinated, dependent and poor.

The post-colonial feminism is critical towards colonial imperialism and supportive of women’s rights. As a solution it proposes that women organize in small communities and encourage their productive and reproductive mother’s roles. However, these communities still continue cultural practices, such as female circumcision, which Western feminists see as physically harmful and unacceptable. Whether and to what extent to interfere with traditional cultural practices is still a dilemma for postcolonial feminists.

²⁷ Etienne, Mona, and Eleanor Leacock, *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*, New York, 1980

²⁸ Mies.M, and V.Bennholdt-Thomsen, C. von Werlhof, *Women: The Last Colony*, London, 1988

4.3. Gender Resistant Feminist Theories

As gender reform feminisms provoked public consciousness and drew more opportunities, women formerly men-reserved spheres and became more aware of other inequalities of everyday life. Out of this awareness of being ignored and interrupted came the gender resistant feminism. Below I will briefly outline the main characteristics of three major theories of this feminist current.

4.3.1. Radical Feminist Theory

This theory is related with the idea of gender inequality that goes beyond discrimination and oppression. Radical feminists argue that the root of men's exploitation of women is patriarchy – the belief that women are different and inferior. This can best be resisted and overcome by “forming non-hierarchical, supportive, woman-only spaces where women can think and act and create free of constant sexist put-downs, sexual harassment, and the threat of rape and violence”*. The creation of women-oriented health care facilities, counseling and legal services, a woman's culture and ethics could be seen as separation from men.

Radical feminists criticize sharply all characteristics of male-dominated societies – objectivity, control, aggressiveness and competitiveness – and blame them for wars, poverty, battering and child abuse. The important values are those that women possess – intimacy, warmth, care and sharing.

Radical feminists' policies have been protection of rape victims and women victims of domestic violence, as well as establishment of women's groups and alternative organizations. This focus on gender oppression has led to critics that radical feminism neglects ethnic and social class differences among men and women.

4.3.2. Lesbian Feminist Theory

Lesbian feminism goes further than the radical feminism in its perception of men. They see heterosexual relationships between men and women as exploitative because of men's social, physical and sexual power over women.

Early lesbian feminism developed in an attempt to counter the dominant medical construction of lesbianism as the congenital defect of "inversion." The medical model clearly suggested that lesbianism was a biological defect, and early homosexual rights advocates used this to claim that lesbians should be pitied for their condition rather than oppressed because of it. With the rise of the women's movement in the seventies came an increasing dissatisfaction with the association of lesbianism with biological "abnormality," as early feminists began to analyze other explanations for the existence of lesbians. The theory that came to dominate early lesbian feminism was that lesbians were those who resisted the regime of compulsory heterosexuality, and unlike heterosexual women, refused to become part of the male economy by choosing to identify only with other women.

Lesbian feminist activists in the seventies claimed that lesbianism had nothing to do with a medical condition of illness, and that it was, in fact, a choice available to all women, a choice that any woman aware of the oppressive nature of patriarchy could make. Thus, lesbian feminism sought to "liberate the 'lesbian' in every woman"²⁹.

Important characteristic of lesbian theoretical writings of the last several decades is the definition of lesbianism and its identity. Lesbians see themselves as opposite to heterosexual feminist liberal movements and excluded from those movements. Their primary goal is to break free from men's oppression. This

* see Judith Lorber, in *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, quoted above

²⁹ Stein, Arlene, "Sisters and Queers: The Decentering of Lesbian Feminism", in "Socialist Review 22.1, January 1992

independence, however, has its penalties – exclusion from child-rearing, discrimination in the job market, hostile attitude of the society. Lesbians have to meet not only social abuses, but also men hostility and heterosexual feminists' rejection. In spite of this, many lesbian activists have devoted their efforts to feminist movements. The place of lesbianism within the women's movements has nevertheless remained ambiguous. Lesbians had been variously represented as a threat, as an irrelevance, or as heroines and vanguard of women's movements because of their refusal to relate sexually to men.

Another important concept of lesbian feminism is that of the independent, woman-identified woman. This idea sees the love between women as an identity, an emotional and sexual community and culture. Women bisexuals who have sexual contacts with both women and men are disturbing for lesbian feminism, as any relationship with a man is viewed as collaboration with the "enemy"³⁰.

There are two currents of Lesbian theory, the first one being a strictly academic, spread across a whole range of academic disciplines, and the second one including work by writers of poetry and prose. Writers like Christine Crow, Maureen Duffy, Anna Livia, Michelle Cliff, Sally Gearhart, Monique Wittig and many others have explored questions of lesbian identity and sexuality, and have worked out alternative models of lesbian life and community.

4.3.3. Psychoanalytical Theory

The term "psychoanalysis" means an account, an analysis of the mind's, the psyche's, structure and relation to the body. It is used as a method to treat certain types of disorders or sickness. Some of the main psychoanalysis' concepts, developed and largely discussed in the twentieth century, include the Oedipus complex and the phalli symbol. These terms are closely related to gender, sexuality, interpersonal and familial relations, and that is why they are also of central interest to feminism. Most of the feminist theories analyze the

concept of the unconscious, the idea that gender is a psychic and not a biological identity, and post-Freudian writers focused on the early pre-Oedipal stages of a child's life. Generally, these writers could be divided into two groups: Anglo-American and French feminist school.

At the end of nineteenth century Freud developed his theory of the Oedipus complex and infantile sexuality. The Oedipus complex is explained by Freud as a jealous hatred of the parent from the opposite sex – “the small boy who loves his mother and experiences hatred of his father”³¹. Freud makes the little boy the model for both sexes, and describes the little girl as a deficient version of him. The “Oedipus complex” of Freud is problematic for the feminist psychoanalysis, as it constructs women as inferior sex. Freud starts to write on feminine identity and female sexuality late in his career. According to the French feminist Luce Irigaray Freud's definition of femininity's nature is similar to that of melancholia or depression. Irigaray claims that women in Freud's works are excluded from social life as they have little interest in the outside world.

In contrast with Freud's concept of gender difference, Melanie Klein, a psychotherapist worked after the Second World War, offers another vision of feminine identity. While Freud talks about a single, phallic sex which takes up the positions of masculine and feminine according to different reactions to the threat of castration, Klein argues that there are two original sexes, male and female. Due to her emphasis on the importance of the maternal, in contrast to Freud's role of the father, Melanie Klein has made a great impact on feminist theory, and since the early 1980s there has been a return to her ideas.

The French feminist psychoanalytical theory makes femininity its central concern and stands against the perception that the symbolic order is a patriarchy. Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian-born French feminist, Luce Irigaray, a Belgian-born French feminist, and Helene Cixous are among the most prominent names of French theorists.

³⁰ Gonda, Caroline, *Lesbian Theory*, in *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, Edinburgh, 1998

³¹ Vice, Sue, *Psychoanalytical Feminist Theory*, in *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, Edinburgh, 1998

Kristeva is concerned with the nature of the feminine, defining it in a non-biological way and points out that women are marginal to the social order, as are various other groups, including intellectuals, the working class and the blacks. In political terms, such marginality, according to Kristeva, affords these groups great revolutionary potential.

In her essay "Women's Time"³², originally published in 1979, Kristeva argues that there are three phases of feminism. She rejects the first phase because it seeks universal equality and overlooks sexual differences. She criticizes Simone de Beauvoir and the rejection of motherhood; rather than reject motherhood Kristeva insists that we need to understand better maternity, female creation and the link between them.

Kristeva also rejects what she sees as the second phase of feminism because it seeks a uniquely feminine language, which, according to her, is impossible. She does not agree with feminists who maintain that language and culture are essentially patriarchal and must somehow be abandoned. On the contrary, Kristeva insists that culture and language are the domain of speaking beings and women are primarily speaking beings. As third phase of feminism she identifies a phase that does not choose identity over difference, but rather, it explores multiple identities, including multiple sexual identities.

Luce Irigaray maintains that the theories of subjectivity developed by Freud and Lacan are bound to their theories of sexuality. Irigaray argues against the masculine-gender-based idea of subjectivity. She argues that women are not given a proper place in a patriarchal world.

According to Irigaray, social order determines sexual order. In patriarchal society, the males are the "producer subjects and agents of exchange" and the females are the "commodities" . The economy as a whole is based on homosexual relations because all economic exchange takes place between men. In this society "woman exists only as an occasion for mediation,

³² Kristeva, Julia, "Women's Time," in "New Maladies of the Soul", New York, 1997

transaction, transition..."³³. Irigaray proposes that if women as commodities refuse to "go to market," the basis of the patriarchal society would be broken. Irigaray argues that inequality is based on sexual difference and its solution may come only through sexual difference.

In her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa"³⁴ Helene Cixous argues that most women do write and speak, but that they do so from a "masculine" position; in order to speak, women need a stable, fixed system of meaning, and thus they align themselves with the Phallus which stabilizes language. Cixous uses the phrase "l'écriture féminine" to discuss this notion of feminine writing. She sees "l'écriture féminine" as something possible only in poetry, and not in realist prose. In poetry language flows more freely and is closer to the unconscious, and thus to what has been repressed – female bodies and female sexuality.

Following Freud, whose earliest works were on hysteria, Cixous also focuses on female hysterics. The idea of hysteria is that a body produces a symptom, which represents a repressed idea; the body thus "speaks" what the conscious mind cannot say, and the unconscious thoughts are written out by the body itself. According to Cixous, l'écriture féminine has a lot in common with hysterics, as the direct connections between the unconscious and the body are seen as a mode of "writing".

In order to resist to phallic cultural productions, which according to psychoanalytical feminism, are full of aggression and domination, French feminism calls for women to write and learn from their life experiences and their bodies – about pregnancy, childbirth, and sexuality. However, critics of psychoanalytical feminism argue that urging women to produce women's art and culture locks them into female sensibility and separates them more from men's culture, which is still dominant.

³³ Irigaray, Luce, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, New York, 1985

³⁴ Abel, Elizabeth, and Emily Abel (eds.), *The Signs Reader: Women, Gender and Scholarship*, Chicago, 1980

4.4. Gender Rebellion Feminist Theories

The 1980s and 1990s mark the emergence of feminist theories that attack the hierarchical components of the existing social order. They analyze how cultural productions, especially in the mass media, justify gender inequality. These feminisms have the revolutionary potential to destabilize the structure and values of the existing social order.

4.4.1. Multi-Ethnic Feminist Theory

In the last decades of twentieth century feminist theories claimed that no one aspect of inequality is more important than any other. Ethnicity, religion, social class, and gender comprise a social hierarchical system in which the upper class is represented by heterosexual, white men and women, and the lower class by disadvantaged women and men from different ethnicities and regions.

Multi-ethnic feminists show that gender, ethnicity, religion and social class are structurally linked. But they argue that “it is not enough to dissect a social institution or area of social thought from a woman’s point of view; the viewpoint has to include the experiences of women and men of different ethnic groups and religions and must also take into consideration social class and economic conditions”*. Important point made by multi-ethnic feminist theorists is that there is not just one but multiple systems of domination, and they give examples with African, Asian and Latin American men and women in the United States. Men and women from different disadvantaged ethnic groups are oppressed in different ways – men oppress women because of a traditional patriarchal culture or because they are themselves subordinated by men from the upper class of the social pyramid. In this case women from different ethnicities are seen as suppressed by both dominant men and subordinate disadvantaged men.

* see Judith Lorber, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, quoted above

Multi-ethnic feminism is part of political movements that aim to fight discrimination of disadvantaged groups in society and preserve their cultures.

4.4.2. Postmodern Feminist Theory

The concept of a postmodern gender suggests that it is possible to express gender and sexuality beyond the gender binary of female and male.

The term “postmodernism” is used to “designate a new cultural epoch in which capitalism, in its latest consumerist phase, invades everything, leaving no remaining oppositional space”³⁵. Postmodernism comes to describe also a “crisis of understanding of knowledge and selfhood”³⁶. This crisis of understanding has had an impact over feminism as well. Feminists, like postmodernists, have long recognized the need for a new ethics and values, a response to technological changes and power issues. Feminism has argued that gender differences are not a consequence of biological differences but originate from the social concepts that do not reflect the truth about human nature.

The postmodern shift in thinking can be located as a more general movement within the contemporary Western cultural tradition which problematizes Enlightenment beliefs and the philosophy of an essential, individualized and rational self. The postmodern position entails assumptions such as there is no one 'Truth' but many competing truth claims, pluralism and relativism. A postmodernist feminism, according to Fraser and Nicholson³⁷ is “comparativist rather than universalist and attuned to changes and contrasts instead of covering laws [and] would replace unitary notions of woman and feminine gender identity with plural and complexly constructed conceptions of social identity”.

Postmodern feminist ideas are often expressed in literature, movies, TV, advertising, which transmit messages about gender roles, sexual identity, desire,

³⁵ Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism, Or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, 1992

³⁶ Waugh, Patricia, *Postmodernism and Feminism*, in *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, Edinburgh, 1998

³⁷ Nicholson, Linda, *Feminism/Postmodernism (Thinking Gender)*, New York, 1989

and female and male bodies. In this way they translate their theoretical and linguistic destabilization of the gender order into politics and everyday interaction. Postmodernist feminism argues that multiple roles are part of our reality and the world consists of multiple realities too. Thus, the essential nature of women - the one-way to be a woman – is abandoned, and a new concept of diversity in feminism is proposed.

5. Policy Approaches Towards Women’s Equality – Gender Mainstreaming

The academic work that has been done in the field of gender in the past decades provides valuable knowledge about the position of women throughout the history, the reasons of different types of social behaviour, and the future perspectives of women’s issues. Most of the theorists propose also their solutions to the problematic which are sometimes arguable and rather general, so they can be implemented in a same way at all parts of the world. In order to solve a problem with different levels of specificity, it is necessary after a theoretical analysis is presented, to establish a systematic approach, a large-scale policy that could answer the needs of more people and is adapted according to the particular features of each region.

All feminist theories are based on the presumption that relations between men and women are patriarchal, i.e. they reflect a hierarchy in which women are subordinate to men. This subordination and inequality limit women’s participation in nearly all spheres of life. “Gender equality therefore demands women’s empowerment, a process that leads to greater participation in social and political processes, greater decision-making power and to conscious action for social transformation”³⁸ .

³⁸ “Gender Mainstreaming: The Concept, report located at: <http://www.undp.org.in/report/gstrat/strat-5.html>

In the scientific literature, the concept of women's empowerment is called gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming reflects "a desire for women to be at centre-stage, part of the mainstream"³⁹. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defines gender mainstreaming as "a perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality."⁴⁰

A similar definition of gender mainstreaming is provided by the European Commission, which outlines the principle of "mainstreaming" as "the systematic consideration of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men..."⁴¹

The main objective of a mainstreaming approach is to reduce the disparities between men and women through establishing institutions and programmes and activities that could provoke change in social attitudes and answer the needs of women and men. This can be achieved with the participation of governments, non-governmental organizations, regional communities and individuals. "Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively."⁴² Throughout the world there are numerous institutions and events which mission and aims is promoting gender equality.

³⁹ Rounaq, Jahan, *The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development*, London, 1995

⁴⁰ Definition of Gender Mainstreaming, International Labour Organization, located at: www.ilo.org

⁴¹ European Commission, "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities", 1996, located at: www.europa.eu.int

⁴² Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, September 1995

In UN, it is the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) that is involved in gender equality promoting. "UNDP's strategy for gender mainstreaming emphasizes systematic integration of gender equality objectives into organizational policies, programmes at all levels, resource allocations and practices"⁴³. Two of the main objectives of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing (China) in 1995, were to adopt a "Platform for Action", leading to fundamental changes and improvement of the situation of women, and to determine the priorities for implementation of the strategies within the UN system. The adopted "Platform for Action" was a step forward as the covered problematic issues were more than ever before: discrimination and violence against women, the right to inherit right and property, sexual rights, reproductive health, war crimes against women, cultural characteristics and religious beliefs. Five years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, the United Nations held in New York a Special Session on the implementation and impact of the Beijing Platform for Action, called "Beijing+5". It outlined the further actions and initiatives that should be undertaken in order to reach the objectives set at Beijing Conference in 1995.

All European Union member countries, as well as EU candidate countries have participated in signed the main international agreements on women's rights and gender mainstreaming, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Beijing Platform for Action. These international commitments form the broad legal framework for gender equality policies.

In the European Union, at European Commission level there are several structures that play an important role in developing and adopting Commission's gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities strategy and actions: the Group of Commissioners on Equal Opportunities, the Inter-service Group on Gender Equality and the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for women and men. The promotion of equality between men and women is legally based on

⁴³ Gender in Development, Policies, located at: <http://www.undp.org/gender/policies>

Article 2, Article 3, Article 13 and Article 137(1) of the Treaty of Amsterdam, and Article 23(1) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Article 2 of the Amsterdam Treaty proclaims the promotion of “equality between men and women” as a fundamental task of the Community. Article 3 calls for elimination of gender inequalities in Community objectives, strategies and actions. Article 13 mandates action to “combat discrimination” based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation”⁴⁴. Article 137 (1) proclaims “equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work”. In the same spirit, the EU Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005) also recognizes gender equality as an integral part of economic, social, and democratic development.

In February 1997, following the World Conference in Beijing, women’s non-governmental organizations from ten countries of Central and Eastern Europe established a coalition, called “KARAT”, which main objective was to change the socio-political position of women in these countries and to strengthen the role of women’s NGOs in the process of democratization. Karat Coalition participated actively in the UN Special Session “Beijing+5” and at the same time started new initiatives of monitoring the implementation of the European Union gender equality standards in the accession process. “Our experience in the Beijing+5 process exposed the serious ignorance of EU women regarding Central and Eastern European women...Therefore, we may play an important role in building EU understanding of the citizens and culture of CEE... Effective integration into the EU is important for the women in CEE for fundamental reasons. Women of CEE do not want to be second class women within the EU, nor do they want to be represented by existing EU women’s organizations without having equal partnership with them”⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ Article 13 (ex Article 6a), Amsterdam Treaty; Treaty establishing the European Community, 1997, located at www.europa.eu.int

⁴⁵ Lohmann, Kinga, “Strategies and Demands of Women’s NGOs from Central and Eastern Europe in the Beijing+5 and the European Union Enlargement Process”, in “Societies in Transition – Challenges to Women’s and Gender Studies”, Heike Flessner, Lydia Potts (eds.), Opladen, 2002

Chapter II

1. Evolution of Gender Relations in Bulgaria

After the political transformations at the end of the 1980s, the Western world turned its head eastwards, where the “other” part of Europe was. This “other” Europe was, until that time, rather unknown. Getting to know one new country is already a challenge, let alone several countries, “piled up” in one and the same region! It is much easier to address them together, arranged by geographical position and/or common past. That is how all former communist countries, located eastwards from Germany and Austria, and spreading from the Baltic Sea to the Balkans, were called all together “Eastern Europe”. Since then, this term appeared in various publications and in every-day language, naming countries with different historical, political, economic and cultural background. During the period of EU accession negotiations, they were divided into “first” and “second” wave candidates but they were still generally referred to as “Eastern Europe”.

Being one of the EU accession candidate countries and located in the southern part of Eastern Europe, Bulgaria has often been presented in gender-related papers and reports under the wide term “Eastern Europe”. As stated in the previous chapter, within the broad concept of gender, there are more narrow distinctive, cultural features that shape the gender structure of every society. In the present part of my thesis, I will focus on those specific characteristics that explain women’s position and gender relations in Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian state came into existence in 681 AD. After reaching its greatest power in twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Bulgarian Kingdom was divided into two kingdoms: the kingdoms of Vidin and Turnovo. This division weakened the country and in 1396 it was conquered by the Ottoman Empire in 1396. The modern Bulgarian state was restored in 1878 as a result of one of many Russo-Turkish Wars in the history of the two empires. The end of the five oppressive

centuries of existence under Ottoman domination was characterised by rejection of the Ottoman Empire and seen as a chance to build a new society influenced by European traditions and culture.

Until the first decades of twentieth century, the traditional Bulgarian society consisted of three main classes: peasants (the majority of the people), chorbadjii (a small wealthy class that owned big land property), and esnafi (tradespeople and craftsmen, mainly in towns).

The most important institution of traditional Bulgarian society was the “zadruga”, an extended family composed of ten to twenty small families, related by blood, who lived and worked together, and owned property. The extended family most often included four generations of men, the wives whom those men brought into the household through marriage, and the children from those marriages. Once a girl married, she would leave the zadruga of her parents for that of her husband. No member of the zadruga had any personal property other than clothes or the women's dowries. The peasants did not see their existence out of the zadruga and the collective spirit. “The simplicity and monotony of the rural work created identical way of life, concerns, same thoughts and feelings in all peasants”⁴⁶. In physical appearance, no one was trying to be remarkable or different; on the contrary, everyone wanted to look like the rest and “the whole”. Women, too, were cautious not to use elements in their clothing that could distinguish them from the others. In many Bulgarian villages, women did not have right to inherit their fathers. Thus, the land and other property were divided only between brothers. Later, after the liberation of the country, the voted Law of inheritance broke this tradition.

Traditional Bulgarian society was patriarchal. The leader of the zadruga, called the "old man" had power over his family and was treated with big respect. He was considered the wisest because he had lived the longest. His duties included managing the purchase and sale of all household property, division of labor

⁴⁶ Hadjiiski, Ivan, *Bit i Dushevnost na Nashiya Narod (Way of Life and Mentality of Our People)*, Volume I, Sofia, 2002

among zadruga members, and settling personal disputes. Older men within the household could offer advice, but the "old man" had the final word. Familial respect was shown to him by rising whenever he appeared and eating only after he had begun and before he had finished his meal. The "old man's" wife had similar authority over traditional women's activities such as tending the garden, observing holiday rituals, and sewing. This woman had similar respect from the members of the zadruga, but she was never allowed to interfere in functions designated for men.

The familial system sometimes extended to include godparents and adopted brothers and sisters who had the same status as close relatives. Godparents kept close ties with their godchildren throughout their lives, and the godparent/godchild relationship could be transferred from generation to generation. Godparents were treated with the utmost respect and had an important role in all events in a godchild's life.

Children typically began to share in household work at the age of five or six. At that age, girls began to do household work, and by age twelve they had usually mastered most of the traditional household skills. By age twelve or thirteen, boys were expected to do the same field work as adults, and some of them were learning a trade such as tailoring or blacksmithing at six or seven.

When the zadruga began breaking up in nineteenth century, property was divided equally among its members. The individualisation of the old patriarchal order and moral gradually destroyed the existing traditions of the zadruga. The extended family was weakened as younger generations, sons, began leaving the zadruga at the death of the "old man," and newly arrived wives did not adjust to the traditional system. As a result, people began to create smaller households.

The zadruga breakup accelerated after Bulgaria gained its independence and began introducing laws that gave women equal inheritance rights, although in many parts of Bulgaria women did not begin demanding their legal inheritance until twentieth century.

After the decline of the zadruga, the patriarchal system continued its existence in the smaller families, where husbands gained ownership of family property and the patriarchal status the old men once had. Upon marriage a woman was becoming member of the new family while her relations with her own family were limited. Couples often looked forward to the birth of sons rather than daughters because sons always would remain family members. Arranged marriages, were common until the beginning of twentieth century, and persisted in some most traditional villages until the beginning of the communist period. It was the parents of the young man and woman that were arranging the engagement and wedding according their own vision and the collective moral. The love before marriage was above all need of a social companion. "Life was simple. Several qualities were important at the choice of the girl: to be good-natured, healthy, big, strong, hard-working, and, if possible, beautiful. At the time of the zadruga the wealth of the girl's family was not important as the girl did not inherit anything. The beauty of the girl was a condition that made the choice easier. If the girl possessed these qualities she will be a good labourer, mother and wife. That is why unhappy marriages and separations because of problematic life together were unknown to the people"*. The health of the children, keeping the household in order and the field work were main responsibilities of the women. Women were always working – land work, house work, garden work, selling at the market. Even when they were invited to see female friends or neighbours they were carrying with them their knitting work. Wives were expected to give obedience to their husbands. Women waited for a man to pass rather than crossing his path and did not dare interfering in a man's work.

Under the influence of Ottoman sexual visions, there were certain restrictions concerning women's relations with men at that time. They aimed preserving the old sexual moral, keeping women from various "temptations", and thus, making the family a stable social unit. All women, especially unmarried women, attended public life events separately, including church, and the traditional folk dance

* see Ivan Hadjiiski, *Bit i Dushevnost na Nashiya Narod*, Volume I, as quoted above

khoro[♦]. Women were prohibited to look in the eyes men who were unknown or not family related. “There was never a ‘mixed’ khoro. Men and women were dancing separately. If they had to play one single khoro, men were at the front line and women were behind, as relatives were making the link between the male and female dancers... At the weddings there were separate male and female tables... In the theatre of Kazanlak, there were male and female parts and the sold tickets were called ‘male’s’ and ‘female’s’”⁴⁷. Ivan Hadjiiski argues that in these attitudes there was no intent to humiliate women as individuals but they mostly reflected the existing Balkan social models of that time. The sexual identity of Bulgarians has been a subject of several intellectual works after the Liberation. Many authors describe Bulgarian women and men as down-to-earth people who are very vital and energetic, but sexually timid and uneasy. “In his love life the Bulgarian invests secret and balanced tenderness which soon gets dresses in clean family relations, duty and social decency... The shyness and secretness of the sexual experiences has rather features of something initial and primitive, than is a result of social restrictions or spiritual discipline”⁴⁸. In his reflection about Bulgarian sexual folklore, Nayden Sheitanov argues that it is rich of female and male characters, and in it, every element of nature is described with its male or female name, expressing a vital view of life. “Unfortunately it has been changed and modified by the Christianity, and recently it is experiencing the destroying influence of the Western European culture, to which Bulgaria, Balkan way of life is strange and unknown”⁴⁹.

In spite of the obedience, seen in “female-male” relations, a historical consequence of the patriarchal moral order of the zadruga, women had, at the same time, high, respectable position in the family’s economy. Women were

[♦] traditional Bulgarian folk dance, usually danced in a circle

⁴⁷ Hadjiiski, Ivan, *Bit i Dushevnost na Nashiya Narod (Way of Life and Mentality of Our People)*, Volume II, Sofia, 2002

⁴⁸ Gidikov, Stefan, *Polovata Svitost na Bulgarina kato osnova na Negoviya Harakter, 1932 (The Sexual Shyness of the Bulgarian as a base of his character)*, in “Zashto sme takiva? V Tarsene na Bulgarskata Kulturna Identichnost” (Why are we like this? In Search of Bulgarian Cultural Identity), Sofia, 1994

⁴⁹ Sheitanov, Nayden, *Sexualnata filosofia na Bulgarina, 1932 (Sexual philosophy of the Bulgarian)*, in “Zashto sme takiva? V Tarsene na Bulgarskata Kulturna Identichnost” (Why are we like this? In Search of Bulgarian Cultural Identity), Sofia, 1994

contributing to family's budget by sewing, weaving and knitting, which products were sold after that. They helped their husbands with the work in the field and took care for the education of the children. In short, they were valuable co-workers and companions for men. If the husband was abroad or out of the village or town, and if there was no father-in-law in the house, the wife was head of the family and had right to be initiative, give advice and opinion on most of the important family matters. "In Sopot, the woman was enjoying full equality. She was a "treasurer" with a main task to save. She was considered as a companion and an assistant of the man. In Kotel, the relations between men and women were put on an equal base. He consulted her on all important issues: whether to start trading, to build a house, what to do with the children, etc. The parents were creating together their authority in front of the children" *. Women took active participation also in revolution affaires: sewing revolution flags and helping with rebellion preparation. Thanks to the important role of the woman for the family and society, people gave up the existing, until then, idea that women did not need education. The traditions established during the period of National revival (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) were essential for the large public support for female education. As a result, many female schools were built: in Gorna Oryahovitza in 1827, in Pleven in 1840, in Panagyurishte and Svishtov in 1841, in Kotel and Sliven in 1844, in Gabrovo in 1845, in Shumen in 1856, etc. The women took under their protection the female schools and established women's associations, where they discussed questions of education and culture, as well as their roles of women and mothers. "In fact, several foreign and Bulgarian male-observers* have indicated that Bulgarian women were treated in the most honorable manner compared to women of the other so-called 'Eastern' nations - Russians, Romanians and Serbs"⁵⁰. Here is how Americans, traveling through the country in nineteenth century, saw Bulgarian women: "Bulgarian women are

* see Ivan Hadjiiski, *Bit I Dushevnost na Nashiya Narod*, Volume I, as quoted above

* K.Irechek, A.Golovin, quoted by Petar Kepov in "Belejiti bulgarki ratnichki za rodnata kultura", 1933; P.Kiranov

⁵⁰ Nestorova, Tatyana, "Between Tradition and Modernity: Bulgarian Women During the Development of Modern Statehood and Society, 1878-1945" in *Women's History Review*, Volume 5, Number 4, 1996

kind, compassionate and hard-working. Their maternal and sister-like cares for the foreigner in their house are really touching. Together with the Greeks they are the most beautiful women in European Turkey, with amazingly long and brilliant hairs... Bulgarian peasant women are robust and have calm dignity and charm. They talk a little; the groups of girls, bringing water from the fountain, are silent like if they were at a funeral... They never complained loudly and they all stand the troubles with patient resignation. Women, who have seen how unmerciful oppressors were taking their own children away and killing their husbands, can stand almost everything”⁵¹.

After the liberation, the Bulgarians showed more interest in education and social affairs as they were supposed to take part in the revival of the Bulgarian state. At the beginning of twentieth century the literacy level of Bulgarian women increased noticeably – from under 14% in 1900 to nearly 47% in 1926. As a general trend Bulgaria was further before the rest of the countries in the region in numbers of high school and higher education students. By 1946 almost 21% of all Bulgarians with higher education were women; among them nearly 58% of all teachers with higher education, and 39% of all dentists with higher education⁵². The interwar period is characterized by increased female participation in the public life: literature and sports clubs for women, female groups associated with established political parties or with radical, revolutionary groups. In the 1920, nearly all political parties included in their programs projects for grant of voting rights to women. In 1937, married, widowed and divorced women were given the right to vote for deputies in the National Assembly. In the early 1920s, during the rule of the Agrarian party government of Alexander Stamboliiski, legislative acts introduced obligatory labour periods for both women and men. This program was not fully implemented as the Stamboliiski government was removed from power, but its temporary presence, however, outlined the public attitude towards labour

⁵¹ Shashko, Philip, and B.Greenberg, R.Ghenov, Amerikanski Patepisi za Bulgaria prez XIX vek (American Travel Notes about Bulgaria in the nineteenth century), Sofia, 2001

⁵² Vazharov, Penko, Naselenie, Trudove na Statisticheskiya Institut za stopanski prouchvaniya pri Sofiiskiya Darjaven Universitet (Works of the Statistical Institute for economic research at Sofia State University), Sofia, 1936

equality of women and men. Women's active participation in cultural life in the interwar period led to flourishing of arts and intellectual work. The decades of the interwar period witnessed exhibitions of women's artists and female publications. "Women organized their own societies, maintained female vocational schools, petitioned the National Assembly, and supported (most often financially) the Macedonian struggles for independence in what was viewed as the patriotic view of all Bulgarians. Even these few examples are sufficient to make the point that women continued to be an active component of Bulgarian society and were able to gain visibility in previously non-existent or inaccessible spheres of public life" * .

However, this progress made its co-existence together, and in contrast, with the strongly valid values of the patriarchal moral order. Women were still excluded from the political field, they did not have full voting rights, and feminist ideas were often associated with radical Marxism and socialism. The appearance of feminist ideas and feminist organized activities is an interesting aspect of Bulgarian women's public life. In the Balkans, there is little evidence of the existence of traditions and elements of what we call "civil society". "Yet, the history of women's societies (especially feminist ones) in Bulgaria might be regarded as an example of autonomous, self-sustained, socially and politically oriented activity that would fit the requirements of institutions present in civil society... Similarly in the post-communist period, a revival of such activities might be construed as conducive to the restoration or, where necessary, the creation of civil society" * . The first national feminist organization, The Bulgarian Women's Union ("Bulgarski Jenski Sayuz") was established in 1901. Most of the founders of the union were educated in Western Europe where they were strongly influenced by the experience of some more advanced European countries. The union represented mostly urban and better-educated women, and by 1939 it had more than 12 399 members. At the beginning, the objectives of the union were

* see Tatyana Nestorova, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Bulgarian Women During the Development of Modern Statehood and Society, 1878-1945*, as quoted above

* see Tatyana Nestorova, , *Between Tradition and Modernity: Bulgarian Women During the Development of Modern Statehood and Society, 1878-1945*, as quoted above

changes in educational standards and professional equality, but twenty years later, in 1921, Bulgarian feminists started to claim full political and civil equality. The members of the union were ideologically divided into two groups: “bourgeois feminists”, who presented more traditional view on women’s role in society, and “social-democrats” that demanded full social and economic emancipation of women. Later, the women social-democrats split from the union and formed coalitions with various Marxist and socialist groupings.

In September 1944, the Soviet Army entered in Bulgaria and, in 1946, the country was proclaimed a “People’s Republic”. The Bulgarian Communist Party came to power and all other political parties were banned. Until the break-down of the communist regime in 1989, the economy of Bulgaria economy was centrally planned on the principle of “public ownership”, hierarchical, and highly monopolized. Strong emphasis was put on industrialization with the aim to overcome the relatively slow development process from a rather traditional agrarian society.

The equality of women and men was formally proclaimed in the Bulgarian Constitutions of 1947 and 1971. In 1944, women were given full voting rights. The Constitution of 1971 stated that “all citizens of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria are equal before the law, and no privileges or limitations of rights based on national, religious, sex, race, or educational differences are permitted”, and that “women and men in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria have the same rights”. Bulgaria’s Family Code affirmed equal rights for men and women, too. This equality was expressed also in social welfare measures aiming to assist women to combine their professional duties with family responsibilities. Most of these measures concerned child-care facilities, such as childcare centres and public child-kitchens, providing food for babies and small children. These measures were implemented, to a great extent, because of the extensive nature of the economy and the needed active female labour participation. However, the proclaimed “equality” was associated with a lack of choice as it has never been questioned whether all Bulgarian women wanted to become paid workers and

mothers. “Men saw themselves as somehow ‘unmanned’ since the model they looked up, was that of Western man, who was the main breadwinner for the family, earning enough for a financially dependent wife and children. Under the old communist regime, the self-esteem and self-respect of men as well as women was impaired. Yet it was the women who particularly suffered since coping with the double burden of the demands of family life and employment, they often felt that they were not good enough as mothers/home-makers and as paid workers. It is not surprising that under communism, a large number of women said that if they had a choice, they would prefer to stay at home and look after the family”⁵³.

Bulgarian women had full access to academic institutions. In 1988, 48.9% of all enrolled university students, and 64.9% of university professors were women⁵⁴. In the Constitution of 1971, there were articles on protection of maternity, child care and family. Mothers were allowed maternity leave for pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. The maternity leave lasted two or three years, if the mother desired it, and started usually 45 days prior to the childbirth. The leave was paid in case of first, second and third child; unpaid leave after the second year of the child was also possible to be taken. The leave could be use also by the father, although this was a rare practice. The idea of the above social policies was to encourage demographic growth (encourage a three-child family model), as well as to give possibility for women to perform their triple role as workers, mothers and socially engaged persons. Thus, in the 1980s women were estimated to almost 50% of the total labour force in the country. The burden of their overloaded – active participants in social or political organizations, workers, and mothers and wives – resulted in stressful everyday lives. Traditionally, women were the ones responsible for the childcare and household work. As a result, “women often perceived, particularly seen in retrospect, the right to work as an

⁵³ Vitanova, Irena, Women’s Studies in Bulgaria, in Women’s History Review, Volume 2, Number 1, 1993

⁵⁴ United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Periodic Report, Republic of Bulgaria, 1994

obligation, a duty in addition to their family and social responsibilities, rather than a right that they could positively enjoy” * .

The principle of equality was mostly respected in the terms of the equal pay for equal work. Following Convention No.100 of the International Labour Organization⁵⁵, which Bulgaria has ratified, men and women were paid equally for same work. However, women did not enjoy the same equal status regarding functional distribution of work. There were some branches of the economy, such as education, health care and services that were traditionally reserved for women, but the higher hierarchy positions of these professions were dominated by men.

The marriage rate was nearly 10% per year and relatively stable until beginning of the 1980s. After that period it fell slightly reaching 7% in 1989. After 1944, the divorce rate rose steadily until 1983, when it reached 16.3%. 44% of all divorces were among young couples, married five years or less. Concerned about this, the government issued restrictions on divorce in the Family Code of 1985, according to which every application for divorce required initial investigation of the reasons, and the application fee was higher than three-month average salary. This could be explained, to some extent, with the fact that, in spite of the political and social changes after 1944, the older generations had still respect for the patriarchal family model existing in the last centuries, so that some older women stayed at home as housewives. The main duty of building the new “socialist society” was assigned to second and third generations, born after the beginning of the communist period. These were generations of people that have lived and known only the conditions of the communist system and the expectations, that young Bulgarian women and men will perform their social duties of true socialist citizens, were higher.

* see United Nations periodic report on Bulgaria, as quoted above

⁵⁵ International Labour Organization, Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951, located at: <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english/docs/convdisp.htm>

During the above stated long historical period – from nineteenth century to the political changes in 1989 - the position of Bulgarian women has gradually changed. In spite of the different historical circumstances, there are similarities that could serve as a base for general reflection. Women have always been valuable for the Bulgarian society, as they represented half of the labour force in the country. In the beginning of the period, because, with their work, they were contributing to the economy of the zadruga (and later, of the smaller household), and at the communist part of this period because, being workers, promoters of the new ideology, and mothers of future communists, they were contributing to the development of the whole socialist society. As far as their self-perceiving, sexual identity and relations with men are concerned, women were a part of subordinated system, where the patriarchal moral was still dominant.

2. Bulgaria After 1989: The Process of Social Transformation

When influenced by external interference and internal factors, the relative stability of a social organization and behaviour changes.

November 1989 marked the beginning of democratic changes in Bulgaria. The political parties were restored; a new Constitution was adopted in 1991, replacing the old one of 1971; the property, expropriated in 1947, was resituated. Privatisation and restitution of the land started. Nevertheless, the years of transformation are characterized by a very complex political, economic and social situation.

Almost hundred years after the Liberation and restoration of the Bulgarian state, the social attitudes, following the breaking of the Soviet Union dominance, revealed familiar phenomenon: collectivism versus individualism? After nearly fifty years of living in the collective “socialist zadruga”, people started to restore their own smaller households again.

After the start of the transition, the economy of the country was no longer coordinated by central planning mechanism, but at the same time mature market forces were not developed either. This state of vacuum was certainly not a favourable ground to introduce and develop a successful market economy.

2.1. Women and Employment

The political instability and economic crisis after 1989 led to extremely high levels of inflation (up to 240% in February 1997), and unemployment. Hyperinflation minimized the pensions and the unemployment compensations. The shrinking of economy and the slow privatization created a heavier burden for women. Social advantages, which once supported Bulgarian women, began to disappear or were seriously reduced. The few vocational programs aiming retraining and qualification were targeted mainly at men. The process of privatization and the closing of inefficient heavy industries meant displacement or unemployments to many Bulgarians. After remaining unemployed, many Bulgarian men were directed to jobs in the “light” industries and services, which during the communist period were domain of women. Thus, women formed the majority of the registered unemployed – 53.7% in 1999⁵⁶. In 1992, the legal provision of equal pay was removed and the wage gap between women and men increased to 68% in 1997. In some parts of the country, women comprised more than 62% of the registered unemployed in 1998⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ Republic of Bulgaria, National Economic Development Plan, Sofia, 2000

⁵⁷ United Nations, National Human Development Report Bulgaria 1999, Sofia: UNDP, 1999

The economic changes and re-structuring led to imbalances in the distribution of work between men and women. Women tend to be concentrated in the public or state sector – especially education and health care sectors. One of the purposes of the transition was to reduce the participation of the state in the economy, and experiencing a serious economic crisis, the country became dependent on financial aids received from international institutions like the International Monetary Fund, which set “unfavourable” conditions concerning government expenditures and social policies. As government spendings for social and public spheres shrank, employment in these sectors decreased by 12.9%*, and women became the first ones to lose their jobs.

An analysis, made by SOCO project paper⁵⁸ on Bulgarian women, suggests that the majority of women in Bulgaria perceive themselves unequal to men. Comparison between the status of women and men with regard to education, occupation, profession, position, income, and distribution in hierarchy, shows existence of social and economic inequalities. The survey data of the above project reveals significant differences in distribution of work: men “predominate in the category of those performing skilled labour (58%). Only 39.3% of the respondents, who stated that their work provided them with opportunities for professional growth, were women (as compared with 60.7% of the men). As a whole, employers prefer to hire men, and severe economic conditions “force” women to accept any work, even under unfavourable conditions and for low pay⁵⁹.

Men still provide the greater share in family income. Most of the women have incomes ranging between the minimum work salary and the average salary for the country. The 1998 report of UNDP on women’s situation in Bulgaria, estimated that 83% of all women had a monthly income lower than the average for the country, and less than one-fifth (17%) received incomes above the

* see Republic of Bulgaria, National Development Plan, as quoted above

⁵⁸ SOCO project paper: Bulgarian Women in the Period of Transition: Inequalities, Risks, and Social Costs, by R. Stoilove, G. Fotev, V. Zlatanova, and N. Tilkidjiev, Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna, 2000

⁵⁹ United Nations Development Program, Bulgaria: Women in Poverty, UNDP, Geneva, 1998

average salary (against 33.7% of the men). Particularly difficult was the situation of the single mothers, widows, disabled women, and ethnic minority women.

Gender inequalities related to employment are also related to regional differences. Thus, in regions where most of the population was previously employed in industrial factories, closed for inefficiency, the unemployment rate was the highest. Because of the limited job opportunities, especially in the small towns and villages, the majority of the people had to change their work. Thus, in small towns and villages, many women had to “re-qualify” and work in the agriculture, while in the bigger cities they shifted to the spheres of commerce and seasonal services in tourism.

Disparity of job opportunities according to women’s age is another aspect of gender inequality concerning the workplace. The new economic conditions require new educational and labour skills, such as foreign language knowledge, IT literacy, specific economics-related education. That is why, present employers prefer to hire young women up to thirty-five or forty, that fit within the new profile. As additional “advantage” employers see if the young women have no children as in this way she will be able to devote more of her time to professional duties. This situation of “age-preference” has created heavier load for the women over forty who have family and children and not always match employers’ interests.

2.2. Women and Politics

In the international arena, there is a growing recognition that women’s representative participation in decision-making is a fundamental condition of women’s equality. The 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, requires states to promote women’s equal representation in the developing and implementation of government policies. The Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, in 1995, states that the equal participation of women and men in decision making strengthens democracy and promotes its proper functioning. “There is often an

impression that women enjoyed particular prominence under communism, both in the workplace and political life. The reality, however, was that men dominated in the decisive positions in government and the party. There were quotas for representation of women in elected bodies, but this exercise was largely cosmetic, as the representatives were, in fact, appointed and the bodies had little real power. The ideological promise of gender equality under communism went unfulfilled, as did the assurance of self-government and national sovereignty”⁶⁰.

The political participation of Bulgarian women could be divided into two periods of development. During the first one the presence of women in political life was low. It is related to historical and cultural traditions according to which women were hardly seen as politicians, as they were traditionally devoted to their family and household duties. The second period is characterized by increase of female participation partially due to lack of trust in the existing at that time political figures and search for new people that would have higher moral and would serve better to society.

During the period of transition, Bulgarian women have partly lost the positions they had in political and social life. In 1988, before the fall of the Jivkov government, women had 21% of the seats in the Parliament. After the introduction of the first free elections, this number dropped down to only 8.5%, and by 1999, this number rose again to 11.5%⁶¹. After the last elections in 2001, the newly organized National Movement Simeon II introduced more women among its candidates. Thus, presently, the women in Bulgarian Parliament represent 25.8%⁶² of all parliamentarians.

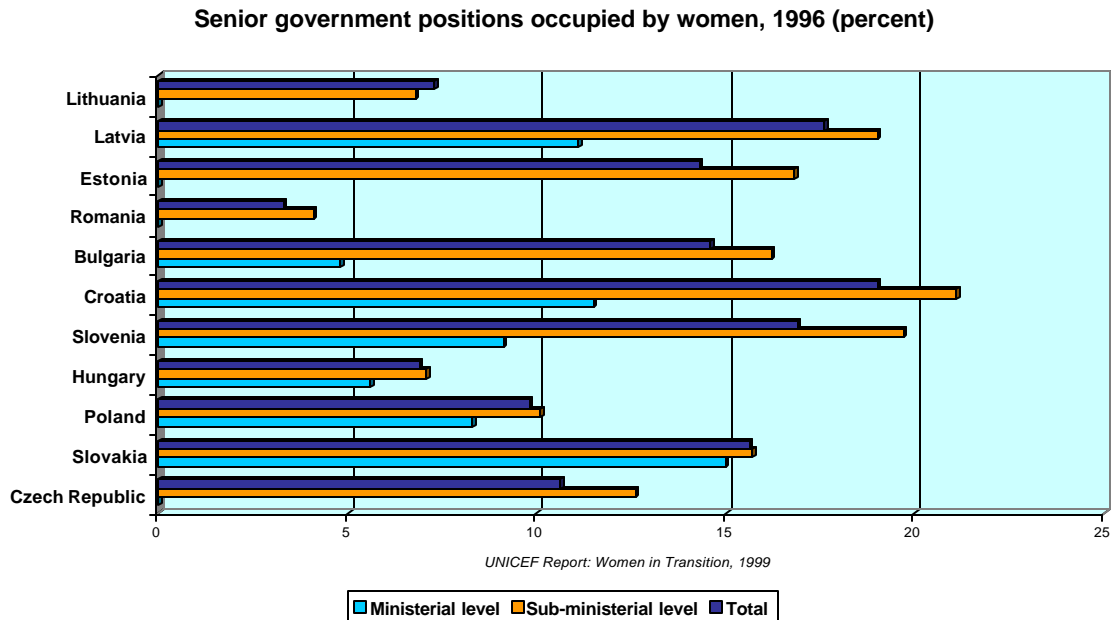
Despite formal proclamations of gender equality, women’s participation in power is limited by various factors. Traditional public opinion persists that men are better in politics and a women should have more competencies than a man in

⁶⁰ UNICEF, The Monee Project, CEE/CIS/Baltics, Regional Monitoring Report: Women in Transition, No.6, 1999

⁶¹ Women’s Alliance for Development, Women in Bulgaria 2000, 2000, located at: www.womenbg.org

⁶² Information about Bulgarian Parliament, located at: www.parliament.bg

order to become a politician. Statistical data, provided by the quoted above SOCO project on the situation of Bulgarian women, show that “public attitudes are more categorically in favour of men as candidates for parliament. Although the majority of the respondents (53.8%) claimed that ‘gender is not important’, preference was expressed for male deputies by a ratio of 7:1... There is a correlation between traditional attitudes to gender roles and place of residence. For instance, a majority of the respondents living in large cities, declared tat ‘gender does not matter’ (63.2%), compared with 45.4% of respondents of small towns and villages. A preference for male deputies was most strongly expressed by those living in villages (47.1%)”.



In spite of the still existing patriarchal attitude towards “women in politics”, statistical data of the transitional period shows that, compared with the representation of women from the rest of the Eastern European countries, Bulgarian women were among the highly represented in power in the region. In my opinion, this could be explained, to some extent, with the stronger past commitment to the communist ideology, the traditional experience of the zadruga and “post-zadruga” period when Bulgarian women were respected as equal co-

workers together with men, and the relatively not strong religious beliefs of Bulgarians.

“The analysis of the political activity of women parliamentarians reveal that their greater portion is not transformed into power in the interest of women. They have no effective sensitivity to women problems, and gender issues could not till now unite the female part of the political elite... Also, the female political elite belongs to the upper strata of the social stratification system. This makes it difficult for women politicians to develop collective female identity, oriented towards equal chances and opportunities. Women parliamentarians defend different political programs and views in which women’s problems do not appear at first priority”⁶³.

2.3. Women and Entrepreneurship

Especially in times of economic crisis, private enterprises are important providers of job opportunities. Entrepreneurial activities in Bulgaria have been performed, from one side, by people possessing entrepreneurial spirit, and, from other side, by people suffering from the negative impact of the economic reforms: unemployment, limited opportunities, etc. These circumstances have placed many families in difficult situation, which adequate solution was starting up a small business. Being the ones who have mostly suffered from the high unemployment, some women saw entrepreneurship as a chance to contribute to their families’ budget, as well as a source of self-confidence and recognition. However, according to the data of the National Statistical Institute⁶⁴, the percentage of self-employed women, in the last years of transition, has been low – 8.4%, compared to 12.2% for men. Gender differences exist also in terms of size of the run business. Middle and large-size firms are dominated by men, while small-size enterprises are managed by women (68% of women’s firms are of small-scale, and 30% of middle-scale). The low percentages of women’s

⁶³ Kostova, Dobrinka, *Women in Bulgarian Parliament – Continuity and Change*, Sofia, 2002

⁶⁴ National Statistical Institute, *Employment and Unemployment*, Sofia, 1998

entrepreneurship is also related to old family concepts which say that if man starts up a business he does it for his family, while a woman does it because of her career ambitions and personal interests. It is more common for women to participate in their husbands' businesses (as this happened in the past centuries), rather than setting up their own. Thus, the role of a businesswoman can not be considered as traditional, and woman's entrepreneurship exists between the old patriarchal visions and the demands of the modern day. The main domains of women's entrepreneurship are: trade with food, cosmetics, clothes and shoes, pharmaceutical products, tourism; clothes and cosmetics production; services.

A survey, sponsored by the International Labour Organization, has shown that women are less likely than men to establish their own enterprise and their businesses are more likely to fail within the first year. Those enterprises that succeed, however, provide considerably more employment than male-headed businesses: Large women-owned companies employ on average 175 employees, while the general average for small and medium enterprise is only 156. Barriers to the formation of enterprises – socio-cultural, economic, financial, and educational – are higher for women than for men⁶⁵.

Women have particular problems with establishing and developing their own businesses. One of the biggest problems they face is the lack or the difficult access to credit. Only 7% of all women entrepreneurs have received bank loans in the last year. Most of the credit sources for women remain personal loans borrowed from friends or relatives⁶⁶. The bank loan system in Bulgaria is still slowly and insufficiently developing and in order to get credits people have to meet numerous requirements concerning their previous incomes and providing several guarants, which make the procedures complicated and heavy. The household work is still dominated by women and this creates an additional

⁶⁵ Steinhilber, Sillke, Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the EU Enlargement: An Opportunity for Progress, 2002, report located at: www.igtn.org/Europe/WIDE_EUenlarge.pdf

⁶⁶ Dnevnik Newspaper, "Business Ladies Earn Less Than Men", December 11th, 2002, located at: www.dnevnik.bg

burden for women as they have to cope with both their business and family responsibilities.

“If the aim of social change is to enhance opportunity and the right to individual choice, an essential question is: has the individual been trained to make independent choices?... Basically the female socialist model demanded constant perfection and growth... In this way, generations of women have become prepared for changes such as those currently taking place. Self-expression, resistance, and learning to be independent were secondary elements in woman’s ‘socialisation’”^{*}.

2.4. Women and Civil Society

The question about the role of women in the civil society has been largely debated in the recent years. From one side, there was a will to meet the requirements of international institutions and create a civil society in which women would have their voice. From other side, the large public opinion has always associated feminist activism with the socialist past of the country. However, women’s participation in civil society is vital for the process of transformation, as well as for their well-being.

During the almost five decades under communist rule, there were no women’s movements in Bulgaria, in the same meaning used by Western feminists. The communist regime proclaimed equality of women and men, but suppressed every attempt for free movement or organization. The established “equality” at that time could be related more to the propaganda of the communist ideology, that to a real process of evolution. In an artificial way, it created additional social responsibilities for women, which were perceived more as obligation than expression of free will. These facts explain the initial hostility of Bulgarian

^{*} see SOCO report on Bulgarian women, as quoted before

women, to feminist ideas and words like “emancipation” and “equality” after the transformations of 1989.

Presently, women’s organizations still have a small part of the civil society, around 10% of the registered non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The number of women’s NGOs rose significantly in the periods 1993-1995, and 1996-1997* , at the time of big political and economic crisis, when the governments did not succeed to cope with its problems. Most of these women’s organizations were focused on charity activities for poor people, orphans, disable and elderly people, and, thus, sticking to the traditional role of women as caretakers in society.

After the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, two major trends regarding women NGOs occurred. The number of these organizations grew, and they got better organized with more clear focus on gender issues. Some women’s organizations started to work on social problems like violence against women, lobbied for implementing of new legislative norms, established first shelters for women-victims of domestic and sexual violence, provided services for women-victims of trafficking, and legal and social advice. In this way, from being mainly caretakers for a society weakened by the social transition, women’s organizations became active promoters for change and participants in problem-solving. The following fields of activity of the new organizations can be distinguished: actions against different forms of gender-based discrimination and violence, self-help initiatives, a broad variety of social services to disadvantaged people, consultancy (training courses and courses of re-qualification, promotion of entrepreneurship, health advice), sociological researches on gender-related issues, support to ethnic minorities, groups, advocating for gender equality, traditional charity organizations. In the period 1994 - 1996, a National Women’s Forum was established together with UNDP WID Program in Bulgaria. The Forum held numerous discussions on particular women’s problems, identified by the participants, and raised the social awareness on gender issues. The

* Data of Women’s Alliance for Development, located at www.womenbg.org

establishment of female NGOs, advocating for equality and special social policies for women, contributed to the elaboration of a Draft Law on the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, a Draft Law of Defense against Domestic Violence, and elaboration of a National Program for Prevention of Trafficking, and a National Network for Equal Opportunities.

Most of the women's NGOs are urban groups. There are based in the bigger towns and only 1.81% in small towns and villages. The problems with involving rural women are result of the more traditional perceptions about women's role in society, the lack of information on women's activities performed in the other, urban regions of the country, as well as the difficulties of managing rural projects from distance.

The changes of 1989 brought hope and mass expectations that there would be rapid and radical improvements in the Bulgarian society. Indeed, there was some progress in building of democratic institutions and promotion of human rights. However, almost fourteen years later, the country is still experiencing serious economic and social problems, such as unemployment due to restructuring the economy from centrally planned to economy, based on market principles; unsatisfactory social services and policies, low incomes, worsening of the overall quality of life, extremely reduced childbirth rate and high rate of young people emigration. After the transformation, the proclaimed by the communist regime equality was replaced by "inequality" as women happened to be more vulnerable to social change: many of them lost their jobs, faced unjust competition with men at the labour market, and economic difficulties at home. The social uncertainty and aggressiveness, as well as the re-distribution of power and influence within the country, resulted in increase of organized crime, which victims very often were again women. In 1997, a study on prostitution in Bulgaria concluded that the country was becoming a country where prostitutes could be "easily recruited for international 'work'"⁶⁷. In 1999, The International Organization for Migration

⁶⁷ Tchoudomirova et al., "Demographic Data on Prostitutes from Bulgaria – a Recruitment Country for International (migratory) Prostitutes", in *International Journal of STD and AIDS*, No.8(3), 1997

estimated over 10 000 Bulgarian women, working as prostitutes in Western Europe⁶⁸.

Apart from becoming involved in trafficking, far more often, women become victims of domestic violence. In Bulgaria, domestic violence is not yet considered a violation of human rights as it occurs in the private family sphere. According to data, provided by women's NGOs, it is a widespread phenomenon although it is not openly acknowledged and public awareness about it is relatively low. Domestic violence is most often characterized by frequent physical injuries between spouses and/or between parents and children (on most of the cases, beaten women and children). Yet, there is not much evidence of this form of crime as there is no adequate legal protection of the victims, and because throughout the history, family matters in Bulgarian society have always been private and secret, reflecting the attitude "whatever happens at home, remains only there".

Although the communist regime formally emphasized emancipation of women, strong elements of paternalism and accent on traditional female roles remained in Bulgarian society. After 1989, the new economic conditions influenced the elimination of the traditional extended families, including one or two of the couple's parents, and limited the number of children, especially in the urban areas. The number of marriages has decreased and is one of the lowest among the countries in Eastern Europe, and the average age at marriage has become higher (in comparison with the previous communist period). Luckily, female reproduction rights and access to safe abortions were not under pressure in Bulgaria, as it happened in the other post-socialist countries.

Another consequence of the transformation period is the gap in mode of life and attitudes (including family-related) between the generations of parents, who have lived most of their lives in the communist system, and the new generations, who barely knew its features and are strongly influenced by the Western culture, often

⁶⁸ International Organization for Migration, in news releases, concerning trafficking in women in Bulgaria, and exploitation of migrant women from Eastern and Central Europe, located at www.iom.int

seen as a symbol of modernity. Thus, feminist ideas, coming from the West, are accepted by young women in a rather different and positive way, than by their mothers.

2.4. Gender-Mainstreaming Initiatives – Towards Gender Equality

The social picture of the transformation process described above reveals some of the serious problems which many Bulgarian women face. These problems, as well as the present EU Accession negotiations led to the launch of many, but not yet sufficient, governmental and NGOs' initiatives that aim to improve the situation of the Bulgarian women. In 1996, following the Beijing World Conference on Women, the National Council on Social and Demographic Issues and the Council of Ministers adopted a National Action Plan. The main goal of the Action Plan was the "achievement of real equality and development of women in all spheres of social life on the basis of sustainable social and economic development and reaffirmation of the democratic society"⁶⁹. The strategic objectives, set out in the National Action Plan are:

- protection of women's rights and their equality in society;
- ensuring women's rights in the sphere of labour, social security and social assistance;
- equal access of women to the political, economic and social life in Bulgaria;
- increase of employment and reduction of unemployment among women;
- reducing the poverty among women and improvement of social assistance and social welfare;
- upgrading the vocational training and qualifications of women and girls in Bulgaria and ensuring equal access of women to education;

- ensuring full and adequate participation of women in environment protection and reduction of ecological risks to their health;
- ensuring equal access of women to health care and medical services;
- prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and by women;
- solving the problems of women related to gender equality in society, with the peaceful means of culture and cultural interaction;
- improving the role of the mass media for achievement of full and true gender equality;
- cooperation and interaction with non-governmental women's and other organizations for solving the problems of women.

Apart from the National Action Plan, there are other programs of governmental institutions. The Ministry of Health provides additional food to pregnant women, nursing mothers and small children, in the framework of a nutrition program alongside financial measures to reduce food prices. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy together with NGOs and the United Nations Development Program in Bulgaria, organized a seminar "The Gender Approach – a Policy of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and Achievement of Sustainable Human Development, and supported the UNDP Project "Gender in Development". This project aims the implementation of various pilot activities, such as rural tourism and managing of family hotels in Momchilovtzi, crafts and unique manufacturing in Levchovo, establishment of information centre in Smolyan, economic empowerment of women in Devin region, etc. The project "Economic empowerment of women in Devin region" has been founded by the United Nations Development Program and implemented by the National Employment Service. The goal of the program was to introduce a pro-active approach to job creation in a region suffering from very high unemployment, especially among

⁶⁹ National Action Plan, located at: www.un.org/documents/ga/conf177/natrep/nap1996-bulgaria.htm

women. Another program focused on unemployed women is the Program for Part-time Employment, has been implemented under the Vocational Training and Unemployment Fund. The International Labour Organization and United Nations Development Program “Poverty in Transition Project” provides support for formulating and implementing of national policies and strategies on poverty alleviation, notably for women.

The European Union has granted assistance to Bulgaria within the framework of PHARE program. Projects, such as “Women in Transition” and “Participation of Women in Social and Political Life” are parts of this program. In addition, women’s NGOs receive financial aid within the EU program “Daphne”, which is focused on prevention of violence against children, young people and women, support to the victims of violence.

3. National Gender-Related Legal Framework

One of the main requirements in the process of EU accession negotiations with Bulgaria, concerns the legal and juridical system in the country. Within the context of “equal opportunities”, the European Union Directives point to implementation and enforcement of gender-related legislation.

According to the 2001 Regular Report on Bulgaria’s Progress Towards Accession, “much of the *acquis* in the field of equal treatment for women and men remains to be transposed [...] and no progress has been made in adopting detailed and effective anti-discrimination legislation. Further efforts are needed to ensure alignment with the *acquis* on anti-discrimination based on Article 13 of the EC Treaty [...]”⁷⁰. The next year’s 2002 Regular Report states: “On social policy and employment, some progress has been made But considerable further work remains on legal transposition in the areas of labour law, equal opportunities, antidiscrimination and health and safety at work. Social dialogue in line with EC

⁷⁰ 2001 Regular Report on Bulgaria’s Progress Towards Accession, located at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report2001/bu_en.pdf

practice needs to be fostered”⁷¹. Following the requirements of the negotiation process, the Bulgarian government adopted a strategy for the acceleration of the negotiations for accession in 2001. As priorities it outlined the rapid adoption of comprehensive and effective anti-discriminatory legislation and of legislation in the area of equal treatment of women and men, as well as the establishment of a National Council of Equal Opportunities of Women and Men and appointment of an Ombudsperson⁷².

The areas in which Bulgaria has not reached compliance with the EU Directives include part-time work and the burden of proof in cases of sex discrimination. According to a survey report, prepared by UNICEF in 1999, one of the spheres in which discrimination against women is more apparent, is that of remuneration: in 1997, Bulgaria had one of the largest pay gaps among the Eastern European countries. The principle of equal pay for women and men was introduced with the amendments to the Labour Code in 2001. Until 1992, a general clause existed in the Labour Code providing equal pay for equal work, but it was subsequently abolished as incompatible with the principles of market economy. As a result women were highly disadvantaged in the transition period and the gender gap was especially evident in remuneration. The newly amended Section 234 provides that women and men have the rights to equal pay for the same work or work of equal value, and the principle is valid for all the payments related to labour relations* .

The principle of “equal rights” for women and men and non-discrimination is incorporated in the national legal framework. Article 6 of the Bulgarian Constitution⁷³ states that women and men have equal right, and also prohibits discrimination based on a series of grounds, including sex. Article 46(2) stipulates that spouses have equal rights and equal obligations in matrimony and

⁷¹ 2002 Regular Report on Bulgaria’s Progress Towards Accession, located at: <http://www.bulgaria-embassy.org!/10102002-01.htm>

⁷² Open Society Institute, Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in Bulgaria: Monitoring the EU Accession Process, 2002, located at: <http://www.eonet.ro/pdf/Bulgaria.pdf>

* see Open Society Institute, 2002, as quoted above

⁷³ Constitution of Republic of Bulgaria, located at: <http://fbac.net/BulgariaConstitutionBG.htm>

the family. Article 47(1) declares that the upbringing of children until they reach the age of majority is both the right and obligation of parents, who must be assisted by the state. Women are given priorities as mothers in the specific labour legislation.

Equal rights for women and men are also guaranteed by international human rights legislation, the main international instrument being the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was ratified by Bulgaria and came into force in 1982.

Bulgaria has also ratified the “Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention 111 of the International Labour Organization. The Convention obliges the states to adopt national policies for promoting equality and non-discrimination in the field.

In 2000, Bulgaria ratified the Revised European Social Charter and, according to its Article 20, undertakes to recognize the right of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in the field of employment and occupation.

Discrimination on the grounds of sex is not defined in Bulgarian legislation, but the draft Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, defines both direct and indirect discrimination in Article 1 of the Additional Provisions. Following the practice of some European countries more advanced in the field of equal opportunities, the Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, without giving a strict definition of discrimination, will open a large field for legal practice and the practice of the ombudsperson*.

Bulgarian legislation provides special protection for women, especially pregnant women and mothers. The Labour Code prohibits night work and overtime work for pregnant women and mothers of children up to the age of six, as well as mothers of handicapped children, irrespective of children’s age.

* see Open Society, 2000, as quoted above

The legislation is in full compliance also with the international standards related to maternity leave. Existing provisions give also fathers the opportunity to participate in childcare, according to the decision of each family couple. For economic reasons, it is also common practice for grandparents to take advantage of the maternity leave, instead of the father[♦].

The adoption of the Act on Equal Opportunities would ensure the equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men in Bulgaria. The draft version of the above Act on Equal Opportunities was submitted to the 39th National Assembly, but in April 2002 was rejected by the Bulgarian Parliament with the promise that a comprehensive anti-discrimination act will be adopted instead of an equal opportunities act. The concern of gender equality is presented among the key priorities in the present government program: “Main strategic priorities in the social sector are: [...] substantial rise in child allowances; guaranteed social safety nets for the socially vulnerable groups; promotion of social dialog. Child rights, gender equality, social schemes for the minorities and for the disabled and consumer protection will go in parallel”. In spite of the fact that the program includes provisions on gender issues, so far, the Act on Equal Opportunities or any alternatively proposed document has not been approved and implemented.

[♦] see Open Society, 2000, as quoted above

Conclusion

The aim of this work was to discuss the concept of gender in its classic theoretical framework, as well as to study how this concept looks like in the specific context of social transformation in Bulgaria.

The ideas of “feminist activism” and “emancipation” are not new to most Bulgarian women. Having lived under a communist regime for more than four decades, many of them are familiar with the proclaimed by the communist ideology equality for women and men. In fact, there are also feminist theories, notably social, and Marxist and socialist theories, which use the fundamental concept of equality of the socialist doctrine, and have deserved its place in the feminist theoretical knowledge.

However, during the socialist period in Eastern Europe, the idea of equality was used purposefully, in order to gather as much as possible labour force of both women and men, build extensive economy and accustom the society to the new ideological values. In spite of the many social policy benefits, most of the women were not satisfied with their social roles as the latter did not resulted from their free choice, as it happened in the Western feminist debate. Apart from this, the stated in the past equality and feminism were mostly valid for the working place, with regard the right to work, while in the social sphere it was limited by imposed ideological directives. As far as the family life is concerned, “feminism” did not have a place in the family model, which was influenced by traditional patriarchal attitudes.

Nowadays, in the period of transition, we can get an idea about how the gender concept is perceived by Bulgarians, if we simply look at the language terminology used in the country: the used term is the one *imported* from English language – “*gender*”; terms like “emancipation” and “feminist activities” have, on the whole,

negative shades, and, at the same time, there is no local Bulgarian term describing the notion of this study.

In order to adopt gender issues in Bulgaria, we need to use and “import” from the most experienced and advanced those elements which would support the development of our society, and preserve and respect the traditions of our cultural background.

Bibliography

Books

Abel, Elizabeth, and Emily Abel (eds.), *The Signs Reader: Women, Gender and Scholarship*, Chicago, 1980

Ahmed, Leila, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993

Barrett, Michelle, *Women's Oppression Today*, London, 1980

Bridger, Susan, *No More Heroines? Russia, Women and the Market*, London, 1996

Delphy, Christine, *L'ennemi Principal*, Paris, 1997

Etienne, Mona, and Eleanor Leacock, *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*, New York, 1980

Genov, Nikolai, *Managing Transformations in Eastern Europe*, Paris/Sofia, 1999

Gidikov, Stefan, *Polovata Svitost na Bulgarina kato osnova na Negoviya Harakter*, 1932 (The Sexual Shyness of the Bulgarian as a base of his character), in "Zashto sme takiva? V Tarsene na Bulgarskata Kulturna Identichnost" (Why are we like this? In Search of Bulgarian Cultural Identity), Sofia, 1994

Gonda, Caroline, *Lesbian Theory*, in *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, Edinburgh, 1998

Hadjiiski, Ivan, *Bit i Dushevnost na Nashiya Narod (Way of Life and Mentality of Our People)*, Volume I, Sofia, 2002

Hadjiiski, Ivan, *Bit i Dushevnost na Nashiya Narod (Way of Life and Mentality of Our People)*, Volume II, Sofia, 2002

Irigaray, Luce, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, New York, 1985

Jackson, Stevi and Jackie Jones, *Thinking for Ourselves: An Introduction to Feminist Theorising*, in *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, Edinburgh, 1998

Jackson, Stevie, *Theorising Gender and Sexuality*, in “Contemporary Feminist Theories”, New York, 1998

Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism, Or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, 1992

King, Karen, *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity)*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. 2000

King, Margaret, and Catharine Stimpson, *Women of the Renaissance*, Chicago, 1991

Kostova, Dobrinka, *Women in Bulgarian Parliament – Continuity and Change*, Sofia, 2002

Kristeva, Julia, “Women’s Time,” in “New Maladies of the Soul”, New York, 1997

Lips, Hilary, and Virginia Cyrus, *A New Psychology of Women: Gender, Culture and Ethnicity*, Mayfield Publishing Company, Columbus, 1999

Lohmann, Kinga, “Strategies and Demands of Women’s NGOs from Central and Eastern Europe in the Beijing+5 and the European Union Enlargement Process”, in “Societies in Transition – Challenges to Women’s and Gender Studies”, Heike Flessner, Lydia Potts (eds.), Opladen, 2002

Lorber, Judith, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, New York, 1998

Lorber, Judith, *Paradoxes of Gender*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995

McClintock, Anne, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Imperial Context*, London, 1995

M. Mies, and V. Bennholdt-Thomsen, C. von Werlhof, *Women: The Last Colony*, London, 1988

Mills, Sara, *Post-Colonial Feminist Theory*, in "Contemporary Feminist Theories", Edinburgh, 1998

Mitchell, Juliet and J. Rose (eds), *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne*, London, 1982

Moser, Caroline, *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training*, London, 1993

Nestorova, Tatyana, "Between Tradition and Modernity: Bulgarian Women During the Development of Modern Statehood and Society, 1878-1945" in *Women's History Review*, Volume 5, Number 4, 1996

Nicholson, Linda, *Feminism/Postmodernism (Thinking Gender)*, New York, 1989

Power, Margaret, *The Egalitarians, Human and Chimpanzee: An Anthropological View of Social Organization*, Cambridge, 1991

Rounaq, Jahan, *The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development*, London, 1995

Shashko, Philip, and B. Greenberg, R. Ghenov, *Amerikanski Patepisi za Bulgaria prez XIX vek (American Travel Notes about Bulgaria in the nineteenth century)*, Sofia, 2001

Sheitanov, Nayden, *Sexualnata filosofia na Bulgarina, 1932 (Sexual philosophy of the Bulgarian)*, in "Zashto sme takiva? V Tarsene na Bulgarskata Kulturna Identichnost" (Why are we like this? In Search of Bulgarian Cultural Identity), Sofia, 1994

Stein, Arlene, "Sisters and Queers: The Decentering of Lesbian Feminism", in "Socialist Review 22.1, January 1992

Vazharov, Penko, Naselenie, Trudove na Statisticheskiya Institut za stopanski prouchvaniya pri Sofiiskiya Darjaven Universitet (Works of the Statistical Institute for economic research at Sofia State University), Sofia, 1936

Vice, Sue, Psychoanalytical Feminist Theory, in Contemporary Feminist Theories, Edinburgh, 1998

Waugh, Patricia, Postmodernism and Feminism, in Contemporary Feminist Theories, Edinburgh, 1998

Articles, Working papers, Reports

ABC of Women workers' rights and gender equality, ILO, Geneva, 2000

National Statistical Institute, Employment and Unemployment, Sofia, 1998

Slavova, Kornelia, Translating Gender-Related Texts/Politics In/Out of Context, Sofia University, 2001

SOCO project paper: Bulgarian Women in the Period of Transition: Inequalities, Risks, and Social Costs, by R.Stoilova, G.Fotev, V.Zlatanova, and N.Tilkidjiev, Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna, 2000

Tchoudomirova et al., "Demographic Data on Prostitutes from Bulgaria – a Recruitment Country for International (migratory) Prostitutes", in International Journal of STD and AIDS, No.8(3), 1997

The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, The Position of Women from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini, Teheran, 2001

UNICEF, The Monee Project, CEE/CIS/Baltics, Regional Monitoring Report: Women in Transition, No.6, 1999

United Nations Development Program, Bulgaria: Women in Poverty, UNDP, Geneva, 1998

United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Periodic Report, Republic of Bulgaria, 1994

United Nations, National Human Development Report Bulgaria 1999, Sofia: UNDP, 1999

Vitanova, Irena, Women's Studies in Bulgaria, in Women's History Review, Volume 2, Number 1, 1993

Internet sources

“Gender Mainstreaming: The Concept, report located at:

<http://www.undp.org.in/report/gstrat/strat-5.html>

2001 Regular Report on Bulgaria's Progress Towards Accession, located at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report2001/bu_en.pdf

2002 Regular Report on Bulgaria's Progress Towards Accession, located at:

<http://www.bulgaria-embassy.org/!/10102002-01.htm>

Article 13 (ex Article 6a), Amsterdam Treaty; Treaty establishing the European Community, 1997, located at www.europa.eu.int

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, September 1995, located at:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

Bulgarian Parliament, located at: www.parliament.bg

Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2003

Constitution of Republic of Bulgaria, located at:

<http://fbac.net/BulgariaConstitutionBG.htm>

Definition of Gender Mainstreaming, International Labour Organization, located at: www.ilo.org

Dnevnik Newspaper, "Business Ladies Earn Less Than Men", December 11th, 2002, located at: www.dnevnik.bg

Encyclopaedia Britannica located at www.britannica.com

European Commission, "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities", 1996, located at: www.europa.eu.int

Gender in Development, Policies, located at: <http://www.undp.org/gender/policies>

International Labour Organization, Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951, located at: <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english/docs/convdisp.htm>

International Organization for Migration, in news releases, concerning trafficking in women in Bulgaria, and exploitation of migrant women from Eastern and Central Europe, located at www.iom.int

National Action Plan, located at:

www.un.org/documents/ga/conf177/natrep/nap1996-bulgaria.htm

Nelson - Online Dictionary of the Social Sciences, located at

www.socialsciencedictionary.nelson.com

Open Society Institute, Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in Bulgaria: Monitoring the EU Accession Process, 2002, located at:

<http://www.eonet.ro/pdf/Bulgaria.pdf>

Republic of Bulgaria, National Economic Development Plan, Sofia, 2000, located at: <http://bulgaria2000.virtualave.net/Ec-2.htm>

Spivey, Courtney, The Invisible Society: Women in Middle Eastern Culture, paper located at <http://www.is.rhodes.edu/modus/96/Spivey.html>

Steinhilber, Sillke, Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the EU Enlargement: An Opportunity for Progress, 2002, report located at:

www.igtn.org/Europe/WIDE_EUenlarge.pdf

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary located at www.m-w.com

UNESCO website on culture and development, located at
www.unesco.org/culture/

Women's Alliance for Development, located at www.womenbg.org

Women's Alliance for Development, Women in Bulgaria 2000, 2000, located at:
www.womenbg.org

<http://www.eurosur.org/wide/home.htm>

<http://www.worldbank.org/gender/prr/wp.htm>

http://www.europeanforum.bot-consult.se/gender_issues/pressbrief.htm

<http://www.neww.org/>