78 | considering the role of men in gender agenda setting: conceptual and policy issues

Yakin Ertürk

abstract

The international gender equality agenda evolved into one of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes. Within this process, the role of men gained increasing attention in the debates on gender equality. This resulted in the inclusion of 'men's role' as one of the themes of the agenda of the Commission on the Status of Women for the year 2004. While this is another step forward in the global efforts for achieving equality between women and men, its potential risks should not be overlooked. Therefore, it is necessary to revisit the concept of gender and carefully assess and monitor how the role of men is included in the agenda. This article starts with the premise that gender inequalities are the product of historically determined gender order in which the differentially assigned male female attributes are unequally structured in layers of privileged and subordinate positions of masculinities and femininities. The concept of patriarchy is brought back into the analysis to capture the interlinkages between the various status hierarchies that lead to shifts in hegemonic forms of masculinity that reproduces itself under diverse and changing conditions. Thus, while the article attempts to account for the generic and universal characteristics of gender inequality, at the same time, it draws attention to its specific socio-cultural manifestations. Finally, policy guidelines are offered for the consideration of the role of men in gender agenda setting. Accordingly, it is suggested that men's initiatives for alternative masculinities are acknowledged and that the questions regarding which men, in what kinds of alliances and for which end are reflected upon in formulating policies.

keywords

patriarchy; gender order; masculinities; femininities; paradigm; UN Commission on the Status of Women

introduction

The impetus behind the global gender equality agenda stems from the widespread persistence of inequality between women and men worldwide. The United Nations (UN) along with the international women's movement has sponsored world conferences on women since 1975. The first one of these conferences was held in Mexico City, which was followed by Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and finally Beijing in 1995. Each conference built on earlier international norms and culminated in a consensus over a common action plan for the eradication of inequality. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (PfA) adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, represents a commitment on the part of the international community, governments, non-governmental organization (NGO) actors and women themselves to eradicate the most pervasive and universal form of inequality. The special session of the UN General Assembly (GA) in 2000, popularly referred to as Beijing + 5, identified further actions and initiatives in view of the persisting obstacles and the emerging global challenges that had been continually arising since the Beijing Conference (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW), 2001).

While the Platform identifies the empowerment of women as its basic agenda in achieving the goal of equality between women and men in both public and private spheres of life, it also draws attention to the need to engage men, as partners in the process. The role of men, as part of the solution, is mentioned throughout the Platform as well as in the final documents of the major UN sponsored conferences of the 1990s. The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, 1994), particularly within the context of sexual and reproductive health and rights and sharing of domestic chores, is most pertinent. The Beijing + 5 process further reiterated the role of men and stressed the importance of partnership between women and men in the full implementation of the Platform and in ending violence against women. The issue, therefore, gained growing recognition and interest on part of the decision-making bodies on an international level. This emergent interest in the need to work with men resulted in the inclusion of 'men's role' as one of the thematic issues on the agenda of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).[1]

The interest in the role of men, within multilateral dialogue and decision making, is no doubt another step forward in the agenda for equality between women and men. The challenge is how to translate this into policy and practice without endangering the progress achieved thus far. At various fora, discussions of men's role have provoked suggestions that the scarce resources at hand be used to rehabilitate the 'problem male' instead of on programmes for women. Such a short-cut approach to gender equality clearly evades the issue. The underlying premise of this paper is that gender-based inequalities and their diverse manifestations are not due to innate or biological components of individual men

[1] The Commission on the Status of Women adopted its current multi-year work programme (2002–2006) at its 45th session in March 2001. An agenda item on the role of men will be taken up during the 48th session of CSW in the year 2004.

but rather, gender inequality is the product of cumulated successive historic eras in which men and women have been assigned roles that inherently rest on violence breeding relations, which are then sustained through domination of women by men. Inequality between women and men is thus rooted in a patriarchal gender order, which is continually reproduced in modified forms in human consciousness, language as well as institutionalized structures of social experience. Therefore, any effort to integrate the role of men into the international gender agenda should start with a deconstruction of the concept of masculinity and an assessment of its policy implications under changing conditions, so as to avoid deviating from the strategic objectives set forth in the Platform.

To this end, this paper aims to revisit the concept of gender, to delineate its parameters and offer preliminary policy guidelines that may provide possible entry points in considering the role of men with the view of a transformative agenda towards the achievement of equality between women and men.

why consider the role of men in the gender equality agenda?

The growing concern in the role of men is a natural outcome of the global gender politics and the accompanying paradigm shifts of the past three decades. The feminist discourse and the international policy framework started with a focus on the norm of non-discrimination on the ground of sex. As the discourse evolved, the focus shifted to a woman in development (WID) approach and then evolved to a focus on the situation of women within the wider context of gender relations. This enhanced the understanding of the multidimensional aspect of inequality as well as the contradictions of women's subordinate position at all levels of social reality. At the same time it influenced the design of development policy and programme initiatives that aimed to promote empowerment[2] of women and their equality with men.

The WID discourse paved the way for an expanded understanding of women's disadvantaged position. The early discussions tended to revolve around two different aspects of the problem: women had either been excluded from the benefits of development, or had been included in ways that had marginalized them (Boserup, 1970). Accordingly, policy orientation was shifted to ensure that development resources were used for improving women's conditions and making their productive contributions visible. Programmes undertaken within such a policy framework helped to improve women's conditions and facilitated their access to resources. This in turn, led to increased recognition of women's input to household, national and international economies. These programmes did not, however, address the basic structure of inequality in the relationship between women and

2 Women's empowerment requires the removal of all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life. This means that, as elaborated in the PfA, '...the principles of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities' (UN, 2001: para. 1).

men, which through social values, practices and institutions and the overall differentiation of social activity within a public/private dichotomy, continually perpetuate the subordination of women to a private sphere and marginalize them in the labour market as well as in decision-making processes. The eventual shift of focus to a gender perspective resulted in: (i) the realization that unequal power structure is at the core of gender relations; (ii) the re-examination of all social, political and economic structures as well as development policies from the point of view of gender differentials; and (iii) the recognition that achieving gender equality between women and men requires 'transformative change' (UNDAW, 1999: IX).

This shift in paradigm,[3] which placed the term gender at the centre of the debate, had significant policy implications as well. Development policies could no longer be limited to isolated women's projects aimed at meeting basic needs or expanding women's access to resources. It became clear that in order to have a holistic, integrated approach, policy and implementation had to be grounded in strategies that effectively targeted the deprived positions of gender status through normative, institutional and structural change at all levels of society. This understanding guided development planning and led to what became con-ceptualized as gender mainstreaming within international fora. In 1997, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN) adopted *gender mainstreaming* as a strategy for bringing about such change. It stipulated that, 'Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for men and women of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality' (United Nations Economic and Social Commission (ECOSOC), Agreed Conclusions, 1997/2).

While the *ECOSOC agreed-conclusion* has made gender perspective visible and gave it a stamp of legitimacy at the highest level of international policy framework, it remains largely a liberal project and fails to reflect the transformative connotation that the term gender has gained in praxis. As such, it falls short of capturing the understanding reflected in both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Platform for Action. By adopting what could be interpreted as an essentialist notion of gender, the *ECOSOC agreed-conclusion* confines gender mainstreaming to a process of recognizing, valuing and considering women's difference from men.[4] Such an approach does not necessarily question why those differences exist, particularly, within the context of the social construction of femininity and masculinity. Therefore, by implication, it is a static disposition that, despite the final call for gender equality, in the hands of the

3 Paradigm shift in women in develop-ment issues have been widely exam-ined, for example, see Moser (1993) and Razavi and Miller (1997).

4 The Council of Europe definition of gender mainstream-ing is less con-straining as it offers

'equality' as the only yardstick. The definition is as follows: 'Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organization, improvement, development, and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors involved in policy-making (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1998).

5 This issue is rooted in the similarity (right of women to be treated the same as men) and difference (right of women to be treated on the basis of their difference) debate, which continues to be central to feminist scholarship and the women's movement. The two approaches need not be exclusionary, they can be used to complement one another. For example, demands for equal rights (equal treatment) can be accompanied by institutional arrangements that allow for the different needs of women, such as in the case of maternity leave or quotas for women. However, both approaches have been criticized for implicitly accepting a male yardstick, that is, women are either the same or different for men. For a discussion on divergent views on this issue see, for example, Cook (1994) and Nash (2000: 165–173).

6 A total of 154 national reports on the implementation of the PfA was reviewed and analyzed

gender biased or gender blind, may result in further marginalizing women, disguising inequalities and constraining the plurality of women's interests. In the same vein, however, approaches based on the 'sameness of treatment' model may be instrumental in making systematic discrimination invisible.[5]

The Platform, on the other hand, as the main policy framework for international gender equality regimes, addresses the historically determined unequal power relations between women and men. It also draws attention to violence against women as a key manifestation of that inequality, which sustains domination over and discrimination against women by men. Therefore, the Platform emphasizes the need for a *transformed* partnership based on the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men at home, as well as in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities (para. 1). As such, the achievement of gender equality in essence would require profound institutional changes as well as changes in the attitudes and behaviours of women and men alike. With this understanding, the Platform not only broadens the concept of gender but also engages governments in a new area of responsibility as reflected in the Beijing Declaration, which states that 'Governments are determined to encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality' (para. 25).

Five years after the Beijing Conference, the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action showed that various governments dealt in varying degrees and forms with the issue of making men more aware of their place in the gender order. Despite their commitment, the persistence of cultural and social norms, traditional beliefs and negative gender stereotypes were the obstacles most frequently cited by governments to the achievement of gender equality in all regions.[6] Such perceptions not only perpetuated traditional practices but also created a pervasive climate of discrimination and at times backlash. Examples range from the continued devaluation of women's labour in the home, to disadvantaged position in the labour market to attacks on women's reproductive rights. In some countries, economic, social and cultural changes have reinforced negative stereotypes of women. Even in countries where basic indicators of women's advancement show considerable progress and a 'critical mass' in decision-making positions have been achieved, gender roles and identities continue to be shaped by patriarchal notions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' (albeit in modernized forms). Hence, progress towards gender equality continues to be fragile and under constant threat from a conservative coalition, operating globally and nationally with actors from within as well as outside of the state apparatuses.[7]

While in some cases, the reassertion of traditional values and practices have been observed, at the same time, emerging contradictions have challenged the traditional notions (UNDAW, 2001: 30). The main challenge to the traditional construction of gender roles came no doubt from the women's movement. As women, collectively, questioned and resisted the patriarchal definitions of

femininity and asserted alternative female roles, this unavoidably led to a deconstruction of patriarchal hierarchies where masculinity eventually became demystified and ultimately a subject of inquiry. Furthermore, such a thorough examination of relations between women and men was an unavoidable outcome of using gender as an epistemological starting point (Grant and Newland, 1991: 8).

Thus, feminist politics, coupled with fundamental geo-political and economic transformations since the mid-1970s, has shattered the structural origins of traditional masculinity, which is said to have led to a masculinity crisis (Kimmel, 1995). Another important change during this period was to be found in the nature of the state–individual relationship and the corresponding paradigm shift '...away from state-centered, class-based models of political participation, towards an understanding of politics as potential in all social experience' (Nash, 2000: 2). This provided an enabling environment for the contestation of the existing gender identities and structures of private and public life, making their transformation possible. While male response to these changes has been diverse, the debate on gender increasingly included a focus on the issue of masculinity.[8]

The Beijing + 5 review process took place against a background which provided the opportunity to rethink the basic concepts and strategies that underlie the guiding principles of the international regimes for gender equality. This allows for realigning gender mainstreaming as a strategy that goes beyond cataloguing differences between women and men to one that allows the identification of the processes through which domination and subordination are systematically reproduced (UNDAW, 2001: 8). Thus, it has become clear that women's empowerment and the achievement of equality between women and men requires an understanding of how masculinity as well as femininity is historically constructed and reproduced under diverse and changing conditions. The 'gender knot' has to be unravelled,[9] and this requires a deconstruction of masculinity as well as femininity. Considering the role of men in gender agenda setting, therefore, needs to be approached within such a framework in order to ensure that policies and programmes that are guided by such an agenda contribute towards transforming the existing patriarchal gender order.

revisiting the concept of gender

Since the Beijing Conference, the term 'gender' has become an uncontested tool of analysis and policy formulation both within and outside of the United Nations. However, this widespread usage of the concept has, at times, been at the expense of conceptual ambiguities. As a result, it is not always clear what is meant when referring to gender. While it is generally understood that gender refers to the social and cultural values attributed to masculinity and femininity, it is nonetheless, often used interchangeably with the term 'women' or at best to delineate the differences between women and men, as discussed earlier (Ertürk, 1997a; Goetz,

by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women on the implementation of the Platform for Action (UNDAW, 2001). Some of the national reports can be accessed through the DAW website: www.un.org/women-watch/daw.

7 In this regard, the Beijing + 5 process and the recent Fifth Asia Pacific Conference on Population and Development, held in ESCAP headquarters in Bangkok (11–17 December 2002) are most noteworthy.

8 Although early feminist analysis concentrated on women's agency — that is, what women may or may not do — and women's entitlements — that is, what they may or may not have access to — issues concerning masculinity as part of the gender equality debate are increasingly becoming a subject of their inquiry. In this regard, Hooper (2000: 59) states, 'It is also important to 'know thine enemy'...At the risk of giving even mote attention to the powerful and privileged that they already get...' she maps out the gendered struggles taking place at the top of the social hierarchy. See also Cornwall and Lindesfarne (1994).

9 The Gender Knot is the name of a book written by Allan G. Johnson (1997), which offers a powerful insight into gender inequality that can empower both women and men to be part of the solution instead of the problem.

1997). The first usage is conceptually incorrect. The latter is politically problematic as it conceals the asymmetric relations of power between women and men, and the plurality of women's interests.[10] Therefore, it is necessary to re-examine the concept of gender for its analytical clarity in order for its instrumental value in guiding policy and practice to be enhanced. This will also serve to strengthen the strategy for gender mainstreaming and prevent it from going *malestream*!

For purposes of simplicity, it may be best to start from a point where a common understanding has already been established. The premise that gender[11] is the social organization of presumed sexual differences and that it defines the roles and identities associated with femininity and masculinity and their entitlements, provides such a starting point.[12] These identity constructs evolve within the material as well as symbolic realms of life, and in doing so establishes socially accepted 'female' and 'male' traits and behaviour as it defines them *vis-à-vis* one another. Therefore, gender can neither be taken out of its social, cultural, economic and political context nor can it be abstracted from how the construction of diverse roles and identities associated with being a woman and being a man are interconnected. As a universal system, relations of gender manifest themselves in culturally and historically diverse forms. As an analytical tool, the concept of gender enforces recognition of the concrete historical moments that shape gender identities as well as the asymmetrical power system in which femininities and masculinities interconnect. This inherently unequal aspect of gender and its intersections with other systems of domination and inequality have not been sufficiently considered and reflected upon in policy formulation and programme design.

Although social constructs associated with femininity and masculinity are diverse and subject to constant negotiation and alterations in everyday life (i.e. there are plural and fluid femininities and masculinities in all societies at any given time) the dominant gender identities and their patterned interconnectedness are embedded in the patriarchal legacy that manifests itself through particular relations of domination and subordination depending upon specific social formations. In its most general meaning, 'A society is patriarchal to the degree that it is male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered. It also involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women' (Johnson, 1997: 5).

Within a patriarchal context, both sexes are ascribed with structurally and ideologically different positions (or statuses) with unequal access to power and assets in favour of men. This results in sex-differentiated structures of privileges and disadvantages. Women's individual and collective response to their disadvantaged position, particularly the recent women's movement, have served to considerably expand the boundaries and nature of participation for women in spheres which continue to be largely male dominant. For example, the sphere of formal politics, both at the national and international levels is one such area.[13]

10 Elsewhere, the following have also been identified: (1) Since gender is a more general level of abstraction within which 'women' as well as 'men' exist, using gender and women interchangeably is conceptually wrong. The theorization of the concept gender followed a focus first on the situation of women. This, nevertheless, does not change the fact that theoretically gender precedes its properties: woman/man. (2) From the point of view of third-world countries, where the patriarchal structure remains intact, the use of gender synonymously with women can serve to conceal the latter before they have a chance to gain full visibility in public space. Women first have to gain visibility, therefore, there is a need to exaggerate rather than just accentuate women verbally, conceptually and politically. (3) The term gender, when used as distinct from that of woman, often refers to mere difference between women and men. As a result, the structure of inequality within which differences are constructed become forgotten. Political implications of such usage can be co-optation, compromise and marginalization. The loss of its political content has neutralized the concept gender, which may account for its widespread usage by

Kimmel and Kaufman (1995: 17) discuss how the civil rights movement and the subsequent women's and gay movement in the United States challenged the dominant view that public arena and the workplace were preserves for white men.

The public/private distinction has served to justify and sustain sex-segregation; however, women always found ways of moving between the two. Even under conditions of physical sex-segregation and confinement behind the veil, such as the case in some Moslem societies, women have access to the male world. They can observe and become acquainted with diverse male roles, giving them some leverage in developing their survival strategies (Ertürk, 1991: 317). In other words, women, even in confined conditions, participate in one form or another in the realm of men, the reverse, however, has been considered socially less appropriate, since the more rigidly defined attributes of manhood have imposed a break from the sphere of women after early childhood (Chodorow, 1978).[14] As a result, traditionally men's familiarity with the realm of women has by and large been confined to more subordinate and conventional female roles, leaving a vacuum in the established norms and attitudes when responding to female presence in unfamiliar contexts. While this has provided women with opportunity to rupture conventional structures and impose alternative images (Ertürk, 1991), it has also increased the possibility for male violence against women.

Traditionally, patriarchy has been associated with the institutions of the state, family and the household and as such inequalities between women and men have been sought primarily in the politics of the public and private divide. With modernization and women's increased participation in the labour market, this distinction became blurred and therefore the emphasis on patriarchy as an analytical tool weakened. Furthermore, the contention that there is a strong tension between capitalism and patriarchy over the exploitation of women's labour has led to the logical expectation that patriarchy would wither away as traditional social formations are eliminated. This has not happened. While the traditional kin-based patriarchy has largely become a myth in some parts of the world, the 'gender contract' (Moghadam, 2000) continues to sustain, though in modified forms, the sexual division of labour and the patriarchal character of societies worldwide. 'The nature of women's work, paid and unpaid, inside and outside the home, and its varied roles and lowly status, can only be fully analyzed on such bases' (Youngs, 2000: 49). Mikanagi (2000: 117) demonstrates how the patriarchal gendered structures *persist* in Japan despite the fact that by 1980, 47.6 percent of Japanese women of working age (15 years and over) were working in the formal labour force.

What connects class and gender relations so intimately is the strong interconnectedness of two vital areas of human activity that are rooted in the patriarchal power structure: namely, production and reproduction. Historically, man's struggle to sustain and control the production process has institutionalized class relations. Within this context, some men have used power in the form of

diverse institutions and groups (Ertürk, 1997a: 4).

11 See Goetz (1997) and Wieringa (1998) for a discussion of how the term gender evolved and became conceptualized.

12 Essentialist assumptions that differences between women and men are intrinsic and immutable are still quite common in the literature and in everyday life situations. A variant of essentialist argument that women are different from men in moral issues, such as in maintaining and building peace, has been strongly expressed by some feminists. For further elaboration see, Carol Gilligan (1993).

13 Women's movement has succeeded in securing a niche in multilateral dialogue, which is then used to expand space in national politics (see, for example Tinker, 1990; Pietila, 1999; Kardam, 2002). Bilateral diplomacy, however, has proven to be less penetrable.

14 This process is less abrubt in the non-western cultures, which needs to be further examined.

violence (slave society) and contract (capitalist society) over the labour of other men, creating class hierarchies, that is to say inequalities among men. Connell (1987) differentiates between 'hegemonic' and 'subordinate' masculinity to capture the differential access men have over power and social privilege. Correspondingly, although preceding class society, the interest of a social group to sustain and control socially acceptable lines of reproduction of their species has institutionalized gender relations. Within this context, men have used power to control women's sexuality and set limits on their reproductive behaviour. The honour and prestige of a man, in many instances, became intrinsically associated with the conduct of the women related to them and paradoxically, their ability to violate the sexuality of other women.[15] The regulation over women's reproductive capacity and their sexuality has taken diverse forms, marriage being the most common form today. In essence, therefore, patriarchy is the definition of 'manhood': the breadwinner or provider (i.e. class relations)[16] and regulator of women's sexuality, whether in the form of protector of honour or as transgressor of women's body (i.e. gender relations). 'Womanhood', on the other hand, is defined in association with manhood, thereby being confined to the structural position of the 'other' (Braidotti, 2000). Consequently, societies have tended to be premised on a male-headed model of the family, where the male household head is designated with the dual obligations of providing and protecting. The former is a source of potential conflict in the public sphere and the latter in the domestic sphere.[17] In addition to the sexual assault and abuse that takes place within and outside the home, patriarchal power manifests itself in the form of culturally approved or instigated forms of transgression against women by the wider collective group, such as the extended kinship networks. Some of the most striking cases of such violence observed across the globe are mutilation of female genitals, bride/dowry killings and crimes of 'honour'.

As there is diverse male positions *vis-à-vis* class structure, that is, plural masculinities, female positions also vary. Gender and class intersect with other hierarchies such as age, race, ethnicity and religion, among others, creating further layers of status differentiation and diverse gender interests for men and women alike. At the intersection of class (and other status hierarchies) and gender, some women may be in a position to exercise authority over men who are at the lower end of the status hierarchy, thus allowing them to share male power. However, all femininities are subordinate to hegemonic masculinity at any given time and place (Connell, 1987). In other words, when gender relations are abstracted from other status hierarchies, the dominant and subordinate roles or feminine/masculine dichotomies become more clearly delineated as the basis of collective divisions between women and men.[18]

On the other hand, as aforementioned, gender relations and gendered power are transformed as a result of modernization and global restructuring. In particular, the recent global trends in casualization and feminization of the workforce;

15 There is considerable variation in how masculinity and the domination over women's sexuality is manifested. While, in some cultures honour – that is, sexual behaviour of women kin – is central to masculinity, in others, violation of women's sexuality has a stronger connotation to manliness. Where the latter predominates, women have been more vulnerable in public space and subject to open violence such as gang rapes and desertion by the partner. Whereas, in the former, women have been subjected to male protection and confinement to the private sphere.

16 In most cultures, male identity is strongly associated with work. Thus, to work for an adult male is not a matter of choice but rather a requirement of his manhood. This patriarchal requirement helps sustain class relations as it compels a man to sell his labour in the market although in many contexts women may in fact be the dominant provider in the household.

17 While labour relations as a public

collapse of the welfare state; erosion of the economic autonomy of the family wage system; feminization of agriculture, poverty and migration; among others, have undermined traditional male authority on its most secure ground: the family. With global restructuring, the patriarchal gender order too is restructured and ruptured as masculinity diversifies, becomes modernized and in some cases, transformed (Connell, 2000; Hooper, 2000; Kimmel and Kaufman, 1995).

An important distinction to make with regard to class and gender structures in understanding the durability of patriarchy under alternative modes of production is that, while the relations of production have been contested throughout history, the issue of male power (i.e. patriarchy) has not been questioned in mainstream struggles for change. That is to say, historically changes in class relations have entailed an alteration of power among men but never disassociating the intimate link between power and masculinity. This strong inter-connection between power and masculinity gives patriarchy its pervasiveness, while what is masculine continuously adjusts to the changing requirements of power (Ertürk, 1997a). What has been and continues to be negotiated, at the societal and personal levels of life, is the place accorded to women. Women's identity and status become the sites where politics are concretized and women's bodies become the arena where battles are fought. In this sense, while women, as the primary barriers of culture, have been relegated to the private sphere, their fate has always been central to politics, public policy as well as open conflicts (Ertürk, 1997b).[19]

For instance, Esposito (1998: xv) in his assessment of women and Islam, argues that the efforts to re-define women's role in society in the Muslim world has been an effort '...to identify continuities as they seek to reconcile tradition and modernity'. On the other hand, in the case of the formation of the Turkish Republic, the modernization project entailed a break with tradition, but here too women became the medium through which change became articulated. From the dress code (outlawing of the veil in public sphere) to the right to vote and to be elected, women were given considerable space and rights in public life as markers of progress. However, the boundaries of this space and the rules that governed what women could and could not do was largely in the hands of the modern state (Kardam and Ertürk, 1999).[20] Nash argues that, policies that expand women's rights are 'valuable in allowing women to escape subordination from individual men in the home...', however, this may be nothing more than exchanging '...private patriarchy for public patriarchy...' if women are dependent on a state over which they have no power (Nash, 2000: 169). Bandarage (1997: 17), defining patriarchy as the organizing principle of the entire global system, attributes this female subordination to their restricted access and control of means of both production and reproduction in the private and public spheres.

Competition among men over power, within or beyond any given boundaries, may entail open conflicts whereby women are targeted in various ways. The atrocity experienced by Bosnian women, during the disintegration of Yugoslavia, was one of

matter have been central to law making, the violence that takes place within the family has historically escaped public sanction since the home is regarded as man's private and personal domain. Both national and international legal systems have tended to address issues related to the private sphere with the assumption that the regulation of the private sphere is not the business of law. The women's movement has challenged the public/private dichotomy as legitimizing women's subordination and has expanded the boundaries of human rights to penetrate into the private sphere. For a collection of readings on related issues, see Cook (1994).

18 This continues to be the driving force behind struggle for gender equality. It is the femininity/masculinity dichotomy at this level that supports the sameness of women's experience and interest and thus the grounds for a common course of action.

19 It is interesting that although the 2000-year-old Roman law, which stipulates that public law ends at the threshold of the private family, has dominated the understanding of law making in all societies, change in socio-political order have, in fact, demarcated itself through some form of intrusion into the privacy of domestic life as articulated in

the most shameful acts of violence and humiliation against women in recent history. These women were raped, impregnated and detained until it was too late to terminate their pregnancy. Violating women in this manner as part of a war strategy to dishonour a whole social group is indicative of the degree to which masculine power is detached from male reproductive capacity (Ertürk, 1996: 26).[21] The recent war against Afghanistan represents yet another manifestation of the clash of masculinities, where according to Yeğenoğlu (2002), Afghan women became the 'war zone' in the battle between the Taliban and the American military. 'It is through her body that two masculinities fight their war. While for Taliban her veiling is the means of protecting Afghan society from Western intrusion, her unveiling is equated with liberation by the Western world, thus making her completely mute in this battle between the two masculinities'.

In the process of structural or policy change, different elements of masculinity also become integrated into the new configuration to serve particular interests, without necessarily questioning masculine power. This results in the legitimization or, in some cases, suppression or devaluation of certain images (Hooper, 2000: 60). However, the manner in which power is perpetuated by different representation of hegemonic masculinities[22] sustains the notion of the duality of the sexes. As stated earlier, the global restructuring and changing patterns of governance has significantly altered the conditions of traditional patriarchy. Today, hegemonic masculinity is being reproduced at the global level, bringing together technocratic masculine elite with considerably diverse traits. Hooper, in her analysis of *The Economist*, shows that the Anglo-American hegemonic masculinity is being reconfigured in the image of a softer, more informal qualities previously associated with 'femininity' (Hooper, 2000: 71). Connell (2002) refers to this emerging masculinity as the 'transnational business masculinity' with hegemonic space for masculinity in the new 'world gender order'.[23] This shift of masculine power to a new terrain is most evident in the representation of women in the decision-making bodies of the corporate world. 'Even in countries where a 'critical mass' in decision-making positions within the public sector has been achieved, such as the Nordic countries, there are few women on boards of directors of major business corporations' (UNDAW, 2001: 34).

what stake do women and men have in change?

The argument in this article that the patriarchal gender order in its varying forms, has proven to be so durable, enabling hegemonic masculinity to reproduce itself under changing conditions, does not in any way attribute patriarchy immutability. The patriarchal gender formations and their implications for femininity has been the source of women's subordination as well as the driving force for change. As already referred to above, women individually have always developed strategies in their everyday life to negotiate and contest patriarchal social arrangements that

Yakin Ertürk **feminist review 78** 2004 **13**

disadvantaged them. Collectively, the women's movement, internationally and nationally has engendered the political agenda and paved the way for women to make gains in mainstream society over the past few decades. This has been reflected in the emergence of an international gender equality regime, which has ensured women's voice a public audience in the recognition of issues once regarded as private matters. Although the agenda so far has concentrated on the liberal and relatively less threatening aspects of gender relations, the impact has been far reaching, provoking both resistance against and pressure for change. The challenge now is to move beyond the liberal agenda towards the transformation of masculine power that is embedded in human consciousness, language, values and major institutions such as the state, economy, politics, family, etc. This is basically a political agenda, requiring various strategies for action. A partnership among women and men to challenge and resist masculine gender politics at all levels is an area that needs to be explored and carefully integrated into the agenda for change. Women's incentive for venturing into such a partnership is understandable, but since all men benefit to some extent from the association between power and masculinity what stake do they have in such change?

Some men have already addressed this question in the affirmative (Johnson, 1997; Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 1995). Since the 1990s there has been a growing body of literature[24] on issues of masculinity and gender equality and there are numerous men's groups as well as international agencies working to create awareness and alternative conceptions of manhood. A Pakistani human rights lawyer, speaking at a panel discussion on 'Deconstructing Masculinity' during Beijing $+ 5$[25] explained that, as a young boy growing up in a strict patriarchal family in Pakistan, he was marginal to the dominant male nexus in the family which was represented by his older brother and his father. Because he lacked the expected masculine standards of behaviour he became subjugated to his brother's hegemony. In order to deal with his vulnerability in the male world, he forged an alliance with his mother. This alliance not only enabled him to eat and dress better but also exposed him to the problems his sisters encountered as females within a patriarchal setting. The intersection between his subordinate position *vis-à-vis* his older brother and the subordinate position of his sisters *vis-à-vis* the patriarchal gender order, brought him to the realization that both forms of subordination are rooted in the same system of domination that sustains itself through the male/female dichotomy. This realization eventually led him to become a human rights lawyer, with a strong commitment for the elimination of public and private forms of discrimination against women.

The above narrative demonstrates that the agenda for gender equality is not about a battle of the sexes but rather about changing a social order that breeds domination, exploitation and violence that have consequences for women as well as for men. As Connell (2000: 30) puts it, 'The task is not to abolish gender, but to

24 See the appendix in Johnson (1997) for an extensive list of resources on related issues.

25 This panel discussion was organized by UN Department of Public Information during the Beijing $+ 5$ pre-patory committee meeting in March 2000 in NY.

reshape it; to disconnect (for instance) courage from violence, steadfastness from prejudice, ambition from exploitation'. Johnson asserts

'Perhaps in the simplest sense, when men and women work to end any form of oppression, they act with courage to take responsibility to do the right thing, and this empowers them in ways that can extend to every corner of their lives... With each strand of the patriarchal gender knot that we help to unravel,...[w]e join a process of creative resistance to oppression that's been unfolding for thousands of years'

(Johnson, 1997: 253).

Johnson, while acknowledging that the incentive for engaging in the agenda for change may be more manifest for women, concludes that it is not any less valid for men.

'When men join the movement against patriarchy, they can begin to undo the costs of participating in an oppressive system as the dominant group...Most men don't realize...how they compromise their humanity,...how they distort their sexuality to live up to core patriarchal values of control'

(Johnson, 1997: 252).

After all, human history has inherently been driven towards the freedom from oppression. Striving for gender equality is a natural dimension of that overall struggle.

translating theory into practice: policy implications

In view of the foregoing discussion on the theoretical implications of the concept of gender, how would the interest regarding the role of men translate into policy and implementation? What does integrating male involvement in gender equality initiatives entail for the work of the UN system, national governments and other actors? What kind of a strategy does a focus on the role of men imply in the gender agenda? How are limited funds and resources to be channelled into achieving gender equality goals given this new interest? These are no doubt legitimate questions with no ready and easy answers. The dialogue needs to continue and more comparative research on how gender roles and identities are reproduced under diverse conditions is needed to expand our understanding of the problem.

Integrating the role of men into gender agenda setting needs to be carefully tailored in view of the analytical premises, regarding patriarchal gender relations, advanced in this article; most important in this regard are: gender relations are inherently unequal, thus, hegemonic masculinity is re-configured under changing conditions; and gender hierarchies intersect with other systems of domination, thus, layers of inequalities emerge that subordinate women in diverse forms.

Bearing these premises in mind is important in order that policy interventions contribute towards transforming the sources of inequality by de-linking power and masculinity at all levels. Two areas where gender inequality is most manifest, widespread and detrimental in terms of their overall impact on women and society are violence and poverty. These offer priority entry points for gender equality policies at national and international levels.

Hence, in view of the theoretical concerns raised above with regard to considering the role of men in gender agenda setting, a four-fold policy approach is needed: (i) adoption of a gender perspective in overall policy making; (ii) elimination of all forms of discriminatory provisions and practices from all legislation and institutions, including the family, the media, schools, labour market, decision-making bodies, judiciary, budgetary processes, etc.; (iii) designing and implementing programmes that would increase women's alternatives and contribute towards their empowerment; (iv) engaging in a dialogue and alliance with like-minded men to sensitize various social segments in addressing the problem of gender inequality as a societal problem concerning women and men equally. At the more specific level, the following policy guidelines within each approach may be considered:

gender perspective in policy formulation

- It is critical to maintain conceptual clarity. Using the terms women and gender synonymously can serve to coopt or conceal women's concerns before women have a chance to gain full visibility in public policy formulation. Gender analysis should guide in identifying deprived and subordinate status in order that policy interventions can be directed towards their remedy.
- General policy guidelines need to be supported and concretized with local research that examines gender norms and relations in specific contexts.
- In order to understand the core problem of oppression, attention needs to be paid to forms of inequality and domination that draw from the same source of control as that which governs gender relations. Attention is also needed in identifying the intersections of gender inequality with these other forms of domination, where women's multiple disadvantages are produced.
- Changes in gender relations should be monitored with the view to identifying how and where hegemonic forms of masculinity shift, manifest and reproduces itself.

transforming institutions

- Strategies and programmes aimed at changing male attitudes and behaviour should be approached within the framework of major institutions, whereby sexist ideas and images from school curricula, advertisements and news coverage are eliminated, and concepts such as male head of household and male bread winner should be replaced by gender neutral terms in statistics and in legislation.
- Gender budgeting should be part and parcel of all resource allocation strategies, where equality measures are clearly visible.

women-targeted programmes

- A focus on men's role as part of the solution should in no way suggest a deviation from the commitment to support women's individual and collective initiatives and women-targeted programmes. Women still live in exclusion and under unacceptable conditions of deprivation worldwide.
- Funds and resources available for the advancement of women, which are already meagre, should not be diverted to programmes for men on the grounds of cost- efficiency. Such programmes may target the symptoms of the problem but will not offer a sustainable solution, as use of masculine power can take more discrete and nominally 'reformed' ways. Women themselves need to be empowered to resist and challenge unequal power relations, while at same time strategies that would transform the latter are considered.
- The principle of equality between women and men should form the framework of all policies and programmes. Even the more conventional programmes that aim at meeting basic needs or increasing women's access to resources should be organized in ways that can increase women's options and enhance their capabilities.

dialogue and alliance with men

- Men's initiatives for alternative masculinities should be acknowledged and used for advocacy to increase gender sensitivities as well as in forging new alliances.
- While the involvement of men in gender equality initiatives should be encouraged and integrated into programme design and implementation, the role of subordinate and dominant groups of men should be tailored carefully and differently to ensure that negative gender constructions are weakened or eliminated. The questions of 'which men', 'in what kinds of alliances' and 'for which end' need to be assessed with care.

Ratification of relevant human rights and gender equality instruments, particularly CEDAW and its optional protocol, is essential in creating the kind of enabling environment needed for the policy approach suggested above. Engagement with international regimes not only ensures the political will and commitment on the part of national authorities, but it also sets the guidelines in determining time-bound targets, the framework for domestic reforms in achieving these targets, the accountability mechanisms for monitoring and following up on the implementation and the common ground for dialogue and negotiation among women, governments and other actors in constantly moving the gender equality agenda forward.

concluding remarks

It has been argued above that the rationale behind considering the role of men in gender agenda setting must start from the premise that gender inequalities are not a result of innate natural characteristics of women and men but rather the product of a historically determined system of differentially assigned attributes that are unequally structured, creating layers of privileged and subordinate

positions. Although all men benefit from the association of masculinity and privilege, some men are also subordinate to power of dominant male positions. Thus, gender inequality issues are not women's issues but rather a concern for human emancipation in general. As such, gender issues are both '...generic and very sex-specific and they point very clearly in the direction of male privilege... These power differentials is what gender analysis tries to bring to the fore and to correct' (Braidotti, 2000: 4). Given the complexity and diversity in gender roles and statuses, emphasis has been placed on the need to move beyond the cataloguing of differences between women and men towards a critical examination of the structural positions of masculinity and femininity in patriarchal gender order, which is reproduced and modified in accordance with changing requirements of local, national and global power. Therefore, diversities that are observed across time and space should serve as inputs to broaden and redefine the universal notions of equality and human rights to be inclusive of options for the disadvantaged.

Gender equality approaches, in order to capture the generic and universal characteristics of inequality between women and men, need to link the local, the national and the global levels. This calls for gender analysis and feminist epistemology that rests on an integrated approach to *paradigm, policy* and *praxis*. Such an understanding is the basis for an expanded dialogue among academicians (the sphere of paradigm), decision-makers (the sphere of policy) and activists (the sphere of praxis).

What has made the UN experience, in the area of advancement of women, a viable project, since the inception of the organization, has been the close collaboration among governments, women's organizations and the academia, the last being the weaker link.[26] Such a coalition in multilateral dialogue enabled the UN to serve as a forum for building and expanding the boundaries of a common agenda for gender equality despite the multiple forms of persisting disparities that continue to divide the world today. This collective initiative has contributed to systematically uncovering the Western/male-based universalism, which disclosed the oppressive nature of dualistic categorizations that have been used to naturalize and legitimize inequality between women and men and other disadvantaged groups.

26 UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) can play a role in bringing the academic research experience into the UN agenda.

In the process, the agenda has evolved to place the role of men as a new consideration in the gender equality agenda. This new focus, which no doubt, has the potential of diverting attention from the objectives of the PfA, also has the potential of moving the equality initiatives forward towards transformative change. Transformative change is not an easy task. It is inherently disruptive of the comfort offered by the predictability of the established way of life for the dominant and the dominated and it implies a loss of identity and safety. While, such change may hold risks for all concerned, it also *promises* a step forward in greater emancipation. Baldwin (1961), in his discussion of racial inequalities, eloquently articulates this point '... it is only when a man is able ...to surrender

a dream he has long cherished or a privilege he has long possessed that he is set free — he has set himself free — for higher dreams, for greater privileges'.

author biography

Yakin Ertürk is a professor of Sociology at the Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara, Turkey. She also taught at the *Center for Girls*, at King Saud University in Riyadh (1979–1982) and from 1979 to 1981 served as its Chair. Between 1997 and 2001, she took leave from her university post at METU and joined the United Nations, serving first as Director of the *International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women* (INSTRAW) in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (Octover 1997–February 1999), then as Director of *The Division for the Advancement of Women* (DAW) at UN Headquarters in New York (March 1999–October 2001). She has worked for various national and international agencies on rural development and women in development projects. Yakın Ertürk, whose areas of interest include multilateral dialogue, conflict, identity politics and violence against women, globalization, population movements, labour use patterns and women in development, received her PhD degree in development sociology from Cornell University in 1980. She was appointed as the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women as of August 2003.

references

Baldwin, J. (1961) *Nobody knows my name*, New York: Dell Publishing.

Bandarage, A. (1997) *Women, Population and Global Crisis*, London: Zed Books.

Boserup, E. (1970) *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, New York: St. Martin's Press.

Braidotti, R. (2000) 'Feminist Ethics and the Quest to New Universals' a position paper presented at the International Conference on Global Ethos, UNU, 24–26 October, Tokyo.

Chodorow, N. (1978) *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, London: University of California Press.

Connell, R. (1987) *Gender and Power*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Connell, R. (1995) *Masculinities.*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Connell, R. (2000) 'Arms and the man: using the new research on masculinity to understand violence and promote peace in the contemporary world' in I. Breiness, R. Connell and I. Eide (2000) editors, *Male Roles, Masculinities and Violence*, Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 21–33.

Connell, R. (2002) 'Masculinities in Global Context' paper presented at conference on Masculinity Contested: Construction of Masculinity in an Eastern Mediterranean Perspective, Swedish Institute, Istanbul, 7 June.

Cook, R. (1994) editor, *Human Rights of Women: National and International Perspectives*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Cornwall, A. and Lindisfarne, N. (1994) editors, *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*, London: Routledge.

Council of Europe. (1998) *Gender Mainstreaming*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Ertürk, Y. (1991) 'Convergence and divergence in the status of moslem women: the cases of Turkey and Saudi Arabia' *International Sociology*, Vol. 6, No. 3: 307–320.

Ertürk, Y. (1996) 'From the 'Cold War' to the 'Hot Peace': women at the center of conflict' in *Women and Human Settlements in Conflict Zones*, INSTRAW, Proceedings from Habitat II: 25–33.

Ertürk, Y. (1997a) 'Women, gender and patriarchy: conceptual considerations for the development context' in *INSTRAW News*, No. 27, Second Semester: 3–4.

Ertürk, Y. (1997b) 'Identity Politics: Implications for gender analysis, policy and training' in *INSTRAW News*, No. 27, Second Semester: 9–15.

Esposito, J.L. (1998) 'Introduction: women in islam and muslim societies' in Y.Y. Haddad and J.L. Esposito (1998) editors, *Islam, Gender and Social Change*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, ix–xxviii.

Gilligan, C. (1993) *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Goetz, B.S. (1997) 'Who needs (sex) when you can have (gender)? Conflicting discourses on gender at Beijing' *Feminist Review*, Vol. 56: 3–25.

Grant, R. and Newland, K. (1991) editors, *Gender and International Relations*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hooper, C. (2000) 'Masculinities in transition: the case of globalization' in M.H. Marchand and A.S. Runyan (2000) editors, *Gender and Global Restructuring*, London: Routledge, 59–73.

Johnson, A.G. (1997) *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Joseph, S. (2000) editor, *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Kardam, N. (2002) 'The emergence of a global gender equality regime' in *International Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 3: 411–438.

Kardam, N. and Ertürk, Y. (1999) 'Expanding Gender Accountability? Women's Organizations and the State in Turkey' *International Journal of Organization Theory and Behavior*, 2 (1 & 2): 167–197.

Kandiyoti, D. (1994) 'The paradoxes of masculinity: some thoughts on segregated societies' in A. Cornwall and N. Lindisfarne (1994) editors, *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*, London: Routledge.

Kimmel, M.S. (1995) editor, *The Politics of Manhood*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Kimmel, M.S. and Kaufman, M. (1995) 'Weekend warriors: the new men's movement' in M.S. Kimmel (1995) editor, *The Politics of Manhood*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 15–43.

Mikanagi, Y. (2000) 'Apolitical explanation of gendered division of labor in Japan' in M.H. Marchand and A.S. Runyan (2000) editors, *Gender and Global Restructuring*, London: Routledge, 116–128.

Moghadam, V.M. (2000) 'Economic restructuring and the gender contract: a case of Jordan' in Marchand M.H. and A.S. Runyan (2000) editors, *Gender and Global Restructuring*, London: Routledge, 99–115.

Moser, C. (1993) *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training*, London: Routledge.

Nash, K. (2000) *Contemporary Political Sociology: Globalization, Politics and Power*, Malden: Blackwell Publishers.

Pietila, H. (1999) *Engendering the Global Agenda: A Success Story of Women and the United Nations*, INSTRAW Occasional Paper Series, Santa Dorningo-INSTRAW, No. 1.

Razavi, S. and Miller, C. (1997) 'Conceptual Frameworks for Gender Analysis Within the Development Context' paper prepared for the Socio-economic and Gender Analysis Inter-Agency Review Meeting, UNDP, Pearl River, New York.

Tinker, I. (1990) *Persisting Inequalities*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

United Nations. (2001) *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with the Beijing + 5 Political Declaration and Outcome Document*, New York: United Nations.

United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. (1999) *World survey on the Role of Women in Development: Globalization, Gender and Work*, New York: UNDAW.

United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. (2001) *From Beijing to Beijing + 5: Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action*, New York: UNDAW.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission. (1997) Agreed Conclusion, 1997/2.

Yeğenoğlu, M. (2002) 'Response to R. W. Connell's 'Masculinities in Global Context', presented at the conference on Masculinity Contested: Construction of Masculinities in an Eastern Mediterranean Perspective' Istanbul (unpublished).

Youngs, G. (2000) 'Breaking patriarchal bonds: dymythologizing the public/private' in Marchand M.H. and A.S. Runyan (2000) editors, *Gender and Global Restructuring*, London: Routledge, 44–58.

Wieringa, S. (1998) *Rethinking Gender Planning: A Critical Discussion of the Use of the Concept Gender*, Working Paper Series No. 279. The Hague, the Netherlands: Institute of Social Studies.