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'Who is in crisis? With reference to the debates about the 'crisis of masculinity', discuss about poverty, unemployment, or other social issues, and its effects on women'.

But

Whose crisis is it after all?

Introduction

Is it sexuality or the lack of it, or rather money or the lack of it that defines better the relationship between men and women? Have the position of women really changed a lot regarding sexual hierarchy from the image of the “cheap household manpower” to the self-conscious modern woman possessing an independent income or is that all just an illusion? There are changes that can be traced in the feminist literature from the pre-industrial society through the appearance of the paid labour force of women kept count of the result of the industrial revolution, as well as through the positive changes in the election and heritance rights considered from the women’s point of view to the modern, strengthening feminist fights for female quotes. Can these be really considered as big steps taken forward or rather just very small ones in respect of equality between genders considering the present picture of societies basically described as patriarchal in the literature? Proceeding along the theories we try to give an answer to the above questions in this study by focusing on the results that summarize the empiric study of a present-day female group of a given social position, namely deep poverty. At the same time, we are going to concern the issue of masculinity crisis to a large extent. According to our hypothesis, it is actually not clear whether only “masculinity is undermined” as a result of the general economic difficulties (unemployment) affecting the financial situation of families at a micro level. What happens to women in the meanwhile? Or what happens to the children, respectively, that is to the families themselves? What happens to them especially at around or under a well identifiable standard of living: the subsistence level? American literature of sociology in the 1980s – which described studies on the feminisation feature of poverty carried out in the United States – has already made it clear that widows, divorced women or mothers who rear their child alone live poverty deeper than men do. They simply live in deeper poverty. Research results gave a plastic indication of the fact that the chance of families sustained by women the ten times more likely remain poor even for long-term than that of families sustained by men.

Governmental measures intended to cope with female poverty (USA; years of the 70s and 80s), however, did not work. The reason for that can be traced back now, from a temporal distance of 30 to 40 years, to the fact that the underlying causes of female poverty are actually different from that of male poverty. Additionally, programmes coping with poverty were developed for men and thus they were not suitable and effective for women; moreover, they have anchored the state of female poverty. (Czibere 2014) Child rearing duties incumbent solely on women as well as women's handicapped position at the labour market a priori make the female form of poverty "unique", irrespectively to whether it hits mothers struggling with solving everyday living of their families in America or – as we'll see in our example – in the middle of Europe. We try to draft it in this study that what evidences have researchers found so far to verify that poverty appearing as a process due to social differentiation can at the micro level be detected - as a sign of inequality within the family - between genders, in a male-female relation, also in several dimensions.

Sub- and superordinate relations

There have been different views supporting or criticising each other about inequalities between men and women – both in the family and the society – seeking the social causes and, respectively, considering the possible mitigation of them. The study by Helen I. Safa from 1996 titled „Gender Inequality and Women's Wage Labour: Theoretical and Empirical Analysis” describes the bases of the different views from the standpoint of women by giving an analysis of the effects made by the capitalist development (Safa, 1996. p. 186). She leads the idea from the features of pre-industrial societies – where access to education and labour was given or denied on a gender basis – through the “women- liberating” theories of women's wamework appearing along with the capitalist development to the patriarchal relations defined in her own interpretation. Safa, when stressing the masculine control over female work, states clearly that this feature does not only characterize relations at home but it is typical of the workplace relations, as well. As she writes it; gender hierarchy is reproduced at the workplace. (Safa, 1996. p. 188) The Marxian interpretation of the changes affecting women coming forth along with the appearance of capitalism: the views connected to the egalitarian division of family roles proved to be real “treasuries” for the feminist literature. These views, as a basis, gave birth to many studies later on. Nonetheless, these views were actually elaborated by Engels, a close friend of Marx, it is also true that they allow an insight to the function of capitalism according to Marx's ideology (Baxter 1992). Janeen Baxter, at the same time, in her study titled „Families and Households in Society and Gender” considers Engels' views on the division of labour in the family and the egalitarian opportunities of women wrong. Engels stressed that no inequality existed between man and woman before commodity production has developed and that natural division of labour determined the activities. Surplus production and the curtailment of maternal rights brought forth inequality for men, as

well as the possibility to quasi “demote” female gender and treat it simply like an instrument of slavery acting to please men. This leads Engels to the point that equality between man and woman would be achieved again only if women, leaving their home, appear in the paid labour market. According to Baxter, however, it became clear relatively soon – as it is stated in following studies – that in spite of the increasing number of women entering the labour market neither the inequality between genders, nor the inequality of household labour division ceased. Therefore, Engels was wrong – writes Baxter – when he contrasted the value of economy-based labour with the goods that can be produced at home. In other words, Engels was mistaken in explaining the reason for the devaluation of housework and child-rearing. The statement itself that duties between man and woman would originally be divided on a biological base was proved to be wrong, as well (Baxter 1992). There is one thing, however, in Engels’ reasoning that is worth attention: feminist directions in the 20th century, mainly in its second half, in the course of family studies developed further the issue of family labour division in a man-woman relation. Legal equality was introduced in many countries and – as Engels finally had “predicted” it – more and more women managed to find their place on the labour market. Thus changes took place also in the family economic relations. However, now the question is – as we have already indicated it in the introduction of our study - that to what extent this shift regarding male and female egalitarian endeavours is to be considered. Literature – seems – to estimate it for the moment that in terms of family power relations the mentioned shift did not bring forth a significant step forward (Cseh-Szombathy¹ 2006). As we shall see through a Hungarian example later on, literature is very likely to be right.

Many variations of female subordination are presumed by Helen I. Safa, as we have already referred to her. She tries to illustrate her statement by comparing and collating two theories in connection with paid female work force, namely the Marxian feminist analyses and the bases of the so called modern school. The modern school – as Safa refers here to the theory of Rosen (1982) – reckons on the basis of ascriptive criteria thought to be traditional that the paid female work appearing along with the capitalist development quasi „emancipated”, liberated women. Due to the increasing independence of and the professionalism acquired by women the integrity of women has promoted their mobility climbing upwards the social ladder – through the development of human capital – and modernity became finally an attitude. According to Safa, theories approaching from the direction of the Marxian-feminist views agree with the representatives of modernity in that paid work or waged work have liberated women. At the same time, they also stress that capitalism in alliance with patriarchy is actually the source of the subordination of women. And thus, instead of mitigating inequality, it strengthens further the already existing hierarchy – as we have already demonstrated it above keeping track of Baxter’s study. In connection with this, Safa mentions the differences in male and female labour wages at a disadvantage for women. She stresses that among these patriarchal relationships capital, state and men

¹ László Cseh –Szombathy (1925 - 2007) Member of Hungarian Academy of Sciences, he was Director of the Social Science Institute for Social Science Research at the University of ELTE. His research focuses on family and demographics.

all are interested in maintaining the reduced prestige of housework which, in her views, is the token of saving the masculine role. (Safa 1996. p. 187 -189) We still have to mention also that men – as well as the state and the capital – exactly know that the token of the future is to be found in child rearing, the reproductive function of women. And though all actors are aware of this, disputes emerged about the division of labour and hierarchy in the family as well as the acknowledgement of women's housework done at home – in the opinion of feminist authors - still show all together in the direction that among the existing patriarchal relationships the myth of masculine “wage-earner” is safe and unshakeable. “Sub- and superordinate relations” thus remain, in spite of that the economic depths and crises of recent decades as well as the growing unemployment and other subsequence² resulting from them significantly contributed to the erosion of masculine roles as a wage-earning one. Due to this, the instability of family has grown and the proportion of families sustained by women expressed in a percentage has definitely increased, as well. (Safa 1996. p. 216) This latter fact will play a role also in our example to be demonstrated later on: the sample of the unemployed breadwinner producing a complicated life situation and attitude.

The feminist directions of literature assisted the understanding of social phenomena connected to family – as Janeen Baxter has also phrased it out – right in that they tried to point out the necessity of understanding the relationships within the family. Studies made from the aspect of male and female relations – that is the “insight” gained into the life of families – made it possible to have an overview of the relations between families and social institutions. “...they have (feminist analysers – note by the editor) critically examined the social organisation of the family, and highlighted men's and women's differing experiences of family life. Moreover, feminists have stressed the need to differentiate between the ideologies of the family and the reality of individuals' lives within families.” (Baxter 1992. p. 94) This becomes interesting for us in respect of our citation of a statement on the position loss of men's wage-earning status. The example that a man from the status marking the “wage-earning” role can transfer to his children, i.e. to the next generations will in turn take a significant part in shaping the future image of the society. It is not all the same either from this point of view

²Reproduced from European Population Committee of the Council of Europe (2005) Recent demographic developments in Europe 2005 – results: Later childbearing - particularly in north and west - UK and Spain oldest mothers (29+); Extra marital births - 1970 very low (8% UK) - 1990 /15% Europe; 2004 over 28% and over 40% Sweden, UK, France; low S. & E; Rising divorce rates from 1970 in northern Europe; Rise in divorce (1 in 3 marriages end in divorce UK); Impacts on households: more one- and two- person households.

By 2005 the rate of one-parent households in Hungary grew from 15.6 to 16.8 percentages, and within that the number of mother-child type one-parent families grew from 80 to 87 percentages. In 2001 11.3 % of children younger than one year old lived in one-parent families while this rate was already 18.4 % in the case of the 14 year olds. Source: Hungarian Demographic Research Institute; study by Erzsébet Földházi published in 2009:

http://www.demografia.hu/letoltes/kiadvanyok/DemPort/09foldhazi_csaladszerkezet.pdf
Download-09/11/2014

what happens within the family, in a battlefield of “gender fights”. As James Heartfield (2002) stresses in the beginning of his study titled “There is No Masculinity Crisis”, with regards to the young generations, it is necessary to have social control from the state’s part. And by citing Fukuyama, he highlights that the socialisation of young people with an inadequate fraternal example can be observed the best in criminal statistics. (Heartfield 2002. p. 4) After having collated, several theories dealing with the masculinity crisis Heartfield points out the relation as per which if we really can talk about the crisis of masculinity then it should be looked for in no way within the masculine values. It is rather worth connecting with the issues of self-confidence and prestige related to work and economic stability. „The crisis of masculinity at work” – writes Heartfield as a subtitle (p. 7.) –, and cites Susan Faludi to give support to his statement. In her study Faludi identifies the crisis of masculinity and the undermined prestige of the breadwinner’s role partly with the lack of economic prestige indicating the increasing unemployment due to the economic recession in the 90s as a starting point. And though Faludi gives an American example to that the crisis of masculinity is actually worth being interpreted as the crisis of the industrial working class – and finally Heartfield also agrees with this statement in general³ –, in order to make a European comparison, she shows a British example, as well, citing the book by Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West: „The War Against Parents”. The authors presume that the economic recession does not only have a destructive effect on family life but they also set up the thesis of „pathological masculinity” (Heartfield refers to Hewlett and West 2002. p. 8), which means in their understanding that as per their assumption economy deprives men (of the idea of real masculinity, the masculinity – by editor), mainly the young ones. So, based on the above lines the question is rightly raised that if the crisis of masculinity is to be considered actually the crisis of the working class as Faludi and Heartfield wrote, then what can we say in the meanwhile regarding women? And what happens to the people living at the lowest level of the social ladder who make a living by charring and do not really have a choice in doing industrial or agricultural work? Because at a phenomenal level it is also the economic pressure, the everyday problem of making a living that is responsible for the biggest stress in the families as well as in the men who themselves “theoretically play the wage-earning role” - without job and vision in an era hit by recession. A further question is that where can women get a role in the middle of the masculinity crisis? What role is incumbent on them in respect of the responsibility for family commitments until men face a crisis? May women also allow themselves - as if a whole class – to be in crisis? Or does the question itself already show the unequal opportunities both within the family and the society? Or is this an even more complicated issue? Certainly, it is. In the frame of the present study we cannot undertake to give an exact, detailed answer. However, we would like to demonstrate “the other side” of the crisis, the complementary one, the other aspect of the crisis.

³ „The crisis is not one of masculinity, but one of the working class.”(Heartfield 2002. p. 13.)

Crisis of female existence?

As we have already referred many times to that in our study we want to start with the investigation of the dimensions of inequality in the family by illustrating the results of a research done in Hungary in the end of the first decade of the 2000s. The research was made among women living in deep poverty with the help of 89 qualitative interviewees. In Hungary of the 2000s researchers wanted to know how inequalities in the family appear in connection with the present female poverty and how the people involved: women living in deep poverty live their own status. Along what system of relations, events will it be obvious that the immobile nature of women's role within family and its unequal situation/position compared to that of men remained strongly anchored in the case of the lowest social strata, which position is significantly stabilized by poverty⁴. The volume giving a summary of the research was published first in Hungarian in 2012 while it came out in English this year (2014) titled „Women in deep poverty”. The education level of the majority of the 89 interviewees is very low, but there were some women having GCE or college degree, as well. The definition of deep poverty was still uniformly typical to all of them, as per that the average amount of income per person in their families did not exceed the minimum amount of pension⁵. The majority of the 89 women⁶ were living in a small town or in a village at the time of the interview; most of them were under the age of 50 and were

⁴By putting up the summing question of who and why will become poor, when looking for the answer, first, we have to mention the theoretical approaches by Marx and Wright based on exploitation, as a challenging factor. Davis & Moor, the pair of authors representing the classical school of functionalism, based their theory on the fact that not all of the occupied positions are uniformly important for the society, and this picture is further detailed by the differentiation of individual capacities. Those will become poor whose position is less important for the society, and the remuneration going hand in hand with the position (work) – as an incentive system - also forwards inequality, hence low prestige is paired with low income (Monostori 2005). Peter Townsend—who actually criticises the functionalist approach – presumes that the desire for financial remuneration is not the same in the case of the different social groups that is the “motivation” for obtaining financial goods “also depends on the cultural environment” (Czibere 2012). Oscar Lewis proceeding along the line of „underclass poor” phrased out by Herbert J. Gans views that the way of life developed among the poor: “the subculture of poverty” is a kind of adaptation and, at the same time, a response given to poverty as marginalized position. Amartya Sen, at the same time, considers as a starting point that one of the most important instrument of a balanced life is the income which has an absolute effect on one's life. If there is no adequate income that deprives the persons from such opportunities as e.g. the liberty of “taking part in the activities they have a good reason to take part” (Czibere 2012).

⁵In Hungary the amount of the minimum old age pension is 28.500 HUF/month in 2014 (it is approximately 92 Euro at today's exchange rate) Source: Hungarian National Occupational Service http://www.afsz.hu/engine.aspx?page=allaskeresoknek_tajekoztato_oregsegi_nyugdij_legki

⁶Regarding their qualification women who finished 8 classes (i.e. primary school) (32 persons) and, respectively skilled workers' training (22 persons) were over-represented and the ratio of GCE-holders (17 persons) was higher than expected; 4 persons had a college degree. regarding their labour market position only 24 of the 89 had a job, more than this (33 persons) were unemployed, the number of women being on some sort of maternity leave was also high (17 persons), and the rest of them received pension or nursing fee.

rearing 1 or 2 children⁷, and the number of households experiencing the everyday without a masculine family member was relatively high. Their way of life was typically influenced by a family background where in most cases the daily problems of making a living were characteristic, and the childhood with the fraternal prestige, the cultural background, the financial circumstances at childhood and the (usually low) position of the parents in the labour market. It is an important momentum that compared to the parental family not any kind of social mobility could be traced by the research: the automatic inheritance of the social position has taken place in the case of the investigated group. It is even more interesting, however, that the women who possessed a degree were not able to climb the social ladder either. It was typical of the family organisations that each other's children were also reared in a large number of the cases as well as the common ones born in the meantime; i. e. women lived in a second or a common-law marriage which in turn made their situation complicated all the while. It is very likely that this circumstance – and the maternal responsibility – played a role also in that they marked their emotional life mostly as one where the love relationship lags much behind the need for their own and first of all the children's financial security on a priority list. The author of the book, Ibolya Czibere highlighted this line especially because the occurrence of harder life situations (insecure financial income, loss of employment) have weakened further the anyway infirm bond between the adult members of the family. This in turn gave way to the validation of physical dominance⁸ over and psychic outrage against women in most cases. All of the 89 interviewees have mentioned some form of violence that was committed against her. Those women gave account of the most brutal and most frequent outrages in whose case the male family member was unemployed while the female was not. Their lives were not eased by either the division of labour or the traditional division of power in the family. Due to the lack of the mentioned mobility in marriage the expectation of women living in deep poverty towards the husbands or common-law

⁷ From among the 89 families 35 reared 3 to 5 children while there were 6 to 9 children in 7 families. Most of the women lived in marriage or common-law marriage, some were about to get divorced or became a widow.

⁸ According to the statistical data, partner outrage means male perpetrator and female victim in 95 percent of the cases. Intra-family violence in Hungary demands the life of at least one woman a week. Every fifth woman grew up in a family where her father beat her mother. Perpetrators of violence against women are partners or ex-partners in the vast majority of cases. 22 percent of violent crimes against women were committed by their partner or ex-partner. The similar data relevant to men was 3 percent. More than half of the women killed was killed by their (ex) husband or common-law husband. In Hungary, according to the police statistics, e.g. in 2009 51.2 % of the killed women (43 women) and according to another police source 76 % of them (64 women) were killed by their partner. From the court files of men killed by their partners it turns out in 80 percent of the cases that the woman's becoming a perpetrator was preceded by a long-lasting, severe outrage of the wife from the husband's part. 23 percent of women experienced at least some kind of physical violence committed by their present or former male partner. (This data is a low value of conservative estimation.) 55 percent of the women experienced physical violence and 44 percent of the women experienced sexual violence suffered serious injuries (bruises, sprains, open wounds, fractures, head and facial injuries). Source: <http://nokjoga.hu/alapinformaciok/statisztikak>

husbands has actually imaged the patriarchal feature of their environment. In the case of the present social group this means that the wage-earning role of man is generally accepted and expected. However, it “cuts a hole” into this “tradition” when the man loses his job or odd job. Thus child rearing, housekeeping, many times the work around the house have been incumbent on women, and often a part of the wage-earning, as well, which usually provided a modest but stable income according to the educational level. Losing the wage-earning activity – as we could already see it when discussed the masculinity crisis – brings about a turn that is a crisis, that can be detected not only in the life of the family, but in that of a whole “masculine class” or group, as well. It is the same situation in the case of the group presented in our example, but the experienced situation precipitated in different forms in the families. Czibere writes in connection with this referring to the study of Falussy of 2001 that when men or women lose their wage-earning activity in Hungary the time spent on housework by women is going to be orders of magnitude more. Men, however, deal with their working time spent in the household “more modestly”. Falussy concludes from this that “there are much bigger differences in the working time of unemployed men and women and in its compound than in the case of the active ones”⁹. Actually the interviewees of Ibolya Czibere also support this interrelation by their own stories. At the same time, the situation is different if the woman regularly goes to work while the man in the family is unemployed — and for some reason he is not willing to go out charring.

But most men usually do not take over any burden from the women (child rearing) even in this case. Women practically remain alone with their troubles with the difference that the time spent together with the partner falls drastically. These time-structure shifts inherent the masculine unemployment, as Czibere phrases out, require therefore a large degree of independence and problem solving skills from the women. Meanwhile, Czibere assumes that the underlying reason of man’s off home time spending is right the “shuffling off” the troubles arising from poverty. The imbalanced situation evokes a growth in the experienced inequality compared to that of the former relations supported by the fact that men “disdain” the work women do at home irrespectively whether they take an active part in creating family income or not. The unequal or so to say unfair feature of the situation is further sharpened by that the behaviour of the man who became unemployed will be “malevolent” – as Czibere writes it referring to Gödri’s study of 2000 – if the family has to face economic difficulties which in turn lead to the quality degradation of the marriage. It is important to note, however, that as the monthly total income of the family is not enough in most cases to make a living¹⁰. The handling of money, due to the everyday

⁹Czibere: *Women in Deep Poverty*, p.128.

¹⁰The different combinations of odd jobs and illegal work, various allowances and subsidies for children still do not actually cover the monthly expenses; therefore families surcharge themselves by borrowing from the rack-rent through bank credits to various forms of loans month by month.

depressing burden (children), will be the charge of women¹¹. This slightly cants the image of power division in the family expected among the patriarchal relations where handling money is a masculine duty, as well. At the same time if we examine that at which end of the parties is the necessary “jettisoning” stronger in respect of certain commodities due to the low income, it turns out clearly from the interviews that women are who forego in each case their individual necessities (except food, but sometimes even that if needed), in order to save the family income stability, even in the case when they are the breadwinners. The subject of jettisoning primarily serves to meet the child’s adequate requirements (fruit). Some of the interviewed women have not bought for themselves anything that can be considered as general consumer commodity (such as cloths or shoes) for many years. The individual consumption of men (alcohol, cigarettes, games), however, can be considered regular in many cases. And if we add to this the result of the survey on the satisfaction with the standard of living (which is an important part of supporting the hypothesis on the difference of how men and women experience poverty) we can observe interesting interrelations. In the opinion of the majority of the asked women men live the everyday with less responsibility, they can afford more things for themselves; therefore they live a better life and are more satisfied with it, which may be frustrating for the women. However, they gave a reason for all these statements not in the forgone individual consumption, but namely that “the husbands have much more rest and can afford much more amusement and spending.”¹² A significant part of the asked women phrased out a similar opinion respecting their disadvantage - related to socially free and bound time spending - when both members of the couple were unemployed, that is both of them began the day with the same conditions in the mornings. Based on this Czibere reckons that the consumer differences and inequalities existing in the family of the examined women show that the family members are not uniformly poor: women consider themselves poorer than men do that is “wellness” is not evenly distributed between family members.

Conclusion

There are few more expressing sentences regarding the desires of women living in deep poverty than the lines found in the interviews: “I would like to have a new pullover, because I can rarely make it...”¹³, „I am longing for everything, but most of all a pair of spring shoes...”¹⁴ „I’d like to have once a dress that has not been worn by anyone else before.”¹⁵

¹¹ The result validated by the author is identical with former researches in the topic: none of the 89 female interviewees had mentioned that money would have been budgeted by the man in her family.

¹² Czibere: *Women in Deep Poverty* p. 155

¹³ Interviewee No. 3

¹⁴ Interviewee No. 81

¹⁵ Interviewee No. 51

And while these women are busy with the procurement of money and consumer commodities necessary for making a living, the establishment of security and the maintenance of stability they are constantly experiencing every day that they make disproportionately more sacrifices for the sake of their relationships and their whole family than the other party does. The “party” that is theoretically in a crisis right now. Or isn't he? Hence actually the masculine members of this lowest stratum of the society sometimes reach (upwards) into the social stratum called the working class, while at other times not even there. But it certainly seems that they need the strength of the female side in order to solve the subsistence problems of the family – very likely irrespectively from that what level they are positioned at within a social stratum. Now is that only the crisis of the working class indeed as Faludi and Heartfield wrote it? Or is the picture yet more detailed than this, and is this the crisis of all men, irrespectively to their social “rank”, for a shorter or longer period of time who is staggered by economic circumstances in their belief in themselves and their masculinity?

There is no way to anatomize further this issue in the frame of this study. What can be seen for sure though through the demonstrated example is that men and women within the family treat the everyday life and their poverty and troubles in a different way. Women consider themselves poorer than men in many respects.¹⁶ This is in contrast with the generally accepted statement in poverty research according to which all family members are uniformly poor at a certain level of poverty¹⁷ (Czibere 2012). Regarding gender hierarchy, in addition to the image of “cheap female household manpower” the above example leads us to another dimension, as well.

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¹⁶ Katalin Koncz in her study of 2002, in course of examining her hypotheses has already set forth that the raising of poverty studies that all family members are poor to the same extent at a given level of poverty is not relevant. (Czibere 2012)

¹⁷For the description of women's social position most researches consider social exclusion the adequate definition. They examine women's poverty risk along this concept and do not consider the study by sex adequately measurable. (Iván Szelényi writes about this in his study of 2001) As per Zsolt Spéder's study of '97 Hungarian researchers have not really found—before the study has been published – a significant difference between the risk of masculine and feminine poverty; but the analysis made by the conference working group of the global organisation (UN) did not find other results either. (Czibere 2012)

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