FEMININE CAPITAL?
FEMINIZED CRÈCHE WORK AND MASCULINE LABOR ORGANIZING IN HUNGARY

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the possible effects of the full feminization of an occupational field on its union through a case study of crèche workers in Hungary and their union, the Democratic Trade Union of Crèche Employees (BDDSZ). The thesis draws on the theory of gender capital and feminine capital (Huppatz, 2009; McCall, 1992) and poses the following research question: Are the feminine and/or female capitals possessed by crèche employees capitalized on also by BDDSZ? It also analyzes the gendered nature of BDDSZ's operation and the ways in which this is similar or different to the gendered operation of the crèche and looks at how crèche employees capitalize on femininity and femaleness. The study is based on data from participant observation during an internship at BDDSZ and fifteen interviews with union members and leadership.

I argue that while crèche employees utilize feminine and female capitals in their profession, BDDSZ does not, and relies primarily on masculinity and masculine organizational norms instead. I demonstrate that crèche employees draw on female capital because there is a requirement to have a female body in the profession and build on feminine capital because they can become better workers if they display stereotypically feminine qualities and skills. Through the utilization of these capitals, crèche employees exclude men from the field, achieve work-life balance, and draw satisfaction and meaning from their job. Meanwhile, BDDSZ does not utilize feminine or female capitals. Whereas the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; Williams, 2000) is challenged in the crèche, it is reinforced in the union as members and officials are expected to invest significant time and energy into activism. Union leadership is expected to draw on stereotypically masculine qualities and skills. The organizational logic of the union is gender-neutral where there is a lack of awareness of the gendered nature of both crèche work and union activism.

This thesis expands on the scholarly literature on gender capital through demonstrating that in some contexts, not only masculinity or maleness can be of value but also demonstrates the limitations of utilizing femininity as capital, as well as the wielding of masculinity by women and the wielding of femininity by men. Scholarly work on women and unionism is also addressed through demonstrating that a public-sector union with a fully feminized membership and leadership does not challenge traditional, male-dominated unionism in the Hungarian context. Furthermore, the research contributes to the literature on gender and work by analyzing an occupation where the glass escalator (Williams, 1992) does not benefit men and where the ideal worker norm can be challenged within the field. Examining these questions in the post-socialist context of Hungary where unions historically had a different role than in Western countries and where traditional gender roles and an anti-gender discourse is prevalent is important because it yields different results than in the Anglo-American contexts. Understanding the conflict between the gendered nature of crèche and union is important to possibly push towards more effective organization.

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My grandfather, Bandi, cannot see me graduate. We lost him last September after a battle with Alzheimer's. Bandi, a textile factory worker, taught me more about life than much of my formal education. He was also probably my biggest support, the person who was always the most enthusiastic about my success and adventures. Until his last day, he recognized me, and until he could, he smiled at me. I will forever cherish that smile and my heart breaks that it will not be on my graduation photo. This work is dedicated to him.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 28 739

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Table of contents

Introduction

In the Spring of 2019, I was an intern for the Hungarian Democratic Trade Union of Crèche Employees (*Bölcsődei Dolgozók Demokratikus Szakszervezete*, BDDSZ). One morning, I accompanied a union representative to the Ministry of Human Capacities to a reconciliation forum between different public-sector unions and the government. Throughout the meeting, I heard the woman official representing BDDSZ formulate her rational, numerical, data-driven arguments, similarly to the way in which she usually presented her case. Her whole presentation could be said to embody a stereotypical, rational masculinity. The next time the male governmental official who chaired the meeting spoke, however, he emphasized that the unions are simply "too emotional" and that a meeting like this should not be "about emotions". During this exchange, I was sitting in a back row, writing down my notes, and kept thinking about how a female representative can be dismissed immediately based on gender, as "emotionality" is linked stereotypically to women and is usually used to dismiss women's arguments. This exchange raised several questions because clearly, gender, masculinity, and femininity matter in this space. In crèche work, the field represented by BDDSZ, all employees but a few are women in Hungary. They work in the early childhood education institution for children under three years old and thus with an age group that is most often taken care of by mothers. At this meeting, I wondered whether the union representative was dismissed because she is a woman or because of the feminization of the field she represents. At large, I asked how a union where almost all members are women operates. If "emotionality" – or, a great degree of emotional labor – is needed for childcare workers in the crèche but is devalued in a setting of negotiations with the government, is there a conflict between the way the crèche and the union are gendered? If women are so readily dismissed in such a setting, how does a union organize a profession that is possibly one of the most stereotypically feminine ones?

The aim of this research is to examine the possible effects of the full feminization of an occupational field on its labor union. Drawing on the theory of gender capital (McCall, 1992) and feminine and female capitals (Huppatz, 2009), I formulated the following research question: *Are the feminine and/or female capitals possessed by crèche employees capitalized on also by BDDSZ?* I consequently analyze the gendered nature of BDDSZ's operation and its similarities or differences to the ways in which crèche work itself is gendered. I thus also ask whether crèche employees possess feminine and female capitals and how these can be wielded at the workplace and question whether femininity and femaleness are drawn on in BDDSZ and if BDDSZ as a union organizing a completely feminized field can challenge the traditional masculine organizational logic of unions. To answer these questions, I draw on data gathered through participant observation during a three-month-long internship at the central office of BDDSZ in the spring of 2019 and fifteen in-depth interviews with union members and leaders.

I argue that while crèche employees utilize feminine and female capitals (Huppatz, 2009) in their profession, BDDSZ does not use these and primarily relies on masculinity and masculine organizational norms instead. First, regarding crèche work, I demonstrate that there appears to be a requirement to have a female body to secure a job in this profession, and possessing and displaying certain qualities associated with femininity and mothering are also needed to become a good crèche employee. I consequently argue that crèche employees can successfully capitalize on femaleness and femininity and to thus exclude men from the field, while also creating work-life balance. Men are excluded by those in the field – crèche employee women and parents, for example – because male bodies are regarded with distrust and because they are not allowed to display femininity and due to their low number, men cannot fill leadership positions either. While the feminization of the field is perpetuated, I argue that a female and feminine ideal worker challenges the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; J. C. Williams, 2000) in the crèche as having care and domestic responsibilities does not conflict

with being an ideal crèche employee. I furthermore claim that while femininity and femaleness are clearly limited types of capitals, they can be considered capitals in a Bourdieuan sense (Huppatz, 2009; McCall, 1992) because recognition and esteem, as well as satisfaction and meaning, can be drawn from them.

Meanwhile, instead of femininity, BDDSZ builds on ideals and norms associated with hegemonic masculinity. I argue that instead of challenging the ideal worker norm, the organizational logic of BDDSZ reinforces it as it idealizes members and officials who can afford to invest time and energy into union activism and thus have few external responsibilities. Furthermore, I demonstrate that union leadership is expected to possess masculine qualities such as rationality and toughness and display masculine heroics (e.g. Franzway, 2000, p. 264). Consequently, the ideal member, official, and leader are masculine and draw on stereotypically masculine – predominantly working-class masculine – skills and qualities, in contrast with the ideal crèche employee. I also claim that the organizational structure of BDDSZ is gender-neutral and there is a lack of consciousness about gender issues in the union which further underlines the fact that BDDSZ and its representatives do not capitalize on femininity and femaleness. As I demonstrate, this also means that BDDSZ, even though it is a feminized union in the public sector, does not propose a challenge to the traditional, masculine unionizing.

In the thesis, I use and contribute to the work on gender capital and feminine capital. The concept of gender capital was developed by feminist scholars to rethink Bourdieu's embodied cultural capital and to argue that gendered embodiments can act as forms of capital tradable in social space (Huppatz, 2009; Lovell, 2000; McCall, 1992; Skeggs, 1997). While some scholars have argued that only masculinity can be profitable capital (McCall, 1992), others claim that femininity or even femaleness can be capitalized on as well (primarily Huppatz, 2009, 2012). Analyzing feminine capital in the workplace has been done previously and similarly to my work, and it has been shown that in some working-class or lower-middle-

class occupations, women's possession of femininity or even a female body is tradable for a secure job, even if it is limited outside of the field (Huppatz, 2012). My thesis adds two details to these works. First, I demonstrate that centering femininity as capital can allow us to understand the dynamics between women and men in the crèche better by showing that through using both female and feminine capitals, crèche employees exclude men from the field entirely where they thus cannot benefit from wielding either masculinity or femininity. I thus contribute to the theoretical debate by arguing that not only masculinity and maleness can be beneficial but femininity and femaleness also and I aim to show that women actively participate in the process of assigning value to femininity and utilizing it to claim benefits in the workplace. Second, through an analysis of feminine and masculine capitals outside of the workplace, within a union, I show that while femininity is valued in one context, the same people devalue it in another and rely on masculinity solely and I also show the limitations of women wielding masculine capital.

This study furthermore contributes to the debates around the feminization of unions, as well as to literature on gender and work. The feminization of labor unions' membership, especially due to the expansion of public-sector unionism has been researched in the Anglo-American contexts and the question was examined whether unions incorporating many women can challenge the traditional, male-dominated unionism where masculine imagery and negotiating style, as well as ignoring women's gender-specific interests were prevalent (e.g. Boston, 2015; Bradley, 1999; Milkman, 2007). Some scholars argue that this challenge can be significant (e.g. Boston, 2015; Milkman, 2016), others maintain that the feminization of unions does not pose a real challenge and the labor movement has largely remained the same in its male-domination and organizational style (Bradley, 1999; Dean, 2015; Kirton, 1999). To this debate, I contribute with the analysis of a public-sector union with a fully female membership in the context of post-socialist Hungary where unions were historically part of the state socialist

regime (Neumann, 2005) and thus hardly vehicles of change, and where traditional gender roles and the division of labor are rarely questioned (Blaskó, 2005; Fodor, 2002) or are even reinforced by a prevalent anti-gender discourse (Grzebalska & Pető, 2018; Kováts 2020). I argue that in this context, BDDSZ does not challenge traditional unionism, showing that a female-dominated membership in a feminized sector is not a sufficient condition for this.

Regarding feminized work, scholars have examined the gendered construction of skill and the consequent undervaluation of feminized occupations (e.g. England, 2005). A possible reason for women to choose undervalued professions has been identified by some authors as a necessary trade-off in order to achieve work-life balance (e.g. Kirton & Greene, 2015): since women cannot fulfill the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; J. C. Williams, 2000) as that supposes a worker who has no care or domestic responsibilities, they choose lower-prestige and lower-paying jobs to escape it. The literature here misses the point that non-financial rewards are drawn from jobs occupied by women and that for some, prioritizing time spent with family over work obligations might be a true and important choice. In this thesis, I contribute to this literature in showing that by drawing on feminine and female capitals, crèche employees access these rewards and that achieving work-life balance is something valuable to them, just as it has been recently reported that very often Hungarian women's main concern and value is to have time for family instead of paid work (Kováts, 2020).

Last, this research adds to the literature on men's position in feminized occupations. Different authors argue that while men's social status might diminish outside of the workplace if they engage in feminized care work, they often take on leadership positions and thus benefit from the glass escalator (Williams, 1992). This thesis shows that examining dynamics within occupational fields that are so feminized that they exclude men completely can yield rather different results. In Hungarian crèches, there are basically no men working as childcare workers

and they do not take on the leadership positions either. This suggests that the glass escalator might not work in professions where only female workers and femininity are valued.

The thesis is divided into six main chapters. In Chapter 1, I briefly describe the most important contextual information regarding crèche work, Hungary's family and gender politics, the history and contemporary situation of unions in Hungary, and BDDSZ itself. In Chapter 2, I discuss the methods used for this research, along with my positionality and the ethics and limitations of the thesis. In Chapter 3, I discuss the relevant scholarly work on gender capital and feminine capital to weigh in on the different debates and draw a theoretical framework. Chapter 4 focuses on the operation of female and feminine capitals in crèche work and is divided into a literature review – containing an overview of relevant work on the ideal worker norm and on the situation of men in care work – and an analysis of my data on this subject. Chapter 5 analyzes the lack of utilization of feminine capital in BDDSZ. This chapter is also divided into a literature review – which discusses the scholarly work on traditionally masculine- and feminized public-sector unionism – and an analytical part that answers the main research question of the thesis. In Chapter 6, I draw some conclusions, discuss the most important findings in relation to the scholarly literature, and outline some possible further directions for research.

Chapter 1: Crèches and unionism in Hungary

In this chapter, I map out the most important information regarding the contexts in which BDDSZ operates. First, I briefly discuss the crèche network and the situation of its employees in Hungary. Then, I discuss the history of Hungarian unions since the state socialist period and their current situation. I then provide information about BDDSZ itself and make a note on the importance of considering the contemporary gender and family politics of Hungary for the union's activism.

1.1 The crèche network and its workers in Hungary

Crèches (or nurseries) are part of the early childhood education and care system in Hungary.[1] The Hungarian term used to refer to these institutions is "*bölcsőde*". They provide care for children under three years old. Early childhood education and care is not compulsory for this age group. During state socialism (1949-1989), crèches were usually tied to the workplace and grew significantly in number (KSH, 2012). After the regime change, crèches saw a crisis when many institutions had to close and the number of crèches was in a decline until the 2000s (Csányi, 2019). While birthrates also decreased, the number of children attending crèches in proportion to the total number of children under three years old was also in a decline (KSH, 2012). The number of crèches has now been growing constantly since 2006.[2] In 2018, there were 765 crèches and 927 home-based family nurseries in the country (KSH, 2019).[3] According to available data for 2019, these institutions could provide care for 45 889

[1] Throughout the thesis, I use the term "crèche" to refer to these institutions, instead of referring to them as nurseries, for instance. I do so because BDDSZ, the trade union I analyze in the thesis, also refers to them as such when it translates its own name to English as "Democratic Trade Union of Crèche Employees".

[2] Source of data: KSH. Available at: https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_fsg005a.html. (Last visited: May 25, 2020.)

[3] The crèche (*bölcsőde*) and the home-based family nursery (*családi bölcsőde*) are two out of the four different types of nurseries currently in Hungary.

children.[4] There is a great deal of regional inequality in terms of available institutions, with almost half of all places in the country being located in the capital city, Budapest, or the surrounding county, Pest (KSH, 2019). Crèches are overwhelmingly public institutions that are financed by municipal governments (ibid). Private institutions also exist but they cover only a small number of children. The governance of crèches falls under the State Secretariat for Family and Youth Affairs (*Család- és Ifjúságügyért Felelős Államtitkárság*).

There are approximately eleven thousand people employed in the crèche system (Szűcs, 2017). This number consists of around seven thousand professionals, or, infant and early childhood educators (*kisgyermeknevelő*), and additional staff such as auxiliary co-workers (*dajka*) and other technical workers such as cleaners, cooks, gardeners, or people working in maintenance (ibid).[5] There is no available data on the gender- or age-division of the employees, but for gender, according to conversations I had with representatives of BDDSZ, there are only five men who work as infant and early childhood educators in the country. Other than them, all workers are women in crèches, except for maintenance or gardening employees. To become an infant and early childhood educator professional, one must finish an OKJ-course[6] or attain a Bachelor's degree. As the possibility of a Bachelor's degree was only introduced in recent years, people with this qualification comprise a small minority of all educators: the number was approximately 900 workers in 2017 (Szűcs, 2017).

As to the financial compensation of crèche employees, it is important to emphasize that the wages, while constantly rising in recent years and are planned to be further raised in the

[4] Source of data: KSH, 2019. Available at: https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_fsg018.html. (Last visited: May 3, 2020.)
[5] In this thesis, when I talk about "crèche workers" or "crèche employees", I usually mean the educators. This is because they compose the majority of all workers and because most interview partners and union members I talked to belong to this group and thus, I have the most information about them.
[6] Programs acknowledged by the National Qualifications Registry, a form of post-secondary non-tertiary qualification.

following years, are significantly lower than the national average wage in Hungary. For instance, in 2020, the net wage of an educator with a college degree who just started in the profession is 162 061 HUF.[7] To compare, the net Hungarian guaranteed minimum wage (*garantált bérminimum*) is 140 thousand HUF in 2020 and the 2019 average net wage was around 240 thousand HUF[8], according to the Central Statistical Office. Based on educational attainment and position in the crèche, workers receive their wages based on various wage scales. For example, educators with a college degree are paid based on teachers' wage scale, whereas educators without a college degree receive their wages based on a different scale. This can create animosity and division within the profession.

Currently, there is a governmental plan to greatly expand the crèche network. As part of a family policy packet called the Action Plan for the Protection of Families (*Családvédelmi Akcióterv*), the plan is to create places for a total of seventy thousand children by 2022 (Csalad.hu, 2019; Orbán, 2019).[9] As more workers will be needed if the places are to be opened, a thirty percent wage raise was promised by 2021 (Eduline, 2019). To implement the plan, a ministerial commissioner was appointed, signaling its importance. While the crèche network expansion is not as much talked about as the other elements of the policy packet, it is nevertheless important in shaping the possibilities of BDDSZ, as well as the future working conditions of crèche employees. The emphasis and attention on crèches, while worry some, lead many workers to believe that their situation and especially financial and social recognition will improve in the following years. Also, as BDDSZ leaders have explained to me, their suggestions and proposals are now often easier to get through in negotiations in the ministry

[7] These wages are without possible local allowances, overtime-payments, and so on. Source of all data regarding crèche employees' wages in 2020: calculations by BDDSZ, available at: https://bddsz.hu/sites/default/files/2019-11/Ped.%20bértábla_főiskola%20nettó_bölcsi%20pótlékkal_2020.%20jan.1-től.pdf. (Last visited: May 3, 2020.) 162 061 HUF translates to 465 EUR on May 21, 2020.

[8] 240 thousand HUF translates to 689 EUR on May 21, 2020.

[9] See also: *csalad.hu*, https://csalad.hu/cikk/6-bolcsodefejlesztesi-program. (Last visited: May 4, 2020.)

which is most likely because of the importance currently placed on crèches. It is important to emphasize that the feasibility of realizing the government's plan is questionable, but nevertheless, if the goals are to be achieved, the working conditions of crèche employees have to improve (Szikra, 2019).

1.2 A brief history of Hungarian unionism from state socialism to today

During state socialism in Hungary (1949-1989), unions had a rather different role than unions did in market economies as they were tied to the party-state, with union leadership and party bureaucracy closely entangled (Crowley, 2004; Kallaste & Woolfson, 2009; Neumann, 2005). Unions acted as a "transmission belt" between the party and the workers. This means that their role was to distribute different social benefits, as well as to represent the party in the workplace (ibid). Union density was very high in all state socialist countries with membership being mandatory, even if only implicitly so (Crowley, 2004). Almost everyone was thus a member of SZOT (National Council of Unions; *Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa*) but it did not really represent the interests of the workers and collective bargaining was practically non-existent (Kallaste & Woolfson, 2009; Neumann, 2005).

In the process of the regime change of 1989/1990, SZOT was dissolved and new unions and union confederacies were formed. During the 1990s, unions gradually lost their importance as political actors and became marginalized in decision-making (Crowley, 2004; Kubicek, 1999; Langowksi, 2015). Soaring unemployment contributed to the declining union membership (Neumann, 2005, p. 70) but other factors were important, too. For instance, unions' connection to state socialism was important (Crowley, 2004; Langowski, 2015). Unions also lost their relevance to many workers (Kallaste & Woolfson, 2009, p. 93). Furthermore, the reorganization during the regime change led to the fragmentation of the labor movement (Neumann, 2005, 2012). Simultaneously, public- and private-sector unionism split, and a shift

occurred towards public-sector unionism (Neumann, 2005, pp. 77-78), similarly to different Western countries during the previous decades (see e.g. Mellor et al, 1994; Milkman, 2016). It is important to emphasize that the disintegration and weakening of the labor movement started before the election of the Orbán-government in 2010 (Neumann, 2005, p. 63).

After coming into power in 2010, the Orbán-government constrained the levy of labor unions, further contributing to their marginalization (see e.g. Neumann, 2012; Tóth, 2012). Amendments were made to the strike law that made strikes, in practice, almost impossible (Neumann, 2012, p. 375). The government generally resorted to a "divide and rule" strategy towards unions (ibid, p. 384). The most important changes after 2010 for trade unions resulted from the new Labor Code of 2012 that cut union rights to a minimum level. For instance, fewer union officials enjoy legal protection than before (Neumann, 2012, p. 375; Tóth, 2012, p. 7). Statutory working time exemption for people on union duties was also reduced and it is no longer possible to use working time exemption for the goal of union education (Tóth, 2012, p. 7). Clearly, these and other new regulations affected the already weakened unions negatively.

Currently, unions in general are rather marginalized and fragmented. There are five major confederacies, from which BDDSZ belongs to SZEF (Cooperation Forum of Unions, *Szakszervezetek Együttműködési Fóruma)* that organizes 59 thousand workers from the public sector.[10] Partly because of state socialist legacies, partly because of hostility between unions and corruption charges, unions' public perception is negative (Neumann, 2005, p. 98). The publicity of union work is also low (Langowski, 2015). Consequently, the rates of unionization are very low: according to 2015 KSH data, approximately 9 percent of the workforce was unionized which amounts to approximately 329 000 people. The organization rate is significantly lower among people under forty than among older workers. Women's

[10] Source: ETUI. Available at: https://www.worker-participation.eu/National-Industrial-Relations/Countries/Hungary/Trade-Unions. (Last visited: May 6, 2020.)

organization rate is slightly higher than men's.[11] The gender difference probably results from the slightly higher unionization rate of the public sector which predominantly employs women (Neumann, 2012) due to the persistent sex segregation of the labor market (Fodor, 2005; Pollert, 2003). Generally, in unions, women are low in number in leadership positions (ETUC, 2018; Neumann, 2005, p. 86), but SZEF, for instance, has two female vice-presidents out of four and has a high percentage of women in leadership (see e.g. ETUC, 2018).

1.3 The Democratic Trade Union of Crèche Employees (BDDSZ)

This thesis is based on an internship conducted at the central office of BDDSZ and interviews with its members and leadership. BDDSZ was founded in 1989 after the abolition of SZOT.[12] According to BDDSZ's charter, the main aim of the organization is to represent and protect the interests of the approximately eleven thousand workers in the sector, to ensure safe working conditions and to elevate the moral and financial recognition of crèche workers (BDDSZ, 2017). In its representation work, BDDSZ participates in different forums where the representatives of employees (the unions) and the representatives of employers (the government and municipalities) negotiate.[13] BDDSZ also provides several services to its members, such as free accident insurance or free legal help and discounts with the membership card. Assistance is also provided to those in need of financial aid such as in the case of a funeral.

Currently, the union has approximately 2100 active members, representing twenty-twenty-five percent of the field. About five hundred members are under forty-one years old and

[11] Source: KSH, 2015. Available at: https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_evkozi/e_szerv9_01_16.html. (Last visited: May 6, 2020.)

[12] Most information, if not otherwise noted in the text is drawn here from BDDSZ's website or from personal conversations with different BDDSZ representatives. BDDSZ's website can be consulted on the following link: https://bddsz.hu/. (Last visited: May 4, 2020.)

[13] These reconciliation bodies currently are: OKÉT (National Reconciliation Committee for the Public Sector), KOMT (National Reconciliation Committee of Public Sector Employees), and SZÁÉF (Reconciliation Forum of the Social Sector). When I talk about different meetings with ministry representatives in the thesis, these usually took place at one of these.

can thus form the youth wing of the union. There is no data available about the gender composition of BDDSZ but considering that almost all workers in the field are women, the same can be assumed about the union as well. The membership is organized into fifty-one local branches (*alapszervezet*) that are represented and led by the secretary (*titkár*) who is under legal protection and receives working time exemption. Local branches also have trustees (*bizalmi*). The secretaries have a council (*Alapszervezeti Titkárok Tanácsa,* ATT) every month to make decisions. The largest decision-making body of BDDSZ is the Congress (*Kongresszus*) which decides on goals and directions every few years. The higher-level body of the union is the executive committee (*Ügyvivő Testület*). At the head of BDDSZ is the President. The work of the union is supervised by an Economic Supervisory Committee (*Gazdasági Ellenőrző Bizottság*, GEB). On the central level, the union's daily life is organized by the central office in Budapest. Here, the president and two other employees work full-time. Besides the employees of the central office, the work of other union representatives is unpaid and voluntary.

1.4 Gender and family policy in Hungary

In the analysis of BDDSZ's work, an aspect I emphasize is the non-consciousness on gender issues. For this, it is important to keep in mind the current gender politics in Hungary. Generally, gender policy is equated with family policy (Kováts, 2020, p. 86). "Gender ideology" and the term "gender" have also become enemies of the government in power (ibid, p. 88) in the context of "illiberal gender politics" where an anti-gender discourse is thus prevalent (Grzebalska & Pető, 2018, p. 170), making it difficult for any organization to use them if they want to achieve anything with the government. Consciousness on gender issues is also quite low in Hungary in general (e.g. Nagy, 2005) and the household division of labor or the sex segregation of the labor market are rarely questioned (e.g. Fodor, 2002; Gregor & Kováts, 2019). Traditional gender roles are generally idealized as well (e.g. Blaskó, 2005; Pongrátz & S. Molnár, 2011).

Furthermore, the planned expansion of the crèche network is happening in the context of a controversial family policy of the Hungarian government. Family policy has been at the forefront of the government's agenda in recent years. Its general aims are pronatalist and the encouragement of Hungarian people to have more children is tied to fears about immigration. It is important to mention that first, the family policy of the Orbán-government has been critiqued for its discrimination against the Roma and the poor (Szikra, 2018, p. 229), but also that while the planned expansion of crèches is a tool to increase the birth rate, the simultaneous goal of increasing the labor market participation of women with small children is also there (Szikra, 2018, p. 232; see similarly Prügl & True, 2014; Repo, 2016 p. 307). The latter can be emancipatory for large groups of women (Kováts, 2020, p. 87).

Chapter 2: Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the methods used to acquire data for this research as well as the ethical implications and limitations. First, I describe my participant observation during an internship at the central office of BDDSZ, then discuss the interview process involving fifteen participants. Afterward, I discuss my positionality as a researcher and the ethics of this research. Last, I shortly overview the limitations of my methods.

2.1 Internship at BDDSZ: participant observation

This thesis relies partly on data gathered through an unpaid internship at the Budapest-based central office of the Democratic Trade Union of Crèche Employees. Here, using the method of participant observation, I was involved in the daily life of the union through a period of three months from April to June 2019. I worked full-time, working eight hours per day from Monday to Friday. I worked together closely with the president of BDDSZ and two other colleagues who are employed in the central office.

During the weeks I spent at BDDSZ, I assisted the union in various tasks, such as clerical tasks, analyzing a survey conducted with crèche workers, translating international research materials to Hungarian and summarizing them, and helping out with the organizing of the 30th-anniversary jubilee picnic of the union. While these tasks also allowed me to gain an insight into the functioning of the union, I made the most important observations in different meetings and events where I accompanied the president or other union officials. First, I visited several crèches in Budapest with a colleague to inform workers about the union's work. These were very important sources as I saw inside institutions and could talk to employees who were not affiliated with the union. Then, I attended different internal meetings of union officials. Here, I saw how decisions were made in BDDSZ and what tasks officials had. Last, I accompanied the union to different negotiations and meetings with the representatives of the government, such

as meetings with the ministerial commissioner responsible for crèches or reconciliation committees. These occasions provided me with valuable insight into the operation of employer-union negotiations and into the ways in which these are gendered.

As part of my participant observation, I wrote fieldnotes at the end of every workday.[14] In these, I tried to give an account of the day's events in as much detail as possible. The fieldnotes were first used to write weekly reports to my internship coordinator. Later, they were coded along with the interview transcripts, as will be discussed in the next section.

2.2 Conducting interviews

The second important source for this thesis is fifteen interviews conducted with members of BDDSZ. The interviews were conducted in December 2019 and January 2020. When searching for interview partners, I reached out to many people I have met during the internship. To reach some interview partners, in particular, the two male crèche employees who were the only ones I have not met during my time at BDDSZ, I used snowball sampling and asked recommendations from other interview partners. In the end, I interviewed thirteen women and two men from different levels of the union hierarchy: I conducted interviews with the president, members of the executive committee, the economic supervisory committee, secretaries, activists of the youth wing, and ordinary union members. All interview partners currently work or have previously worked in crèches, mostly as educators or institution directors. The average age of interview partners was forty-six, with the youngest being twenty-three years-old and the oldest sixty-seven and with most of them being in their forties or fifties. With the exception of four people, everyone lived and worked in Budapest or Pest county. Nine

[14] In the thesis, I do not quote directly from the fieldnotes, but rather, refer to the data acquired through them and paraphrase them, mostly to protect everyone's anonymity. See more on this question when I discuss the ethical implications of the research.

interview partners had a college or university degree, three finished an OKJ-course, and three finished trade school (*szakközépiskola*).

Before the interviews, I outlined a questionnaire, but the interviews were semi-structured, and I attempted to go deeper into issues that were important for interview partners. After asking for some demographic data, I asked interview partners about their choice of crèche work and their experiences in the profession. I asked people about the problems and the prestige of the profession, as well as about the possible reasons behind the feminization of the field. As to unionism, I asked people about their reasons for joining or being active in the union and about expectations from members and officials. People in leadership positions were asked in detail about the strategies and challenges of BDDSZ. I asked all interview partners to describe the ideal crèche employee, crèche director, union member, and union leader. Interview partners in their twenties were asked about the youth wing, and I asked the men about their specific experiences in a feminized field. After each interview, I revised my draft questionnaire and adjusted or added questions based on the experiences of the discussion.

Interviews took place in different locations: two in the central office of BDDSZ, two in the interview partners' workplace, and ten in different cafés or restaurants. One interview was conducted via video call. All but one interview took place in Budapest. Interviews lasted an hour on average, with the shortest lasting forty, the longest an hour and twenty-five minutes. All interviews were recorded with the interview partner's consent and were then transcribed word-by-word.[15] Interview transcripts were coded in the software NVivo after I read through them and identified the most important themes which later served as my codes. Thematical

[15] Interviews were in Hungarian, and thus the transcripts are, too. All translations of quotes in the thesis were done by me.

memos were later written from the files containing the coded materials from both the fieldnotes and the interviews (e.g. Emerson et al, 1995).

2.3 Positionality and ethics

As the relationship between a researcher and a research subject is an unequal power relationship (e.g. Stacey, 1988), I find it crucial to discuss my positionality and the ethical implications of this research. First, the degree to which a researcher is an insider or outsider to the group is important. While I was not a crèche worker or a BDDSZ member[16], through my work of three months at the central office and the various events I attended with the community, I became close to many people and I consider several members my friends. Thus, to a certain degree, it can be said that I became an insider.[17]

The relationships built during the internship enabled me to conduct interviews in a way that all interview partners could feel that our relationship is built on trust which is important to establish an equal research partnership (e.g. Weiss, 1994). To avoid the power relationship as much as possible, I try to reciprocate that people shared their thoughts with me and invested time and energy into the research. As I worked for three full months for BDDSZ, I also gave time and energy to the union and I am planning to help out with their international work in the future. I also find it very important to communicate the results of this research to the union and my interview partners as well, in the form of a Hungarian-language excerpt and a presentation on key findings. I furthermore talk regularly to people I met during my time at BDDSZ; these ties were not broken after leaving the research site. I also believe that the fact that most

[16] At the time of doing this research, I was not a member, whereas I am currently a "supporting member" (*támogató tag*) in order to be able to assist in the union's international work in the future in an unpaid position.

[17] I find it important to mention here that to some degree, the fact that I worked closely with several members of the leadership for months might have influenced some answers that interview partners gave me later. While I in general believe that the answers interview partners gave me were genuine, it nevertheless can be the case that perhaps negative opinions were not voiced about the organization because some people assumed that I was close with the president, for instance.

interview partners were enthusiastic to be involved in the research and were excited about the idea that a thesis is conducted about their workplace suggests that they did not feel their participation to be one-sided.

Regarding the ethical implications, receiving informed consent is crucial. When contacting the interview partners, I explained to them what the research is about[18], that it will be written up in English and will be available online, that the interview would be recorded but only accessible to me. At the start of each interview, I repeated this information and told people that they do not have to answer all questions and we can stop the interview at any time. In the case of different events and meetings during my internship, this issue is more problematic. During crèche visits and internal meetings, the people present knew I am a university student researching crèche work and feminized unionism. Nevertheless, since fully informed consent could never be received in these contexts, I do not cite anyone and I anonymize places, times, and settings as much as possible. During meetings with government officials, the participants did not know I am a researcher, in most cases not even that I am a university student as sometimes I was not introduced and just sat in a back row. As the notes I took during these meetings and the fieldnotes based on them are very valuable, I decided to use these with anonymizing everyone, attempting to generalize the nature of meetings as much as possible. I find this ethical because the participants of these meetings are most often public figures and the meetings themselves semi-public and discuss public affairs.

Ensuring the protection and anonymity of people involved in the research is of primary importance (e.g. Weiss, 1995). Interview partners were given pseudonyms and I avoid giving out identifying information such as places or names, similarly to when I draw on fieldnotes.

[18] During the interview process, when talking about my research, the way I formulated a description of my topic was saying that I write about the operation of BDDSZ as a feminized union as well as the crèche as a feminized workplace. I believe this has told enough for people without revealing the exact research question which could have influenced participants' answers.

Anonymizing higher-level union officials is hard, considering that it is a small circle of people whose titles are publicly available. Nevertheless, I decided to only mention whether people are ordinary union members, secretaries, or have senior positions in the union, not naming the actual positions. This way, I hope to avoid people being identifiable.[19]

The last issue I consider is the avoidance of harm done to BDDSZ. BDDSZ, like most other unions in Hungary, is in a precarious position, even if currently having a more successful negotiating position than others. Throughout the analysis of data in this thesis, I attempt to avoid giving out any information about anyone or the organization itself that could, in any way, be harmful. I also made sure to ask the permission of BDDSZ's leader to explicitly refer to BDDSZ by name in this thesis.

2.4 Limitations

Clearly, while both the participant observation during my internship and the conducted interviews provided this research with valuable insights and rich material, the chosen methods have some limitations. For example, due to particularly the aim of not harming BDDSZ and the problematics of citing what happened at negotiations with government representatives, some information that might otherwise further the arguments were omitted. Furthermore, the list of interview partners was drawn from a rather limited circle of people. First, I only asked mostly active union members, making the perspective of passive members or non-member workers missing. Also, most interview partners are from a certain demographic: I could only interview two men and only four interview partners were under the age of thirty. Most interview partners were from Budapest, making other, possibly locally specific points of view missing. Last, the

[19] Even though in the case of the president, it might be useful to know that a cited statement comes from her rather than other, lower-level officials, I decided to use a pseudonym for her as well and refer to her as "higher-level official" or "senior official", just as with other representatives, to preserve all participants' anonymity as much as possible. In a few cases, I mention that an information comes from the president when that is necessary, and the information is not sensitive.

educational level of the interview partners is overall higher than of the average crèche employees', with college-educated people being overrepresented.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework: Understanding gender as capital: can femininity be profitable?

In this thesis and at formulating my research questions, I draw on the conceptual tools of gender capital and feminine capital. The concept of gender(ed) capital was developed by feminist scholars to rework Bourdieu's (1986) concept of embodied cultural capital (e.g. Huppatz, 2009, 2012; Lovell, 2000; Matos, 2018; McCall, 1992; Orr, 2011; Skeggs, 1997). In this chapter, I briefly discuss the development of this concept, focusing on a few important questions discussed by scholars: first, whether and why gender can be considered a form of capital; second, whether only masculinity can be considered a form of capital or femininity also, and how limited capital femininity is; and third, if masculinity and femininity are capitals, whether men can successfully wield femininity and women masculinity. I will also discuss what definitions I use in the thesis and how I contribute to the theoretical literature.

In Bourdieu's model of the social order, different types of capitals structure advantage and disadvantage and thus people's position within it (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 196). Emphasizing that not only economic exchanges structure the social world, Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes between three main types of capital: economic, social, and cultural capitals (p. 243). All types of capital take time to accumulate and are convertible to different profits (ibid, p. 241). The different types of capital are also convertible to one another (ibid, p. 252): for instance, economic benefits can be acquired from social capital. For this thesis, the concept of cultural capital is the most important, above all, cultural capital in its embodied form. Embodied cultural capital is "long-lasting impositions of the mind and body" (ibid, p. 243) which means a type of capital that can be acquired through socialization, even unconsciously and that can become an integrated part of one's person (ibid, p. 245). Elsewhere, Bourdieu (1985) also discusses the concept of symbolic capital which he defines as "prestige, reputation, renown, etc., which is the

form in which the different forms of capital are perceived and recognized as legitimate" within fields (p. 197). Regarding symbolic capital, Bourdieu emphasizes that an individual's reputation or recognition as legitimately possessing other types of capitals is important in the different symbolic struggles of the social world, such as in processes of creating categories or in reinforcing or challenging the legitimate views about the social world (ibid, p. 205).

This model of Bourdieu's has been critiqued for being gender-blind (see e.g. Bennett et al, 2009; Huppatz, 2009, 2012; Lovell, 2000; McCall, 1992; Reay, 2000; Silva, 2005; Skeggs, 1997, 2004). While Bourdieu reacted to the criticism by writing on masculinities in "Masculine Domination" (2001), his theory largely tends to see women as capital-bearing objects, rather than capital-accumulating subjects (Huppatz, 2012, p. 32 Lovell, 2000, p. 37; Silva, 2005). To extend Bourdieu's theory and incorporate gender into it, McCall (1992) developed the concept of gender capital. She argues that a reading of Bourdieu's work is possible where gendered forms of capital or gender capital exist: the very physical nature of gender and the fact that it is acquired through socialization makes it embodied cultural capital (p. 844). Scholars of gender capital thus argue that gendered embodiments are capitals tradable on different markets. Other authors caution against the expansion of Bourdieu's concepts (e.g. Bennett et al, 2009). They argue that gender is not capital, rather, it informs the structuring of other types of capital within fields (discussed e.g. by Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013, p. 294) and argue that expanding Bourdieu's concepts will result in a never-ending project where the original concepts lose their convincing power (e.g. Bennett et al, 2009). In this thesis, along with McCall (1992), Huppatz (2009, 2012) and others, I argue for the usefulness of understanding gender as capital. As I demonstrate, there are certain occupational fields, such as crèche work, where analyzing the ways in which gendered capital operates can be useful for understanding the way that arena functions, for instance, in exploring how women's utilization of femininity excludes men from the field. The concept thus allows for moving away from the gender-neutrality of the original

theory on cultural capital and can help us analyze the ways in which gender privilege and inequality operate within certain spaces (Huppatz, 2012, p. 27; Skeggs, 1997, p. 10).

In this thesis, I claim that femininity can also be capital in some spaces, not only masculinity. The question of whether femininity can be profitably wielded is one of the key questions around gender(ed) capital. Some authors argue that femininity can never really be profitable for women (Adkins, 2003; McCall, 1992) while others argue that feminine forms of capital also exist, and feminine capital can be considered a form of embodied cultural capital (Huppatz, 2009, 2012; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013; Lovell, 2000; Reay, 2000; Silva, 2005; Skeggs, 1997, 2004). For Bourdieu (2001), femininity is always imbued with symbolic violence. Similarly, in relation to hegemonic masculinity, Connell (1987) argues that all femininities are subordinated to it. For Connell, "emphasized femininity" can be a beneficial type of femininity for women but only to the extent that it supports the gender hierarchy and is oriented towards fulfilling the interests and desires of men (p. 183). Similarly, in her theory of gender capital, McCall (1992) argues that only masculinity can function as profitable gender capital (p. 845). Femininity is thus seen as rarely advantageous for women, especially in the labor market where masculinity is more readily tradable (Miller, 2014, p. 465; Skeggs, 1997, p. 10).

Contrarily, the concept of feminine capital was developed to argue that feminine forms of capital exist and to highlight that gender capital cannot be solely equated with masculine capital in every field (Huppatz, 2009; 2012; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013; Lovell, 2000; Reay, 2000; Silva, 2005; Skeggs, 1997; 2004). Female capital was also defined to argue that having a female body can also function as capital in some settings (Huppatz, 2009, 2012). When femininity is conceptualized as stereotypically feminine qualities and skills, such as investments in being a good caregiver, authors argue that it can be traded on the labor market and translated to economic capital, even if in limited ways (Lovell, 2000, p. 41; Skeggs, 1997,

p. 101). The convertibility of femininity – or even femaleness – on the labor market is especially important for lower- or working-class women (Huppatz, 2009; 2012; Lovell, 2000; Reay, 2000). Authors argue that in the changing economy, where there is an ever-growing demand for care workers and other types of feminized labor, the convertibility of femininity to economic capital might also be growing (Huppatz, 2012; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013; Lovell, 2000) and working-class femininity might become more profitable in terms of converting it to job security and economic rewards than working-class masculinity (Lovell, 2000, p. 43). In the case of Hungarian crèches, the planned expansion of the crèche network might bring with it raised wages and greater financial appreciation of the employees.

In this thesis, I define feminine capital and female capital using Huppatz's (2009) definitions. I thus conceive of feminine capital as "the gender advantage that is derived from a disposition or skill set learned via socialization, or from simply being hailed as feminine" (Huppatz, 2009, p. 50). I show that in crèche work, people capitalize on "uniquely feminine skills and capacities in order to become better" workers (Huppatz, 2009, p. 53). As childcare work is a field where having the "right body" is crucial, I use the concept of female capital as well and define it as "the gender advantage that is derived from being perceived to have a female (but not necessarily feminine) body" (Huppatz, 2009, p. 50). As will be seen, female capital is crucial in excluding men from the field and preserving it for women. I believe the separation of these two concepts is important to avoid the conflation or equation of femininity and femaleness (Huppatz, 2012, p. 27; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013, p. 297) and to avoid the assumption that all female bodies are feminine or, for instance, that male bodies cannot be feminine.

Clearly, feminine capital and female capital are rather limited types of capitals. One of their most important limitations is that since feminine skills and qualities are regarded as natural (Adkins, 2003), fields where they are required are undervalued and underpaid. Femininity can thus be a "double-edged sword" (Huppatz, 2009, p. 55) that is hard to convert to capital outside

of the field (ibid, p. 59). Furthermore, it is important to stress that while femininity and femaleness can operate as capitals within certain fields, such as care work, their convertibility to other types of capital outside of the field is also restricted (ibid). The fact that BDDSZ does not capitalize on femininity and femaleness – while, as I argue, the workers they represent do – will show the limitation of converting femininity to benefits outside of the field of crèche work. Nevertheless, what I wish to show that just because femininity is devalued in one context, such as in unionism, it can be invaluable in others, like in crèche work. What is important to emphasize here again is that women working in crèches are lower-middle class, if not working-class, for whom other types of capitals might not be available. As I will show in Chapter 4, they understand their skills as socially learned and not natural, which helps them capitalize on them. Through utilizing their stereotypically feminine skills and qualities, and also the fact that they have female bodies, they can successfully exclude men and create a workplace where they are recognized and in which work-life balance can be achieved. This, I argue, shows that femininity and femaleness are used in the field of crèches to "manipulate constraints" (Huppatz, 2009, p. 59) or make "patriarchal bargains" (Kandiyoti, 1988). This means that while crèche employees might not be able to question larger structures such as the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; J. C. Williams, 2000) at large or the sex segregation of the labor market, they can manipulate events and opportunities available to them within their social space to turn them into advantage (Skeggs, 1997, p. 10). While women's choices might be constrained, they nevertheless participate actively in navigating within these boundaries (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 286). In Chapter 5, I aim to show that thus while crèche employees are able to secure a job that gives them recognition and meaning, as well as achieve work-life balance, as long as their union does not rely on them, larger social structures, such as the organization of a labor union cannot be challenged through them.

A last important question regarding feminine or masculine capital is whether women, when acquiring masculine traits, can wield masculinity successfully and whether in contexts where femininity is profitable, men can wield femininity to their benefit. Since femininity is not tied to female bodies and masculinity is not tied to male bodies, women can acquire masculine characteristics, just as men can acquire feminine characteristics (e.g. McCall, 1992, p. 845; Paechter, 2018 p. 122). Drawing on masculinity by women can invite social sanctions (Franzway, 2000, p. 266; McCall, 1992, p. 845). As I demonstrate in Chapter 5, when women attempt to utilize masculinity in union-government negotiations, they are still dismissed by male government officials and are not taken seriously, suggesting that there are limits to women's use of masculine capital. Then, while Huppatz (2012) claims that men in feminized occupations can get ahead in their profession if they "do femininity" well because their performance in these jobs is not seen as natural (p. 95), in Chapter 4, I will demonstrate that in Hungarian crèches men appear to be excluded from the profession of feminine capital and because they are already excluded for not possessing female capital, they cannot fill in leadership positions either. I thus aim to show that because of the disassociation of men from femininity and women from masculinity, it appears that the social sanctions are stronger than the potential benefits women could gain from wielding masculinity, for instance.

Overall, in this chapter I outlined the concepts of gender capital, feminine capital, and female capital. I summarized the debates around whether femininity can be considered a form of capital, or only masculinity. I discussed the questions of consequences related to men utilizing femininity and women wielding masculinity. Chapter 4 will apply the concepts to crèche work to analyze the ways in which femininity and femaleness yield benefits to women working in crèches. Chapter 5 will demonstrate that feminine and female capitals are not utilized by BDDSZ as the union largely relies on masculine qualities and skills, as well as tactics of traditionally male-dominated unions.

Chapter 4: Female and feminine capitals in the crèche: the ideal crèche employee

Introduction

This chapter examines the operation of feminine and female capitals in crèche work. First, the chapter contains a literature review, discussing the theory of gendered organization and the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; J. C. Williams, 2000) and the scholarly work around women's escape from this norm through feminized occupations, and discussing the literature around the gendered construction of skill (Anker, 1997; Gardiner, 1998; Kirton & Greene, 2015) and the consequent undervaluation of feminized fields (e.g. England, 1995) where men can get ahead easily because of the glass escalator (Williams, 1992, 1995, 2013). Then, in the analytical part of the chapter, I argue that crèche employees possess female capital and feminine capital: there is a requirement to have a female body and to display stereotypically feminine skills and qualities. Through these, I argue that men are excluded from the field and consequently they cannot benefit from the glass escalator either. Furthermore, I demonstrate that the ideal worker norm is challenged within the field of crèche work. I argue that while feminine and female capitals are clearly limited, they are very important resources for crèche employees to draw upon and they can also be converted into symbolic capital, meaning recognition and respect, and other non-material gains can be drawn through them as well.

4.1 Literature review

4.1.1 The ideal worker norm and how women might escape it

According to the theory of gendered organizations, organizational structures in workplaces are not gender-neutral (Acker, 1990). In different workplaces, there are disembodied and universal workers who fill in jobs and positions in the hierarchy (ibid, p. 136). The expectation from workers that is created is referred to as the "ideal worker norm" (J. C.

Williams, 2000). To conform to the ideal worker norm, the workers should exist only for the job and have no or few responsibilities outside of work that would hinder performance at work (Acker, 1990, p. 149; Brumley, 2014; Williams et al, 2012). The ideal worker works full-time, works overtime, and does not have any childbearing or childrearing responsibilities (J. C. Williams, 2000, p. 1). Thus, it can only be fulfilled by someone who has another person taking care of their personal needs and children (Acker, 1990, p. 149). Consequently, a male worker is assumed, making the ideal worker norm a masculine norm (Acker, 1990; Brumley, 2014; J. C. Williams, 2000; Williams et al, 2012; Williams, 2013). The ideal worker norm thus excludes caregivers, or assumed caregivers (Kelly et al, 2010; J. C. Williams, 2000, p. 65), and thus, women from most jobs that are well-paid or higher prestige. Several scholars argue that a way for women to escape the ideal worker norm and create work-life balance is to work in female-dominated professions (Anker, 1992; Blackburn et al, 2002; Hardill & Watson, 2004; Kirton & Greene, 2015; Lovejoy & Stone, 2012; J. C. Williams, 2000).

In most contemporary societies, the overwhelming majority of household and childcare work is still performed by women because the increasing employment of women was not accompanied by a transformation of the household division of labor (Anker, 1997; Guerreiro & Pereira, 2007; Halpern & Murphy, 2004; Hochschild & Machung; 1989), a phenomenon referred to by Hochschild and Machung (1989) as the "stalled revolution". This means that when employed women finish their shift at the workplace, a second shift awaits them in the home (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). In Hungary, while during state socialism women's involvement in the paid workforce was an achieved goal, women's primary role as mothers and the household division of labor was not questioned (see e.g. Csányi, 2019; Fodor, 2002, p. 241; Nagy, 2005; Zimmerman, 2010, p. 9). A recent study has shown that household labor and elderly and childcare work is still largely performed by women and the household division of labor is still unquestioned (Gregor & Kováts, 2019).

Because women are thus torn between the home and the workplace (Kelly et al, 2010, p. 292) and thus cannot fulfill the ideal worker norm, they are often excluded from positions of responsibility and authority (J. C. Williams, 2000, p. 1). This is not necessarily due to procedural discrimination, as women might perceive that to occupy leadership positions, overtime is required, with which their parenting and domestic responsibilities would conflict (Liff & Ward, 2001). Women are thus especially hindered in their professions if they become mothers (Corell et al, 2007; Hampson, 2013): they are often cut off from getting ahead in hierarchies and hit the "maternal wall" (J. C. Williams, 2000, p. 69), or experience a "motherhood penalty" in wages (Correll et al, 2007). Meanwhile, for men, fulfilling their roles as breadwinners or providers in the family means conforming to this ideal worker norm and working as much as possible to support the family (J. C. Williams, 2000, p. 3).

Several scholars argue that working in female-dominated professions can be a way for women to escape the masculine ideal worker norm and to thus be able to achieve work-life balance (Anker, 1992; Blackburn et al, 2002; Hardill & Watson, 2004; Kirton & Greene, 2015; Lovejoy & Stone, 2012; J. C. Williams, 2000). Jobs in female-dominated professions, which are often in the public sector, are more likely to make it possible for women to take time off for childbearing and childrearing (J. C. Williams, 2000, p. 82). Therefore, it has been argued that women, especially mothers, decide to take these positions because they know that this will enable them to coordinate their work and domestic responsibilities (Anker, 1992; Blackburn et al, 2002; Hardill & Watson, 2004; Kirton & Greene, 2015; Lovejoy & Stone, 2012; J. C. Williams, 2000). When making a decision to opt for a female-dominated profession, women are making a trade-off: they settle for lower-paying jobs that are also often lower-prestige in exchange for the possibility to take care of domestic responsibilities and have time for their children (Budig et al, 2016; Hardill & Watson, 2004; Kirton & Greene, 2015).

Authors often emphasize that while women thus might escape the masculine norms and create work-life balance when opting for jobs in female-dominated sectors, the hierarchies and norms in society are left unchallenged (Lewis, 2001; Mandel & Semyonov, 2006; J. C. Williams, 2000). It is a "welfare state paradox" that in countries where women's employment is more widespread, the more prevalent is often the sex segregation of the labor market (Mandel & Semyonov, 2006). This means that rather than challenging the ideal worker norm, female-dominated professions reinforce the sex segregation of the labor market. Because of this, authors have questioned whether it is a true choice of women to work in female-dominated occupations (Budig et al, 2016, p. 161; J. C. Williams, 2000, p. 6) or whether it can be described as a rational choice (England, 1982, p. 369). The very concept of "work-life balance" has also been critiqued because it assumes the separation between the home and the workplace, two separate spheres that have to be reconciled (Halpern & Murphy, 2004; Lewis, 2001).

In this chapter, I argue that feminine and female capitals are used by women working in crèches to challenge the ideal worker norm within the workplace and to thus achieve work-life balance. Clearly, crèche work can be considered a type of feminized occupation where women can escape the ideal worker norm. I will demonstrate that one of the key reasons for women to choose crèche work and remain in it is that it does not conflict with domestic responsibilities or pregnancy. While the fact that the ideal worker of a crèche is feminine and female does not challenge the ideal worker norm outside of the crèche and the exclusive feminization of the field perpetuates the sex segregation of the labor market, what I wish to emphasize in this chapter is that the challenge to the norm within the sphere and having a workplace where the female body is not an anomaly (Acker, 1990) are very valuable to the workers. I show that while the work of a crèche employee is financially undervalued, other values, such as emotional satisfaction, recognition, and meaning (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016) can be drawn from it. Furthermore, for lower-middle-class or working-class women, the alternative occupations

might not be higher-prestige. I also suggest that prioritizing time spent with one's family might be genuinely valuable for crèche employees, something that was recently explored in relation to Hungarian working women (Kováts, 2020). Consequently, I question the argument that working in female-dominated occupations is not a real choice for women (Budig et al, 2016; England, 1982; J. C. Williams, 2000, p. 6). I also find it important to examine a space where the ideal worker norm is challenged, even if on the local level, because it can help us understand how a gendered organization might change over time (Blakcburn et al, 2002; Stainback et al, 2016), while remaining unquestioned elsewhere, as in labor unions, as Chapter 5 will discuss.

4.1.2 Men in care work: masculinity in feminized fields

One of the most important feminized fields where the discussed opting-out from the ideal worker norm might take place is care work. Care work – meaning here paid care work performed outside of the home – is generally undervalued and underpaid (see e.g. England, 2005; Huppatz, 2009; Kirton & Greene, 2015; Müller, 2018; Williams, 1995). According to the scholarly work on the gendered construction of skill (e.g. Kirton & Greene, 2015, p. 69), skills and qualities associated with women and femininity are regarded with lower status than those associated with men (Anker, 1997; England, 2005, p. 382; Gardiner, 1998, p. 216; Kirton & Greene, 2015, p. 69). While there are also positive qualities and skills associated with women, such as the ability to care (Anker, 1997, pp. 324-237), these are usually assumed to be natural and are thus not really valued (Gardiner, 1998, p. 216).[20]

Paid care work is thus generally undervalued and hegemonic masculinity is disassociated from it (see e.g. Huppatz, 2009). This makes men working in these professions

[20] Of course, scholars do not only explain the undervaluation of feminized care work with the gendered construction of skill. For instance, the prisoners of love dilemma (Folbre, 2001) or the „emotional hostage" effect (England, 2005, p. 390) is also discussed which means that due to the emotional connection between caregiver and client or patient, the caregiver does not withdraw their services because they wish to do no harm to the ones in their care. This contributes to the lower pay of care workers (England, 2005).

"anomalies" (Williams, 1995, p. 2). However, according to the theory of the glass escalator (Williams, 1992, 2013), men in these professions do not face discrimination but rather are disproportionately pushed into leadership positions. As leadership skills are generally associated with men (Gardiner, 1998), instead of facing discrimination because of their token positions – as women do in male-dominated professions –, their masculinity advantages them (Budig, 2002; Cognard-Black, 2004; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013, p. 301; Williams, 1992). Thus, in feminized care work, men are rewarded for their masculine characteristics with higher positions, which reproduces male power and privilege (Williams, 1995, p. 4). It is important to emphasize, however, that not all men experience these benefits: gay men or racial/ethnic minority men, for instance, are excluded from the benefits of the glass escalator (Williams, 2013, p. 613; Wingfield, 2009). In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the glass escalator does not operate within Hungarian crèche work. Men are excluded from the field to an extent where they cannot fill in the leadership positions either because this workplace is one where it seems that solely femininity and femaleness are profitable.

As Huppatz and Goodwin (2013) argue, men can also successfully wield femininity in feminized occupations to get ahead (p. 302). However, it is important to emphasize that there is a social stigma associated with men entering these professions (Huppatz, 2012, p. 73; Williams, 1992). Due to the close association between hegemonic masculinity and heterosexuality (Connell, 1987, p. 186), men in care work often experience that their sexuality and/or gender is questioned (Huppatz, 2012, p. 75; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013, p. 304). Fears from men's sexuality, the assumption that they are "child molesters" or "sexual perverts" can also hinder their entry to the caring field (Williams, 1995, p. 13), especially in early childhood education where touch is important (Cekaite & Bergnehr, 2018) and a great degree of body work (Cohen & Wokowitz, 2017) is performed. Generally, men who enter these occupations also violate the norms of traditional masculinity which means that their masculinity is contested

outside of the field (Williams, 1995, p. 21). To avoid these social stigmas and disadvantages, men in care work often (re)affirm or negotiate their masculinity in different ways (Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013; Snyder & Green, 2008; Willett, 2008; Williams, 1995), such as through highlighting the masculine elements of their job (Huppatz, 2012, p. 181; Williams, 1995, p. 126). As in this chapter I will demonstrate, the men I interviewed also experienced social stigmas such as the assumption of "homosexuality". It was also evident that the idea that male bodies are to be distrusted in such close proximity to small children was prevalent. While the women interview partners expressed that men could be allowed to enter if they perform masculinity well, in practice it appears that the social stigmas are so strong and feminine capital and having a female body are so important, that men are completely excluded from the occupation. It is important to emphasize that this exclusion further contributes to the feminization of the field and perpetuates the sex segregation of the labor market.

4.2 Analysis

4.2.1 Female capital: the requirement of having a female body

Most crèche workers I interviewed expressed that due to the close bodily contact between the child and the crèche worker, a male crèche employee invites distrust. While never explicitly stated, having a female body seems to be a requirement for this job, as caring – especially for children in the age group under three years old – is associated with female bodies (Huppatz, 2009, p. 53). Therefore, I argue that femaleness operates as capital in the context of crèches as it enables women to attain and maintain jobs in this field, whereas maleness disables men from doing so (ibid). In Hungarian crèches, the social stigmas (Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013; Williams, 1995) associated with male childcare workers are so strong that men are completely excluded from the field and thus cannot fill in leadership positions either.

The most important task that requires bodily contact between the child and the worker is the changing of diapers, an issue that came up in almost all interviews. Some interview partners, like Anikó, a woman in her fifties, who now is a director of a crèche, discussed how some parents would be reluctant to trust a man with this task in the following way:

> I think they [the parents] would react to [male crèche employees] with mixed feelings. [Some would find it okay.] But then there are these old-fashioned families or mothers who would be reluctant to have a man taking care of their children. And here I mostly refer to bodily care, so for instance, changing nappies and stuff.

Here, Anikó connected a refusal of allowing men to take care of small children with the antiquated thinking of some parents, while she expressed during the interview that she herself, other colleagues, and most parents would not find this weird.

While some interview partners could not explain why the aversion to men performing these tasks exists, others elaborately discussed how this type of care, when performed by men, can invoke the social stigma of "pedophilia". This was most apparent in my conversation with Barbara, a woman in her forties. When I asked her about why she thinks there are so few men in this profession, she replied: "because they will think he is a pedophile". When I asked her to elaborate, she discussed this the following way:

> It is not associated with them [men], so as I said, it is the [bodily] care part that is frowned upon, not necessarily the fact that he works with children. But then that is also not tied to men, nurture, protection, these are qualities and tasks linked to women, and I am not sure if they are manly.

Here, Barbara discussed how, while working with small children is not seen as a masculine task either, having a man hugging small children and changing their diapers can even be seen as dangerous. While Barbara herself did not believe that men choosing this profession are "dangerous", she was aware that many people would think so.

Gergő, a thirty-years-old male crèche employee I interviewed, encountered the stigma associated with men changing diapers in a discussion with his previous teacher:

> I remember that I had a teacher once – and it is weird that he as a teacher, as an educator would think this – and he was like… "you, as a man, are going to be wiping the buttocks of children?"

> And, you know, this hurts a little because one always expects that when you do something, you will be valued and recognized or they would just say, "cool" and "how is it?". And then your teacher says something like this…

As Gergő evoked this story another time during our interview, it is obvious that it had a great impact on him, even though he did not have many other such negative experiences. He described this encounter with the teacher as painful and shocking, especially because it devalued the work he otherwise performed with pride and joy.

Deriving from the disassociation of male bodies from care (Huppatz, 2009), especially the discussed bodily care, is the idea that it is unimaginable that a man would want to do this job. Orsolya, a female crèche employee in her fifties replied to my question about the lack of men in the profession as follows:

> Because men think of this as a woman's job […]. And I think it is not appealing to them, really, to get the shit out from under someone else's child, and bathe them, change their nappies, feed them, nurture them. […] And it is different, for example, to teach in a school, or even work in a kindergarten where there are independent, potty-trained, independently thinking children […].

As can be seen, for Orsolya also, the key difference drawn between a crèche and other childcare facilities such as a kindergarten is the fact that the infants still wear diapers and cannot independently use the bathroom. As discussed here, while it is not strange that someone with a female body would want to perform the tasks of bodily care for someone else's child, it is so when someone with a male body would want to. Bence, the other male crèche employee in his early twenties that I interviewed, discussed that many men might find it unacceptable to change the diapers of someone else's child.

A male body in the context of caring for small children is thus seen as foreign, and sometimes even as threatening. Therefore, having a female body is beneficial in this job, it functions as capital, while having a male body is a factor that excludes one from this profession through the creation of a social stigma. As a consequence, men are almost completely missing from Hungarian crèches.

4.2.2 Feminine capital: the feminine skills and qualities of the good crèche worker

When describing the required qualities and skills of the good crèche worker, my interview partners generally invoked ones that are stereotypically feminine. Through appealing to a certain, mothering femininity, crèche employees appear to utilize feminine capital to become better at their job (Huppatz, 2009, p. 53). However, the idea that these skills and qualities are natural to women (e.g. Gardiner, 1998, p. 216) seems to be rejected through constant emphasis on the importance of learning, training, and even attaining a college degree. The idea that femininity is socially learned is therefore enforced. Nevertheless, men appear to be excluded from possessing feminine capital and are only allowed to enter the profession if they affirm their masculinity. Femininity is thus something that is only beneficial for females in this field and cannot be successfully wielded by men (contrary to Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013, p. 302).

The most frequently cited skills and qualities that are required from a crèche employee are: patience, empathy, compassion, the ability to divide one's attention and multitask, good communication skills, being able to work in a team and cooperate with colleagues, playfulness, and humility. Other qualities, such as peacefulness, creativity, or self-knowledge were also mentioned. Most of these qualities are stereotypically associated with women (e.g. Anker, 1997), but some more masculine qualities are also important, such as self-confidence. An ability that also came up as important in several interviews is that of leaving one's personal problems outside and smiling, being happy on the job (Boyer et al, 2013; Vincent & Braun, 2013). This implies the need to perform a great degree of emotional labor, another type of work associated with women and femininity (Hochschild, 1983). Gergő, the thirty-years-old male crèche employee described this requirement to "keep smiling" as follows:

> You need to smile even when you don't feel that good. And this is not because you put on an act, but because you have to show to the child and the parent… or not really show, but do… this is what I undertook, this is what I signed up to, this is my vocation, so I have to do this.

It becomes apparent from Gergő's description that the emotional labor of putting up a happy face is an essential element of the job, basically a part of the job description.

While the good crèche employee is thus described as possessing all these feminine qualities, counterexamples include crèche workers who are too "soldier-like", too strict and not capable of showing empathy, and thus possess qualities generally associated with masculinity. For instance, Adrienn, a woman in her forties, discussed an example for a "bad crèche employee" by stating that a former colleague of hers was like a soldier and was stiff. Similarly, Barbara described her former colleague's faults as a crèche worker:

> Well, for instance, she is very soldier-like. So, she very closely follows the rules and tries to make others abide by them. She lectures the parents, doesn't take note of what the family's expectations are. She doesn't cooperate, she is loud, she doesn't pay attention to the child, […], she is impatient, doesn't consider the needs of the child […].

In both Barbara's and Adrienn's description, qualities associated with "bad mothers" or even "bad women" can be discovered in association with the "bad crèche worker" (see the same for "good women" in Huppatz, 2012, p. 33). "Bad crèche workers" thus do not conform to expected feminine gender roles and do not perform femininity well.

Furthermore, the "good crèche employee" is often described as a good substitute for a mother, as someone one would trust with their own children as well, someone who treats the children in her care as their own. Performing and practicing mothering femininity is thus important. For instance, Lilla, a female crèche employee in her late forties, described the way a good crèche worker treats children:

> What else do you need for [this job]? Patience, you sure need a great, a gigantic degree of patience for it. I've always told my girls[21] that they should treat the kids only in ways they would expect their own children to be treated by others, by a kindergarten teacher or anyone.

Here, Lilla discussed how good crèche workers treat children as if they were their own. In a similar vein, Dorottya, a crèche employee in her late twenties, described that she had a few peers in college who were not suited for the job because she "wouldn't trust them with [her] own children". Dorottya here imagined herself as a future mother and deemed those who do not possess certain – stereotypically feminine – qualities as unfit for the job. From this, the image of a certain type of mothering femininity emerges. If someone wishes to be good at this job, it appears that they need to be good at performing this femininity and develop the skills – such as patience or empathy – associated with it.

While essentializing notions about men and women are quite common within the union and among interview partners and the idea that women are inherently more capable of performing this work than men was articulated on several occasions, this was usually not linked to biological reasons by interview partners, but rather, to social causes. This was most apparent in the following thought by Zsuzsa, a fifty-years-old former crèche employee, formulated when discussing the qualities of the good crèche employee:

> Resourcefulness is important, to be able to always pay attention to multiple things at once, so the ability to divide your attention is important for sure because otherwise, you can't keep up with having to change the nappies of one child, but then meanwhile someone fell there and the third one started crying. So, we need to be able to multitask… so as women are basically, that we need to pay attention to so many things at once, like the husband, family, child, cleaning, cooking, laundry, shopping in. You need the same at the crèche, too, I think.

What Zsuzsa described here is a certain type of femininity, one that women are able to develop in the home through being housewives and mothers. Therefore, while she does not think that men are capable of performing this job well – as discussed by her later in the interview –, she does not seem to tie this to the biology of men and women but to socially learned femininity

[21] Here, by "my girls" *("a lányaim"),* Lilla refers to her fellow crèche employees. Referring to the employees as "girls" is very common both in the crèches and in BDDSZ. This issue will be discussed also in Chapter 5.

and masculinity. The socially learned femininity enables women to multitask in the crèche as they have plenty of practice in the home, whereas the socially learned masculinity does not prepare men for this job.

The socially learned nature of the necessary feminine skills of the good crèche worker is emphasized when the importance of good training in childcare is highlighted. For instance, it was often discussed by my interview partners that having the right disposition, such as the love for children, is not enough in itself. Mária, a woman in her sixties, who is now a pensioner but still teaches crèche workers, explained this as follows:

> I also think that for our profession – and I always tell this to my students when I first meet them, I ask them why they came here since they are adults, they are switching professions, worked in other jobs, and the first thing they say is that [they came here] because they love children. And this is why I usually say that this is not enough. Every normal person loves children, especially children between 0 and 3 years old because they are small, round, they smile, they are soft, they smell good, but this is not a reason. [Laughs.]

In this quote, Mária explained that in her opinion, everyone has a reason to love small children, and thus everyone can possibly have the right disposition but that can only be a starting point for developing the skills and attitudes necessary for this job.

The possibility of attaining a college degree is also considered to elevate the social prestige of the profession, precisely by highlighting that it is not something that anyone – any woman – can naturally perform. This aspect, even though without mentioning that a college degree proves that the necessary skills are not natural, was even discussed in a speech by the ministerial commissioner responsible for the expansion of the crèche network in her speech at a jubilee event of BDDSZ: she emphasized how the introduction of the college training for crèche employees was one of the greatest milestones of recent years, one that can greatly contribute to the elevated social recognition of these workers. The importance of this was mentioned by almost all interview partners as well, but was possibly most elaborated by Gergő:

> We are not only babysitters, for that, you would not need to get such a big paper [here: diploma]. I think that […] when a profession sets it as a condition that you need to have a BA degree, it

> shows that there really is quality work performed, that the work is important, and it requires a constant developing of one's knowledge and creativity.

Here, Gergő, similarly to many others, contrasted "babysitting" with the work of crèche workers, suggesting that while the first is something easy, something unskilled, the latter is a professional job, requiring constant training and developing of one's skills. This constant emphasis on the non-naturalness of skills shows that crèche employees constantly challenge the idea that the required qualities are natural to the women performing this job (e.g. Adkins, 2003) which could make feminine capital more effective (Huppatz, 2009, p. 55).

The socially learned nature of the feminine aptitudes and skills of the good crèche employee could in theory mean that men can also develop them and that they could successfully wield femininity to get ahead in crèche work (Huppatz, 2012, p. 95). However, I argue that men seem to be excluded from acquiring the necessary feminine capital. A feminine man is not allowed to enter the profession, while a man performing or affirming his masculinity might gain entry. Besides the stigma that male crèche employees are "pedophiles", their heterosexuality is also questioned (Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013, p. 304; Williams, 1995, p. 21). This stigma of "homosexuality" can be avoided by appearing masculine, instead of displaying femininity. For instance, Lilla told me a story about a male crèche worker she has met when she was once in Italy. There, before she met him, she assumed that "the guy must be gay". Upon meeting him in person, she was surprised to find out that he was the "most macho man in the world". For Lilla, the presentation of this male crèche worker's masculinity convinced her that therefore he cannot be "gay" which means that he is no longer "weird" or threatening. Bence told me that when he first entered his current workplace a few years ago, a lot of families were shocked to see a man in this profession:

> For those in the older generation who grew up in the old system, it would be extremely surprising at first, but… I think they accept it. I even met grandpas who were surprised first but then we shook hands, I introduced myself, and then this grandpa said that he wouldn't have thought that someone in this profession would have such a strong handshake or something. And then that's

> it. So, I think with me having this masculine appearance… so they don't see a feminine man in this profession. I think that would bother them more.

Here, Bence deliberated that his affirmed masculinity – through his appearance, handshake, and so on – allowed him to stay in the profession, whereas acquiring feminine traits would seemingly disqualify him. Gergő found a different way of affirming his masculinity during our interview when he discussed the necessary qualities for a crèche worker:

> Well, for instance, there is that physical attribute that you have stamina and a carrying capacity because you constantly have to pick the children up, you move a lot.

Here, Gergő, similarly to men working in feminized professions, highlighted an aspect of that work that is more masculine (Williams, 1995, p. 126): the need for physical strength to pick up and carry children. Through affirming their masculinity, it appears that men could be allowed to enter the crèche in theory: several interview partners discussed that as men could provide a "different type" of care to children and embody a father figure, it might be nice to have more men in the field. Thus, if men embody a certain type of masculinity that supplements the mothering femininity of female crèche employees, that seems acceptable to the interview partners.

Overall, in the field of crèches, possessing and displaying mothering femininity with the associated skills and qualities is a type of capital that can make someone a good crèche employee. The naturalness of this femininity to biological females was questioned by the workers through an emphasis on the importance of training. However, men are not allowed to acquire these feminine traits, feminine capital cannot be possessed by them. Men, therefore, are excluded from the field both because of the suspicion towards male bodies and through their exclusion from feminine capital which would otherwise be necessary to be good in this job. Due to this almost complete exclusion, they do not occupy leadership positions in crèches

either[22], which shows that in this entirely feminized field, the glass escalator (Williams, 1992, 2013) does not work either.

4.2.3 Achieving work-life balance and meaning at work

The requirement to have a female body and to develop and present mothering femininity show that the ideal crèche employee is female and feminine. As I argued so far in this chapter, female and feminine capitals function to exclude men from the field. In this section, I discuss another way in which these capitals are utilized: through preserving the field as a feminized space, women working in crèches can create work-life balance because this workplace allows them to work reasonable hours and have time and energy for their domestic responsibilities. I thus argue that within the field, the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; J. C. Williams, 2000) is challenged. This does not mean that dedication or engagement is not required towards the job and the children, but that this does not mean an exclusive dedication. While the norm outside of the field is not challenged and the perpetuated feminization of the field reinforces the sex segregation of the labor market, I aim to demonstrate that the challenge to the norm within the field is significant and valuable for these women and their choice of working in this feminized occupation must be seen as a true agentic choice (contrary to e.g. Budig et al, 2016; England, 1982; J. C. Williams, 2000, p. 6). Also, I will show that crèche employees draw non-material rewards from their profession, such as a feeling of pride and meaning and they can achieve recognition and respect within the field, which also makes their feminine and female capitals symbolic capital.

Several of my interview partners discussed that one of the main reasons for choosing this profession or staying in it is the appeal of convenient working hours, free weekends, and extra days off. This allows the workers to attend to their family responsibilities, as well as to

[22] It is important to mention that there is no official data available on the gender division of crèche employees or crèche directors, my evidence is anecdotical and comes from BDDSZ officials.

their work. Many interview partners who have been in the profession for a long time started out working in health care and switched to working in a crèche precisely because this work better aligned with their family responsibilities. Mária, a former crèche worker who is now a pensioner, told me that she only started working in a crèche after she got married and got pregnant and her husband convinced her that the hospital is "not for a woman with a family". Rita also switched from health care to the crèche because this way, she could, for instance, spend Christmas with her family. Lilla explained her similar change of professions as follows:

> I worked as a nurse in a hospital for a year and I earned [very little] and had to work in three shifts. In those days [the early 1990s], I could earn more working in a crèche and the weekends and holidays were free, while that was not the case in health care. And I already had my husband then and we were planning on starting a family, so this is why [I started working in a crèche]. […] And this is good, we only have to work seven hours […], we have more days off, weekends are free, these are really good things. […] Once I wanted to go back to the hospital, but my husband wouldn't let me because of the shifts. […] Because he said that then what would be with the children […] so I didn't go back.

As can be seen, the different benefits of crèche work – like seven-hour shifts and more free time – make it an appealing job for women with families. It was also apparent from several of these women's stories that their husbands also preferred them working in this profession as it allows the women to still fulfill their roles in the home and take care of their children, something that was not challenged by the women I interviewed. Adrienn, for instance, gave up her position as a crèche director because of pressure from her husband. She discussed that there were constant conflicts in her home because her husband said that she worried too much about issues from work when she was home and thus fought with him and the children. From this, it is also apparent that women working as childcare workers, because of having less responsibility than if they would work in other positions, like that of the crèche director even, can better coordinate their work-life balance. For Adrienn, this meant not necessarily responsibilities such as housework or childcare, but the mental distraction that her leadership position meant for her.

Crèches are also workplaces where someone's pregnancy is not necessarily seen as a problem, but rather, as the expected and normal consequence of young women working in the

profession. Women who take time off from this profession to have children are not expecting to face any repercussions or a motherhood penalty (Correll et al., 2007). For instance, Eszter, who is in her late twenties, discussed at length that she is planning to have a baby soon with her partner. When she talked about this, she was not at all worried about finding employment as a mother: she said that she would want to leave her current workplace, but only because she has to commute too long now, but she will surely find a crèche closer to her home. Almost all the older women had children as well, but none of them expressed that they ever faced any difficulties in crèche work because of this.

Among crèche workers, it appears that it is not the women, but the men who might be hindered by their responsibilities towards their families. Ideals of traditional masculinity exclude men from this profession because providing for one's family (see e.g. J. C. Williams, 2000, p. 3) is not possible from the low pay crèche workers receive. This aspect was discussed by almost all interview partners when I asked them why they think there are so few men in the field. They discussed that even if a man might have the right disposition for this profession, the low pay will deter them. This was most clearly articulated by Vera, a union official in her early forties:

> This is a traditionally feminized occupation and also the wages. So, even if a man wants to spend his days among children under three years old, even if he learns the profession, in Hungary the arrangement usually is that the man is the provider for the family. And these wages are insufficient to support a family.

Both Bence and Gergő, the male crèche employees I interviewed intend to leave the profession in the foreseeable future. Even though they still wish to work with children, they want to do so in better-paid positions. Other interview partners, who otherwise criticized young people for leaving the profession because of the low pay, were not surprised or critical about men who do so. For instance, Rita discussed that if a young man stays despite all the obstacles and the low pay, he must be very dedicated, while she did not state anything similar about young women

who stay in the profession. This shows that men's role in a family is in conflict with their possible employment in this field, while women's is not.

It can thus be seen that securing employment in a crèche – through the possession of a female body and mothering femininity – allows women to coordinate their domestic responsibilities with their work. What is important to stress here is that my interview partners do not see a problem with these arrangements, but instead, having work-life balance is something very valuable to them (see similarly in Kováts, 2020). It is important to consider that for these lower-middle-class or working-class women, the alternatives to crèche work might not have the same benefits (see e.g. Bennett et al, 2009; Huppatz, 2009; 2012; Lovell, 2000; Reay, 2000). Therefore, working in female-dominated crèche work is not necessarily a trade-off for them from other, higher-prestige or higher-paying professions, or if it is, they are active agents in utilizing their femininity and making these choices. Of course, the convertibility of feminine and female capitals in this profession to economic capital is limited because of the low pay of crèche workers. This can also increase in following years due to the government's plan to extend the crèche network and simultaneously raise the wages (Eduline, 2019).

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that not only financial rewards can be drawn from a job. For instance, in order to consider femininity and femaleness capitals in this context in the first place, crèche employees must be able to convert them to symbolic capitals (e.g. Huppatz, 2009; McCall 1992; Skeggs, 2004). I argue that this can be done in the crèche because a good crèche employee can achieve recognition and respect within the field, by parents, colleagues, or employers.

For instance, the workers I talked to, while sometimes complaining that parents do not always value their work, usually expressed that in general, what they do is recognized within the crèche. One of the greatest signs of parents' gratitude often discussed by interview partners

is when a parent whose child went to the worker's group a long time ago recognizes them later on the street, or when they are sincerely thanked. Ági, for example, is now a pensioner in her late sixties, but she told me that she still meets mothers whose children she cared for decades ago who are always eager to talk to her, even on the street. Similarly, Orsolya discussed that she draws a great sense of pride from her work being recognized as important by the parents. Another way in which parents' recognition can be expressed is by listening to the advice and recommendations of the crèche worker, thus recognizing them as professionals. For example, Eszter, a crèche employee in her late twenties, explained to me that she can feel valued through the way parents approach her:

> [They show recognition] through the way they [the parents] talk to me. So, they dare to ask for advice, they accept my opinion, they accept my advice, I don't feel ill at ease, I don't feel looked down upon, but I am treated as an equal partner.

Here, Eszter told me how she has achieved a status as a professional and how, through investing a lot in earning parents' trust, she could achieve the recognition of parents.

Some interview partners also discussed that they feel completely recognized on the local level, by their institution's director or by the local municipality who their employer is. Dorottya, for instance, who only started working in the profession a couple of years ago, told me that she believes that her boss really appreciates her work because she was repeatedly told that she does her job well. Similarly, Eszter also believes that they receive a great degree of local recognition, also in the form of financial allowances from the local municipality. Gergő also discussed that he feels that his work is recognized locally because the material conditions for him to perform his work are provided. For instance, he has everything available for doing crafts with the children and he just has to submit a list of what he needs.

What further highlights that financial recognition is not necessarily the most important aspect is that while crèche employees feel the lack of financial recognition, they appear to be more hurt if there is a lack of wider societal prestige of the profession. The fact that they do not

fully feel that their work has prestige in society also shows a key limitation of female and feminine capitals: the associated skills and qualities do not necessarily have much value outside of the field (Huppatz, 2009, p. 59). One of the key elements of the lack of social recognition is the idea that crèche workers are merely "babysitting" and "changing nappies". This is connected to the societal idea that females are naturally capable of performing this job. For instance, Dorottya, a young crèche worker told me that she has often heard that her work is not even real work as she spends her days playing with the children:

> We often experience it from the outside world that they say "oh, it's so good for you, you are just playing inside with the children all day. And then to this, we always say, "okay, then come in for a day then", because this is not only play, not only fun and laughter, but we have tough, tiring days with lots of problems […], we have such huge responsibility. But from the outside, they just see that this is just… that we are just spending time with the babies and playing.

Dorottya clearly articulated here that "playing" is not considered to be skilled, important work in wider society and she also discussed that she and her colleagues constantly need to prove that their work is important and comes with responsibility. Bence, a male crèche employee in his early twenties also discussed this problem, but he also seemingly displayed more consciousness regarding the assumed naturalization of the necessary skills related to taking care of young children:

> I think a lot of people still think that you are just a nanny[23] […] but the nanny is basically doing cleaning in the crèche. And a lot of people think that you are just playing with the children, you just… and a lot of people think that anyone can do this, this is just a simple thing. But if someone wants to do this job well, you need a lot of consciousness and self-training, or at least I think so. So, anyone can raise children, and anyone can do that, children grow up everywhere, but the quality of that growing up is not all the same.

Here, Bence, similarly to the previously-discussed emphasis on the need for constant training and learning, emphasized that while children can be raised by anyone, crèche work is an important, skilled profession that contributes to the well-being of children. While Bence

[23] Here, the word "dajka" is used in Hungarian. "Dajka" is the term used to refer to auxiliary co-workers in the crèche who assist the work of the infant educators (*kisgyermeknevelő*). I use the English term "nanny" in the translation in order to highlight that it is used in common speech to refer to someone who is "babysitting" or "childminding".

discussed elsewhere that he believes some people are more predisposed to be good childcare workers, the skills and qualities are not natural. However, as in public opinion they are assumed to be, the profession continues to have low prestige.

Another important aspect to emphasize is that crèche employees draw emotional gains, satisfaction, and meaning (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016) from their profession. The fact that this profession gives employees a sense of meaning is already reflected in that they refer to it not as a job, but rather as a "vocation" (*hivatás*), which was the case with all but a few interview partners. For some, like Ági, this vocation and the love received from children has provided such satisfaction that they never even considered doing something else for a living:

> For me, the love of children, and that caring love I always tried to give the children were always very important. Seeing their development, helping them in what they need is a wonderful thing. And in our vocation – because they can attend the crèche from the age of twenty weeks and they can't talk yet – communication is different, and it is such a wonderful thing to get a sense of what they actually need. […] Of course, there are some problems and difficulties but taking care of these children is such a beautiful vocation. […] These children, I think, were my true world.

Here, Ági, when talking about decades of crèche work, emphasized the fulfillment she drew from seeing the children's development and receiving love from them. Likewise, Orsolya told me that she could not think of any aspect of her job that she does not enjoy:

> Listen, [I like] everything about it. So, for me, this is my vocation. This is my life. This is where I feel good. So, when a child comes up to you and hugs you and whispers into your ear „are you happy?". Then, even if you felt down, that feeling just gets blown away […]. I can't think of any other aspect of my life where I feel this good. […] To assist the development of these children through the years is something I am proud of. I am proud of doing this.

Thus, Orsolya can draw fulfillment and meaning from her job that she could not achieve otherwise in her life. Her profession is crucial to her sense of self-worth (e.g. Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). For her and many others, this sense of meaning and purpose that they derive from doing their job well appears to be more important than financial recognition and economic benefits.

A further example of emotional gains from this job is that the engagement and dedication towards the well-being of children also provide employees with pride. For instance, when I visited a crèche in Budapest during my time at BDDSZ with a colleague, we were shown around in the building by the director of the crèche at this institution and were shown toys that were handmade by the workers, as well as small towels that were hand-embroidered by the employees. As we were told, these are usually done while the children are sleeping. While it could be argued that this is a form of exploitation of the workers, it appeared that the employees derive a sense of pride from having done these objects for the children, a way of showing their love and dedication towards them. These examples mean that while crèche employees might be making a trade-off from possibly higher-paying professions, they gain other, non-economical rewards in return.

Drawing satisfaction and meaning from this job also means that a "prisoners of love" (see England, 2005, Folbre, 2001) effect is created: the workers continue on this job despite difficulties and low pay because of the attachment and sense of duty they feel towards the children and their parents. For example, Dorottya, while feeling deeply dissatisfied and angry because of her low pay, discussed that she does not intend to leave the profession any time soon:

> The other thing I usually say [at work] is that I always cry on payday because it is simply catastrophic. So, on those days, nobody should talk to me, I usually hit a low, it is a day of mourning but then the next day everything goes on obviously… then I don't care about it anymore.

Here, this young crèche worker explained that the fulfillment she can draw from being with the children keeps her on the job, despite referring to the day she receives her wages as "a day of mourning". This highlights the limitation of feminine and female capitals in their convertibility to higher economic rewards but also shows the reasons behind workers' decision to stay on the job.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that having a female body and displaying mothering femininity operate as capitals for crèche workers. I showed that due to the close bodily contact between child and caregiver, male bodies are regarded with distrust and thus excluded from the job, while a female body is a requirement. I also demonstrated that a good crèche employee must also possess stereotypically feminine skills and qualities. While the workers questioned the idea that this femininity is natural to women through an emphasis on learning, men are still excluded from the possession of feminine capital because of the social stigmas associated with feminine men. I thus claimed that female and feminine capitals are used by crèche worker women to exclude men from the field and preserve the workplace for women only. This means that men are excluded from leadership positions as well and cannot take advantage of their masculinity and the glass escalator (Williams, 1992, 2013) which suggests that men's advancement in feminized occupations does not always work, especially if a field is feminized to this extent. I also demonstrated that crèche employees challenge the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; J. C. Williams, 2000) within the field because the ideal crèche employee is not only female and feminine but is not required to have no responsibilities outside of the workplace. I argued that achieving work-life balance is very important to these women and that this choice must be considered a real agentic choice. I highlighted also that female and feminine capitals can be converted to recognition and respect within crèche work and satisfaction and meaning are drawn from this job.

Of course, female and feminine capitals are limited. Rather than challenging the status quo, crèche employees are able to use them to "manipulate constraints" (Huppatz, 2009, p. 59) or make "patriarchal bargains" (Kandiyoti, 1988). While there was not much space to discuss the limitations of their convertibility outside of crèche work in this chapter in-depth, in Chapter 5, I will highlight that the non-utilization of femininity and femaleness by BDDSZ shows that

they are capitals that are only valuable in certain settings, even if where they are valuable, many important benefits can be derived from them.

Chapter 5: Masculine organizing of a feminized sector: the non-utilization of femininity in BDDSZ

Introduction

In Chapter 4, I argued that crèche employees possess and utilize female and feminine capitals. In this chapter, I seek to answer whether the labor union of these workers, BDDSZ, also capitalizes on femaleness or femininity. Traditionally, unions have been male-dominated organizations operating with masculine norms, excluding, or marginalizing women workers (Boston, 2015; Bradley, 1999; Cobble, 1993; Cockburn, 1991; Milkman, 2007, 2016). Some researchers of women and unionism suggest that feminized unions in the public sector can challenge the masculine-dominated or gender-neutral organizational dynamics of unions (Boston, 2015; Franzway, 2000; Milkman, 2016), whereas others argue that this challenge is limited (Bradley, 1999; Dean, 2015; Kirton, 1999). As BDDSZ is a public-sector union where almost all members are women – who, as I demonstrated, rely on femininity and femaleness in the workplace –, and all leadership positions are filled by women, it would be possible that it challenges the reliance on masculinity and male-centeredness in its organization.

However, this chapter will demonstrate that this is not the case and argue that BDDSZ does not rely on femininity and femaleness and does not attempt to turn these to its advantage. First, the chapter contains a literature review where I discuss the relevant scholarly literature on traditional, male-dominated unions, and the discussions on feminized public-sector unionism. Then, in the analytical part of the chapter, I first demonstrate that BDDSZ's ideal member and official are assumed to have no domestic or care responsibilities and can thus afford to invest time and energy into the union. Second, I will demonstrate that a masculine, rational, and charismatic leadership is idealized along with tactics described as "masculine heroics". Here, qualities that are considered negative in crèche workers, such as toughness or militancy are idealized. Third, the organizational logic of BDDSZ is gender-neutral and there is a lack of

awareness of the importance of gender in shaping crèche work and unionism. These reinforce traditional strategies of unionism, instead of challenging them. It thus appears that in the post-socialist Hungarian context where traditional gender ideals (e.g. Nagy, 2005) and anti-gender backlash (e.g. Grzebalska & Pető, 2018) are prevalent, BDDSZ remains an organization where masculine capital is utilized and femininity is not drawn on.

5.1 Literature review

5.1.1 Masculine unions, female membership: the incorporation of women workers into a "greedy institution"

Trade unions are gendered organizations that have incorporated, represented, and advocated for men and women differently (Boston, 2015; Langowski, 2015; Milkman, 2007, 2016; Yates, 2006). Women, for most of union history have remained on the margins of the movement (Milkman, 2016, p. 207). This section explores the relevant literature on this issue to demonstrate how unions have created their own ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; J.C. Williams, 2000) and to explore how unions traditionally appeared to be institutions in which feminine capital does not operate, whereas masculine capital is useful.

A key reason for women's marginalization in unions has been the male-dominated or macho culture and imagery of unions (Bradley, 1999; Kirton, 1999; Milkman, 2007, 2016). Throughout the 20th-century, the symbolism of trade unions was full of masculine images (Milkman, 2007, p. 65), an imagery and association that largely persists until today (Kirton, 1999, p. 214). Furthermore, union meetings were usually dominated and led by men familiar with the union's culture which has been alienating for many women (Boston, 2015, p. 363; Gregory & Milner, 2009, p. 130). Another important issue is that it has been seen that the only way to achieve success in bargaining or confrontation was the use of "masculine heroics", the utilization of an aggressive form of masculinity (Bradley, 1999, p. 171; Franzway, 2000, p. 264). Whereas for men, such a confrontational style is encouraged, for women it can be seen

problematic (Franzway, 2000, p. 266): as it was discussed in relation to the wielding of masculine capital by women, displaying a confrontational, masculine style of negotiating can bring social sanctions if done by women (McCall, 1992, p. 846). There has been nevertheless female union militancy throughout labor history, only less visible than male militancy (Bradley, 1999, p. 164; Milkman, 2016, p. 168).

Gender-neutral organization dynamics have also disadvantaged women in unions (Milkman, 2016, p. 169). This means that because loyalty and trust are important in unions because of a siege mentality (Franzway, 2000, p. 258; Mellor et al, 1994, p. 204), women can be seen as a threat to the discipline of unions (Langowski, 2015, p. 65). Furthermore, unions operate within a framework of class where the interests of "working people" are advocated for (Bradley, 1999, p. 184), making any group with "special interests" suspicious (Milkman, 2016, p. 169). Thus, women's specific interests, such as sex equality in pay have been subsumed in the larger category of class which takes precedence over gender (Bradley, 1999, p. 184). Therefore, even as unions started to incorporate women workers, some were slow to respond to their specific interests, such as challenging the sex segregation of the labor market, or, these interests have not been considered at all (Gregory & Milner, 2009, p. 123; Milkman, 2016). Simultaneously, the undervaluation of "women's work" has not really been questioned or has even been reinforced within the trade union movement (Boston, 2015, p. 401). This disinterest in the issues important to women has discouraged women from active participation (Mellor et al, 1994, p. 204).

The standards of good membership and leadership in a union can be quite demanding which can also exclude women from union activism. A union official, for example, is expected to work in the evenings or even over the weekends, for instance, to go on recruitment trips for the union (Bradley, 1999, p. 164). Basically, union work is a job that never ends, something that a person must perform around the clock. Putting in long hours, especially for the leadership,

is an important expectation (Bradley, 1999, p. 180; Franzway, 2000, p. 258; Kirton, 1999, p. 214). This also means that a certain degree of personal sacrifice, a commitment of time and energy must be made (Franzway, 2000, p. 259). Also, union meetings have been held in places and times that were inconvenient for women (Boston, 2015, p. 365; Gregory & Milner, 2009, p. 130; Kirton, 1999, p. 214; Milkman, 2016, p. 167).

Therefore, it has been argued that unions are "greedy institutions" (Coser, 1974; Franzway, 2000). Greedy institutions require particularly great investments of time, loyalty, and energy (ibid). As the family is also a greedy institution and one can only serve one greedy institution with full commitment at a time, women with family responsibilities must navigate between the two if they want to commit to union activism (Franzway, 2000, p. 259): union activism is hard to coordinate with one's domestic responsibilities (Cockburn, 1992; Franzway, 2000; Roby & Uttal, 1993). There is a tension, especially for married women, between these responsibilities and women's trade union participation on these discussed terms, particularly when it comes to women's leadership roles (Bradley, 1999, p. 164; Kirton, 1999, p. 216; Langowski, 2015, p. 54; Milkman, 2016, p. 198; Roby & Uttal, 1993, p. 368). Similarly to what was discussed with the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; J. C. Williams, 2000), the expectations from a union official can only be fulfilled if someone has another person at home taking care of his or her needs, as well as his or her children, thus, by someone who has no external responsibilities (Bradley, 1999, p. 164; Langowski, 2015, p. 67). Even if women wanted to participate actively in the unions or take on leadership roles, the difficulties of combining activism with paid work and the family have often deterred them (Bradley, 1999, p. 175; Kirton, 1999, p. 214).

Not recognizing the difficulty of combining paid work, domestic responsibilities, and union activism, the traditional view that women are less engaged to or interested in the labor movement has emerged (Bradley, 1999, p. 164; Milkman, 2007, 2016; Yates, 2006). This

creates and reinforces the image of the normative member or official, who is male, whereas women are seen as problematic (Franzway, 2000, p. 258). Consequently, unions have created their own norms that ideal members and officials must follow, and these are based on the typical male experience. Thus, they can be considered "masculine norms". In this chapter, I will demonstrate that BDDSZ preserves these masculine "ideal member norms" derived from traditional unionism, even though the ideal worker in the crèche is female and feminine.

5.1.2 Public-sector unionism: does the feminization of unions change them?

Primarily because of the increase in public-sector unionism (e.g. Mellor et al, 1994), contrary to the traditional, male-dominated unions, the unions of the 21st-century are typically organizations with a predominantly female membership (Cobble, 1993; Milkman, 2016). Women workers are represented in ever-growing percentages by unions and women are more commonly found in leadership positions as well (Milkman, 2007, p. 68). This feminization of public-sector unions, according to some, challenges the traditional, masculine unions in that the norms and priorities by which they operate are different and they can be vehicles of change, through, for instance, pushing a gender equality agenda (Boston, 2015; Franzway, 2000; Milkman, 2007, 2016). Some authors argue that this possibility is limited, and even unions with predominantly female membership remain masculinized institutions (Bradley, 1999; Dean, 2015; Kirton, 1999). This section reviews the relevant literature and discusses how the case of BDDSZ contributes to it.

The previously discussed traditional, typically macho, and militant unionism can be questioned by public-sector unions (Boston, 2015, p. 364; Franzway, 2000, p. 262; Milkman, 2016, p. 197). For instance, the language and imagery can be less male-dominated (Boston, 2015, p. 393; Milkman, 2007, p. 80). Unions in services and the public sector have also been more receptive to incorporating gender equality agenda than other unions, some of them became

strong advocates (Boston, 2015, p. 386; Bradley, 1999, p. 164; Milkman, 2007, p. 67). For example, the work-life conflict has been politicized by some unions (Milkman, 2016, p. 198). Some unions in the public sector have started to tackle the issue of sex segregation on the labor market and the persistent undervaluation of "women's work" (Daphne, 1995, p. 83; Müller, 2018, p. 6). Revaluation campaigns have been carried out, for example, in Germany and Denmark to address the stereotypes about female-dominated jobs (Müller, 2018, p. 29). Here, the root cause of low pay for women has been identified as the cultural undervaluation of skills, and consequently, professions stereotypically associated with women. As it will be demonstrated in this chapter, such awareness is not present within BDDSZ.

Just because a union has predominantly female membership, it does not necessarily mean that the traditional, militant union style and techniques are questioned or challenged (Milkman, 2016, p. 168), as the case of BDDSZ will demonstrate in this chapter. Some authors argue that despite the rapid feminization of the labor movement, most unions have not changed much, and the traditional, male-dominated dynamics are still persistent (Bradley, 1999, p. 169; Dean, 2015, p. 37). For instance, it is argued that the image associated with unions is still a masculine one (Kirton, 1999, p. 214). "Masculine heroics" is still needed, as well as a level of aggression and assertion even if unions are feminized (Bradley, 1999, p. 171). This also means that unions with a female-dominated membership are, to a large extent, still understood in terms of class, where gender is neglected (Bradley, 1999, p. 188). A feminized organized workforce does not mean that engagement with gender equality issues is embedded in contemporary unionism (Dean, 2015, p. 37). Also, it is important to mention that the male-dominated industrial unionism did not cease to exist either, but rather, two worlds of unionism can exist simultaneously (Milkman, 2007).

Furthermore, while even in the male-dominated unions, women have started to take on leadership roles in growing proportions, they often have to face stereotypes and not being taken

seriously and being patronized by employers (Bradley, 1999, p. 181) or fellow male union activists (Cockburn, 1991, p. 112). Sexism and even sexual harassment are often encountered by union women (Kirton, 1999, p. 219). Furthermore, women often only find their way to the lower level of union leadership (Langowski, 2015, p. 74). Simultaneously, however, women who become leaders in unions can draw a sense of satisfaction from this work and it can also provide them with an opportunity that is otherwise not available to them in public life (Franzway, 2000, p. 260). For instance, they have the chance to develop different skills and make autonomous decisions (ibid, p. 263).

In the Hungarian context, the feminization of some unions also took place and it has been argued that women use women's sections to push for gender equality agenda within Hungarian unions (Langowski, 2015, p. 48). However, attention to women in public-sector unionism in post-socialist Hungary has been scarce and the question of whether a challenge is made here to traditional unionism was not analyzed. BDDSZ, being a public-sector union representing a workforce that is almost a hundred percent female and where the membership consists also of women, could be a good example of a union where traditional gender-neutral organization or masculine norms are challenged. As the case of BDDSZ shows, the feminization of unions and the expansion of public-sector unionism do not necessarily mean a challenge to traditional, masculine-dominated unionism. This might be due to the different role unions played during state-socialism than in the Western or Anglo-American contexts where they served as a connection between the regime and the workplace (e.g. Kallaste & Woolfson, 2009; Neumann, 2005), thus reinforcing hierarchies instead of challenging them. Awareness of gender issues is also generally low in Hungary (e.g. Nagy, 2005) and an anti-gender discourse is prevalent (e.g. Grzebalska & Pető, 2018), making it unlikely that unions, already in a weakened position could challenge gender inequality.

5.2 Analysis

5.2.1 Organizing a feminized workforce: can the ideal crèche employee be an ideal union member and official?

In this section, I describe the requirements of fulfilling the norms of the ideal union member and ideal union official to demonstrate the ways in which these are similar to the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; J. C. Williams, 2000) in that they privilege the typical male experience. I demonstrate that a member, but especially someone with an official position must show engagement and dedication towards BDDSZ in the form of attending events, protests, participating in decisions, and so on. Clearly, such involvement costs time and energy which conflicts with many women's domestic responsibilities (Boston, 2015; Bradley, 1999; Kirton, 1999; Milkman, 2016). As BDDSZ organizes a feminized workforce and a workplace where the ideal worker is female and feminine – as discussed in Chapter 4 –, a conflict emerges between the good crèche employee and the good union activist. This means that BDDSZ does not utilize femaleness and femininity the way crèche employees do in the workplace. Furthermore, it shows that unions that organize a predominantly female workforce do not necessarily challenge the ways in which traditionally unions have operated (Bradley, 1999; Dean, 2015; Kirton, 1999) and can remain "greedy institutions" (Coser, 1974; Franzway, 2000) where female members can be considered problematic (Franzway, 2000, p. 258).

The ideal union member is engaged and dedicated to the organization (see e.g. Franzway, 2000; Milkman, 2016). It was a generally shared opinion among my interview partners that it is not enough for a member to pay the membership fees, but rather, workers should engage somewhat actively with BDDSZ's work. This active engagement can involve participating in the union's decisions, attending events, and most importantly, participating in protests, marches, and strikes. Eszter, for instance, who is in her late twenties and has been

actively involved with the youth wing of BDDSZ, explained what can be expected from a union member:

> Yes, it can be expected that [they] show up. They should be there at different events. When there are protests, they should come to them because one person alone can't protest. So, being present. So, being actively present, so that it's not like one percent of our wages disappearing from our bank account, but that we are there when we are needed.

As can be seen, Eszter believes that the union needs active members that can be counted on not only for the financial contribution but for their presence at different events and demonstrations. As Barbara, a union official in her late forties explained, union members cannot simply wait for BDDSZ to do something for them. She explained that if someone is only paying membership fees, they cannot be considered a "good member". I argue that the expectations from members assume that they can afford to invest time and energy into the union, much like the imagined ideal worker of gendered organizations (Acker, 1990).

As these discussed expectations towards members exist, it was a common complaint within BDDSZ that the workers, members are not "engaged enough", they do not "care enough". The workers were also described as passive, indifferent, lazy, and as not wanting to participate in making change. This means that the membership generally does not live up to the standards of being an "ideal member". These complaints are similar to those that have been historically voiced by union officials regarding women members (see e.g. Bradley, 1999). For instance, as Rita, a higher-level union official in her fifties explained, protests cannot be too effective because of the passivity of the membership:

> It is very hard to organize any kind of campaign, demonstration, protest because so few people can be mobilized. And this is because of indifference: why should I go when we won't achieve anything. I always tell members like this that listen, the union has fought for so many things […], give all this back to me, please […], and then you'll know what the union has achieved because I'm sure your wages will be lower.

According to Rita, members do not participate and are passive because they cannot really see what advantage they can receive from engaging with the union's work. I argue that this type of

complaint does not consider that the largely female membership might not be able to afford to engage actively with BDDSZ.

While thus the general membership is also expected to be somewhat active within the labor movement, this is especially important for officials of the union. Probably one of the key expectations from union secretaries is that they show up at protests or marches. This sets an example for the membership. When asked about the duties of union officials, almost everyone I talked to agreed that going to BDDSZ demonstrations is the most important. I argue that this requirement reinforces the idea that the ideal official is someone who is not tied down by responsibilities outside of work and unionism and thus is available to go to demonstrations. The following quote by Orsolya, a union secretary in her fifties, illustrates the importance of union officials attending these events:

> Since [becoming a secretary] I have been there at almost every protest because I believe that this can be expected from me as a secretary. If I'm not there, who will be? [The president] also says always that if the secretary is not there, then the trustee won't be there, and the member won't be there because the secretary is the one setting the example. The secretary is the one who must set an example for the membership to finally wake up.

Here, Orsolya explained that it is the duty of a secretary to go to protests as she is the one at the top of a chain: if she does not go, nobody can motivate an ordinary member to attend either. As protests and other types of demonstrations are thought to be the most important tool for BDDSZ, the importance of many secretaries attending with their branches was emphasized all the time.

Meanwhile, participation in events, team-building activities in one's free time appears to also be a requirement. Attending such events is not only important for staying informed about the union's work and showing one's dedication but organizing them is an important way to create a sense of community and get other members engaged with the union's work. For instance, Anikó, who held the position of a secretary before, shared with me a list of events she had organized: she mentioned various dinners, wine tastings, excursions, and theatre visits. All of these served to create a closer bond between members of the local BDDSZ branch. While I

was at BDDSZ, I participated in the organization of an event on a grander scale as the 30th-anniversary picnic of the union took place in June 2019. As I have attended many meetings in preparation for this event and the picnic itself – which was attended by hundreds of people –, I have witnessed how much work different secretaries and other, higher-level officials have put into the organization of a single such event. Every detail of the picnic was organized by volunteering union officials. The organization and attendance of this single event illustrate the amount of effort and dedication that is required from and that is given by members, but especially officials of BDDSZ. This highlights that the idea that female members might not find time to attend events, or that the timing of these events is inconvenient for someone with domestic responsibilities (e.g. Gregory & Milner, 2009, p. 130; Kirton, 1999, p. 214) is not considered.

I argue that the requirements from members and officials discussed so far show that BDDSZ, like other unions, is a "greedy institution" (Coser, 1974; Franzway, 2000) that requires the investment of a great amount of time, energy, and loyalty (e.g. Bradley, 1999; Franzway, 2000; Mellor et al, 1994). Its "ideal member norm" and "ideal official norm" conform to the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; J. C. Williams, 2000). It is thus especially hard for women with domestic responsibilities to conform to the norms of ideal union official or ideal union member (Bradley, 1999, p. 164; Kirton, 1999, p. 216; Langowski, 2015, p. 54; Milkman, 2016, p. 198) as they are already committed to another "greedy institution", the family (Franzway, 2000, p. 259). Not only do the women of BDDSZ have to perform at a full-time job, but almost all interviewed women who are older than thirty are also married and have children. Some difficulties I had faced when scheduling interviews highlighted the conflict between domestic responsibilities and union activism early on. Several union members whom I approached with asking for an interview told me that while they would really want to help me and speak about their work and the union, they simply cannot get away from their children in the afternoons and

weekends. A few interviews could not happen at all because of this, with others we squeezed in a meeting during their working hours while the children at the crèche were sleeping.

Some women I talked to have given up leadership roles because they conflicted with their responsibilities in the family and the home. For instance, Csilla told me how she gave up on her involvement in the youth wing, back when she was in her twenties:

> I was very young then, 22 or 21… what 21, I was 18 [laughs]. So, I was 18 when I started in the crèche and I automatically joined the union.[24] I then led the youth wing [in my district] for five or six years until I gave birth to my son. Then I stayed at home with my daughter [as well], but I kept paying the membership fees.

Thus, while Csilla remained committed to the union by paying her fees after having two children, she quit the leadership position. Later, when her children were older, she became a secretary in another district. Somewhat similarly, for the two women in their twenties I interviewed, it was evident that they would need to step back from active involvement in the union if they had children. While Dorottya also explained that once she has a family, she will probably withdraw from being actively involved in the union, Eszter explicitly cited her plan to have a child soon as the reason for stepping back from involvement in the youth wing. She explained that while moving cities also influenced her decision, her plan to start a family with her partner was the primary motivator behind her decision to withdraw. Her example suggests, that, as discussed in Chapter 4, women who work in crèches can achieve work-life balance, but this is questioned and threatened by being involved in union activism.

Considering the fact that most secretaries and higher-level officials are in their forties and fifties, it appears that women whose children are already older or even adults or have no children might have more time and thus be able to commit more to the union. Some of the interviews pointed to this as well. I claim that while crèche employees, through the utilization

[24] Here, the union referred to is not BDDSZ but its predecessor during state socialism. Many of the interview partners have been members since before 1989 and thus started out not with BDDSZ but with state socialist unions.

of feminine capital in the workplace carve out a space for themselves where pregnancy or childrearing are not an anomaly, for a union official, these hinder participation and engagement. Orsolya's case is the best example for a woman who could take on the position of a union secretary because she has fewer domestic responsibilities after her sons have grown up:

> I like to do this, […] I went to bed last night at half past midnight because I was still doing union work. So… I need this. For me to feel good in my skin, I need this, but I also have to add that both my older sons live [in another country] and only the youngest lives with me. So, I need to keep myself busy. […] I can say that now it is work that fills my life, it fills this void, be it the union, the crèche, or even babysitting. I need these.

Orsolya, who is in her mid-fifties, even though raises a son on her own, conceptualizes her work as a union secretary as something that can occupy her now that she does not have to care for her other two children. The fact that her sons moved away not only gives her more time to be involved in BDDSZ but also enables her to spend her energy and caring capacities on the union.

So far, I aimed to demonstrate the conflict between the ideal crèche employee and the ideal BDDSZ member and official and the ways in which the expectations from members and officials are hard to fulfill for a feminized membership. Members are expected to be actively involved in the union's work by partaking in decisions and participating in events. The expectations from officials, such as secretaries are higher: they need to show dedication and be present for protests, marches, as well as free-time activities. I argued that these expectations create the norms of the ideal union member and official that privilege men's typical life experience by assuming that union activists can afford to invest time and energy into the organization. Meanwhile, as my evidence also showed, women's domestic responsibilities conflict with union activism, causing many to step back from previous leadership roles. Thus, as I argued in Chapter 4, while for crèche employees, work-life balance can be achieved, and domestic responsibilities do not hinder them in fulfilling the norms of the ideal crèche employee, they are in the way of fulfilling that of the ideal union official. Therefore, I claim that there is a conflict between the feminine and female ideal worker of crèches and the

masculine expectations of the union which proves that femininity and femaleness are not wielded in the union setting as they are in the crèche workplace. I also claim that the standards of good membership prevalent in traditional, masculine unions (e.g. Bradley, 1999; Franzway, 2000; Kirton, 1999) are not questioned by the feminized BDDSZ.

5.2.2 Masculine leadership as a tool for union success

In this section, I argue that in BDDSZ, a masculine, rational, charismatic leadership is idealized, along with union tactics that can be linked to traditionally male-dominated unionism (Bradley, 1999; Franzway, 2000; Kirton, 1999; Milkman, 2016). Masculine-typed language is also used to a great extent. Among confrontation or negotiation methods, the utilization of "masculine heroics" is idealized, meaning the utilization of a certain, more aggressive form of masculinity (Bradley, 1999, p. 171; Franzway, 2000, p. 264). Acting as a "social man" at the negotiating table (Sorenson, 1984, cited by Acker, 1990) is deemed to be necessary to achieve success. Therefore, femininity and femaleness are not utilized by the union leadership. Consequently, BDDSZ does not challenge the traditional form of unionism that idealizes masculine-typed organizing and activism (see e.g. Bradley, 1999; Dean, 2015; Kirton, 1999). In the following, I will discuss that the current president of BDDSZ is idealized as a leader because she dedicates a great amount of time and energy to the union and makes personal sacrifice and because she possesses the masculine qualities that the membership deems necessary, such as toughness or rationality.

Generally, within BDDSZ, the current president is considered to be an ideal, charismatic leader. Throughout both my internship and the interviews, I have seen that she is considered to be the perfect person to be at the head of the union. The leader is described as having substantial prestige whose way of leading the organization is one of the key reasons for its success. As many of my interview partners explained, due to the personal charm of the president, she is

taken seriously and is an example to other unions and BDDSZ's members. Moreover, the president is idealized because she puts in an extraordinary effort to union work and constantly works overtime and because she possesses the masculine qualities that are deemed necessary for leading a union. It is these latter two aspects I describe in detail in the remainder of this section.

The current leader is "ideal" in part because she puts in an extraordinary effort to union work and constantly works overtime. For the "greedy institution" that is a union (Coser, 1974; Franzway, 2000), it is its leader that has to fulfill the highest requirements. While working with her at the central office of BDDSZ, I have seen that the president was always in before anyone else – usually already at seven in the morning – and left later than anyone else, often continuing work from home. Her constant overtime was recognized by everyone I talked to. Just as in informal conversations, in the interview with her, she also discussed how many hours she puts into the union. With her words, she "has become a slave to the union". This aspect was emphasized by several of the interview partners, like Anikó, a senior official in the union:

> A good leader is someone who stands up for the workers like [our president]. […] Basically, it is someone who sacrifices themselves because I think she [the president] sacrifices herself so that it is better for the crèche workers. I think she works an awful lot.

In this quote, Anikó showed that the degree of dedication and investment of time and energy that the current president shows are required from a leader. In a similar vein, Lilla discussed that while she would be sad to see the president go, it is not good that she "gives up her life" for the union. Here, she explained that by this, she means that the president does not yet have children and thus equated having a life with starting a family. It is also evident from this that Lilla believes that the job of leading a union is not for a woman with children, with domestic and care responsibilities. According to Lilla, a female leader thus must make a choice between having a family or having a leadership position, something that crèche employees do not have to make. All this is because giving up significantly from one's private life is necessary for

someone to be considered a good leader (see e.g. Franzway, 2000). Without working so many extra hours and sacrificing free time, a union leader cannot be always available and reliable – and thus credible –, something that was described by union officials as important. For instance, both Rita and Lilla described that the fact that the president is always available to give advice and to listen to concerns is one of the most important qualities a leader can have. Then, this always-availability assumes a leader who has no domestic or care responsibilities, which is more typical of men. Therefore, it can be considered a masculine expectation.

Regarding the charismatic leadership (Weber, 1947, cited by Eberhardt & Merolla, 2017) style of the president, it is a masculine type of charisma that is idealized and emphasized. While different feminine traits could also be required for a charismatic leader (Eberhardt & Merolla, 2017), the interview partners generally emphasized those that are associated with masculinity. Here, some qualities, such as toughness or militancy are more associated with dominant working-class masculinity and thus with the labor movement's traditional imagery (e.g. Milkman, 2016). Thus, importantly, while one does not have to be male to be considered a good union leader, stereotypically masculine – mostly working-class masculine – characteristics are required.

As the current female president is idealized as the perfect leader, it is evident that there is no requirement of being male for a leader. In fact, the idea of male leadership was rejected by many. To this extent, femaleness can be capitalized on by the leadership, but only if coupled with masculine presentation. This is because as, for instance, Barbara and Zsuzsa, two union officials, explained, having a male leader in a union that organizes a feminized workforce would not be credible. As Barbara put it:

> I think it would be very weird to have a man as a leader in a union that primarily organizes women. I'm not sure how accepted this would be […], I don't think there would be trust within the profession. This is such a feminized environment with a profession where the main job is care, and these things like care, empathy, delicacy are all tied to women… With a guy, they [the workers] would feel like he doesn't get what's going on. Therefore, they wouldn't accept a guy

> as a BDDSZ president. […] And if the membership can't trust its president, the whole unionism goes down the drain.

Here, Barbara explained that women working in crèches could not accept a man as union president because they would assume that he does not know anything about the profession. Clearly, this idea is linked to the general exclusion of men from the field and the ideas about men's capabilities in performing this profession, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Importantly, male leadership is furthermore rejected because the current female leadership already possesses the stereotypically masculine qualities deemed necessary for leading a union. Just as traditionally, "masculine heroics" was the ideal for union leadership (e.g. Bradley, 1999, p. 171; Franzway, 2000, p. 264), it is not different for BDDSZ either. For instance, Ági, a senior union official in her sixties, discussed that there is no need for a man as the women of BDDSZ are already "militant enough". According to the interview partners, it is the masculine qualities that matter when it comes to negotiations and advocacy work and not the sex of the leader. When, for instance, Barbara continued the above-cited quote, she added:

> It is not necessarily a guy who they [the government and the employers] fear. Rather, I would say, it is the preparedness that they are afraid of. So, not the guy, but this tough efficiency.

As it is apparent, Barbara believes that the toughness – which is a quality traditionally linked to working-class and labor movement imagery (Kirton, 1999; Milkman, 2016) – of a leader is much more important than whether they are male or female. Similarly, Adrienn, a former secretary, explained how personality matters and not one's sex:

> I think [our success] is because of the leadership and because [our president] is really fit for this role. At least that's what I think. If we wouldn't have a leader with a personality like this or someone who is pushy or resilient… I think this matters more than whether [the leader] is a woman or a man.

In these cited quotes, different qualities associated with men, masculinity, and labor were mentioned, like "being pushy" or "being tough". Other interview partners mentioned the importance of other skills and qualities, often using masculine-typed language as well. For instance, the need to "fight" was emphasized by Rita and Csilla, along with the need to be a bit

"violent" at times. Being a bit like a "hound" was also mentioned by Barbara, while Vera, a senior official discussed the requirement of "having balls". The importance of calm and diplomatic negotiating skills was also discussed by some. Thus, some qualities and skills that were regarded as negative when possessed by crèche employees are idealized and required from a charismatic and good union leader. I argue that this proves the non-utilization of femininity by union leadership and the idealization of masculinity instead.

One of the most important qualities that is required from a union leader and during negotiations involving the union is rationality. The devaluation of emotionality – which is stereotypically linked to women (see e.g. Pateman, 1988) – compared to rationality was emphasized by several interview partners and was apparent in a meeting with government officials that was also referred to in the Introduction. What this also demonstrates is that a female union leader – and possibly, a lower-level official, like a secretary as well – must possess masculine capital and conduct negotiations with "masculine heroics" (Bradley, 1999, p. 171; Franzway, 2000, p. 264). For instance, Mária, a senior BDDSZ official in her sixties, discussed the following:

> [The president] always has the exact, thorough answer to everything, the legal answer to everything. She is not emotional; she always tries to remain factual.

While thus the need to be rational or factual is emphasized, it was a complaint sometimes voiced that crèche employees and BDDSZ members are "too emotional". For instance, Ági, a higher-level official presented the problem of fluctuating membership when discussing this issue:

> Just one more thing that I find important… Obviously, it also happened to me in my life and in my more than forty years [in the profession and in the union] that my emotions influenced me. However, it would be very important to not let our emotions influence us when it comes to decisions about the union. So, for instance, one shouldn't quit [the union] because they are offended. […] So, the emotions, especially the negative emotions shouldn't be… It is not easy of course because we often make decisions based on emotions.

What Ági found problematic here is that union members base their decision around whether to join or quit BDDSZ based on emotions instead of rational, calculated arguments. Another official, Vera, voiced a similar complaint about crèche employees in general:

> It is very important [for a leader and a secretary] to separate one's feelings from the factual matters. These women in the crèche are determined by their emotions and they simply cannot look at a problem or a task without emotions. […] I don't know how to put this, but you just can't even understand what they are saying because it is so full of emotions. […] It is very important when you put things forward to remain factual, that your arguments are supported with data, because you won't achieve anything just with emotions.

The general idea here is that rationality is more valuable and effective in negotiations and advocacy work than emotionality. Meanwhile, crèche employees and union members cannot live up to the standards of rationality to the degree that for instance, the president does.

While, according to union members and officials, the leadership of the union lives up to the standards of rationality, I witnessed at a meeting at a ministry that the union's arguments were dismissed on grounds of "emotionality" that I discussed in the Introduction of this thesis. As mentioned there, the BDDSZ representative at this reconciliation meeting used rational, data-driven arguments supported with numbers, for instance, referred to survey data. Nevertheless, her arguments were dismissed by the male chair of the meeting by continuously emphasizing that the unions are "too emotional" and an affair such as this should not be "about emotions".

This latter example illustrates the difficulties of wielding masculinity or masculine capital by women (see e.g. McCall, 1992, p. 845). The union leadership is expected to exhibit "masculine heroics" (e.g. Bradley, 1999, p. 171; Franzway, 2000, p. 264), act as a "social man" (Sorenson, 1984, cited by Acker, 1990) at the negotiating table, and possess important masculine qualities such as rationality and toughness. The current female president embodies all this, but because of her sex, she can still be dismissed by male government officials. Dismissing women on the grounds of "emotionality" and assuming that they cannot be rational

are common (see e.g. Pateman, 1988). Consequently, women are often dismissed by men in settings similar to that of union-government negotiations, such as executive meetings, a phenomenon that has been referred to as "gender sidelining" (e.g. Fink, 2018) or "double-bind" (e.g. Fernandez et al, 2019). This, I argue, demonstrates that there can be social sanctions for women wielding masculine capital (Franzway, 2000, p. 266; McCall, 1992, p. 846). Meanwhile, as the general dismissal of "emotionality" suggests, feminine capital – or, the same reliance on emotional and caring labor that is effective within crèche work – cannot really be wielded within the sphere of union-government negotiations. Nevertheless, BDDSZ relies on masculinity instead of femininity in these settings because as it appears, they still deem it more effective.

From this recent example, it is also evident that negotiations with the government or the employer can be profoundly gendered where it matters whether the government official sitting at the other side of the table is male or female. In the above-mentioned example, the male official dismissed the unions' arguments. Meanwhile, both in the interview with BDDSZ's president and during my internship it was apparent that meetings with Ildikó Bárány, the female ministerial commissioner responsible for the expansion of the crèche network are much more efficient, suggestions of the union – even if not always – can be incorporated into policy, if taken through her. In our interview, the president told me that as this person also comes from the profession, in the current situation when crèche expansion is high on the government's agenda, it is useful to have someone to communicate with who knows what the field is like. Earlier, in an informal conversation while I did my internship at the central office, the president elaborated also on how much it matters whether she negotiates with a man or a woman. When she goes to meet the female ministerial commissioner, she is greeted by a kiss on the cheek. Meanwhile, there are several male government officials who "do not even greet you with a handshake". Emphasis was put by the president on the humiliating feeling of the latter. Apparently, it is easier for the union to get demands through these woman-to-woman meetings,

using the same, rational, data-driven arguments that are utilized in settings with male officials as well. This suggests that drawing on masculinity might not bring strong sanctions when both parties are female as the women at the negotiating table do not face the general dismissal of men (the latter discussed by e.g. Fernandez et al, 2019; Fink, 2018).

Before closing this section, it is important to mention that not only the charismatic leader is idealized for possessing stereotypically masculine qualities and skills, but traditional union tactics, such as striking or protesting (see e.g. Bradley, 1999) are also idealized as ways to achieve success. When asked about ways to achieve things for BDDSZ, most interview partners – besides emphasizing the importance of the person of the president – mentioned protesting, marching, striking, and sometimes media presence and social media campaigns. These are examples of traditional union militancy that has been typical of the male-dominated labor movement (see e.g. Boston, 2015; Bradley, 1999). These types of activities, as discussed before, also assume a member who can afford the time and energy invested into them. This, I argue, suggests that BDDSZ, even though representing workers who utilize femininity and femaleness and being a feminized public-sector union, which could possibly question traditional unionism (as suggested by e.g. Boston, 2015; Franzway, 2000; Milkman, 2016), sticks with traditional, masculine-typed organization and strategy. In the next section, I will demonstrate how this, among others, highlights the lack of awareness on gender issues within BDDSZ.

In this section, I argued that in BDDSZ, a type of leadership is idealized that is masculine, charismatic, and rational, along with other, masculine-typed union tactics. The aim here was to show that instead of relying on femininity, the union utilizes masculinity through a president who embodies the qualities deemed necessary for successful leadership. Femaleness is used only to the extent that a male leader is thought to bring distrust in a profession of almost exclusively women. I showed that the current leader is considered ideal because she serves the "greedy institution" well by investing extraordinary time and energy and because she displays

all the necessary masculine qualities, such as rationality or toughness. I briefly discussed the ways in which women relying on masculinity can still be dismissed by male negotiation partners.

5.2.3 Advocating for the "workers": gender-neutral organization and lack of consciousness

In this section, the aim is to demonstrate further the non-utilization of femininity and femaleness by BDDSZ, as opposed to their use by crèche employees. I argue that the union's work follows a gender-neutral organizational logic (see e.g. Milkman, 2016) which shows a lack of consciousness on gender issues within the union. I claim that even though BDDSZ uses gendered language to refer to its feminized membership and thus conceptualizes the workers as female through using words such as "girls", the workers advocated for are gender-neutral. Because of the lack of awareness of the gendered nature of both crèche work and unionism, BDDSZ cannot and does not consciously rely on femininity or femaleness as capitals. Instead, as demonstrated so far in this chapter, stereotypically masculine tools are idealized and utilized. Thus, even though BDDSZ is a feminized public-sector union, it does not advocate for gender issues, as opposed to some such unions (e.g. Boston, 2015; Franzway, 2000; Milkman, 2016; Müller, 2018).

BDDSZ conceptualizes its members as female. In fact, the way the members are talked about excludes men entirely via a language that always already assumes femaleness. Whenever the members or workers in general were mentioned, both during my internship and in the interviews, they were referred to as "girls" (*lányok*). Sometimes even the word "chicks" (*csajok*) was used. It is important to emphasize that talking about crèche employees as "crèche girls" (*bölcsis lányok*) appears to be prevalent within the profession. Furthermore, the symbolism of BDDSZ can be considered feminine. Its logo is a flower and its motto refers to the importance of "care" both within the profession and the union as it states: "You take care

of the future, our job is to make your life better. For you, with you, but not instead of you." Here, while emphasizing solidarity and working together – a traditional element of unionism – together with the flower-image and the emphasis on the care work the members perform, traditional, masculine symbolism (Kirton, 1999; Milkman, 2016) is challenged at least to some extent and BDDSZ appeals to a female membership. A further example for the conceptualization of members as always female came when I attended a meeting of local secretaries while I worked at the central office of the union. Here, a representative of the branch that organizes employees in the child protection services raised the issue of sexual harassment or assault within the social sphere. In a discussion that followed, it was evident that the secretaries present thought of sexual harassment as an issue that cannot affect crèche workers at the workplace as all workers are female. While clearly assuming that only men can perpetrate sexual harassment and assault, it was also evident that as the membership is assumed entirely female, this issue did not have to be taken up by the union. I argue that conceptualizing members as female, without exception, stands in contrast with norms that favor men or assume a membership that does not have domestic responsibilities, as discussed previously in this chapter. This discrepancy can probably be traced back to the long history of unionism where women were excluded or discouraged from joining (Boston, 2015; Bradley, 1999; Milkman, 2016). Generally, in Hungary during state socialism, women were not considered subjects who can afford to be fully devoted to the party (Fodor, 2002) and thus to the union affiliated with the party. The organizational structure that has been established is not questioned by BDDSZ, but of course, this can possibly transform in the future.

The utilized gender-typed language contrasts with the way gender is not taken into consideration by BDDSZ when it comes to the ways it organizes. This means that while members are thought of as female, their femaleness is not considered to require attention from the union or to make a different form of organization necessary. I argue that there is a lack of

awareness of the gendered nature of both crèche work and unionism within BDDSZ because many issues that seem quite crucial for the ways in which the union can organize and operate are not recognized by officials or members at all. This signifies that gender is not considered important besides the aspect of class and the logic of advocacy for the union remains gender-neutral (Bradley, 1999, Milkman, 2016).

Importantly, for instance, the conflict between paid work, domestic work, and union activism is not recognized or accounted for. This means that the union does not recognize the ways in which its expectations conflict with the life of its average members. As discussed above, while the conflict was discussed by some interview partners to a certain extent, when asked about why they think people are reluctant to join or take on leadership positions, the conflict of domestic responsibilities and union activism was rarely cited. Instead, fear of repercussions – like cuts to wages or losing one's position as a crèche director –, a low trust in unionism – which is prevalent in Hungary (see e.g. Szabó, 2014; Tóth et al, 2005) – and the problematics of giving up one percent of one's gross income each month were cited as important reasons stopping people from joining or being active. While all of these reasons are most likely important factors and it is crucial to recognize that not only gendered issues are at play hindering the union's organizing efforts, the non-reflection on a feminized membership's responsibilities in the home is notable. Meanwhile, as demonstrated above, even though many interview partners themselves experienced the conflict between their domestic and union responsibilities, citing the lack of time for engagement with BDDSZ was sometimes seen as an excuse. For instance, at the end of our interview with Rita, a higher-level union official, we discussed how hard it is for BDDSZ to find people for different positions. I mentioned that from what I have seen during my internship, union activism is very demanding, and many workers do not have the time to engage in it. To this, Rita said that one can find the time for whatever one wants to, and mentioning these different reasons is just an excuse. I claim that this reasoning

demonstrates the lack of consciousness within BDDSZ on the gendered nature of activism and the conflict between what can be considered the ideal crèche employee and the ideal union member. This also means that the traditional thinking of unions that women members are not properly engaged (Bradley, 1999; Franzway, 2000; Milkman, 2016) is not questioned, or is even reinforced.

As discussed before, the idea of male leadership was generally rejected by my interview partners. At the same time, the idea that a male leader or a male union official might be taken more seriously or rejected less – which, as the above-discussed example where the female union representatives' claims were rejected on grounds of "emotionality", might indeed be the case – was not considered. I described before that the current leader, according to people I talked to, is taken seriously enough already because of her charisma and prestige. Consequently, most interview partners said they did not think that a male leader might achieve more. Only two union officials, Rita and Mária discussed that it is possible that a man might have more possibility to achieve something with the government. As Rita discussed when asked about what would be different if BDDSZ had men in the leadership:

> I think unions […] where there are lots of men work very well. The president of SZEF is a man, and he has a self-presentation that I think is needed. I think that in many cases it would be good [for the president of BDDSZ] to have a vice-president who is a man, for instance. Perhaps they would look differently at BDDSZ, maybe… I don't know. But maybe.

Here, Rita thought about possibly being more successful or being taken more seriously by government officials if the union had at least one man in the leadership. This suggests that some, even if not all, union officials have considered how negotiations and advocacy might be gendered.

Many gendered issues that might contribute to the fact that crèche work is undervalued and that might limit BDDSZ's efforts to elevate the value of this work, were not recognized or considered. For instance, the connection between the feminization of the field and its

undervaluation (see e.g. England, 2005) was not made. Csilla, a secretary in her fifties simply said that crèche work "has always been devalued" and "always been on the periphery". Therefore, she had not thought about the root causes of this and did not question it. Similarly, in an informal conversation I had with a higher-level official of the union while I was at BDDSZ, I discussed the topic of this thesis with her. Then, she told me that she does not believe that crèche work is undervalued because it is feminized. Rather, she discussed how these professions associated with care are devalued because they always have been. What was often discussed by interview partners was that all workers, especially workers employed by the state are undervalued in Hungary and this is not something specific to crèche work. For instance, Lilla, a former secretary, discussed the following:

> The truth is, the members of other unions within SZEF… those are all undervalued workers with bad wages. […] I really don't think that in this country a railroad worker or anyone similar is more valued than the work we do. So, I don't think [that BDDSZ's tasks were different from these other unions'].

Here, Lilla answered the question about the similarities between different unions she is familiar with by stating that the goals of all unions in Hungary are similar because all state employees are undervalued and have low wages. Thus, she did not differentiate between feminized or masculinized professions. Overall, the idea that a feminized field might be undervalued because it is feminized was not present. Meanwhile, as it has been demonstrated by other researchers, this connection has been made by other European public-sector unions which could then successfully advocate for a revaluation of feminized work (Müller, 2018). I argue that the worker advocated for is gender-neutral precisely because these connections are not made or recognized and thus, women's specific interests as part of a feminized workforce cannot be advocated for.

When I asked interview partners about the issues discussed here so far, the answer often was that they had not considered these before and did not think about them until I asked them. For instance, Ági, a senior official in her sixties, discussed that she never considered why there

are so few men in crèche work. She also discussed how this just seemed natural to her because she spent all her professional life among other women. Similarly, Adrienn, a member in her forties, discussed how she never considered what would change with male leadership. I argue that this demonstrates the lack of awareness of these issues.

Here, I do not wish to say whether BDDSZ's efforts are hindered by this lack of awareness, but merely show that the gendered nature of both crèche work and unionism had not really been considered by members and officials of this union.[25] In fact, the lack of awareness about all the issues discussed in this section is hardly surprising considering Hungary's current anti-gender politics (e.g. Grzebalska & Pető, 2018), the non-questioning of women's roles as mothers and the household division of labor both during state socialism and since the regime change (Fodor, 2002; Nagy, 2005; Zimmerman, 2010), as well as the Hungarian public's generally traditional thinking on gender and gender roles (e.g. Blaskó, 2005; Pongrátz & S. Molnár, 2011).

The aim of this section was to demonstrate the gender neutrality of BDDSZ's organizational logic and the lack of awareness of the gendered nature of crèche work and unionism. I demonstrated that while members are conceptualized as female, gender is not considered to be significant. For instance, the conflict between domestic responsibilities and union activism is not accounted for, the idea that a male leader might be taken more seriously is not considered, and the connection between the feminization of crèche work and its undervaluation is not made. Due to the lack of consciousness on these issues, I claim that it is evident that femininity and femaleness are not drawn on in BDDSZ's organization or strategy.

[25] While it falls out of the scope of this thesis, it is worth mentioning that not only gender-related issues go unrecognized within BDDSZ. A recognition of Roma women working in crèches was also missing, while there was even an explicit government campaign to recruit more Roma crèche employees (see e.g. Kormany.hu, 2015). No critical reflection was made on the subtle homophobia that I witnessed, most evident from the idea that male crèche employees are „homosexuals" as discussed in Chapter 4.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter argued that the feminine and female capitals possessed by crèche employees are not utilized by BDDSZ. In its organization and strategies, the union does not capitalize on femininity and instead relies on and idealizes masculine or gender-neutral logics. First, I described the requirements for the ideal union member and the ideal union official. I argued that the expectation to be dedicated to the movement, to invest time and energy assumes a member who does not have domestic or care responsibilities, and thus, the norms of the ideal union member and official conflict with the realities of the lives of the predominantly female membership. Here, I drew up a conflict between the ideal crèche employee, who is feminine and female, and the ideal union member, who, even if female, is assumed masculine. Second, I demonstrated that utilizing masculine heroics is a requirement from union leadership and that a masculine and charismatic leadership is idealized which relies on toughness – an element of traditional labor movement masculinity – and rationality. In relation to using rationality in negotiations, I argued that utilizing masculinity by women is restricted because they can still be dismissed based on their sex. Third, I argued that the worker advocated for by the union is gender-neutral and that there is a lack of awareness on the gendered nature of crèche work and unionism within BDDSZ. Through this, I discussed that BDDSZ does not capitalize on femininity or femaleness and does not consider these as important organizing factors. Consequently, I also argued that BDDSZ, as a feminized public-sector union, does not pose a challenge to the traditional, masculine organizational dynamics of unions (similarly to e.g. Bradley, 1999; Dean, 2015; Kirton, 1999).

Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusions

The main aim of this thesis was to examine whether the Democratic Trade Union of Crèche Employees can utilize and turn the feminine and female capitals possessed and utilized by crèche workers into capital or benefits. Consequently, the goal was also to explore the ways in which crèche employees benefit from wielding femininity and femaleness, whether these can be considered as forms of capital in the crèche workplace. To see if these in turn are utilized by BDDSZ as well, I asked also how the union is gendered differently or similarly than the crèche itself. I analyzed these questions at a time when the crèche network is before profound changes due to the planned expansion of the crèche network which has effects on the windows of opportunity for BDDSZ. After analyzing the data collected through a three-month-long internship at the central office of BDDSZ and fifteen interviews with members, I concluded that while crèche workers capitalize on femaleness and femininity in the workplace, BDDSZ does not utilize femininity and instead relies on masculinity and masculine norms in its organization.

I thus first argued that crèche employees possess female and feminine capitals. I demonstrated that there appears to be a requirement to have a female body in order to become a crèche worker and crèche employees must possess and display stereotypically feminine skills and qualities typically associated with mothers. These two requirements exclude men from the field because male bodies are regarded with distrust and because they are not allowed to wield the necessary femininity. Simultaneously with excluding men, women working in crèches, when utilizing femininity and femaleness well, can secure employment in a workplace that allows them to achieve work-life balance. I argued that femininity and femaleness can be considered capitals in the crèche because recognition and esteem can be derived from them, as well as a sense of pride and fulfillment about one's job.

While the crèche as a workplace is thus gendered in a way that benefits women and where possessing a female body and femininity are wielded to the workers' advantage, BDDSZ does not rely on femininity or femaleness and its members and leadership instead draw on and idealize masculinity and masculine norms. First, I argued that while the ideal worker norm is challenged in the crèche where the ideal employee is feminine and female, it is reinforced within the union as the norms of ideal union member and official require a person who can afford to invest time and energy into activism and thus assume someone with no care or domestic responsibilities. This highlights the strong contrast between the way the two fields are gendered, even though the same people move within and between them, and the difficulties for crèche employees to conform to the requirements of the union. Second, I demonstrated that the union leadership is expected to possess stereotypically masculine qualities, such as toughness or rationality, and must display masculine heroics. Therefore, qualities that are regarded as negative for crèche employees are idealized if possessed by BDDSZ leadership. This, I argued, demonstrates that instead of femininity, union officials wield masculinity, even though utilizing masculinity by women can be questioned in negotiations. Last, I discussed that the organizational logic of BDDSZ is gender-neutral or lacks a consciousness on the gendered nature of both crèche work and unionism. This further highlighted that union members and officials do not capitalize on femininity and femaleness within the union setting.

Through drawing on the concepts of feminine and female capitals, I contributed to the theoretical scholarly debates around the usefulness and adaptability of gender capital (e.g. Huppatz, 2009, 2012; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013; Lovell, 2000; McCall, 1992; Skeggs, 1997). In looking at the ways in which femininity and femaleness can operate in certain fields to benefit people who can capitalize on them, I highlighted that not only masculinity or maleness can be beneficial. While it is true that the convertibility of femininity outside of the field of crèche work is limited, as this is also evident from the fact that BDDSZ does not attempt to utilize it

in its work, within the field they are important for the working-class or lower-middle-class women who can successfully wield it. I also discussed that men are hindered in wielding feminine capital in crèche work, but I also suggested that union women might be sanctioned in negotiations with male government representatives if they wield masculinity, or, their utilization of masculinity might not appear credible.

Through an analysis of BDDSZ as a gendered organization that builds on the ideal worker norm, masculine heroics, and gender-neutral organizational dynamics, this thesis also contributed to the scholarly literature on women's incorporation into labor unions. In contrast to traditional, male-dominated unions that have marginalized women workers and privileged male members (e.g. Boston, 2015; Bradley, 1999; Cobble, 1993; Cockburn, 1991; Milkman, 2007, 2016), several authors argued and demonstrated that feminized unions in the public sector can challenge the masculine-dominated organization of labor (e.g. Boston, 2015; Bradley, 1999; Franzway, 2000; Langowski, 2015; Milkman, 2007, 2016; Müller, 2018). In Chapter 5, I demonstrated that BDDSZ, even though it is a union representing an almost entirely female workforce in the public sector, does not challenge the traditional organization of labor unions, such as the norms of membership that assume a person with the ability to commit fully to the cause, the idealizing of masculine heroics when it comes to leadership and the sole focus on class as an organizing principle with no specific attention to gender.

Through analyzing the operation of feminine and female capitals in crèche work, in this thesis, I also added to two sets of scholarly literature around gender and work. First, I contributed to the scholarly literature on gendered organizations and the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990; J. C. Williams, 2000). While I emphasized the persistence of these within BDDSZ, I argued that crèche workers challenge these norms by utilizing femininity and femaleness in the workplace. The challenge to the ideal worker norm means that the ideal crèche employee is feminine and female and can create work-life balance. Authors have argued that

women choose feminized professions – such as childcare work – precisely to escape the ideal worker norm but this only means that they trade-off higher-paying and higher-prestige professions in order to have work-life balance (Anker, 1992; Blackburn et al, 2002; Hardill & Watson, 2004; Kirton & Greene, 2015; Lovejoy & Stone, 2012; J. C. Williams, 2000). In Chapter 4, I aimed to highlight that the choices women make when deciding on this profession must be seen as real choices where women are active agents. I also discussed that they draw satisfaction and recognition from this job. Thus, I highlighted the fact that while the financial and social value of this profession might be low and the ideal worker norm outside of the field might remain unchallenged through the reinforcement of the feminization of crèche work, the challenge to the norm within the field is significant and is important to the women workers.

Regarding men working in crèches, I argued that they are excluded because male bodies are regarded with distrust and because they are refused the possession of the necessary feminine capital. Based on my interviews, men are only allowed to enter the crèche workplace if they affirm their masculinity. Therefore, I demonstrated that the crèche is a feminized workplace where men cannot wield femininity (as it was argued by e.g. Huppatz, 2012) but they cannot capitalize on their masculinity to use the glass escalator either (Williams, 1992, 2013). This adds to the literature around the glass escalator because it demonstrates that there can be feminized professions that disadvantage men in every way and not only because of discrimination based on race or sexuality (Williams, 2013; Wingfield, 2009). My arguments regarding this topic were rather limited, however, due to the narrow attention I could give to the issue within the thesis and also because I could only interview two men who work in crèches.

Besides the restricted focus on men, the largest limitation of this research is that it did not extend to an analysis of the reasons behind the non-utilization of femininity and femaleness by BDDSZ and consequently I did not examine why it is that BDDSZ does not question the

traditional, masculine-dominated organizational style of unionism. I nevertheless suggest that while BDDSZ's reliance on masculinity and male-biased norms might be surprising given the way femininity and femaleness are preferred within the crèche as a workplace; in the contemporary Hungarian context it is also understandable. As briefly discussed in Chapter 1, an anti-gender discourse is prevalent today in Hungary (e.g. Grzebalska & Pető, 2018; Kováts, 2020), there is a general lack of awareness on gendered issues (e.g. Nagy, 2005), and traditional gender roles are rarely questioned (e.g. Gregor & Kováts, 2019; Pongrátz & S. Molnár, 2011). Furthermore, trade unions have historically been a part of the state socialist regime (e.g. Neumann, 2005), where they preserved the status quo, rather than challenging it. As unions are generally weak today in Hungary, it appears that BDDSZ cannot challenge larger social structures either.

Further research could nevertheless look into the reasons behind a feminized public-sector union such as BDDSZ idealizing and utilizing traditional organizing to such an extent. Also, as this thesis focused solely on the case study of one Hungarian union, further research would be useful in comparing the gendered nature of other public-sector and industrial unions in the context of Hungary, to see whether there is any challenge made by other unions or whether the norms and ideas organizing BDDSZ are prevalent elsewhere, too. Comparative studies could be made with other unions organizing childcare workers in other post-socialist countries to examine the similarities and differences and to thus determine whether the challenge made by public-sector unions is a Western specificity or not. From my argument on the glass escalator, it derives that further research could compare the crèche to other feminized institutions of childcare and education, such as kindergartens or primary schools in Hungary to explore whether with the growth of proportion of men within a field these dynamics change. My claims regarding gender capital point to several directions of further research regarding femininity and masculinity as capitals as it can be a useful tool in examining the dynamics

between men and women in male- or female-dominated professions. Therefore, the conditions under which femininity and masculinity can be capitalized on by either sex could be explored more in-depth.

Overall, I hope that further research will be conducted about comparisons between different unions, about professions where men are not able to utilize the glass escalator, but also about professions and settings where femininity, and not only masculinity might be beneficial. In practical terms, I hope that such research will assist the labor unions and other workers' movements in better understanding the dynamics of their own activism, as well as of the professions from which they represent the workers. In particular, focusing attention to the gendered nature of union organization and strategy might help unions to rethink the ways they do their activism in order to better suit the needs of the workers. Hopefully, this could lead to a more effective representation and consequently, a higher financial and moral recognition of workers in childcare and other feminized professions, a recognition that is more than overdue today.

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