

## 8 Homeless Men and the Crisis of Masculinity in Contemporary Ukraine

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Homeless persons are among the most economically marginalized and culturally stigmatized social groups in post-Soviet societies. The Russian abbreviation, *bomzh* (*bez opredelennogo mesta zhytelstva*, literally meaning 'without a permanent place of residence'), is a widely used label for the so-called underclass of unemployed, middle-aged or elderly single men with a lack of social ties, health problems, and alcohol or drug addictions. In post-communist societies the homeless are often portrayed as deviants who spread infectious disease, are involved in criminal or asocial behaviour (digging through garbage, sleeping in the hallways of apartment blocks), and who refuse to work or to receive treatment.

In 2004 in Ukraine, more than 80 per cent of all officially registered homeless people were male, according to the research project 'The Way Home.'<sup>1</sup> But this gendered dimension of homelessness has not been analysed in detail. Although many problems that affect homeless people (such as bad health, vulnerability related to life on the streets, and lack of services and affordable housing) are true for nearly everyone who is homeless, other problems are gender-specific. Glaser (1994) notes that, because life on the streets is especially dangerous for homeless women, many in this group have 'learned to stay in the shadow in order to survive [and their] plight has also tended to remain hidden from view.' On the other hand, because it is not socially acceptable for a woman to be on the streets, there are often better and more diverse services available for homeless women than for homeless men. According to Cramer (2005), housing officers, in their informal categorization of homeless clients, tend to see homeless women as the more 'deserving' group and distinguish between 'troublesome' male offenders and

'troubled' women in need. She concludes that 'homelessness is a site where gender is both experienced and constructed' (p. 738).

Men, meanwhile, are more likely to suffer from chronic homelessness and remain on the streets for longer periods of time:<sup>2</sup> 'Homeless men [. . .] receive only the most meagre responses to their problems. Their independence and the public perception of them as threatening, as alcoholics, and as mentally ill put this group last on the list for help,' notes Glaser (1994, 37). Writing about the stigmatization of homeless women in post-Soviet societies, Højdestrand (2009) admits that 'homelessness is not a fertile soil for cultivation of socially accepted men either.' To her, the homeless man, stereotyped as a *bomzh*, is a powerless, emasculated figure analogous to the refuse spaces he inhabits, and far from what Connell (2005), in referring to 'the pattern of practice that allows men's dominance over women,' would call 'hegemonic masculinity' (p. 832). Although this pattern is not common in the statistical sense – only a minority of men can enact it – it is considered normative as the 'most honored way of being a man, [requiring] all other men to position themselves in relation to it' (p. 832). The practice of hegemonic masculinity includes both 'negative' and 'positive' aspects: violence and domination over women (and men with subjugated or marginalized masculinities) as well as the more revered work of 'bringing home a wage, sustaining a sexual relationship and being a father' (p. 840). From this perspective, homeless men can be considered to be extreme cases of 'failed hegemonic masculinity': lacking stable employment, suffering from poor health, and unable to provide for their families (or having cut ties with them), they fail to live up to the standard of the successful, strong, and economically stable man. Analysing the situation of homeless men in the context of recent debates about the so-called masculinity crisis in post-Soviet societies, therefore, contributes to both gender studies and homelessness research.

In this chapter, I examine the situation of homeless men in the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, in the context of gender studies theories on the masculinity crisis, destructive masculinities, and failed masculinities. Drawing on qualitative data I compiled in 2003 and 2004 through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with sixty homeless people in Kyiv, I utilize the typology of men's responses to the crisis of masculinity that was developed by Tartakovskaya (2003), who distinguishes six male self-perceptions related to how men have dealt with this crisis. In doing so, I diverge from her analysis, however, in insisting that more emphasis should be placed on the economic component of

homeless men's stories, as this component provides greater explanatory possibilities for capturing the context of a post-Soviet crisis of masculinity. Taking a neo-Marxist position, I conclude that post-Soviet homelessness must be understood as an extreme case of 'failed hegemonic masculinity' in the context of wider structural changes taking place during a transition to capitalism. From this theoretical position, de-proletarianization, unemployment, and lack of social security during a transition to capitalism are the main causes of poverty, alcohol abuse, crime, and deviance. These structural factors, combined with the masculinity crisis in post-Soviet societies, contribute to disproportionately high numbers of men among homeless people. An analysis of these structural factors is essential for understanding the phenomenon of homelessness in the Ukrainian context, for challenging stereotypes, and for informing policy action.

### **Theoretical Debates on the Crisis of Masculinity in Post-Soviet Societies**

For a long time, debates on gender inequality have focused on the negative effects of hegemonic masculinity for women who, as a consequence of it, find themselves subordinated. However, recent research has shown that strictly regulated norms and expectations are harmful to men, too. To name just a few of these harms, men often retire later than women, rarely get custody of their children in cases of divorce, suffer from greater stress and pressure related to the need to be economically successful, and are more frequently labelled as losers if they are unable to provide for themselves and their families. Moreover, in all industrialized societies, modernization, technological development, and the greater involvement of men compared with women in the public sphere has led to a higher death rate and lower life expectancy for men (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2002, 432–51). Many have labelled the sum of these increasingly negative consequences of hegemonic masculinity on men a 'crisis' (Kon 2009; Edwards 2007).

In post-Soviet societies, evidence shows that men are, indeed, in an unfavourable position compared with women: they continue to have a shorter life expectancy; they take up destructive practices such as smoking, alcohol abuse, and unhealthy eating habits more often; and they are more likely to die from preventable causes (stress, accidents, or cardiovascular disease). In Ukraine, as of 2007, men's life expectancy is about 11 years below that of women (62.3 years versus 73.6

years), and the death rate for working-age men (20 to 45 years of age) is more than three times higher than for women in the same age group (Amdzhadin 2007). Bureychak (2008) explains these demographic data as being the result of a number of social factors, such as greater involvement of men in risky behaviour, dangerous work, and criminal activity; men are three times more likely than women to suffer from tuberculosis, five to six times more likely to have alcohol addiction, and seven times more likely to commit violent crimes.

These trends in contemporary Ukrainian society are deeply rooted and can be traced back at least fifty years. Debates about the masculinity crisis in Soviet society actually began in 1968 after a demographic report by Uralnis (1970) showed higher rates of illnesses and mortality among men, compared with women. A public campaign to 'take care of men' was launched, highlighting the following economic and social consequences of what was deemed to be a crisis of masculinity: inefficient use of male labour power, high costs for medical treatment of preventable illnesses caused by male destructive practices, problems related to divorce and child rearing by single mothers, and the social costs of alcoholism. In late Soviet discourse, 'crisis of masculinity' actually became a metaphor for deeper structural ills in society: 'The thesis about the crisis of masculinity suggests that there is a certain normative model of true manhood and a possibility to attain this model of a true man . . . The impossibility to fulfil traditional male roles, related to limitations on liberal rights (property, political freedoms, freedom of expression) were implicitly recognized to be the causes of the destruction of true masculinity, although this thesis was not openly stated until the late 1980s' (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2002, 343–5).

This reference to liberal rights suggests that a more liberal capitalist model that respected men's rights and freedoms would at least partially resolve the masculinity crisis. However, from today's perspective, such claims can be interpreted as wishful thinking of the perestroika years; the transition to capitalism did not resolve the problems associated with the masculinity crisis, and in fact, aggravated them.

Tartakovskaya (2003) has made a comprehensive analysis of this aggravated masculinity crisis in post-Soviet societies. She conducted research on gender strategies in the labour market in Russia to show that although both men and women often find themselves in crisis situations as a consequence of the transition to capitalism, for men the crisis also implies the impossibility of living up to hegemonic

masculinity, a failure that causes a very emotional reaction and even leads to self-doubt in men about their own gender status. Focusing on respondents' own attitudes towards their gender roles, Tartakovskaya introduces the concept of 'failed masculinity' to capture this self-doubt. As she notes, 'Masculinity is not only a theoretical concept from the field of gender studies but has a very personal cultural meaning for each man. It is a project, the realization of which requires great efforts and often even turns out to be impossible.' She classifies six types of self-perceptions that characterize men's responses to situations of failed hegemonic masculinity: 'losers who give up,' 'men who feel unjustly offended,' 'alcoholics,' 'escapists,' 'housewives,' and 'single fathers.'

All of these self-perceptions are shaped by difficulties encountered in the labour market except 'single fathers' and, to some extent, 'housewives.' I will therefore leave aside these last two categories for another discussion, as they exceed the scope of this chapter. For Tartakovskaya (2003), changes that have taken place in the 1990s and 2000s have worsened the crisis of masculinity that began during the Soviet era. Many traditionally male-dominated sectors of the economy, such as the military or machine building, have shrunk, and as a consequence, the professional and economic situation of previously successful men has deteriorated. Men have faced unprecedented economic, professional, and personal difficulties. As Tartakovskaya describes it, 'An unemployed or a working, but poor man is deprived of the main characteristics of his own gender competence and becomes "de-masculinized" and faced with a problem of self-identification in his family circle (provided he has a family), among other close relatives, employees and work colleagues.' This insight is supported by Ashwin (2001), who argues that men have had to meet certain prerequisites in both the Soviet and post-Soviet era before truly becoming 'successful,' namely, professionalization and attaining economic stability as a breadwinner – not only to feed his family, but as a sign of prestige and self-esteem. Therefore, post-Soviet men have a very limited set of legitimate social roles and are dependent on the overall situation in the labour market.

Tartakovskaya (2003) stops short of making a thoroughgoing link between unemployment, poverty, and the masculinity crisis, however. In fact, she denies that economic restructuring during the transition could be solely responsible for failed masculinity. Instead, she lays the blame on the inevitable discrepancy between masculine ideals

and reality: 'Even if we look at our respondents who were somehow affected by the contemporary socioeconomic crisis in Russia, the phenomenon of "failed masculinity" is in no way its direct result. On the contrary, a possibility of "failure" is already present in the very concept of masculinity that suggests an internal hierarchy between "real," successful men and those who could not live up to this standard.'

But, as I will argue, Tartakovskaya's focus on the failure of masculine ideals does not sufficiently take into account the social suffering of many post-Soviet men that is the result of economic restructuring. Although I do not claim that the transition to capitalism *caused* the crisis of masculinity, in the tyology that follows I demonstrate that it has had negative effects on the economic and psychological well-being of many men, including on their self-perceptions, and has caused social problems such as rising rates of alcoholism and homelessness.

### Homelessness as an Extreme Example of 'Failed Masculinity'

One of the signs of the masculinity crisis is the spread of destructive masculinities, as witnessed in alcoholism, aggressive behaviour towards work colleagues and family members, and criminal activities or vagrancy. In post-industrial societies, these masculinities are especially pervasive among working-class men, as traditional masculine identities related to industrial production become obsolete (Schwarz 1990). Beynon (2002) shows that work is a fundamental component of hegemonic masculinity, but given the current labour market, in which work has become less stable and more oriented towards the service sector where women are more welcome as employees, men who have lost 'real masculine work' in the field of industrial production are stigmatized (p. 87). If a woman, having lost her work, can find other sources of positive identification (as a good housewife, as a beauty, or as a mother), men's identity is almost solely defined by work. Consequently, long-term unemployment is more likely to cause depression, suicide attempts, and/or criminal and destructive behaviour, such as alcoholism and drug abuse among men.

In the Ukrainian context (as well as in other post-Soviet societies), the masculinity crisis and the decline of the industrial economy have occurred alongside two other trends. First, a period of transformation after the breakup of the USSR meant higher levels of stress and social suffering for the majority of the population (related to the need to

adapt to changing social conditions). Second, the demise of the social state with guaranteed full employment was felt in an especially acute manner by middle-aged and older working-class men who lost their jobs through economic restructuring. Therefore, when speaking of the negative consequences of the transition, it is important to distinguish those that have resulted from transition itself (felt by men of various social groups), and those that are due to capitalism (felt primarily by working-class men). Homelessness emerges from a combination of these mutually reinforcing 'crises,' with the risk of ending up on the streets being much higher among long-term unemployed working-class men.

To capture these subtle differences, I will now employ Tartakovskaya's typology to organize the findings from my own study. As we will see, the men in my study tend to slide across categories of self-perception rather than belonging to just one.

### **Losers Who Give Up**

In Tartakovskaya's typology of men's self-perceptions in response to the crisis of masculinity, 'losers who give up' appear to be most prominent. Men in this category are mostly victims of economic restructuring – they have either lost their previous jobs or experienced a significant decline in living standards. They perceive their current or past jobs as being of little value, have accepted their low socioeconomic status, and sometimes suffer from additional marginalization because of alcohol abuse. At the same time, as Tartakovskaya notes, such personal devaluation is often preceded by a period of resistance during which a man, unhappy with his situation, tries to keep up at least temporary employment, look after himself, and take care of his family.

Several respondents in my research appear to be living through this initial stage of resistance. In their self-description, they are far from 'losers.' Instead, they define themselves as 'hard workers.' Many of these men are insecurely employed in the Kyiv construction industry, making do with day labour. They cannot rely on a regular income and often have to live for several weeks without work. Forced temporary unemployment may also be caused by injuries, illness, or food poisoning (because of the low quality of food and alcohol consumed). In such periods, these men often find themselves isolated and alone in a large city, and they turn to homeless shelters and soup kitchens for

help in survival. Although their living arrangements in Kyiv are never stable, in difficult periods the men may be literally homeless, sleeping in parks, train stations, or shelters for the homeless. Experiences of temporary homelessness in the context of overall insecurity are part of a downward spiral, with negative effects on personal appearance and well-being. For example, Daly (1996) notes, 'There is a continual deterioration in their situation – physical and mental health, stability of friends or family, legal problems, financial and emotional independence, job prospects' (p. 158). The majority of homeless people are chronic alcoholics and 80 per cent suffer from tuberculosis.<sup>3</sup> 'One can only be on the streets for seven – eight years maximum,' says a doctor who helps street homeless in Moscow, 'after that comes death' (Yeroshok 2008).

Despite their experiences of homelessness, insecure housing arrangements, breaks in social ties, and stress that often leads to substance abuse, day labourers in the construction industry refuse to identify themselves as *bomzhi* (those who 'gave up') and fear the prospects of such degradation of their status. One of my study participants said:

Don't think that I'm some kind of a *bomzhi* here! Yes, I go to these soup kitchens for *bomzhi* – I have to survive somehow! If they feed for free, why not come? But no, I'm not a *bomzhi*, I'm a hard worker! I work hard day and night, building apartments for you, Kyivites . . . Yes, building for you and not having anything myself . . . I live right there, at the construction site . . . it's cold there, chalk and sand everywhere. But anyway, I still look after myself. I wash myself every day, and shave. Look at me – do I stink? Do I have scruffy clothes? Am I drunk? Well, I tell you – if I drank and didn't look after myself, nobody would hire me to do the work!<sup>4</sup>

If being a *bomzhi* means drinking, not looking after oneself, and refusing to work – something a person can be blamed for – a 'hard worker,' on the contrary, is poor through no fault of his own, not *because of* a failure to adapt, but *despite* all adaptation efforts. This perception is very important among respondents when positioning their own responses to negative change. Viewed structurally, however, we can see that these casual workers in the construction industry form an 'excess reserve army of labour' for whom 'economic advancement translates into a regression of material conditions and a curtailment of life



chances,' while 'survival based on a mix of casual labour, welfare support and illegal activities trumps regular wage labour participation' (Wacquant 2007).

Another way in which day labourers distinguish themselves from *bomzhi* is by emphasizing the temporal nature of their status as opposed to those who are chronically homeless. Even when the casual male workers in this sample go through a difficult period, they still believe that things will improve shortly. As one of them said:

Well, with the *bomzhi* it's hopeless . . . There's no way they will ever change their lives. As for us, hard workers, yes, there are difficult periods, when we sleep in shelters and go to these soup kitchens for *bomzhi*, but as the saying goes 'after the rain comes the rainbow' – we know that a good period will follow shortly. There will never be any good periods for the *bomzhi*, they can't work, they just gave up.

However, among those who do currently identify as *bomzhi*, many also perceived themselves as having been 'hard workers' at some point in the past. Their stories show that the distinguishing line between categories of self-perception (between hard workers and *bomzhi*, losers who give up and those who haven't given up yet) is unstable, and that any small injury, illness, or family conflict in a wider context of instability may lead a 'hard worker' to 'give up.' A 32-year-old homeless man from a small town in the Vinnytsia region recalls how he came to work at a construction site in Kyiv because there was no work in his hometown. In the summer he slept by the river, but in the winter he had difficulties finding a place to sleep, because apartment rent was too high even for a group of workers, and he had promised to regularly send money back home to his family. One night he slept at the train station and was robbed and beaten up by a group of street children, so he couldn't return to work the following day and lost his job, which made him feel 'miserable' and contributed to his alcohol abuse. He explained:

I couldn't go back home either, you know, without the money . . . it's not right . . . what kind of a man am I? I felt miserable . . . Well, I started drinking, and, well, here I am . . . So I guess I'm a *bomzhi* now.

He concludes that he is very unhappy with his situation and drinks even more 'because it's all so depressing.'

## Men Who Feel Offended at Being Unjustly Treated

In my sample, as well as in Tartakovskaya's study, men who did not receive positive evaluations of their work (either informally or through formal material and symbolic rewards) often came to lack self-esteem. Some left their jobs and remained unemployed for prolonged periods. Perceived betrayals by a wife represent another reason for which some of the men feel 'unjustly offended' (as such betrayal also challenges sexual potency). One of the men described his situation like this:

Can you believe it, what a bastard! Son of a b . . . tch! He wanted to rape my wife – of course I didn't let him! I took a hammer and hit him on his head, this jerk. Who knew that he would die? So they put me in jail. Usually you get a life sentence for murder, but with me, because it was 'unintended murder,' I got 12 years. And my wife? She, b . . . tch, while I was in jail, evicted me from my flat; back then it was possible. So I come back and she, b . . . tch, won't let me in! Saying, 'Go away, Zhenia [pseudonym], I don't need you.'<sup>5</sup>

This case presents a violent scenario of family breakup and eventual homelessness beginning with the respondent's taking offence at his wife's behaviour (although the wife's point of view is lacking here, not allowing for an idea of the whole picture). A more 'peaceful' resolution to a similar conflict is related by Vitaliy, who said:

Am I homeless? That's an interesting question. Actually, I am local, from Kyiv, but now I unwillingly became a vagabond. I left my home, could not live with my wife after she betrayed me . . . Of course, I could fight over my part of the flat in court, but I would have to hire a lawyer – and where would I find the money for that? And I don't want to quarrel with my wife – let her do whatever she wants with her beloved one, I can somehow manage to survive on the streets. Actually, it's not a matter of food or other 'material' things. I have no friends; I am alone. A knife in my pocket and no one will touch me. I collect bottles. No, it's not a matter of food or money. I go to the Victory Church – they have such preaching! Yes, people help me but it's not about help. Most of all I lack communication and rest – I have everything else.

In this passage, Vitaliy is resentful about his wife 'betraying him' with another man – he feels offended, but wants to preserve a sense of

pride. He therefore presents himself as independent, not needing anyone's assistance and lacking nothing but human relationships and an opportunity to rest. Later in the interview, Vitaliy mentions that his children sometimes come to see him and wish to help him, but he refuses or even tries to give his children some pocket money. He explained:

On the contrary, I myself try to help them – my daughter is studying in a technical college, so I give her some money for her studies.

We do not know to what extent he can financially help his children, but it is important for Vitaliy to present an image of himself as a strong, proud, and independent man who is not in need of assistance. Both Zhenia and Vitaliy highlight their masculinity. At one point, Vitaliy exclaimed:

Am I a man or what? What man can stand his wife in bed with another?

Such defensive postures appear to permit some homeless men to better cope with changes that have been, in reality, beyond their power, but which have threatened their sense of manhood.

### **Alcoholics and Escapists**

One psychological strategy for dealing with a situation of crisis is escapism or infantilization – the failure to take responsibility for one's actions. Among the homeless men I interviewed, there were occasions when laying blame on external circumstances out of their own control masks another side of the story that would show their own degree of responsibility for events. Thus, in describing a wife's betrayal or decision to kick them out of their house, few men mention possible reasons for such a response by their wives, whether because of alcohol abuse or failure to contribute to the household budget. Other men described having their documents stolen or being fired from work, but did not admit to any lack of initiative in renewing documents or securing a new job. For example, one man said:

I'm not a *bomzh*, am I? I just fell down low. I started drinking, had nothing to do . . . And now something happened to my kidneys, they hurt real bad, I can't walk or sit – they hurt all the time. If I could lie in bed for

a while and get some treatment, then I could work. I am only 56 years old, and I am not a bomzhi. I arrived in Kyiv only 28 days ago. Police caught me. They say: 'Go to work or go home!' But how can I work? I can't – that's what I tell them. And I can't go home either – my wife would kill me if she saw me in such condition. So what am I to do?

Such descriptions of wives unwilling to see a drunk husband or forcing a man to leave his home are common among respondents. Meanwhile, criminal behaviour by the men sometimes leads to imprisonment, after which reintegration into society is extremely difficult. According to official statistics, about one-third of all homeless Ukrainians are ex-convicts (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine). In my own study, about a quarter of the respondents reported having served prison sentences.

### Redistribution versus Recognition

Based on my study of homeless men in Kyiv, men's self-perceptions – and perceptions they have of other homeless individuals – tend to blend more than one of the types of responses to 'failed masculinity' that Tartakovskaya (2003) identifies in her typology. Men who end up on the streets may quickly give up in practical ways, but self-describe as working hard for something better; they may abuse alcohol and have an escapist attitude while also harbouring resentment towards their former wives, employers, or real estate agents, whom they claim are responsible for their condition of homelessness. However, as we have seen, the men also continue to adhere to a strong sense of masculinity, and they often justify their actions with reference to preserving it.

Thus, these men reflect on their experience, articulate their 'failed masculinity' to themselves and to others, and actively respond to the situation, although their choices can be limited. Speak (2004) notes that for many homeless individuals in developing countries, there is a degree of choice available: this is especially true among those who are homeless for short periods, who may choose homelessness 'as a means of improving their more permanent living conditions' and there is 'little indication of personal inadequacy or family dysfunction' (p. 469). The question of choice arose with the respondents in this study as well. Some chose to sleep in parks or shelters to save money. Many preferred to stay in the city instead of going back home, even in

difficult periods when they were out of work. They kept looking for employment in order to justify the sacrifices they made by leaving home, or to avoid the embarrassment and criticism of their masculinity that might have occurred there. Some turned to panhandling or crime in order to keep the 'promise' they had made to their families and to send them money regularly. One man described his situation like this:

Yes, there were times when I was out of work. It was wintertime, cold, and grim . . . I thought – maybe I should return home? But then I said NO, I came here, I told my family I'll provide for them, and I have to keep the promise. So I was begging in the underground, like those *bomzhi*, and I . . . well, don't tell that to anyone, but I . . . well, I got into a few shops with friends, and I was stealing wallets from foreigners. But you have to understand – I told my family, I'd be sending them money. They didn't even know that I was out of work and I didn't want to tell them, so they thought it was the money I made on the construction site.

This shows how important it is for marginally employed workers to be able to provide for their families – this man would rather steal or panhandle than have his family find out that he does not have work and cannot fulfil his 'promise' as a breadwinner.

We also see from the interviews that homeless men who have at least some temporary employment and have preserved family ties resist being labelled *bomzhi*. This label itself can symbolize failed masculinity and personal weakness of homeless men who 'give up.' In post-Soviet societies there is a tendency to draw a clear dividing line between the *bomzhi* and normal or ordinary citizens. Homelessness is seen to be a complete absence, not only of a permanent residence, but also of social ties, of a work ethic, of respect for social norms, and of individual responsibility. Such an attitude is in line with conservative explanations of homeless people as 'different' from the normal majority, and parallels Bahr's classical study on disaffiliation among men (1970; see also Bahr and Caplow 1973). Homeless men are also seen to be 'different' as men – as not living up to the standard of hegemonic masculinity.

My research shows that homelessness does not happen 'overnight' but often results from a series of occurrences. The first is often unemployment, lack of opportunities in their place of residence, the need to support a family, or all three at once. Wacquant (2007) describes this trend as 'de-proletarianization' – denial of access to wage-earning

activities that is an inevitable by-product of the decline of industrial production and uneven economic development. The second occurrence is immersion in an unstable environment marked by a high risk of injury, victimization, unofficial casual labour, and lack of affordable housing. Further occurrences may include the use of survival strategies such as alcohol abuse, participation in crime, saving money on housing by sleeping in public places or in cramped conditions, and frequenting homeless shelters and soup kitchens. When we retrace these steps, however, it becomes clear that the primary causes of homelessness are economic and that people who are already in marginal positions – unskilled workers and the unemployed – are at a much higher risk of becoming *bomzhi*.

Tartakovskaya's typology of responses to situations of 'failed masculinity,' her own research on men who are in marginal positions in the Russian labour market, and our research on homeless men in Ukraine together reveal a much greater link between the structural and the symbolic aspects of gender inequalities than Tartakovskaya herself is willing to admit. Economic redistribution to decrease inequalities is no less important than recognition of gender differences if we wish to at least partially neutralize the negative effects of the current masculinity crisis. As Fraser and Honneth (2003) rightly observe:

The demise of communism, the surge of free-market ideology, the rise of 'identity politics' in both its fundamentalist and progressive forms – all these developments have conspired to decenter, if not to extinguish, claims for egalitarian redistribution. In this new constellation, these two kinds of justice claims are often dissociated from one another – both practically and intellectually. Within social movements such as feminism, for example, activist tendencies that look to redistribution as the remedy for male domination are increasingly dissociated from remedies that look instead to recognition of gender difference. And the same is largely true in the intellectual sphere . . . scholars who understand gender as a social relation maintain an uneasy arm's-length coexistence with those who construe it as an identity or a cultural code. This situation exemplifies a broader phenomenon: the widespread decoupling of cultural politics from social politics, of the politics of difference from the politics of equality.

Fraser and Honneth conclude that this is a false decoupling, and that both redistribution and recognition are required to achieve greater social justice.

In this chapter, I have also stressed the importance of both a cultural and structural analysis when looking at homelessness among men using the concept of failed masculinity. By neglecting the economic problems that cause men to lose employment, break family ties, and end up on the streets, we fail to notice all the men who are at risk of homelessness, many of whom will 'give up' and become *bomzhi*. We also overlook the fact that the masculinity crisis would be less acute and all would benefit from more equal development, greater job security, and affordable housing. Fewer men would have to come to Kyiv and other large cities in search of work, fewer of those who do come would have to 'choose' homelessness as a survival strategy, and fewer of them would end up chronically homeless. Indeed, as of this writing, taking into account economic factors of existing gender-related problems is part of the state's Program to Implement Gender Equality until 2010 (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 2006).

Therefore, it is important to look at the masculinity crisis among post-Soviet homeless men in the context of economic restructuring. Unequal economic development among regions and along the urban-rural axis, high unemployment rates, exploitation and lack of social security in the shadow economy, and lack of affordable housing for workers are among the underlying causes of homelessness. Homeless and other marginalized men also challenge expectations of hegemonic masculinity and reveal contradictions between ideology, real life experience, and self-perceptions, pointing to structural rather than individual causes of homelessness and failed masculinities in post-Soviet Ukraine.

## NOTES

- 1 This research is on homelessness in 20 Ukrainian cities. Information about the project is available at <http://homeless.net.ua/ua/index.php>. A similar proportion of homeless men and women has been found in police statistics: among the 17,221 homeless people registered by the Ukrainian police in 2005, 14,560 were men and 2,661 were women. This information was retrieved from <http://www.helsinki.org.ua/index.php?id=1138900432>.
- 2 Although men are the focus of this chapter, it is important to touch on the devastating dimensions of homelessness for women as well. Glaser (1994) notes that although women constitute a minority of the homeless, they

suffer disproportionately from physical and psychological abuse and are less resistant to harsh living conditions [0] and to alcohol. Although women, in general, have a higher life expectancy than men, the situation is reversed for the homeless: women who do end up on the streets have a much higher death rate than men in similar conditions. In his research on homelessness, Ropers (1988) found that women, on average, were homeless for shorter periods but reported more health problems, and their health deteriorated rapidly on the streets. In her research on homelessness in Russia, Højdestrand (2009) also found that homelessness is much more stigmatizing to women because of the taken-for-granted 'incompatibility of homelessness and femininity' that 'reveals itself in the general silence in official discourse and among non-homeless Russians about the existence of homeless women. Since they can hardly be imagined, there is nothing to say about them, and those who, against all odds, are spotted are in a figurative sense considered to have forfeited their womanhood.'

- 3 In 2006, the death rates of working-age men in Ukraine were three times higher than in the European Union, and half of all deaths were preventable, including those caused by suicide, poisoning by drinking low-quality alcohol, cardiovascular disease, and tuberculosis – diseases related to stress and poverty. See *Smertnost' Naseleniya Ukrainy v Trudoaktivnom Vozraste* (Mortality of the Working-Age Population in Ukraine), available at <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2008/0327/tema01.php>.
- 4 These interviews were carried out as part of the research towards my B.A. The results are discussed in more detail in Riabchuk (2005).
- 5 All names have been changed to protect the participants' privacy.

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