

VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSIVENESS WITHIN THE FAMILY. (INTRA)FAMILY VIOLENCE FROM A SOCIOLOGICAL AND CRIMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Prof. Sorin M. Radulescu, Ph. D.

The (intra)family violence is perceived now as a main and acute social problem. The study approaches this problem by defining the notion of violence and aggressiveness within the family and by revealing its multiple aspects, such as: the types of violence and categories of aggressors or victims within the family; the (intra)family violence and life cycle; the conceptions regarding the masculine aggressiveness within the family etc

Family violence as social problem. 'Legitimate' and 'illegitimate' violence

The evaluations made by sociologists about the contemporary family are relatively contradictory among themselves. Thus, on the one hand, they admit that the family has a special capacity of communion and social solidarity as long as it is a refuge, a privileged place of manifesting affectivity, while on the other they appreciate that the family undergoes a crisis given the decline of its traditional functions, its islandhood within society, its isolation from the large network of relatives, the increase of its instability tendencies.

One of the most acute aspects of this crisis which has been little explored by the sociologist which researches the family is the increase of violence among family members, phenomenon which is present in most of the contemporary societies.

As we know the family violence of (intra)family violence has manifested for a long time, but its perception as a social problem started only four decades ago. Thus, during the 60's and 70's child-abuse and spouses-aggression have become for the first time topics of public debates in several countries attracting the interest of the large public as, of course, of the specialists.

The main reason for which the family violence as social problem was perceived so late and became a distinct preoccupation of specialists constituted, at least in the Western world the specificity of the family

regarded as a 'sanctuary' detached from the public space constraints, as a taboo private space in which no intrusion or intervention from the outside is allowed. In the ex-socialist countries, on the contrary, the family - in its quality of '*base nucleus of the society*' as it was defined by the official ideology - had to suffer all the consequences of an authoritarian regime where any social institution had to be integrated in the public space and be governed by exterior exigences. On the other hand during the communist regime the violence within the family was not officially recognized as a social problem.

A social problem - as the sociologists use to say - is a harmful condition for the society, which provokes the worry of the population and attract the public attention generating preoccupations and controverses which can determine in the end collective actions of its solving (Radulescu, M.S., 1999, p. 166). From this point of view any social problem is defined by the existence of two main elements: a. An objective condition - which concerns its real, measurable content of the respective problem which is shown more or less in the official statistics; b. A subjective preoccupation concerning the legitimate worries which the problem in question provokes to a semnificative number of persons (experts or the large public).

Characterized by these two elemets the violence exercised within the family still remains a social problem in most of the contemporary societies, including Romania, because there are still no adequate solutions as well as because there is a very low consensus in so far as the public opinions or the specialists' defining of the (intra)family violence are concerned. In other words, there is no full agreement regarding the precise demarcation line between the legitimate use of force within the family and the illegitimate acts of violence which are manifested within the family. (Bassis S.M., Gelles J.R., Levine A., 1982, p. 270). Thus, for many persons, including parents or teachers, a slap given to a child as sanction is not an act of violence, but a natural and even necessary means of disciplining. Also, in some opinion polls made in several foreign countries (i.e. other than Romania, translator's note) the repondents answered that hitting a wife or even a husband can be justified under certain circumstances. In the same context, various studies have shown that, oftentimes, the victims of (intra)family violence, policemen and social workers consider as being acceptable those behaviors produced within the family which, if they were to manifest among strangers would be qualified as illegitimate acts of violence.

The divergent opinions regarding the legitimacy and illegitimacy of the use of violence within the family contitute the main reason for which the

authorities and oftentimes the victims refuse to register them or to report them as crimes. The lack of consensus in this field tends thus to hide the black figures of the family violence and, to a large extent, even perpetuates this particular type of violence. "The victims of family violence are among the <<missing persons>> within the official criminal statistics" [Bassis S.M., Gelles J.R., Levine A., 1982, p. 270].

In its essence the (intra)family violence is 'any kind of aggression, abuse or intimidation targetted against a member of the household, a blood-relative or any other persons from the family environment' [Correctional Service Canada, 1988, p.3]. Offering a more restrictive definition than the one which was mentioned and stressing the violence mainly exercised against women and children, the Institute for Criminality Research and Prevention in Romania defines the (intra)family violence as being represented by "the use of physical or emotional constraint against another member of the family aiming to impose the strength and control over the victim" or "the totality of the conflicts within the family which have as effect the illtreatment of the partner or of the child" (Institute for Criminality Research and Prevention in Romania, 2000, p. 4).

Among the family persons which are most frequently aggressed we can find minors, teenagers, elders, and not last, the female partners (but also male partners), victims against which the aggressor (she or he) uses a large variety of means starting from ill-treatment, psychic abuse, sexual victimization, material or affective neglect, abandoning, financial exploitation etc. In this sense the violence within the family "does not include only physical violence (killing, harming, hitting) but also sexual (marital rape), psychological (blackmail, denigration, humiliation, ignorance, abandoning, isolation), verbal violence (insult, threat) and economical violence (the deprivation of women of vital goods or means) - (Institute for Criminality Research and Prevention in Romania, 2000, p.5).

We should also mention that the notion of family household includes any form of co-habiting, the institution of concubination implicitly, since the concubine partners or their relatives can be involved in various violence acts which are included in the large sphere of (intra)family violence.

In order to distinguish more precisely the main features of these forms of violence, M. Strauss and his colleagues have suggested the distinction between two notions: "normal violence" and "abusive violence" [Strauss, A.M., Gelles J.R., Steinmetz K.S., 1980, p. 20-21]. The 'normal' violence refers to those acts which deliberately aim at the physical suffering of the

victim, but benefit from a large social acceptance such as the slaps given to children. As opposed to the normal violence, the 'abusive' violence refers to acts which have a high risk degree in so far as the killing or the hurting of the victim is concerned, such as the case of using sharp objects, illtreatment with the fists, stabbing, shooting, setting a fire etc.

Regardless of these distinctions both forms of violence are harmful because they lead to the victim's suffering or humiliation as well as because violence induces violence as a response or defence reaction.

Given the fact that quite often the various definitions which express the different forms of violence exercised within the family are mistaken (for instance abuse and illtreatment, legitimate and illegitimate violence) it brings us to their defining as rigorously as possible.

(Intra)family violence and the distribution of the power-structure within the family. Types of violence and categories of aggressors

Violence in generic terms signifies the use of force and constraint by an individual, group or social class aiming to impose violence against others [Radulescu, M.S., 1993, p. 670]. From the juridical point of view violence means the use of physical force or other persuasive means to cause prejudice of goods or harming the integrity of a person. In this sense, an act of violence has, most of the times, a premeditated character being "elaborated intentionally or signifying the intention to produce suffering or physical prejudice to another person" [Strauss A.M., 1991, p. 135]. From a psychological point of view violence designates the aggressive behavior manifested, most of the times as a result of frustrations which cannot be defulated by any socially desirable means.

Beyond the variety of the meanings which are associated to it, violence is a power abuse, being connected almost always with a power position and the imposing of this power to others. This characterization defines best the situation of man as opposed to woman, child or elder person.

However, apparently paradoxically, oftentimes even the lack of power leads to violence. The conscience of the lack of power, of impotence, creates in many cases such a strong need of affirmation that it becomes a destructive aggressiveness which in the end leads to violence. [Roy M., 1982, p.3]. This could explain to a large extent the frustrations which characterize many male aggressors, but also the violence acts committed by the female aggressors.

Power, in its entirety has many meanings. To exploit, to constrain, to manipulate, to compete or, on the contrary, to associate with someone in order to use in common a certain power position are only few of its meanings. Some of these power forms have a positive content others have a negative one being associated, but not identical, with violence. Violence, we could say, does not mean power, but its opposite or, at least, a means to accomplish a certain goal: the acquisition of a power position.

A specific classification of violence is made according to the goals and motivations of the aggressor. There are, from this point of view, two types of violence and two types of aggressors [Correctional Service Canada, 1988, p. 32]: a. Expressive violence - which defines those aggressors which tend to 'explode' during conflictual situations since they do not possess the necessary resources to control themselves. Such a type of violence is determined either by the existing deficits of the communication capacity with the others and of the control over the situation, or by the limited repertory of interpersonal strategies necessary to solve the situation. An expressive aggressor seems thus to be a 'hysterical person at the corner' whose violence is an statement of the panic which dominates him; b. Instrumental violence - which characterizes those aggressors to whom the intellectual and social capacities to control themselves do not lack and whose acts of violence do not have an impulsive character. Such a type of violence is 'rationalized', controlled, consciously targeted towards a certain victim to reach a certain result, i.e. the coercion and control of the victim.

Some researchers among which L. Berkowitz (1983) consider that the expressive 'pure' aggression is extremely rare, most of the violence cases having an instrumental character. Thus, "both the father who brutally illtreats his child and the husband who verbally harms his wife during a discussion probably intend to get the same result" [Berkowitz L. 1983, p. 210]. On the other hand, the supposed cases of violence 'out of control' mentioned by many aggressors as a way of excuse and avoiding responsibility take place very seldom in front of any witnesses and, in most of the cases, in private places which suggests that the aggressive situations are not produced without a prior planning or premeditation [Correctional Service Canada, 1988, p. 32].

Violence, either in its expressive form or in its instrumental one could not be expressed or exercised if there were no socializing context through which the violent behavior is learnt like any other behavior. A violent behavior is not so much the statement of a tendency, instincts or personal frustrations but, especially an effect of conforming to certain norms, values

and life styles, assimilated during the socialization process. The individual violence is, in fact, the result of a collective violence learnt in the family and society, into the public space whose aggressive messages have come to invade even the private space.

A short evaluation of the main features of the aggressors allows us to understand that the (intra) family violence is both the product of the way in which the family power structure is distributed within the family and of the way in which the same structure is spread among the members of the society [Correctional Service, Canada, 1988, p.16]: a. The majority of aggressors are men who, much more often than the female aggressors use physical force against their partners, children or elder relatives; b. The female aggressors most often commit violence acts against their partners, usually out of revenge, but also against children or elder relatives which they feel as an 'extra' burden; c. Although the (intra) family violence takes place irrespective of the income level or educational background it prevails in the low income level families and educational background. This also happens because these families come in more frequent contact with various social agencies having a higher degree of 'transparency' than those families which have more resources and more powerful motivations to keep silent the family's violence cases. On the other hand, in many low income families violence constitutes a life 'solution' and a means of defusing one's frustrations.

In this sense we could say that the way of organizing of the individuals and groups in society (social structure) reflects, among others, into the violence patterns which manifest within the family. Beyond the individual features of the family members the influence of the social factors and social values determines violence.

If we refer to the influence exercised by the mass-media messages (television and written press in particular) it is not dangerous because it induces violence (in fact there is no direct cause-effect relationship here), but because it tends to reduce the public's sensitivity towards certain violent acts and their effects. The most important factor seems to be the way in which violence is presented on the screen or in the media. Especially when the aggressive characters are presented as models of behavior they can become sources of encouraging children's aggressiveness since children are always in search for models. "The young have the tendency to reproduce in life those acts of violence they see on the screen (...) The violent programs decrease their sensitivity and determines them to solve their problems by employing aggressive means" [Dragan I., 1996, p. 220].

On the other hand, the example offered by parents or other relatives to their children in so far as the aggressiveness against their partner or other members of the family is concerned is more harmful than the media. Studying the importance of the adults' influence on their children's socialization process A. Bandura [1963, p. 601] considered that *imitation* and *identification* play an extremely important role in the evolution of behavior patterns, both the 'normal' and 'abnormal' ones. Boys much more frequently than girls immitate more easily the aggressive behavoir learnt in the family.

As adult, the child or young will reproduce oftentimes the aggressiveness patterns which he acquired during his socialization within the family. However, the mass-media influence cannot be neglected especially in those families in which aggressiveness violence and coflict are the usual means of solving various personal problems.

The aggressiveness exercized within the family goup

As opposed to violence, *aggression* is generally any act of attack of a person which has not been provoked by the latter. Robert Baron (1977) defined the *aggression* as "a deliberated behaviro carried out with the intention to harm or cause a prejudice to another individual who does not wish to be treated in like manner". This definition implies four factors: the behavior, the intention, the author, the victim.

Psychologists consider that an aggressive situation is determined by two main variables: a. The intensity of anger feelings of a person determined by a certain frustration; b. The tendency to openly express these feelings according to what that particular person has leart about the role of aggressiveness and according to the concrete situation in which the aggressiveness was produced [Sears D. & co., 1985, p. 276].

L. Berkowitz [1969, pp. 1-20] distingushed in this respect between aggressive beahvior and aggressive emotional mood which can facilitate and even strenghten the aggressive response. J. Dollard and N. Miller (1939) considered that the aggressiveness is directly connected to a frustration and K. Lorenz (1968) also considered that any form of aggressiveness is an instinctual energy accumulated in time which is discharged suddenly during a conflict situation.

In search of the main causes of aggressiveness various theories within the field of social psychology try to order the multitude of definitions in the

field, considering aggressiveness either as an inevitable statement of the physical energy (Freud), as a protection function of the individual in connection with other aggressions (Konrad Lorenz) or as a learnt behavior (theories of social learning - A. Bandura).

The conceptions which stress the learnt (socialized) aggressiveness seem much more valid as long as no matter how aggressive the 'natural' impulses of people would be they learn, throughout their lives, but especially during their childhood to control them. The cultural models have an important role which is proved by the distribution of violence within society (of criminality in general and the various acts of aggression particularly) according to regions, nations, social categories, ethnic groups etc. The acts of violence (aggression) exercised within the family differ, obviously, by those that take place among strangers, but both obey equally to the social or cultural pressure. In a society characterized by a low homicide rate there will be few homicide cases among relatives. That is why the distribution and occurrence of the of the general violence in a society constitute the most relevant indicators for the tendencies of violence exercised in the family [Goode J. William, 1973, p. 154]. This situation characterizes for instance the Romanian case where the increase especially between 1990-1996 of the number of crimes committed through violence (afterwards, during 1997-1999 the tendency was a decreasing one) determined an increase of the (intra) family violence. According to the data collected by the Institute of criminality research and prevention in Romania between 1990-1999 the acts of violence committed within the family represented 12,4% of all crimes committed through violence (Institute of Criminality Research and Prevention, 2000, p.3).

The aggressiveness oftentimes even in great proportions is targeted against the persons with which people are extremely close (partners, but also other members of the extended family). Various criminological studies have proven that in most of the aggression cases, some having as effect the wounding, or even killing, between the aggressor and the victim existed a close relationship or at least a prior relationship, being even relatives. As William J. Goode [1973, p. 149] those that are a main source of pleasure for us can be, to the same extent a main source of frustration and prejudice: "From Cain to Able up to Othello; from Clitemnestra to Lolita, literature (...) was written with blood since the topic attracted both the author as well as the audience. As a literary topic the violence among strangers is charmless and uninteresting", while the violence exercised among close relatives constitutes

a real drama which produces emotions and becomes the object of public debate. The most widely spread form of aggressiveness and implicitly of violence is the one exercised between intimate people, between spouses or concubines. Comparative studies carried out by the World Bank [Heise L. Lori and co., 1995, p. 4] concerning this topic have shown that, in many countries, a quarter up to half of the women victims of various aggressions have been abused by their partners, and in other cases they were repeatedly exposed to emotional abuse. The abuse is complementary so with the family violence and aggressiveness.

The family abuse. Particular forms of aggressive behavior

Being oftentimes associated with aggressive or violent acts exercised against a person the notion of *abuse* designates in Romanian the excessive unlimited use of some prerogatives so that the respective act becomes an illegal one. If we admit for example that among the prerogatives of a parent the right to physically punish his child is also included the abuse is equivalent with the crossing of these prerogatives so that it provokes harms to the child himself. In the case of the female partner of the couple the rights of the husband excessively manifested can degenerate quite often into abuses as well.

In English this notion has more meanings among which the one of illtreating, molesting, aggression or violence [Radulescu M.S., 1999, p. 167]. From this point of view the abuse does not only refer to a physical sanction, but to any other act which aims to aggress, the aggression being targeted towards another abuse (such as insult). Just as in Romanian the notion of abuse contains the sexual abuse against one's wife as well (the marital rape for instance) or the one against children or teenagers (as it is the case of incest). This meaning is equivalent with the one existing in Romanian according to which a person sexually abuses another person which usually does not have the capacity to protect himself/herself neither the necessary discerning ability to understand what is happening to him/her. At the same time, the physical or emotional abuse can be equally exercised against the elder members of the family who can also be included in the category of those who lack the defending or discerning resources.

All these distinctions coincide only in part with the juridical evaluations or prescriptions since violence, aggression or abuse implies a multitude of definitions and moreover, if we refer strictly to children the physical sanction

represents in most of the national laws a legal right of the parent. *"An examination of the definition - (of violence, our note) as M. Strauss rightly observes- shows that the physical punishment of children matches each element of the definition of violence. Thus, from a theoretical perspective the physical and capital punishment are similar in spite of the great difference among the two in so far as their severe character is concerned"* [Strauss M., 1991, p. 136].

For all these reasons it is extremely difficult to include in very precise juridical categories the limit from which a physical punishing act of a child becomes and abuse with harmful consequences for his health and education. On the other hand, the emotional abuse exercised against a wife or a female concubine constitutes a form of violence which is considered by many women even worse than physical violence and which is not included in any juridical category.

An abusive behavior can take various forms among which the most frequent are the following [Correctional Service Canada, 1988, pp 3-4]:

- a. physical abuse - constituted of kicks, slaps, pushings, strangling, hitting with various objects, fractures, abandonment and murder;
- b. neglect - which mainly regards children or dependent elderly people and which is constituted in the refuse of satisfying their fundamental needs - for instance depriving of food, shelter, cleaning, protection, health care and instruction;
- c. emotional abuse - the refuse of affection, degrading, reducing to silence, constant critics and insults, terrorizing, gelosy, rejection, neglecting of the victim's right to emotion, his/her humiliation etc.;
- d. psychic abuse - manifested by ridiculing, intimidation, mocking at the victim's system of beliefs (cultural or religious), blackmail, the threat of taking her children away, of placing the victim in an institution or that the victim would get killed, the distruction of the family's patrimony, manifesting of a possessive behavior, exaggerated control of time, words and acts of the victim, denial of the victim's rights to have friends or social contacts, the application of permanent interrogations etc.;
- e. sexual abuse - by forced obligation to unwanted gestures or sexual intercourse, the request that the victim (usually the female partner) to dress more, or on the contrary, less provocative clothes, her obliging to have sex with objects, animals or friends, to put into practice pornographic fantasies, denial or denigration of the partner's sexuality etc. In so far as the sexual

abuse against children is concerned this includes their forcing to assist or take part in sexual activities, to exploit them in prostituting or pornographic aims.

f. economic (financial) abuse - the refuse of the victim's having their own money or income sources, strict control exercised on the family budget, its stealing, taking control over other sums of money or properties through fraud, cheating or funds deturning and so on.

The majority of these forms of abuses constitute in many countries criminal acts whose sanctions are included in the Penal Code.

Family violence and the life cycle

The already mentioned notions cover, in most cases, the dimensions of the violence exercised within the family and where, as the official statistics show the woman is the main victim. Such a violence is exercised along one's whole life cycle having traumatizing effects of children's, women's and elderly people's lives. Referring specifically to the violence against women Lori L. Heise and co. [1995, p. 4-5] revealed the fact that an approach based on the life cycle of the female victim prove that the violence experimented during a certain period of time can have long-term effects which predispose the victim to increase risks in so far as the physical or mental health are concerned or in the acquiring of a deviant behavior. The prostitution, suicide, depression or drug abuse for example can be side-effects of a sexual abuse, illtreatment or any other aggressive acts experimented at early ages. Thus, the more the violence (especially with a sexual character) is present in a woman's life transforming her into victim the more the effects of this violence will be more profound and devastating afterwards (see chart A).

If we refer not only to women but also to men the approach of the family violence based on the life cycle prove that any act of violence, aggressiveness or abuse exercised against a victim at an early age has cumulative effects in the long run which can possibly be felt until an old age. Although the violence against girls is more frequent this does not exclude the fact that the victim can be a male child.

Beyond the violence acts committed by parents against children, by husbands or wives against the female (or male) partner, or by the adult children against elderly relatives which are most widely mediatized, the acts

of violence take place between uncles and nephews, grandchildren and grandparents, son/daughters-in-law and their parents-in-law, sisters/brothers-in-law etc. A different form of violence which has only recently attracted the sociologists' attention is the one committed by minor children or teenagers against their own parents.

Generally almost each member of a family, no matter the relationship category, can undertake, during his/her life cycle a family conflict which can degenerate into violence, aggression or abuse. If the conflicts constitute a constant in the life of any social group, including the family, violence represents a variable factor dependent on the social context and the cultural models according to which the members of the respective group were socialized.

Table A - Violence against women during their life-cycle

Life stage	Type of exercised violence
Pre-birth	Selective abortion according to sex (China, India, North Korea); ill-treatment during pregnancy (emotional and physical effects against women; effects on the fetus); forcefully imposed pregnancy (mass-rape during wartime).
Childhood	Infanticide according to sex; physical and emotional abuse; differentiated access to food and medical care for girls.
Pre-adolescence	Marriage; genital mutilation; sexual abuse exercised by family members or strangers; differentiated access to food or medical care; prostitution.
Adolescence	Violence exercised by a friend (e.g. rape); forced sexual relations according to economical bases (e.g. the girls in African secondary schools who, in order to pay their taxes for education need to sleep with elderly persons who can ensure them these taxes); sexual abuse at the work place; rape; sexual harassment; forced prostitution.
Reproduction age	Abuse against women exercised by intimate partners; marital rape; abuses and homicides; homicide exercised by her partner; emotional abuse; sexual abuse at the work place; sexual harassment; rape; abuse against women who have various incapacities or invalidities.
Old age	Abuse against wives; abuse against old women

Source: Lori H. Heise and co., 1995, p. 5.

Conceptions regarding the masculine aggressiveness within the family

The majority of the aggressors within the family are, as the statistics indicate, men. In order to explain their inclination towards violence several psychological or sociological conceptions were suggested, conceptions which stress either the role of the personality features, or the socialization functions and the process of social learning in the modeling of the violent behavior, or the influence of other social factors which induce the men constant aggressiveness tendencies.

The conceptions which underline the crucial role of the personality features try to reveal various temperamental and character features, specifically male, starting from the assumption that numerous male aggressors react with hostility, anger and harshness in various familial or extra-familial situations. Oftentimes these aggressors manifest solitude, intolerance in their intra-familial relations, an unstable perception of their own ego, communication incapacity in so far as their intimate needs and relations are concerned, acute feelings of abandonment which threaten the meaning of their existence, justified by the parental rejection experienced during their childhood. Donald Dutton (1995) defines this type of aggressors as being persons characterized by a limited (limit) personality organization (LPO) who consider anger and harshness as an inevitable component of intimacy and which they justify by the accusations which are brought to the victim ("It's her fault!", 'It is only her who made me behave so brutally!"). In his turn, correlating the pre-morbid structure of the personality with the alcohol consumption N. Shainess (1977) identifies three main categories of personality types disposed to violence: a. obsessive-compulsive - defined by rigid moralist opinions and by hostile impulses which determine numerous frustrations and resentments projected on other persons by explosions of uncontrolled anger. Some authors [Roy M., 1982, p. 44] describe the persons which are included in this category as having a double personality of the type *Dr. Jekyll* and *Mr. Hyde* who in public have a controlled and good-mannered behavior but who manifest extremely violently in more intimate relationships. By its un-inhibiting and cognitive effects which distort the perceptions and judgment the alcohol has an important influence in determining the aggressive impulses of these persons; b. passive-aggressive - characterized by powerful repressions and suppressions un-inhibited though during the alcohol consumption period which determine a 'hyper-masculine' aggressive behavior'; c. sadistic - inclined towards harshness and excessive cruelty

powerful repressions and suppressions uninhibited though during the alcohol consumption period which determine a 'hyper-masculine' aggressive behavior'; c. sadistic - inclined towards harshness and excessive cruelty towards others who, under the alcohol influence, can calm down or, on the contrary, can become extremely aggressive.

In a different way than the conceptions which claim that the individual is born with a certain personality structure, the theory which stresses the role of socialization sustains that any violent behavior is formed and acquired as a result of the assimilation, within the family of origin, of some norms, values, attitudes and beliefs according to which the use of violence is the only solution in a crisis situation. Socialization, no matter its directional and finality, constitutes of that process through which a certain group transmits its members normative and cultural models determining them to 'learn' the norms, the values, the life styles, the social roles compatible with these models. "As a result of the socialization process any individual manifests powerful tendencies of adhesion to the subculture of the group which socialized him, making a standard of his own behavior out of its norms and values" [Radulescu M.S., 1999, p. 142]. An individual socialized in a family which uses violence as a daily means of solving personal difficulties will afterwards reproduce in the conjugal family this (sub)cultural model.

The theory of social learning, complementary to the socialization conception considers that any behavior is determined by the combination of some models and positive and negative pressures. A violent behavior is, in fact, the product of some violent models assimilated within the family, through learning, imitation or identification, an effect of exposure to definitions favorable to violence and experimenting some violent episodes during one's childhood. Several researches have tried to test the validity of this conception proving that numerous convicts when in prison for severe violence acts had been harshly ill-treated by their parents during their childhood or adolescence [Cyr C., p.11]. An aggressed child will become an aggressor in his turn growing up with the belief that the use of force or of threat to use it constitutes the most effective means to impose one's control and domination over a victim. Thus, some family groups transmit their offspring models of violence which determine the perpetuation of violence from one generation to the next.

As opposed to the already mentioned conceptions the feminist ones sustain that any act of masculine violence is a product of some sexist prejudices ("woman is inferior to men") constituting a premeditated impulse and

targeted on purpose against women to be able to control and dominate her. From this point of view a man's violence can no longer be explained as a reaction towards an aggression situation in which two persons are mutually involved, but as an statement of man's authoritarian and dominating feelings as opposed to a woman.

A combined statement of the feminist conception with the social learning theory can be identified in the so-called Bem inventory for the sexual role (Radulescu M.S., 1996, p. 44-45) elaborated by the American psychologist Sandra Lipsitz Bem which contains sixty attributes considered as desirable for men, women or both categories considered together (neutral attributes). Such attributes are in a direct relationship with the socio-cultural stereotypes regarding the specific roles of men and women (see chart B).

Table B - Social features attributed to men and women

Social features desirable for men	
Acting as leader	Has leadership capacities
Aggressive	Independent
Ambitious	Individualist
Analytic	Takes decisions easily
Imposing	Virile
Athletic	Relies on his own forces
Competitive	Self-confident
Defends his own beliefs	Powerful personality
Dominant	Capable to oppose / object
Powerful	Capable to risk
Social features desirable for women	
Affectionate	Loves children
Friendly	Faithful
Childish	Sensitive to others' needs
Merciful	Shy
Does not use a harsh language	Harshness talking
Willing to smooth hurt feelings	Sympathizing
Effeminate	Delicate
Capable of consolation	Understanding
Kind	Cordial
Trustful	Soft / malleable

Social features	
Adaptable	Changing
Vanitous	Can be trusted
Conscientious	Discreet
Artificial	Honest
Benevolent	Grave
Happy	Characterized by tact
Helpful	Affected (theatrically)
Inefficient	Frank
Jealous	Unpredictable
Attractive	Unmethodical

Source: Sandra Lipsitz Ben, 1974, p. 155-162

The majority of these attributes are circulated through the mass-media (movies in particular) which broadcast a lot of clichés which stress the dominant role of men and the passive-dependent role of women. In this sense the man identifies with power and violence and the woman identifies with the lack of power and defense incapacity. For this reason not so much the biological differences but the norms and social values - synthesized by the cultural stereotypes - decide to a large extent upon the characteristics of masculinity and femininity. These have, in their turn, a determinant influence in the assumption of the quality of aggressor or victim.

None of the already mentioned conceptions or theories is enough persuasive in itself, all of them needing to be correlated in order to prove that the (intra)family violence is not the product of one factor or another, but of a 'constellation' of factors which converge. The role of the clichés and of the cultural stereotypes needs thus be connected with the role of the norms, values and cultural models, with the influence of the family life-style and socialization process and, last but not least, with influences exercised by the personality factors.

Theories regarding the attachment of the victim to the aggressor

As the outcome of many studies prove, in numerous (intra)family violence cases, the victims (especially the wives and children), do not complain to the authorities that they have been aggressed and continue to bear

in the future the same violent behavior on behalf of the aggressor. In most of the similar cases the women do not divorce or do not separate from the aggressor and continue to live in the household in spite of the fact that the acts of violence repeat with a frequency which is higher and higher.

In order to explain the profound attachment that some abused persons feel towards the aggressor more theories have been suggested. The Canadian researchers D. Dutton and S. Painter for example have suggested the theory of the so-called traumatic connection, which claims that the victims had experienced violent acts during their childhood, growing up in a family milieu defined by violence, reason for which they find violence as being normal. Applied to the female victims this theory does not have though enough empirical support because, as the statistical data from several countries show, about one third of the women abused by their partners had grown up in a family milieu characterized by violence. [Correctional Service Canada, 1988, p. 20].

Other theories - tributes to the psychoanalytical model - consider that victims are, generally, persons dominated by masochist tendencies which incite the aggressor to commit some violent acts which could bring them 'pleasure'. Beyond its limits, the characteristics of any conception of a Freudian origin the above-mentioned theory does not explain why the female victims have conflict, sadomasochist relations only with their partners but not with anyone else from their environment.

A special theory elaborated by the American sociologist Leonore Walker (1979), the theory of learnt helplessness stresses the fact that the victim's reaction naturally derives from previous experiences. Thus, if a person, man or woman, learns from a past experience that he/she has no control over a hostile environment or an unfavorable situation he/she loses any motivation to change that environment or that situation by adopting a passive attitude. The theory sustains that the learnt helplessness applies in all situations with which the victim is confronted. An important role in this sense is exercised by the feminine attributes learnt through the socialization process.

However, the conclusions of several researches prove that numerous female victims are competent in the solving of some difficulties or conflict relations outside the family household the helplessness feelings are exclusively present in the relationship with the couple partner. [Correctional Service Canada, 1988, p. 20]

There are, of course, numerous theories regarding the relationship between the victim and aggressor. Some stress the psychic characteristics of

the victim, other on the obstacles of an economic and social nature that the victim faces. None of these theories is however complete and persuasive to be verified entirely by the empirical support.

In any (intra) family relation which implies the emotional attachment between the victim and the aggressor there need to be identified in fact two factors [Correctional Service Canada, 1988, p. 20-21]; a. *the distribution of power and the way in which this distribution is perceived* the aggressor is, most often, an authoritarian despotic person, and the victim a person who feels subjugated and dominated, b. the abuse frequency - in the sense in which this happens, most of the times, with discontinuously. The period which elapses from the commission of an abuse to the commission of the next is likely to include agreeable behaviors which please the victim or make her forget that she has been abused. In this way the victim is subjected to some alternating periods which intertwine the pleasant episodes with aggressive reactions, situation which is meant to maintain the emotional connections with the aggressor.

These two factors can explain the reasons why a large part of the victims of the domestic violence decide not to address the authorities and continue stay with the aggressor to bear other acts of violence, ill-treatment or abuse. Usually the victim - most often the wife - is convinced that her welfare and future depends of the aggressor's welfare and will, one more reason to remain attached to him. In the case of children or elderly people the dependence and incapacity of taking decisions constitute the dominant factors of the attachment.

References

- BASSIS S. Michael, GELLES J. Richard, LEVINE Ann, *Social Problems*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1982.
- BANDURA A., *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis*, New Jersey, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1963.
- BARON Robert, *Human Aggression*, New York, Plenum, 1977.
- BERKOWITZ L., *The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis Revisited*, in *Roots of Aggression: A Re-examination of the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis*. New York, Atherton, 1969.

- BERKOWITZ L., *the Goals of Aggression*, in: Finkelhor David, Gelles J. Richard, Hotelling T. George (eds.), *Op. Cit.*, 1983.
- Correctional Service Canada, *Breaking the Cycle of Family Violence. A Resource Handbook*, written and produced by Bonnie Hutchinson Enterprises Inc., Ottawa, Ontario, 1988.
- CYR Caroline (Correctional Service Canada), *Modèle théorique: Programmes de lutte contre la violence familiale en milieu correctionnel*, mai 1994.
- DOLLARD J., DOOB L., MILLER N.E., MOWER O.H., SEARS R.R., *Frustration and Aggression*, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1939.
- DUTTON Donald, *Behavioral and Affective Correlates of Borderline Personality Organization in Wife Assaulters*, in "International Journal of Law and Psychiatry", 1995, cf. Cyr Caroline, *Op. Cit.*, May 1994, p. 12-13.
- DRAGAN Ioan, *Mass communication paradigms*, Bucharest, Sansa Publishing House, 1996.
- GOODE J. William, *Violence between Intimates*, in *Explorations in Social theory*, New York, London, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1973.
- HEISE L. Lori, PITANGUY Jacqueline, GERMAIN Adrienne, *Violence Against Women. The Hidden Health Burden*, "World Bank Discussion Papers", The World Bank, 1995.
- Institute for Criminality Research and Prevention, *Criminality through Violence in Romania (1990-1999). Intrafamily Violence*, Bucharest, General Police Headquarters, 2000.
- LORENZ Konrad, *L'aggression*, Paris, Flammarion, 1968.
- RADULESCU M. Sorin, *Violence*, item elaborated in "Dictionary of sociology" (coord. Zamfir Catalin, Vlasceanu Lazar), Bucharest, Nemira Publishing House, 1996.
- RADULESCU M. Sorin, *Deviance, Criminality and Social Pathology*, Bucharest, Lumina Lex Publishing House, 1999.
- ROY Maria, *The Abusive Partner. An Analysis of Domestic Battering*, New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1982.
- SEARS O. David, FREEDMAN L. Johnathan, PEPLAU L. Anne, *Social Psychology*, fifth edition, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1985.
- SHAINNESS N., *Psychological Aspects of Wifebattering*, in *Battered Women: A Psychological Study of Domestic Violence* (Roy M. – edit.), New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1977.
- STRAUSS A. Murray, GELLES J. Richard, STEINMETZ K. Suzanne, *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family*, New York, Garden City, Doubleday, 1980.
- STRAUSS A. Murray, *Discipline and Deviance: Physical Punishment of Children and Violence and Other Crime in Adulthood*, in rev. "Social Problems", vol. 38, no. 2, May, 1991.
-