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**Author:** Danuta Rode, Magdalena Rode

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## *Risk factors in committing domestic violence in light of gender psychology*

Danuta Rode<sup>1-A,C,D,E,F</sup>, Magdalena Marta Rode<sup>2-A,B,C,D,E,F</sup>

1: University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Katowice, Poland

2: University of Silesia, Institut of Psychology, Bytom, Poland

### BACKGROUND

The present research attempts to establish specific risk factors of domestic violence occurrences, and to pinpoint the gender-specific differences that are their main predictors. According to the subject literature, four categories of variables (personality, temperamental, socialisation, and demographic features) may constitute significant predictors of violent behaviours.

### PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

The selection criterion was the type of crime. Prospective research subjects were men and women convicted under article 207 paragraph 1.2 the Penal Code for abuse of family members. The group constituted 366 inmates – 130 female (35.60%) and 236 male (64.40%).

The following measurement methods were used: NEO-FFI Inventory by P. Costa, R. McCrae, Formal Characteristic of Behaviour – Temperament Inventory (FCB-TI) by B. Zawadzki, J. Strelau, *Attachment Questionnaire* by M. Plopa, *Own Questionnaire*.

### RESULTS

The results indicate that domestic violence perpetrated by women is connected with alcohol consumption and perseverance; and for men with anxious-ambivalent attachment and briskness.

### CONCLUSIONS

The research showed the temperamental temporary behavioural characteristics of perseverance and briskness were risk factors for both male and female perpetrators of violence. This may indicate that the main risk factor in occurrences of violence is the way people react to external stimuli, the need for stimulation, and thus the constitution of the nervous system.

### KEY WORDS

risk factors; temperament; domestic violence; woman as perpetrator; man as perpetrator

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR – Magdalena Marta Rode, Ph.D., Institute of Psychology, University of Silesia,  
8a/15 Grunwaldzki Place, 41-902 Bytom, Poland, e-mail: [magdalena.rode@us.edu.pl](mailto:magdalena.rode@us.edu.pl)

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION – A: Study design · B: Data collection · C: Statistical analysis · D: Data interpretation ·  
E: Manuscript preparation · F: Literature search · G: Funds collection

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## BACKGROUND

Capturing the multi-layered problem of violence is difficult, often requiring a holistic approach. Violent behaviours are more commonly associated with men, which seems understandable once individual differences in physiology, socialisation, and culture are taken into account. Women, on the other hand, while also committing acts of violence, are more often seen as victims of men's aggressive behaviours. The present research attempts to establish specific risk factors of domestic violence occurrences, and to pinpoint the gender-specific differences that are their main predictors.

Male perpetrators of domestic abuse are often characterised as lacking confidence, suffering from a number of anxieties related to low self-esteem, lack of ability, and abandonment (O'Leary, 1993; Barnett, Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2004; Bennett & Williams, 1999; Krahé, 2005). They have trouble exerting control over their behaviour, displaying a tendency for impulsiveness and aggressiveness when challenged even in the slightest way (Baumaister & Boden, 1988; Holtzworth-Munroe, Mochan, Hebron, Rochman, & Stuart, 2000; Johnson, 2006).

Hamberger and Hastings (1986), Campbell, Sharps, and Glass (2000), and Dutton (2001b) distinguished several borderline personality traits in perpetrators of violence. These are, in descending order of importance: a tendency for intense and unstable interpersonal relationships often characterised by attempts at depreciation of one's partner, manipulation and covert dependence, an unstable sense of self coupled with intolerance towards loneliness and a fear of abandonment, high level of anger, as well as high expectations and impulsiveness, often coupled with substance abuse. Dutton (2001a) and Rennison (2009) point to a certain stereotypical view of what are considered to be appropriate gender roles and responsibilities, and a deep conservatism with regards to tasks associated with them, characteristic of male perpetrators of violence. The role of a wife is raising children and caring for the entirety of the family system; therefore, for the good of the family, the wife's position and associated functions need to be under constant control of her husband/partner because only then are the wife's tasks performed completely.

Rode (2010b, 2012, 2014) presented a typology of domestic abuse perpetrators based on a determined personality factors profile, temperamental traits, and their characteristic. On the basis of symptoms present in the behaviour of the perpetrators of violence, Rode stressed that their personality and behaviour are shaped in a direct relation to disordered identity and "self" function. An unstable and inadequate view of oneself is a characteristic trait of such persons. Therefore, their main motivation becomes sus-

taining, protecting, and elevating their sense of self-worth, which is often achieved by degrading their partner's value (questioning partner's competences, professional position, ascription of negative traits) by controlling their behaviour.

Few researchers have attempted to diagnose the phenomenon of domestic abuse perpetrated by women (Steinmetz, 1987; Rennison, 2009; Murdoch, Vess, & Ward, 2010; Straus, 2003). They have tried mainly to present the abuse directed by women towards their partners, together with the range and forms of this phenomenon's occurrences. There is a clear lack of studies and reports regarding the psychological characteristics of women who abuse their partners. Our knowledge on this matter is scattered, with elements of it found in literature on battered husband syndrome (Steinmetz, 1987, 2013) and on instances of women's violence in heterosexual relationships (Goldenson, Geffner, Foster, & Clipson, 2007; Stuart, Moore, Gordon, Ramsey, & Kahler, 2006). Dutton (1998), and Goldenson, Spidel, Greaves, and Dutton (2009) stress the problems with maintaining emotional stability in violent women. Emotional instability causes frequent mood swings and poor emotional control. Since these women experience stressors, such as anger, more often than men, it increases the probability of them acting violently towards persons who they see as responsible for these emotions. They are characterised by impulsiveness and heightened excitability. Analysis of research results by Rode et al. (2015) regarding psychological characteristics of both men and women committing acts of domestic violence suggests that women are more open to experiences, and thus richer in these terms, while male perpetrators of violence remain more conventional and conservative in their behaviours and views. This interpretation may be considered as highly probable.

It is probable that a higher level of emotional intelligence observed in violent women (as opposed to violent men) is a factor facilitating adaptation to different life situations, allowing for greater elasticity in behaviour, and in openness towards others. However, it should be immediately mentioned that in terms of emotional functioning, perpetrators of violence exhibit decreased competencies and abilities related to effective processing of emotional information and to coping with demands and environmental pressures, including maintaining close interpersonal relationships, regardless of gender (Rode et al., 2015)

One may notice the poor level of subject literature (for the reasons mentioned above), which focuses almost exclusively on physical violence, while other forms of abuse like female-perpetrated psychological and sexual abuse have not been the subject of serious research. There are a few exceptions to this state of affairs (Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1989;

Winstok & Straus, 2016). A particularly important result of Straus's research (2003) was establishing that the drive for domination and control was the most common reason behind violence perpetrated by both men and women.

Straus (2003) remarks on the tendency for omitting aspects of provocation and initiation of physical assault by women, in studies on battered women. Finkel's (2012) I<sup>3</sup> theory, constituting the structural basis for various risk factors leading to violence, stresses the thus far disregarded factor of provocation, which, as a main generator, may be triggered by a family member's behaviour or by an obstacle in achieving one's goal. Individual, socialisation, and situational factors determine whether a person will react aggressively to provocation.

Studies on domestic violence are focused more on the risk factors of domestic violence perpetration than gender-based violence. The literature review indicates the importance of following risk factors in domestic violence perpetration: family and developmental factors, e.g. attachment styles, domestic violence in the origin family, psychopathology (Costa et al. 2015; Dutton & White, 2012), ineffective social processing (Azar et al., 2016), problems in emotional self-regulation (Carpenter & Stacks, 2009), angry rumination (Denson et al., 2012), and aggression as a trait linked to sensitivity to provocation (Denson, Pederson, Friese, Hahm, & Roberts 2011; Lawrance & Hodginks, 2009).

Summarising the above presented material, it is worth pointing out that the majority of comparative research points to a similar tendency to initiate physical assaults in both men and women.

Based on the subject literature, the following research problem was formulated: which personality, temperamental, socialisation, and demographic variables best explain the risk of domestic violence perpetrated by women, and which by men?

The research model accounts for four categories of variables. These are: personality, temperamental, socialisation, and demographic variables, which, according to the subject literature, may constitute significant predictors of violent behaviours (Bartlett & Anderson, 2012; Meloy, 2003; Middlebrooks & Audage, 2008; Egan, 2008; Rode, 2010a; Burfeind & Bartusch, 2011; Błachut, Gaberle, & Krajewski, 2007).

Based on scientific literature we can distinguish the following personality traits of violent men and women: personality traits based on the Five-Factor Model (*neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness*), temperamental traits (*briskness, perseverance, sensory sensitivity, emotional reactivity, endurance, activity*), and types of attachment (*avoidant, anxious-ambivalent, secure*). Demographic variables include: *education, place of residence, marital status, family economic situation,*

and *perpetrator's substance abuse*. Socialisation variables include: *substance abuse in one's family of origin (by the father or mother), being a victim of violence in one's family of origin (physical, psychological), and conflicts between parents*.

Research on the correlation between personality and a tendency to batter family members has a long history. Dutton (1998) showed that a combination of anxiety attachment, borderline personality traits, and chronic trauma symptoms (traumatic experiences) generate the formation of an *abusive personality* in both male and female perpetrators of domestic violence.

On the basis of studying 219 perpetrators of violence, Gilchrist et al. (2003) established that the majority of subjects displayed increased antisocial/narcissistic traits, with the remainder being characterised by borderline personality traits or emotional dependence. Walsh et al. (2010) tried to establish whether male and female perpetrators of violence are significantly different in terms of personality traits. Based on the results they obtained, the following conclusion was formulated: perpetrators of domestic abuse, both male and female, can be divided into the following three groups: antisocial – possessing high levels of psychopathic personality traits; dysphoric – characterised by high levels of anxiety, depression, and other types of psychological disorders; and low level of pathology – persons displaying adequate personality structure, rarely exhibiting violent tendencies.

## TEMPERAMENT

As one of the traits of temperament, activity serves as a regulator in seeking out stimuli, which is conditioned by the level of initial reaction. Seeking out experiences was noted by researchers studying domestic violence. Research by Dutton and Golant (1995), and Herzberger (2002) allowed distinguishing of perpetrators of domestic violence for whom acts of violence inflicted on their partners were the source of experiential stimulation. Aggressive behaviours were used to compensate for lack of stimulation. Other research (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1988; Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005) showed a high level of aggressive reaction to low-level stimuli. Caprara, Perugini, and Barbaranelli (1994) point to the perpetrator's heightened excitability and excessive impulsiveness, coupled with strong reactions to even the slightest stimulus or provocation. Cabalski (2014) remarks that the psychological profile of women who use violence stresses their hyperexcitability, tendency for anger, and aggressiveness. Goldenson et al. (2009) showed that temperamental traits like initial reaction and perseverance play a significant role in the perpetration of acts of violence.

## TYPES OF ATTACHMENT

Attachment Theory is the basis for understanding and explaining the cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements of interpersonal relations in close relationships characterised by the presence of stress and conflict (Goldenson et al., 2009; Carnelley, Pietromonaco, & Jaffe, 1994). Research shows (Babcock, Jacobson, Gottman, & Yerington, 2000; Godbout, Dutton, Lussier, & Sabourin, 2009) that male perpetrators of domestic violence exhibit non-safe attachment styles more often than men not using violence. According to researchers, men using violence may be classed equally well as either withdrawn or preoccupied. Perpetrators with withdrawn attachment were more controlling and distant in their marital interactions, while preoccupied ones were the least distanced. The results point to an important role of repressed anxiety and intimacy avoidance in the transition from early exposure to violence during childhood to directing violence towards one's partner. Particular attention was paid to women's attachment (Goldenson et al., 2007; Orcutt, Garcia, & Pickett, 2005). Results show that individuals (men, women) with non-safe attachment display a tendency to see their partners as distant, unreliable, and untrustworthy. Studies on female perpetrators of violence showed a common pattern of psychopathic personality traits (Simmons, Lehmann, Cobb, & Fowler, 2005; Stuart et al., 2006).

## PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

### SAMPLING PROCEDURE

According to the subject of research, selection criterion was a type of crime (purposive sampling). Prospective research participants were men and women convicted under article 207 paragraph 1.2 the Penal Code for abuse of family members. The control group solely comprised prisoners who had not committed violent offences. Male subjects were selected from the following institutions: Zabrze Correction Facility, Tarnowskie Góry Detention Facility, Kraków (Nowa Huta) Correction Facility, and Strzelce Opolskie Correction Facility. Women were interviewed at Lubliniec Correction Facility, Kraków (Nowa Huta) Correction Facility, First Correction Facility in Łódź, Opole Detention Facility, and External Section of Opole Detention Facility with headquarters in Turawa.

The authors were granted permission to conduct research in accordance with an established research procedure. This allowed for an appropriate sample selection and realisation of research with the help of students and resident psychologists of the aforementioned correction facilities. Prior to conducting the study, both students and psychologists received a theoretical and practical training in the form of

workshops (using research tools, data collection procedures). All subjects gave their consent to participate in the study. Prior to giving their consent they were informed of the aim and course of the study, as well as the fact that results will be anonymised and that participation is voluntary and can be terminated at any point without adverse consequences to the participant. Part of the research presented below was conducted by Dominik Zygała as part of his Master's thesis "Risk factors for using violence in men and women".

### PARTICIPANTS

*A. Demographic factors.* A total of 366 participants took part in the study – 130 female (35.60%) and 236 male (64.40%). The mean age for the male and the female groups was 36.8 and 36.6 years, respectively, and in the control group of males the mean age was 34.6 years, and 34.9 years for females. The majority of participants had primary or trade school education (77.50%; 38.60% and 38.90%, respectively); individuals with secondary school and higher education constituted 22.50% (out of which only 2.46% had higher education). Both the mean age and its standard deviation were similar for both male and female ( $p = .823$ ). In terms of education, women differed in the primary school to trade school education ratio – the primary school education group was two times greater than the trade school group, while for men there was near parity between the two (secondary school and higher education were represented at similar levels in both male and female groups: female 22.30%, male 19.90%).

There was a slight majority of unmarried subjects in the sample (50.30%). However, when we account for gender, the marital status becomes a more varied variable – 59.30% of male subjects were either married or had concubines, while for females this number was significantly lower at 32.30%. When considering the demographics, it is worth pointing out that most of the subjects were from cities and towns (86.60%), and many of them (61.20%) described their economic situation as good or very good.

*B. Socialisation factors.* It was determined that more than half of the perpetrators of violence (52.40%) abused alcohol (men – 52.20%; women – 53.10%). Of note is the fact that these subjects were raised in families where parents mostly did not abuse alcohol (fathers – 63.40%; mothers – 81.50% and 80.80%). It can be assumed that in their families of origin alcohol was not the root cause of stress and conflict, and thus the subjects did not model certain behaviours, like conflict resolution, by means of alcohol. Such a distribution of results may suggest that alcohol abuse in family of origin is neither necessary nor sufficient for conditioning future violent behaviour. The confirmation might be the control group results where

the majority of women (66.70%) and half of men were raised in families in which father abused alcohol and children did not resort to domestic violence.

Subjects experienced physical (38.60%) and psychological violence (51.90%) in their families of origin. Men, when compared to women, were more often victims of both physical and psychological violence. Subjects were raised in families with frequent conflicts between parents (43.40%), and female perpetrators of violence (44.60%) were also witnessing violence more often than their male counterparts. To compare in group of females who were not domestic violence perpetrators, conflict between parents occurred in 25.00%, and in the case of males – 27.20%. It is therefore highly probable that some of the subjects worked out a generalised representation where conflict and violence are strictly connected. Children witnessing parents arguing or suffering abuse at their hands internalise the aggressive behaviour as an acceptable way to solve problems. Conflicts in relationships and escalation of violence in inter-partner relations appear to be an important factor. The data is presented in Table 1 – Quantitative distribution of socialisation variables.

MEASURES

*Personality dimensions.* The personality traits were measured by the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) authorship P. Costa and R. McCrae. The NEO-FFI Inventory is a tool used for the measurement of five personality factors: neuroticism (N), extraversion (E), agreeableness (A), openness to experience (O), and

conscientiousness (C), which consists of 60 test positions (12 for each factor). Subjects determine their answer on a five-point scale, where 1 means a complete disagreement and 5 a complete agreement with the statement. Answers are assigned a point value (0-4 points) relevant to a given scale. The questionnaire contains separate norms for men and women, accounting for five separate age groups. The test used in the present research is a Polish adaptation of one proposed by P. Costa and R. McCrae. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  coefficient for each scale is as follows: neuroticism – .80, extraversion – .77, agreeableness – .68, openness to experience – .68, and conscientiousness – .82 (Zawadzki, Strelau, Szczepaniak, & Śliwińska, 1998).

*Temperament.* The temperamental traits were assessed by *The Formal Characteristic of Behaviour – Temperament Inventory* (FCB-TI). This tool is designed for temperament diagnosis (Strelau & Zawadzki, 1993). The Regulatory Theory of Temperament constitutes the theoretical basis for the construction of the FCB-TI inventory. The questionnaire consists of 120 positions – 20 for each of the six scales. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  coefficient for each of the scales is as follows: briskness – .77, perseverance – .72, sensory sensitivity – .72, emotional reactivity – .82, endurance – .86, and activity – .82. The score for each FCB-TI scale is obtained by adding up all diagnostic answers (one point per answer). Raw results are then transformed into normalised results (stanine). Results are interpreter in two ways – psychometric and psychological.

*Types of Attachment.* The *Attachment Questionnaire* (AQ) was used to measure types of attachment. Hazan and Shaver’s theory (1987) constitutes

Table 1  
Quantitative distribution of socialisation variables

| Sex                      |   | Alcohol perpetrator |      | Alcohol father |      | Alcohol mother |      | Physical violence |      | Psychological violence |      | Conflicts between parents |      |
|--------------------------|---|---------------------|------|----------------|------|----------------|------|-------------------|------|------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
|                          |   | Yes                 | No   | Yes            | No   | Yes            | No   | Yes               | No   | Yes                    | No   | Yes                       | No   |
| Female                   | N | 69                  | 61   | 47             | 83   | 24             | 106  | 45                | 85   | 59                     | 71   | 58                        | 72   |
|                          | % | 53.1                | 46.9 | 36.1           | 63.9 | 18.5           | 81.5 | 34.6              | 65.4 | 45.3                   | 54.7 | 44.6                      | 55.5 |
| Male                     | N | 123                 | 113  | 87             | 149  | 46             | 190  | 96                | 140  | 139                    | 97   | 101                       | 135  |
|                          | % | 52.2                | 47.8 | 36.8           | 63.2 | 19.5           | 80.5 | 40.6              | 59.3 | 58.8                   | 41.2 | 42.8                      | 57.2 |
| Total                    | N | 192                 | 174  | 134            | 232  | 70             | 296  | 141               | 225  | 198                    | 168  | 159                       | 207  |
|                          | % | 52.4                | 47.6 | 36.6           | 63.4 | 19.2           | 80.8 | 38.6              | 61.4 | 51.9                   | 48.1 | 43.4                      | 56.6 |
| Females without violence | N | 24                  | 32   | 37             | 19   | 14             | 42   | 14                | 42   | 12                     | 44   | 14                        | 42   |
|                          | % | 42.8                | 58.6 | 66.7           | 33.9 | 25.0           | 75.0 | 25.0              | 75.0 | 21.4                   | 78.6 | 25.0                      | 75.0 |
| Males without violence   | N | 25                  | 19   | 22             | 22   | 12             | 22   | 14                | 30   | 17                     | 27   | 12                        | 32   |
|                          | % | 56.8                | 43.2 | 50.0           | 50.0 | 27.3           | 50   | 31.8              | 68.2 | 38.6                   | 61.4 | 27.2                      | 72.8 |

the theoretical underpinning of this tool. Based on different types of attachment, Plopa (2008) created a questionnaire consisting of three scales: safe, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant attachment. The tool consists of 24 statements which the subject rates on a seven-point scale where 1 means a complete disagreement and 7 means complete agreement with a given statement. This tool has the following psychometric reliability score for each dimension of the questionnaire (safe  $r = .90$ ; anxious-ambivalent  $r = .78$ ; avoidant  $r = .80$ ). These reliability levels confirm that AQ meets our methodological requirements.

*Demographic and socialisation variables.* Our own questionnaire was prepared to assess the demographic and socialisation characteristics of participants. The questionnaire designed by the authors provided the following data: (1) demographics – age, sex, education, marital status, employment status, place of residence, and alcohol and medication abuse; (2) family socialisation conditions – family of origin economic situation, parental alcohol abuse, conflicts between parents, experiencing violence (physical, psychological) in the family of origin.

## RESULTS

In order to answer the research question: “which personality, temperamental, social, and demographic

variables best explain the risk of domestic violence perpetrated by women, and which by men?” we conducted a regression analysis. Variables with the highest level of relevance were included in the regression model. Due to differences in scales used to measure different variables (interval for quantitative variables, nominal for qualitative variables), a logistic regression was performed – with non-dichotomous qualitative variables suitably recoded. Regression analysis was conducted separately for male and female groups of perpetrators. Demographic and socialisation variables will be referred to as quantitative, and psychological variables (personality, temperamental, attachment), due to their measurement, will be referred to as qualitative.

### FEMALE PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE

The input model for qualitative variables studied all relevant qualitative predictors correlated with the dependent variable “violence”. Input model was fitted to data  $\chi^2 (df = 4, N = 166) = 16.09; p = .003$ . Regression analysis allowed limitation of the number of variables significant for the dependent variable in the third stage. The final model for qualitative variables was appropriately fitted to data –  $\chi^2 (df = 2, N = 158) = 11.12; p = .004$ . Alcohol consumption, OR = 2.28; Wald  $\chi^2 = 5.80; p = .020$ , and experiencing violence

Table 2  
*Plotting the female group regression model – qualitative variables*

|  | B0 const. | Place of residence | Alcohol consumption | Experiencing violence in the family of origin |
|--|-----------|--------------------|---------------------|---|
| Score                                    | 1.51      | -0.53              | 0.82                | 0.97  |
| Standard error                           | 0.76      | 0.28               | 0.35                | 0.45  |
| <i>P</i>                                 | .050      | .060               | .020                | .050  |
| <i>t</i> (164)                           | 1.99      | -1.92              | 2.35                | 2.18  |
| -95% CL                                  | 0.01      | -1.08              | 0.13                | 0.09  |
| +95% CL                                  | 3.01      | 0.01               | 1.50                | 1.85  |
| Wald $\chi^2$                            | 3.97      | 3.70               | 5.80                | 3.81  |
| <i>P</i>                                 | .050      | .050               | .020                | .050  |
| Odds ratios for specific units of change | 4.53      | 0.59               | 2.28                | 2.36  |
| -95% CL                                  | 1.01      | 0.34               | 1.14                | 1.09  |
| +95% CL                                  | 20.29     | 1.01               | 4.49                | 6.38  |
| Odds ratio**                             |           | 0.34               | 2.28                | 2.64  |
| -95% CL                                  |           | 0.11               | 1.14                | 1.09  |
| +95% CL                                  |           | 1.03               | 4.49                | 6.38  |

Note. Total loss: 97,92  $\chi^2(3) = 15,142; p = .002$ .

Odds ratio\*\*: Odds ratio for a change equal to the observed range of values of the analysed variables.

in the family of origin,  $OR = 2.36$ ;  $Wald \chi^2 = 3.81$ ;  $p = .050$ , were statistically significant predictors.

The final model for quantitative variables contained only *perseverance*,  $OR = 1.15$ ;  $Wald \chi^2 = 7.51$ ;  $p = .006$ , and was fitted to data,  $\chi^2 (df = 1, N = 162) = 7.97$ ;  $p = .005$ . No predictor was statistically significant, which might have been caused by high correlation of neuroticism and emotional reactivity  $r > 0.60$ ;  $p = .010$ .

MODEL OF QUALITY AND QUANTITY PREDICTORS

Regression analysis using independent variables allowed limitation of the number of variables significant for the dependent variable being analysed (female violence) in the second stage. They are *alcohol consumption* and *perseverance*. Both these variables were significant in the model, which was well fitted to data,  $\chi^2 (df = 2, N = 158) = 11.38$ ,  $p = .003$ , and significantly better than the input model (loss function = 10.74,  $p < .001$ ).

MALE PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE

The regression model for men was designed in the same way as for women. After dependency analysis of qualitative predictors and the dependent variable, the following variables were qualified for subsequent stages of analysis: alcohol abuse by the perpetrator,  $\chi^2 NW = 4.26$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .040$ , experiencing psychological violence in the family of origin,  $\chi^2 NW = 3.63$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .057$ , and conflicts between parents,  $\chi^2 NW = 3.67$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = .055$ . Unfortunately, the input and other models containing qualitative variables were either statistically insignificant or unquantifiable due to high level of correlation between predictors. Therefore, the general model omits qualitative variables because they do not improve the model.

Table 4  
*Logistic regression model for female violence variable*

| Predictor           | Score | SE   | t(239) | Wald $\chi^2$ | P    | OR   |
|---------------------|-------|------|--------|---------------|------|------|
| Alcohol consumption | 0.73  | 0.36 | 2.04   | 4.14          | .040 | 2.07 |
| Perseverance        | 0.12  | 0.05 | 2.33   | 5.42          | .020 | 1.13 |

Table 5  
*Logistic regression model for male violence variable*

| Predictor                     | Score | SE   | t(239) | Wald $\chi^2$ | P      | OR   |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|--------|---------------|--------|------|
| Anxious-ambivalent attachment | 0.34  | 0.06 | 5.96   | 35.48         | < .001 | 1.40 |
| Briskness                     | 0.21  | 0.08 | 2.55   | 6.48          | .010   | 1.22 |

Table 3  
*Plotting the female group regression model – quantitative variables*

|  | B0 const. | Perseverance | Emotional reactivity |
|--|-----------|--------------|----------------------|
| Score                                    | -1.02     | 0.12         | 0.04                 |
| Standard error                           | 0.66      | 0.06         | 0.04                 |
| P  | 0.12      | 0.006        | 0.36                 |
| t(164)                                   | -1.554    | 2.076        | 0.911                |
| -95% CL                                  | -2.31     | 0.01         | -0.05                |
| +95% CL                                  | 0.27      | 0.23         | 0.13                 |
| Wald $\chi^2$                            | 2.42      | 7.51         | 0.83                 |
| P  | 0.120     | 0.038        | 0.362                |
| Odds ratios for specific units of change | 0.36      | 1.15         | 1.04                 |
| -95% CL                                  | 0.10      | 1.01         | 0.95                 |
| +95% CL                                  | 1.32      | 1.26         | 1.14                 |
| Odds ratio**                             |           | 7.58         | 2.15                 |
| -95% CL                                  |           | 1.10         | 0.41                 |
| +95% CL                                  |           | 51.96        | 11.37                |

Note. Total loss: 98.73  $\chi^2(2) = 8.8$ ;  $p = .012$ .  
Odds ratio\*\*: Odds ratio for a change equal to the observed range of values of the analysed variables.

Regression analysis using independent variables allowed limitation of the number of variables significant for the dependent variable being analysed (male violence) in the third stage. They are: *anxious-ambivalent attachment* and *briskness*. The model was well fitted for data,  $\chi^2 (df = 1; p < .001)$ . Anxious-ambivalent attachment was an important predictor,  $OR = 1.40$ ;  $Wald \chi^2 = 35.48$ ;  $p < .001$ , as was *briskness*,  $OR = 1.22$ ;  $Wald \chi^2 = 6.48$ ;  $p = .010$ .



Our analysis showed that domestic violence perpetrated by women is connected to *alcohol consumption* (OR = 2.07,  $p = .040$ ) and *perseverance* (OR = 1.13,  $p = .020$ ), and for men with *anxious-ambivalent attachment* (OR = 1.40,  $p < .001$ ) and *briskness* (OR = 1.23,  $p = .010$ ). Based on the data, we can conclude that the chance of female perpetrated violence occurring increases with an increase in alcohol consumption and a tendency for behavioural perseverance. For men, the risk factors are anxious-ambivalent attachment and low briskness levels.

## DISCUSSION

Among significant factors in predicting the likelihood of female domestic violence occurring are the level of alcohol consumption and perseverance. Frequent alcohol consumption may entail the lowering of reactivity to stimuli and decreased respect for social norms. Furthermore, alcohol consumption may be a coping mechanism for stress, as well as a regulator of pressures exceeding the optimal level of excitability. It may be summarised that the more alcohol a female perpetrator of violence consumes, the greater the likelihood of violence occurring. As was already mentioned, alcohol simply leads to disinhibition. Women, being more emotionally developed than men, experience feelings of being hurt, of blame, anxiety, or depression more frequently. It may be conjectured that women practice a form of self-medication by using alcohol to reduce undesired emotional states. Emotional dysfunctions like anxiety, fear, and uncertainty subside under the influence of alcohol. By becoming inebriated, female perpetrators also acquire a sense of control over a situation. Perseverance is a temporary behavioural temperamental trait connected to neuroticism. Its heightened level may indicate a greater tendency for repetitive behaviour even after the cessation of a stimulus. It is possible that in the case of female perpetrators of violence the heightened level of this trait results in an inability to cope with undesired excitation and a longer exposure to the situation, even rumination, which in turn may result in acts of violence. Focusing on negative, angry mood, remembering past episodes of anger, as well as their causes and consequences, is a constitutive element of violent acts committed by women (Sukhodolsky, Golub, & Cormwell, 2001). In such cases alcohol could serve as a catalyst for these behaviours, while simultaneously helping one to cope with them. It is possible that there are other socialisation or situational variables that influence female violence but which were not included in the research model, or were not classed as significantly connected to violence by the statistical analysis.

Results show that anxious-ambivalent attachment and briskness are among the male violence risk fac-

tors. Men are characterised by anxious-ambivalent interpersonal attachment more often than women, which influences the way they function in various interpersonal relations. According to this point of view, parental responses to a child's affective signals did not result in the child's internal organisation of emotional experience (Rode, 2010a). Because of this, male perpetrators of violence experience strong anxiety and anger in close relationships – emotions which are tied to fear of abandonment. Fear of being separated from a close person causes anger, which, suppressed for a long time, culminates in rage – the main cause of aggression. The imbalance of strength leads, in turn, to violence, which is designed to keep the partner (Dutton, 2001b). Babcock, Jacobson, Gottman, and Yerington (2000) noticed a connection between the type of attachment developed in childhood, and the use of violence in intimate relations. They concluded that men using violence against their family members exhibit non-safe types of attachment more often than men not resorting to violence. It can be thus summarised that it is the fear of losing one's partner and control one has over her life, which underlies the deficient emotional regulation mechanism in perpetrators of violence. On the one hand, they fear loneliness and need close symbiotic relations of dependence, while on the other hand, they are afraid of the intensity of these relations. The threat of being left by one's partner causes strong fear of abandonment and even panic attacks (Vasselle-Augenstein & Ehrlich, 1992; Gelles, 1993; Rode, 2010b). In cases of low sensitivity, aggressive behaviours of these perpetrators are often the source of strong stimulation. Instrumental aggressive behaviours are most often used to compensate for stimulation deficiency. Violence in the male group is tied to an inadequate and less efficient mechanism for regulation of behavioural change frequency in response to a given stimulus. It is possible that this is a result of the constitution and sensitivity of the nervous system, as well as a certain way of reacting to external stimuli. Perpetrators of violence exhibiting anxious-ambivalent attachment are probably characterised by a decreased need for both quantity and quality of stimuli, which, together with low intensity, may result in physiological-cognitive problems. A person who does not know how to react to an unpleasant excitation discharges it via violent behaviour.

It is worth noting that the temperamental temporary behavioural characteristics of perseverance and briskness were risk factors for both male and female perpetrators of violence. This may indicate that the main risk factor in occurrences of violence is the way people react to external stimuli, the need for stimulation, and thus the constitution of the nervous system. Nevertheless, one should take care when generalising from a sample to the population because not everyone who has problems with excitation level regulation will be prone to violence. This phenom-

enon should be analysed at several levels, with the results presented above supporting further inquiry.

The research presented above refers to a highly complex problem of risk factors of domestic violence. Empirical data allowed for the presentation of significant results, together with their interpretation. However, there are still aspects requiring further investigation. Among them are: inclusion of rumination of aggressive individuals as a tendency to remember prior episodes of anger, as well as their causes and consequences in research. Studies show that rumination on aggression conditions aggression (Anestis, Anestis, Selby, & Joiner, 2009), yet we still lack research into its relationship with violence and gender. It is necessary to conduct research regarding the specific dynamic between the victim and the perpetrator of violence from each respective perspective. Researchers point to a deep ambivalence of the perpetrators of violence, both men and women, towards dependence relations and their partners. Only by showing this interdependence together with the dynamics of the relationship will it be possible to fully describe the conditioning of violent acts. Looking for factors shaping scripted experiences of the perpetrators of violence and their influence on marital conflict perception and coping mechanisms seems important. It would help us to know precisely why for some individuals experiencing violence in childhood leads to them employing violence against their partners, while for others it has no bearing on the matter, as they never act violently towards their family members.

The obtained results indicate conclusions that can be taken into consideration during domestic violence offenders' therapy, both male and female.

Correction-educational programs used so far usually refer to a psychological type of one kind of offender, while their typology (Rode, 2010a; Spidel et al., 2013) needs psychological-therapeutic programs, which tend to change their various patterns of behavior conditioned by different psychological profiles. Psychological aid should be provided in two stages: stage one – basic – the therapist (1) focuses on offender's violent behaviors and his/her responsibility; and (2) finds the information about the offender's perception of particular event, i.e. the way the offender learned to perceive and understand his/her own and others' behaviors by means of self-observation, which lets them recognise chains of violent events, identify the trigger, cognitive restructuring, own thinking style, and behaviour analysis as well as interpersonal skills and relaxation training. Stage two – refers to the offender's personality theory.

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