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**ABSTRACT**

This study examined assaults on wives by their husbands in an attempt to provide information on the intoxication-victimization theory, a theory that posits intoxication as a condition which increases the probability of victimization. Data were obtained by telephone interviews in 1985 with a national probability sample of 6,002 households. The wife abuse data came from wives' reports in 3,665 households containing a currently married or cohabiting couple. Survey questions measured drunkenness and drug abuse, violence, and approval of violence. The sample was classified into three groups: non-abused wives, women who experienced minor violence at the hands of their partner, and women who were the victims of severe assaults by their partner. Discriminant analysis was used to determine the extent to which these groups could be differentiated on the basis of 11 variables: (1) wife's drug use; (2) wife's drunkenness; (3) husband's drug use; (4) husband's drunkenness; (5) low income; (6) violence by victim's parents; (7) housewife status; (8) husband's unemployment; (9) pregnancy; (10) violence norms; and (11) number of children. The results revealed that, relative to other factors examined, husband's drug use was the most important predictor of wife abuse, and husband's drunkenness was second in importance. Women who drank heavily or used other drugs had a higher risk of being victims of wife abuse than did other women. Other important factors were low income, unemployment, and attitudes which tolerate violence. (NB)

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## SUBSTANCE ABUSE AS A PRECIPITANT OF FAMILY VIOLENCE VICTIMIZATION\*1

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Most of the research on the link between drugs, particularly alcohol, and crimes of violence has been from the perspective of "intoxication-aggressor" effects, i.e., intoxication as an instigator of aggressive acts. A complementary perspective is what we will call "intoxication-victim" effects. This perspective is based on the idea that persons "under the influence" of alcohol and other drugs may precipitate their own victimization. This theory posits intoxication as a condition which increases the probability of victimization. The research to be reported was designed to provide information which can help evaluate the intoxication-victimization theory. It uses assaults on wives by a husband or male partner (which, for brevity we will call "wife abuse" from here on) as the type of victimization.

The data are from a study of a nationally representative sample of American families. These data allow us to explore the extent to which there is a linkage between drug/alcohol use and victimization. The analysis will also consider certain other factors often postulated as increasing victimization for wife abuse. The major questions to be addressed include: (1) Are women who drink heavily or use drugs at greater risk for abuse by spouses? (2) If so, is this a "spurious" relationship; for example, a relationship which simply reflects drug/alcohol use by the husband, or reflects other confounding variables such as socioeconomic status? (3) Do certain other characteristics of the victim and her spouse provide a basis for predicting the severity of spousal violence?

## I. VICTIMIZATION THEORY

### Blaming the Victim

Poor, minority group members were the focus of Ryan's original research on victim blaming (Ryan, 1971). The case of battered women has certain parallels. Stereotypes persist that wife abuse occurs because of the victims' masochism (Freud, 1933; Deutsch, 1944) or because the women do things to provoke the assault. The question commonly asked by the general public, "Why do they stay?" implicitly suggests that the victimization occurs because something is wrong with battered women. Schur (1984:7) observes that female victims of rape and battery are often treated as though they were the deviant, thus reflecting society's "overall devaluation of women." Moreover, Dobash and Dobash (1978) point out that blaming the victim of wife beating provides a justification for batterers' violence. When women nag, or try to have an equal say in family decisions, or refuse sex, husbands may feel they are justified in using force (LaRossa, 1980). In these cases, the woman is blamed for her own victimization.

As previously indicated, wife beating is not the only crime which is excused by blaming the victim. Research on rape, for example, shows that rape tends to be doubted if the victim is lower class, has a reputation for promiscuity, or has a history of drinking, drug use or psychiatric hospitalization (Clark and Lewis, 1977; McCahill, Meyer and Fischman, 1979). Consequently their accusations of rape have received less effective responses from the criminal justice system. Clark and Lewis's (1978: 91) study of 117 Canadian rape cases concluded that "... it is the character of the reporting rape victim which determines whether or not a reported offense will be classified as founded, and passed on in the judicial system." These more recent interpretations of rape within a victimology framework contrast to those of earlier researchers. Amir (1967, 1971) for example, has been criticized for his stereotyped discussion of victim-precipitated rape. On the other hand, Wolfgang's (1958) analysis of victim-precipitated homicide carefully defines this category as one in which the victim was the first to use physical force or display a weapon. All of the case illustrations Wolfgang provides of victim precipitation in families are instances where the victim is a male batterer killed by his beaten wife.

## Explaining Wife Abuse Victimization

Theories of Victimization. A number of theoretical perspectives have been utilized to explain wife abuse. For example, Gelles and Straus (1979) identify fifteen theories, which they organize into three broad categories: intraindividual theory, social psychological theory, and sociocultural theory. Intraindividual theory has emphasized alcohol-drug effects and psychological traits such as self esteem (Hudson and McIntosh, 1981; Roy, 1977). Socio-cultural theories such as systems theory have attempted to integrate social structural and family processes (Straus, 1973). Feminist explanations of wife abuse also emphasize socio-cultural factors, especially the patriarchal structure of society and socialization practices (Pagelow, 1984; Yllo and Straus 1984). Social-psychological approaches have stressed for one, social-learning through experience and exposure to violence (Sebastian, 1983; Kalmuss, 1984).

Empirical Studies. Research on wife abuse rarely includes information on the victim's use of drugs other than alcohol. The study by Coleman and Straus (1983) illustrates this omission. Coleman and Straus present separate data on drinking by husbands and wives but their measure of family violence is for the couple, i.e. they do not provide information on drinking by women who have been assaulted. Another problem is illustrated by Walker's study (1984) of 400 battered women. Walker found that approximately 20% of these women used alcohol and 8% use other drugs prior to violent episodes. The problem is that one cannot evaluate the meaning of this without knowing the extent of drug use in some comparable sample. For this reason, we have selected for review here only research which utilizes some type of comparison group.

Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) carried out a comprehensive review of research on factors associated with engaging in wife abuse or being a victim of wife abuse. They located 400 empirical studies, of which 97 met the comparison group criterion. Fourteen characteristics were found to be "consistently" associated with being an abuser;<sup>2</sup> whereas only one factor was found to be consistently associated with being a victim of wife abuse.

Five of the studies reviewed by Hotaling and Sugarman investigated drug use by victims, but the findings were inconsistent. Six of the studies included data on alcohol usage, but only one found an association with drinking by the victim. Hotaling and Sugarman conclude that characteristics associated with the husband or the couple are more useful in assessing victimization risks than victim characteristics, including victims' use of alcohol or other drugs. Nevertheless, the fact that three of the five studies of drug use by wives did find an association with wife abuse, suggests that drug use may indeed put women at higher risk of being a victim of spouse abuse. In respect to alcohol use, despite the fact that only one of the six studies of the wife's alcohol use reviewed by Hotaling and Sugarman found a statistically significant association, other studies suggest that it may be premature to dismiss the idea that alcohol use by wives can precipitate assault by their husbands. Perhaps the best known of these is the research which suggests that drinking precipitates rape, assault, and homicide (Amir, 1969, 1971; Wolfgang (1958).

Turning to research focusing directly on wife abuse, Eberle (1980) did a discriminant analysis comparing abused wives whose husband used no alcohol with husbands who were drinking at the time the abuse occurred.

Eberle found the alcohol use by victims to be the most important variable distinguishing between two groups of batterers. Telch and Lindquist (1984) found that both husbands' and wives' alcohol use discriminated between violent and non-violent groups. A study of violent and non-violent couples in therapy by Coleman, Weinman and Hsi (1980) found that the wives in the violent relationships differed significantly from the non-victim wives in respect to the husband's alcohol use, frequent verbal arguments, low education of the wife, and drug abuse by the wife.

Added to the presence of alcohol, attributions of blame for wife abuse may also vary according to the sex of the actor. Evidence for this is provided by the experimental research of Capasso Richardson and Campbell (1980). Using a student population of 273, these researchers gave subjects two accounts of wife abuse, varying the sex of the drunken spouse. Their findings showed that women were blamed more than men when they were drunk; when husbands were drunk, situational factors were rated more important and less blame was attributed to men. The findings suggest different standards for men and women and a gender-specific deviance disavowal script. Battered women under the influence violate gender norms of appropriate behavior and may be viewed as meriting their own beatings. Ironically, when the husband is doing the drinking, attributions of blame are less likely. Both beliefs in alcohol's disinhibiting powers and acceptance of excess drinking for men serve to legitimize and excuse their violent acts. Moreover, battered women themselves tend to use the husband's drinking as an explanation for his violence (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Gelles, 1974).

Overall, there seems to be considerable empirical evidence supporting a link between substance abuse and victimization. However, the studies reviewed have several problems. They are largely limited to clinical samples. The relative importance of substance abuse by the aggressor and the victim is not clear. There is also no data on the association between drug use and severity of abuse. By contrast, the study to be reported uses a national representative sample, takes into account both alcohol and other drug use, and differentiates between minor violence and severe assaults. In addition, the analysis includes several other factors reflecting the etiological complexity of women's violent victimization. These include: normative approval of violence, witnessing paternal violence against mothers, employment, income, pregnancy and number of children.

## II. METHOD

### Sample

The data for this study were obtained by telephone interviews in 1985 with a national probability sample of 6,002 households. Eligible households had to include adults 18 years of age or older who were: (1) presently married or (2) presently living as a male-female couple or (3) divorced or separated within the last two years or (4) single parent with a child under 18 living in a household. The wife abuse data utilized in this analysis is based only on wives' reports in 3,665 households containing a currently married or cohabiting couple.<sup>#3</sup> It excludes single parents and recently terminated marriages. The response rate was 84%.

Further information on the sample is given in Straus and Gelles (1986) and Kaufman Kantor and Straus (1986).

#### Drunkenness/Drug Abuse Measure.

The measure of alcohol/other drug abuse was based on two survey questions. The first asked "In the past year, how often would you guess you got drunk?" The second question repeated this for "got high on marijuana or some other drug." Both questions were asked of women about their own use of drugs, and then the same questions were asked about their partner's usage. One limitation to the measure of drug abuse is that marijuana is the only drug specified. The lack of specific probes for other drugs may result in underreporting. On the other hand, because marijuana has become an increasingly normative "recreational" drug, people may be more willing to admit to drug usage. Underreporting of drunkenness by women is also plausible given gender norms disapproving of this behavior for women. The use of wives' reports of husband's drunkenness has been validated by other researchers (Van Hasselt, Morrison and Bellack, 1985).

#### Violence Measure

The definition of violence used here is "an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of causing physical pain or injury to another person" (see Gelles and Straus, 1979 for an explication of this definition and an analysis of alternative definitions). The "Conflict Tactics Scale" (CTS) was used to measure the incidence of violence (Straus, 1979). The CTS has been used and refined in a number of studies of intra-family violence (Allen and Straus, 1980; Giles-Sims; 1983; Hornung, McCullough and Sugimoto, 1981; Jorgensen, 1977; Straus, 1979; Straus and Gelles, 1986; Steimetz, 1977). This paper uses the 1985 revision of the CTS (Straus and Gelles, 1986), and specifically the following acts of physical violence: threw an object at the spouse, pushed, grabbed, or shoved spouse, slapped spouse, kicked, punched, hit with object, beat-up, choked, threatened with knife or gun, used knife or gun.

While we consider both husband-to-wife and wife-to-husband violence important phenomena, we believe that they cannot be equated. Assaults on women are a far more serious problem given men's greater size and strength. Men, in fact may laugh at their wife's attempts to slap or punch them and much of the violence by wives is in self-defense (Straus, 1980; Saunders, 1986). Consistent with this, our data on the effects of violence show that women are three times more likely to require medical care for injuries sustained in family assaults. We therefore chose to focus this paper on husband-to-wife acts of physical violence. Furthermore, because this paper focuses on women's victimization only the reports of wives are utilized in the analysis. For brevity and convenience, this will be referred to as "wife abuse" for the balance of the paper. If the husband engaged in one or more of the violent acts listed above during the one year referent period of the survey, the couple was classified as having experienced wife abuse. The forms of violence which are used in this paper include:

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Predictor Variables by Violence Type Groups

Predictor Variable	<u>No Violence</u> (N=1860)		<u>Minor Violence</u> (N=167)		<u>Severe Violence</u> (N=106)	
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
<b>A. Substance Abuse</b>						
Wife high on drugs (1=high)	.04	(.19)	.14	(.35)	.24	(.43)
Husb. high on drugs (1=high)	.05	(.22)	.18	(.39)	.31	(.46)
Husb. drunk (1=drunk)	.31	(.46)	.50	(.50)	.70	(.46)
Wife drunk (1=drunk)	.16	(.37)	.36	(.48)	.46	(.50)
<b>B. Other Characteristics</b>						
Low Family Income (1=low)	.06	(.24)	.09	(.28)	.15	(.36)
Father hit mother (1=yes)	.09	(.29)	.19	(.39)	.19	(.40)
Housewife (1=housewife)	.35	(.48)	.29	(.45)	.36	(.48)
Man's unemployment (1=unemployed)	.02	(.16)	.02	(.14)	.07	(.25)
Pregnant (1=yes)	.03	(.18)	.04	(.20)	.07	(.25)
Violence norms (1=approve)	.11	(.31)	.20	(.40)	.16	(.37)
Number of children (interval scale)	1.06	(1.17)	1.21	(1.26)	1.14	(1.15)

Minor Violence. The violent acts included in this index include throwing an object at another, pushing, grabbing or slapping.

Severe Violence. The violent acts included in this index include kicking, hit, hit with fist, hit with object, beat-up, choked, threatened with knife or gun, used knife or gun.<sup>#4</sup>

### Approval Of Violence Measure

To measure norms tolerating wife abuse, we replicated the measure first employed in a 1968 survey conducted for the President's Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (Owens and Straus, 1975; Stark and McEvoy, 1970): "Are there situations that you can imagine in which you would approve of a husband slapping his wife?"

### III. FACTORS DIFFERENTIATING WIFE ABUSE VICTIMS

Discriminant analysis was used to examine the relative importance of several victim and aggressor characteristics as a basis for differentiating wife abuse victims. Three categories of violence (non-violence, minor violence, and severe violence) were used as the dependent variable.

A stepwise discriminant analysis was done using Wilks's Lambda as the criterion for variable inclusion. This statistic considers both the differences and the cohesiveness of variables, i.e., the degree to which they cluster near the group centroid (mean) (Klecka, 1980). Wilk's Lambda is also an inverse statistic: the smaller the lambda, the better the predictor.

### Substance Abuse

(Table 1 about here)

Drug Use. Table 1 presents the results of the first step in the discriminant analysis: the means for each independent variable for the three violence types. Part A of the table gives the means for the substance abuse variables. Reading across the rows of part A shows that mean scores (which are, in effect, rates) for substance abuse are lowest among non-violent couples and increase with the severity of violence. For example, the first row shows that 4% of the non-victim wives reported having been high on drugs during the year of this survey, compared to 14% of the women who were victims of minor violence, and 24% of the severe violence victims. Thus, women who were severely assaulted by their partner had a six times greater rate of drug use than did non-victim women. A similar pattern is shown for drug use by husbands. At the same time, it is also important to note that, even though the substance abuse rate is six times higher, 76% of the severely assaulted women reported no use of drugs during the year of their victimization. Similarly, 69% of the men who severely assaulted their wife did not use drugs.



The first two rows of Table 1 also reflect the fact that a high rate of drug use was reported by this sample overall. Five percent of the wives reported one or more instances of drug use during the year of the survey, and an even larger percentage of the husbands -- seven percent -- were reported to have been high on a drug one or more times during the year.

Drunkness. The absolute rates for drunkenness are much higher than for use of other drugs: sixteen percent of the wives reported at least one episode of drunkenness. The rate for the husbands was double -- 32 percent. The third and fourth rows of Table 1 show that the differences between the non-victim and victimized wives in the rate of drunkenness are large, but less than was found for drug use. Thus, 16% of the non-victim wives were drunk one or more times during the year of this study, compared to 46% of the severely assaulted women, i.e. almost three times the rate. A similar pattern is shown in the last row of Part A for alcohol abuse by husbands. It is again important to note that although heavy drinking by the wife is associated with victimization, the majority of victims of wife abuse reported no instance of being drunk during the year of their victimization.

### Other Factors

Although the primary focus of this paper is on substance abuse, we included seven other variables in the equation, either in order to control for the possibility of their being confounded with substance abuse, or because previous research suggested their importance. These variables are listed in Part B of Table 1.

Low Family Income. The first row of Part B shows that 6% of the No Violence couples were classified as low income (total family income less than \$10,000), compared to 9% of the Minor Violence cases, and 15% of the Severe Violence Cases. Thus, wife abuse is associated with low income.

Violence By Victims's Parents. The row labeled "Father hit mother" shows that "only" nine percent of non-assaulted women grew up in a violent home compared to 19% of abused women, i.e. double the rate.

Housewives. A previous study (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980) found that housewives were at greater risk of abuse than women in the paid labor force. However, the row labeled "Housewife" in Table 1 shows that this is not the case among the present sample.

Husband's Unemployment. Previous studies (Gelles, 1974; Peterson, 1980; Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980) and social stress theory (Straus, 1980b) suggest that abusing husbands have a higher unemployment rate than other husbands. The row labeled "Man's Unemployment" shows that this is the case for husbands who severely assaulted their spouse (whose unemployment rate is over three times greater), but not for husbands whose abuse was restricted to minor violence.

Pregnancy. Gelles's finding that pregnancy seemed to increase the risk of being assaulted (Gelles, 1975), has been confirmed by Stark et al, 1981) and by informal data. The pregnancy rates shown in the row labeled "Pregnant" provide additional confirmation. They show that, compared to

Table 2. Pooled Within Groups Correlation Matrix for Predictor Variables

Predictor Variable	Correlation											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Wife high on drugs (1=high)												
Husb. high on drugs (1=high)	.69											
Husb. drunk (1=drunk)	.25	.29										
Wife drunk (1=drunk)	.35	.30	.46									
Low Family Income (1=low)	-.01	-.01	.02	-.02								
Father hit mother (1=yes)	.00	-.00	.06	.05	-.01							
Housewife (1=housewife)	-.09	-.09	-.11	-.11	-.11	-.03						
Man's unemployment (1=unemployed)	.02	.07	.02	.00	-.12	.04	-.05					
Pregnant (1=yes)	.04	.03	.04	.03	-.02	-.04	.01	.05				
Violence norms (1=approve)	.04	.05	.08	.09	.01	.01	-.04	-.03	.00			
Number of children (interval scale)	-.08	-.05	.03	-.04	-.01	.07	.09	.02	-.02	-.04	1.00	

Table 3. Summary of Discriminant Analysis of Wife Victimization Types  
 =====

Predictor Variable	Rotated Standardized Discriminant Coefficients	Wilks Lambda*
Husb. high on drugs (1=high)	.43	.938
Husb. drunk (1=drunk)	.38	.898
Low Family Income (1=low)	.28	.904
Wife high on drugs (1=high)	.25	.892
Violence norms (1=approve)	-.06	.895
Wife drunk (1=drunk)	.14	.919
Man's unemployment (1=unemployed)	.23	.891
Father hit mother (1=yes)	.11	.911
Housewife (1=housewife)	.19	.889
Number of children (interval scale)	-.01	.894

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 \*All Lambda coefficients are significant at  $p < .0001$

non-abused women, the pregnancy rate is a third higher among victims of minor violence, and 2.3 times higher among victims of severe violence.

Violence Norms. The next to the last row of Table 1 gives the proportion of women who say that there are situations in which they would approve of a husband slapping a wife. Victims of minor violence have almost double the approval rate expressed by non-abused wives (20% versus 11%). However, approval of this type of violence drops off sharply (to 16%) for women who were victims of severe violence. This drop off is quite plausible since experiencing a severe assault (which includes life-threatening attacks with knives, guns, and other objects) is likely to change ones view of violence by a spouse. The finding also provides one more refutation of masochistic stereotypes of battered women.

Number of Children. Despite the theoretical attractiveness of the idea that stress and therefore violence increases as the number of children in a family increases, six of the seven studies which investigated this issue found no relationship (Hotelling and Sugarman, 1986). The last row of Table 1 shows that the findings of this study are consistent with the majority of previous studies because, compared to the No Violence couples, victims of minor violence have only a slightly higher mean number of children, and for victims of severe violence the differences is even less.

#### Interrelation of Predictor Variables

(Table 2 about here)

The correlations in Table 2 were computed based on the averages of the separate covariance matrices for all groups. All of these pooled within-groups correlations are small with the exception of the correlations for wife and husband's alcohol and drug use. The drug and alcohol abuse by one spouse appears to be strongly associated with drug and alcohol abuse by the other spouse, and this tendency is particularly strong for drug use.

#### Discriminant Function Analysis

(Table 3 about here)

Table 3 provides summary information from the final phase of the discriminant analysis. Pregnancy was dropped from the final equation because, with a Wilks Lambda of .998, it failed to meet the inclusion criteria. The other variables (all of which are significant at  $p < .001$ ) are listed in Table 3 in order of their relative contribution to the predictive equation, as measured by the standardized discriminant function coefficients.\*5 These coefficients are analogous to regression coefficients. The largest coefficients are for husband's drug use, followed by his drunkenness, low family income, wife's drug use, and husband's unemployment.

Finally, data on the predictive accuracy of the equation indicate that the variables included in the model correctly classify 73% of cases according to violence type. However, this seemingly high rate of correct

classification is primarily a reflection of the extremely skewed distribution of the dependent variable.<sup>6</sup> Of greater importance is the fact that the variables in the discriminant function are much better predictors of severe violence (44% of the cases correctly classified) than for minor violence (20% correctly classified). Thus, drug use, alcohol abuse, and low socioeconomic status (the key variables represented by the function) are much more closely linked to severe assaults than they are to minor violence.

#### IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Interview survey data based on a nationally representative sample of 3,665 couples were used to examine three questions: (1) Are women who drink heavily or use drugs at greater risk for abuse by spouses? (2) If so, is this a "spurious" relationship; for example, a relationship which simply reflects drug/alcohol use by the husband, or reflects confounding with other variables such as socioeconomic status? (3) Do certain other characteristics of the victim and her spouse provide a basis for predicting the severity of spousal violence?

To answer these questions, the sample was classified into three groups: non-abused wives, women who experienced minor violence at the hands of their partner, and women who were the victims of severe assaults by their partner. Discriminant analysis was used to determine the extent to which these three groups could be differentiated on the basis of drug use, drunkenness, and certain other variables.

##### Drug and Alcohol Use Patterns

Sixteen percent of the women in this study report at least one episode of drunkenness, a rate half that of their husbands (32%). Women's acknowledgement of drug use is only slightly less (5%) than they report for husband's drug use (7%). The data show a strong association between drug and alcohol use, and a moderate association between husband and wife drug/alcohol use. That is, people who abuse one drug (alcohol) tend to use other drugs, and people married to a drug or alcohol abuser tend also to use drugs or abuse alcohol.

##### Substance Abuse and Wife Abuse

The discriminate analysis revealed that, of the eleven variables in the model, the most important for distinguishing abused from non-abused are the husband's drug use, husband's drunkenness, low income, and wife's drug use. The discriminant coefficient for husband's drug use is almost twice as large as the coefficient for drug use by the wife. Thus, relative to other factors examined, drug use by the husband is the most important predictor of wife abuse. Husband's drunkenness is second in importance. Low income and the wife's drunkenness have important associations with wife abuse. Since the discriminant function coefficients measure the net effect of each independent variable, we can conclude that the association of the wife's substance abuse with victimization is not the result of confounding with the other nine variables in the equation.<sup>7</sup> Finally, it

should be noted that these factors are more closely associated with severe assaults on wives than with so-called "minor violence."

### Causal Processes

A number of different causal processes which may underlie these findings need to be considered.

Direct Pharmacological Effects. One interpretation is that direct pharmacological effects of multiple drug abuse leads to aggressiveness (Powers and Kutash, 1982). A detailed examination of this explanation in a previous paper (Coleman and Straus, 1983), led to the conclusion that the physiological effect of alcohol depends on the meanings and scripts which alcohol users have learned to associate with intoxication. This is a plausible conclusion for the effects of alcohol, which has central nervous system depressant properties. On the other hand, use of hallucinogenic drugs, central nervous system stimulants, or combinations of drugs may more often lead to aggression (Tinklenberg, 1973) but all drug responses vary according to individuals' mental states and the context of usage (Smith, 1972; Zinberg 19++).

Conflict Over Substance Abuse. Another possibility is that drug and alcohol problems produce an increase in family conflict, thus indirectly increasing wife abuse. Research on drug-dependent women (Kaufman Kantor, 1984) found many women physically abused by their addict partners. In relationships of this type, the drug bond shared by the couple dominated the relationship as a source of both succorance and conflict.

Violation of Norms Concerning Gender Roles. We believe that different norms exist concerning the appropriateness of drinking and drunkenness by women compared to men (MacAndrew and Edgerton, 1969; Sandmaier, 1980; Gomberg, 1979). Drinking, and to a certain extent drunkenness, are macho, whereas the same behavior on the part of women raise questions about her "character." When women violate these gender norms of drinking behavior, they may be considered fair game for rape and/or deserving a beating. Sandmaier (1980:114) provides a case example of such an instance:

"Once the drinking started getting bad, my husband started to beat me for it. If he smelled one drink--pow! Black eyes and the whole bit..."

Another aspect of gender role norm violation which increases the risk of wife abuse is suggested by Sandmaier's data showing that when women drink, they may become more verbally aggressive. This is no different than the behavior of men who have been drinking. However, such behavior on the part of men is not a violation of gender role norms, whereas for women it violates the passive and subservient model of female behavior. Having violated the norms of appropriate female behavior, they lose the protection afforded by other traditional gender role norms, such as "never hit a woman" (see Young, 1975 for an experimental demonstration of this process) and a physically violent response to "provocation" is therefore legitimated. These mechanisms can also apply to drug use other than alcohol.

Substance Abuse as A Consequence of Physical Abuse. Finally, there may also be differences in the causal ordering of substance abuse. That is

women's substance abuse may be a result of the violence rather than a precipitant. Analysis of hospital records finds much greater problem drug use for battered women treated for injuries than for non-battered women (Stark et al, 1981).

### The Larger Context

The results of this study indicate that substance abuse is an important dimension in understanding wife abuse, but it is far from the whole story. A number of other things need to be kept in mind.

First, drug and alcohol abuse are more associated with severe abuse than with the minor violence of married life. Although severe violence poses greater threats of injury, so-called minor violence is an extremely important problem because it occurs much more often and because of the damage it can do to the marriage and to the mental health of the victim. In addition, minor violence can escalate into severe violence.

A second caveat is needed because we measured use of alcohol and drugs during the 12 months preceding the interview. We do not know if these substances were used at the time of the violent incident or incidents. However, a previous study which did use a measure of drinking at the time of violence analysis (Kaufman Kantor and Straus, 1986) obtained similar findings to those reported in this paper, i.e. although there is a strong link between husband's drinking and wife abuse, in 75% of the violent incidents, alcohol was not an immediate antecedent of violence.

A third consideration needed in evaluating the link between alcohol/drug use and victimization is that many other factors also contribute to wife abuse. Some of these were examined in this study. We found that families characterized by low family income, unemployed husbands, and a wife who grew up in a family where there was violence between the parents, are all associated with a higher risk of victimization. These findings are consistent with the findings of a previous national survey (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980).

Returning to the three main questions which formed the focus of this study, we conclude that: Substance abuse by the husband is the most important factor differentiating abused wives from other women. However, women who drink heavily or use other drugs have a higher risk of being assaulted by their partner than other women. A number of other factors-- especially low income, unemployment, and attitudes which tolerate violence -- were also found to be important. At the same time, the findings of the study show that no one of these factors by themselves explains wife abuse. The limited effects of any one variable also applies to substance abuse. Thus, although women who drink heavily or use drugs, or whose partner drinks heavily or uses drugs, are more likely to be victimized, most physical abuse of wives occurs in the absence of alcohol or other drugs.

## FOOTNOTES

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2. Hotaling and Sugarman categorized a finding as "consistent" if at least 70% of the studies investigating a given variable found it to be related to wife abuse.

3. For convenience and economy of wording, terms such as "marital," and "spouse," and "wife," and "husband" are used to refer to the respondents, regardless of whether they are a married or a non-married cohabiting couple. For an analysis of differences and similarities between married and cohabiting couples in respect to violence and other characteristics, see Yllo (1978) and Yllo and Straus (1981).

4. We should emphasize that the distinction between "minor" and "severe" violence should not be taken to mean that the former is "unimportant." It is simply a method of distinguishing violent acts which carry a relatively high risk of producing an injury which requires medical treatment (i.e. kicking, punching, using a knife or gun) from violent acts which are less likely to produce such an injury such as slapping. This distinction allows the assumed greater injury potential of the latter to be tested, and also permits an empirical examination of possible differences in the etiology of minor and severe assaults, as was done by Kalmuss and Straus (1982).

5. The discriminant analysis also revealed a second function. But since the second function accounted for only 6% of the variance in the predictor variables, we did not carry out further analyses of that function.

6. This is also reflected in the fact that the squared canonical correlation indicates that the discriminating variables account for only 9% of the variance in wife abuse. Another reason for caution in interpreting the results of the discriminant analysis is the fact that the eigenvalue is low (.12) and the Lambda for the total equation, although statistically significant ( $p < .0001$ ) is not impressive (.896).

7. However, even though all variables in the final equation met the tolerance criterion, there is substantial overlap between husband and wives drug use ( $r = .69$ ). Consequently, caution is needed in respect to the presumed independent effects of drug use by husbands and wives.



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