Alcohol, Alcohol Use Disorders, and Violence

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Violence and Mental Health: Opportunities for Prevention and Early Intervention
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Key aspects of the alcohol/domestic violence relationship.

- The relationship between excessive alcohol use and domestic violence
  - has been observed in many different cultural contexts
Countries with at least one controlled study finding an association between partner drinking and domestic violence.
Key aspects of the alcohol/domestic violence relationship.

• The relationship between excessive alcohol use and domestic violence
  – has been observed in many different cultural contexts
  – has been found across many different kinds of samples
Samples / representative studies supporting alcohol/ domestic Violence association.

- Alcoholic/substance abuse samples

- Batterers

- Emergency Room

- Prenatal and Antenatal Clinics

- Primary Care Settings

- Community and representative samples
Key aspects of the alcohol/domestic violence relationship.

- The relationship between excessive alcohol use and domestic violence
  - has been observed in many different cultural contexts
  - has been found across many different kinds of samples
  - represents an association of at least moderate strength, and has been shown longitudinally.
Meta-analyses across cross-sectional studies show that the relationship largely consistent.

Lipsey, Wilson, Cohen, and Derzon (1997)
Strength of cross-sectional associations

- Lipsey, Wilson, Cohen, and Derzon 1997
  - 34 studies of domestic violence including child abuse
  - Effect size .22
- Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, & Tritt, 2004
  - 22 studies of partner violence and alcohol use
  - Effect size .24
- Foran and O’Leary, 2008
  - 50 studies of partner violence and alcohol
  - Effect size .23
Husband Hx of Family violence

- Husband Hostility
- Husband Femininity

Husband to Wife Marital aggression Before marriage

Husband Perceived Power

Marital Conflict Style
- H + W verbal aggression
- H + W Low withdrawal
- H Hi PS, W Low PS

Husband Alcohol Dependence scale

Husband to Wife Marital aggression 1st year of marriage

Wife Hx of Family violence

Wife Hostility

Keller, El-Sheikh, Keiley, & Liao. Longitudinal Relations Between Marital Aggression and Alcohol Problems. Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 23, 1, 2-13, 2009. Published by the American Psychological Association and adapted with permission.
Key aspects of the alcohol/domestic violence relationship.

- The relationship between excessive alcohol use and domestic violence has been observed in many different cultural contexts.
- It has been found across many different kinds of samples.
- It represents an association of at least moderate strength.
- It appears that acute effects of alcohol contribute to the violence, even in chronic heavy drinkers.
Evidence of an acute effect of alcohol on aggression

• Event-based research
• Experimental studies of alcohol and aggression
Husband and wife alcohol use in conflict episodes

Comparing conflict episodes with and without violence

Experimental Studies of Alcohol and Physical Aggression

• General Methodological Approach
  – Random Assignment to alcohol versus control, which is sometimes no alcohol, sometimes placebo, sometimes both.
  – Experimental Context is which mild aggressive behavior (usually shock or noise) is enabled.
  – Often the context includes manipulation of other variables.
Meta-analyses of Experimental Studies of Alcohol and Physical Aggression

Effect sizes compared to no alcohol control

- Alc. w/out aware: -0.01
- Placebo: 0.1 (Bushman, 1997)
- Alcohol: 0.43

Effect sizes of different alcohol levels compared to no alcohol controls.

- Low BAC: 0.35 (Ito, Miller, & Pollock, 1996)
- High BAC: 0.53
Experimental Studies of Alcohol and Aversive Verbal Behavior

* Seen as more ecologically valid than other aggression paradigms
  - Less artificial than reaction time or teacher learner.
  - Verbal aggression more natural response than setting shock
  - Links between verbal aggression and physical aggression
  - Primarily has been used in studies of intimate partners.
Negativity as a function of alcohol condition and time

Negativity among High Antisocial and Low Antisocial Alcoholics and their wives as a function of alcohol

Processes underlying alcohol’s effect.
Three general models

- Cognitive disruption models – Dominant cue (Taylor and Leonard, 1983) or Alcohol Myopia (Steele and Josephs, 1989)
  - Intoxication leads to cognitive impairment, in order to deal with this, focus on salient cues and neglect inhibitory cues.
- Several implications
  - Intoxication should lead to behavior consistent with the dominant cue in the situation.
  - Factors that lead to hostile cues/aggressive response as being dominant should interact with alcohol.
  - Factors associated with diminished processing of inhibitory cues should interact with alcohol.
Moderators of the alcohol/domestic violence relationship

- **Hostility** (Leonard & Blane, 1992; Margolin, John, & Foo, 1998; Schumacher, Homish, Leonard, Quigley & Kearns-Bodkin, 2009)
- **Marital satisfaction** (Leonard & Blane, 1992)
- **Verbal aggression** (Quigley and Leonard, 1999)
- **Life stress** (Margolin, John, & Foo, 1998)
- **Negative affect** (Leonard & Blane, 1992)
Alcohol should be most strongly associated with aggression when there are strong aggression facilitating and weak inhibitory factors.

Parrot and Giancola (2004) conducted an experimental study and found that alcohol led to the largest increase in aggression relative to placebo for participants who were high in trait anger and low in anger control.
Alcohol should be most strongly associated with aggression when there are strong aggression facilitating and weak inhibitory factors.

To the extent that mental illness is associated with high levels of negative affect and impaired self control, we might hypothesize that the combination of excessive alcohol use and psychopathology might be associated with a particularly high risk of violence.
Predicted probability of any violence between Waves 1 and 2 of NESARC

Key aspects of the alcohol/domestic violence relationship.

• Successful treatment of alcoholism is associated with substantial reductions in domestic violence
Severe aggression after couples based alcoholism treatment


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Severe aggression after treatment for couples treatment

Heuristic Model of Alcohol and Intimate Partner Violence

Distal Influences

- Husband Drinking Pattern
- Husband Background Influences
- Wife Background Influences
- Wife Drinking Pattern
- Marital Discord

Proximal Influences

- Acute Alcohol Influences
- Psychological/Psychopharmacologic
- Neurological changes

- Husband Cognitive Processes
- Husband Behavior
- Wife Behavior
- Wife Cognitive Processes
- Violence

Acute Alcohol Influences

Psychological/Psychopharmacologic

Neurological changes
Key aspects of the alcohol/domestic violence relationship.

- The relationship between excessive alcohol use and domestic violence
  - Is partly the result of the acute effects of alcohol, but the potential role of chronic alcohol is unclear.

- Successful treatment of alcoholism is associated with substantial reductions in domestic violence.

- With respect to alcohol and domestic violence, alcohol appears to be a contributing cause.