

**ALCOHOL AND VIOLENCE:  
EXPLORING PATTERNS AND  
RESPONSES**



**INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR ALCOHOL POLICIES**



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International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to help reduce the abuse of alcohol worldwide and to promote the understanding of the role of alcohol in society through dialogue and partnerships involving the beverage alcohol industry, the public health community, and others interested in alcohol policy. ICAP is supported by major international producers of beverage alcohol.

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Copies of *Alcohol and violence: Exploring patterns and responses* are available online at [www.icap.org](http://www.icap.org) or may be requested from us at:

International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP)  
1519 New Hampshire Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
USA  
Tel.: +1 202 986 1159  
FAX: +1 202 986 2080

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<i>Marcus Grant</i>	
<b>Sociocultural Factors that Foster or Inhibit Alcohol-related Violence.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Anne Fox</i>	
<b>The Role of Drinking Patterns and Acute Intoxication in Violent Interpersonal Behaviors.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>Kenneth E. Leonard</i>	
<b>Working with Culture to Prevent Violence and Reckless Drinking .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<i>Courtney Mireille O'Connor and Claire Dickson</i>	
<b>Practical Responses: Communication Guidelines for First Responders in Cases of Alcohol-related Violence.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<i>Joseph Asare and Ronald West</i>	



## Introduction

Increasing attention is being paid to the question of what exactly is the nature of the association between alcohol and violence. This is the case both in terms of scientific and research efforts and also in terms of public discourse. Although most commentators agree that there is no simple causative relationship, there is certainly a need to better understand how some patterns of drinking intersect with some patterns of violence. This collection of papers is an attempt to contribute to that understanding.

The International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP) has been interested in this issue for more than a decade. In 1998, we produced a literature review; in 2002, we published an *ICAP Report: Violence and Licensed Premises*. We also engaged in discussions with a variety of international bodies, including the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and the International Center for the Prevention of Crime, as well as with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women. In 2005, the World Bank hosted a meeting organized by ICAP and co-chaired by UNIFEM to discuss how best to move forward on this issue through some form of public-private cooperation. The following year, the ICAP Board of Directors agreed to devote increased attention to the topic in the hope that we could contribute to greater international understanding.

This collection of papers is the first output from that increased attention. Each contribution presented here provides a distinct disciplinary perspective from the author's area of expertise—anthropology, clinical psychology, human rights law, gender, public health, and violence. An effort was made to retain the original style, tone, and frame of reference of each paper to allow the reader a better understanding of the ways alcohol and violence are approached and discussed in different sectors. We begin by exploring the factors that influence patterns of violence at both the individual and societal levels. The paper by Anne Fox examines the meanings attached to drinking and violence in different cultures and focuses on the concepts of disinhibition, masculinity, and the drinking environment. The paper by Kenneth E. Leonard examines the biomedical and psychological explanations for alcohol's effects, looking at whether certain individual characteristics explain the relationship between some drinking patterns and some patterns of violent behavior.

The second part of this monograph explores some practical responses toward preventing alcohol-related violence. The intention is not to present simplistic solutions, but rather to stimulate informed discussion about different approaches that could be effective. The paper by Courtney O'Connor and Claire Dickson looks at alcohol and violence from a gender perspective. It identifies strategies used to respond to analogous social problems and extrapolates promising lines of action for the future. Finally, Joseph Asare and Ronald West have developed a set of international guidelines, amalgamated by ICAP and intended to enhance communications between first responders to alcohol-related violence, particularly between the health and law enforcement sectors. The guidelines supplement an annotated bibliography of first responder guidelines that is already available on the ICAP website at [www.icap.org](http://www.icap.org).

In publishing this collection of papers, ICAP is signaling our willingness to work with others to achieve a deeper understanding of this issue and to identify and promote good practice in the prevention of violence.

Marcus Grant  
President, ICAP  
April 2008





# Sociocultural Factors that Foster or Inhibit Alcohol-related Violence

Anne Fox

Galahad SMS Ltd.  
United Kingdom

The premise of this paper is that there is no simple causative relationship between alcohol consumption and violence. The relationship is always complex, whether it concerns the behavior of a drinking individual, a group of drinkers, or a cultural collective such as an army.

Consider the following:

*In Germany up to and including the Second World War—a militaristic society that glorified violence—the violence perpetrated by the state was carried out coldly, rationally, and soberly. Drinking in that society was sociable, carried out in public in beer gardens and beer halls, with music, dancing, and singing, and was characterized by sentimentality and gemütlichkeit, without any violence.*

*During the Napoleonic wars, the Allied armies used alcohol extensively, but not to provoke violent activity. Extra gin rations were ordered by Duke of Wellington for his infantry at Waterloo to give them “Dutch courage” to stand and face the pounding of Napoleon’s guns. With their senses dulled, the British soldiers were also able to perform the repetitive activity of loading and firing their muskets with less distraction. In the same way, men who were required to charge into the breaches at sieges were “liquored up”—not to make them more aggressive, but, again, to dull their senses so that they would march and scramble over the rubble to almost certain death. The rum ration given to sailors was likewise to help them face “the hell of the gun deck”—not to provoke them to violence, but to help them endure it.*

We (and no doubt you, the reader) could give countless such illustrations, but they would all prove that the relationship between alcohol and violent behavior—and between alcohol and violent societies—is far from the straightforward causative one found in the popular and even scientific imagination. Men very rarely get blind drunk in order to go out and kill. They do the killing “stone-cold sober,” and the drinking is done later in celebration or commiseration. So what is the connection between drinking and violence?

## **DRINKING: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The central question for this paper is as follows: What is the influence of a drinking culture on aggressive or violent behavior? By asking this very question, however, we may be making two possibly fallacious assumptions: first, that culture is the primary driver of human behavior; and second, that a drinking culture “drives” violence, rather than the other way around—that a violent culture may “drive” drinking behavior.

A desire for some form of intoxication appears to be part of the universal “grammar” of human nature, one of its universal constants. The cultural manifestations of this drive are diverse, but all societies, tribes, and civilizations on earth have a means of achieving intoxication, whether by using hallucinogenic or psychotropic drugs or by ritual dancing, drumming, jumping, chanting, or whirling.

Like intoxication, aggression is also a universal feature of human nature: It can be found among all tribes and societies; and the aggression of young males is a constant feature of human behavior. But, equally, all cultures include socially sanctioned methods of suppressing aggression and expressing or releasing it. We cannot escape the fact that aggression, violence, and, indeed, intoxication are all part of our humanness.

This paper, then, poses several additional questions: What “cross-pollination” has occurred in different cultures between these human traits? Is the potential for human aggression triggered by the chemical ethanol, or do the cultural beliefs surrounding the ingestion of this chemical act as catalysts for violence? Is the answer somewhere in between?

To unravel some answers, we first need to make clear what we mean by *culture*. “Culture” can be defined as the shared beliefs and practices of a people or group: the patterns of behavior, customs and etiquette, symbols, icons, folklore and myths, the rules and norms, the social institutions—loosely speaking, “the way things are done.” To study one aspect of a culture, such as drinking, involves studying the beliefs, behaviors, rules, rituals, and norms tied to it within the group or society.

Many anthropologists and sociologists have long held that we are influenced, molded, and coerced by our cultures, but also that we willingly seek to conform to cultural norms. Franz Boas (1858–1942), often considered the father of modern anthropology, concluded that, “unless the contrary can be proved, we must assume that all complex activities are socially determined, not hereditary” (Pinker, 2002, p. 22). Students and ideological followers of Boas, such as Clifford Geertz, Ruth Benedict, and Margaret Mead, went on to claim that culture alone, not human nature or instinct, could explain every aspect of human existence. These assumptions have led to the belief that culture somehow exists apart from people, and that it is an infinitely malleable essence that somehow mysteriously descends upon groups and dictates their behavior, a “medium” in which people exist and act. With this mindset, *culture* in social research becomes like an independent variable in an experiment, and social engineering becomes a valid strategy: Manipulate the culture, alter the mix in the cultural Petri dish, and you can change the behavior of individuals.

Tripathi (2001) warns, however, that many cross-cultural psychologists are victims of the failure to distinguish between the surface structures of culture and the deep structures. In recent years, many anthropologists have recognized that, underneath the dazzling variety in cultural practices, certain “universals” or constants can be found that prove the opposite of the social determination assumed by Boas. The existence of these commonalities proves that all cultural practices, despite their surface differences, are expressions of human nature.

Could this be the way in which drinking and violence intersect? Could it be that drinking somehow “unleashes” our violent nature? Within this question, unfortunately, hides another erroneous assumption that further clouds this debate—that alcohol somehow frees us from cultural constraints and returns us to a *natural state*, which many therefore assumed to be savage or violent, what Webb and Webb (1903) referred to as “the carnival of bestial drunkenness.” Research by Winslow and Hall (2006) with violent protagonists in the drama of the night-time

economy of town and city centers in England provides an example of this concept. The authors write:

Society generally, and perhaps young people in particular, imbue alcohol with mystical properties that are in no way an inevitable consequence of ethanol entering the bloodstream.... Most of our respondents subscribed to the belief that alcohol revealed a culture-free, natural self. (Winslow & Hall, 2006, p. 106)

In the introduction to *Gender, Drink and Drugs*, Maryon McDonald (1994) also draws attention to the popular misconception that alcohol somehow “frees” us from culture. But, as McDonald explains, the notions of *arousal* and *disinhibition* are part of the culture, not of chemical physiology:

One such assumption is... that drink has the capacity to operate at the level of, and to reveal, a culture-free nature. This is a widespread assumption... but in each case, the “nature” so revealed is itself no less cultural for that. (McDonald, 1994, pp. 13–14)

Beginning with the landmark work *Drunken Comportment* in 1969, MacAndrew and Edgerton first conclusively demonstrated that drunken behavior is itself dictated by cultural rules (MacAndrew & Edgerton, 1969). Numerous ethnographic studies have since confirmed this. Also, the assumption that just below the surface of “civilized” behavior lurks a violent primate is equally fanciful, as will be discussed below.

But here we have a paradox: On the one hand, drunken expressions and drunken behavior are apparently dictated by culture; on the other hand, we are claiming that culture itself is an expression of certain facets of our evolutionary coding, our human nature. So, what possible facet of human nature could be “encoded” in intoxication? Or, put differently, what adaptive function could drinking have served in human evolution?

It would be wrong to adopt a completely functionalist perspective and to claim that *all* cultural practices are wholly rational responses to human nature. This is not always the case. Humans engage in numerous behaviors that can be viewed as not only maladaptive but downright destructive. Culture itself is an adaptive response to the environment. It is because we can change our behavior and immediately pass these changes on to the next generation that, as a species, we have been able to survive extinction and dominate the earth. But, although culture can change faster than physical evolution, once established, it can still be an intransigent force. Behaviors and practices that suited one environment can persist for centuries, long after the “need” for them has passed.<sup>1</sup> When bizarre practices become part of religious doctrine, it can take centuries to change them. But, since culture is a response to human needs, as anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski insisted in his book, *A Scientific Theory of Culture*, it cannot take a form that persistently violates these needs without damage to itself and to the human beings who are its carriers (Malinowski, 1944/1990).

The question still remains: If drinking behavior (violent or otherwise) is dictated by cultural rules—and if culture is in some way reflective of human nature—what possible “natural” urge or need can alcohol (or drunkenness) satisfy?

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<sup>1</sup> Triandis (1994) has referred to this phenomenon as *cultural lag*.

It is entirely possible that our Pleistocene ancestors consumed naturally fermented fruits. (Chimpanzees do, and they show signs of mild intoxication.) Could intoxication through alcohol, then, be a “direct” expression or feature of something fundamental to human nature? Or is it one of those maladaptive, cultural features from our historical past? Drinking alcohol may not be a natural urge, but it directly facilitates and is closely related to a genuine natural urge: the urge to bond.

## **CULTURE, ALCOHOL, AND THE NEED TO BOND**

There are three basic elements of specifically human bonding that we must consider: language, synchronization, and what we might call *group ecstasy*, the feeling of total incorporation into the group.

### ***Language***

The need for group or communal bonding was so important in our evolutionary past that it is still hard-wired into our behavioral programming. Why? In nearly all primate groups, especially those of our closest relatives, the chimpanzees, group cohesion is necessary for survival. There is safety in numbers.

Our primate cousins achieve close bonds of trust and comfort in the troop primarily through physical touch, and especially through grooming, a form of contact that stimulates a calm, trusting state through release of endorphins, the brain’s natural painkillers. Anthropologist Robin Dunbar theorizes that, as our ancestral human groups expanded, grooming became unfeasible for us as a means of maintaining group cohesion. Grooming is extremely time-consuming and is impossible beyond a group of approximately 12 individuals. He speculates that human language developed out of the necessity to appease each other quickly and beyond arms’ length. Language, he says, is “grooming at a distance” (Dunbar, 1998). But it is a very poor substitute for physical touch, as language does not necessarily produce a physical response. One can lie and deceive with words more easily than with touch. Thus, while we gained the ability to communicate with increasingly larger groups, we lost something as well—the immediate, intimate, physical sense of trust.

### ***Synchronization***

Our early ancestors needed something beyond talk. Several authors who approached the question from widely differing fields have reached the same conclusion: Many of the communal cultural practices seen in societies and tribes around the world are variants on the same theme of group synchronization. Anthropologist Chris Knight (1990) has called this the *ritual synchronization of emotions*—rituals, dances, ceremonies, and other activities that enable many individuals to feel, think, and move as one body and that go beyond language to allow large groups of people to create a physical bond (see also Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1970; McNeill, 1995).

For our early ancestors, there was great power in these rituals. Muscular movements in a coordinated rhythm triggered the release of endorphins, often producing a trancelike, hypnotic state, during which dancers could feel not only one with their tribe but with the environment as well. Judging by the frequency of violent warfare in many surviving hunter-gatherers tribes around the world, it is likely that group dancing also served as a pre-battle bonding mechanism for warriors, simulating coordinated activity on the battlefield and cementing the feeling of being one body.

## *Group Ecstasy*

Barbara Ehrenreich has written extensively about the universality of such rites. However, in early accounts by European explorers Cook, Darwin, and others who witnessed such tribal activities, there is a strong sense of revulsion. The dancing, chanting, drumming were often described as “savage,” “wild,” “sensual,” “grotesque,” “barbaric,” and completely alien to the experience of the White explorers and colonialists; such behavior was deemed to be “incompatible with civilization” (Ehrenreich, 2006). Throughout the history of the “civilized” world, these expressions of communality and joy have been suppressed, condemned, and outlawed. Communal bonding actions have both fascinated and terrified rulers and religious institutions for millennia. There is a great threat to hierarchical power inherent in a crowd’s ability to feel and act “as one.” Yet, activities that achieve this “ecstasy” of communal bonding continue to surface in all cultures, time after time. It can be seen, for example, in carnival, the 1960s rock-and-roll revival, modern sports crowds, raves, dance clubs, and evangelist religious gatherings. Durkheim (1912/1965) called this phenomenon *communal effervescence*; Victor Turner (1969) described it as a ritual of *communitas*, a transformational and group bonding experience.

As human groups expanded and settled into larger communities, nation-states developed and changed forever the character of such group bonding activities. Communal ecstasy and its many expressions were actively repressed by Christianity and Islam or channeled into approved, sedate, clothed, and choreographed forms (Ehrenreich, 2006). Any spontaneous bodily expression of sensuality, ecstasy, and communal bonding was, and still is, feared as an ungodly return to our sinful animalistic and savage nature.

It is my view that the development of “drinking cultures” that perceive alcohol as a “disinhibitor,” an agent “freeing” us from the constraints of civilized behavior, was largely in response to such repression. In today’s large societies, the need to synchronize emotions still exists. People, especially the young, crave ecstatic, transforming, social bonding experiences. It is part of our biological heritage. Anthropologist Kate Fox (2004) agrees that, in many cultures with strict social rules and behavioral etiquette, such as Japan and the United Kingdom, the need for release is behind many aspects of drinking cultures that characterize unruly or bad behavior as the expected consequence of drunkenness.

We now see that drinking increasingly occurs in the absence of energetic, muscular, ritualized activity; drinking and drunkenness have become ends in themselves. It is argued here that, as we have lost many of our communal bonding rituals, we have replaced them with a chemical substitute. This and other apparently dysfunctional behaviors illustrate what Robin Fox (1989) called the problem of *consciousness out of context*, the context of the evolution of consciousness in the Upper-Paleolithic or Old Stone Age. Group drinking could thus be viewed as a chemical shortcut to the primal urge for group bonding.

The unique properties of alcohol could have assisted in all three types of bonding: language, synchronization, and group ecstasy. It is likely that our early ancestors would have recognized the pleasurable effects of weak alcohol from fermented fruits as very similar to the effects produced by interpersonal grooming and communal bonding. Alcohol triggers the release of endorphins that create deep feelings of satisfaction, warmth, and trust. Alcohol also has a unique effect on the way the brain processes words. Depending on the level of threat associated with a particular word, the brain will process it at a different speed. For example, the word *war* carries with it a greater level of threat than the word *windy*. David Warburton (1999) of Reading University in the United Kingdom has found that alcohol “evens out” the speed at which the brain processes all words, regardless of their associated threat. This has the effect of lowering the level of anxiety inherent in all conversations. Warburton also found that moderate doses of alcohol

enhance the ability to remember “happy” words (Warburton, 1999). It is my belief that the combination of endorphin release and lowered anxiety around language gave alcohol the power to make spoken communication less stressful and to make language more like physical touch, allowing this “grooming at a distance” to feel like actual physical grooming.

Another unique property of alcohol, *alcohol myopia*, the intense obsession about one thing (person, object, or task), occurs at moderate to high levels of alcohol consumption. Just as alcohol myopia facilitated the repetitive action of soldiers in the Napoleonic wars (loading, aiming, and firing muskets), this obsessive effect could have assisted in group synchronization activities by facilitating the repetitive motion of dance.

It is possible that alcohol was also used to enhance communal bonding rituals and intergroup rituals designed to keep the peace among warring tribes. The lasting evidence of this connection can be seen in the near-universal use of alcohol around the world as a symbol of friendship, an indicator of loyalty, and a gift of peace. Thus, drinking most likely originated not out of our capacity for violence, but from our need for peace, harmony, cooperation, and group synchronization. However, as illustrated by the many surviving forms of communal bonding in tribes today, an intoxicant substance is certainly not necessary.

### ***Drink Bonding: Male Bonding***

As we have seen, alcohol can be a facilitator for social bonding. The variations in expressions of drunkenness—when and where it is characterized by either violence or passivity—are dependent on the need for bonding, the characteristics of the bonded group itself, and environmental conditions. Many people say that they are just “social drinkers,” consuming alcohol merely to facilitate sociability. What they are really saying is that they drink to facilitate social bonding. In the vast majority of cases, such drinking is peaceful, amiable, and inclusive of strangers.

There is, however, a darker side to bonding. In his seminal work *On Aggression*, Konrad Lorenz (1963/1967) first demonstrated that aggression was part and parcel of bonding: Animals that bond into social groups are also animals that display and act aggressively toward each other. Bonding implies grouping; grouping implies developing a group identity; a group identity implies territoriality; territory (even a metaphysical space) needs defending. As anthropologist Mary Douglas (1987) has noted, while drinking is normally viewed as a socially inclusive activity, it can just as easily be a vehicle for exclusion.

Anthropologist Lionel Tiger also reasoned that male bonding behavior and rituals are “a special human adaptation directly connected with co-operative predation and defense,” and that male bonding thus constitutes “a necessary condition and probably a stimulus for aggressive behavior” (Tiger, 1969/1970, p. 131).

The male-to-male bond is a hard-wired hangover from our hunting past, the context of our mental and emotional development. The process of bonding among males, particularly in all-male organizations, is a precursor to aggression. To “cut off” or consummate such aggression requires consummation of the bonding process. Where there is no prey to capture together and kill, the orgiastic release made possible by alcohol simulates the triumphant conclusion of the male bonding process.

If the belief exists that alcohol causes violence, it does not necessarily mean that alcohol-related violence will be prevalent evenly throughout the culture. It is more likely to be found in subgroups among which violence itself is more acceptable, especially among those who have a strong need for bonding. The fieldwork for my Ph.D. Thesis consisted of a six-month participant-

observation study of British Army Infantry recruits (Fox, unpublished). I concluded that alcohol was used (informally and unofficially) by Army trainers as a quick shortcut to bonding together groups of men and, as such, constituted a vital element of the military strategy. As many commanding officers explained to me, the key to combat effectiveness is not necessarily high-tech weaponry or even highly skilled soldiers, but “group cohesion,” the ability of a team of men to think and act as a loyal, bonded unit. Alcohol was thus introduced very early in training. It could symbolize reward and appreciation, strength and masculinity, power and dominance, trust and loyalty, and even love and affection between men. It demarcated the time and space between work and play and allowed for a semblance of personal expression, freedom, and even rebellion among the lower ranks.

Many of the instructors and officers considered alcohol to be a facilitator of violence. In pre-home-leave pep talks, it was common to hear a training corporal encouraging the recruits to get as drunk as possible, sleep with as many women as possible, and “show the civilians what soldiers are made of.” When recruits came back to camp several weeks later with battered faces and broken noses, a “boys-will-be-boys” attitude regularly excused their off-duty violence. Officers would often say to me, “We don’t want angels in the Infantry,” and praised the men for not backing down from a fight (Fox, unpublished).

But it was the unit bonding aspect of drinking that was universally recognized among all ranks as the key to success. As one soldier with extensive combat experience in Iraq put it:

“You can’t not be mates in the Army. We might have our differences but, on the front line, I know he’s got my back. I know that because we drink together, and that’s when your differences get sorted out. I couldn’t go into combat with anyone who’s not prepared to get drunk with me.”  
(Fox, unpublished).

### ***Religion, Bonding, and Alcohol***

It has been noted that adherents to particular religious faiths are more likely to abstain from alcohol or to drink in moderation than nonreligious people. A seemingly logical explanation for this phenomenon would be that the individuals are heeding the proscriptive doctrines that forbid such indulgence. For example, the Koran clearly states that “...intoxicants and gambling, all are an abomination of Satan’s handiwork... and hinder you from the remembrance of God, and from prayer; will you not then abstain?” (Holy Koran 5:90–91) The Bible, however, is more ambiguous, in some parts even encouraging consumption: “Give intoxicating liquor, you people, to the one about to perish, and wine to those who are bitter of soul. Let one drink and forget one’s poverty, and let one remember one’s trouble no more” (Proverbs 31:6–7). Some passages would even appear to suggest that the best vintage should be reserved for God himself: “... in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the Lord for a drink offering” (Numbers 28:7). Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism all allow drinking in moderation, and Judaism incorporates wine into the culture through highly structured rituals.

Torres Stone, Whitbeck, Chen, Johnson, and Olson (2006), however, found that participation in traditional activities and in traditional spirituality predicted cessation of drinking among North American Indians. An explanation from the anthropological perspective is put forward by Klausner (1961), who investigated the connections between religious group integration and alcohol consumption. Religious group membership, it appears, fulfills the need for affiliation; the belief and support systems help the individual to act in the face of anxiety. Klausner claimed that strong integration into a religious group in itself reduces social anxiety, and that these factors, more than any moral proscriptions against drinking, serve to lessen consumption in such groups

(see, for example, Klausner, 1961, 1964). Durkheim (1897/2002) and researchers who have followed his lead found that the religious groups that strongly incorporated the individual (like Catholicism and Judaism) had low levels of suicide and alcoholism, but that less incorporative religions (like Protestantism), which stressed the individual conscience, had higher levels of both.

Religious practices such as communal singing, chanting, prayer, dancing, drumming, and reaching trancelike or hypnotic states achieve the same feeling of group bonding as group drinking. Karl Marx may have been disparaging when he claimed that religion is the “opiate of the people,” but, neurobiologically speaking, he was not far off the mark. These religious practices trigger endorphins, the brain’s own opiates, and satisfy the ancient desire for group belonging. Faithful participants in these activities would have little need for the chemical shortcut provided by alcohol.

## CULTURAL PATTERNS OF DRINKING

What differences can be seen between drinking cultures? In recent years, the categorization of drinking cultures has focused on a distinction between two styles. The first—labeled *integrated, wet, moderate, nontemperance, or Mediterranean*—is characterized by normalization or integration of drinking into a range of everyday activities that do not have drunkenness as their goal (Levine, 1992; Raitasalo, Knibbe, & Kraus, 2005). In integrated drinking cultures, alcohol is commonly viewed as a food substance, without the power to radically alter or transform the drinker’s behavior. Drinking is also taken to be part and parcel of everyday life, requiring no special occasion, excuse, or justification. The social proscriptions of drunken behavior, however, tend to be harsh. Overtly drunken antics, whether violent or joyful, are neither expected nor tolerated.

The second type of drinking culture—labeled *nonintegrated, dry, immoderate, temperance, ambivalent, or Nordic*—is characterized by consumption that takes place mainly outside “normal” everyday life. In nonintegrated drinking cultures, intoxication is often seen as the main aim of drinking, and alcohol tends to be strongly associated with celebration. The term *ambivalent* refers to the paradoxical coexistence of heavily proscriptive rules and laws regarding drinking (such as opening and closing times of drinking places, sales restrictions on alcohol, and minimum drinking age legislation), on the one hand, and a permissive and tolerant attitude to drunken behaviors, on the other (Campbell, 1991; Room & Mäkelä, 2000).

Some authors make a geographical divide between the two drinking styles in Europe:

... there has been a long-lasting view of a north-south gradient of drinking and binge drinking, with a higher integration of drinking in everyday life (e.g., drinking with meals) in southern Europe, and stronger traditions of ostensive drunkenness in northern Europe. (Kuntsche, Rehm, & Gmel, 2004, p. 122)

The degree of integration in a drinking culture can change over time. For example, in a study of Finnish drinking habits, Simpura, Paakkenen, and Mustonen (1995) remarked on the disintegration of traditional daily rituals that had involved alcohol, pointing out that having a beer after a sauna is the only widespread daily or weekly ritual left that still included drinking.

There are problems with these distinctions between the two drinking styles, however, as they ignore the presence of numerous subcultural variations in drinking patterns and do not reflect the globalization or homogenization in drinking cultures that have been observed in many parts of the



world. Moreover, they primarily concern only the cultures of the “developed” world, leaving many of the traditional practices found in tribal societies out of the categorization.

## CULTURAL PATTERNS OF VIOLENCE

According to anthropologist Kate Fox (2004), “the specific, unwritten rules and norms governing the use of alcohol in different cultures invariably reflect the characteristic values, beliefs and attitudes of those cultures” (p. 254). Or, quoting Dwight Heath, “just as drinking and its effects are imbedded in other aspects of culture, so are many other aspects of culture imbedded in the act of drinking” (Fox, 2004, p. 254). What we must ask here is this: Are cultural aspects of violence and cultural aspects of drinking interrelated?

In many societies, the drinking culture intersects in some way with the “aggression culture,” but the value and portrayal of violence within the society differ widely. After an exhaustive comparison of hundreds of cultures, Russell (1972) concluded that “there exists a definite warfare factor, which forms the basis for a group of cultural characteristics that tend to accompany warlike cultures and not peaceful ones” (p. 290). In some cultures, as in the United States, aggressive responses and masculine “toughness” are widely glorified in popular media; in others, as in contemporary Japan and Denmark, for example, peaceful cooperation and harmony are valued above competitiveness. How alcohol fits into these cultural patterns is strongly related to the ways in which we humans manage our dual capacity for peace and war.

In terms of aggression, humans bear some resemblance to both species of our closest cousins, chimpanzees and bonobos. We share with chimpanzees a capacity for territorial aggression, pack hunting, and murder, but we differ from them in our capacity to create peaceful relations with other, unrelated groups of humans. Bonobos are a more peaceful species and capable of interacting with other troops of their kind without violence (albeit with considerable noise and displaying). Both chimpanzees and bonobos also demonstrate the capacity for nonviolent conflict resolution and reconciliation. So it is likely that we evolved with the ability to react to threatening situations in many different ways, ranging from outright murder to total harmonious peace. Such differences in “cultural” practice can also be found between different troops of primates of the same species: Some are more aggressive and violent, while others strive to be peaceful, cooperative, and harmonious. Frans de Waal even found an example of a “cultural” shift in aggressive behavior in baboons. Two troops of the same species, subjected to different ecological conditions, displayed different peaceful or aggressive responses that continued for a decade (de Waal, 2005).

We are a species of hunting mammals. We are also a social species, with an innate need to belong to a group. And we are a patrilocal species—that is, related males are not pushed out of the clan when they reach sexual maturity. All of these features lend themselves to territorial, sexual, and social competitiveness, and to violence. In humans, some aggression appears to be an inescapable feature of male adolescent development. One scientist argued that we do not need to look to alcohol to explain why young men are aggressive, violent, and often criminal: Levels of the male testosterone can increase after puberty to 30 times pre-puberty levels (Fox, 1994). This can result in a great attraction to violence: “...young men are enormously attracted to... violent escapades because they expect considerable rewards; because the activity is itself rewarding and pleasurable. It has to do with excitement, the sense of danger, the sense of achievement” (Fox, 1989, p. 140).

Our violent past has, in a sense, primed our brains for aggression, which has always been a vital component of our survival. But violence is not an innate urge in all of us, simmering just below

the surface of humanity, waiting to erupt. Violence is a behavioral strategy, employed in the self-interest of the individual or the group, as the situation demands. As Miczek et al. (1994) noted, the varied forms of “adaptive” animal aggression have “evolved as part of reproductive strategies, ultimately serving the transmission of genetic information to the next generation” (pp 378–379). In this sense, violence is as rational to humans as it is to other animals. Although we are all capable of violent responses, our brains are equally capable of suppressing and channeling this urge.

Throughout evolutionary history, most human societies have been characterized by violence. In fact, past societies had much higher levels than today, despite the common conception that we live in exceptionally violent times (Eisner, 2003; Ember, & Ember, 1997). Today, not all societies are alike in their propensity for violence. International studies have identified two distinct types of cultures: violence-reinforcing cultures and violence-repressing cultures (Tsytsarev & Callahan, 1995).

Violence-repressing cultures (for example, modern Denmark and Japan) are rich with social and cultural solutions for nonviolent conflict-avoidance. Such cultures usually stress the value of the community above the individual. Law enforcement techniques also tend to limit the use of weapons and force. Violence-reinforcing cultures (for example, Russia and the United States), on the other hand, tend to tolerate and even glorify violent solutions, personified by aggressive heroes and legitimated by state actions or methods of law enforcement and punishment—methods that tend toward aggressive measures and capital punishment (Cohen, 1996, 1998).

Around the globe, societies have evolved with different cultural patterns of violence and aggression, depending on their environmental influences. This does not mean that individuals in these groups are in some way “bred for violence” and have a greater genetic predisposition for it than others. In fact, it has been shown that, when a violent person is removed from a culture of violence, he or she shows no greater inclination to aggression than others (Harris, 1998). Violence is merely one of many behavioral strategies in the human repertoire that exist to be used as the situation demands.

The presence of certain cultural features, however, can largely predict levels of homicide, spousal abuse, and other forms of violence. Violence-reinforcing cultures tend to share the following features:

- (1) cultural support (in media, norms, icons, myths, and so on) for aggression and aggressive solutions;
- (2) militaristic readiness and participation in wars—societies that are frequently at war have consistently higher rates of interpersonal violence as well;
- (3) glorification of fighters;
- (4) violent sports;
- (5) corporal and capital punishment;
- (6) socialization of male children toward aggression;
- (7) belief in malevolent magic;
- (8) conspicuous inequality in wealth;
- (9) a higher than normal proportion of young males in the society;

(10) strong codes of male honor—in general, societies and subgroups that actively subscribe to strong codes of honor tend to have higher rates of homicide;<sup>2</sup>  
(11) a culture of male domination.

Absent from the list above is prevalence of weapons among the population. Although this might seem to be an obvious factor promoting violence, studies have shown that easy access to weapons does not appear to be a provocative factor in general. However, Phillips, Matusko, and Tomasovic (2007) found that the presence of a weapon does have a significant influence in drinking environments. The authors questioned whether alcohol consumption influenced the escalation of a potentially violent situation into an actual act of violence. The answer was *no*, but the presence of a weapon did. How can this be explained? According to Phillips et al. (2007), weapons can short-circuit the normal inhibitory signals in males that would otherwise lessen the likelihood of violence (Phillips et al., 2007).

When cultures of male honor, male domination, and male violence intersect, the effects are dramatic—as, for example, in Jamaica, where the homicide rate in 2000 was 33 per 100,000 people (Harriott, 2000), almost four times the global average of 8.8 per 100,000 people (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002).

#### **AT THE CROSSROADS: DRINKING AND VIOLENCE**

So the question remains: What is the relationship between drinking cultures and violent cultures? We should note that some of the most violent cultures in the world have been decidedly not drinking cultures. The violent spread of Islam and its conquest of lands from Morocco to India were carried out by warriors to whom the consumption of alcohol was absolutely forbidden. The Plains Indians of America, a culture devoted to war and personal aggrandizement by war, had no alcohol until the coming of Europeans.

A brief but telling international comparison of violence rates and alcohol consumption rates by country also leaves us with some intriguing anomalies. For example, one of the most violent societies in the world is South Africa, where 664 assaults, 190 homicides, and 123 rapes per 100,000 people were recorded in 2000 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2004). Italy, by comparison, recorded six homicides, 50 assaults, and four rapes per 100,000 people in the same year (UNODC, 2004). Luxembourg, by far one of the most peaceful countries in the world, had such a low rate of crime in 2001 that the government considered closing the country's only prison. Yet, at 17.54 liters of pure alcohol per capita, Luxembourg has one of the highest alcohol consumption rates internationally; only 2.5% of its adult population does not drink (World Health Organization [WHO], 2004). In South Africa, by contrast—where per capita alcohol consumption is 7.81 liters, similar to, for example, Italy, at 9.14 liters per capita—almost 70% of the population abstains totally (compare this to the 25% abstention rate in Italy, see WHO, 2004). Another violent nation, Jamaica (mentioned above), also has a relatively low per capita alcohol consumption rate: approximately 3.37 liters per capita, with 57.6% of the population reported as abstainers in 2001 (WHO, 2004). So, whatever the part of alcohol in violent cultures, it has neither a necessary nor a causal role in levels of violence.

We have seen that there are cultural differences in the expression of violence, and cultural differences in the expression of drunkenness. Drunken expressions of violence also differ

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in southern states of the United States, where violence-reinforcing “honor code” cultures have been entrenched since colonial times, homicide rates have historically been up to 10 times higher than in northern states (Nisbett, 1993; Redfield, 1880/2000; Vandello & Cohen, 2004).

between cultures. For example, after an examination of ethnographic reports on drinking behavior, Levinson (1983) concluded that “in a worldwide sense, it seems that alcohol-related aggressive behavior—as measured by male involvement in drunken brawls—is about as likely to be present as it is to be absent” (p. 306). Schaefer (1973) had found that men engaged in drunkenness in 76% of 60 small societies examined, but aggressive drunken behavior was found in only 40%, less than half. The differences between the violent characteristics of these societies, however, were not noted (Levinson, 1983).

It is also clear that, within a culture, drinking patterns may not be homogenous. For example, research on drinking in Boston found that:

In the “Mom-and-Pop” community bar, the men were quiet and deferential in their dealings with older members of the Charlestown [Massachusetts] community. But, in Boston’s downtown “combat zone”—an area designated for “adult entertainment,” [the same men] exhibited their rowdiest behavior, getting involved in a loud argument, a fight involving a gun, and a run-in with the police. (Levinson, 1983, p. 314)

Many authors have written about cultural differences in alcohol-related aggressivity and observed that it is rarely related to actual amounts of alcohol consumed. The difficulty is in gaining accurate data that compare a society’s levels of violence with its drinking culture; and, even if such data could be obtained, it would still not prove any clear causal direction.

It has been demonstrated that individuals with certain genetic, physiological, or psychological conditions may be differently affected by alcohol. For example, for those with hyper-aggressivity and Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD), alcohol can aggravate or amplify violent reactions. But U.S. studies show that hyper-aggressivity exists in only 1% of the population, and ASPD in only 3% of males (Regier et al., 1990).<sup>3</sup> Theoretically, individuals with such predispositions should exist in similar proportions in every population, yet the rates of alcohol-related violence still appear to be culture-dependent, indicating that cultural norms can mitigate against, or even override, certain violent predispositions.

Miczek, Weerts, and DeBold (1993) concluded,

Whether or not alcohol in a range of doses... causes a certain individual to act aggressively more frequently or even to engage in “out of character” violent behavior depends on a host of interacting pharmacological, endocrinological, neurobiologic, genetic, situational, environmental, social, and cultural determinants. (p. 84)

We should, therefore, look at how cultural values and beliefs concerning violence and aggression can and do intersect with cultural beliefs and behaviors concerning alcohol. The main *cultural* features that appear to be associated with alcohol-related violence are:

- (1) a belief in the disinhibiting powers of alcohol;
- (2) the association of alcohol with masculinity, power, and status (a *machismo* drinking culture);
- (3) drinking environments conducive to violent behavior.

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<sup>3</sup> Other researchers have found that the issue is not so much that alcohol causes aggression as that aggressive people drink to excess (see, for example, Dougherty, Bjork, Bennett, & Moeller, 1999; Gerald & Higley, 2002; White, Brick, & Hansell, 1993).

The intersection of these features with a violence-reinforcing culture and a nonintegrated drinking culture will invariably signal a higher incidence of alcohol-associated violence, both public and domestic. In societies without these cultural combinations, on the other hand, heavy drinking can and does occur without associated violence, even among groups of strongly bonded males.

### ***The “Disinhibiting” Powers of Alcohol***

One of the key distinguishing characteristics of nonintegrated or dry drinking cultures is the belief in the power of alcohol to loosen inhibitions and “release” the inner person, freed from constraints. But what exactly are inhibitions? Anthropologist Robin Fox (1994) writes that “the cultural expression of inhibition... is rules” (p. 86). Inhibition merely means *following the rules*; disinhibition is *breaking the rules*. The rules, of course, differ depending on the culture.

In nonintegrated cultures, this special alcohol-stamped “license to transgress” is so ingrained in society that it has, in itself, become a rule. When intoxicated, drinkers are *expected* to alter their behavior and to engage with the crowd in varying degrees of promiscuity, vandalism, public displays of affection, loud and boisterous behavior, dancing, sex, and other activities that are normally under fairly strict social constraint.

Alcohol activates the brain’s reward circuitry. For our Pleistocene ancestors, this may have felt like grooming, but the sensation can be interpreted in other ways by modern humans. Any chemically induced sensation in the brain automatically drives us to seek an explanation for it. Our logical brains do not like an effect without a cause, so an ethanol-created surge in serotonin and dopamine levels that makes us feel good drives us to seek a reason for this feeling. Thus whatever desire we may have at the time of drinking (or whatever action we are planning or performing) gets an automatic positive reinforcement. This viewpoint may explain the myriad of individual effects that alcohol seems to “cause,” including the view that alcohol seems to cause disinhibition.

Disinhibition among intoxicated individuals is hard to predict, because it is socially determined, and social rules differ from group to group. George and Norris (1991) explain that inhibitions are social rules about behavior that are internalized by each person. However, the process of internalization is highly individual and invisible. Subsequently, whether disinhibition has occurred or not is highly subjective and dependent on who is observing and interpreting the behavior. “The grayness of such judgments,” say the authors, “coupled with expectations about alcohol’s powers, yields a wide berth for blaming... misbehaviors on alcohol rather than the person” (George & Norris, 1991, p. 135).

Some scientists, however, claim that this behavioral unpredictability is a property inherent in the alcohol itself. They have put forward the theory of *selective disinhibition* as another means of attributing bad behavior to alcohol (Crowe & George, 1989; Hull & Bond, 1986; Lang, 1985; Marlat & Rohsenow, 1980). Proponents of this theory have made an unfortunate choice of terms. *Selective*, by definition, implies a degree of conscious choice—which, contrary to the theory, is precisely what does occur.

We have been somewhat conditioned in our culture to expect a drug to affect all users in a similar way; this is what drug companies tell us should happen. Marketing drugs would be impossible if, on the box, the caution regarding potential side effects were to read, “Depending on what you believe.” So it is uncomfortably counterintuitive to accept that the same chemical can affect people in different ways depending on their cultural norms.

The multiplicity of effects and behaviors that result from drinking is more readily recognized in other cultures than in our own. The ancient Aztecs, for example, honored a pantheon of gods, collectively known as *400 Rabbits*, who were all descended from Two Rabbit, the supreme God of *pulque* (an alcohol drink from the same plant that produces tequila). The 400 sons of Two Rabbit represented the almost limitless variety of possible behavioral effects of intoxication (Anawalt, 1997).

### ***Alcohol, Disinhibition, and Violence***

To explain the connection between alcohol, disinhibition, and violence, the temptation to create a causal link between aggression and neurophysiology is strong. Take testosterone, for example, the hormone associated with male aggression. Phrases such as “flooded with testosterone” are commonly used to describe aggressive young men, whose violent actions are often portrayed as being “fuelled by alcohol.”

First, alcohol reduces levels of testosterone (Chopra, Tulchinsky, & Greenway, 1973; Eriksson, Fukanaga, & Lindman, 1994; Ylikahri et al., 1974). Second, the situational and environmental factors in which aggression takes place and a person’s recollection of previous experience of aggression (for instance, winning or losing fights) seem to correlate more strongly with acts of aggression than do levels of testosterone (Simpson, 2001).

The same argument holds for serotonin, our “feel-good” brain chemical. Many scientists have observed that:

- (A) aggression is associated with lower levels of serotonin;
- (B) alcohol consumption, in the long term or in certain regions of the brain, can lower serotonin levels (although studies indicate that alcohol increases serotonin—see, for example, Moeller & Dougherty, 2001).

Many scientists have therefore inferred that B must cause A.

For example, Pihl and LeMarquand (1998) write that alcohol’s effect on serotonin may increase the potential for aggressive behavior (p. 61). They argue that aggression is a “default response,” triggered by: (1) cognitive disorganization (confusion); (2) disinhibition; and (3) lowered levels of serotonin—all of which can be induced by alcohol. This theory, however, rests on a presumption that aggression is the normal underlying state in all humans, and that inhibition, cognition, and high levels of serotonin form a kind of “dam” that holds aggression at bay. If the dam is breached, aggression will come flooding forth. But most professional observers of human behavior and psychology would not agree that aggression is a “fundamental default response,” as the authors claim, nor that latent violence is the universal human condition. Peaceful cooperation and conflict resolution are human drives that are equally powerful, if not overriding.

Serotonin and testosterone, say other scientists, are *consequences* of behavior, not causes of it (see, for example, McGuire & Raleigh, 1986).<sup>4</sup> The evidence that testosterone causes aggression, however, is undermined by the same flaws that plague some studies on alcohol and behavior: poor measurement, reverse causality, and poor experimental design (Goldstein, 2001). There is sound evidence, however, to show that testosterone levels rise and fall depending on “an individual’s perceived status in social hierarchy” (Goldstein, 2001, p. 153). For example, in

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<sup>4</sup> For a review of the relationship between testosterone and male aggression, see Zitzmann & Nieschlag (2001).

primate groups, serotonin levels are proportionate to status or rank. Roughly speaking, the higher up the male, the greater is his level of serotonin. By manipulating rank, one can change the serotonin levels. If the status of a monkey within the troop is artificially elevated, his serotonin levels will rise. Similarly, in an all-male fraternity, officers were found to have serotonin levels 25% higher than recent initiates to the group. Among primates, it is the dominant or high-serotonin males who are *more likely* to attack other males or predators (see, for example, McGuire & Raleigh, 1986). To imply that low levels of serotonin “cause” aggressive behavior is to reverse the natural order.

It has been demonstrated, however, that in human subjects who *already* have chronically and abnormally low levels of serotonin—such as Type II alcoholics (Higley & Linnoila, 1997), individuals diagnosed with ASPD, and those with frontal-lobe dysfunction—aggressiveness may be exacerbated by alcohol, making these subjects even more violent (Moeller, & Dougherty, 2001; Moeller, Dougherty, Lane, Steinberg, & Cherek, 1998). This evidence points to the conclusion that it is not so much that alcohol causes aggression, as that aggressive people drink.

In my experience as an alcohol educator, I have conducted many workshops for young British soldiers who were referred for problem drinking behavior, much of it resulting in violent incidents. Without exception, all of them start out with entrenched beliefs regarding alcohol as the cause of their aggressiveness. After some analysis of their pre-drinking motivations, however, many come to understand that their “loss of inhibitions” is largely under their control, as this sudden revelation by a young Infantry soldier illustrates:

“Usually, when you go for a night out [drinking], you have two things in mind that you want: either you pull a bird [get a woman to sleep with you] or you get into a good punch-up. The thing is though, if you pull a bird first, you don’t take her home and beat her up, do you?” (Fox, unpublished)

Although, like many of his colleagues, this young man never fully came to accept that his “inhibitions” were never “lost,” he did achieve a cognitive compromise:

“So, like, with booze, right, you still lose your inhibitions, but you can kind of decide which ones you want to lose.” (Fox, unpublished)

The science, in fact, fully backs up his conclusion. In experiments, it was found that, no matter how inebriated a drinker becomes, even to the point of losing control of bodily functions, the self-control of behavior is *always* possible as long as the drinker has an incentive to control him- or herself (see, for example, Bailey, Leonard, Cranston, & Taylor, 1983; Bushman & Cooper, 1990; Hoaken, Giancola, & Pihl, 1998; Giancola, 2002; Giancola & Zeichner, 1995; Taylor, 1986).

Critchlow, a leading expert in the psychology of drinking behavior, summarized the accumulated evidence about alcohol and violence as follows:

On a cultural level it seems to be the negative consequences of alcohol that hold most powerful sway over our thinking. Because alcohol is seen as a cause of negative behavior, alcohol-related norm violations are explained with reference to drinking rather than the individual. Thus, by believing that alcohol makes people act badly, we give it a great deal of power. Drinking becomes a tool that legitimates irrationality and excuses violence without permanently destroying an individual’s moral standing or the society’s system of rules and ethics. (Critchlow, 1986, p. 761)

But the association does not operate like this in violence-repressing cultures. Belief in the disinhibitory powers of alcohol in these cultures is normally confined to extroverted but peaceful expressions, such as joviality and amorousness.

Folk beliefs in beverage-specific violent effects are prevalent in many cultures. In the United Kingdom, one particular brand of lager, for example, is commonly known as *the wife beater*, because it is thought to incite men to domestic violence. Whisky is another common candidate for the belief in liquid violence. In a study on the use of alcohol in the training of British Army Infantrymen, I encountered a sergeant who believed he could determine the age of Scotch whisky by how aggressive it made him feel. The older the Scotch, he theorized, the greater the “aggression potential” it built up, and this aggression was then released in the drinker (Fox, unpublished).

Ignoring the fact that the active ingredient in all alcoholic drinks—ethanol— is the same, several researchers have tried to substantiate the sergeant’s science, the folk belief (particularly prevalent in dry drinking cultures) that certain drinks (even particular brands of the same drink) will cause aggression, whereas others will not. When one overlooks the powerful effect of belief (or cultural norms), these arguments become painfully convoluted. Parker and Rebhun (1995), for example, in attempting to demonstrate the “homicidal” side-effect of alcohol, concluded that the “aggression potential” of spirits is greater than wine. Beer, according to these researchers, is also positively associated with homicide, but only among “non-White” Americans. Three years later, Parker and Cartmill (1998) found a negative association with wine consumption and homicide among White Americans. That is, the higher the consumption, the lower the homicide rate. The contorted conclusions become slightly farcical: Spirits cause White Americans to become violent, but wine reduces their violence; beer (specifically, malt liquor) causes Black Americans to become violent. Is it fallout from the political-correctness campaigns that blinds such researchers to the obvious differences in cultural beliefs and practices regarding alcohol and violence? Is it so much more difficult to accept that people behave differently because of their cultural beliefs than to try to find racially targeted magic in the same ethanol molecule?

### ***Alcohol and Masculinity***

Within many cultures, most notably the violence-reinforcing ones, the construct of *masculinity* is thickly layered with notions of power, status, and honor. But are there also human “universals” about manhood? After a cross-cultural examination of masculinity, anthropologist Gilmore (1990) concluded that the construct was universally comprised of three key features: “To be a man in most of the societies we have looked at, one must impregnate women, protect dependants from danger, and provision kith and kin” (p. 223).

Gilmore’s findings also led him to the conclusion that the ideologies of manhood are highly dependent on the social environment: “The harsher the environment and the scarcer the resources, the more manhood is stressed as inspiration and goal” (Gilmore, 1990, p. 224). The defense of one’s honor or reputation is, in some cultures and subcultures, “a cause worth dying for.” Some studies find that a large proportion of male-on-male homicides—as high as 41% in one study—is triggered by extremely trivial slights and even unintended insults (Wolfgang, 1958). Daly and Wilson (1988) stressed that, “In most social milieus, a man’s reputation depends in part upon the maintenance of a credible threat of violence” (p. 128).

Numerous authors have investigated the common patterns and motives involved in male-on-male homicide (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Katz, 1988; Luckenbill, 1977; Polk & Ranson, 1991; Wolfgang, 1958). And why do men kill other men? The above cited authors agreed that male-on-male homicides are disproportionately caused or triggered by public contests of honor or reputation. In



this respect, the pub brawl in defense of individual or group honor is, in the eyes of the slighted male, a legitimate battle.

Messerschmidt (1986) argues that economically marginalized males in particular may seek to “ground their masculinity” in displays of physical toughness and aggression (p. 70). A challenge or threat to any of these key pillars of masculinity can provoke aggressive displays or violent response (Polk, 1994).

Among the British Army Infantry soldiers I studied in 2001, there was not only a strong belief in the power of alcohol to cause a man to behave violently, but, more specifically, a belief in the unpredictability of this effect. Not all males in a group can be on top. Many of the younger, weaker soldiers, who could not maintain a “credible threat of violence” by means of their own strength, quickly figured out that it could be to their advantage to gain a reputation as being “a bit of a madman” when under the influence of alcohol, as this lessened the chance that they would be bullied by others.

In many societies around the world, heavy drinking is strongly associated with masculinity. For example, one anthropologist who went to study the drinking culture among the Truk peoples of Micronesia found that he could not separate an understanding of the meaning of drinking from the meaning of manhood, as the two were inseparable in Truk culture (Marshall, 1979).<sup>5</sup>

In most countries of the “developed” world, we have successfully suppressed or outlawed all forms of ritualized conflict (such as dueling, for example) that were traditionally used to settle questions of honor among men. Apart from certain sports (such as boxing), and capital punishment, there is no acceptable, socially sanctioned form of “assault” left to men. Today, defending one’s honor, the honor of a lady, or the honor of one’s group will most likely result in a criminal conviction.

This is not to suggest that dueling or other ritualized forms of violence between men should be reintroduced. I am just drawing attention to the fact that, in our “modernized” societies, apart from sport, there are no longer any approved outlets for male aggression. The only form of fighting left to men is the drunken brawl. But even here, it is important to note that what Fox called “the inherent rules of violence” are often in evidence. In the absence of weapons, most men do not try to kill each other, and the fighting tends to be “ritualized” and controlled by spectators. The alcohol consumed may in fact inhibit serious damage by making the combatants uncoordinated and inefficient in their fighting (Fox, 1978).

It is a fair generalization that in a group of drinking males, no matter how much alcohol is consumed, if there is no *expectation* of violence, violence will not occur. Men are as likely to get maudlin as to get mad. On the other hand, if violence is an expected outcome of drinking, there is a high probability of its occurrence. In violence-reinforcing cultures (or subcultures, as in the case of the army) where inequalities of power, honor codes, and an association of alcohol with masculinity intersect, there is a far greater likelihood of incidence of alcohol-related violence. In such cultures, the drinking environment becomes a proving ground for male status. Several scientists have suggested that manipulation of these environments can alter the balance between peace and war.

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<sup>5</sup> Paradoxically, the chemical effect that alcohol (ethanol) has on men is decidedly un-masculine: Drinking, especially rapid heavy consumption, has been shown to decrease levels of testosterone in men, potentially leading to shrinkage of the sex organs, decreased libido, and, because of the consequent increase in estrogen, an increase in feminine characteristics—such as loss of facial hair and increase in the size of male mammary glands (enlarged breasts).

## *Alcohol and Domestic Violence*

Male aggression, however, is not confined to the bar. The balance between peace and war in the home can also be influenced by both culture and consumption.

Domestic violence (or spousal abuse) could be construed as an issue relevant only to individual psychologies rather than to culture. Cross-cultural studies, however, confirm that such intimate partner violence must conform, to some extent, to cultural norms, as rates differ between countries, ranging, for example, from 71% of women surveyed having experienced domestic violence in Ethiopia to 15% in Japan (Kishor & Johnson, 2004; WHO, 2005). Although many commentators and media reports imply that drunkenness is the cause of domestic violence, the connections between the two are far more complex. Alcohol consumption (by either the victim or the perpetrator) may be a risk factor for spousal abuse, but well-considered studies on domestic violence show that many other factors are far more accurate predictors of such acts.

Although assaults by women on their male partners (or same-sex partners) are increasingly recognized and recorded (see, for example, Archer, 2000), in general, women are more likely to engage in “passive,” or non-physical, forms of violence, such as manipulation and emotional blackmail (Hein & Hein, 1998). Studies have demonstrated, however, that, if seriously provoked, women will launch physical attacks against the perpetrator of the perceived threat. Although alcohol has not been shown to “cause” female aggression, the combination of alcohol and serious provocation has been found to increase the physical severity of the resulting attack. The results of a study by Hoaken and Pihl (2000) show that sober women manifest considerable aggression when highly provoked—*more* aggression even than sober men. Alcohol actually seemed to have a slight “dampening effect” on women’s aggressive response under high provocation: They were less aggressive when intoxicated than when they were sober. The most interesting finding in this and other studies is that aggression in women bears more relation to the nature and level of the provocation than to the amount of alcohol consumed (Bettancourt & Miller, 1996; Hoaken & Pihl, 2000). Another laboratory experiment, designed to measure and compare the influence of “personality-trait anger” on the alcohol-aggression relationship in men and women, found that, “under high provocation, alcohol increased aggression only for men with higher trait anger scores. Alcohol had no effect on female aggression, regardless of anger levels” (Giancola, 2002).

Using interview data from over 5000 individuals, Kantor and Straus (1987) showed that the cultural approval of violence was far more strongly associated with wife beating than was excessive drinking. Several studies have identified other specific conditions under which male-to-female spousal abuse occurs (Dobash & Dobash, 1984; Levinson, 1989; Roy, 1977). Four main factors that together are predictive of wife beating appear in these and many other studies:

- (1) *The power struggle*: when there has been a perceived challenge to the husband’s authority, his control, or his masculinity. In many cases, this challenge can be triggered by economic or educational inequality. A study by Yllo and Straus (1984) of 2000 women across the United States showed a U-shaped curvilinear relationship between women’s economic and educational status and marital violence toward them. Women’s risk of violence increased when their status was either very low or very high. Other scholars have noted that increased female independence and economic participation can lead to increases in domestic violence (see, for example, Eber, 2000).
- (2) *The sense of male entitlement*: unfulfilled expectations regarding domestic or sexual “duties.” In many areas of the world, the notion of male “entitlement” is still enshrined in law, extending even to the right to beat or have forced sex with one’s wife.

- (3) *Sexual jealousy*: although infidelity by either party in an intimate relationship can result in extreme emotional pain, to certain “alpha-type” males, it represents the most serious challenge of all to dominance. If bonding and aggression are restless bedfellows, sex and aggression are even more closely entwined. As psychologist Peter Marsh puts it, in evolutionary terms, “sex ... is the pay-off of fierce dominance” (Marsh, 1978, p. 61).
- (4) *Restriction on divorce*: in societies where women cannot easily and legally get out of abusive relationships, the violence can be more frequent, severe, and prolonged.

All the above triggers for spousal abuse can have cultural influences. For example, in male-to-female assault, the recurring theme of the challenge to male dominance, power, status, or masculine identity may have a foundation in our human/primate nature, but it is also defined by cultural norms. Alcohol consumption may be part of this paradigm: As one author pointed out, drunkenness (or the “show” of intoxication) can be used as a means of altering the boundaries of social interaction (Hill, 1978). The drunken man is in a “liminal” state, variously explained as possession by an evil spirit, a state of “diminished responsibility,” or a “true” state, reflective of drinker’s “real” self.

The relationship of drunkenness to male power is complex. On the one hand, many have observed that men drink in order to assuage their need for feelings of power (McClelland, Davis, Kalin, & Wanner, 1972); on the other hand, drunkenness can also dissolve or weaken a man’s power. In the company of other men (as I witnessed among British soldiers), it may be acceptable, when drunk, to allow “feminized” expressions of the self to surface, leading often to physical affection between men, albeit usually layered with derisive misogynistic commentary. Penny Harvey (1994) noted that these temporary alterations to masculine identity can have dangerous side-effects: When men are thus “weakened” by alcohol, they “are likely to experience strong cultural pressure to reassert a recognition of themselves as dominant,” especially when challenged by a woman about their drunken (subordinate) state (p. 226).

In many societies, women have limited opportunities for escape from violent relationships. Some anthropologists have observed that, in such cultures, women may come to believe that suffering violence is their destiny. Perhaps as a defensive response, the belief in spirit possession of drunken men is particularly prevalent in these cultural conditions. Based on observations of drinking culture in the southern Andes, anthropologist Penny Harvey (1994) wrote that “drunkenness involves an approximation to supernatural power” (p. 226). The folk belief in magical transformation by alcohol in some cultures also excuses wife beating. John Ingham (1986) discussed belief in *naguales* (beast-like evil spirits) that can possess people and make them act out of character. There is a strong belief among some Mexican groups that *naguales* are particularly prone to attacking drunken men. Whether or not the belief in the supernatural is present, or that people believe they are literally possessed by evil, alcohol can serve, for the aggressor, as an excuse for violent actions: “It was the drink talking.” This excuse is deeply entrenched in some societies. For example, Ruth Bunzel first reported in 1940 on the Mexican attitude that domestic violence was not to be taken seriously if the perpetrator was drinking at the time. To strike one’s wife while sober, on the other hand, was a true indication of evil intent (Bunzel, 1940).

We have seen that there are parallels between violence-reinforcing cultures and violent drinking practices. Franzer (1993) also found numerous parallels between families gripped by alcoholism and violent families. The “restructuring” of family life to accommodate alcoholism, he explains, “establishes a milieu that tolerates and accommodates to violence” (Franzer, 1993, p. 173).

Characteristics of many violence-reinforcing cultures, such as macho codes of honor and aggressive socialization of young males, tend to go hand-in-hand with a strong sense of male

entitlement—to power, to sex, to dominance. Men in such societies are more likely to be “acculturated” into such expectations. Where male power is challenged or threatened, violence can result, whether in the public or private sphere. In Western societies, however, we find an uneasy coexistence of cultural logics: a celebration and expectation of macho identity on the one hand, with condemnation of aggressive expressions of male entitlement on the other. The icons of popular culture saturate the airwaves with excessively violent Rambo-style responses to minor slights to male honor or status. Yet, in “real life” such actions are punishable with the strictest measures. These opposing cultural rules can create what psychologists term *cognitive dissonance*,<sup>6</sup> a state that requires resolution. The *deviance disavowal* theory of alcohol-related aggression postulates that drunkenness allows individuals to escape blame for actions that are contrary to cultural norms. Alcohol can therefore serve as the bridge between “warrior” or macho thinking and the reality of legal sanction and social disapproval. It is possible that Western, Nordic dry drinking cultures have such problems with alcohol-related violence because of this inherent conflict between social expectations of masculinity and allowable expressions of it. In violence-repressing cultures, on the other hand, the line between fantasy violence—in myth, fable, or movies—and real-life aggression is more thickly drawn, delineated with active social learning on alternative, peaceful norms of behavior.

Although reducing domestic violence should be a major priority, Graham and Wells (2001) rightly questioned “the extent that progress in reducing one kind of violence (male violence against women) can be made in the context of a society that views other forms of violence (male-to-male violence) as partly or wholly acceptable or as an affirmation of the power of aggressive men” (p. 606).

### ***Drinking Environment and Violent Behavior***

Several studies have established that, in nonintegrated or immoderate drinking cultures, the environment in which drinking takes place can influence aggressive behavior. The combination of a violence-reinforcing drinking arena with individuals who are already prone to aggressively impulsive behavior can increase the likelihood of the incidence of violence. Leonard, Quigley, and Collins (2003) found that people predisposed to aggression not only drink more heavily but are also more likely to frequent violent bars. Roth (1994) also observed that people who drink in so-called “fighting bars” may have deliberately sought out such environments in order to vent frustrations or anger, knowing that there will be a degree of social permissiveness to violent behavior in these settings. I saw this phenomenon directly in my observations of British soldiers. On occasion, particularly when returning from a long tour of duty, some soldiers would deliberately seek out the most notoriously violent bars in the hopes of getting into “a good fight,” as they explained, “to get the built-up aggression out of [their] system.”

But, in such environments, violent incidents can erupt even among those who are not actively seeking them. A possible explanation for this is an effect of alcohol mentioned at the beginning of this paper: *alcohol myopia*, a kind of tunnel vision, focusing only on what the individual sees as important. If this effect is experienced in a violent atmosphere, the response can be an over-aggressive reaction if the individual is already prone to such behavior (Taylor & Leonard, 1983). In pubs and other licensed premises, the key variables that escalate drunken aggression have been found to be environments that are noisy, cramped and badly maintained, and in which a tolerance

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<sup>6</sup> *Cognitive dissonance* is a psychological term referring to the discomfort one experiences from conflicting beliefs. For example, experiments have shown that, when forced to tell a lie, most people will convince themselves, to some extent, that the statement is true, rather than suffer the discomfort of lying (Festinger, 1957).

or expectation of violence is the norm (see, for example, Graham, La Roque, Yetman, Ross, & Guistra, 1980; Graham, West, & Wells, 2000; Homel & Clark, 1994). Thus, the physical layout of a pub or nightclub can influence customer behavior. An understanding of this can help landlords to arrange seating, gaming, and ordering areas in such a way as to minimize conflict in crowded situations.

Many experiments have found, however, that even heavily inebriated people, although they may not be able to control their physical movements, can control their reactions and behavior if they feel that they have an incentive to do so (see, for example, Jeavons & Taylor, 1985; Taylor, 1986). The key to containing violence is to maximize the incentives for individual control and to make sure that the social rules of behavior are absolutely clear. As Room (1993) argued, drunken violence is more likely to escalate in situations where the social rules are not clear. Graham, Bernards, Osgood, and Wells (2006) also found that setting high standards of behavior among both patrons and staff could reduce incidents of violence.

### **PERPETUATING OR DETERRING ALCOHOL-RELATED VIOLENCE**

Although radical shifts in violent cultures have happened in history, as with the transformation of violent (and drunken) Vikings to pacifist Danes, they have largely depended on massive underlying changes in society and economy that cannot easily be the rational objects of policy. Such changes do not happen overnight. Here we must look at what we realistically can and cannot change.

**We cannot change** the male propensity for aggression, but we can channel it into appropriate and socially acceptable forms. In particular, we need rites of passage for young people that offer challenge and a route to adult status and recognition. The aim should not be to completely suppress male aggression, but to utilize and channel it constructively.

**We can change** beliefs about alcohol, but not simply by deploring its supposed violent effects. Alcohol education has not been traditionally seen as effective at behavior change, because it may merely reinforce existing beliefs. Young people are told about the awful “disinhibiting” effects of alcohol and warned off it. This is about as effective as abstinence training for sex. The result is that, when young people do drink, they are primed to expect an aggressive outcome of their drinking, and they oblige. It is therefore necessary to experiment with changes in the educational messages. Several authors, for example, have advocated the inclusion of *expectancy challenge* techniques in future alcohol education and treatment (see, for example, Larimer & Cronce, 2007; Milgram, 2001).

**We can change** the social responses to violence and aggression in drinking environments—and, above all, we can change the drinking environment itself. In this, we can learn from our attempts to understand the role of drinking in cultures where it does not lead to large-scale and damaging aggression.

There was a social experiment, for example, that tried to change the dry drinking culture in the United Kingdom by changing one aspect only—by extending licensing hours. The expectation was that the British, not forced to consume within a limited time, would miraculously become Mediterranean café-style drinkers. While extending licensing hours has worked in some areas to reduce violence at the traditional closing times, it has not reduced the overall heavy drinking in town-center areas. As Heath (1982) explained:

It is important to realize that drinking problems are virtually unknown in most of the world's cultures, including many where drinking is commonplace and occasional drunkenness is accepted. This suggests that even a technologically advanced culture might have something to learn from other cultures.... To speak of adopting traits from other cultures is problematic, because each culture is itself a complex web of interrelationships in which the parts have more meaning to each other than in isolation.... Nevertheless, it is apparent that certain ways of thinking and acting with respect to alcohol, ways that are consistently associated with drinking problems, might fruitfully be rejected, while others, those that correlate with unproblematic drinking, might well be fostered. (p. 436)

## CONCLUSIONS

Anthropological evidence suggests that human beings, on the whole, can be a violent lot. The problem is that we do not want to believe this. We still cling to the romantic notions of the “blank slate” of human nature and the “peaceful noble savage.” We would far rather believe that a certain malleable element of our culture—drinking—is the root cause of most violence, and that, if it were eliminated, we would all return to our peaceful, noble state.

Our best bet for peace is first to understand the real causes of violence in human nature and our triggers for aggression, and then to devise societies that are capable of recognizing and containing or minimizing these catalysts. Some anthropologists have concluded that, compared to indigenous peoples living in a tribal state, “modern” civilization has been quite adept at controlling and containing violence. As Stephen Pinker (2002) says, “While conflict is a human universal, so is conflict resolution” (p. 58).

We need to look more closely at the meaning attached to both drinking and violence in different cultures, without assuming that the one causes the other. Alcohol is a convenient scapegoat that allows us to deny and ignore the impulses and drives of which we are capable, and the influence of the cultures that glorify violence. Bonding, violence, and aggression are part of our heritage and genetic make-up. Better planning, design, and management of drinking environments will help to lessen the incidence of violence in certain situations, but the problem of young male violence (with or without alcohol) will not be “solved” until realistic and practical measures for channeling such impulses are found. For this, we should concentrate our investigations not so much on drinking cultures as on the ingenious means of aggression-suppression that have been practiced by our primate and human ancestors for millennia, and that continue to characterize many of the world's cultures. We should also seek to reinstate and support small-scale communal celebrations in which alcohol is integrated ritually and peacefully into the format.

Because it is used in so many symbolic ways—in celebration, in grief, in rage, for love, and for courage—alcohol will always be found along the stress lines of society, defining the contours of our nature. Once we learn the basic lesson of this monograph, that there is no simple causative relationship between alcohol and violence, the way is then open to examining the real relationship as we find it in any culture. Once we stop blaming the alcohol for the problems that we create and understand alcohol's role in responding to some fundamental human needs, we will be able to shape our beliefs, our rituals, our settings, and our expectations to produce a more realistic outcome, the peaceful enjoyment of the undoubted human good that alcohol can provide.

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# **The Role of Drinking Patterns and Acute Intoxication in Violent Interpersonal Behaviors**

**Kenneth E. Leonard**

**Research Institute on Addictions and Department of Psychiatry  
State University of New York at Buffalo  
USA**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Aztec Indians often called *octli*, an indigenous alcohol beverage, *centzonttotochtili*—or *400 Rabbits*—reflecting the highly variable and seemingly inconsistent behaviors that emerged with different degrees of alcohol consumption (Taylor, 1979). They were particularly concerned about alcohol and violent behavior. Netzahualcoyotl, a king of the city-state of Texcoco in pre-conquest Mexico, described the effects of heavy drinking as follows, “It is like a tornado that destroys everything in its path. It is like a hellish tempest that brings with it all evils. Drunkenness... causes violence among kinfolks. Yelling and brawls are caused by *octli* and its accompanying drunkenness” (Soustelle, 1955, quoted in Paredes, 1975, p. 1143). Although there are exceptions, alcohol intoxication and violent behavior have been seen as causally related within a great many societies, both ancient and contemporary.

This paper will focus on the role of alcohol intoxication and long-term drinking patterns in the occurrence of violence. It will begin by defining and delineating violence and briefly discussing the different causes of interpersonal violence. It will then address the relationship between violence, on the one hand, and chronic and acute consumption, on the other, and look at the evidence of alcohol’s relationship to violence among individuals with certain characteristics. Finally, the paper will present two broad explanations for the alcohol-violence relationship—*alcohol as an excuse* and *alcohol as a cognitive disruptor*. The paper concludes with a brief summary of the major points.

## **DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS OF VIOLENCE**

### ***Definition of Violence***

Before we begin to explore the research regarding alcohol and violence, it is important to define what *violence* means and review the factors that may cause it. Although we may “know violence when we see it,” many different definitions exist, some more inclusive than others. Perhaps the broadest definition is provided by the World Health Organization (WHO):

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm,

maldevelopment or deprivation. (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002, p. 5)

A similar term, *aggression*, reflects “any behavior directed toward another individual that is carried out with the ... [immediate] intent to cause harm” (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 28), with violence being viewed as “aggression that has extreme harm at its goal” (p. 29). This distinction between violence and aggression is, in fact, difficult to draw and has been applied inconsistently in the literature. In this paper, the terms are used interchangeably.

The value of WHO’s broad definition of violence is that it calls our attention to a vast array of harmful behaviors, whether self-directed, interpersonal, or collective, leading to a typology of violence that includes deprivation/neglect and physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Despite this advantage, the broad definition is problematic when we begin to examine the causes of violence. Specifically, while there may be some factors that are important causes for all the different forms of violence, many factors may be unique to particular behaviors. For example, it seems unlikely that the same factors cause *child sexual abuse* and *psychological collective political violence*, two different kinds of violence identified by WHO. However, it is also likely that some forms of violence have similar causes—for example, *interpersonal physical violence of a partner* and *interpersonal psychological violence of a partner*.

Given the enormity of the research literature, it is critical to delineate more precisely the focus of this review. It will discuss primarily interpersonal physical violence against adults, including intimate partners, acquaintances, and strangers. At times, psychological violence will be considered—in part, because it often precedes and perhaps “causes” interpersonal physical violence. The rationale underlying this focus lies, to a degree, in the phenomenological similarities and differences between the forms of violence in the usual research methodologies and the empirical literature regarding the causes. It is also formed by broad conventions and distinctions in the literatures. Finally, this focus represents the set of phenomena for which alcohol involvement has been most thoroughly and systematically investigated. This does not mean that alcohol is not an important element of the other forms of violence, only that much less is known.

### ***Potential Causal Factors in Interpersonal Violence***

In beginning to address the causal factors in violence, it is important to acknowledge that causal factors may be viewed as operating on a number of different levels. For example, at the most specific level, one may focus on why a particular act of violence occurred. In doing so, the key question is, “Were there factors in the immediate environment that caused the violence?”—like threats of violence, acts of psychological aggression, cues for aggression (such as weapons), or models of aggressive behavior. At the level of the person, dyad, or group, we might ask, “Do the people involved in the violence have enduring characteristics that increase the likelihood of violence in all situations or in specific kinds of situations?” However, from the standpoint of understanding the entire causal structure, we must ask, “How did the person come to have these characteristics?” and this question may be answered in terms of biological/genetic factors, developmental factors (including familial and peer influences), and social and cultural factors. This general approach has been described as an *ecological model* (see discussion in Krug et al., 2002). In our attempt to understand violence, we must perceive this as a causal structure in which the broad factors above come to impact more specific factors that ultimately play out in a given violent episode.

At the level of the immediate environment, a number of factors that can lead to violence have been identified. For example, Anderson and Bushman (2002) described six general classes of situational factors shown to increase aggressive behavior in the laboratory:

- (1) *aggressive cues*, persons or objects linked to aggression in one's memory, such as individuals urging violence or the presence of guns;
- (2) *provocation*, such as insults, disrespect, physical aggression by another;
- (3) *frustration*, blocking another's ability to achieve a desired goal;
- (4) *pain and discomfort*;
- (5) *incentives*, positive outcomes for violent behaviors;
- (6) *presence of psychoactive substances*, including alcohol.

Although not specifically listed by Anderson and Bushman, one might add *nonaggressive cues* and *aggression-punishing cues*, objects or persons in the situation that would be linked to nonaggressive behavior or the punishment of aggressive behavior, such as individuals urging restraint or threatening punishment. All of these are viewed as impacting violence by influencing the emotional state of the individual and his or her ability to evaluate the situation, decide on an appropriate course of action, and follow it through.

As one considers the specific situational factors, it is important to remember that many of them are "in the eye of the beholder." For example, what constitutes aggressive cues, incentives, provocations, nonaggressive cues, and aggression-punishing cues varies widely among individuals, highlighting the role of the aggressive personality in a given episode. Broadly speaking, the aggressive personality may be thought of as those beliefs, attitudes, and perceptual, interpretive, and behavioral tendencies that lead one to define a situation as aggressive, to view aggression as an appropriate response, and to enact specific verbal or physical behaviors (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Some of the factors that are relevant in this regard are anger proneness, irritability, and aggressive norms (Bettencourt, Talley, Benjamin, & Valentine, 2006; Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). Similarly, there are factors at the personality level that, despite aggressive provocations, may mitigate against violence—for example, empathy (Lovett & Sheffield, 2007) and self-control (DeWall, Baumeister, Stillman, & Gailliot, 2007), which either lead to alternative behaviors or delay aggressive responding sufficiently to enable the individual to reevaluate the situation and choose a nonviolent course of action.

Research has documented genetic/biological and developmental influences on both aggressive dispositions and mitigating/self-control factors. On the genetic and biological front, a number of different studies have focused on the importance of the neurotransmitter serotonin in anger and aggression. For example, Knutson and colleagues (1998) found that the administration of a pharmacological agent that increased the availability of serotonin led to a reduction in negative affect and hostility over a four-week period in a normal volunteer sample. Similar findings have been observed in baseline assessments indicative of low serotonergic functioning (Higley, Mehlman et al., 1996) and in acute administration of different substances that reduce serotonin (Finn, Young, Pihl, & Ervin, 1998; Manuck et al., 1998), as well as in both human (Manuck et al., 1998) and animal studies (Higley, King et al., 1996). More recent research has identified genes associated with serotonin receptors (Giegling, Hartmann, Moller, & Rujescu, 2006) and tryptophan hydroxylase, an enzyme that assists in the synthesis of serotonin (Manuck et al., 1999, 2000), to be associated with anger and aggression.

With respect to developmental influences on aggressive dispositions and self-control, one body of research has focused on the disruption of mother-infant attachment patterns. For example, Lyons (1996) linked disorganized attachment patterns toward the caregiver in infants to aggressive behaviors later in life. Edwards, Eiden, and Leonard (2006) have found that children in alcoholic

families are at risk for early externalizing problems, including aggression, if there is insecure mother-infant attachment. Other researchers have focused on poor emotion regulation as a critical aspect of the development of aggression, often with poor emotion regulation viewed as a mediator of the relationship between attachment and aggression (Contreras, Kerns, Weimer, Gentzler, & Tomich, 2000; Shields & Cicchetti, 2001). Dodge (2006) has laid out a heuristic model, linking early attachment and socialization experiences to the development of aggressive schemas and a hostile attributional bias as more proximal influences on aggression. These processes were described throughout the 1980s, largely in the work of Dodge and colleagues (see Dodge, 2006). Research since that time has demonstrated that the relationship between social cognition and violence cannot be explained on the basis of general intellectual deficits or impulsivity, and that these social cognitive factors are predictive of later aggressive behavior across several months to years (see, for example, Dodge, Pettit, Bates, & Valente, 1995).

These advances in the genetic/biological and the psychosocial developmental arenas have provided a solid foundation for sophisticated interdisciplinary research, and there have been a few seminal integrative studies. For example, Suomi (2003) has mustered evidence that the serotonin transporter gene is associated with extreme aggression in rhesus monkeys, but only among subjects who experienced insecure early attachments. Caspi and colleagues (2002) found that the association between childhood maltreatment and antisocial and aggressive behaviors was stronger among individuals with a gene conferring low levels of monoamine oxidase A, an enzyme that metabolizes neurotransmitters, including serotonin. Moreover, this effect was replicated with respect to childhood adversity (for example, interparental violence, parental neglect, and inconsistent discipline) as a predictor of conduct disorder (Foley et al., 2004). Focusing more on the interplay of biological and personality factors, Finn et al. (1998) found that an acute tryptophan depletion, which results in serotonin depletion, led to increased hostile affect, with a more pronounced effect among antisocial subjects. These findings raise the possibility that genetic factors linked to serotonin and serotonin metabolism may increase the likelihood of aggression among individuals with disrupted early attachment experiences, and perhaps the developmental sequelae of these experiences.

In addition to these individual factors, two other factors are prominent as predictors of violence: gender and age. Physical violence—particularly severe violence—is far more common among men than among women (Reiss & Roth, 1993). Crime statistics in the United States indicate that the homicide rate for male offenders is approximately 10 times the rate for female offenders. The rate of other violent crimes and assaults is about four times higher among male offenders than female offenders (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005). Archer's (2004) international analysis of published studies found that reports of aggression in real-world settings, for self-report and report by peers, was much more common among males than among females. He also noted that the predominance of male aggression was stronger among studies in Asia than in North America or Europe and suggested that this may be related to differences in gender roles and social and economic costs of aggression for women. In a subsequent paper, Archer (2006) examined gender differences in partner violence across a variety of cultures. For this type of violence, there were a number of countries in which the prevalence of female-to-male violence equaled or exceeded male-to-female violence; these were countries with high levels of gender empowerment and individualistic norms.

Violent behaviors such as homicides and assaults occur disproportionately among teenagers and young adults, and decline precipitously among those in their early 30s (Reiss & Roth, 1993). This pattern is discernable in historical homicide records from the 13th century to present day (Eisner, 2003). In part, the increased rate of severe violence observed among teenagers is due to developmental maturation. Studies of aggressive behaviors among children in North America indicate high rates of these behaviors in the early years of childhood and their decline throughout



the lifespan. However, as children mature physically, they become more capable of inflicting harm, and their aggressive behaviors are taken more seriously (Tremblay & Nagin, 2005).

Research at the environmental level has begun to document that neighborhood and social settings surrounding individuals impact violent behavior. Neighborhood characteristics have been found to predict child maltreatment (Coulton, Korbin, & Su, 1999), intimate partner violence (Raghavan, Mennerich, Sexton, & James, 2006), and violence among children (Ingoldsby et al., 2006) and adolescents (De Coster, Heimer, & Wittrock, 2006). One of the environmental factors often examined in relation to violence has been poverty. Although poverty is nearly always associated with violence rates, it is often linked to a number of other factors that relate to violence, such as housing density, residential mobility, and single parent families. When these other factors are taken into account, the relationship between poverty and violence becomes considerably weaker (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1993). In a classic study, Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) demonstrated that *collective efficacy*, a construct reflecting social cohesion and informal social control, was associated with lower levels of violence, even after controlling for individual-level variables and prior violence. Concentrated disadvantage, which largely reflected poverty, was related to violence, but much of this relationship appeared to be due to the fact that impoverished neighborhoods lack the social cohesion and informal social controls that often restrain violent behavior.

At the broadest level, substantially different rates of violence are observed in different cultural and subcultural groups. According to WHO, Africa and South and Central America have the highest rates of homicide, while the lowest rates are in Western Europe and Australia. Of course, there are many disparities across and within these regions. Much of the scholarly work in this area is more theoretical and speculative, due to a variety of methodological issues that make it difficult to directly compare data from different countries. However, several common themes are prominent. One of the major concepts discussed is the extent to which a culture encourages, approves, or tolerates aggression—both generally and with respect to certain situations or targets. In addition, poverty and social disorganization are often noted at the broader social level as linked to elevated violence rates, with the implication that formal (such as police) and informal (such as communities and kin networks) processes normally inhibiting violence have been disrupted or destroyed. Finally, the more practical issue of the availability of guns varies widely from country to country; this impacts homicide rates and may affect rates of other assaults indirectly.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALCOHOL AND VIOLENCE**

Research addressing the link between alcohol and violence focuses on two different levels of explanation: (1) *the chronic level*, concerned with whether drinkers displaying certain long-term patterns of alcohol consumption are more likely to engage in violent behavior; and (2) *the acute level*, which focuses on whether the individual instances of acute intoxication are associated with the occurrence of a violent event. These two levels are, of course, interrelated in that people with a chronic pattern of frequent heavy drinking will also have many occurrences of acute alcohol consumption. As a result, while these two levels utilize different methods and are interpreted differently, it is important to recognize the connections between them.

### ***The Association between Chronic Drinking Patterns and Violent Behavior***

A number of studies have been conducted on the association between long-term drinking patterns and violent behavior; the vast majority of these involve case-control studies or cross-sectional surveys with the aim of determining whether there is a relationship and whether the relationship

can be considered spurious. Often, these studies are interpreted with respect to the acute effects of alcohol, even though data about specific episodes of drinking or violence are not collected.

### **General Population Studies in English-speaking Countries**

The results of these case-control and cross-sectional studies are consistent. Lipsey, Wilson, Cohen, and Derzon (1997) performed meta-analyses examining 67 studies of chronic alcohol use and criminal violence and 34 studies of chronic alcohol use and domestic violence.<sup>7</sup> These meta-analyses combine information from many studies to provide a statistical summary of a key set of results that may not be able to be assessed in any single study. Overall, the results showed a significant association between chronic alcohol use and both criminal and domestic violence. In describing the magnitude of the association for domestic violence, the authors stated, “We imagine dividing the aggregate sample into two groups: those with no or low alcohol use and those with moderate to high use.... If 10% of the low-alcohol-use group engaged in domestic violence, then 20% of the high-alcohol-use group would also” (Lipsey et al., 1997, p. 265). With respect to the association between criminal violence and chronic alcohol use, Lipsey and colleagues indicate that the association is “equivalent to a contrast between a low-alcohol-use group that is 10% violent and a high-use group that is 17% violent” (p. 265). In evaluating this statement, it is important to understand that, in the United States, the upper half of men with respect to drinking includes men who report getting drunk about one time a year (30%), about one time a month (6%), and about one time each week (5%). This group, as a whole, is two times as likely to engage in domestic violence and 1.7 times as likely to engage in criminal violence as men who drink less than this, which includes individuals who abstain or who rarely, if ever, drink to intoxication. However, the risk of violence would be much stronger if we were to compare the heaviest drinkers—for example, those who report getting drunk at least once a week—with the low-alcohol-use group.

The consistency of the relationship can also be seen by virtue of the diverse samples that have reported a significant effect. Studies conducted with general population samples have found associations between excessive drinking and violent behavior. Recently, Coid and colleagues (2006) interviewed over 8000 adults in England, Wales, and Scotland about violence and psychiatric disorders over the preceding five years. Both hazardous drinking and alcohol dependence were associated with the occurrence of violence, five or more violent incidents, and injury to the victim and to the perpetrator. These associations were significant after controlling for sociodemographic factors, drug dependence, and any other disorder (neurotic and personality disorders, including Antisocial Personality Disorder and the psychosis screen). In the United States, the Epidemiology Catchment Area survey assessed psychiatric disorders in the general population and the occurrence of violent episodes. In this study, nearly a quarter of individuals with an alcohol diagnosis had been involved in violence—in contrast to 2% of individuals without a psychiatric disorder (Swanson, Holzer, Ganju, & Jono, 1990). Similar findings have been reported in general population studies in Australia (Arseneault, Moffitt, Caspi, Taylor, & Silva, 2000) and Canada (Wells, Graham, & West, 2000).

In addition, several general population studies have examined the link between excessive drinking and/or alcohol diagnoses and partner violence. Evidence in support of an association

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<sup>7</sup> The use of *criminal* and *domestic* violence is the terminology used in the Lipsey et al. study (1997). According to the authors, “Domestic violence was any type of interpersonal violence against family members within the home, such as spousal or child abuse. Criminal violence was any other type of violence potentially chargeable as a crime, whether defined in a legal context (e.g., murder, assault, rape) or not (e.g., fighting)” (Lipsey et al., p. 263). This terminology should not be construed as suggesting that spousal or child abuse is any less serious than other forms of violence, or that it is not criminal.

between these variables has been reported in the United States (Kaufman Kantor & Straus, 1990). However, there is some variation in the degree of the association among individuals of African, European, and Hispanic decent (Caetano, Schafer, & Cunradi, 2001). Similarly, there is diversity in the strength of the alcohol-violence relationship among U.S. Hispanics from different countries of origin (Kaufman Kantor, 1997). For example, the association is very strong among Hispanic Americans of Puerto Rican background, but weaker among those of Mexican background. Reasons for this diversity were not entirely clear. Kaufman Kantor suggests that neither cultural views about the acceptability of violence against women nor the belief that alcohol causes violence accounted for the diversity, but, perhaps, the linkage between drinking and masculinity—or *machismo drinking*—might. Further research is needed to evaluate this hypothesis.

## **General Population Surveys Worldwide**

Growing literature is documenting the alcohol-violence relationship in general population surveys across countries. It should be noted that these studies focus on violence against women, and that there are few that examine violent behavior more generally. WHO's *World Report on Violence and Health* notes that "population-based surveys from Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Spain, and Venezuela also found a relationship between a woman's risk of suffering violence and her partner's drinking habits" (Krug et al., 2002, p. 98). In 2004, Kishor and Johnson reported a multi-country study based on the Demographic and Health Surveys program, a nationally representative survey of households. By 2003, nine countries have collected data from women with respect to domestic violence, although not all of these countries collected data concerning husband or partner drinking habits. In every country where both domestic violence and partner drinking were assessed, there was a significant relationship between the two. These countries were Cambodia, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Peru. Other studies have reported the association among 170 women in poor villages in rural India (Rao, 1997), nearly 500 women in the urban slums of Bangladesh (Salam, Alim, & Noguchi, 2006), approximately 1100 women in northwest Ethiopia (Yigzaw, Yibrie, & Kebede, 2004), and among 1300 randomly selected women in three provinces in South Africa (Jewkes, Levin, & Penn-Kekana, 2002).

## **Studies in Special Settings**

In addition to the general population samples, research has documented the alcohol-violence relationship in a variety of more select populations. Among samples that were not selected specifically because of alcohol or violence problems, a relationship between partner drinking and partner violence has been observed in emergency rooms (Kyriacou, McCabe, Anglin, Lapesarde, & Winer, 1998), primary healthcare settings (McCauley et al., 1995), family practice clinics (Oriel & Fleming, 1998), prenatal clinics (Muhajarine & D'Arcy, 1999), and rural health clinics (van Hightower & Gorton, 1998). Recently, Macdonald et al. (2005) examined the link between alcohol and violent versus accidental injury in six countries: Argentina, Australia, Canada, Mexico, Spain, and the United States. Individuals injured in a violent event evidenced heavier drinking patterns than those injured in an accident in every country, although the relationship appeared to be the most pervasive in the United States and Canada. This is particularly significant inasmuch as many of such accidents tend to be automobile accidents, and there is a strong relationship between heavy drinking and traffic crashes (Peden et al., 2004).

Studies of samples selected specifically because of violent behavior or heavy drinking have also generally supported a relationship between problem drinking and violence. For example, with few exceptions, men in treatment for partner abuse have higher rates of alcohol problems than appropriate comparison samples (see, for instance, Barnett & Fagan, 1993; Julian & McKenry,

1993; Russell, Lipov, Phillips, & White, 1989; Telch & Lindquist, 1984). Similarly, men seeking treatment for alcoholism manifest higher rates of domestic violence than the general population (O'Farrell & Choquette, 1991; O'Farrell & Murphy, 1995). However, studies of incarcerated men in which men convicted of a violent crime are compared to men convicted of a nonviolent crime often find no difference in drinking patterns (for example, Welte & Miller, 1987). This can occur for at least two reasons. First, the specific nature of the crime of conviction may not accurately represent the aggressive behavior of these men. That is, many men convicted of "nonviolent crimes" may have engaged in violent behaviors, including violence against their spouses or children, but were not apprehended, charged, or convicted for these crimes. Second, patterns of excessive drinking may impact a variety of risky and deviant behaviors and, thereby, have a comparable effect on violent and nonviolent crimes.

### **Longitudinal Studies**

Finally, although the literature is small, there is evidence for a longitudinal relationship between chronic drinking and violence, with most of the research focusing on intimate partner violence. Two of these studies have focused on newlywed couples. Heyman, O'Leary, and Jouriles (1995) assessed couples prior to marriage and found that scores on the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test were associated with serious aggression at the six-month assessment, but not at the 18- or 30-month assessment. Leonard and Senchak (1996) also assessed couples at the time of marriage and found that scores on the Alcohol Dependence Scale were predictive of the frequency of marital aggression reported at the first anniversary—after controlling for premarital aggression, perceived relationship power, perceived conflict behavior, hostility, gender identity, and history of family violence. Quigley and Leonard (1999) extended this follow-up to the third anniversary and found that husband alcohol consumption was predictive of subsequent marital aggression, but only among couples in which the wife was a light drinker. In addition, a number of treatment studies have found that alcoholics who maintain sobriety after treatment engage in less partner violence in the year after treatment than alcoholics who relapse.

Two longitudinal studies have examined alcohol and intimate partner violence over longer time frames. Magdol, Moffitt, Caspi, and Silva (1998), in analyses of the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study, found that substance use at age 15 was associated with male and female perpetration and victimization at age 21. Although the unique impact of substance use was not reported, problem behaviors (which included alcohol and drug use and aggressive delinquency) were uniquely related to partner aggression after controlling for socioeconomic resources, family relations, and educational achievements. A study by Mihalic and Elliot (1997) focused on 423 women and 374 men between the ages of 18 and 28 who took part in the National Youth Survey. Participants in this survey were initially interviewed in 1976, then aged 11 to 17 (Wave 1), and re-interviewed eight times in the ensuing 16 years. The authors focused on married and cohabiting participants who answered a series of marital violence questions in 1983 (Wave 6), 1986 (Wave 7), or 1989 (Wave 8). When considered alone, problem drinking was longitudinally related to male and female acknowledgment of minor violence and female acknowledgment of severe violence. It was also related to male and female reports of minor victimization and male reports of severe victimization. However, in a more sophisticated analysis that took into account other important variables, problem drinking was not linked to marital violence, nor to two other variables normally associated with marital violence—marital satisfaction and stress.

With respect to general violence, two longitudinal studies provide relevant information. Lynskey (2001) utilized data from the Christchurch Health and Development Study and found that hazardous alcohol use at age 16 was longitudinally predictive of violent offenses (and property offenses) at ages 18 and 21, after controlling for a number of social and familial covariates.

White, Brick, and Hansell (1993) analyzed data from the Rutgers Health and Human Development Project and found that, while alcohol and aggression were correlated in cross-sectional analyses at ages 15 and 18, there was no evidence that it was longitudinally predictive of aggression.

### **Specific Drinking Patterns Associated with Violence**

Across the many studies that have examined drinking patterns and violence, many different measures of alcohol consumption have been employed. Some studies have utilized estimates of the average intake per day, based on the frequency of drinking and the usual quantity of alcohol consumed per occasion. Along similar lines, other studies have assessed the frequency of heavy drinking episodes, focusing on some quantity of alcohol (for example, binge drinking or having five or more drinks per occasion) or the frequency of intoxication. In contrast, some studies use measures of alcohol problems, such as the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test or diagnostic interviews that assess problem drinking and dependence.

Few studies provide detailed information enabling researchers to determine whether there is a specific pattern of drinking that is most associated with violence. However, existing evidence suggests that a current pattern of drinking marked by frequent instances of intoxication is most clearly related to the violent behavior. Leonard, Bromet, Parkinson, Day, and Ryan (1985) found that current alcohol abuse or dependence was associated with adult fighting and marital aggression, but that a previous diagnosis was not. This may, in part, account for the failure of longitudinal studies with long intervals between assessments to find evidence that alcohol involvement predicts aggression. In addition, the strongest relationship was observed with respect to one diagnostic criterion, a pathological pattern of consumption, which included items such as drinking as much as 24 beers in one day, going on binges, and having blackouts. In contrast, the average daily consumption of alcohol that misses atypical occasions of excessive drinking was not related to violence. Similar findings were reported by Leonard and Senchak (1996) with respect to the longitudinal prediction of marital violence. In Macdonald et al.'s (2005) study of emergency rooms in six countries, the most consistent drinking variable that differentiated violent from accidental injury was *usually have 12 or more drinks*, while the least consistent was *usually drink 1–2 times per week or more*. O'Leary and Schumacher (2003) utilized two nationally representative datasets to determine whether the relationship between drinking and intimate partner violence was attributable to a subsample of frequent heavy drinkers. Their approach was to examine the full range of drinking and test to determine whether the relationship represented a linear effect or a threshold effect. Although they found weak evidence of linearity, the authors concluded that "the difference between high or binge drinking and more moderate levels of drinking appears to be an important threshold with regard to [intimate partner violence]" (O'Leary & Schumacher, 2003, p. 1582).

### **Chronic Drinking Patterns and Violent Behavior: Summary**

Thus, at the chronic level, indicators of heavy episodic drinking are consistently associated with the occurrence of violence. These associations are strong and do not depend on the nature of the sample. Although the association may not appear in all cultural groups, it has been observed in a number of cultures spanning Africa, Asia, North and South America, and Europe. Some longitudinal data indicate that drinking patterns predict subsequent aggression, at least when the

interval between the assessments is fairly short. Finally, there is evidence to suggest that the key pattern to consider at the chronic level is the frequency of drinking to intoxication.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Acute Alcohol Consumption and Violent Behavior***

As discussed above, an important distinction exists between chronic drinking patterns being predictive of violence and acute alcohol consumption being associated with the occurrence of a specific episode of violence. However, the emerging findings suggest that the frequency of intoxication may be a critical drinking pattern and raise the question whether this simply reflects the acute influence of alcohol. That is, individuals at risk for violence because of chronic heavy drinking may simply be at risk for violence because each occasion of intoxication may facilitate the occurrence of violence. A considerable body of research has developed, most of it quite recently, that focuses on acute alcohol use as a predictor of an aggressive or violent behavior.

### **Event-based Survey Research**

Numerous estimates focus on the extent to which alcohol consumption, either by the victim or by the assailant, precedes episodes of violence. Even though these estimates tend to be large—ranging from 40% to 60%, depending on the nature of the violence and the person reporting it—they, by themselves, are not very informative regarding the potential causal role of alcohol in the occurrence of violence. They become informative when comparisons can be drawn to the presence of alcohol in control events. In order to accomplish this, researchers adopt one of two basic strategies: a between-subjects approach or a within-subjects approach.

In the between-subjects approach, information regarding individual and event characteristics is collected from respondents who have experienced a specific event (for example, physical violence). Different individuals who have experienced a control event—such as a verbal argument—but who have never experienced a physical violence event also report on individual characteristics and characteristics of the verbal argument. After statistically accounting for individual factors that differentiate those who experienced the violent event from those who experienced only the verbal argument, characteristics of the event are used to predict whether the individual reported a physical event or a verbal argument.

A number of studies have examined this with respect to domestic violence. In an early study, Bard and Zacker (1974) compared police officers' judgments of alcohol consumption in domestic calls involving and not involving an assault. Surprisingly, 21% of assaults and 40% of the nonassaultive episodes involved alcohol, suggesting that drinking may have prevented violence. However, research since that time has shown that acute alcohol intake may be associated with either the occurrence or severity of domestic violence. For example, McClelland and Teplin (2001) had well-trained graduate students ride along with 350 randomly selected police patrols. The students observed over 1200 police-citizen encounters and, utilizing a validated observational checklist of alcohol intoxication, found that alcohol was present in 34% of these encounters. Moreover, violent encounters were 2.5 times more likely to involve alcohol than nonviolent encounters, and this relationship held for *spousal assault, violent crime and sexual assault, and public order/vandalism*.

Studies relying on the reports of the aggressor or the victim have also found this relationship. Leonard and Quigley (1999) compared episodes of verbal aggression with episodes of physical

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<sup>8</sup> A growing body of literature also suggests that the experience of violent victimization, either as a child or as an adult, may impact subsequent drinking patterns. The interested reader should refer to Kilpatrick, Acierno, Resnick, Saunders, & Best (1997) and Wilsnack, Vogeltanz, Klassen, & Harris (1997).

aggression. Husband drinking in the event was statistically predictive of a physical episode occurring (in comparison to a verbal episode) according to both husband and wife reports and after controlling for wife drinking. In contrast, wife drinking in the event was not predictive of a physical episode after controlling for husband drinking. In addition, these associations held after controlling for sociodemographic factors, personality, chronic drinking patterns, and other event-based information. In other studies, comparisons between less violent and more violent events suggested that alcohol involvement is associated with more severe episodes of aggression (see, for example, Leonard & Quigley, 1999; Martin & Bachman, 1997). In addition, Campbell and colleagues (2003), in univariate analyses, found a higher incidence of alcohol and drug use prior to femicide in contrast to nonlethal abuse of women. However, this effect was not significant in the multivariate analyses, possibly because it was mediated by other event-level characteristics, such as using a gun.

Although most of these studies have been concerned with intimate partner violence, several studies have used the between-subjects approach to examine violent behavior in other contexts. Collins and Schlenger (1988) found that drinking at the time of the offense predicted incarceration for a violent versus nonviolent crime, but that a diagnosis of alcohol abuse/dependence did not. Wolfgang (1958) found that relatively more violent homicides were more likely to involve alcohol than less violent homicides. Leonard, Quigley, and Collins (2003) interviewed men with respect to episodes of threat and aggression that they had experienced in a bar setting. Although the participants reported similar levels of alcohol consumption in episodes of aggression and in episodes of threat that did not involve physical aggression, greater alcohol consumption by the participant and the opponent occurred for more severe events that resulted in physical harm. Moreover, this relationship was still significant after controlling for personality and situational factors.

The second approach to event-level studies, the within-subjects approach, focuses on individuals who have experienced a violent event and compares the characteristics of that event with a control event or time period that did not involve violence. For example, one might examine all the individuals who report both physical violence and verbal aggression events and compare the alcohol consumption preceding these two events. Alternatively, one might collect detailed information on both daily drinking and the occurrence of violent events. In this variation, drinking is used to predict the occurrence of violence within subjects using a highly sophisticated data analytic strategy.

Several studies using the within-subjects approach have suggested that acute alcohol use is associated with the occurrence or severity of aggression. Leonard and Quigley (1999) asked newlywed couples to report on their most severe episode of physical aggression and the most severe argument that involved physical aggression. Husband drinking was more likely in the violent episode than in the argument according to both wife and husband reports. Wife drinking was not related to violence according to husband report, although it was related according to wife report. Using a general population sample of British adults, Graham, Plant, and Plant (2004) interviewed men and women about the most physically aggressive act that they had done to a partner and that a partner had done to them. When drinking was involved in the incident, women reported higher levels of aggression severity and fear than when alcohol was not involved; this was particularly the case for women who responded that only the man was aggressive. Thompson and Kingree's (2006) analysis of the U.S. National Violence against Women Survey indicated that the man's drinking in an episode of violence was associated with the occurrence of an injury. A relationship between perceived intoxication and injury was also reported in Wells and Graham's 2003 study of a Canadian population.

Studies of treatment populations produced similar findings. Murphy, Winters, O'Farrell, Fals-Stewart, and Murphy (2005) used the within-subjects approach with alcoholic men and their partners. In this study, husbands drank more drinks (13–14 drinks) prior to violent events than prior to verbal aggression events (8–10 drinks); wives also drank more prior to violent events (2 drinks) than prior to verbal aggression events (1 drink). Fals-Stewart (2003) assessed men entering treatment for alcoholism or domestic violence. Using the Timeline Followback method to determine on which days in the past year substance use occurred and, independently, on which days marital violence occurred, the author found that severe violence was much higher on days of heavy drinking than on days of no substance use, and that the violence was most likely to occur within four hours after drinking.

Several studies have assessed drinking and general violence over an extended period of days. Chermack and Blow (2002) used the Timeline Followback interview to assess drinking and drug use for alcoholic men and women over the 90 days prior to treatment entry. They also collected information regarding conflicts on these days. Among individuals who did not report any physical aggression, there was no difference in the amount of alcohol consumed on the most severe conflict day and nonconflict days. In contrast, among those who engaged in moderate or severe physical aggression, more alcohol was consumed prior to the most severe incident than on the nonconflict days. Mulvey and colleagues (2006) utilized weekly interviews of mentally ill individuals at high risk for violence. They found an association between alcohol intake and violence at the daily level. They also found evidence that drinking on one day was predictive of violence on the next day, but that violence was not predictive of subsequent drinking. Finally, in a study by Neal and Fromme (2007), first-year college students completed 30 days of web-based self-monitoring on their drinking and 10 different behaviors. Based on estimated blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels, the authors found that, controlling for the average BAC for the 30 days, the blood alcohol level on a specific day was significantly associated with the occurrence of aggressive behavior on that day.

### **Experimental Studies of Alcohol and Physical Aggression**

A considerable number of experimental studies, primarily focused on young men, randomly assigned participants to receive either alcohol, placebo, or no alcohol. The participants then perform a task in which they are able to deliver an unpleasant stimulus (usually noise or shock) to another participant in the study. For example, in some studies, the participant is a “teacher” and administers a punitive stimulus to a “learner” for incorrect responses in a learning task. Unbeknownst to the participant, the “learner” is usually a research assistant behaving in a predetermined way (such as making pre-planned errors on certain trials). In other studies, the participant competes in a “reaction-time competition” with a second participant—again, usually a research assistant. The participant selects a level of the unpleasant stimulus to administer to the “competitor” in the event that the participant wins the trial. If the participant “loses,” he or she receives the level of the unpleasant stimulus selected by the “competitor.”

The results of these studies have been summarized in several meta-analyses (Bushman, 1997; Bushman & Cooper, 1990; Ito, Miller, & Pollock, 1996; Lipsey et al., 1997), which combine information from many studies to provide a statistical summary of a key set of results that may not be possible to assess in any single study. In the 1990s, three well-described meta-analyses were conducted, each with comparable findings with respect to key issues. This research confirmed that participants who received alcohol selected more aggressive responses than participants who received either no alcohol or a placebo. Moreover, participants who received a placebo beverage were not more aggressive than participants who received no alcohol. Interestingly, the meta-analyses also revealed that, while there was a moderate alcohol effect on the aggressive behavior of men, the studies did not support an effect for women.



## Experimental Studies of Alcohol and Aversive Verbal Behaviors

A number of experimental studies have examined whether alcohol consumption impacts verbal behaviors that might be related to the occurrence of aggression, particularly within the context of relationships. It has been argued that traditional laboratory aggression paradigms, which allow participants to administer physically aversive stimuli to other participants, may not be valid analogues when applied to intimate couples. In contrast, the *conflict-resolution paradigm*, developed by marital interaction researchers to study marital distress, has been shown to be applicable to intimate partner violence. In this paradigm, married couples are asked to discuss and attempt to resolve potential or actual marital conflicts. The interactions are videotaped and rated with respect to the behaviors displayed, including verbally aggressive behaviors. The results of the few studies that have examined marital interactions among aggressive husbands and their wives have been fairly consistent in demonstrating that aggressive men and their wives engaged in a higher proportion of aversive behaviors (Cordova, Jacobson, Gottman, Rushe, & Cox, 1993; Margolin, John, & Gleberman., 1988).

Two major studies have utilized the conflict resolution paradigm to study the impact of alcohol on negative verbal behaviors. One of these efforts was conducted by Jacob and colleagues (see Haber & Jacob, 1997; Jacob & Krahn, 1988). The full design of the study involved couples in which either the husband or the wife was alcoholic, depressed, or had no diagnosis. These couples and a teenage child participated in a series of family interactions on two nights—one in which the adults were provided access to their usual alcohol beverages (*alcohol session*), and one in which the adults were provided nonalcoholic beverages (*no alcohol session*). During the *alcohol session*, all of the couples were provided with at least one drink, and most consumed more than a single drink. Jacob and Krahn (1988) found that couples in which the husband was alcoholic tended to display higher levels of negativity during the *alcohol session* versus the *no alcohol session*, while couples in which the husband was depressed or did not have a diagnosis did not change across the two sessions. Haber and Jacob (1997) utilized the same sample but included couples in which the wife was alcoholic. They specifically compared couples in which husband, wife, both, or neither was alcoholic and found a general increase in negativity from *no alcohol* to *alcohol* sessions, except among couples in which only the wife was alcoholic. In another study, Leonard and Roberts (1998) allowed couples to discuss a marital conflict under a baseline condition. They were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions: *no alcohol*, *husband placebo*, or *husband alcohol*. Men who received alcohol displayed higher levels of negativity than men in the *placebo* or *no alcohol* condition, as did their wives who did not receive alcohol. Although couples that had experienced husband-to-wife aggression engaged in higher levels of negativity, they were not differentially impacted by the alcohol administration.

The role of alcohol in aversive verbal expressions has also been recently examined by Eckhardt (2007). In this study, maritally violent and nonviolent men were randomly assigned to receive alcohol, placebo, or no alcohol. They then heard brief descriptions of anger-arousing situations, imagined that they were in the situation, and spoke about their thoughts and feelings. The men were tape-recorded, and their thoughts and feelings were coded. Although ratings of anger were not affected by alcohol, alcohol led to an increase in aggressive verbalizations for maritally violent men, but not for nonaggressive men. As in the Leonard and Roberts (1998) study, the placebo did not influence anger or aversive verbalizations for either group.

## FACTORS THAT STRENGTHEN OR WEAKEN THE ALCOHOL-VIOLENCE ASSOCIATION

Reviews of the alcohol-violence literature often conclude that, if alcohol has any causal impact, the effect is restricted to certain individuals under specific environmental conditions. In discussing the role of alcohol and violence more generally, Lipsey and colleagues (1997) referred to the lack of work on moderating factors as “the greatest failure of the research” (p. 280). However, there have been some consistent findings with respect to a few moderators.

The most consistent evidence is that individuals with aggressive propensities are most likely to behave aggressively in the presence of excessive drinking patterns or acute intoxication. In laboratory studies of alcohol and aggression, Bailey and Taylor (1991) found that alcohol facilitated aggressive behavior among men who were moderate to high in hostility, but not among low-hostile men. Giancola and colleagues observed similar findings for a series of constructs related to hostility, including trait anger (proneness to experience anger), dispositional aggressivity, irritability, and behavioral anger (proneness to display anger) (Giancola, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; see also Parrott & Zeichner, 2002). In a similar vein, Moeller, Dougherty, Lane, Steinberg, and Cherek (1998) found that alcohol increased laboratory aggression among individuals with antisocial personality disorder but not among those without the disorder. When we examine the aversive verbal paradigms, we also find evidence that people with hostile/antisocial tendencies are most responsive to alcohol in two of the three studies. In studies described above by Jacob and colleagues, Jacob, Leonard, and Haber (2001) found that, among couples with an alcohol-receiving husband, the increase in negativity from the *no alcohol* to *alcohol* session was only observed in couples in which the husband was also antisocial. In Eckhardt’s (2007) study, alcohol administration resulted in the highest level of aggressive verbal statements among men who scored high with respect to their typical level of anger. Finally, at the daily level, Fals-Stewart, Leonard, and Birchler (2005) found that alcohol consumption on a specific day increased the probability that severe aggression would also occur on that day, and that this effect was the strongest among men with an antisocial personality disorder.

Studies have also focused on moderators of the relationship between drinking patterns and aggressive propensities. For example, several studies have found that heavy drinking is associated with marital violence only among individuals with high levels of hostile and negative affect (Leonard & Blane, 1992) or in maritally distressed couples (Leonard & Blane, 1992; Leonard & Senchak, 1993; Margolin, John, & Foo, 1998). Quigley and Leonard (1999) examined verbally aggressive conflict as a moderator. This study demonstrated that heavy alcohol involvement (showing both high Alcohol Dependence Scale scores and average daily alcohol consumption) predicted subsequent aggression only among couples high in verbally aggressive conflict styles.

These studies seem to suggest a synergistic effect of alcohol and aggression-provoking factors. However, there are at least two other studies indicating somewhat different interactions. Blane, Miller, and Leonard (1988) explored the relationship between alcohol problems and current spousal abuse among men on parole from prison. Current alcohol problems were associated with current spousal abuse among men with lower levels of self-reported criminal violence, but not among men with high levels of criminal violence. Similarly, Rice and Harris (1995) evaluated 685 violent offenders and assessed violent recidivism. A significant interaction indicated that alcohol abuse was associated with violent recidivism among nonpsychopaths—but not among psychopaths. Given the fairly extreme nature of the Blane et al. and the Rice and Harris samples and of the nature of the interactions, it seems plausible to suggest that the synergistic effect of alcohol and aggressive proclivities breaks down at the highest level of aggressiveness. Stated otherwise, among individuals with many or very strong motives to aggress and few restraints (as

inferred by a history of criminal violence), alcohol may not add appreciably to the likelihood of violence, although it may impact severity (see Fals-Stewart et al., 2005).

Some research also implicates cognitive processing—and particularly cognitive functioning on inhibitory control tasks—in aggressive behavior. These cognitive processes, which involve working memory, inhibition of behavior, and strategic planning, are referred to as *executive cognitive functioning* (ECF). Giancola (2000) has reviewed much of this literature and concluded that “the results of more recent studies carried out on both clinical and nonclinical samples have all documented significant negative relations between executive functioning and aggressive behavior” (p. 583). Fishbein (2000) also noted that “several recent literature reviews unanimously conclude that impairments in executive cognitive functions are implicated in the regulation of impulsive aggressive behavior” (p. 149). While there have been studies that are not supportive (see, for instance, Lau, Pihl, & Peterson, 1995), the majority of research has suggested that overall ECF could be an important moderator of the relationship between alcohol and intimate partner violence. For example, Pihl, Assad, and Hoaken (2003) reported that, in a laboratory aggression paradigm, intoxicated individuals with low scores on ECF were more aggressive than other groups, but only under low provocation. Giancola (2004) observed that alcohol increased aggression for men who were low on ECF under both low and high provocation. Alcohol had no effect on women, irrespective of their scores on the ECF measure. Interestingly, Fillmore and Weafer (2004) found that alcohol did not appear to influence the inhibitory control of women in a basic cognitive task. In general, the results suggest that individuals with low overall executive cognitive functioning may be most prone to experience aggression while drinking, although it is not clear whether one aspect of ECF (inhibition) is more important than another (working memory).

## **THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACUTE ALCOHOL INTAKE AND VIOLENCE**

There are two broad explanations of the impact of alcohol on aggression: one focusing on the beliefs and expectations of the drinker regarding alcohol, and the other, on the pharmacological impact of alcohol.

### ***Alcohol Expectancies***

One of the broad explanations of alcohol and violence invokes the construct of alcohol expectancies, suggesting that individuals become aggressive while drinking because they “expect” that aggression is an outcome of alcohol consumption. Proponents of this approach have not generally described this process in more detail. However, one common theme in the literature is that alcohol results in violence because the individuals believe that they can use it as an “excuse” to behave aggressively and to mitigate their responsibility and punishment. Quigley and Leonard (2006) described three basic questions arising from this approach:

- (1) Do individuals believe alcohol causes people to become aggressive?
- (2) Is intoxication a mitigating circumstance in blame and responsibility attributions for harmful behavior? (In short, does alcohol “excuse” violent behavior?)
- (3) Does possession of an alcohol-aggression expectancy play a causal role in the enactment of intoxicated aggression? (In other words, is the belief that alcohol causes aggression related to actual aggression?)

## **Do individuals believe alcohol causes people to become aggressive?**

The evidence is clear that individuals do believe that alcohol causes people to become aggressive. Most of this evidence is discernable in studies of the alcohol expectancies. The initial development of measure of alcohol expectancies was based on statements from college students, who described the expected behaviors people may display when drinking (Brown, Goldman, Inn, & Anderson, 1980). Through statistical analyses, one set of potential expectancies was identified involving the belief that alcohol led to increased “arousal and aggression.” Rohsenow (1983) administered a similar set of potential expectancy items to U.S. college students, although not all of the seven items on the list assessed physical aggression (two assessed verbal aggression and three assessed feelings of power, freedom from restriction, and “feeling flushed”). On average, the subjects endorsed six of the seven items as being true for others—but only 3.6 as being true for themselves. Hence, there was a clear belief that alcohol was associated with other people’s aggression. In a more straightforward manner, Paglia and Room (1999), in a Canadian sample, asked whether a few drinks make people aggressive. They found that 83% of participants believed that having a few drinks on occasion makes other people more aggressive, but only 12% believed this when asked about themselves. Similar findings have been reported by Leigh (1987) and Rohsenow (1983). Hence, while individuals believe that alcohol makes people more aggressive, they are less likely to believe it has that effect on themselves.

## **Does alcohol “excuse” violent behavior?**

One approach to answering this question has been to provide individuals with short stories in which a violent individual is described as intoxicated or sober. The respondents are then asked to assign responsibility, blame, or punishment for the violence. The findings are quite diverse. While Critchlow (1985) found that intoxicated individuals were seen as less responsible than sober individuals for a variety of behaviors (including insulting people, beating someone up, and vandalism), Aramburu and Leigh (1991) reported that intoxicated individuals were assigned more responsibility than sober individuals for aggression in a bar. Tryggvesson and Bullock (2006), in a Swedish sample, found that attribution of blame for a male-to-male bar altercation differed among male and female respondents and was complexly related to intoxication of the aggressor, intoxication of the victim, respondents’ relationship to the aggressor versus the victim, and aggression severity. Overall, there appeared to be a trend for lessened blame for men when the aggressor was intoxicated and the act was severe. However, there was no effect when the act was less severe. Moreover, although alcohol influenced the blame assigned for the severe act, it did not reduce the respondents’ rated likelihood of calling the police.

Scenario studies of domestic violence show a similar diversity of findings. Working with U.S. college students, Richardson and Campbell (1980) found that an intoxicated man was assigned less blame than a sober man, while Leigh and Aramburu (1994) reported that the intoxicated man received more blame, and Dent and Arias (1990) discovered no effect of intoxication on the blame assigned to the man. Meanwhile, studies of social workers (Home, 1994), police officers (Stalans & Finn, 1995; Stewart & Maddren, 1997), and couples who have experienced domestic violence do not suggest that alcohol serves as a mitigating factor.

Moreover, in the area of domestic violence, evidence with respect to actual behaviors suggests that alcohol does not usually mitigate violent outbursts. According to Thompson and Kingree (2006), alcohol consumption in a violent event is associated with an increased likelihood of reporting the event to the police. Other studies have found that intoxicated aggressors were more likely to be arrested than sober aggressors (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988; Hoyle, 1998), although some studies have not established any impact of alcohol involvement on the likelihood of arrest (Feder, 1998; Robinson & Chandek, 2000). With respect to actual punishment, Harrell (1981) used

characteristics of 628 pre-sentence reports to predict severity of sentence received by the offender. Alcohol involvement resulted in a less severe sentence for low-severity crimes, but was associated with a more severe sentence for high-severity crimes.

### **Is the belief that alcohol causes aggression related to actual aggression?**

Finally, is there evidence that individuals who believe that alcohol causes aggression are more likely to engage in aggressive behavior? Although there are some cross-sectional surveys that have found this relationship (see, for example, Dermen & George, 1989), the one longitudinal study (Leonard & Quigley, 1999) did not find that expectancies regarding alcohol and aggression were predictive of later violence. Results from experimental studies have not been strongly supportive either. Chermack and Taylor (1995) administered alcohol or a placebo to men who either did or did not believe that alcohol caused aggressive behavior. The results indicated that alcohol administration led to increased shock setting in the competition paradigm, even among men who did not believe that alcohol caused aggression. Giancola, Godlaski, and Parrott (2005) replicated this study with a much larger sample and found that alcohol expectancies were not related to aggression after controlling for general hostility.

One implication of the “excuse” position is that the pharmacological aspects of alcohol are less important in violence than the symbolic aspects of drinking. That is, the ability to use alcohol as an “excuse” for behavior arises from the knowledge that one has been drinking and is by no means tied to whether there was a large dose of alcohol, a small dose of alcohol, or no alcohol at all in the beverage. Hence, the existence of a placebo effect would be consistent with the “excuse” position. Overall, the evidence that a placebo beverage increases aggressive behavior is not strong. Some studies have reported placebo effects, but the meta-analyses conducted by Bushman and Cooper (1990) concluded that the placebos did not increase aggression in comparison to subjects who were in the *no alcohol* group.

In a similar vein, subjects who believe that they have received the same amount of alcohol, but who actually receive different doses would not be expected to differ in aggression according to an “excuse” position. However, the meta-analysis of Bushman and Cooper (1990) found that active doses of alcohol led to significantly greater aggression than placebo doses. Taylor and Gammon (1976) reported that a high dose of alcohol produced greater aggression than a low dose. In Leonard and Roberts’ study (1998), the extent of husband negative behavior was uniquely correlated with his BAC level after controlling for how much alcohol he thought he received and how intoxicated he perceived himself to be. However, husband negative behavior was not correlated with rated intoxication or estimated consumption after controlling for blood alcohol levels. These studies suggest that the beliefs one holds about whether one consumed any alcohol and how much are less relevant to aggressive behavior than the actual amount of alcohol consumed.

### **Expectancies as a cognitive frame**

In their extensive review of the alcohol expectancies paradigm, Quigley and Leonard (2006) argued that current work represents expectancies as a cognitive-associative network, which influences attention, interpretive processes, and behavioral scripts. As a cognitive frame that may guide one’s observations and interpretations of a situation, the alcohol-aggressive frame coexists with other diverse and contradictory alcohol-behavior frames. The specific cognitive frame used in any given situation may depend on individual and contextual factors. Important research in support of this view has recently been conducted. Bartholow and Heinz (2006) found that alcohol cues—such as words related to alcohol—increased participants’ speed in identifying aggressive words. This finding suggests that presenting alcohol cues made thoughts about aggression more

easily brought to mind. The authors then found that showing alcohol advertisements led the participants to rate a target person as more hostile, and this effect was strongest among individuals with the strongest belief that alcohol was a cause of aggression. In a subsequent study, Friedman, McCarthy, Bartholow, & Hicks (2007) concluded that the presentation of words associated with aggression at a speed at which they could barely be identified led to increased aggressive behavior in subjects who believed that alcohol was a cause of aggression. Taken together, these studies indicate that the symbolic aspects of alcohol may lead those who believe that alcohol causes violence to interpret behaviors by other people in the situation as hostile or threatening—and then to act aggressively. While these findings are of potential importance, one must recall the laboratory studies in which providing alcohol cues in the context of an alcohol-placebo did not result in aggression, even among individuals with a high aggressive expectancy (for example, Chermack & Taylor, 1995; Giancola, Godlaski, & Parrott, 2005). Nonetheless, these initial results, in conjunction with other findings, lead to the possibility of a rapprochement between psychopharmacological, expectancy, and sociocontextual approaches to alcohol-related violence.

### *Alcohol and Cognitive Disruption*

The second broad class of models focuses on alcohol's psychopharmacological impact—and, in particular, its ability to disrupt cognitive processes (Pernanen, 1976; Sayette, Martin, & Parrott, 2001; Steele & Josephs, 1990; Taylor & Leonard, 1983). While the specifics of these models differ slightly, they agree that alcohol impairs cognitive processes, which, under normal circumstances, would inhibit aggressive responding (for instance, likelihood of attending to potential inhibitory cues, recall of appropriate normative behavior, recognition of alternate strategies, and evaluation of potential consequences). From this perspective, alcohol weakens inhibitions and allows dominant cues and dominant response options to those cues determine behavior. Accordingly, alcohol should have a more pronounced effect on individuals with already somewhat compromised attentional and appraisal abilities and on individuals with aggressive perceptual and behavioral propensities.

Much of the research describing the moderators of the alcohol-aggression relationship is consistent with this position. Specifically, the evidence suggests that individuals with attentional-behavioral tendencies that are facilitative of aggression are more aggressive with alcohol, while individuals with tendencies that are not facilitative of aggression are not more aggressive with alcohol (or are less so). Similarly, the research that implicates inhibitory control and executive cognitive functioning suggests that individuals with weak inhibitory controls are most responsive to alcohol's impact on aggression. In addition to these broadly supportive findings, there are findings from several other studies which pertain to this model. Leonard (1984) provided intoxicated and sober men in a laboratory aggression study with clear cues of either very aggressive intent or nonaggressive intent. Among subjects who received alcohol, the more intoxicated they were, the more they behaved in accordance with the cues. So, in the presence of clear nonaggressive cues, the more intoxicated subjects were more likely to select a nonaggressive action than were less intoxicated subjects. In the presence of clear aggressive cues, the more intoxicated subjects were more likely than their less intoxicated counterparts to select a highly aggressive action. Using a more sophisticated social-cognitive method, Lange (2002) reported that, among subjects who associated alcohol with "amiable" outcomes, increasing intoxication was associated with reductions in perceived aggression in a vignette. In contrast, among subjects who associated alcohol with aggressive outcomes, increasing intoxication was associated with increased perceived aggression.

Giancola and Corman (2007) tested this model more specifically in several studies. In their first study, they found that a distraction that required cognitive effort reduced the aggression of

intoxicated subjects to the level of subjects who received a placebo. In the second study, they discovered that the extent to which alcohol-related aggression was reduced depended on the extent of cognitive resources required in the distracting task. When the distracting task was very easy, aggression was not reduced, but when the task was moderately difficult, aggression was suppressed. When the task became extremely difficult, however, aggression was not reduced in comparison to the condition without a distraction, possibly because the participants became stressed and frustrated—or, perhaps, because the participants could not perform the cognitive task and returned their focus to the competition-aggression task.

## CONCLUSIONS

In recent years, the study of alcohol-related aggression has moved from broad studies of chronic drinking patterns and the occurrence of any violence to more precise studies of the association between acute alcohol intake and the occurrence of specific violent events—and to a focus on unraveling the underlying processes. As in earlier reviews, this paper finds that the association between drinking patterns and violence is robust across samples, types of violence, and, to some extent, across cultural groups. There is some uncertainty about whether frequency of drinking, usual quantity of intake, or some combination of these is the critical variable, primarily because all of these constructs are highly interrelated. However, some evidence suggests that the critical aspect of the drinking pattern is the frequency of drinking large amounts of alcohol, such as drinking to intoxication (see, for example, Leonard et al., 1985). Moreover, there is some evidence that the link between the frequency of drinking to intoxication and the likelihood of violence is somewhat of a threshold effect, with increases observed primarily at and beyond once-a-week intoxication. This association reflects a variety of processes, including the shared characteristics of individuals who engage in violence and drink heavily and contextual characteristics that may promote both behaviors.

Beyond these processes, however, growing evidence suggests that the association between chronic drinking patterns and violence may reflect an acute causal process, when the consumption of alcohol increases the likelihood and severity of a violent event. Although precise dose studies are not available, it seems likely that increased likelihood of violence would become apparent at doses that produce significant cognitive impairment (for instance, as expressed in blood alcohol concentration levels). This acute process appears to be stronger among individuals with pre-existing propensities to aggress and, possibly, among subjects with lower levels of cognitive control. While individuals who have behaved aggressively when drinking may use alcohol as an “excuse,” there is no evidence that such people behave aggressively *because* they expect to be excused for their behavior. In contrast, there is considerable evidence supporting the hypothesis that the cognitive disruption occurring with intoxication is responsible for the association between acute consumption and aggression. Some recent evidence indicates that alcohol cues may serve to frame a social interaction in a more hostile way, particularly among those who believe that alcohol causes aggression. Further research is needed to examine the manner in which this social framing, in combination with the psychopharmacological impact of alcohol on social cognition, may result in aggressive and violent behavior.

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# Working with Culture to Prevent Violence and Reckless Drinking

Courtney Mireille O'Connor, Esquire  
USA

Claire Dickson  
International Center for Alcohol Policies  
USA

## INTRODUCTION

In a video preserved at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), a British interviewer asked the question, “Do you think people get violent when they get drunk?” A US American musical performing artist answered, “It’s either f\_\_k or fight, man.”<sup>1</sup> Three simple, though rather indelicate, words cogently sum up the expectations of many men and boys around the world when they know that they are being watched—when they sense that the eyes and presumptions of their community, their society, their culture,<sup>2</sup> are upon them. The expert in male psychology, William Pollack, resonated with the Tajik men quoted later in this paper when he wrote the following about boys in the United States of America (USA),

As soon as a boy behaves in a way that is not considered manly, that falls outside the Boy Code, he is likely to meet resistance from society—he may merely be stared at or whispered about, he may be humiliated, he may get a punch in the gut or he may just feel terribly ashamed.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, many men do not feel obliged to drink to excess, make a show of predatory sex, or act openly belligerent in order to—consciously or unconsciously—satisfy the expectations of the society in which they live.<sup>4</sup> Taken together, this monograph’s two preceding papers,<sup>5</sup> along with the work of many

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<sup>1</sup> The artist is Huey Morgan of the Fun Lovin’ Criminals, an alternative rap and rock group from New York City. The exchange is taken from the documentary, *Brewing Trouble*, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHxBnk3jTCg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHxBnk3jTCg). The question that Mr. Morgan was asked related to drinking and violence in the United States of America (USA) and in the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> For a definition of how the term *culture* is used in this paper, see the section *Culture, Recklessness, and Violence* below.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 58 in Pollack, W. (1998). *Real boys: Rescuing our sons from the myths of boyhood*. New York: Random House.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the first paper in this monograph: Anne Fox, “Sociocultural factors that foster or inhibit alcohol-related violence.” See also pp. 389–390 in Winter, D. G. (2000, June). Power, sex and violence: A psychological reconstruction of the 20th century and an intellectual agenda for political psychology. *Political Psychology*, 21, 384–404.

<sup>5</sup> See this monograph: Anne Fox, “Sociocultural factors that foster or inhibit alcohol-related violence”; and Kenneth E. Leonard, “The role of drinking patterns and acute intoxication in violent interpersonal behaviors.”

others concerned about the challenges of problem drinking, or violence, or both,<sup>6</sup> help us understand why. They teach us that, generally speaking:

- (1) Among people who resort easily and rapidly to violence, this trait may be exacerbated after consuming alcohol;
- (2) individuals who are not predisposed toward aggression do not become more so when they drink alcohol, and may even become less so;
- (3) a constructive difference might be made with individuals in the middle—those susceptible to influence from external factors.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to look at how that constructive difference might be made—from the perspective of practitioners, not academics. In her paper for this monograph, Anne Fox argues that efforts to counteract a “culture of violence” and “the male propensity for aggression”<sup>8</sup> should be channeled toward altering “beliefs about alcohol” and “social responses to violence and aggression.” These are essential targets for action. It is contended here, however, that **efforts to reduce violence and the problem drinking that stems from its cousin, recklessness, must also go to the root of these dynamics: the very gender roles**<sup>9</sup> that help create many of the propensities, beliefs, and responses of which Fox writes.<sup>10</sup>

Like the two preceding papers, this one relies on research, both academic and field-based. It also relies on the human rights, humanitarian, and development work experience of its authors, as well as the expertise, experience, and wisdom of actors in or from 29 countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, Latin America, North America and Oceania—people working individually, in groups, or in large institutions to preserve and enhance their own health and safety, as well as those of their families,

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Dabbs, J. M., Jr., & Dabbs, M. G. (2000). *Heroes, rogues, and lovers: Testosterone and behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill. See also Winter, D. G. (2000, June). Power, sex and violence: A psychological reconstruction of the 20th century and an intellectual agenda for political psychology. *Political Psychology*, 21, 384–404.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, p. 42 in this monograph. According to Leonard: “Reviews of the alcohol-violence literature often conclude that, if alcohol has any causal impact, the effect is restricted to certain individuals under specific environmental conditions. In discussing the role of alcohol and violence more generally, Lipsey and colleagues (1997) referred to the lack of work on moderating factors as ‘the greatest failure of the research’ . . . .” See also Lipsey, M. W., Wilson, D. B., Cohen, M. A., & Derzon, J. H. (1997). Is there a causal relationship between alcohol use and violence? A synthesis of evidence. In M. Galanter (Ed.), *Recent developments in alcoholism* (Vol. 13, pp. 245–282). New York: Plenum.

<sup>8</sup> See p. 21 in this monograph. Our use of this quote does not reflect belief in a “male propensity for aggression.” This paper is based on the understanding that, except perhaps in extreme cases, recourse to violence is a learned—not a biologically predetermined—behavior.

<sup>9</sup> The World Health Organization distinguishes gender, or gender roles, and sex as follows (emphasis original):  
“**Sex**” refers to the *biological and physiological* characteristics that *define* men and women.  
“**Gender**” refers to the *socially constructed* roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society *considers appropriate* for men and women. To put it another way: “**male**” and “**female**” are sex categories, while “**masculine**” and “**feminine**” are gender categories. Aspects of sex will not vary substantially between different human societies, while aspects of gender may vary greatly.

See World Health Organization. [n.d.]. *What do we mean by “sex” and “gender”?* Retrieved April 25, 2008, from <http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en>.

<sup>10</sup> As the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) Expert Group on Male Roles and Masculinities in the Perspective of a Culture of Peace stressed back in 1997, “Aggressive and dominating masculinities may be a direct source of violence. In many cases, however, gender ideologies serve as the means by which other causes of conflict are converted into violent conduct.” See UNESCO Expert Group. (1997, September). *Expert group meeting on male roles and masculinities in the perspective of a culture of peace: Rapporteur's summary of issues and themes*. Oslo, Norway: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO). This report is henceforth referenced as “UNESCO Expert Group.”

communities, and societies. These actors include human rights and other lawyers, judges, and protection and community service officers; development and gender experts; staff at nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), independent evaluators, refugee status determination officers, and intergovernmental organization officials; social workers, sexual violence counselors, medical doctors (including psychiatrists), psychologists, and other healthcare workers and activists; biologists, anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, economists, political scientists, and other academics; politicians; survivors of gender-related discrimination (including violence); traditional elders, parents, young men, and boys; police and military officers (including peacekeepers); leaders and followers; journalists, as well as grassroots or community organizers, people of faith and educators; indigenous peoples, refugees, and internally displaced persons; musicians and writers.

The intent here is not to make a major academic or research-related statement. Rather, the authors endeavor to use what they have learned in their work and from others **to provoke discussion and thought on creative ways to prevent violence, problem drinking, and situations where the two intersect.**

### **THE INTERSECTION OF VIOLENCE, PROBLEM DRINKING, AND UNHEALTHY GENDER ROLES**

#### ***People Learn about Conflict, Alcohol, and Gender in the Same Places and at Similar Times***

Generally speaking, people develop their basic belief framework about, and responses to, conflict and responsibility (including on alcohol) during their childhood and adolescence—in the home, in the community, and among peers. Home, community, and peer groups are also where individuals learn during childhood and adolescence what social roles they are expected to fulfill, including gender roles, and where these roles fit into their community’s and society’s social hierarchies (see Figure 1).



**FIGURE 1. Children and young people learn about conflict, alcohol, and gender in the same places and at similar moments in their lives**

### ***Missed Opportunities for Healthy Understanding, Modeling, and Behavioral Development***

Depending on what children and young people are taught and absorb, they may not have the opportunity to learn and employ conflict resolution skills that obviate violence. They may not have a realistic enough understanding of alcohol and its effects to make wise choices about whether to consume it and, if so, how to do this safely and responsibly. They may not be helped and required to exercise the self-control (impulse control) that can steer them clear of reckless behavior,<sup>11</sup> including immoderate drinking. Finally, they may not assimilate an ethical framework capable of empowering them to reject the facile prejudices underpinning the decisions of many to be violent<sup>12</sup> or otherwise abuse those whom they consider, or would like to consider, lesser beings—in the home, on the playground, in the board room, at the bar, and in battle.

### ***Discrimination, Human Rights, Entitlement, and Violence***

Prejudice—bigotry, discrimination, or whatever we choose to call it—is a human rights violation in itself, regardless of whether it involves or leads to violence.<sup>13</sup> A frequent result of the combination of discriminatory attitudes and predetermined societal roles is an exaggerated sense of entitlement. Examples can be found in the parent who considers it her right to abuse her child; the husband who feels entitled to vent his frustration by beating his wife;<sup>14</sup> the child who uses humiliation, threats, or violence to maintain control of a peer group; or the soldier who presumes that he can rape a member of the civilian population, or one of his own colleagues, with virtual impunity, including in situations involving the consumption of beverage alcohol.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> As Leonard informs us on p. 46 in this monograph, “the research that implicates inhibitory control and executive cognitive functioning suggests that individuals with weak inhibitory controls are most responsive to alcohol’s impact on aggression.”

<sup>12</sup> According to the UNESCO Expert Group, “Solving the problem of violence and building a culture of peace certainly require change in masculinities. But it does not require men to become weak or incapable. On the contrary, violence often happens because masculinities are constructed to make violence the easy option, or the only option considered.”

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 26: “All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” See United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (1966/1976). *International covenant on civil and political rights (ICCPR)*. Retrieved April 18, 2008, from

[www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm). As of April 18, 2008, 161 governments had ratified the ICCPR.

<sup>14</sup> According to the UNESCO Expert Group: “When men feel entitled to power and status (especially with respect to women), they are angered when they cannot achieve these ‘entitlements.’ Reactions to a sense of powerlessness may include violence against women or joining a gang, a racist movement, an army or an armed revolutionary movement, that restore feelings of control.”

<sup>15</sup> According to Helen Benedict, “While commanders of some units are apparently less vigilant about policing rape, others engage in it themselves, a phenomenon known in the military as ‘command rape.’ Because the military is hierarchical, and because soldiers are trained to obey and never question their superiors, men of rank can assault their juniors with impunity. In most cases, women soldiers are the juniors, 18 to 20 years old, and are new to the military and war, thus vulnerable to bullying and exploitation.” See p. 4 in Benedict, H. (2007, March 7). The private war of women soldiers. *Salon News* [Online]. Retrieved April 24, 2008, from [http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/03/07/women\\_in\\_military/index.html](http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/03/07/women_in_military/index.html). This article is based on Benedict’s forthcoming book, *The Lonely Soldier: Woman at War in Iraq* (Beacon Press). For more on the obstacles to USAmericans’ safely reporting rapes during deployment and obtaining justice, see Houppert, K. (2008, April 4). Another brutal rape cover-up at KBR. *The Nation* [Online]. Retrieved April 24, 2008, from [www.alternet.org/waroniraq/81266](http://www.alternet.org/waroniraq/81266).

Put simply, unequal treatment—including on the basis of sex—violates the internationally recognized right to freedom from discrimination.<sup>16</sup> Unwarranted or disproportionate violence<sup>17</sup> abridges the human right to personal security.<sup>18</sup> Gender expectations that encourage excessive drinking or violence are unhealthy and can spill over into the area of discrimination—for example, when a recruit must choose between excessive drinking, violence, or both, on the one hand, and complete social, economic, or professional exclusion or humiliation, on the other.<sup>19</sup> Decades of human rights work have shown us that fighting gender discrimination can reduce violence. Given the perceived link among manliness, domination, and excessive drinking in numerous societies, fostering healthy, non-discriminatory attitudes about masculinity and femininity can go a long way toward reducing violence, immoderate alcohol consumption, and the confluence of the two (see Figure 2).

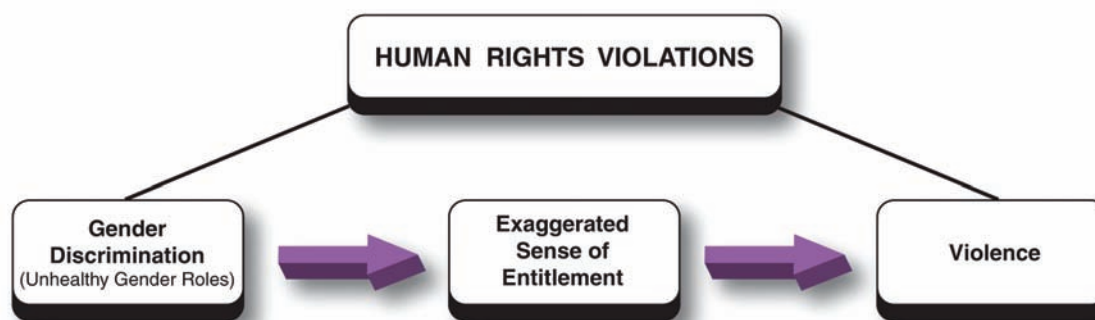


FIGURE 2. The gender discrimination-perceived entitlement-violence continuum

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, ICCPR, Article 24, para. 1: “Every child shall have, without any discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property or birth, the right to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor, on the part of his family, society and the State.” The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which currently has 185 States Parties, defines discrimination against women as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (Article 1). See United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (1979/1981). *Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women*. Retrieved April 18, 2008, from <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm>. See also the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has 193 States Parties. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (1989/1990). *Convention on the rights of the child*. Retrieved April 18, 2008, from <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> Situations in which violence is normally considered justified include proportionate self-defense on both the interpersonal and inter-state levels.

<sup>18</sup> The international human rights law boundaries of the definition of *personal security* or *security of person* (also referred to as *personal integrity* or *integrity of person*) move somewhat according to the legal instrument being interpreted and the judicial or expert body doing the interpreting. For the purposes of this paper, it refers to one’s right to freedom from physical or psychological abuse or attack, or from the threat thereof. Personal security is often referred to collectively with the rights to life and liberty (of person), given the close interrelationship of these three rights in practice—for example in the case of torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, including during detention. See Article 3 in United Nations. (1948). *Universal declaration of human rights*. Retrieved April 18, 2008, from [www.unhchr.ch/udhr/index.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/index.htm). See also pp. 72–73 in O’Donnell, D. (1989). *Protección internacional de los derechos humanos, comisión andina de juristas*. Lima, Peru: Comisión Andina de Juristas; Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2005). *International human rights law and abortion in Latin America*. Retrieved April 18, 2008, from <http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/wrd/wrd0106/wrd0106.pdf>. The interpretation provided above is echoed in the national law of a number of countries, including the USA, where one definition of personal security is “a person’s legal and uninterrupted enjoyment of his life, his limbs, his body, his health, and his reputation.” See p. 1356 in Black, H. (1990). *Black’s law dictionary* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). St Paul, MN: West Publishing.

<sup>19</sup> See the example from the corporate world in South Korea, described below (in subsection *Overcome the Use of Humiliation and Ridicule to Preserve Unhealthy Norms, Traditions, and Institutions*).

## *Why Focus on Men and Boys?*

Let us be clear. The focus on male gender roles in this paper is a function of two realities: (1) inadequate room in the monograph for which it was written to give anything but general or tangential attention to the very particular aspects of women's and girls' roles in situations of problem drinking and unwarranted violence; and (2) the statistical findings and other research regarding men's relationship with these two pathologies. That is to say:

- (1) Many more men than women are reported to use alcohol in unhealthy and dangerous ways;<sup>20</sup>
- (2) many more men than women have been found to respond to conflict with violence;<sup>21</sup>
- (3) many more men than women are reported to engage in *alcohol-related* violence.<sup>22</sup>

The findings of the two preceding papers in this monograph are no exception.

It is the authors' conviction, however, that—like females—males, as a rule, are not born violent or reckless. Rather, culture-based beliefs about their role in society, passed on or formed from one generation to the next, confine them to a limited range of behaviors. For a significant number of males, this behavioral gamut spans unwarranted violence and recklessness, including problem drinking.

This is not a new way of thinking and the authors are far from alone in this finding. An expert group of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), made up of academics and activists from numerous disciplines and 15 different countries, found the following over 10 years ago, based on research and action conducted during more than a decade preceding their collaboration:

There are, clearly, links between masculinity and violence. To recognize this is not to say that all men are violent, [or] that men are naturally violent.... It is to pose important problems: How can men as men, as gendered beings, be drawn into the making of a culture of peace? What alternative ways of being a man can be found? How, especially, can violent masculinities change...? Highlighting issues about masculinity is easily misunderstood. It may be seen as unfairly blaming all men for violence, implying that men are evil, or that women are inherently better people. This view would lead to instant alienation of most men from any program of change. Alternatively, highlighting masculinity may be seen as a way of excusing violent men, since their behaviour is attributed to a masculinity which many believe to be

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, p. 1 in Obot, I., & Room, R. (2005). *Alcohol, gender and drinking problems: Perspectives from low and middle income countries*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization. See also World Health Organization (WHO). (2004). *Global status report on alcohol*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author.

<sup>21</sup> According to UNESCO Expert Group, "It is a familiar fact that most of the world's soldiers are men. It is men, almost exclusively, who make the decisions that launch international aggression and civil wars. It is further true that men are responsible for most crimes of violence in private life. Men rather than women are central to the symbolism of violence in mass media, sports, and political rhetoric." See also Reiss, A. J., Jr., & Roth, J. A. (Eds.). (1993). *Understanding and preventing violence* (vol. 1). Washington, DC: National Academy Press. Finally, according to the WHO report on violence, "Although women can be violent in relationships with men, and violence is also sometimes found in same-sex partnerships, the overwhelming burden of partner violence is borne by women at the hands of men." See p. 89 in Krug, E. G., Dahlberg, L. L., Mercy, J. A., Zwi, A. B., & Lozano, R. (2002). *World report on violence and health*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization (WHO).

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Bloomfield, K., Allamani, A., Beck, F., Helmersson Bergmark, K., Csemy, L., Eisenbach-Stangl, I., et al. (2005). *Gender, culture and alcohol problems: A multi-national study*. Berlin, Germany: Institute for Medical Informatics, Biometrics and Epidemiology. This study examined differences in drinking behavior among men and women in 13 European and two non-European countries and found that, with the exception of the United Kingdom, "alcohol-related aggression was more likely among males than females from the same country" (p. 108).

“natural” and unchangeable. In responding to these misunderstandings,... **the focus should be on the characteristics of social masculinity that lead men towards violence, and on the institutions and ideologies that reinforce aggressive masculinities.**<sup>[23]</sup> This neither excuses violent behaviour nor simplistically blames men, but allows a **focus on the prevention of violence and the building of positive alternatives.**<sup>24</sup>

Sadly, many focus their gender efforts on helping women and girls, but not men and boys. It is hoped that this paper will encourage at least a few actors and other experts concerned with violence, unhealthy alcohol consumption, or both to extend more of an empathetic, helping hand to the male sex, instead of just blaming or excusing it, as if its members were prisoners of some cursed biology, serving out a life sentence.

## CULTURE, RECKLESSNESS, AND VIOLENCE

### *Culture Defined and Cultures Distinguished*

#### **Definition**

In employing the term *culture*, this paper starts with a more traditional, anthropological definition: “the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.”<sup>25</sup> It also recognizes the modern supplement: “the predominating attitudes and behavior that characterize the functioning of a group or organization.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Healthy Gender Roles and Nonviolence Go Hand in Hand**

As defined above, culture can be a constructive force, a destructive force, or both. In societies with healthy norms for gender roles and relations, constructive behavior results. Boys are encouraged to express their feelings, including those of vulnerability. Men are encouraged to nurture. Conflict escalation is frowned upon. According to political psychologist George Winter, societies that take no pleasure in domination or killing differentiate little between sex roles, do not idolize aggressive masculinity<sup>27</sup> or see men and women as adversaries, and are more intolerant of rape than are other societies.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> To effect sustained behavioral change, obstacles to achieving the desired behavior must be eliminated and institutional behaviors modified to incorporate and reflect the shift in perspective. See London, S. (1996). *Understanding change: The dynamics of social transformation*. Retrieved November 27, 2007, from <http://www.scottlondon.com/reports/change.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Emphasis added; see UNESCO Expert Group. The Expert Group included political scientists, sociologists, experts in equality and ethnicity, male activists against male violence, anthropologists, and other social and behavioral scientists and researchers.

<sup>25</sup> *Dictionary.com Unabridged* (vol. 1.1). Retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/culture>.

<sup>26</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/culture>.

<sup>27</sup> Here, Winter makes specific reference to the Arapesh of Papua New Guinea and the Lepcha people of Sikkim, in northeast India. See Winter, D. G. (2000, June). Power, sex and violence: A psychological reconstruction of the 20th century and an intellectual agenda for political psychology. *Political Psychology*, 21, 384–404.

<sup>28</sup> See pp. 389–390 in Winter. See also p. 63 in Dabbs and Dabbs, “Cross-cultural studies and observations of everyday life make it clear that violence is not the invariable outcome of high testosterone levels.” Dabbs, J. M., Jr., & Dabbs, M. G. (2000). *Heroes, rogues, and lovers: Testosterone and behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

## Unhealthy Gender Roles Foster Violence

In societies where unhealthy male gender norms—*machismo*, male patriarchal ideology, toxic masculinity—predominate, much destruction and waste results. In patriarchal societies, violence is a permissible expression of masculinity and means of imposing an ascribed gender hierarchy.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, violence is often directed at women and girls. Yet men’s violence against other men also results and is a means of asserting hierarchies of power among themselves.<sup>30</sup> Wars get started. Time and resources are wasted. Energy is squandered in posturing and domination. In short, everybody suffers.<sup>31</sup>

## Unhealthy Alcohol Consumption Is Associated with Male Patriarchal Ideology

Certain ingrained concepts of masculinity also result in gendered patterns of alcohol consumption; internationally, men tend to enjoy more social liberties than women do with respect to alcohol.<sup>32</sup> Research has also shown that alcohol is a cultural symbol that can be utilized to, as sociologists West and Zimmerman write, “do gender” or “do masculinity.”<sup>33</sup> Just as “holding your drink” is seen as “manly” in certain societies,<sup>34</sup> alcohol may also be used as an excuse to justify toxic masculine action (see Figure 3).<sup>35</sup>



FIGURE 3. Violence and recklessness often stem from counterproductive male gender roles created by certain unhealthy cultural expectations and practices

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, p. 393 in Winter (2000), on power-hungry men’s need to objectify the “object of their desire”: the man who fuses sex, power, and violence “triumphs over the danger [perceived in sexual excitement] by... dehumanizing the source of the danger, the ‘other,’ to the status of a non-living object. (That is, the ability to render the organic inorganic is the most primitive form of power.)”

<sup>30</sup> Gutmann, M. (March 2001). *Racism, class and masculinity: Gender-based violence in Latin America*. Paper presented at the Commission on the Status of Women 2001, panel “Racism, Class and Masculinity.” Retrieved November 27, 2007, from [www.health.columbia.edu/pdfs/gender\\_based\\_violence.pdf](http://www.health.columbia.edu/pdfs/gender_based_violence.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> According to Peggy Reeves Sanday, “Men are more violent toward women in cultures where there is war, interpersonal violence, and an ideology of male toughness.” See Sanday, P. R. (1981). The socio-cultural context of rape: A cross-cultural study. *Journal of Social Issues*, 37, 5–27. See also the paper by Anne Fox in this monograph.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, World Health Organization (WHO). (2005). *Gender, health and alcohol use*. Retrieved November 4, 2007, from <http://www.who.int/gender/documents/Alcoholfinal.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). “Doing gender.” *Gender and Society*, 1, 125–151.

<sup>34</sup> According to Lemle and Mishkind, “Alcohol provides a semblance of power for fragile masculinity. With all its ambiguities, heavy drinking represents toughness, risk-taking, virility, and sexual prowess in American culture: A man who can hold his liquor is ‘a man.’” See Lemle, R. & Mishkind, M. (1989). Alcohol and masculinity. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 6, 213–322.

<sup>35</sup> West, L. A. (2001). Negotiating masculinities in American drinking subcultures. *The Journal of Men’s Studies*, 9, 371–392.



## Moderate, Culturally Integrated Alcohol Consumption Tends to Coexist with Greater Intolerance of Related Violence

In a parallel fashion, in many societies where moderate alcohol consumption is integrated into daily life, drinking occurs to excess much less than in societies where its consumption is strictly controlled and segregated. In numerous societies, neither violence in general nor predatory sex in particular is presumed to be the logical outcome of alcohol consumption, even when drinking is done to excess.<sup>36</sup>

### *How and Why Do Cultures Change?*

Most, if not all, human societies tend to condemn at least some forms of immoderate drinking and much violence. Where the lines are drawn, however, moves from one society to the next, and over time. Consider this example involving over-consumption of beverage alcohol:

For the past fifty or so years, the Chinese emphasis on hospitality has adapted to the massive cultural upheaval brought on by Maoist conquest and control. Many Communist party officials came to consider “liquid lunches” *de rigueur* when entertaining. They felt compelled by both traditional and professional considerations to ensure that all present were enjoying themselves and bonding. Heavy consumption of beverage alcohol was seen as the most efficient means to these ends.<sup>37</sup> “It would be disrespectful to not drink with a guest,” explained the general manager of a distillery in Xinyang. The practice became so common that, in many government offices, little competent work was achieved after lunch, most days. The advent of a greater diversity of beverage alcohol, including varieties with lower proof, concern over waste, a younger generation that preferred to bond over activities like golf, and a “palpable... public disgust with official privilege,” however, convinced the Communist Party in Xinyang to crack down on liquid lunches with sudden searches, blood alcohol testing, firings, and public humiliation.<sup>38</sup>

The reform methodology employed in this example may leave much to be desired. This community’s realization that it was time for a cultural paradigm shift, however, is patent. **The confluence of modernization, concern over limited resources, and moral disapprobation forced a pivotal move away from what some described as a “ritual,” toward a healthier lifestyle and a more productive society.**<sup>39</sup>

Why do some societies decline while others survive and, indeed, thrive? Biologist, geographer, and cultural observer Jared Diamond found that societies that have disappeared over the centuries did so because of their unwillingness to face cold hard facts and adapt their ways. The surviving societies, and those that have flourished, are the ones that had the courage to make bold cultural paradigm shifts. As Diamond says,

Perhaps a crux of success or failure as a society is to know which core values to hold on to, and which ones to discard and replace with new values when times change.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See, for example, the paper by Anne Fox in this monograph. Approaching masculinity from a more chemically-oriented perspective, Dabbs and Dabbs (2000) concluded, “Human values exist separately from hormones, and they temper the effects of hormones. With good manners and non-violent moral values, people can control testosterone....” See also UNESCO Expert Group: “[T]he biology of sex does not explain the issues; biological differences are biological differences, while social patterns of violence require social explanations and social solutions.”

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, the description of coerced drinking in corporate South Korea, below (in subsection *Overcome the Use of Humiliation and Ridicule to Preserve Unhealthy Norms, Traditions, and Institutions*).

<sup>38</sup> Adapted from Yardley, J. (2008, March 8). Got a mint, comrade? Chinese ban liquid lunch. *The New York Times* [Online]. Retrieved April 20, 2008, from [www.nytimes.com/2008/03/08/world/asia/08china.html?hp](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/08/world/asia/08china.html?hp).

<sup>39</sup> According to Yardley, the crackdown’s architect estimated that the new policy had saved the government one million U.S. dollars per month over the preceding six months.

<sup>40</sup> See p. 433 in Diamond, J. (2005). *Collapse: How societies chose to fail or succeed*. New York: Penguin Group. See also Dabbs and Dabbs, p. 94: “Human values are guided by human history and experience.... They develop

## *How Can We Facilitate Positive Change?*

This brings us to the central question of this paper, one that relies on the presumption that both violence and immoderate drinking are, as a rule, counterproductive: **How might we coax the natural process of cultural evolution in a direction that reduces both violence and unhealthy drinking?** The answer here is **the gradual eradication from our society of unhealthy gender norms, with a particular focus in the first instance on male patriarchal ideology.** As the UNESCO Experts found,

While the historical record of men's violence is horrifying, masculinities differ greatly, and there are many points where change may begin. Many experiences in personal life show men as well as women moving towards equality and nonviolence if given the chance. As long as institutional and cultural patterns block their way, they stop. Yet even small measures to unblock the path may create considerable effects.<sup>41</sup>

### **STRATEGIES FOR SHIFTING GENDER PARADIGMS RELATED TO VIOLENCE AND RECKLESSNESS**

Over the years, individuals, communities, and entire societies around the world have devised innumerable strategies for enhancing the health of the gender roles with which they live. This paper reviews eight overarching strategies and examines their common threads in search of lessons (printed in bold) that could be applied to the reduction of violence, or to the reduction of problem drinking, or to both. The authors hope is that, by the end of this paper, readers concerned with alcohol policy will see the many opportunities—parallel to those that human rights and violence prevention practitioners see—for action to stem not just violence at its roots, but problem drinking as well.

The following strategies, expressed in the imperative, will be considered:

- (1) educate;
- (2) recognize and act on public-private cycles of violence;
- (3) overcome the use of humiliation and ridicule to preserve unhealthy norms, traditions,<sup>42</sup> and institutions;
- (4) promote healthy ways for males to overcome their isolation from each other, and from females;
- (5) rectify power imbalances with development and role models;
- (6) challenge the profit-makers;
- (7) maximize opportunity in crisis—support the phoenix from the fire;
- (8) view and treat custom<sup>43</sup> as a resource, not the enemy.

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and change from generation to generation.” Dabbs, J. M., Jr., & Dabbs, M. G. (2000). *Heroes, rogues, and lovers: Testosterone and behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

<sup>41</sup> See UNESCO Expert Group.

<sup>42</sup> In this paper, the term *tradition* is used to mean “[a] mode of thought or behavior followed by a people continuously from generation to generation; a custom or usage.... A time-honored practice or set of such practices.” See *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/tradition>.

<sup>43</sup> The term *custom* is used here to mean “habits or usages collectively; convention” or, in sociological terms, “a group pattern of habitual activity usually transmitted from one generation to another.” See *Dictionary.com Unabridged* (vol. 1.1). Retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/custom>. Also applicable is the definition, “[a] practice followed by people of a particular group or region.” See *The American*

This list is not exhaustive, and the examples provided under each rubric are no more so. One theme, nonetheless, runs through most of the illustrative strategies: Reconsideration of gender roles has helped enhance respect for the rights of women and children, including by reducing male violence, and, as a consequence, has boosted human development in diverse societies around the world. It could, therefore, be relied upon to help reduce other reckless behavior resulting from toxic masculinity, such as immoderate alcohol consumption and all manner of related violence.

## *Educate*

Education is the single most effective investment for empowering people and preventing intolerance and violence.<sup>44</sup> For boys and men in particular,

...education can open up a diversity of pathways, and allow [them] to use a broader spectrum of their capacities—emotional, communicative and political. Education can show boys and men a variety of ways of being a man, and allow them to experience this diversity. It can develop [their] capacities for non-violent action, training them in techniques of peace as they are now commonly trained in the techniques of combat.<sup>45</sup>

**Education comes in many forms**, from activities that occur in a traditional classroom setting, to parent and community outreach, to workshops for men and women, to messages communicated through public service announcements, fine and performing arts in galleries, on the street, in the cinema, on television, radio, the Internet and billboards, through journalism, and by way of “virals.”<sup>46</sup> However delivered, the lessons and messages communicated should address three key areas in order to defuse the power of unhealthy notions of masculinity to cause problem drinking and violence:

- (1) **human rights**, in particular, the right to personal security, the right to freedom from discrimination based on sex (gender), and the rights of the child;
- (2) **life skills**, the “abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour, that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life;”<sup>47</sup>

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*Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/custom>.

<sup>44</sup> See United Nations. (2000). *Girls represent two-thirds of 100 million children out of school, Commission on the Status of Women told*. Press Release WOM/1182. Retrieved December 12, 2007, from <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2000/20000301.wom1182.doc.html>. See also UNESCO. (1995). *Declaration on the principles of tolerance*. Retrieved December 12, 2007, from <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/tolerance.pdf>. See also p. 59 of Dabbs and Dabbs, “[H]igh-testosterone individuals are influenced by good parenting, education and the social restraints of civilization.” Dabbs, J. M., Jr., & Dabbs, M. G. (2000). *Heroes, rogues, and lovers: Testosterone and behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

<sup>45</sup> See UNESCO Expert Group.

<sup>46</sup> “*Viral marketing* and *viral advertising* refer to marketing techniques that use preexisting social networks to produce increases in brand awareness, through self-replicating viral processes, analogous to the spread of pathological and computer viruses. It can be word-of-mouth delivered or enhanced by the network effects of the Internet. Viral marketing is a marketing phenomenon that facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message voluntarily. Viral promotions may take the form of video clips, interactive Flash games, advergames, e-books, brandable software, images, or even text messages.” See Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved March 21, 2008, from [www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Viral\\_marketing](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Viral_marketing).

<sup>47</sup> See World Health Organization (WHO). (1997). *Life skills education in schools: Introduction and guidelines to facilitate the development and implementation of life skills programmes*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO Programme on Mental Health.

- (3) **alcohol education** that is reality-based, involves parental oversight, as appropriate, and offers incentives.<sup>48</sup>

All three of these subjects require attention in a manner that is both gender-aware and gender-fair. Clearly, the pursuit of gender equity is a human rights endeavor. Educational efforts to demonstrate the relationship between gender inequity, violence, and reckless behavior such as unhealthy drinking, however, require coordination with the closely related fields of alcohol education and life skills training. In education, as in most areas of prevention and transformation, the more angles from which the challenge is approached, the more coherently effective the effort is likely to be. In short, **education should be multi-sectoral to the extent relevant and possible.**

## Human Rights Education

Many working in the fields of human rights and development have found that **education of both sexes about the rights of women and girls does not only dramatically reduce spousal abuse in a given community, but also increases the economic prosperity of the community**—in part by limiting the catalysts of, and opportunities for, unhealthy drinking. The first outcome seems obvious; but the second? How do rights contribute to development? And what does that have to do with violence and unhealthy alcohol consumption? In an effort to minimize repetition, the answers have been laid out in the subsection, *Rectify Power Imbalances with Development and Role Models*, below. For now, we will focus on those aspects of the alcohol-violence dynamic that relate directly to education.

Education to fight the recklessness and violence that accompany toxic masculinity in much of the world must tackle more than rights, per se. If we are to break the cycle of violence and problem drinking that runs from bedroom to barroom to battlefield and back, individuals and communities need to **reassess the gender roles played in the family and in society**. When men see the benefits for all of allowing their wives and daughters more freedom, it is a good time for them to reexamine their own role in the family (see Figure 4). Three indigenous women interviewed in rural Guatemala in 2001 explained how the combination of human rights training and reexamination of gender roles freed them to take on leadership roles in their village:

Since our husbands received human rights training, they don't beat us anymore when we try to leave the house to attend meetings.... They [even] take care of the children while we are away!<sup>49</sup>

## Life Skills Training

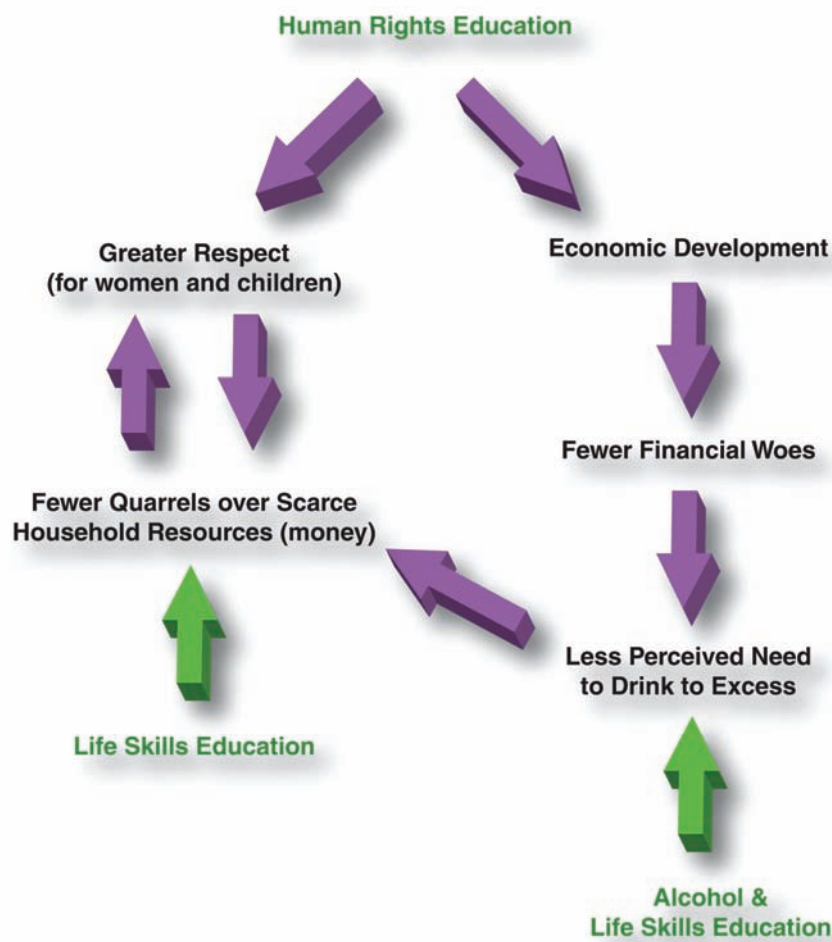
**Life skills training can help learners apply their newly gained knowledge about rights and alcohol to their everyday life.** As the Mentor Foundation<sup>50</sup> describes it,

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<sup>48</sup> See, for example, International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP). (2005). *Alcohol education and its effectiveness*. ICAP Report 16. Washington, DC: Author; Kumpfer, K. L., Alvarado, R., Tait, C., & Turner, C. (2002). Effectiveness of school-based family and children's skills training for substance abuse prevention among 6- to 8-year-old rural children. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 16(Suppl. 4), S65–S71. See also pp. 143–146 in McCardell, J.M., Jr. (2006). *The effects of the 21-year-old drinking age: A white paper*. Middlebury, VT: Choose Responsibility.

<sup>49</sup> Meeting notes of C. M. O'Connor, taken during a project evaluation mission that she headed for an international NGO working to remedy and prevent torture and organized violence in Guatemala (henceforth referred to as "O'Connor in Guatemala").

<sup>50</sup> The Mentor Foundation "focuses on the prevention of drug misuse in its efforts to promote the health and well-being of children and young people and to reduce damage to their lives." See para. 1 in Mentor Foundation (n.d.). *About Mentor*. Retrieved April 23, 2008, from [www.mentorfoundation.org/about\\_mentor.php?nav=3](http://www.mentorfoundation.org/about_mentor.php?nav=3).



**FIGURE 4. Human rights education can combine with alcohol and life skills education to reduce problem drinking and violence in impoverished families<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> For a better understanding of the relationship between human rights education and development diagrammed here, see the subsection *Rectify Power Imbalances with Development and Role Models*.

Knowledge and information are important but on their own do not necessarily change behaviour. It is the values, attitudes and most importantly the “skills” [that people] possess that will enable them to practice prevention in their behaviour.<sup>51</sup>

Such enabling skills are numerous and subject to some modification from one challenge and local context to another.<sup>52</sup> The ability set focused on alcohol and violence education includes the following:

- (1) problem-solving;
- (2) decision-making;
- (3) critical thinking;
- (4) coping with stress;
- (5) coping with emotions;

<sup>51</sup> Mentor Foundation. (n.d.). *Life skills*. Retrieved April 23, 2008, from [www.mentorfoundation.org](http://www.mentorfoundation.org).

<sup>52</sup> World Health Organization (WHO). (1997). *Life skills education in schools: Introduction and guidelines to facilitate the development and implementation of life skills programmes*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO Programme on Mental Health.

- (6) effective communication;
- (7) interpersonal relationship skills;
- (8) self-awareness;
- (9) creative thinking.<sup>53</sup>

**When applied in a human rights context, life skills training can help students defend and promote the rights that they learn.** Much life skills training focuses on children and young people. Adults can benefit from life skills training as well, however. Parents who were subject to corporal punishment when young, for example, might be tempted to apply the same method of “discipline” with their own children. Learning skills for empathy, handling interpersonal relationships, coping with stress and emotions, as well as creative thinking might help them raise citizens less likely to resolve their problems through violence.<sup>54</sup> In a meeting about the psychosocial health of his remote Petén jungle community in Guatemala in 2001, a returned refugee—and the father of a recent military recruit—described quite cogently what can happen when this intergenerational, public-private cycle of violence is not broken:

If we hit our children in our homes, I guess we should not be surprised when they grow up and decide to join the very same military that massacred us and drove us from our country.<sup>55</sup>

People for whom domination is important may be quick to anger and prone to act without thinking. As Dabbs and Dabbs wrote,

One good reason for women to discourage fighting is to protect themselves. Men mostly attack each other, but they sometimes attack women. Men are most likely to attack women they think have belittled or insulted them, as happens with women who leave them or threaten to leave. The... drive for domination can translate into the desire to control a wife or girlfriend, with the result that when a woman leaves a man, she makes him feel as though he has lost control.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> This list combines the skills that the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) deems helpful in the prevention of violence and skills that the Mentor Foundation finds useful in drug and alcohol abuse prevention. The UNICEF website provides an extensive list of skills and subsets of skills applicable to various challenges and situations. See UNICEF. (n.d.). *Which skills are life skills?* Retrieved April 23, 2008, from [www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index\\_whichskills.html](http://www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index_whichskills.html).

<sup>54</sup> William Pollack, Director of the Center for Men and Young Men and Harvard Medical School professor of psychiatry (Massachusetts, USA), writes, “Scientists have found that early emotional interaction can actually alter a boy’s brain-based biological processes.... The people in a boy’s life... may have an effect equal to that of testosterone in shaping a young boy, not only by influencing his formative experience but by affecting his brain structures and neurotransmitters.” See pp. 56–57 in Pollack, W. (1998). *Real boys: Rescuing our sons from the myths of boyhood*. New York: Random House.

<sup>55</sup> O’Connor in Guatemala. See also: Child abuses highlighted ahead of UN visit. (1999, July 7). *UN Wire Guatemala*. Retrieved April 23, 2008, from [www.smartbrief.com/un\\_wire/un\\_wire\\_archive.htm](http://www.smartbrief.com/un_wire/un_wire_archive.htm). The *UN Wire Guatemala* asserted that many Guatemalan children are mistreated in their own homes. According to the article, a representative of the National Commission against the Mistreatment of Infants in Guatemala claimed that the physical abuse of children was continuing to rise: “Parents’ hitting their children as a method of discipline leads to the **culture of violence and machismo** in this country” (emphasis added). For more on backgrounds of abuse in military recruits, see the subsection, *Recognize and Act on Public-private Cycles of Violence*, below.

<sup>56</sup> See pp. 61–62, in Dabbs, J. M., Jr., & Dabbs, M. G. (2000). *Heroes, rogues, and lovers: Testosterone and behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill. According to UNESCO Expert Group, “When men feel entitled to power and status (especially with respect to women) they are angered when they cannot achieve these ‘entitlements.’ Reactions to a sense of powerlessness may include violence against women, or joining a gang, a racist movement, an army or an armed revolutionary movement, that restore feelings of control.”

For such men, life skills training in self-awareness, coping with emotions and stress, effective communication, problem-solving, empathy, and interpersonal relationships might be tremendously useful.

Given the power and irrationality of many of the people one encounters from cradle to grave, **life skills can help possible targets of violence and irresponsible drinking to defend and advance their own rights** where potential abusers have yet to assimilate such strategies. An example of this can be found in the work of the Human Rights Education Program for Women, developed by the Turkish organization, Women for Women's Human Rights—New Ways. The program was created in 1993 and has since been implemented in over 30 cities, in every region of Turkey. In addition to teaching women about their rights, the facilitators teach the participants “communication skills” and work with them to devise “common tactics” and “personal strategies” “to deal with the negative responses from their families and community.”<sup>57</sup> One participant wrote,

“In our day, we could not defend our own rights; we were brought up in ignorance. I do not want my daughter, my son or my daughter-in-law to experience what I have lived through. I have to make this happen. I have seen that through the Women's Human Rights Training Program. I have changed my husband as well; but it is not only my husband, our society has to change.... I had forgotten about the people out there and how to talk to them. Now I travel and talk to my heart's desire, and I write freely, without fear.”<sup>58</sup>

In 2002, an external evaluation was conducted with 290 of the 4000 program graduates. As reported in evaluation focus groups, many of the participants “had internalized gender norms that condone violence against women, perceived it as normal.” After the training,

[Sixty-three per cent] of women who experience physical violence from their partners were able to end it, while 22% were able to decrease its extent.... [Seventy-five per cent] of women who were subject to emotional violence were able to end or decrease [it] through skills they acquired in the program.... **[The] combination of an increase in critical awareness of rights combined with communication skills resulted in an increased ability to resolve problems for an overwhelming majority of the participants (90%)....** Around 70% reported that the attitudes of the husbands and other members of the family towards them changed for the better.... [P]articipants developed a greater awareness of their daughter's rights and the importance of not engaging in discriminatory behavior towards girl children. [Ninety-three per cent] indicated that their attitude towards their children changed in a positive direction after the training.<sup>59</sup>

This evaluation of such a large program demonstrates how, in the best cases, one can move from [re-]socialization to social transformation, and on to a possibility of cultural paradigm shift. In short, **life skills training can both dramatically reduce the chances of escalation that often occurs after the rights consciousness of traditional targets is raised, and contribute significantly to the ability of these learners to pass on their newly-gained knowledge and assurance with pyramidal effect throughout their community, as well as to the next generation** (see Figure 5).

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<sup>57</sup> See pp. 118, 119, 121, 123, and 124 in Ilkcaracan, P., & Amado, L. E. (2005). Human rights education as a tool of grassroots organizing and social transformation: A case study from Turkey. *Intercultural Education*, 6, 115–128.

<sup>58</sup> Turkan, a participant from Ankara, Central Anatolia, cited on p. 123 in Ilkcaracan & Amado.

<sup>59</sup> Emphasis added; see pp. 124–125 in Ilkcaracan & Amado.

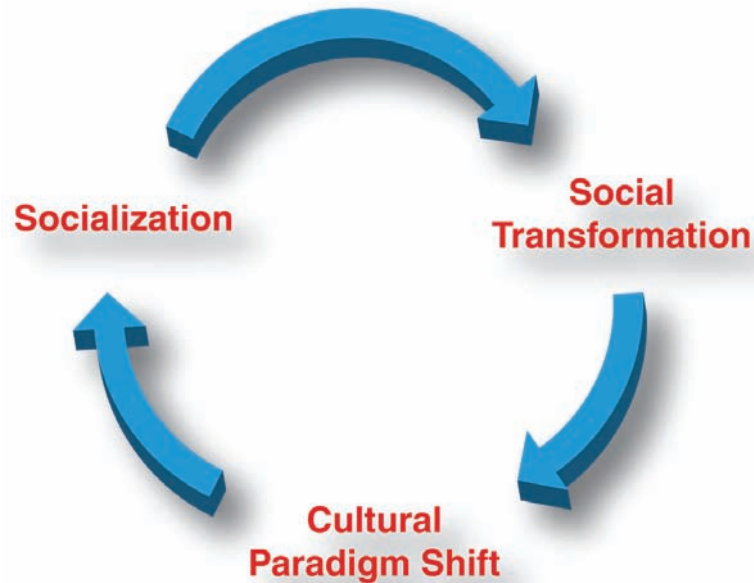


FIGURE 5. The cyclical nature of sociocultural transformation

### *Alcohol Education*

Some critics of alcohol education have claimed that its effectiveness cannot be proven. Literature reviews on the subject nonetheless reveal that **many of the characteristics of effective interventions on alcohol echo strategies in human rights education**, the success of which is rarely questioned. These characteristics include the following:

- (1) a participatory and multi-media format, involving the family, where appropriate, as well as communication and decision-making skills;
- (2) multi-sectoral content, based in the participants' reality;
- (3) a course design long enough to allow repeated interplay between the classroom and the real world;
- (4) incorporation into institutions capable of both maintaining the training and reacting to societal changes that result from it;
- (5) diligent supervision of program content and delivery;
- (6) thorough and periodic evaluation of the program with a view to enhancing its effect and culling both lessons learned and good practices.<sup>60</sup>

This overlap suggests two possibilities. First, **alcohol education might be more effective when combined with education on other health or social issues**—for example human rights and life skills aimed at containing and preventing violence. Second, these six characteristics appear applicable for any education for social transformation. Such commonality underscores the value of testing their effectiveness by bringing them together in a single program that includes alcohol education.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Ilkkaracan & Amado. See also International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP). (2005). *Alcohol education and its effectiveness*. ICAP Report 16. Washington, DC: Author; pp. 143–146 in McCardell, J.M., Jr. (2006). *The effects of the 21-year-old drinking age: A white paper*. Middlebury, VT: Choose Responsibility.



As mentioned in the list above, **a key element of both effective human rights education and effective alcohol education is the program's ability to reflect and respond to the current reality of its participants.** In human rights education, such reality-based instruction includes culturally significant ways of learning the rights and freedoms in question (including through case studies), prevention-oriented consideration of the dangers posed by their defense and promotion, as well as politically and culturally strategic ways of conducting that defense and promotion. In quite a parallel fashion, proponents of reality-based alcohol education suggest that educators:

...provide accurate, truthful, and unbiased information about alcohol and its consumption; distinguish between the use and abuse of alcohol; teach the legal status and potential legal consequences of underage purchase, possession, and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages...; [and] teach effective ways to reduce the potential harm that can result from the abuse of alcohol.<sup>61</sup>

Whereas human rights have bases in both national and international norms, alcohol consumption is regulated strictly by national or local norms—not international ones. As a consequence, the basic tenets of the human rights component of education efforts to reduce alcohol-related violence, and their implications for life skills, should remain largely uniform internationally, even if they are communicated differently from one society to the next. Alcohol education and its resonance in life skills education, however, must necessarily vary in implementation, depending on the legal environment of the country where they are offered. The most challenging case, of course, is that of societies that are legally “dry,” but where problem drinking and related violence are prevalent.

Regardless of the legal status of alcohol in a given society, gender-aware and gender-fair human rights and life skills education can help young men, couples, parents, and leaders resort less frequently to violence when confronting conflict and frustration, whatever the circumstances. As long as the education is offered on the basis of equity between the sexes, and the various topics addressed cover the childhood origins of much unhealthy public and private behaviors, education can be a cost-effective way to prevent violence. To understand the logic underpinning this statement without entering into complex economic analysis, one need only compare the financial and emotional cost of a few hours of education to that of one emergency room visit or, worse, one funeral.

### ***Recognize and Act on Public-private Cycles of Violence***

Violence is the most visible and disturbing end result of the process that begins when a boy is pushed into the adult world too early and without sufficient love and support. He becomes seriously disconnected, retreats behind the mask, and expresses the only “acceptable” male emotion—anger.... Violence, therefore, is the final link in the chain that begins with disconnection. Violence is also about shame and honor.... [It] is a boy's attempt to... thwart shame and dishonor by going on the offensive, by hurting another human being....<sup>62</sup>

Many harmful practices continue in private, being passed on from one generation to the next, even where they have long since been criminalized by local or national law.<sup>63</sup> Both witnessing violence and suffering

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<sup>61</sup> See para. 11 in Hanson, D. J. (n.d.). *Children and young people. Effective alcohol education: What works with underage youths*. Retrieved March 20, 2008, from <http://www2.potsdam.edu/hansondj/YouthIssues/1116635269.html>.

<sup>62</sup> See p. 338 in Pollack, W. (1998). *Real boys: Rescuing our sons from the myths of boyhood*. New York: Random House.

<sup>63</sup> The intergenerational cycle of violence suggests that children who grow up in abusive environments and/or suffer neglect are more likely to become abusers and/or act violently themselves. See Widom, C., & Maxfield, M. (2001). *An update on the cycle of violence*. Washington, DC: Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

it directly influence how children learn to perceive themselves, manage their emotions, mediate situations, internalize concepts of self-control, and ultimately interact with others.<sup>64</sup> Children exposed to physical violence, often within the home, may resort to violence themselves because they perceive this kind of behavior to be an appropriate response to conflict, frustration, or stress.<sup>65</sup>

Similarly, research has suggested that abused children face an increased risk of developing alcohol-related problems as adults, particularly in the case of women.<sup>66</sup> For these survivors, alcohol may serve as a coping mechanism to deal with the trauma experienced as a child and/or to manage subsequent depression. What's more, some studies suggest that parents' alcohol problems may be a factor in the physical and sexual abuse of their children.<sup>67</sup> Exposure to violence during childhood may therefore contribute to problem drinking, which in turn may perpetuate the intergenerational cycle of violence (see Figure 6).

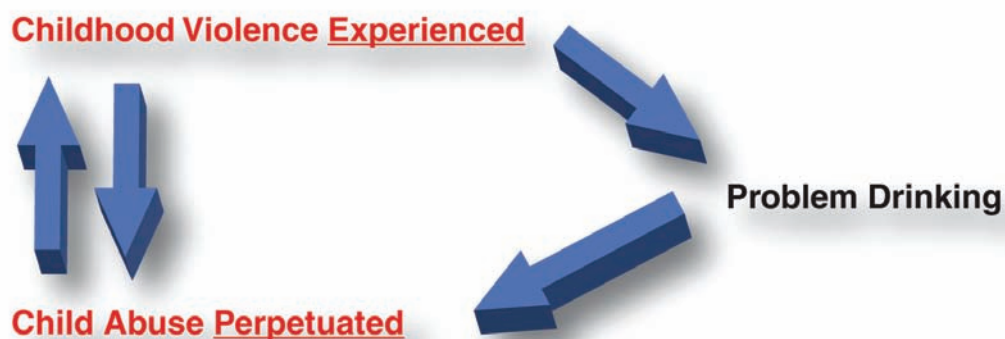


FIGURE 6. Violence experienced in childhood and problem drinking can interact in various ways

Many nations fear intervening in the affairs of their neighbors—or even responding to them by offering assistance on their own territory—despite atrocities and gross violation of international law, because they would rather avoid cross-border scrutiny of their own internal affairs. In much the same way, members of a community, or even a family, avoid getting involved in cases of family violence to avoid others' prying into their own matters. Culture also plays a role.

In a 1994 case that proves both of these general rules, and their exception, the Government of Canada was asked to consider the asylum claim of a woman and her daughter who were fleeing domestic violence. The principal claimant's husband had repeatedly battered, raped, and threatened her with death throughout their seven-year marriage:

<sup>64</sup> Parent-child and gender relations in the family socialize most individuals. Not only are these behaviors transmitted from generation to generation, but they are also reflected in prevailing social norms. See Eisler, R. (1997). Human rights and violence: Integrating the private and public spheres. In J. Turpin & L. R. Kurtz (Eds.), *The web of violence: From interpersonal to global*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois.

<sup>65</sup> Widom, C. (1993, June). *The cycle of violence*. Paper presented at Second National Conference on Violence, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, Australia. Retrieved November 27, 2007, from <http://www.aic.gov.au/conferences/ncv2/widom.pdf>. See also Widom, C., & Maxfield, M. (2001). *An update on the cycle of violence*. Washington, DC: Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

<sup>66</sup> Reiss, A. J., Jr., & Roth, J. A. (Eds.). (1994). *Understanding and preventing violence* (vol. 3). Washington, DC: National Academy Press. See also National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). (1997, October). Alcohol, violence and aggression. *Alcohol Alert* [Online], 38. Retrieved April 20, 2008, from <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa38.htm>.

<sup>67</sup> Widom, C., & Hiller-Sturmhöfel, S. (2001). Alcohol abuse as a risk factor for and consequence of child abuse. *Alcohol Research and Health*, 25, 52–57.

Any attempts by the claimant to turn to family and friends for support were thwarted by her husbands' threats of violence against them. As well, the claimant was blamed for the abuse and pressured to remain in the marriage by her own father and her husband's family. Her sole source of support, her mother, was also a battered wife who was blamed by family members for allowing the claimant to take refuge in her home. The unyielding consensus was that the claimant belonged at her husband's side no matter what. This entrenched societal attitude only served to reinforce the claimant's isolation and perpetuated the pattern of spousal abuse against her.... The... authorities were clearly aware of the pattern of abuse which the claimant suffered at the hands of her husband, and they chose not to bring him to justice.<sup>68</sup>

So, how did the refugee status determination officials regard this scenario? The Government found as follows:

[The inaction of the authorities of the country of origin] constitutes "acquiescence" as defined in the Convention on Torture.... If a wife is subjected to violence repeatedly, then... she stands in no different a situation than a person who has been arrested, detained and beaten on a number of occasions because of his political opinion. As a matter of fact, such a person suffers to a lesser degree over a period of time, because after each detention he is released and enjoys his freedom. The wife on the other hand has no respite from her agony of torture and grief. She must endure these misfortunes continuously.... [T]he claimant has an internationally recognized right to protection from domestic violence and failure to give that protection is a form of gender-based discrimination.... [T]he... authorities did not take the necessary steps to protect the rights of the minor claimant [from]... mental and psychological duress suffered... due to her father's violence....<sup>69</sup>

**The Canadian Government did not engage in "cultural imperialism" by deciding to grant refugee status and the consequent safe haven to the mother and daughter. It employed international law applicable on its territory and, quite likely, valid in the applicants' country of origin<sup>70</sup>—a reality the understanding and assimilation of which is essential to working constructively with the intersection of human rights and culture.**

On the surface, this case did not involve unhealthy patterns of alcohol consumption. It did, however, address the following issues crucial to the understanding and eradication of all family violence, including where immoderate alcohol consumption is involved:

- (1) Much (family and intimate partner) violence is intergenerational;
- (2) cultural beliefs, or "entrenched societal attitudes," preserve and foment this intergenerational continuum;
- (3) intimate partner violence based on presumptions about one sex's rights over another is gender-based;<sup>71</sup>
- (4) the target is not the only one who suffers; witnesses, especially children, suffer as well, often profoundly and over their entire lives.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Name withheld. Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). (1994, August 9). *Decision No. T91-01497/8*, pp. 2, 4–5, 7.

<sup>69</sup> Emphasis added; Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). (1994, August 9). *Decision No. T91-01497/8*.

<sup>70</sup> As of March 21, 2008, 145 countries were party to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. See this treaty's ratification status at the website of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, <http://untreaty.un.org/ENGLISH/bible/englishinternetbible/partI/chapterIV/treaty14.asp>. Full text of the Treaty is available online: see United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (1984/1987). *UN convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*. Retrieved March 21, 2008, from [http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/h\\_cat39.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/h_cat39.htm).

<sup>71</sup> Much child abuse is as well.

So, pry we must. Until we do so consistently, **applying punishment proportionate to the crime committed, treating the intergenerational cycle of domination and violence as the major health concern that it is, and encouraging others to follow suit,**<sup>73</sup> abuse will be passed on from one generation to the next, as well as from the private sphere to the public, and back again.

Military forces can reveal a more institutionalized face of this intergenerational dynamic.<sup>74</sup> According to Patricia Resick, the Director of the Women's Health Sciences Division of the National Center for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)<sup>75</sup> at the Boston Veterans' Administration (V.A.) facility, both men and women who join the USA military have higher rates of sexual and physical abuse in their backgrounds than does the general population.<sup>76</sup> Knowing this, scenarios like the one that Tina Lee, a psychiatrist at the V.A. Palo Alto Health Care System in California—who works with both male and female PTSD patients—describes should probably not surprise us, even if they shock us:

While serving in a mostly male reserve unit in Kuwait, [one former reservist] told me, she was sexually assaulted. After returning home..., she began exhibiting symptoms of PTSD... and promptly went to her local V.A. hospital for help. She was then put into group therapy—which has long been shown to be an economical and reasonably effective way of helping trauma survivors process their experiences—but her “group” was made up entirely of male Vietnam vets, some of whom were trying to work through sex crimes they committed during military service. Others came home from war and beat their wives....<sup>77</sup>

The experience of many members of the USA armed forces, and the horrific mismanagement of this woman's case, is just one of many increasingly well-documented examples of the intergenerational, public-private cycle of violence. What is not described here, but could be, is the concomitant reliance of many service men and women on beverage alcohol and other psychoactive substances to self-medicate, or

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<sup>72</sup> See discussion above, in the subsection *Missed Opportunities for Healthy Understanding, Modeling, and Behavioral Development*.

<sup>73</sup> Acting on the relationships between the public and private spheres by challenging the fallacious notion that violence is a private matter—or is justifiable by culture or custom—can mobilize collective support to shift public perceptions and behaviors.

<sup>74</sup> For more on the military's influence on male gender roles and violence, see the subsection below, *Overcome the Use of Humiliation and Ridicule to Preserve Unhealthy Norms, Traditions, and Institutions*.

<sup>75</sup> Post-traumatic stress disorder is a condition that is internationally understood to comprise the following elements: “exposure to a stressful event or situation (either short or long lasting) of exceptionally threatening or catastrophic nature, which is likely to cause pervasive distress in almost anyone...; persistent remembering or ‘reliving’ the stressor by intrusive flash backs, vivid memories, recurring dreams, or by experiencing distress when exposed to circumstances resembling or associated with the stressor...; actual or preferred avoidance of circumstances resembling or associated with the stressor (not present before exposure to the stressor)...; inability to recall, either partially or completely, some important aspects of the period of exposure to the stressor, [or] persistent symptoms of increased psychological sensitivity and arousal (not present before exposure to the stressor) shown by any two of the following[—]difficulty in falling or staying asleep; irritability or outbursts of anger; difficulty in concentrating; hyper-vigilance; exaggerated startle response.... [The above symptoms all] occurred within six months of the stressful event, or the end of a period of stress. (For some purposes, onset delayed more than six months may be included but this should be clearly specified separately.)” See World Health Organization (WHO). (1993). *The ICD-10: Classification of mental and behavioural disorders: Diagnostic criteria for research*. Retrieved March 22, 2008, from [www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/GRNBOOK.pdf](http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/GRNBOOK.pdf).

<sup>76</sup> Corbett, S. (2007, March 18). The women's war. *The New York Times Magazine* [Online]. Retrieved March 22, 2008, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/18/magazine/18cover.html>.

<sup>77</sup> See p. 7 in Corbett.

“numb the pain,” during deployment and after they return home,<sup>78</sup> when many feel intensely alone with excruciatingly painful memories.<sup>79</sup> We are learning that increasing numbers of these memories involve abuse at the hands of the very people they were supposed to trust with their lives—their fellow soldiers.<sup>80</sup>

**The public-private cycle of violence and domination is an international reality, requiring a response that is culturally adaptable, multi-sectoral,<sup>81</sup> and flexible enough to address the problem drinking that can accompany it.** A greater understanding of the roles of alcohol and violence in the military and of good practices for stemming their unwarranted or irresponsible use can be found in the next section.

### ***Overcome the Use of Humiliation and Ridicule to Preserve Unhealthy Norms, Traditions, and Institutions***

Without safe places where they can voice their pain or discuss their shame and deep embarrassment, many boys begin to toughen themselves up into little men. They become cut off from their own feelings, and their voices no longer fully connect with their emotional selves.... Whether it's winning a fight and thus impressing one's peers, helping other boys to beat up another kid, or actually joining a gang, violence may give some boys a false impression that they're somehow growing closer to one another, bonding, in effect, through their individual and collective acts of aggression and malevolence.<sup>82</sup>

From the Tajik man who does not let people see him help his wife with household chores or his neighbor who keeps his sister indoors for fear of ridicule from other men in his town,<sup>83</sup> to the aspiring USA college fraternity<sup>84</sup> recruit who risks his health and maybe even his life in a drinking “game” in order to

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<sup>78</sup> See, for example: More drinking in military. (2004, March 9). *The New York Times* [Online]. Retrieved March 22, 2008, from

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?sec=health&res=9A07E2DB173EF93AA35750C0A9629C8B63&fta=y>.

<sup>79</sup> According to Helen Benedict, “All soldiers with PTSD come home to some combination of sleeplessness, nightmares, bursts of temper, flashbacks, panic attacks, fear and an inability to cope with everyday life. They often turn to drugs or alcohol for escape. Some become depressed, others commit suicide. Many are too emotionally numb to relate to their families or children. But those who have been sexually assaulted also lose their self-respect, feel they have lost control over their lives, and are particularly prone to self-destruction.” See p. 3 in Benedict, H. (2007, March 7). The private war of women soldiers. *Salon News* [Online]. Retrieved April 24, 2008, from [http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/03/07/women\\_in\\_military/index.html](http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/03/07/women_in_military/index.html).

<sup>80</sup> Benedict.

<sup>81</sup> For culturally adaptable and multi-sectoral ways of breaking the public-private cycle of violence, see, for example, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). (2001). *Gender aspects in post-conflict situations: A guide for OSCE staff*. Retrieved March 24, 2008, from [www.osce.org/publications/gen/2001/09/14003\\_947\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/publications/gen/2001/09/14003_947_en.pdf). Although the Guide was originally published in 2001, it has been periodically updated since.

<sup>82</sup> See pp. 59 and 339 in Pollack, W. (1998). *Real boys: Rescuing our sons from the myths of boyhood*. New York: Random House.

<sup>83</sup> “I do not care if my sister has a lover. I do not mind at all. That is entirely her business. But if she is known in my village even to have talked with a strange man **I will become a laughing stock before the men in the village**. For this reason, I keep my sister shut up at home. If we lived in a big city where no one knew us she could do whatever she liked. But not where she can be seen to do it and I can be mocked because of it.”

**“I like to help my wife in the home, but if anyone sees me doing this I am shamed.** For this reason inside our flat I help my wife. Outside I would never do so. When I have tried my neighbours have laughed at me for doing women's work. Now I do not do this any more.”

See Collette Harris, cited in chapter 1 of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). (2005). *Areas of concern*. Retrieved March 20, 2008, from [www.osce.org](http://www.osce.org). According to the UNESCO Expert Group, “Humiliation might not happen so easily if it were not for exaggerated ideas of masculine honour.”

<sup>84</sup> A *fraternity* is an institution of self-selecting, communal housing and social life present on many US American college campuses.

feel accepted, men around the world are subject to humiliation and ridicule aimed at dominating them and controlling the women in their lives.<sup>85</sup>

## The Military

Military forces the world over are infamous for their use of humiliation to maintain the myth of machismo. As a UNESCO international expert group found in 1997,

It is common in military training all around the world to link manliness with brutality, and to discredit fear and sensitivity as unmanly.... Boys' peer group life, military training, and mass media often promote a direct link between being a "real man" and the practice of dominance and violence. The maintenance of [violently dominating male gender roles] requires disrespect for other forms of masculinity and for women's empowerment. This often takes the form of mutual harassment among boys, and serious violence against homosexual men by some young men.<sup>86</sup>

According to the Director of the Women's Health Sciences Division of the National Center for PTSD at the Boston Veterans' Administration facility,

Many of the women [returning from Iraq]... said they felt the burden of having to represent their sex—to defy stereotypes about women somehow being too weak for military duty in a war zone by displaying more resiliency and showing less emotion than they otherwise might.<sup>87</sup>

Most reported avoiding friendships with other women during deployment, in part to steer clear of the ridicule that came with having a close friend. As a 24-year-old, combat-support specialist with the Wisconsin Army National Guard explained,

You're one of three things in the military—a bitch, a whore, or a dyke.... As a female, you get classified pretty quickly.<sup>88</sup>

Many women spoke of male soldiers telling crass jokes about them. Even those who responded with sarcasm said that, privately, the ridicule took its toll on them. "It's like sending three women to live in a frat house," said another.<sup>89</sup>

Was there no hope for these women? As in most situations, **the message had to come from the top.** Several other women interviewed credited their commanders with creating and maintaining a more **egalitarian climate—one of "zero tolerance" for harassment.**<sup>90</sup> In 2005, the USA Department of Defense set up a website intended to educate personnel on the illegality of sexual assault and assist

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<sup>85</sup> See, for example, UNESCO Expert Group.

<sup>86</sup> UNESCO Expert Group.

<sup>87</sup> See p. 6 in Corbett, S. (2007, March 18). The women's war. *The New York Times Magazine* [Online]. Retrieved March 22, 2008, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/18/magazine/18cover.html>.

<sup>88</sup> See p. 6 in Corbett. See also Benedict, H. (2007, March 7). The private war of women soldiers. *Salon News* [Online]. Retrieved April 24, 2008, from [http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/03/07/women\\_in\\_military/index.html](http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/03/07/women_in_military/index.html).

<sup>89</sup> See p. 1 in Benedict. Here, the term *frat* is an abbreviated form of the word *fraternity*. The "housemother" of a fraternity with wrecked furniture in the living room that one of Dabbs' research assistants visited in the course of his research, said, "The house is only standing because it is made of concrete and steel." See p. 84 in Dabbs, J. M., Jr., & Dabbs, M. G. (2000). *Heroes, rogues, and lovers: Testosterone and behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

<sup>90</sup> Corbett. See also Benedict.

survivors in reporting it.<sup>91</sup> What's more, since these statements were made, a majority of US American military personnel surveyed have expressed the opinion that the military's **training on sexual harassment** is having a positive effect.<sup>92</sup>

Such indications of good leadership and effective training are encouraging. Nevertheless, none of the sources for this section mention the effect of warfare on (off-duty) violent behavior.<sup>93</sup> As mentioned above, the use of alcohol to self-medicate during and after armed conflict is also common knowledge to anyone who works in or with military personnel.<sup>94</sup> Clearly, the combination of these two factors in such a male-dominated, organizational culture, with extraordinary access to weapons, is nothing short of deadly—and is very much in need of attention. A number of strategies explored in this paper suggest tactics that the military could use to minimize these problems and their consequent human, financial, political, and security costs. However, so far, the USA Department of Defense has resorted to only one systemically: **education**. The other strategies are **recognition of and action against the elevated incidence of public-private cycle of violence from which military families appear to suffer; eradication of the use of humiliation and ridicule to preserve an organizational culture infamous for its reliance on male domination; promotion of healthy relations among men and between men and women; encouragement and reward of role models who personify and demand respect for human dignity on the basis of equality among all; and working with those components of the military's organizational culture that are ideal vehicles for confronting violence and unhealthy patterns of drinking in personnel, or are capable of constructive reform in these directions.**

## The Corporate World

Anne Fox described how British military recruits were encouraged to bond over drinks. Corporate culture<sup>95</sup> can resemble the military, where young professionals are expected to drink together for the sake of the whole.

Exhorted by their bosses to drink, the [South Korean] corporate warriors bond, literally, so that the sight of dark-suited men holding hands, leaning on one another, staggering toward taxis, is part of [Seoul's] nighttime streetscape. The next morning, back at the office, they are ready to fight, with reaffirmed unity, for more markets at home and abroad.<sup>96</sup>

Whereas drinking to excess has been used in South Korean corporate culture for years to promote bonding between male colleagues, things began to change as women climbed the corporate ladder. At first, women

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<sup>91</sup> Benedict.

<sup>92</sup> See: Military women report harassment. (2008, March 14). *Associated Press* [Online]. Retrieved April 20, 2008, from [www.truthout.org/docs\\_2006/031508Y.shtml](http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/031508Y.shtml). For details of the training, see Benedict.

<sup>93</sup> See above for mention of men who return from war and beat their wives.

<sup>94</sup> For example, *The New York Times* reported, "Cigarette smoking and heavy drinking are rising in the [USA] military, and many in the armed forces report feeling stress, a Pentagon health survey... showed. Of the 12,756 troops who responded to the Pentagon's 2002 survey, conducted at 30 military installations worldwide, about one-third said they felt a lot of stress in their military duties. Almost half of the respondents said that seeking mental health counseling would probably or definitely damage their careers. The survey found that the share of military members categorized as heavy drinkers... rose to 18% from 15% in the previous survey in 1998. And military personnel aged 18 to 25 reported much higher rates of heavy drinking, 27.3%, than civilians, 15.3%." Note, inter alia, the increase in "heavy drinkers" from peace time to war time. See: More drinking in military. (2004, March 9). *The New York Times* [Online]. Retrieved March 20, 2008, from [www.nytimes.com/](http://www.nytimes.com/). See also the paper by Anne Fox in this monograph.

<sup>95</sup> The term *corporate culture* is used here to refer to the "collective attitudes and behavior of corporations." See *Dictionary.com Unabridged* (vol. 1.1). Retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/culture>.

<sup>96</sup> Onishi, N. (2007, June 10). Corporate Korea corks the bottle as women rise. *The New York Times*, p. 1.

were forced to drink heavily too, and were humiliated if they refused. “Either you drink or you get it from me tomorrow,” one boss told his employee. With the growth in their numbers, however, South Korean women have increasingly stood up to such demands. In May of 2007, in an unprecedented ruling, the Seoul High Court found that forcing a subordinate to drink alcohol was illegal. It ruled that the manager in question was guilty of a “violation of human dignity.”<sup>97</sup>

The above examples of military and corporate environments demonstrate two points that are relevant to all social transformation efforts aimed at preventing violence by reigning in unhealthy gender roles. First, institutions such as **armed forces and corporations** are not only male-dominated in most societies; their size and resources also give them tremendous power to influence broader community. For these reasons, such organizations are **key arenas in which to focus energies aimed at facilitating constructive paradigm shifts**. Second, both cases demonstrate the **effectiveness of multi-sectoral approaches to social transformation**. In the case of the USA military, **gender-aware healthcare, leadership, and human rights training** revealed some hope along the long road to reducing misogyny and sexual violence in its ranks. In the corporate South Korean case, women’s **grassroots organization and legal analysis** by lawyers and judges joined forces to remedy the sexism and unhealthy practice of, as well as the violence implicit in, that drinking culture. In both cases, **the journalism profession educated the public about the challenges and possible remedies**.

### *Promote Healthy Ways for Males to Overcome Their Isolation from Each Other, and from Females*

From all-men Quaker colleges, to the promotion of sports that prize skill over brute force, to men’s groups that foster the protector and nurturer in men over the traditional “tough guy,” to all-male campaigns against violence against women, for centuries, people have found and forged **creative alternatives that allow men and boys to expend their energy in productive ways**. Take, for example, the Men’s Traveling Conference, a group of more than 100 men from Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia who journeyed across eastern and southern Africa in 2003 and 2004 to raise awareness and mobilize other men to support gender equality, as well as eradicate gender-based violence (GBV). The Conference was made up of faith leaders, policemen, lawyers, athletes, artists, students, and persons living with HIV/AIDS and consisted of men aged 20 to 80 years. In each town where they stopped, the men used music, dance, drama, and debate to draw in their audiences. Their buses sported banners with such mottos as, “Peace in Africa Begins at Home: Men Fight GBV.” As one participant, Zambian journalist Nelson Banda, said,

**As men, we need to re-assess... how we have been socialized. Gender based violence is barbaric and serves nobody! We are in the Gender Revolution and, as men, we should take the lead and live by example.... I have witnessed that, when men talk to other men on gender equality, they tend to pay more attention than when the same is coming from a woman.**<sup>98</sup>

Whereas the Traveling Conference originated in the “developing” world, the Mankind Project originated in the “developed” world. The Project is a “progressive men’s organization” of over 30,000 men in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the USA. It offers **training aimed at supporting men to develop lives that incorporate accountability and integrity, connection to feelings, leadership, fatherhood, and the blessing of elders**. The Project’s members not only integrate and redirect traditional roles and concepts like fatherhood and elders in their values, they initiate

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<sup>97</sup> Onishi.

<sup>98</sup> Emphasis added; Men tour Africa against gender violence. (2004, March). *Current: UNIFEM’s Electronic Newsletter* [Online]. Retrieved March 20, 2008, from [http://www.unifem.org/news\\_events/currents/currents200403.html#femnet](http://www.unifem.org/news_events/currents/currents200403.html#femnet).



other men through a workshop that encourages being a different kind of “warrior,” one who lives and shares the values of the Project, instead of those of “toxic masculinity.”<sup>99</sup>

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of similar efforts by men currently in operation around the world. Many of them prioritize the prevention of violence against women. One that focuses on positive relations with children—and was founded by a recovering alcoholic—is Dads and Daughters, discussed below.<sup>100</sup> Such organizations and movements show us how to **give men and boys tools other than competitiveness and domination to use in their dealings with each other, with women, and with children.**

Among other actions, organizations like the Mankind Project and Boys to Men<sup>101</sup> **provide men and teenage boys with the kinds of rituals that** have disappeared from many societies over the past decades of rapid modernization and globalization. These rituals—for the renewal of which experts like bio-psychologist Dabbs and anthropologist Fox have called—**offer boys anticipatory guidance<sup>102</sup> at a crucial stage in their physical, emotional, and ethical development.**

### ***Rectify Power Imbalances with Development and Role Models***

This paper has already reviewed ways in which education can alter the power structure, gender roles, interpersonal communication, and conflict management within a family, a community, and a society, thereby reducing the chances of violence and immoderate drinking. In this section, the authors examine how **fighting poverty and demonstrating realistic-but-transformative behavioral models—often in concert with targeted, educational efforts—can also lessen the incidence of these two reckless and injurious behaviors.**

### **Poverty, Deprivation, and Marginalization**

As a rule, gender inequity, violence, and reckless drinking do not discriminate among socioeconomic classes. The debilitating effects and missed opportunities that accompany persistent deprivation and marginalization, however, make the battle against these social pathologies much more challenging for the dispossessed than for the privileged.<sup>103</sup> The journey from gender equity to development, to reductions in violence and reckless drinking, and back, is a circular but constructive one: The fewer cases of gender- or entitlement-related

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<sup>99</sup> C. M. O’Connor interview of the Mankind Project member, Kit Mendelson (2008, March 12), Washington, DC. For information about the Mankind Project, see <http://mkp.org>.

<sup>100</sup> For examples of other similar programs, see UNESCO Expert Group.

<sup>101</sup> C. M. O’Connor interview of Kit Mendelson (2008, April 23), Washington, DC. See also [www.boystomen.info](http://www.boystomen.info): “The mission of [Maine, USA-based] Boys to Men is to help reduce interpersonal violence by offering programs that... [s]upport the healthy development of adolescent boys... [p]rovide assistance and educational resources to boys and those who raise them... [I]ncrease community awareness about the specific needs of boys.” The organization’s core values are “community responsibility for raising healthy boys, non-violence, gender justice and respect.” See: *About B2M/+ core values*. (n.d.). Retrieved April 20, 2008, from <http://www.boystomen.info/about.html>.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, Roffman, D. (2001). *Sex and sensibility: The thinking parent's guide to talking sense about sex*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

<sup>103</sup> Relying on criminological, bio-sociological, and other social research to look at the effects of socioeconomic status on reckless (“delinquent”) behavior, Dabbs and Dabbs found that “[t]estosterone has fewer bad effects among men who are solidly embedded in social networks, men who grow up with strong parental support and have high levels of formal education, stable marriages, steady jobs, and numerous friends and social contacts” (p. 205). Moreover, one study of 14- to 16-year-olds in North Carolina, USA, found that “testosterone related to getting drunk, smoking cigarettes, having sex, and smoking marijuana, but also found [that]... [t]estosterone had a less negative effect among boys who were involved in school and community activities and had a positive attitude toward home.” See Dabbs, J. M., Jr., & Dabbs, M. G. (2000). *Heroes, rogues, and lovers: Testosterone and behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

violence that occur, the less work time is lost to injuries and related illness. The more education and control over household resources that girls<sup>104</sup> and women are permitted, the better they can care for their families, the more able they are to contribute to—or solely provide—the household income, and the better educated their children are likely to be.<sup>105</sup> The more able men are to value their wives and daughters, the more inclined they are to “allow” these family members to fulfill their potential. This is why indigenous survivors of Guatemala’s civil war, human rights workers, and mental health professionals working to forge reconciliation during the country’s reconstruction found that **men who had received human rights training were more inclined to free their women to contribute to their community’s rehabilitation—including in a leadership capacity—thereby enhancing the speed and quality of local development.**<sup>106</sup>

The better off the community and the family, the less likely spouses are to fight over scarce resource allocation, as often happens when a husband returns home after having drunk away most or all of his paycheck. Indeed, the better off everyone is, the less likely the husband is to feel the need to respond to the misery of his grinding poverty and marginalization by drinking to excess and beating his wife and children<sup>107</sup>—behaviors that anthropologists described in indigenous male drinkers in the Peruvian Andes in 1994:

[D]rinkers affirm pride in an autonomous indigenous identity.... They make positive assertions about insider identity, and about their Inka past, but they also cry about their poverty, their loneliness, and their vulnerability. Drunkenness is a state in which people make explicit reference to the limitations of their indigenous, insider reality in their realisation that this dimension of power is not only ultimately inaccessible but also is a power that can be and has been defeated.... When a man beats his wife out of sexual jealousy he is drawing his attention to their affinal relationship.... By dominating the woman he feminises her and asserts his own masculinity.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Many mothers of the world are still girls themselves when they give birth to their own children. The volume of this very serious health and human rights problem can increase in times of armed conflict, for reasons explained by the UNESCO Expert Group above. According to the multi-agency, UN-Government, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Cluster Group in Uganda, for example, as of June 2006, the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) alone included 1500 child mothers who had been abducted and forced to “marry”—in other words, become the slaves of—LRA commanders. See Sexual and Gender Based Violence Cluster Group in Uganda, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNIFEM, UNHCR, et al. (2006, June 21). *Interventions on sexual and gender based violence in northern Uganda*. Paper presented at the Symposium on Violence against Women in Conflict Situations, Brussels, Belgium.

<sup>105</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). (2005). *Basic re-education and gender equality*. Retrieved December 12, 2007, from <http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/>.

<sup>106</sup> C. M. O’Connor interview (2002, January 24), regarding the reconciliation and violence prevention work of the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala. See p. 56 in Fagen, P. W., Rude, D., Johal, R., O’Connor, C. M., Diaz, M., & Quick, D. (2005). *UNHCR policy on refugee women and guidelines on their protection: An assessment of ten years of implementation*. Retrieved March 24, 2008, from [www.womenscommission.org/pdf/unhcr.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/unhcr.pdf). See also United Nations. (2003). *Third Committee speakers stress importance of measures to empower, protect women, as debate on women’s issues continues*. Press Release GA/SHC/3745. Retrieved December 12, 2007, from <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2003/gashc3745.doc.htm>; Annan, K. (2003, April 9). Message delivered during the Global Action Week of the Global Campaign for Education. Retrieved November 27, 2007, from [http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/campaign\\_message.html](http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/campaign_message.html). According to Annan, “There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls.”

<sup>107</sup> Feelings of frustration, hopelessness, desperation, and depression, frequently associated with poverty, may also lead to the escalation of emotional situations that can result in violence, most often directed at intimate partners or children. See Adler, F., & Laufer, W. (1993). *New directions in criminological theory: Advances in criminological theory* (vol. 4). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

<sup>108</sup> See p. 84 of Harvey, P., & Gow, P. (Eds.). (1994). Domestic violence in the Peruvian Andes. In *Sex and violence: Issues in representation and experience*. New York: Routledge.

The negative financial consequences of heavy drinking are not limited to squandered paychecks, however. They include lost income, missed economic opportunities,<sup>109</sup> an increase in medical expenditures (for both the drinker and other family members injured by his violence or recklessness), and—in extreme cases—the premature death of a household’s sole wage earner. Such outcomes are extremely preoccupying for any family. For the poor, they can be the difference between a family’s survival and devastation. According to a 2003 inquiry in 11 districts of Sri Lanka, 7% of male participants reported that their spending on alcohol exceeded their regular income.<sup>110</sup> Imagine the health and economic repercussions of that resource allocation—not just for the individual families, but across each of the 11 communities.

Actors and researchers in the development field have found that **giving women more control over resources**, including through micro-finance, **improves the family’s situation overall, including by reducing substance abuse**.

Studies of countries as varied as Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, and the United Kingdom suggest that women generally devote more of the household budget to education, health, and nutrition, and **less to alcohol** and cigarettes. For example, increases in female income improve child survival rates 20 times more than increases in male income, and children’s weight-height measures improve about eight times more.<sup>111</sup>

In summary, **human rights education can free up women to contribute more to the development of their communities, thereby helping to relieve the stress that leads some men to drink to excess, indulge in family violence, or both. Ensuring women’s and girls’ equitable roles in the development process improves family welfare overall, particularly by reducing the dissipation of precious resources on beverage alcohol** (see Figure 7).

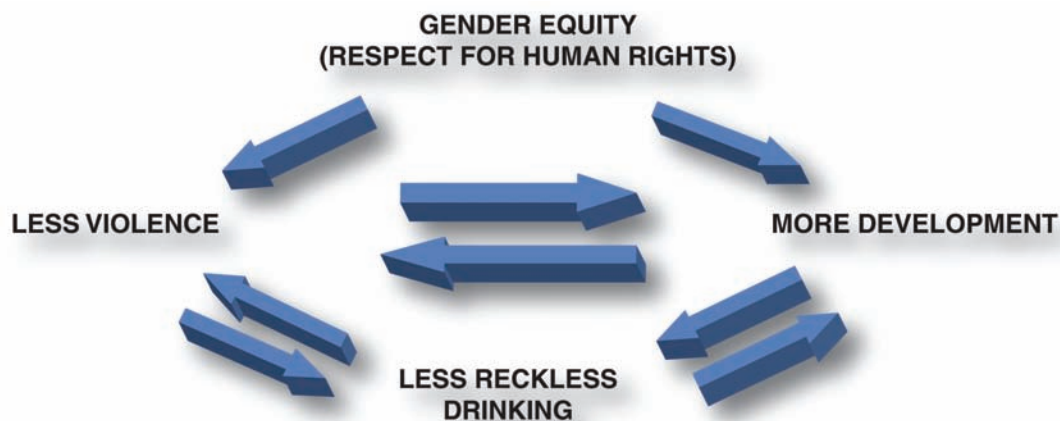


FIGURE 7. The journey from gender equity to development to reductions in violence and reckless drinking<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This figure relies on points made above regarding the intergenerational and public-private cycles of violence and immoderate drinking.

<sup>109</sup> World Health Organization (WHO). (2004). Consequences of alcohol use: Social problems associated with alcohol use. In *Global status report on alcohol* (pp. 59–64). Retrieved November 4, 2007, from [http://www.who.int/substance\\_abuse/publications/globalstatusreportalcohol2004\\_socproblems.pdf](http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/globalstatusreportalcohol2004_socproblems.pdf).

<sup>110</sup> Baklien, B., & Samarasinghe, D. (2003) *Alcohol and poverty in Sri Lanka*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Forut.

<sup>111</sup> Emphasis added; Coleman, I. (2004, May/June). The payoff from women’s rights. *Foreign Affairs* [Online]. Retrieved November 27, 2007, from [www.foreignaffairs.org/20040501faessay83308-p10/isobel-coleman/the-payoff-from-women-s-rights.html](http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20040501faessay83308-p10/isobel-coleman/the-payoff-from-women-s-rights.html).

## Modeling Realistic, but Transformative, Behavior

With or without economic development, **male modeling of masculinities that reject dominance and oppression sets a positive example for other men.**<sup>112</sup> More specifically, **demonstrations of male-female equality and cooperation in pursuit of gender equity are always constructive.** They are particularly important, however, when training military, police, and peacekeepers—occupations historically dominated by men, and ones possessing significant power to either abate or escalate violence. **The collaboration of female and male trainers has been found in this context to be an efficient way to make clear the inevitability and advisability of female occupation of leadership positions.** What’s more, **men are more likely to accept gender messages, and believe assertions of positive outcomes for them, when they come from other men than when they come from women.**<sup>113</sup>

When, in 1992, the inter-clan brutality of the civil war in Somalia—including mutilation, rape, and murder of women and children of opposing clans—spilled over into Kenya, Kenyan police were called in to protect the Dadaab complex of camps for Somali refugees in the northeastern part of the country. Life in and around these camps had become so horrific that the talented and much missed forced migration lawyer and thinker, Arthur Helton,<sup>114</sup> once referred to Dadaab as “the closest thing to hell on earth that I have ever seen.”<sup>115</sup> These police proved how quickly people could change in response to a little education, good role modeling, and a tincture of development assistance.

When the police began guarding the Dadaab complex, rumor had it they patronized the commercial sex workers, who emerge in many refugee settlements and camps, where women are forced to do whatever is necessary to survive and provide for their children. Beginning in 1993, however, these same male officers received training as part of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ (UNHCR) Women Victims of Violence Project. The training—conducted almost entirely, if not exclusively by women—focused on UNHCR’s protection mandate and the tenets of international human rights, refugee, and Kenyan law relevant to the rights of women and the girl child, and to day-to-day camp realities. Police also worked in close cooperation with UNHCR protection and community service staff, the majority of whom were women, who modeled the practical implications of the training that the male officers received. As reinforcement, UNHCR assisted the police with the building of humble station houses near the camps. An external evaluation of the project found the following:

[UNHCR’s] approach has served to create a sense of team spirit between UNHCR and the local police where serious mistrust formerly reigned, as well as to inspire confidence between the police and the refugees, who previously saw each other as adversaries. In some individual cases, law enforcement officers are reported [to have]

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<sup>112</sup> Ruxton, S. (Ed). (2004). *Gender equality and men: Learning from practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing. See also Interagency Gender Working Group, Subcommittee on Men and Reproductive Health. (2003). *Three case studies: Involving men to address gender inequities*. Retrieved November 27, 2007, from <http://www.prb.org/pdf/InvolveMenToAddressGendr.pdf>.

<sup>113</sup> See United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). (2007, June 26). *Involving male facilitators makes gender training for military, police and peacekeepers more effective, say experts in UN-sponsored discussion*. Press Release. Retrieved December 12, 2007, from [www.un-instraw.org/en/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1067](http://www.un-instraw.org/en/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1067). For further discussion of how gender-equitable peacekeeping can obviate the waste and violence that typically accompany gender discrimination, see Chapter 12 in Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). (2001). *Gender aspects in post-conflict situations: A guide for OSCE staff*. Retrieved on March 24, 2008, from [www.osce.org/publications/gen/2001/09/14003\\_947\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/publications/gen/2001/09/14003_947_en.pdf).

<sup>114</sup> Arthur Helton died on August 19, 2003, in the United Nations building bombing, while meeting with the Head of Mission, Sergio Viera de Mello.

<sup>115</sup> Telephone call with C. M. O’Connor (1995).

developed a personal sense of responsibility to prevent and redress sexual assault against the refugees.<sup>116</sup>

According to people living and working in and near the camps, after training and working alongside UNHCR, the officers stopped frequenting the commercial sex workers. One police officer and his wife even harbored in their home a girl who had run away from hers in order to flee forced marriage to a man many years her senior—a marriage that would have necessarily resulted in the excruciating re-mutilation of her genitalia, possibly repeatedly.<sup>117</sup> The captain in charge of the Dadaab camp police force developed into an energetic advocate and defender of refugee women’s and children’s rights. In fact, not long after the mission for the abovementioned evaluation, bandits murdered him as he tried to protect from certain re-mutilation, rape, and possible death at their hands a refugee woman collecting firewood outside the camp’s perimeter. Due in part to this officer’s leadership and inspiration, the police became central to the eventual stemming of the tide of violence that had ravaged these camps. These officers showed how quickly men can change their attitude toward women and girls, as well as their sense of fairness, right, and wrong—all with a little education, good modeling, and positive reinforcement.

In short, **the more people know of alternative role models for behavior, understand their benefits, and have reason to believe in their viability, the more likely they are to follow them, or expect and demand that they be followed.** This finding is as applicable to how people deal with conflict and gender as it is to how they choose to drink.

### *Challenge the Profit-makers*

Marketers and advertisers are often the first to take advantage of the age-old tradition of linking male-oriented products with domination, sexual prowess, and subjugation or objectification of women. One might nonetheless find hope in the 2006 **grassroots efforts** of the USA-based non-profit organization, Dads and Daughters,<sup>118</sup> which—along the lines of the USAmerican *Ms. Magazine*’s “No Comment” page—mounted a **newsletter and Internet-based campaign** against the toy-maker, Hasbro, for planning a new line of “toys,” modeled after The Pussycat Dolls. This burlesque-inspired dance troupe and recording act is famous for such “anti-sisterhood anthems” as *Don’t Cha Wish Your Girlfriend Was Hot Like Me?* In response to the outrage provoked by Hasbro’s attempt to take advantage of small children’s desire to grow up fast, the company hastily withdrew the line of dolls that it had been planning to market to girls as young as seven.<sup>119</sup>

In this way, Dads and Daughters demonstrated the **enduring power of** what anthropologist Margaret Mead called “**small group of thoughtful citizens**,”<sup>120</sup> **and the media**—in the form of their humble

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<sup>116</sup> See para. 26 in Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (1996, March). *A review of UNHCR’s women victims of violence project in Kenya*. Retrieved March 28, 2008, from [www.unhcr.org/research/RESEARCH/3ae6bcfe4.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/research/RESEARCH/3ae6bcfe4.pdf).

<sup>117</sup> Somalis practiced the most extreme form of female genital mutilation (FGM) known to humankind.

<sup>118</sup> Information about the organization, Dads and Daughters—the motto for which is, “Making the world safe and fair for our daughters”—can be found at [www.dadsanddaughters.org](http://www.dadsanddaughters.org).

<sup>119</sup> See, for example: Hasbro ends plans for “Pussycat Dolls.” (2006, May 26). *The New York Times* [Online]. Retrieved December 12, 2007, from [www.nytimes.com/2006/05/26/business/26toy.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/26/business/26toy.html). See also Brashich, A. (2006, May). *The Pussycat Dolls: Rock n’ roll role models or part of the problem?* Retrieved March 24, 2008, from [http://audreybrashich.blogs.com/audrey\\_brashich/2006/05/sorry\\_i\\_missed\\_.html](http://audreybrashich.blogs.com/audrey_brashich/2006/05/sorry_i_missed_.html).

<sup>120</sup> Mead’s full quotation is, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” See p. 2 in John E. Fogarty International Center for Advanced Study in the Health Sciences. (2003). *Fogarty at 35*. Retrieved March 24, 2008, from [www.fic.nih.gov/about/history.pdf](http://www.fic.nih.gov/about/history.pdf). Mead was in good company: Committed pacifist, Mahatma Gandhi, is credited with saying—and is recognized as having proven that—“A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history” (see [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/m/mohandas\\_gandhi.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/m/mohandas_gandhi.html)).

newsletter, *Daughters*. In so doing, they avoided a sociocultural backslide by one powerful toymaker in a society with immense, world-wide cultural influence. Such cases demonstrate that **it does not necessarily require much time and energy to encourage change among the financially powerful, just the organization and energy to confront and expose them.**

Nevertheless, much work remains to be done in order to eliminate unhealthy gender roles and stereotypes from the marketing campaigns that surround us. Although the mass media is all too often a vehicle for the perpetuation of such social messages, it also presents an opportunity to challenge and dispel such perceptions. One example of a successful viral ad campaign intended to shift popular ideals and redefine standards of women's beauty presented in the media was cosmetic company Dove's launch of its short film *Evolution*. The 75-second video features an "ordinary" woman being made up, photographed, and digitally enhanced to reflect supermodel-like characteristics for a billboard advertisement, ending with the comment, "No wonder our perception of beauty is distorted."<sup>121</sup>

The beauty industry's stereotype of female physical perfection illustrates how society's perceptions of female beauty and femininity are manipulated, as well as how narrow and unattainable standards of beauty are perpetuated. The continuous self-comparison with "ideal" women in popular media lowers the self-esteem of many women and girls. This negatively influences their ability to engage in healthy and meaningful personal relationships, thus creating a cycle of self-depreciation.

Stereotypes of female physical perfection, including those used in some beverage alcohol marketing, also create unrealistic and unjust expectations in many men and boys. These expectations can lead to conflict with women and girls who refuse to tolerate such denigrating and mythical standards of comparison. They can also lead to violence.<sup>122</sup> **By adopting the use of online videos to capitalize on the popularity of video-sharing sites, Dove not only seized a brand-building opportunity, but also demonstrated the potential of the commercial sector to act as a vehicle for positive social change.**<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> See Dove. (n.d.). *Campaign for real beauty: Evolution*. Retrieved April 25, 2008, from: <http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/dsef07/t5.aspx?id=7373>.

<sup>122</sup> In the current day, the line between exploitative use of unrealistic images of women in marketing, on the one hand, and pornography, on the other, can be very thin. See, for example, Thomas, E. (2008, March 7). Victoria's Secret: Becoming more "Victorian"? *One News Now*. Retrieved April 25, 2008, from [www.onenewsnow.com/Business/Default.aspx?id=69257](http://www.onenewsnow.com/Business/Default.aspx?id=69257). For this reason, the subscription rate to Victoria's Secret catalogs in US American prisons housing men—where pornography is banned—is reported to be voluminous. It also explains why unrealistic images of female physical perfection in marketing campaigns can be so dangerous. Consider the work of Wendy Quinlan-Gagnon, Executive Director of SATI International, and policy analyst and developer for addressing domestic violence in the Canadian Forces: "As many as 60% of the [abused, battered] women... interviewed [in a study of domestic violence in the Canadian armed forces] cited pornography as an issue in domestic violence. They made statements like, '[H]e hit me because I didn't look like her' [the pornographic model].... Other researchers have reported similar statements, leading us to believe that pornography... undermine[s] women's equality and self-esteem, leading to more and more incidents of domestic (and other) violence. At the same time, it is a well documented fact of social science that men who use pornography treat women differently. Research into this field has shown that pornography desensitizes men, makes them find their sexual partners less desirable and inclines them to treat women as subordinates and/or objects. In [Canada], one third of convicted rapists and half of those convicted of child sexual abuse have said they deliberately used pornography before committing an offence." Emphasis added; contribution to UNIFEM End Violence against Women On-Line Working Group (1999, September 27).

<sup>123</sup> The UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women concluded, "Effective measures should be taken to ensure that the media respect and promote respect for women." See para. 24d, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. (1992). *General Recommendation 19: Violence against women*. Retrieved from the University of Minnesota Human Rights Library on March 25, 2008, from <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/gencomm/gener19.htm>. The Fourth World Conference on Women included the following into its Platform for Action, "Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media."

In this context, it is worth noting that alcohol industry self-regulatory codes typically include provisions that prohibit the use of sexual prowess or sexual success as a selling point for a brand. Many also include provisions against advertising that degrades the image, form, or status of women. Of course, some producers in some markets have failed to adhere to these standards, and persistent vigilance is needed by regulators, industry members, and consumers.

### ***Maximize Opportunity in Crisis—Support the Phoenix from the Fire***

**During times of crisis, people are often compelled to take on roles that one would have thought impossible before.** In societies with a long tradition of viewing females as creatures to be protected, women—even girls—have become guerrilla commanders during civil wars, and wives have succeeded assassinated husbands as heads of state.

During the NATO bombing of Kosovo, the only people who were safe on the streets in many places were mature women and the elderly, who became in a sense the protectors and providers for the men and the young.<sup>124</sup>

Substance abuse and family violence are serious problems in many refugee camps and settlements for internally displaced persons (IDPs). In such environments, where freedom of movement is severely limited, not only do women undergo comparable role changes, but men are often left with little to do. Self-esteem drops; frustration builds; substances—including alcohol—if available, are abused; and violence breaks out in the home, at the camp perimeter, and elsewhere.

This is the perfect time to **complement women’s transformation with a parallel transformation among men.**<sup>125</sup> A number of organizations have sponsored sporting events for boys and younger men in refugee and IDP camps. Such activities provide a constructive outlet for pent-up, young, male energy. They nonetheless fail to **capture opportunities for long-term, positive social change** by not offering support to the women and girls who have taken on new roles with the crisis, and by not including strategies for reducing frustration among the more mature, married men.

**Cost-effective means can be found to train men to take on roles that encourage a healthy use of their creative energies and distance them from the traditional, destructive applications.** Such roles can involve teaching, building, providing basic healthcare, and caring for children. The initiatives *Fathers, Inc.* in Jamaica and *Papai* in Brazil, for example, provide young men in deprived inner-city communities with alternative fathering roles that encourage their emotional support of, and involvement with, their children.<sup>126</sup>

Volunteer refugee workers were central to the success of the Women Victims of Violence Project, described in part above. In addition to training Kenyan police officers, these refugees were trained in techniques for counseling sexually abused women and for teaching preventive measures to potential targets of sexual violence. They also helped survivors recreate support networks, buttressed their self-

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See Strategic Objective J.2 in Fourth World Conference on Women. (1995). *Platform for action: Women and the media*. Retrieved March 25, 2008, from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/media.htm>.

<sup>124</sup> See Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). (2001). *Gender aspects in post-conflict situations: A guide for OSCE staff*. Retrieved March 24, 2008, from [www.osce.org/publications/gen/2001/09/14003\\_947\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/publications/gen/2001/09/14003_947_en.pdf).

<sup>125</sup> See p. 22, para. 6, in Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (1996, March). *A review of UNHCR’s women victims of violence project in Kenya*. Retrieved March 28, 2008, from [www.unhcr.org/research/RESEARCH/3ae6bcfe4.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/research/RESEARCH/3ae6bcfe4.pdf).

<sup>126</sup> UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Gender and HIV/AIDS. (n.d.). *HIV/AIDS, gender and male participation*. Retrieved November 27, 2007, from [http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/docs/factsheet\\_participation.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/docs/factsheet_participation.pdf).

sufficiency efforts, and facilitated gatherings of women to seek solutions to gender-related problems without fear.<sup>127</sup> Many of the volunteer refugee workers had been targets of sexual violence themselves, in a community where a raped woman was considered so unworthy that her husband could divorce her during the actual rape and her family could disown her. The women's empowerment that resulted from the training and collaboration with international humanitarian workers was so tremendous that they became de facto leaders in their community, negotiating with (all-male) elders the re-admittance to their families of banished survivors, cooperation with Kenyan prosecutors of the rapists, and the like.

The role that these volunteers played was so inspirational—at times, heroic—that, as of 1994, at least one refugee man had asked to be trained. The experience of the refugee volunteer workers, including this man, so transformed all involved that, in a community suffering from the intolerance described above, the male volunteer eventually married one of his patients.

The returns on this type of empowerment of women are documented internationally, and across numerous disciplines. **The potential for such creative investment in men to improve their future, the wellbeing of their families and communities, and their self-esteem, however, deserves a great deal more attention.**<sup>128</sup> **Its capacity to help men rely less on psychoactive substances and violent outbursts, thereby depriving the public-private cycle of violence of much momentum, should be central to efforts aimed at reducing alcohol-related violence everywhere, particularly in communities in crisis.**

### *View and Treat Custom as a Resource, not the Enemy*

Custom, tradition, or culture can appear quite the formidable adversary when some beliefs and practices seem to stand in direct opposition to a society's desire or need to transform or save itself—norms that Diamond refers to as “disastrous values.”<sup>129</sup> Every culture, society, or community, nonetheless, has escape valves, ways to make the changes that need to be made. Quite often, the very protectors of the traditions are the ones who decide to foment change for the sake of the community. A Communist Party official cracks down on the “ritual” of “liquid lunches,” and a younger generation that has committed itself to the Party opts for golf over drunkenness to perpetuate age-old supports to hospitality, relaxation, and bonding. Some South Koreans who have joined the “corporate culture” in that country choose theater attendance over drinking to excess as a team-building strategy. The Mankind Project reworks our understanding of what it means to be a “warrior,” a leader, a father, and an elder. Where rites of passage from boyhood to manhood had fallen by the wayside, a number of societies or communities are returning to modernized forms of these rituals in order to save their lost young men.<sup>130</sup> The Society for Integrated

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<sup>127</sup> See p. 15, para. 37, in Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (1996, March). *A review of UNHCR's women victims of violence project in Kenya*. Retrieved March 28, 2008, from [www.unhcr.org/research/RESEARCH/3ae6bcfe4.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/research/RESEARCH/3ae6bcfe4.pdf).

<sup>128</sup> Interventions that provide alternatives to unhealthy practices and increase male self-esteem without violence and risk-taking behaviors, such as drinking to excess, promote healthier conceptualizations of masculinity. See, for example, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. (2005). *Masculinities: Male roles and male involvement in the promotion of gender equality. A resource packet*. Retrieved December 12, 2007, from [http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/masc\\_res.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/masc_res.pdf).

<sup>129</sup> See Chapter 14 in Diamond, J. (2005). *Collapse: How societies chose to fail or succeed*. New York: Penguin Group.

<sup>130</sup> In the 1980s, some Native Canadian tribes revived sweat lodges to rescue and guide young men in trouble, including those who misused alcohol. See pp. 199–201 in Dabbs and Dabbs, on the role of and need for modern, contextually appropriate initiations in socializing boys to be responsible young men: “In primitive tribes, initiations mark the beginning of adulthood, a time when the older generation passes its values on to the younger generation.... Manhood isn't automatic, and initiations help control the raw power of masculinity and convert it into manhood.... Some problems of modern society arise because the old initiations and traditions are gone or no longer work.... Young men today receive less instruction on what they should do when they grow up.... Youth



Rural Development (SIRD), a nongovernmental group in Madurai, a city of Tamil Nadu, India, has integrated culturally familiar media such as street theater to educate both men and women about the risks of hazardous drinking, including the link between drinking and violence in the home.<sup>131</sup> And the list goes on.

Altering just one practice across an entire society is not easy. **The consent of the people who find meaning in that culture is pivotal.** As Ben Ole Koissaba, a Kenyan liberal activist and chairman of the Masai Civil Society Forum in Narok, said, “Culture is dynamic, culture can adapt, but **good, sustainable cultural change comes from within.**” According to him, vital tools in ending female genital mutilation are education, **patience, and the establishment of new mechanisms to fill the same cultural need:** a marker of the transition from girlhood to womanhood. As the Kenya country representative for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Florence Gachanga added,

The solution [is to] **come up with something that is accepted by the community, to use culturally accepted practices, involve the elders and maybe the religious leaders.** And then if you [have] a role model ... who has not undergone circumcision, then people can say, “Wow, she’s normal!”<sup>132</sup>

These ideas are not new. As Lao Tsu, the Father of Taoism, wrote in 700 BC,

Go to the people  
Live with them  
Learn from them  
Love them  
Start with what they know  
Build with what they have  
But with the best leaders  
When the work is done  
The task accomplished  
The people will say  
“We have done this ourselves!”<sup>133</sup>

And they will have. What’s more they will be healthier, safer, and happier for having discarded “disastrous values” in favor of a brighter future.

## CONCLUSION

Most paradigm shifts are, by their very nature, uncomfortable. The time has come, however, to stop falling back lazily on the saying, “Boys will be boys,” when responding to violence and recklessness in males, including immoderate drinking. The force of culture, tradition, custom—whatever we choose to call it—can mean the difference between aggression and protection, between recklessness and calculated risk-taking, between the disruptive participant and the resourceful team player.

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gangs have replaced tribes....” See also p. 206 in Dabbs, J. M., Jr., & Dabbs, M. G. (2000). *Heroes, rogues, and lovers: Testosterone and behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill; and the paper by Anne Fox in this monograph.

<sup>131</sup> Disease Control Priorities Project. (2006). *India's alcohol trap: Probing the links between hazardous drinking and poverty*. Retrieved November 27, 2007, from: <http://www.dcp2.org/features/20>.

<sup>132</sup> Emphasis added; see p. 2 in Baldauf, S. (2008, March 13). In Kenya, refuge from female circumcision. *The Christian Science Monitor* [Online]. Retrieved March 20, 2008, from [www.csmonitor.com/2008/0313/p07s04-woaf.html](http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0313/p07s04-woaf.html).

<sup>133</sup> See, for example, Dixon, J. (n.d.). *The role of the NGO in international development*. Retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://marriottschool.byu.edu/selfreliance/files/Role%20of%20NGO%20in%20Development.ppt>.

This paper has illustrated just a few ways in which parents, communities, and institutions on which they rely can raise their children; societies can transform, and cultural paradigms can shift in the direction of constructive masculinity. These strategies come from all areas of thought and endeavor, for a reason. Multi-sectoral action, a topic worthy of a paper unto itself, is essential to effect such change. The challenge is to apply the strategies above, together with other good practices that come to our attention, in ways that are appropriate to the context in which we operate. In doing so, **we need to challenge our assumptions about what will work or offend, and what will not.** If this paper has done nothing else, the authors hope it has made that message as clear as day.

With luck, as we challenge those assumptions, we will collaborate with others whose point of view is often quite different from our own. In so doing, we will teach our children, and show ourselves, that, regardless of where they live, boys can be boys—strong, loving, productive, and kind boys. In time, these boys will grow into men worthy of respect, trust, and love, who—with women—will make our world a place where all can live and flourish.

# **Practical Responses: Communication Guidelines for First Responders in Cases of Alcohol-related Violence**

**Joseph Asare  
University of Ghana Medical School  
Ghana**

**Ronald West, Independent Consultant  
Guatemala**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Although problem drinking and violence are two separate problems, in practice they commonly coexist. As evidenced by the previous papers contained in this monograph, the relationship between alcohol consumption and aggressive or violent behavior is not a direct causal link but rather a complex interaction of biochemical, psychological, situational, and cultural factors. Successful interventions that provide appropriate and comprehensive responses to victim-survivors and offenders therefore require a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach.

Police, paramedics, fire personnel, emergency room staff, and public healthcare providers, among others, are often the first trained responders to arrive on the scene of an alcohol-related violence incident. Response protocols exist for the personnel of these agencies that help to delineate their responsibilities, guide appropriate responses, recommend available channels of reporting, and outline the use of sound evidence collection techniques. Ideally, first responders provide services and/or interventions outlined by agency-specific policies but also work collaboratively with responders from other related agencies and disciplines to ensure streamlined and collective responses.

With a view to enhancing knowledge and practice on international first responder guidance in alcohol-related cases, the International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP) sought to investigate how agencies are trained to respond to incidents of alcohol-related violence, identify areas for development with suggested priorities for action, and promote best practice in the prevention of alcohol-related violence.

## **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: GUIDANCE FOR FIRST RESPONDERS**

As part of its program on violence, ICAP developed an online resource, an annotated bibliography, which identifies existing sources of guidance for first responders in violent situations involving alcohol (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 2007). The documents cited in that paper aim to enhance the capabilities of first responders to prevent, prepare for, and react to incidents of violence. The document summarizes relevant resources on violence and highlights instances where alcohol is specifically referenced. Although not an exhaustive list, it is believed to be representative of the major sources of guidance available. ICAP is committed to updating this list as additional relevant sources are identified.

Careful review of this literature by ICAP found that, while existing first responder protocols frequently deal with the intersection of alcohol and violence, alcohol is often cited as an individual risk factor or symptom of abuse, with little or no reference to the issues underlying these behaviors. Furthermore, none of the guidelines referenced address alcohol-related violence in detail, nor do they sufficiently elaborate

on the role of alcohol in different types of violence. Although some promising guidelines exist from certain local jurisdictions, they are context-specific and assume the existence of specific infrastructure.

It also became apparent from this review that the available guidelines appear to exist in a vacuum, as they tend to address only one target group—primary healthcare workers, emergency room staff, social workers, police, shelter staff, hotline personnel, or bar staff—and do not sufficiently address the crucial issue of communication between these different sectors. Within sectors, the focus is on the actions and responsibilities of specific responders, working in particular contexts, with little reference to mechanisms of communication between the groups. Moreover, there seems to be no continuity across sectors nor was there concrete advice provided relating to referral or communication systems' effectiveness.

## **COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES**

To develop a framework in this area and to address the current gap in communication between first responder sectors, ICAP commissioned an international public health expert in Ghana and an expert on violence and conflict in Guatemala to each draft a set of multi-sector guidelines. Focus groups with first responders from relevant sectors were held in their respective countries, and consultations with key informants were undertaken. The advice generated was incorporated into the guidelines with the intention that lessons learned be applied in a collective approach across the various first responder sectors.

Both experts agreed that, where incidents of alcohol-related violence occur, many first responders work in isolation, often unaware of what other agencies do. Both found a consistent lack of coordination between responding sectors. In Ghana, Joseph Asare noted "...little awareness of the existence of other agencies involved in dealing with alcohol-related violence. There is also insufficient appreciation of the complementary benefits that would be derived from working cooperatively with other agencies." Similarly, Ronald West stated that in Villa Nueva, Guatemala, "...there is currently little coordination or ongoing communication between police, fire, and other local resources."

The guidelines from Ghana and Guatemala were amalgamated by ICAP. The resulting guidelines were developed to provide insight into the responsibilities of different actors and offer advice on the collective objectives and shared responsibilities of first responders for managing alcohol-related violence. The proposed recommendations possess the potential for broader application, adaptation, and expansion into other settings.

## **COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES FOR FIRST RESPONDERS IN CASES OF ALCOHOL-RELATED VIOLENCE**

The following main points were drawn from both experts and form a resource that can be used in the development of more comprehensive and context-specific guidelines. Recognizing that in many countries various resource limitations and barriers to the realization of systematic modes of communication exist, the guidance presented herein suggests a range of practical actions that, whether adopted in part or in their entirety, can support and enhance the effectiveness of a collective, coordinated, multi-sector response to alcohol-related violence.

### ***Planning and Management***

#### **Coordinating Committee**

A National Coordinating Committee comprised of command representatives from frontline agencies that include police, fire, and emergency medical personnel of area hospitals or medical centers, from a variety

of regions and districts and with a high level of commitment, should be formed to champion the cause at both the national and local levels. This Committee should be responsible for high level strategic direction of a framework that defines methodological and policy approaches. Specific functions of the group are to: maintain interagency communications at a decision-making level; promote effective policies within the engaged agencies; and lobby or pressure local authorities to collaborate whenever necessary.

The Committee should be tasked with:

- (1) defining functional divisions of labor of the frontline agencies;
- (2) developing a uniform, comprehensive reporting format that would receive approval from each agency prior to implementation (for example, field incident reports), with a view to collecting information in a database accessible to the different sectors and agencies to inform, monitor, and evaluate;
- (3) enforcing adherence to communication policies and procedures among personnel of each agency;
- (4) defining indicators of success;
- (5) providing strategic planning;
- (6) mobilizing and allocating resources.

The Coordinating Committee should also convene regular stakeholder meetings to enable representatives to quickly identify shortcomings in collaboration between frontline personnel and to maintain pressure within represented agencies for on-the-ground coordination. The Committee should also be responsible for identifying strategies to support and maintain cooperation. These may include holding motivational workshops for first responders to help clarify objectives, promote the benefits of information sharing, and offer incentives for success.

A Subcommittee should manage data to inform the decision-making activities of the Coordinating Committee. Information collected and analyzed by the Subcommittee would help drive decisions and steer the actions of the Coordinating Committee.

The Subcommittee should also be tasked with:

- (1) designing protocols, guidelines, and procedures for intervention, management, assessment, and referral of cases;
- (2) housing a database and conducting regular data analyses;
- (3) producing and disseminating a National Directory of information about frontline agencies managing alcohol-related problems;
- (4) developing a checklist that can be used to periodically review emergency communications between agencies to assess response quality.

## **Intervention Teams**

Multi-sector Intervention Teams (MITs), comprised of clinical psychologists and social workers, nurses and gender specialists, should be tasked with providing guidance to and support on the ground for coordination of frontline workers responding to cases of alcohol-related violence.

The MITs should be responsible for:

- (1) coordinating training of first responders—police, fire, and emergency medical personnel in area hospitals and medical centers;
- (2) working with survivors of alcohol-related violence to provide services not available through government, or to supplement such services when they are available but are deficient in some aspect;

- (3) developing prevention programs<sup>134</sup> in conjunction with area frontline agencies, for implementation through the Coordinating Committee;
- (4) communicating issues and findings to the Coordinating Committee and Subcommittee.

Teams respond directly to area frontline workers within their jurisdictions. MITs maintain close links with bar staff at area drinking establishments, associations such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), shelter workers, social service workers, personnel at local medical clinics, adult education specialists, prosecutors and court personnel, personnel charged with providing follow-up services to survivors or suspects, and any persons outside of primary agencies (listed in item (1) above) whose observations would further an understanding of the nature and scope of the problem. MITs should also develop relationships and potential partnerships with other external organizations or agencies, such as those tasked with providing educational or employment opportunities, in order to provide additional networks of support and rehabilitation for survivors or perpetrators of alcohol-related violence.

MITs should work collaboratively with the Coordinating Committee to provide input into the design and implementation of preventative measures. For example, following analysis and verification of information with counterparts and local informants, MITs may identify shortcomings in local regulation related to the distribution or consumption of alcohol. One such instance might be identifying bars that remain open after hours or permit other illicit activity, such as drug dealing or prostitution, on their premises. In this case, the MITs should report their findings to the Coordinating Committee, which should then work through its members to proactively address the problem.

The Coordinating Committee should retain operational authority over MITs and be responsible for overseeing their work. Protocols established by the Coordinating Committee should outline how contact between participating agencies and MITs should be made, as well as how the work of MITs should be supervised. Regular meetings should be held by the Coordinating Committee to evaluate MITs' progress toward reducing or better managing the occurrence of alcohol-related violence. MITs should provide routine technical reports to the Subcommittee, attend annual meetings, and undergo formal evaluations. Findings should inform future interagency policy development and suggest priorities for future action. Also essential to the effectiveness of this model is the existence of feedback mechanisms that would enable the sharing of observations, concerns, and suggestions from all sectors, as well as the community itself, in order to increase understanding and the applicability of relevant knowledge.

## ***Communication and Coordination***

### **Interagency Communication**

In some countries, police and fire personnel can speak directly to each other on a dedicated channel for interagency operations. However, in much of the developing world, lack of infrastructure and poor communication networks impede inter-sectoral coordination among first responders. The inability of first responders from different agencies to communicate directly with each other at the site of an incident causes delays in response and hinders a successful outcome. Such communications shortcomings may, for example, negatively impact a criminal case or, at times, pose significant safety concerns for the public or for first responders. Where resources are available, a more streamlined and efficient approach should be facilitated by two-way radio communications between a first responder to an incident of alcohol-related violence, that agency's closest dispatcher or operations center, and the operations centers of relevant sister agencies. Further facilitation of direct and rapid interagency communication is possible

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<sup>134</sup> Three kinds of preventative approaches exist: *primary prevention* aims to avert new cases of alcohol-related violence through broad awareness and education campaigns; *secondary prevention* targets identification of at risk individuals and focuses on preventing further harm; *tertiary prevention* addresses the long-term effects of alcohol-related violence, primarily through rehabilitation efforts.

when dispatch centers are linked directly. Such linkages would enable the assignment of common or linked incident codes for use in tracking and responding to particular types of incidents. Investment in technology that would facilitate communications across several agencies in a geographic area would assist in improving the quality of response.

## **Referral System**

As the level of expertise of first responders is not uniform, they may have difficulties in producing succinct and appropriate referrals, which may inhibit the transfer of clients to other more appropriate levels of care. Placing a referrals checklist, organizational chart, and description of activities offered by entities providing alcohol- and/or violence-related services at the offices of first responder agencies would help personnel to familiarize themselves with local support services available. This might also include a list of contacts, with specific skills and knowledge of local resources, willing to advise and assist first responders in the referral process.

Establishing systems that standardize assessment protocols would facilitate referral to the agency appropriate to handle the problem or issue to be addressed. Consequently, a simple form should be developed and shared among frontline workers, so that clients would be referred to an agency appropriate to problems that the first responder agency cannot handle. Frontline workers and intake units at hospitals should fill out a common field incident report, where possible electronically, with an abbreviated reporting format to facilitate communication between different stakeholders. Records of the incident can be developed for country-specific cases, using field report models that conform to international incident reporting standards. Information gathered by field reports should include for example: description of events; location; sex of the victim-survivors and perpetrators; date; time; and any other significant features of the event. Any ongoing treatment, monitoring and/or follow-up, including referrals to other agencies, should also be documented. The information collected on the field report would also facilitate further data collection and analysis.

It should be stressed that all such reports must be established in a timely, accurate, thorough, objective, and professional manner. The standard of accuracy and verifiability sought should be such that these records could be offered as evidence in cases where the state, survivors, or victim's families seek legal recourse.

## **Training and Capacity Building**

To ensure that first responders to alcohol-related violence become and remain informed about different interventions, it is necessary that they be trained not only by their respective professional bodies but also collectively. In this way, they would acquire knowledge of a holistic approach to the management of alcohol-related violence. The training program should also serve as a platform for sharing information. Training should include basic awareness of issue and related conditions, as well as sensitize first responders to the existence and activities of other frontline agencies, local interventions, community-based resources, and related support services. Standardized protocols, developed by the Coordinating Committee, should set out the procedures for assessment, referral, collection, and preservation of evidence in instances of violence. Workers should be sensitized as to appropriate interview techniques for perpetrators and/or survivors in all cases of abuse, whether perpetrated by a man or a woman or occurring in same-sex relationships. The training should also review the beneficial and harmful effects of alcohol, with specific reference to the importance of referrals in suspected cases of alcohol dependency and alcohol withdrawal. Such training programs should enable frontline workers to:

- (1) screen and identify violent situations where alcohol may be a factor;
- (2) conduct a risk assessment to evaluate the existence of immediate danger;
- (3) understand the benefits that ensue from collaboration;
- (4) provide information on support services;

- (5) encourage and support disclosure;
- (6) access appropriate specialist advice and refer survivors and perpetrators to other agencies;
- (7) inform survivors of the options open to them under the law and provide information on accessing legal advice and assistance;
- (8) assess the suitability of accommodation and protection options for survivors, including residential and nonresidential support;
- (9) adhere to strict reporting and record-keeping procedures.

First responders should learn about some of the root causes common to both problem drinking and violence. Problem drinking as a risk factor for violence and as consequence of abuse should be addressed. Training should include a sensitivity component to avoid victim-blaming and should encompass culturally compatible treatment. Specialized training should be incorporated to guide first responders to appropriately manage the unique needs of certain at-risk populations, including women and gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender individuals. The impact of influences such as culture, tradition, and poverty on experiences of domestic violence should be central to this discussion. Responders should also be made aware of the potential risks to children and young people, as child abuse often coexists with domestic violence.

At the broader level and looking beyond the formal first responder sectors, development of informal local networks and training programs within communities would enable local leaders and members of the public to act as frontline prevention agents and could mobilize collective support to shift public perceptions and behaviors relating to problem drinking and violence. Organized community networks can also provide valuable insight into local realities and experiences, which can be translated into the development of more responsive strategies for prevention.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

All first responders should be alerted to the importance of maintaining confidentiality, as information disclosed or documented may place the survivor at further risk of violence should the perpetrator learn that a survivor sought care for injuries or reported the abuse. The widespread knowledge that information is treated in a confidential manner can gain public trust and may promote further disclosures of abuse.

In order to protect the privacy of individuals, identifiable information such as names, birth dates, and addresses should be replaced by identification codes easily used for data entry purposes.<sup>135</sup>

All policy, procedures, and practices relating to healthcare and law enforcement should abide by agreed upon principles of non-disclosure that would require express consent by survivors, or at least implied consent for the purposes of providing treatment and legal action, before disclosing personal information. Moreover, such records should be kept in secure locations, with access restricted to authorized personnel.

### ***Gathering Data and Follow-up***

#### **Records and Data Keeping**

Enhanced communication between first responder sectors would facilitate data gathering and increase understanding critical to an effective and appropriate multi-sector collaborative response to alcohol-related incidents of violence. Where possible, each frontline agency should maintain records of clients with a history of alcohol-related violence and compile data, copies of which should be kept at the office of the Subcommittee. Assuming the existence of appropriate information technology infrastructure, this

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<sup>135</sup> *Identifying information* refers to information that identifies an individual or from which it is reasonably foreseeable to identify an individual.



information should be securely stored and warehoused on an electronic database. Codified data should be submitted quarterly from first responders of agencies in the regions and districts to produce a useful national matrix database.

This database would capture field report information and operations center communications to inform both policy-making and interventions. Data collected would enable the development of victim-survivor and suspect profiles; provide other relevant information, such as geographic locations, points of consumption and assault, and severity; indicate problem frequency; identify high-risk groups; and facilitate the cross-tabulation of data to rank problem areas. Information generated would be critical for developing prevention initiatives, improving the responses of responsible agencies, and prioritizing problems. Findings would also guide the future activities of the Coordinating Committee and the Multi-sector Intervention Teams.

## **Early Warning Systems**

Early Warning Systems (EWS) have proven effective in a variety of settings. In all instances, the fundamental purpose of an EWS is to identify a threat and treat it as quickly as possible, so as to avoid wider damage or public harm. The establishment of an EWS for alcohol-related violence would promote both communication and cooperation between hospitals, ambulance, fire and police personnel, and those charged with providing follow-up services to survivors or perpetrators, as well as encompass approaches to both prevention and response. This data-based management tool would systematically track alcohol-related violence complaints by citizens and identify individuals, locations, and occasions where alcohol-related violence would be considered likely to occur. Findings should guide agency strategies and alert first responder agencies to the potential risks. An EWS should also direct the outreach activities of the MITs.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In order to improve societal responses to cases of alcohol-related violence, the nature and interaction of both issues must be better understood and addressed. The guidelines presented herein focus on fostering mutual understanding and respect between first responders, with the aim of enabling more efficient and effective action in meeting the complex needs of both survivors and the perpetrators of alcohol-related violence.

Implementation of the proposed guidelines should develop collaborative working arrangements between first responders, streamline and harmonize their objectives, and assist them in playing a more effective role in prevention and harm reduction activities. Raising awareness of the root causes of alcohol-related violence among the general public is also important in dispelling stereotypes and misconceptions, as well as in preventing oversimplification of the issue. This would serve to generate social concern for and understanding of the benefits of interagency collaboration within the community. Implicit in this approach—and imperative to meeting the targets set out—is the need to harness resources and raise funds to strengthen the capacity of communication systems. This would not only yield benefits in cases of alcohol-related violence but also improve coordinated multi-sector responses to other social problems and compliment broader development agendas linked to health and security.

## **REFERENCE**

International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP). (2007). *Guidance for first responders in violent situations involving alcohol*. Retrieved April 24, 2008, from [www.icap.org](http://www.icap.org).

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