

Breakthroughs in understanding addiction and close relationships

Lindsey M Rodriguez¹ and Jaye Derrick²

Substance use is one aspect of life that can serve to bring couples together or tear them apart. Evidence has accumulated for both substance use affecting relationship distress (e.g., partners of substance users report poorer individual and relational outcomes) as well as relationship conflict affecting subsequent substance use (e.g., individuals use substances as a way to cope with interpersonal conflict and distress). We discuss several determinants of each association, including individual difference and relationship-specific constructs. We conclude by considering how conceptualizing addiction as an interdependent — rather than independent — process is critical for future theory refinement and intervention development.

Addresses

¹ University of New Hampshire, USA

² University of Houston, USA

Corresponding author: Rodriguez, Lindsey M
(Lindsey.Rodriguez@unh.edu)

Current Opinion in Psychology 2017, **13**:115–119

This review comes from a themed issue on **Relationships and stress**

Edited by **Gery C Karantzas**, **Marita P McCabe** and **Jeffrey A Simpson**

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.05.011>

2352-250X/© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Romantic partnerships are among the greatest potential source of both joy and grief.

Close relationships are vitally tied to physical and psychological well-being due to the interdependence that they embody. Close others are support systems when stressors arise, and regulation systems when unhealthy behaviors emerge. Substance use is one aspect of life that can serve beneficial or deleterious purposes for those in relationships. When perceived as normative or relationship-enhancing, substance use can be a source of bonding and shared experiences. However, when perceived as excessive, substance use becomes a central source of stress, conflict, and tension.

Figure 1 presents a guiding conceptual model describing how substance use affects relationship outcomes and vice versa. Below, we detail recent support for each path as well

as determinants affecting each path. Some factors (e.g. attachment insecurity) are vulnerabilities arising from a specific partner, whereas other factors (e.g. concordance) are factors related to the specific couple.

Support for Path A (substance use → relationship quality)

Couples in which one partner drinks heavily or uses other substances show lower levels of satisfaction [1,2] and substance use is among the most common reasons given for divorce [3]. Moreover, heavy drinking has been identified as a key factor in intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetration and victimization among couples [4–6]. Addressing the criticism of uncertainty around alcohol as a proximal predictor of IPV, results from a recent study [7] suggested that IPV was significantly more likely to occur when alcohol had been consumed in the previous 4 hours, consistent with the pharmacological properties of alcohol.

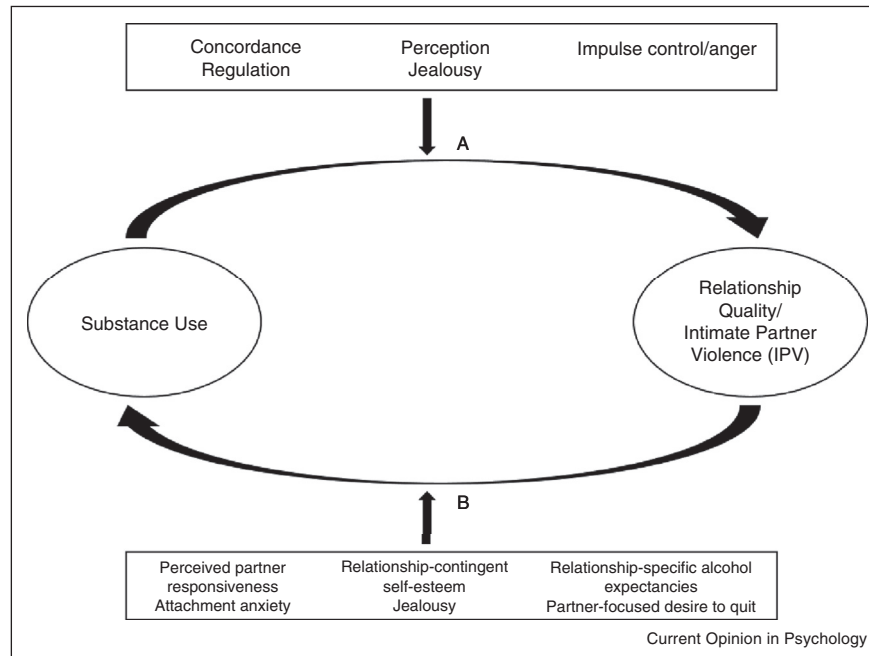
Recent evidence linking marijuana and partner aggression is mixed, and we believe this may be partly due to differences in types of partner aggression, sample gender, and type of relationship. Examining psychological aggression, one study using only college women demonstrated an association between marijuana use and psychological aggression perpetration [8], but another study using only college men did not [6]. On the other hand, multiple studies have failed to find an association between marijuana use and physical aggression perpetration [6,8,9]. Only one longitudinal study found a negative association between marijuana use and physical aggression perpetration [10*]. This was the only study to use a sample of married couples from the community and to control for demographic characteristics; the other studies used individuals (mostly college students) in dating relationships. Therefore, although evidence for psychological aggression is mixed, the recent literature suggests that marijuana is unrelated to or potentially an inhibitor of physical aggression.

Determinants for Path A (substance use → relationship functioning)

Concordance

Research largely supports the notion that couples with discrepant substance use patterns fare more poorly than those with non-discrepant use [11–13], with more consistent results using alcohol use as compared with marijuana or illicit substances. Discrepant heavy drinking newlywed couples (particularly those with a heavier drinking wife) are more likely to divorce in the first nine years of marriage than concordant non-heavy drinkers, controlling

Figure 1



Conceptual model supporting determinants of the reciprocal relationship between substance use and relationship quality/IPV.

for other substance use, personality variables, and socio-demographic factors [14]. Similar results for discrepancy on relationship dissatisfaction have also been recently replicated in same-sex relationships [15].

Recently, research has focused more on the risk carried by concordant heavy-drinking couples. One study followed young adult partnerships for six years and found that concordant heavy drinking couples at baseline were the most likely to have experienced separation and divorce six years later [16**]. Similarly, among older couples, the divorce risk of concordant heavy drinkers is higher than that of concordant light drinkers. The highest risk occurs, however, when only the wife is a heavy drinker [17,18], consistent with other work [14]. Thus, both discrepant and concordant heavy drinking couples experience greater relationship risk than concordant light drinking couples. Furthermore, most studies show that discrepant couples (particularly those with a heavy drinking wife) experience greater relationship risk than concordant heavy drinkers.

Research linking concordant substance use and IPV is mixed. One study has shown that concordant marijuana users are the least likely to experience IPV longitudinally [10]. On the other hand, other studies show that concordant marijuana users are at greater risk for IPV [19], and that couples in which the husband uses illicit drugs (with or without co-morbid marijuana use) and the wife uses

marijuana are at greater risk for IPV [20]. Although concordant use may be less risky than discrepant use for relationship distress and divorce, concordant use seems to elevate risk for IPV.

Interpersonal perception and regulation strategies

Perceptions about a partner's behavior often have more powerful effects on outcomes than the partner's actual self-reported behavior. Perceiving that the partner's drinking is a strain on the relationship is a stronger predictor of relationship outcomes than is the partner's actual drinking [21]. This perception is less detrimental, however, if individuals perceive that they themselves have a problem with drinking [22]. Moreover, romantic partners are among the first to attempt to change what is perceived to be unhealthy behavior. Research on social control has distinguished attempts along a positive/negative reinforcement dimensionality, with positively reinforcing regulation behaviors evincing positive outcomes and punishing behaviors evincing largely negative outcomes. In the substance use domain, partner regulation attempts follow a similar distinction, with the association between partner drinking (perceived and actual) and poorer relationship functioning mediated by punishing, but not rewarding, strategies [22,23**]. Importantly, punishing strategies are ineffective: they are associated with increased partner alcohol-related consequences, whereas rewarding strategies are associated with decreased partner drinking (LM Rodriguez, under revision).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/879228>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/879228>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)