**Wife Abuse in Thailand**

by

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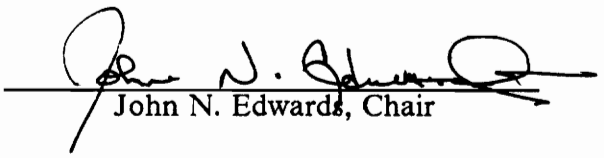

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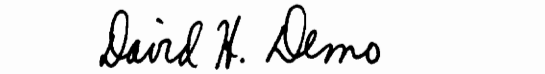

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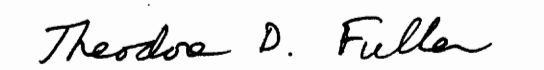

Theodore D. Fuller

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(ABSTRACT)

The objective of this study is to assess the effects of several variables, identified by research on Western, industrialized countries, on the occurrence of wife abuse in a developing Asian society, Thailand. The following variables are organized in two path analysis models: social isolation of the wife, socio-economic status, duration of the marriage, number of children, wife's employment status, husband's level of stress, severity of his drinking problem, and marital conflict. Two separate measures of socio-economic status are tested, one using traditional items--income, occupational prestige, and education, and another measure incorporating several possessions, such as automobiles, appliances, and entertainment items.

While the bivariate analysis showed little correlation among the independent variables and wife abuse, the intervening variables--stress, drinking, and marital conflict--were highly related. The results of the multiple regression and path analyses revealed that marital conflict had the strongest effect and was the best predictor of wife abuse. Stress and drinking also had a significant effect on wife abuse. While number of children, years married, social isolation of the wife, and her employment status appeared to have little impact on wife abuse, socio-economic status (both measures) is consistently related with wife abuse, and with all the intervening variables. The combination of the variables in the models explain approximately 15% to 20% of the variance in wife abuse in Thailand.

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# Chapter I

# INTRODUCTION

Due to the importance of marriage for a society, conflicts within marital relationships have long been of interest to social scientists. Research documents high levels of violence between husbands and wives in many cultures, including urban-industrial, agrarian, and nonliterate societies (ie. Dobash and Dobash, 1979;1983; Gelles and Cornell, 1983; Campbell, 1985; Masumura, 1979; Schlegel, 1972; Straus, 1983; Loizos, 1978; Mushanga, 1978; Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980). However, only recently has physical spousal abuse been considered a social problem or evidence of a serious defect in one of society's most important social institutions.

Initial explanations of spousal violence centered on the presumption of individual pathology or mental illness. As a result, psychopathological theories contended that the victims and the perpetrators involved suffered from various personality disorders (Ball, 1977; Halleck, 1976; Hanks and Rosenbaum, 1977; Kutash, 1978; Lesse, 1974; Reynolds and Siegle, 1959; Schultz, 1960; Snell, Rosenwald and Robey, 1964; Toby, 1966). Bogard

(1988:61) summarizes these disorders, suggesting that they fall into two categories: incomplete psychosexual development and poor psychological adjustment. Gelles (1987:28) explains this early emphasis on individual pathology could have been a by-product of the methodology employed. Most of this early research was based on clinical populations, which are typically small and non-representative samples.

Within the last twenty years, researchers, social workers, and medical personnel have become increasingly aware of the extent and severity of spousal violence (Greenblat, 1985:221). The physical abuse of wives by their husbands, labeled "wife battering," gained recognition in the United States by the early 1970's. This national attention was largely a result of the efforts by the feminist movement and the opening of the first community shelters or safe houses (Straus et. al., 1980:10-11). By the end of the 1970's, wife abuse was considered a major health and social problem in the United States, and in many other industrialized countries, such as West Germany and Great Britain (Kappel and Leuteritz, 1980; Dobash and Dobash, 1979;1983). A recent study in the United States estimates that domestic assaults account for over twenty thousand hospitalizations and almost thirty thousand visits to the emergency room per year (U. S. Attorney General's Task Report on Family Violence, 1984).

# Chapter II

# STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The family is widely regarded as one of the most crucial social institutions in any society. It is through marriage that a family is generally created and new members of the society are nurtured and socialized for the benefit of this society.[1] Since the family is the major social institution to provide nurturing for its members including spouses, it seems ironic and paradoxical that physical violence exists in these intimate social relationships. Despite the extreme reluctance of family members to admit the existence of violence to even relatives or friends, let alone an anonymous researcher or social worker, studies consistently indicate that family members are the most likely perpetrators of physical violence on an individual (ie. Gelles, 1987). However, nearly all of the research conducted on family violence, particularly among married couples, has utilized samples from industrialized, Western societies, typically the United States.

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[1] This nurturing and socialization of individuals also occurs in single-parent families, cohabitating couples, and other alternative family types.

This study presents a test of several key propositions concerning spousal violence. An empirical analysis is conducted which assesses the occurrence of non-life threatening, physical force used by husbands against wives in a developing Asian society, Thailand. This physical force or violence is referred to as physical spousal abuse or wife abuse. By examining patterns that have been documented in Western societies, the present investigation tests whether similar factors and processes influence spousal abuse in an Asian society with distinct norms and customs.

While studies indicate considerable amounts of mutual physical abuse among spouses, some researchers suggest that a woman's violent behavior often may be a form of self-defense (Saunders, 1986; Walker, 1984; Frieze, 1980; Straus et al., 1980). Walker (1984) contends that frequently the wife becomes violent only in a desperate response to repeated, physical assaults inflicted by her husband. Husbands commit violent acts more frequently and have higher rates of the most dangerous forms of spousal abuse (Straus et al., 1980:43; U. S. Department of Justice, 1980). Men's greater physical size and strength provides them with the ability and increases the likelihood of inflicting a serious injury on women (Steinmetz, 1977). A recent study conducted by Kantor and Straus (1987:218) provides evidence of women's greater physical vulnerability. Their data show that women are three times more likely then men to require medical care for the injuries inflicted during marital conflict. As a result of the overwhelming evidence supporting the importance of viewing women as the primary victims of physical spousal violence, this thesis focuses only on the abuse inflicted by husbands on their wives.

Few studies have been completed that assess the occurrence of wife abuse in developing, Asian societies. Research on American and other Western samples indicates that the rates of abuse are associated with the level of social isolation of the wife. Previous an-

alyses reveal that socio-economic status is negatively related to wife abuse. The majority of these abusive incidents are reported to occur in the early years of marriage when financial insecurity may be more likely. Despite the tremendous increase in, and general social acceptance of, married women working outside the home, a wife's employment has been associated with higher levels of marital conflict. Children, it is known, strain economic and personal resources of the family, resulting in increased levels of stress experienced by the parents and creating marital conflict. Many of the husbands who physically abuse their wives report having a problem controlling their alcohol use. Finally, verbal marital conflict, regardless of the origin, increases the likelihood of physical wife abuse.

This thesis presents a secondary analysis of data collected on crowding, health, and family relations in Bangkok, Thailand. The level of social isolation of the wife, socio-economic status, number of children, duration of the marriage, and the wife's employment status are the independent variables, and the level of stress experienced by the husband, the extent of the his drinking problem, and the amount of verbal marital conflict are the intervening variables. In brief, it is hypothesized that all of these variables are related to the occurrence of physical, non-life threatening abuse inflicted on the wife by the husband. These specific factors are operationalized and incorporated into two path analysis models to determine their direct and indirect influences on wife abuse.

# Chapter III

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## 3.1 AMERICAN SAMPLES

Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) completed the first comprehensive national study measuring spousal violence among American married couples. Utilizing the Conflict Tactics Scale developed by Straus in 1979, the respondents reported which acts of physical force, from a slap to a threat with a deadly weapon, were employed to resolve marital arguments. Their research reveals that in over one-fourth of all the marriages (28%), physical violence had been used at least once in the marriage.

Slapping was the most frequent form of physical force (31.3%) used by husbands (Straus et al., 1980). Sixteen percent reported at least one act of physical violence within the last twelve months. Almost thirteen percent of the women received a severe beating at least once during their marriage. Approximately four percent of the wives experienced at least one severe incident within the past year. Two-thirds of these women reported multiple

incidents, with almost half (47%) receiving three or more beatings during the last twelve months. Despite the high incidence of violence these statistics indicate, a recent report from the U. S. Attorney General's Office (1984) claims that spousal violence is currently the most underreported crime and the number one health problem in America.

The Straus et al. (1980) study found that spouse abuse occurs in all socio-economic classes, races, religions, ethnic groups, and educational levels. Other more recent studies have reported similar results (Walker, 1984; Fagan, Stewart and Hansen, 1983; Pagelow, 1981;1984). Based on their findings, Straus et al. (1980:205-206) developed the following "prediction checklist" for spousal abuse: husband working part-time or unemployed, low family income, husband employed as a manual worker, husband very worried about economic security, wife very dissatified with standard of living, two or more children, disagreement over children, grew up in family in which the father hit the mother, married less than ten years, spouses are age thirty or under, non-white racial group, above average score on Marital Conflict Index, very high score on Stress Index, one spouse dominant in family decisions, spouses verbally aggressive to one other, spouses get drunk but are not alcoholic, lived in a neighborhood less than two years, and no participation in organized religion.

Perpetrators of wife abuse may actively attempt to limit their victims' interactions with others to socially isolate them and prevent detection and intervention. Previous research demonstrates that battered wives frequently have few close friends, are not active in community activities, and move often (Pagelow, 1984:48, 320-321; Bolton and Bolton, 1987:104; Dobash and Dobash, 1979). In a more general sense, studies indicate that as the level of social isolation increases, so does the likelihood of spousal and family violence (Allan, 1978; Finkelhor, 1983; Gelles, 1974; Pagelow, 1984).

Several socio-economic variables appear to influence the rates of spousal abuse. McCall and Shields (1986:106) found unemployment, low income, and educational level to be significantly related to spousal violence. In addition, type of occupation or occupational status is associated with the acceptance and actual use of physical force. Utilizing a national, representative sample (n = 5,159), Kantor and Straus (1987:220) found that the majority of the men disapproved of wife abuse. However, among the minority of men who approved of using physical force, occupational status resulted in a significant difference between blue collar males (18.5%) and white collar males (14.4%). With regard to the actual rate of spousal abuse, males with blue-collar occupational status who approved of physical force had substantially higher rates than white collar males with the same beliefs. Only a slight difference existed in wife abuse rates between the two occupational groups of men who disapproved of physical force. Kantor and Straus (1987) conclude that while occupational status is important, normative beliefs are a better predictor.

Allen and Straus's (1980) study tests key propositions of the "ultimate resource" theory of violence. This theory contends that the husband's economic and social resources are related to his use of physical force against his wife. Their analysis utiltizes the following four measures of extrinsic resources: occupational prestige, educational level, income, and satisfaction with income; and the following four measures of intrinsic resources: high self-esteem, high achievement orientation, sociability, and low anxiety. Resources and social status were dichotomized into categories of high and low resources, and social status was divided into middle-class and working-class. A correlation of .49 was found between the low resources/working class combination variable and the husband's use of physical force (Allen and Straus, 1980:200). Other studies provide support for the pro-

position that husbands who experience resource deprivation are more likely to abuse their wives (Browker, 1983; Pagelow, 1981; Brown, 1980).

Straus et al. (1980:179-180) found that the number of children is strongly related to rates of spousal abuse. Their results reveal a positive, linear relationship between the number of children (up to six) and the rate of violence. Controlling for income, the most dramatic increase occurred from one to two children. Spouses without children reported very low rates of wife abuse.

Several early empirical studies (Gianopulos and Mitchell, 1957; Nye, 1958; Hoffman, 1960; Glazer-Malbin, 1975) found that marital conflict is more frequent among couples in which the wife is employed outside the home. However, the findings from a more recent study (Straus et al., 1980) and a review by Spitze (1988) indicate that wife's employment outside the home may improve marital relations and satisfaction or at the very least have a null effect. Spitze (1988:599) contends that any negative effects may be attributed to specific aspects of her employment such as long hours, low pay, and job dissatisfaction.

The results of the Straus et al. (1980:161) study indicate that as the amount of verbal conflict increases so does the rate of spousal abuse. Couples who reported the greatest number of conflicts have a rate of violence sixteen times higher than couples with the fewest conflicts. Conflicts over the management of the children were most likely to lead to spousal violence (Straus et al., 1980:171).

Financial difficulties or job insecurity may result in a husband experiencing stress. While these stressors do not appear to directly cause violence, like children, they may also become the basis of arguments and disagreements between spouses (Shupe, Stacey, and

Hazelwood, 1987:60). Several studies note that batterers report high levels of stress (Straus et al., 1980:204; Ganley and Harris, 1978; Mulvey and Lidz, 1984). Ferraro (1984) suggests that batterers fail to recognize their stress and anger until it gets out of control which may result in a violent outburst, often directed at their wives. Examples of stressful aspects related to family life are pregnancy, disagreements over appropriate child-rearing practices, low socio-economic status, (Gelles, 1975; Steinmetz, 1977; Gil, 1970, Straus et al., 1980) death of a close one, serious illness, sexual difficulties, moving to a new town (Straus et al., 1980:182), sexual frustration, financial problems, and perceived inappropriate behavior on the part of a spouse (Shupe et al., 1987:35). Straus et al. (1980:190) conclude that stressful events are related to higher rates of physical violence in all but the highest income level (Straus et al., 1980:190).

Researchers have found that heavy drinkers may begin drinking to alleviate perceived stress (Bolton and Bolton, 1987:89; Deschner, 1984:31; Fleming, 1979:290). While several studies document strong correlations between alcohol abuse and spousal violence, the researchers stop short of claiming a direct causal relationship (Coleman and Straus, 1983; Livingston, 1986:634; Bolton and Bolton, 1987:86; Kantor and Straus, 1987:213-216; Pagelow, 1984:87). Livingston's (1986) clinical study of men in counseling for alcohol abuse found that most of the men (83%) behaved violently in past relationships as compared to a much smaller portion (28%) of respondents from a non-clinical, representative sample from Straus et al. (1980). Livingston (1986:934) and Walker (1986:88) observe that violence is more frequent and severe in marriages with alcoholic husbands. The Kantor and Straus (1987:224) study reveals that men who drink, have blue collar occupational status, and norms approving of the use of physical force, reported the highest rates of wife abuse. Men with these three characteristics had a vi-

olence rate approximately eight times greater than white collar, non-drinkers who disapprove of the use of physical force.

In addition, Kantor and Straus (1987:218-219) found a positive, monotonic relationship between alcohol use and wife abuse. An incident rate of 6.8% was reported by abstainers, whereas a rate of 19.2% was found for binge drinkers, even when controlling for occupational status and normative beliefs concerning spousal violence.[2] While a majority (76%) of the men reported not drinking alcohol at the time of the violent incident, alcohol still appears to be related because it was one of the antecedent variables in one out of four cases.

The research literature on American samples is rich in detail and suggests that many factors influence wife abuse. While the studies document that spousal violence occurs in all income, occupational, and educational levels, it appears that low socio-economic status is associated with a higher rate of wife abuse. The empirical findings from these studies also indicate that the presence of children, a wife's employment outside the home, and the early years of marriage are associated with poor marital relations. In addition, the amount of stress experienced by the husband, his alcohol use, marital conflict, as well as the social isolation of the wife all have a positive relationship with a husband's use of physical force against his wife.

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[2] The level of alcohol measured refers to the usual drinking pattern, not the level of drinking at the time of the incident.

## 3.2 CROSS-CULTURAL SAMPLES

Campbell (1985) compiled several ethnographic studies focusing on wife-beating in non-Western, developing countries. Wife-beating was defined as intentional, repeated acts of violence which resulted in physical pain or severe injury inflicted by a man involved in an intimate relationship with the victim. Campbell (1985) used data from by Levinson's study (1983) to categorize the amount of wife-beating in Thailand. Campbell (1985) reports that Thailand had one of the lowest levels of wife-beating in frequency and severity.

Research examining matrilineal societies reveals wide acceptance of wife abuse. Schlegel's (1972) analysis found seventy-five percent of the matrilineal societies had norms permitting husbands to use physical force against their wives.

The Dobash and Dobash (1983) study utilized in-depth interviews with women from Scotland who reported physical abuse to the police. These women had suffered several severe beatings at the hands of their husbands or paramours. Dobash and Dobash (1983) contend that most of the marital conflict resulting in violence centers around "wifely obligations" and the husband's authority. They summarize their findings by stating that wife abuse is linked with the "dominance, control, and chastisement of women in their position as wives" (Dobash and Dobash, 1983:150).

Gayford's (1978;1983) research on British samples suggests several factors which influence the rate of wife abuse. Forty percent of the batterers had exposure to violence during their childhood. One-third were frequently out of work. Many were heavy drinkers, with over forty percent of the violent incidents occurring when the husband

was drunk. In addition, a majority of these batterers demonstrated signs of jealousy, and approximately twenty percent of the men had previously been in relationships that ended due to their violence.

Despite the difficulty of comparing studies in different societies, utilizing various sample types and sizes, and the lack of consensus about a definition for spousal violence,[3] some similarities exist between the United States and other countries. In Gelles and Cornell's (1983:32) review of several cross-cultural analyses, they conclude that spousal physical abuse is more common in lower-class households, pregnant women are at a greater risk, and that there is an intergenerational transmission of violence. Based on the available research, physical spousal abuse, in one form or another, appears to be very prevalent, if not a "near universal" (Straus, 1983:28).

[3] Many different definitions and a great deal of controversy surround what constitutes an appropriate definition of a violent act between spouses (Gelles, 1987:31). Researchers, offenders, victims, agents of social control (the police and medical personnel), and the general public all differ in their view of what are "acceptable" uses of physical force among spouses (Gelles, 1974; Steinmetz, 1977; Straus et al., 1980; Bolton and Bolton, 1987). Generally, though, violence refers to a physical act (Gelles, 1987:32) with the intention of inflicting injury on another person (Gayford, 1983; Gelles and Straus, 1979).

# Chapter IV

# SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF WIFE ABUSE

A social norm of privacy surrounds the behavior of family members (Pagelow, 1984:78). This attitude towards family behavior insulates it from intervention by individuals representing other social institutions and agencies (Gelles, 1987:42). The private nature of the family also reduces the risk of negative consequences for a husband's use of physical force against his wife (Goode, 1971). Hotaling (1980) adds that within a marriage or family, no third party is prescribed to arbitrate the conflicts that periodically arise. This norm of privacy concerning family matters and the social isolation of a wife provides an opportunity for wife abuse to occur and fosters an environment free from detection.

In many societies, particularly Western societies, a man's social status is based on his occupational position and his overall economic success (Harris and Bologh, 1985:250). A man who does not demonstrate continuous economic success in terms of the society's

standards loses social status. Losing a job or being unable to obtain a position with some prestige and sufficient income can lead to a feeling of powerlessness (Pagelow, 1984:99). These feelings of powerlessness can lead to anger and frustration. In addition, the husband may be unable to express anger and frustration produced by his underemployment or work environment. As a result, he attempts to alleviate these feelings of powerlessness by exerting control and establishing a position of power over a weaker family member (Fleming, 1979:304; Pagelow, 1984:101). His wife or even his children are used as a substitute target for the husband's hostile feelings (Coser, 1964:41). This use of physical force can be seen as a last resort to exert control and retreive his perceived loss of power (Pagelow, 1984:101; Harris and Bologh, 1985:246). The husband establishes a position of power in the family in an effort to compensate for this loss of status in society. Dominating and battering his wife not only acts as a means to release his anger, but reaffirms a position of power and enhances his own masculinity (Harris and Bologh, 1985:555; Bolton and Bolton, 1987:60).

Blood and Wolfe (1960) introduced the resource theory of family power contending that the spouse with more resources wielded more power. Rodman (1972:60) expanded these propositions and developed the concept of "resources in a cultural context" suggesting that the balance of power is influenced not only by the comparative resources of the husband and wife, but by the cultural expectations concerning the authority structure. Brown (1980) agrees that the two major sources of power in a marital relationship are derived from culture and competence. Cultural norms dictate the structure of the family which prescribes that the husband has the ascribed role as the head of the family. Competence is achieved through the contribution of resources to the marriage. With regard to competence, the husband demonstrates his eligibility to occupy the leadership position through providing economic goods and resources. Without fulfilling these ob-

ligations, the husband loses his legitmacy as head of the family, and his power is undermined in not only the larger society but in the eyes of his wife and family (Goode, 1971; O'Brien, 1971).

To demonstrate competence, the husband must have economic and social resources. A general resource theory of violence suggests that violence is invoked by the husband to compensate when he lacks other resources to serve as a basis for his power (Goode, 1971). The "ultimate resource" theory of violence implies a complex relationship between power and violence (Allen and Straus, 1980). Allen and Straus (1980) agree that physical force is invoked by a husband who lacks other resources to serve as a basis for power. However, this relationship between power and violence holds only under certain circumstances, since other resources can be used to establish and maintain a position of power (Allen and Straus, 1980:190). Violence is presumed to be the last resort for maintaining a power claim within a family or marriage (Allen and Straus, 1980; Farrington, 1980:101; Brown, 1980, McCall and Shields, 1986). Based on the resource theory of power and the "ultimate resource" theory of violence, a husband who lacks resources, i.e., has low occupational status, insufficient income, and minimal education and who feels entitled to a dominant position within the family, is more likely to compensate by using actual or threatened physical force as his basis for power (Gelles, 1974; O'Brien, 1971; Goode, 1971, McCall and Shields, 1986).

The most significant change in the last ten years in the United States, as well as many other societies, has been the increasing proportion of women working in the paid labor force. The U. S. Department of Labor (1984) reports that the percentage of mothers participating in the labor force has quadrupled since 1950. It estimates that six out of ten mothers with school-age children are active in the labor force. A wife's employment

provides increased resources, and according to the resource theory of power this change has important implications for marital power and authority. The working woman's ability to contribute financially may create expectations for a more egalitarian authority structure for the marriage. This attempted shift in power or change in the authority structure may lead to marital conflict unless the husband discards male superiority norms. If the wife's new expectations for greater equality are perceived as illegitimate, the husband may resort to traditional dominating techniques of physical force (Brown, 1980). Whitehurst (1974:74) contends that the struggle between the emerging egalitarian authority structure and the ascribed male superority norms tends to increase conflict and violence between husbands and wives.

The structure of the family, particularly its prescribed nurturing function and the nature of the time spent together, its social isolation, and the constant demand for compromise, creates an environment subject to high levels of stress and a lack of resources to deal with it effectively (Farrington, 1980:94). An economic and social structural model suggests that violence can arise out of stress induced by factors such as low income, unemployment, and illness (Coser, 1967; Gelles, 1974). The absence of sufficient economic resources creates stress for families, particularly the primary adult providers (Bolton and Bolton, 1987:45). While the majority of families survive everyday stresses and periodic financial difficulties without resorting to violence, the failure to adequately manage stress is a common feature of violent marriages (Bolton and Bolton, 1987:35; Garbarino, 1977:727; Howze and Kotch, 1984:401). Violence, then, can occur as a result of the tension and frustration arising from unresolved stress situations (Farrington, 1980:108).

The Straus et al. (1980:180) findings suggest that a simple economic explanation is inadequate to predict wife-battering. They contend that the stress involved with such as-

pects as additional children extends beyond financial worries. The social consequences, such as reduced leisure time and privacy, continue to increase when caring for additional children. It appears that while stress is not necessarily a direct cause of spousal abuse, it can make its occurrence more likely (Shupe et al., 1987:33).

Pagelow (1984:89) contends that battered women and the general public frequently perceive a direct causal relationship between alcohol abuse and spousal violence because it allows for a simple, individualistic explanation. This view is based on the inaccurate assumption that alcohol has the ability to generate behavior that would not occur under sober conditions (Bolton and Bolton, 1987:86). Disinhibition theory claims that alcohol is related to a loss of inhibitions, altering one's judgment and resulting in a loss of control by the drinker (ie., "It was the booze that made me do it."). By believing in this ascribed power of alcohol, the battered wife and others can view the violent husband as "normal", except when he is drinking, and seek individualistic explanations for his behavior (Bolton and Bolton, 1987:86-88; Kantor and Straus, 1987:214).

Coleman and Straus (1983) argue that social learning and deviance disavowal perspectives offer better explanations for the acceptance of violent behavior while intoxicated. They claim people learn a "script" for violence by observing that individuals are excused and forgiven for behavior which occurs while drinking. Other researchers agree that alcohol abuse allows for "time out" to engage in certain behavior without having to assume responsibility (Bolton and Bolton, 1987:86; Coleman and Straus, 1983; MacAndrew and Edgerton, 1969; Pagelow, 1984). Room (1980:80) contends that alcohol may be "an instrument of intimate domination used to excuse the exercise of illegimate force against subordinates."

Kantor and Straus (1987:225) propose an integration of the two general theoretical perspectives to explain the relationship between alcohol use and wife abuse. They contend that the disinhibiting effect of alcohol accounts for the individual level of non-responsibility; whereas, the socially accepted "time out" from normal expectations allows for a lack of personal responsibility at the societal level.

The forementioned theoretical propositions on the private nature of the family, socio-economic status, wife's employment status, stress, presence of children, alcohol abuse, and marital conflict are presented with regard to their relationship to rates of wife abuse. No existing theory incorporates all of these issues and concepts in an attempt to explain the variance in the occurrence of wife abuse. While these propositions do not readily form a concise framework, they do offer theoretical explanations for the predictions presented in the following section describing the path models.

# Chapter V

# THAI WIFE ABUSE MODEL AND ITS COMPONENTS

While many factors are believed to influence the rates of wife abuse, the present study is limited to the information available within the data-set being used. The models are based on a secondary analysis of married couples in Bangkok, Thailand, which focused on crowding, health, and family relations. The independent variables used in the models are social isolation of the wife, socio-economic status, wife's employment status, duration of the marriage, and number of children. Information on the level of social isolation of the wife is available for approximately seventy percent of the sample (when the wife was the respondent). As a result, it is an independent variable only in Model 1 (see Figure 1). The intervening variables are stress experienced by the husband, extent of the husband's drinking problem, and verbal marital conflict. For the majority of the sample, the wife was the respondent, and as such, no information is available for the amount of stress experienced by the husband. As a result, stress is an intervening variable only in

Model 2 which utilizes the husbands as respondents (see Figure 2). The dependent variable is the existence of non-life threatening, physical wife abuse.

## 5.1 INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

### *SOCIAL ISOLATION*

Previous research documents that battered wives are often socially isolated from relatives and friends through efforts of the violent husband. The level of social isolation of the wife is measured through a six-item scale incorporating the presence of other adults in the household, including married couples, relatives, and boarders, the number of good friends, the presence of relatives in Bangkok, and whether or not she is orginially from Bangkok. High social isolation is believed to foster an environment free from detection from other family, friends, and neighbors. It is predicted that as the level of social isolation increases so does the likelihood of wife abuse.

### *SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS*

Socio-economic status has traditionally been measured by scales utilizing educational and income levels and occupational prestige. Previous research suggests that low socio-economic status is associated with higher rates of wife abuse. For this study, socio-economic status is measured by a scale incorporating the husband's educational level, his occupational prestige rating, and the family income. It is predicted that low socio-economic status is related to higher levels of stress experienced by the husband, a more severe drinking problem, increased levels of verbal marital conflict, and the likeli-

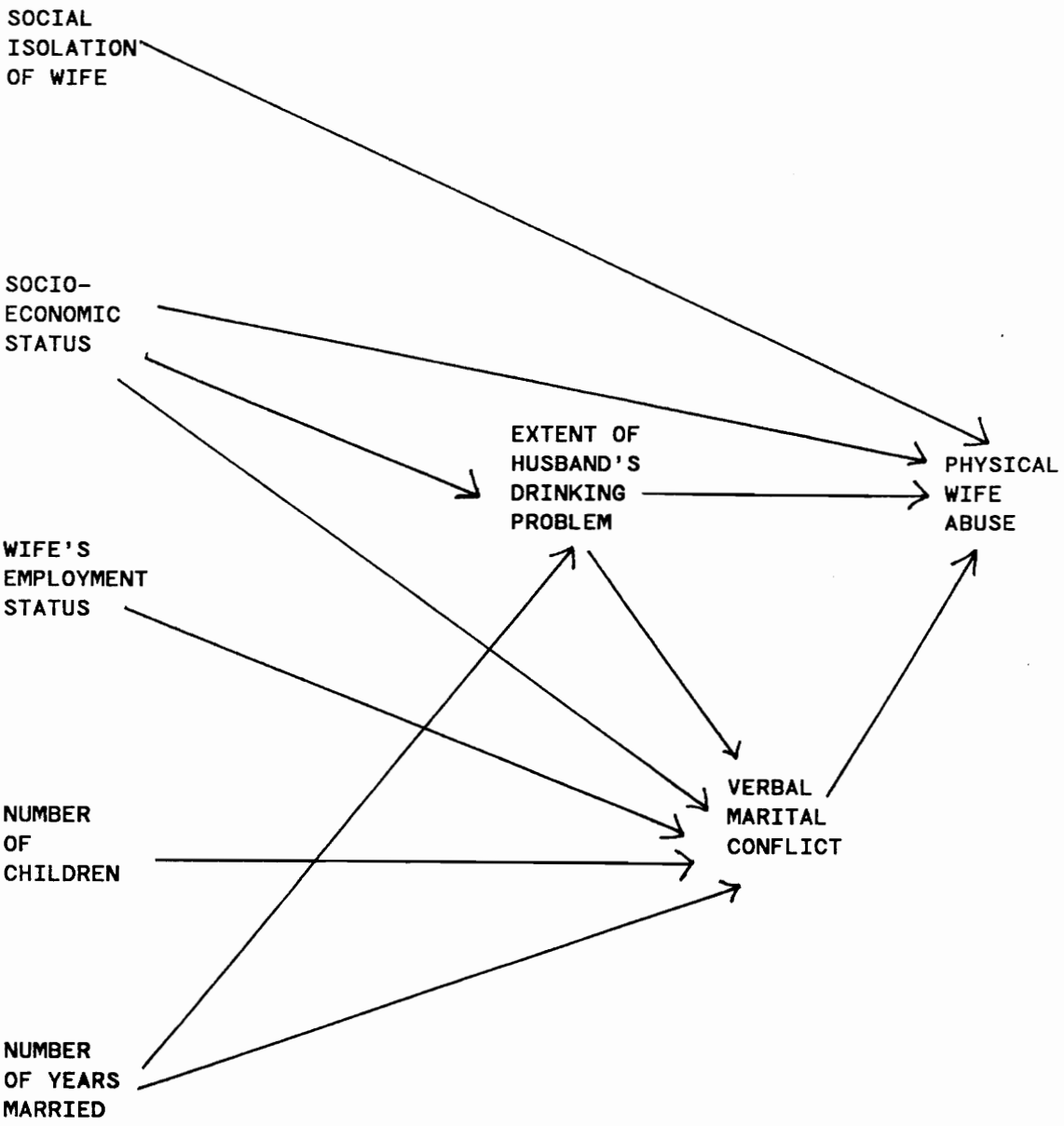


**Figure 1. Path Diagram for Thai Wife Abuse, Model 1**

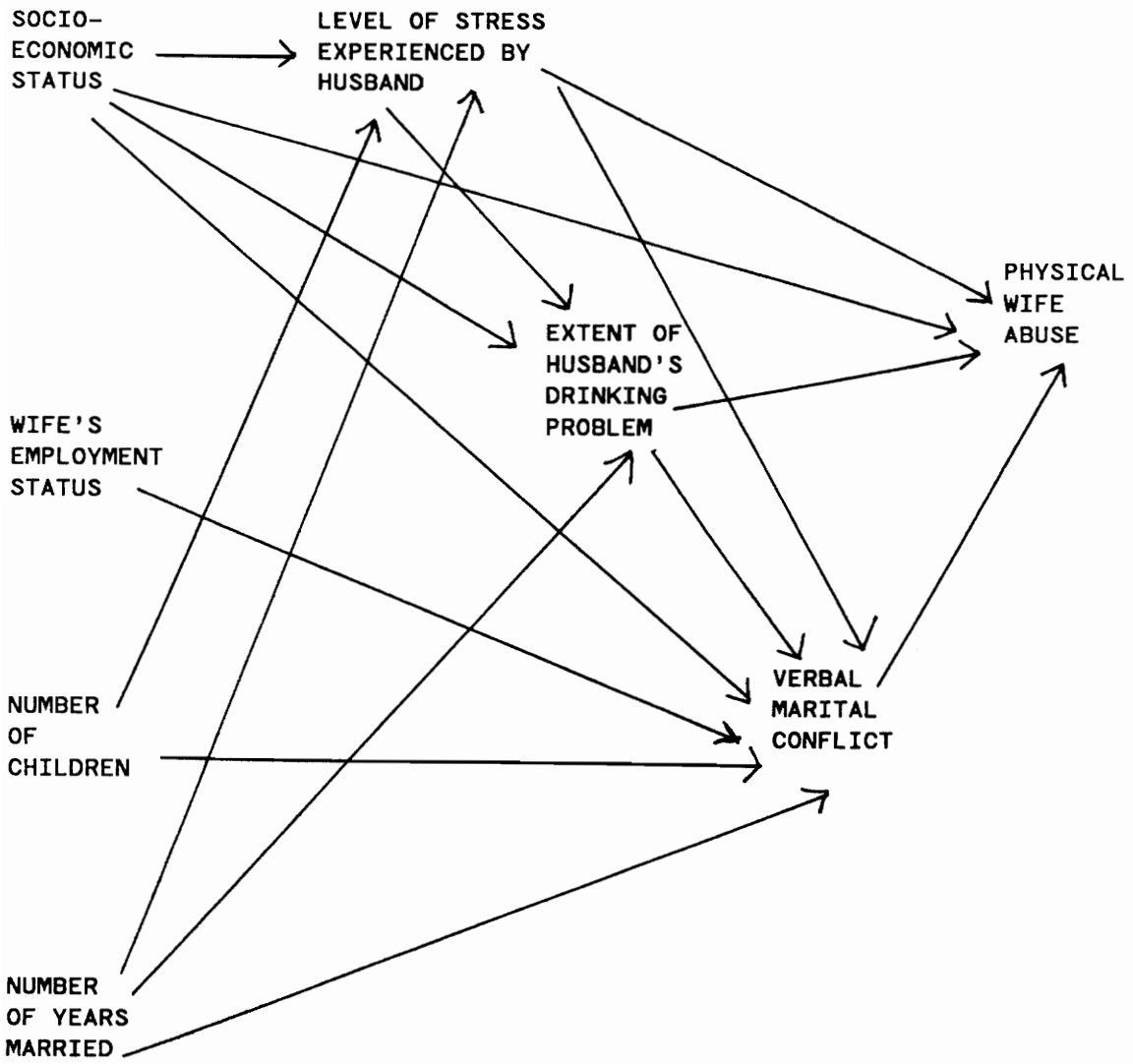


Figure 2. Path Diagram for Thai Wife Abuse, Model 2

hood of the husband using force against his wife. However, more basic indicators of wealth may also be negatively associated with wife abuse. To test this hypothesis, another scale is created which incorporates the possession of the following items: fan, refrigerator, television, video, radio, truck, automobile, telephone, and air conditioner. It is predicted that this possession-based socio-economic status scale is also negatively related to the same intervening variables and the existence of wife abuse.

### *WIFE'S EMPLOYMENT*

While a wife's employment outside the home enables her to contribute economic resources to the family, it may represent a threat to the husband's authority. Although the additional income relieves some of the economic strain from the husband, it is hypothesized that her working leads to increased levels of marital conflict.

### *NUMBER OF CHILDREN*

Caring for and supporting children strain economic resources and drain parents' time and energy. In addition, decisions concerning appropriate forms of discipline are frequently the basis of arguments between parents. As a result, it is predicted that as the number of children increases, so does the level of stress experienced by the husband and the amount of marital conflict.

### *YEARS MARRIED*

Previous research documents that the majority of violent incidents occur in the early years of the marriage, when economic security is low, the demands of children are high, and the husband and wife are not fully adjusted to the responsibilities of family life. In addition, the number of years married serves as a surrogate measure for the age of the husband. As a result, the number of years married is expected to be negatively related to the level of stress experienced by the husband, the severity of his drinking problem, and the amount of marital conflict.

## 5.2 INTERVENING VARIABLES

### *STRESS*

Stress can develop as a result of financial difficulties or from the demands of raising children. Regardless of the cause or origin, as the husband experiences stress, he may attempt to release his anger and frustration by exerting control over his wife through the use of physical force. It is predicted that higher levels of stress are related to the severity of his drinking problem, the amount of marital conflict, and the occurrence of wife abuse.

### *ALCOHOL USE*

Heavy drinkers may begin drinking to alleviate perceived stress (Bolton and Bolton, 1987:89; Deschner, 1984:31; Fleming, 1979:290). Despite extensive research correlating alcohol use and spousal violence, alcohol appears to be far from a necessary or sufficient cause of wife battering (Kantor and Straus, 1987:213; Ganley and Harris, 1978; Bolton and Bolton, 1987:88). However, it is hypothesized that alcohol abuse increases the amount of marital conflict and the likelihood of wife abuse.

### *MARITAL CONFLICT*

Discussions over the management of children are most likely to result in ardent disagreements between spouses (Straus et al., 1980). However, arguments, regardless of their origin, are expected to escalate due to stress and alcohol use. As a result, it predicted that higher levels of verbal marital conflict are associated with the increased likelihood of wife abuse.

## 5.3 DEPENDENT VARIABLE

### *PHYSICAL ABUSE OF THE WIFE*

Many factors have been documented to be significantly related to wife abuse. Due to the limitations of the data, the occurrence of wife abuse is determined by the any of the following three non-life threatening acts; slapping, hitting, and kicking.

# Chapter VI

# METHODOLOGY

## 6.1 DATA AND SAMPLE

This study relies on secondary data gathered for married couples with at least one child and where the wife was not more than forty-five years old.[4] A representative sample of households was drawn utilizing a two-stage, probability-proportional-to-size, cluster sample design with implicit stratification for population density. Each personal interview was conducted with either a husband or a wife, netting 2,017 completed interviews. The increased accessibility of wives resulted in approximately seventy percent (n = 1398) of the respondents being female and only thirty percent (n = 619) being male.

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[4] These data were collected through the financial assistance of a National Science Foundation grant SES-8618157 and support from the Institute for Population and Social Research and Mahidol University in Bangkok, Thailand.

## 6.2 METHODOLOGY AND PROPOSED ANALYSIS

### *HYPOTHESES*

In brief, it is hypothesized[5] that social isolation of the wife, socio-economic status, number of children, duration of the marriage, the wife's employment outside the home, the level of stress experienced by the husband, the severity of his drinking problem,[6] and the amount of verbal marital conflict all influence directly and/or indirectly the existence of wife abuse (see Figure 1 and 2 for a complete diagram of the path models). Specifically, the following hypotheses are to be tested in Model 1 (wife is the respondent):

1. As the level of social isolation of the wife increases, it is predicted that the likelihood of a husband using of physical force against his wife increases.
2. As the level of socio-economic status increases, it is predicted that the severity of the husband's drinking problem, the amount of verbal marital conflict, and the likelihood of a husband using of physical force against his wife decreases.
3. If the wife is employed outside the home, it is predicted that the amount of verbal marital conflict is higher.
4. As the number of children increases, it is predicted that the amount of verbal marital conflict increases.
5. As the number of years married increases, it is predicted that the severity of the husband's drinking problem and the amount of verbal marital conflict decreases.
6. As the severity of the husband's drinking problem increases, it is predicted that the amount of verbal marital conflict and the likelihood of wife abuse increases.
7. As the amount of marital conflict increases, it is predicted that the likelihood of wife abuse increases.

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[5] The following hypotheses are derived loosely from the theoretical propositions presented the section entitled sociological explanations of wife abuse and based on findings from previous research.

[6] This variable refers to the extent of the husband's drinking problem, ie. how frequently he fails to do something because he is drinking. For a complete list of the items used to create the scale for this variable see Appendix A.

The following hypotheses are to be tested in Model 2 (husband is the respondent):

1. As the level of socio-economic status increases, it is predicted that the level of stress experienced by the husband, the severity of the his drinking problem, the amount of verbal marital conflict, and the likelihood of wife abuse decreases.
2. If the wife is employed outside the home, it is predicted that the amount of verbal marital conflict is higher.
3. As the number of children increases, it is predicted that the level of stress experienced by the husband and the amount of verbal marital conflict increases.
4. As the number of years married increases, it is predicted that the level of stress experienced by husband, the severity of his drinking problem and the amount of verbal marital conflict decreases.
5. As the level of stress experienced by the husband increases, it is predicted that the severity of his drinking problem, the amount of verbal marital conflict, and the likelihood of wife abuse increases.
6. As the extent of husband's drinking problem increases, it is predicted that the amount of verbal marital conflict and the likelihood of wife abuse increases.
7. As the amount of marital conflict increases, it is predicted that the likelihood of wife abuse increases.

## *INDEPENDENT VARIABLES*

The following five independent variables are expected to influence the likelihood of a husband using physical force against his wife: social isolation of the wife, socio-economic status, wife's employment status, number of children, and duration of the marriage.

The social isolation of the wife is operationalized through a six-item scale consisting of the presence of other adults in the household, including married couples, relatives, and boarders, the number of good friends, the presence of relatives in Bangkok, and whether or not she is orginially from Bangkok. A high score indicates a high level of social isolation and the alpha for this scale with standardized values is .54.[7]

[7] This alpha is calculated with a subset of the data where the wife is the respondent.

Socio-economic status has traditionally been measured using scales incorporating income, employment status,[8] occupational prestige, and educational level. The scale utilized in this study contains only the following three items: family income, husband's occupational prestige ranking, and his educational level. The alpha for this three-item scale measuring socio-economic status with standardized values is .71. This thesis also evaluates the influence of a more subtle indicator of wealth and economic success. The following possessions are incorporated into another socio-economic scale: fan, refrigerator, television, video, radio, truck, automobile, telephone, and air conditioner. The alpha for this unweighted scale is .71. High scores on both the traditional or the possession-based scale indicates a high socio-economic status, which is expected to be negatively related to level of stress experienced by the husband, the severity of his drinking problem, the amount of marital conflict, and the likelihood of wife abuse.

The three other independent variables are wife's employment status, number of children, and duration of the marriage.

The wife's employment status is operationalized by a single dictohomy with categories of yes (yes = 1) or no (no = 0) and is expected to be positively related to higher levels of marital conflict. The number of children is coded from 1 to 7, with 7 indicating 7 or more children currently living with the parents. The number of children is expected to have a positive relationship, with the level of stress experienced by the husband and the amount of verbal marital conflict. The duration of the marriage is coded from 0 to 98, with zero indicating less than one year. The number of years married is predicted to have a negative relationship with the level of stress experienced by the husband, the extent of the husband's drinking problem, and the amount of marital conflict.

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[8] Due to a lack of variability in the husband's employment status, it was eliminated from the scale developed for the traditional measure of socio-economic status.

## *INTERVENING VARIABLES*

All three of the intervening variables--the level of stress experienced by the husband, the severity of his drinking problem, and the amount of verbal marital conflict--are measured by a scale.

Stress is operationalized through a ten-item scale incorporating presence of psychological symptoms in the past few weeks (See Appendix A for the specific items that constitute the scale). The alpha level for this unweighted scale is .84, with a high score indicating more symptoms. Since the data for this measure are available for only one-third of the respondents, stress is included as a variable only in Model 2 (see Figure 2). Stress is expected to be positively related to the severity of the husband's drinking problem, the amount of verbal marital conflict, and the likelihood of wife abuse.

The severity of the husband's drinking problem is operationalized by a three-item scale, based on the drinking pattern for the past month. The scale items are the frequency that a husband drinks too much, fails to do something as a result of his drinking, and the frequency of arguments developing because of his drinking (see Appendix A). The alpha for this unweighted scale is .72, with a high score indicating a more serious drinking problem. The severity of the husband's drinking problem is expected to be positively associated with marital conflict and the existence of wife abuse.

Verbal marital conflict is measured through a six-item scale, focusing on the disagreements that occurred in the past few weeks. This scale incorporates several issues that married couples may discuss and even argue over such as spending money, not spending enough time at home, irritating habits, etc...(See Appendix A for the complete list of the

items that constitute the scale). The alpha for this unweighted scale is .70, with a high score indicating poor marital relations. Higher levels of marital conflict are predicted to be positively related to the likelihood of the husband using physical force against his wife. The items comprising the stress, drinking problem, and marital conflict scales, are all operationalized at the ordinal level using the following categories: never, rarely, sometimes, and often.

## *DEPENDENT VARIABLE*

The dependent variable is a scale consisting of the following three specific physical acts of force used by the husband against his wife: slap, hit, and kick.[9] These three items measuring different forms of physical force are all dichotomized: ever, never. The alpha for this unweighted scale is .75, with the presence of any act indicating the existence of physical wife abuse.

## *METHODOLOGY*

The causal models presented are developed utilizing path analysis techniques (See Figure 1 and 2 for a complete diagram of the models). The path coefficients, which represent the relative amounts of influence of the specific variables, are estimated by statistics generated from multiple regression analyses. While metric regression coefficients for each of the independent and intervening variables are considered by some researchers to

[9] While the author concedes that other physical acts may constitute wife abuse, these specific actions are the only ones available in this data-set. Only respondents that revealed that they had serious arguments with their spouses within the past few weeks were asked if they had ever used physical force with one another. Specifically, they were questioned as to whether they had slapped, hit, or kicked their spouse and whether their spouse had used these forms of physical force on them at any point in the marriage.

be the best estimates of the path coefficients (Duncan, 1975), standardized coefficients are useful for determining which variable within each model has the greatest effect. Since an additional intervening variable prevents comparing the findings from the two causal models, standardized regression coefficients are examined for the path analysis section of the interpretation of the results.

The use of path analysis is advantageous for this thesis and other social science research for two important reasons (Wolfle, 1981). The arranging of the variables into a path model requires the researcher to explicitly state specific causal relationships based on theoretical rationale. In addition, the path coefficients can be interpreted to determine the amount of the direct, indirect, and total causal effects of all the components of the model (Wolfle, 1981).

Multiple regression and path analysis techniques are especially useful in interpreting information from large data bases. This study utilizes a representative[10] sample of spouses, allowing for inferences to be made to the population. Much of the research on wife abuse has relied on small, often clinical samples from shelters or official statistics from hospitals or police records. These studies, while rich in detail, suffer from underreporting of incidents, different definitions of abuse, and over-representation of the lower classes (Gelles, 1987:34; Walker, 1984; 1986:90; Bolton and Bolton, 1987:44; Straus et al., 1980:7). Gelles (1987:43) contends that theoretical development in the field of family violence will progress with the rigorous empirical testing of existing theories. This thesis utilizes quantitative statistical methodology necessary for empirical testing of propositions derived from American studies on a large representative sample from an Asian society.

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[10] The sample utilized is representative, not withstanding the specifications of housing type, age of wife, and presence of children.

# Chapter VII

# RESULTS OF THE STUDY

## *7.1 STATISTICAL FINDINGS FOR THAI WIFE ABUSE, MODEL 1*

Eighteen percent of the wives reported that their husband had hit, slapped, or kicked them at least once in their marriage (see Table 1). Zero-order correlations among the variables within Model 1 reveal that the wife's employment status (only in the variation of Model 1 utilizing a traditional measure of socio-economic status) and both measures of socio-economic status, are significantly related to the occurrence of wife abuse (see Table 2).[11] The wife's employment status is weakly related with a coefficient of .051.

[11] These correlation coefficients are generated by SPSSX through a Regression statement, similar to the Correlations Statement using the Listwise specification. As a result of missing values for all the variables in the particular model, a smaller subset of the sample is used to calculate the Pearson's r correlation coefficient.

Both measures of socio-economic status--the traditional scale incorporating income, occupational prestige, and education level, and the possession-based scale consisting of the ownership of various household appliances, entertainment items and vehicles--are significantly correlated with a Pearson's r of -.178 and -.203 respectively (see Table 2 and Table 3). The other independent variables--wife's social isolation, number of children, and duration of the marriage--are not significantly correlated with the existence of wife abuse. Regardless of the socio-economic status measure used, both of the intervening variables, the severity of the husband's drinking problem and the amount of verbal marital conflcit, are statistically significant and strongly related, approximately .31 and .41 respectively, to the husband's use of force against his wife (see Table 2 and Table 3).[12] When comparing the correlations among the variables in Model 1 with the two different measures of socio-economic status, almost all of the coefficients and their significance levels are similar. The one exception is the employment status of the wife which is weakly related to the traditional measure of socio-economic status with a Pearson's r of .077 but is unrelated to the possession measure (see Table 2).

With regard to the first regression equation bearing on Model 1, the traditional measure of socio-economic status is highly related to the severity of the husband's drinking problem, with a metric regression coefficient of -.127. However, the duration of the marriage appears to have no impact. Despite the high level of significance for socio-economic status, only two percent of the variance in the severity of husband's drinking problem is explained (see Table 4, column 1).

In the second equation, the duration of marriage, as well as the number of children, and the wife's employment status are all unrelated to the level of marital conflict. The tra-

[12] The difference in correlation coefficients among the same pairs of variables within Table 2 and Table 3 and Table 6 and Table 7, respectively, are the result of different sample sizes.

Table 1. **Frequencies of Wife Abuse for Model 1 and Model 2**

| | Model 1 (Wife - Respondent) | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| No presence | 1146 | 82.0 |
| Presence of wife abuse | 252 | 18.0 |
| | **Model 2 (Husband - Respondent)** | |
| | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| No presence | 498 | 80.5 |
| Presence of wife abuse | 121 | 19.5 |

**Table 2. Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Variables in Model 1 Using the Traditional SES Measure - Wives**

| | Intercorrelations | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** |
| 1. Traditional Socio-economic Status | 1.00 (1264) | | | | | | | |
| 2. Social Isolation of the Wife | .097*** (1264) | 1.00 (1264) | | | | | | |
| 3. Employment Status of Wife | .077** (1264) | -.032 (1264) | 1.00 (1264) | | | | | |
| 4. Number of Children | -.052* (1264) | .084*** (1264) | .010 (1264) | 1.00 (1264) | | | | |
| 5. Number of Years Married | -.046* (1264) | -.096*** (1264) | .127*** (1264) | .583*** (1264) | 1.00 (1264) | | | |
| 6. Drinking Problem of Husband | -.155*** (1264) | .025 (1264) | -.046* (1264) | .001 (1264) | .000 (1264) | 1.00 (1264) | | |
| 7. Marital Conflict | -.137*** (1264) | .017 (1264) | .015 (1264) | -.015 (1264) | .010 (1264) | .444*** (1264) | 1.00 (1264) | |
| 8. Use of Physical Force By Husband | -.178*** (1264) | -.034 (1264) | .051* (1264) | .025 (1264) | .035 (1264) | .319*** (1264) | .409*** (1264) | 1.00 (1264) |
| MEANS | -.011@ | -.057@ | .498 | 2.089 | 10.662 | 3.994 | 12.315 | .177 |
| STANDARD DEVIATIONS | 2.364 | 3.280 | .500 | 1.067 | 6.054 | 1.929 | 4.346 | .382 |

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Note: Pearson's r is the correlation coefficient presented.

@ Standardized values were utilized to calculate the scales for social isolation and traditional socio-economic status which allowed for a negative value for the mean of the variables.

**Table 3. Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Variables in Model 1 Using the Possession SES Measure - Wives**

| | Intercorrelations | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 1. Possession Socio-economic Status | 1.00 (1379) | | | | | | | |
| 2. Social Isolation of the Wife | .170*** (1379) | 1.00 (1379) | | | | | | |
| 3. Employment Status of Wife | .027 (1379) | -.038* (1379) | 1.00 (1379) | | | | | |
| 4. Number of Children | .062** (1379) | .081*** (1379) | .008 (1379) | 1.00 (1379) | | | | |
| 5. Number of Years Married | .095*** (1379) | -.103*** (1379) | .126*** (1379) | .577*** (1379) | 1.00 (1379) | | | |
| 6. Drinking Problem of Husband | -.136*** (1379) | .014 (1379) | -.054* (1379) | -.002 (1379) | -.005 (1379) | 1.00 (1379) | | |
| 7. Marital Conflict | -.149*** (1379) | .013 (1379) | .004 (1379) | -.020 (1379) | -.001 (1379) | .453*** (1379) | 1.00 (1379) | |
| 8. Use of Physical Force By Husband | -.203*** (1379) | -.033 (1379) | .033 (1379) | .023 (1379) | .028 (1379) | .309*** (1379) | .414*** (1379) | 1.00 (1379) |
| MEANS | 10.168 | -.002@ | .497 | 2.083 | 10.622 | 4.001 | 12.368 | .181 |
| STANDARD DEVIATIONS | 1.697 | 3.304 | .500 | 1.069 | 6.069 | 1.936 | 4.358 | .385 |

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Note: Pearson's r is the correlation coefficient presented.

@ Standardized values were utilized to calculate the scale for social isolation which allowed for a negative value for the mean of the variable.

Table 4. Regression Coefficients for Model 1 Using the Traditional SES Measure - Wives

| | Metric - (Standardized) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Husband's Drinking Problem** | **Marital Conflict** | **Existence of Wife abuse** |
| Traditional Socio-economic Status | -.127*** (-.155) | -.135** (-.073) | -.017*** (-.106) |
| Number of Children | | -.127 (-.031) | |
| Number of Years Married | -.002 (-.007) | .014 (.020) | |
| Employment Status of Wife | | .334 (.038) | |
| Wife's Social Isolation | | | -.004 (-.033) |
| Drinking Problem of Husband | | .979*** (.434) | .032*** (.159) |
| Marital Conflict | | | .029*** (.324) |
| N | 1264 | 1264 | 1264 |
| $R^2$ | .024*** | .204*** | .203*** |

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

ditional socio-economic status scale and the severity of the husband's drinking problem are strongly associated with the level of marital conflict with metric regression coefficients of -.135 and .979 respectively. When reviewing the standardized regression coefficients, it appears that while both of these variables are statistically significant, the severity of the husband's drinking problem is a much better predictor than socio-economic status, .434 as compared to -.073. Primarily as a result of this strong relationship with the severity of the husband's drinking problem, this equation explains approximately twenty percent of the variance in the amount of marital conflict (see Table 4, column 2).

In predicting wife abuse, the traditional socio-economic status scale, the severity of the husband's drinking problem, and marital conflict are all statistically significant, yet have very small metric regression coefficients, -.017, .032, and .029, respectively. Once again, the severity of the drinking problem of the husband is a better predictor than socio-economic status. However, the standardized coefficient for marital conflict is twice as large as the coefficient for the severity of the husband's drinking problem, .324 as compared to .159. Socio-economic status, the severity of the husband's drinking problem, and the level of marital conflict explain approximately twenty percent of the variance in the husband's use of physical force against his wife. The social isolation of the wife appears unrelated to the existence of wife abuse in the marriage (see Table 4, column 3).

When substituting the possession-based socio-economic status measure, the results with regard to all three equations are largely replicated (see Table 5). Nearly all of the significant standardized regression coefficients are comparable in size. With regard to the

Table 5. Regression Coefficients for Model 1 Using the Possession SES Measure - Wives

| | Metric - (Standardized) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Husband's Drinking Problem** | **Marital Conflict** | **Existence of Wife abuse** |
| Possession Socio-economic Status | -.156*** (-.137) | -.231*** (-.090) | -.030*** (-.132) |
| Number of Children | | -.106 (-.026) | |
| Number of Years Married | .003 (.008) | .015 (.021) | |
| Employment Status of Wife | | .243 (.028) | |
| Wife's Social Isolation | | | -.002 (-.017) |
| Drinking Problem of Husband | | .996*** (.442) | .028*** (.142) |
| Marital Conflict | | | .029*** (.330) |
| N | 1379 | 1379 | 1379 |
| $R^2$ | .019*** | .214*** | .208*** |

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

amount of variance explained by each equation, the new socio-economic measure produces almost identical findings (see Table 4 and Table 5).

## *7.2 STATISTICAL FINDINGS FOR THAI WIFE ABUSE, MODEL 2*

For Model 2, approximately twenty percent of the husbands reported that they had slapped, hit, or kicked their wife at least once during their marriage (see Table 1). Zero-order correlations among the variables within Model 2 reveal that wife's employment status, number of children, and number of years married are not associated with the existence of wife abuse. Both measures of socio-economic status--the traditional scale incorporating income, occupational prestige, and education level, and the possession-based scale consisting of the ownership of various household appliances, entertainment items and vehicles--are significantly correlated with wife abuse, with a Pearson's r of -.155 and -.205, respectively (see Table 6 and Table 7).

All three of the intervening variables--the level of stress experienced by the husband, the severity of his drinking problem, and the amount of marital conflict--are statistically significant and modestly or strongly related to the existence of physical wife abuse. When utilizing the traditional measure of socio-economic status the coefficients are .165, .134, and .375, respectively, whereas, with the possession-based scale the correlations are comparable with coefficients of .151, .119, and .383, (see Table 6 and Table 7). When reviewing the correlations among the two different measures of socio-economic status and the intervening variables, one trend is apparent. For the possession scale, the coef-

**Table 6. Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Variables in Model 2 Using the Traditional SES Measure - Husbands**

| | Intercorrelations | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 1. Traditional Socio-economic Status | 1.00 (550) | | | | | | | |
| 2. Employment Status of Wife | .058 (550) | 1.00 (550) | | | | | | |
| 3. Number of Children | -.126** (550) | -.079* (550) | 1.00 (550) | | | | | |
| 4. Number of Years Married | -.058 (550) | .079* (550) | .532*** (550) | 1.00 (550) | | | | |
| 5. Stress Experienced By Husband | -.072* (550) | -.013 (550) | -.046 (550) | -.099** (550) | 1.00 (550) | | | |
| 6. Drinking Problem of Husband | -.081* (550) | .027 (550) | -.072* (550) | -.029 (550) | .232*** (550) | 1.00 (550) | | |
| 7. Marital Conflict | -.125** (550) | -.012 (550) | .016 (550) | -.056 (550) | .383*** (550) | .343*** (550) | 1.00 (550) | |
| 8. Use of Physical Force By Husband | -.155*** (550) | -.035 (550) | -.022 (550) | -.018 (550) | .165*** (550) | .134*** (550) | .375*** (550) | 1.00 (550) |
| MEANS | .021 | .618 | 2.160 | 11.462 | 10.133 | 4.007 | 11.262 | .196 |
| STANDARD DEVIATIONS | 2.386 | .486 | 1.106 | 6.385 | 5.754 | 1.756 | 3.613 | .398 |

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Note: Pearson's r is the correlation coefficient presented.

Table 7. Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Variables in Model 2 Using the Possession SES Measure - Husbands

| | Intercorrelations | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 1. Possession Socio-economic Status | 1.00 (616) | | | | | | | |
| 2. Employment Status of Wife | -.009 (616) | 1.00 (616) | | | | | | |
| 3. Number of Children | .021 (616) | -.061 (616) | 1.00 (616) | | | | | |
| 4. Number of Years Married | .090* (616) | .076* (616) | .545*** (616) | 1.00 (616) | | | | |
| 5. Stress Experienced By Husband | -.114** (616) | -.005 (616) | -.049 (616) | -.101** (616) | 1.00 (616) | | | |
| 6. Drinking Problem of Husband | -.105** (616) | .032 (616) | -.066* (616) | -.032 (616) | .236*** (616) | 1.00 (616) | | |
| 7. Marital Conflict | -.136*** (616) | -.016 (616) | -.012 (616) | -.069* (616) | .386*** (616) | .337*** (616) | 1.00 (616) | |
| 8. Use of Physical Force By Husband | -.205*** (616) | -.026 (616) | -.028 (616) | -.051 (616) | .151*** (616) | .119*** (616) | .383*** (616) | 1.00 (616) |
| MEANS | 10.375 | .628 | 2.136 | 11.432 | 10.081 | 3.994 | 11.218 | .196 |
| STANDARD DEVIATIONS | 1.845 | .484 | 1.088 | 6.472 | 5.728 | 1.740 | 3.586 | .398 |

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Note: Pearson's r is the correlation coefficient presented.

ficients are slightly larger, -.114 and -.072 for stress experienced, -.105 and -.081 for the severity of the husband's drinking problem, and -.136 and -.125 for marital conflict. In addition, the significance level is one level higher for each of these intervening variables for their correlations with the possession-based scale.

The level of stress experienced by the husband is the dependent variable for the first equation in this model. Only the duration of the marriage is statistically significant and it is only weakly related, with a metric regression coefficient of - .092. The traditional measure of socio-economic status and the number of children are not associated with the level of stress experienced by the husband. Very little of the variance is explained by these three variables, less than two percent (see Table 8, column 1).

With regard to the severity of the husband's drinking problem, the level of stress experienced is highly related, with a small metric regression coefficient of .069. Neither the traditional measure of socio-economic status nor the number of years married appear to influence this variable. Almost six percent of the variance in the severity of the husband's drinking problem is explained by socio-economic status, the duration of the marriage, and his level of stress (see Table 8, column 2).

Similar to Model 1, the traditional measure of socio- economic status and the severity of the husband's drinking problem are both highly related to the level of marital conflict, with metric regression coefficients of -.114 and .551, respectively. The additional intervening variable, the level of stress experienced by the husband, is also statistically related at a .001 significance level, with a metric regression coefficient of .196. The number of children, the duration of the marriage, and the wife's employment status all appear to have little or no impact on the level of marital conflict. Utilizing standardized regression coefficients, it is apparent that the level of stress experienced by the husband is the best

Table 8. Regression Coefficients for Model 2 Using the Traditional SES Measure - Husbands

| | Metric (Standardized) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Stress Experienced By Husband** | **Husband's Drinking Problem** | **Marital Conflict** | **Existence of Wife abuse** |
| Traditional Socio-economic Status | -.188<br>(-.078) | -.047<br>(-.065) | -.114*<br>(-.075) | -.018**<br>(-.109) |
| Number of Children | -.006<br>(-.001) | | .235<br>(.072) | |
| Number of Years Married | -.092*<br>(-.103) | -.003<br>(-.010) | -.034<br>(-.060) | |
| Employment Status of Wife | | | -.003<br>(.000) | |
| Stress Experienced By Husband | | .069***<br>(.226) | .196***<br>(.313) | .002<br>(.022) |
| Drinking Problem of Husband | | | .551***<br>(.268) | .000<br>(-.001) |
| Marital Conflict | | | | .039***<br>(.353) |
| N | 550 | 550 | 550 | 550 |
| $R^2$ | .016* | .058*** | .226*** | .153*** |

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

predictor, followed by the severity of his drinking problem and the traditional measure of socio-economic status, .313, .268, and -.075, respectively. The combination of these variables explains a substantial proportion of the variance in the amount of marital conflict, approximately twenty-three percent (see Table 8, column 3).

With regard to the husband's use of physical force, the level of marital conflict and the traditional socio-economic status are both highly significant, but the metric regression coefficients are quite small, .039 and -.018, respectively. Verbal marital conflict is a better with a standardized regression coefficient of .353 as compared to -.109 for socio-economic status. Surprisingly, the severity of the husband's drinking problem and the level of stress experienced by the husband do not appear to be associated with wife abuse in this model. These four variables explain a bit less of the variance in wife abuse as reported by the wives, 15% as compared to 20% (see Table 8, column 4).

When utilizing the possession-based socio-economic status measure in place of the traditional measure, the results with regard to all four equations are fairly similar (see Table 9). With regard to marital conflict, the possession-based scale is not related, whereas the traditional scale is significant at the .05 level. In the equation on the existence of wife abuse, the possession coefficient is significant at a higher level, .001 and the standardized coefficient is one third larger than the traditional measure. With regard to the amount of variance explained by each equation, the new socio-economic measure results in almost identical findings (see Table 8 and Table 9).

Table 9. Regression Coefficients for Model 2 Using the Possession SES Measure - Husbands

| | Metric (Standardized) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Stress Experienced By Husband** | **Husband's Drinking Problem** | **Marital Conflict** | **Existence of Wife abuse** |
| Possession Socio-economic Status | -.328** (-.106) | -.074 (-.079) | -.134 (-.069) | -.034*** (-.157) |
| Number of Children | .023 (.004) | | .267 (.081) | |
| Number of Years Married | -.083* (-.094) | -.001 (-.002) | -.037 (-.066) | |
| Employment Status of Wife | | | -.099 (-.013) | |
| Stress Experienced By Husband | | .069*** (.227) | .197*** (.314) | .000 (-.005) |
| Drinking Problem of Husband | | | .534*** (.259) | -.005 (-.021) |
| Marital Conflict | | | | .041*** (.371) |
| N | 616 | 616 | 616 | 616 |
| $R^2$ | .021** | .062*** | .224*** | .171*** |

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

## *7.3 PATH ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR THAI WIFE ABUSE, MODEL 1*

### *DIRECT EFFECTS*

The direct effects are simply the standardized coefficients from the multiple regression analysis. With regard to wife abuse, the amount of marital conflict is the best predictor, and has approximately double the direct effect of the severity of the husband's drinking problem, .324 as compared to .159 (see Table 10, column 1). Socio-economic status, measured by the traditional variables, has the least influence, with a standardized coefficient of -.106. Surprisingly, the level of social isolation of the wife has no significant direct effect on the likelihood of the husband using physical force on his wife. For marital conflict, the severity of the husband's drinking problem has a much greater impact than the traditional measure of socio-economic status, .434 as compared to -.073 (see Table 10, column 2). None of the independent variables--wife's employment status, number of childen, or number of years married--directly influences the amount of marital conflict. With regard to the severity of the husband's drinking problem, only socio-economic status has a significant direct effect, with a standardized regression coefficient of -.155 (see Table 10, column 3).

### *INDIRECT EFFECTS*

The same variables that have a significant direct impact on wife abuse and the level of verbal marital conflict also have a similar and significant indirect influence. The severity

Table 10. Summary of Causal Effects Utilizing Standardized Regression Coefficients in Model 1 Using the Traditional SES - Wives

| Predetermined Variables | Endogenous Variables: Existence of Wife Abuse | Marital Conflict | Drinking Husband |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Direct Effects** | | | |
| Marital Conflict | .324*** | ----- | ----- |
| Drinking-Husband | .159*** | .434*** | ----- |
| Traditional SES | -.106*** | -.073** | -.155*** |
| Social Isolation | -.033 | ----- | ----- |
| Employment-Wife | ----- | .038 | ----- |
| Number of Children | ----- | -.031 | ----- |
| Years Married | ----- | .020 | -.007 |
| **Indirect Effects** | | | |
| Drinking-Husband | .141*** | ----- | ----- |
| Traditional SES | -.070*** | -.068*** | ----- |
| Social Isolation | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Employment-Wife | .013 | ----- | ----- |
| Number of Children | -.010 | ----- | ----- |
| Years Married | .004 | -.003 | ----- |
| **Total Effects** | | | |
| Marital Conflict | .324 | ----- | ----- |
| Drinking-Husband | .300 | .434 | ----- |
| Traditional SES | -.176 | -.141 | -.155 |
| Social Isolation | -.033 | ----- | ----- |
| Employment-Wife | .013 | .038 | ----- |
| Number of Children | -.010 | -.031 | ----- |
| Years Married | .004 | .017 | -.007 |
| N | 1264 | 1264 | 1264 |
| $R^2$ | .203*** | .204*** | .024*** |

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

of husband's drinking problem has nearly double the indirect effect through marital conflict than traditional socio-economic status through both the husband's drinking problem and marital conflict, .141 as compared to -.070 (see Table 10, column 1). Socio-economic status also has a significant indirect effect on the level of marital conflict, through the severity of the husband's drinking problem, with a coefficient of -.068 (see Table 10, column 2). None of the independent variables--wife's employment status, number of children, or duration of the marriage--indirectly influence a husband using physical force against his wife. Due to the placement of the severity of husband's drinking problem in the path model, no indirect effects exist for this variable.

## *TOTAL EFFECTS*

By combining the direct and indirect effects, the total effect of an individual variable can be calculated. With regard to wife abuse, the amount of verbal marital conflict and the severity of the husband's drinking problem have the greatest influence, .324 and .300, respectively (see Table 10, column 1). Socio-economic status, measured by the traditional items, also has an impact, although it is considerably smaller than the intervening variables, with a total effect of -.176. None of the other independent variables--social isolation of the wife, her employment status, number of children, or duration of the marriage--appears to have a strong effect on the husband's use of physical force (see Table 10, column 1).

Similar results are found for the total effects on the the level of marital conflict. The severity of the husband's drinking problem has the strongest influence, with a total effect of .434 (see Table 10, column 2). Traditional socio-economic status has the next largest impact, with a much smaller total effect of -.141. As with wife abuse, the wife's em-

ployment status, the number of children, and the number of years married, all appear to have little or no influence on the amount of verbal marital conflict (see Table 10, column 2). Finally, since the severity of the husband's drinking problem is the first intervening variable, no indirect effects exist and the total influence of socio-economic status is simply the direct effect, -.155 (see Table 10, column 3).

## *POSSESSION SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS EFFECTS*

Substituting the possession-based socio-economic status measure resulted in very similar findings with regard to the direct, indirect, and total effects of all the variables in the three regression equations (see Table 11). However, with regard to the direct impact of socio-economic status, the possession socio-economic status measure generated slightly higher effects regarding wife abuse and marital conflict, -.132 compared to -.106 and -.090 compared to -.073, respectively (see Table 11, column 1 and 2). The traditional measure resulted in a slighly higher effect on the severity of the husband's drinking problem, -.155 as compared to -.137 (see Table 10 and Table 11). Almost identical indirect effects are found for all the variables with the two different measures of socio-economic status. Primarily as a result of the differences in the direct effects, the total impact of the possession socio-economic status is somewhat larger for wife abuse, slightly higher for marital conflict, and somewhat lower for the severity of the husband's drinking problem (see Table 11). As with the traditional measure, the total influence of the other independent variables is very small.

Table 11. Summary of Causal Effects Utilizing Standardized Regression Coefficients in Model 1 Using the Possession SES - Wives

| Predetermined Variables | Endogenous Variables: Existence of Wife Abuse | Marital Conflict | Drinking Husband |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Direct Effects** | | | |
| Marital Conflict | .330*** | ----- | ----- |
| Drinking-Husband | .142*** | .442*** | ----- |
| Possession SES | -.132*** | -.090** | -.137*** |
| Social Isolation | -.017 | ----- | ----- |
| Employment-Wife | ----- | .028 | ----- |
| Number of Children | ----- | -.026 | ----- |
| Years Married | ----- | .021 | -.008 |
| **Indirect Effects** | | | |
| Drinking-Husband | .146*** | ----- | ----- |
| Possession SES | -.069*** | -.061*** | ----- |
| Social Isolation | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Employment-Wife | .009 | ----- | ----- |
| Number of Children | -.009 | ----- | ----- |
| Years Married | .009 | .004 | ----- |
| **Total Effects** | | | |
| Marital Conflict | .330 | ----- | ----- |
| Drinking-Husband | .288 | .442 | ----- |
| Possession SES | -.201 | -.151 | -.137 |
| Social Isolation | -.017 | ----- | ----- |
| Employment-Wife | .009 | .028 | ----- |
| Number of Children | -.009 | -.026 | ----- |
| Years Married | .009 | .025 | .008 |
| N | 1380 | 1380 | 1380 |
| $R^2$ | .202*** | .212*** | .015*** |

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

# *7.4 PATH ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR THAI WIFE ABUSE, MODEL 2*

## *DIRECT EFFECTS*

Standardized regression coefficients are used for the direct effects. With regard to wife abuse, the amount of marital conflict is the best predictor, approximately three times larger than the direct effect of traditional socio-economic status, .353 as compared to -.109 (see Table 12, column 1). Neither the severity of the husband's drinking problem nor his level of stress has a significant direct effect on the likelihood of the husband using physical force against his wife. However, for marital conflict, the level of stress experienced by the husband has the largest direct effect, .313. The severity of the husband's drinking problem also has a significant impact, much greater than the traditional measure of socio-economic status, .268 and -.075, respectively (see Table 12, column 2). None of the other independent variables-- wife's employment status, number of childen, or number of years married--directly influences the amount of marital conflict.

With regard to the severity of the husband's drinking problem, only the level of stress experienced by the husband has a significant direct effect of .226 (see Table 12, column 3). Both traditional socio-economic status and the number of years married appear to little or no direct influence on the severity of the husband's drinking problem. Only the duration of the marriage has a significant direct effect of -.103 on the additional intervening variable in this model, the level of stress experienced by the husband (see Table

Table 12. Summary of Causal Effects Utilizing Standardized Regression Coefficients in Model 2 Using the Traditional SES - Husbands

| | Endogenous Variables | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Predetermined Variables** | **Existence of Wife Abuse** | **Marital Conflict** | **Drinking Husband** | **Stress Husband** |
| **Direct Effects** | | | | |
| Marital Conflict | .353*** | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Drinking-Husband | -.001 | .268*** | ----- | ----- |
| Stress-Husband | .022 | .313*** | .226*** | ----- |
| Traditional SES | -.109** | -.075* | -.065 | -.078 |
| Employment-Wife | ----- | .000 | ----- | ----- |
| Number of Children | ----- | .072 | ----- | -.001 |
| Years Married | ----- | -.060 | -.010 | -.103* |
| **Indirect Effects** | | | | |
| Drinking-Husband | .094*** | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Stress-Husband | .132*** | .060*** | ----- | ----- |
| Traditional SES | -.045** | -.047** | -.018 | ----- |
| Employment-Wife | .000 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Number of Children | .025 | .000 | .000 | ----- |
| Years Married | -.038* | -.041 | -.023 | ----- |
| **Total Effects** | | | | |
| Marital Conflict | .353 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Drinking-Husband | .093 | .268 | ----- | ----- |
| Stress-Husband | .154 | .373 | .226 | ----- |
| Traditional SES | -.154 | -.122 | -.083 | -.078 |
| Employment-Wife | .000 | .000 | ----- | ----- |
| Number of Children | .025 | .072 | .000 | -.001 |
| Years Married | -.038 | -.101 | -.033 | -.103 |
| N | 550 | 550 | 550 | 550 |
| $R^2$ | .153*** | .226*** | .058*** | .016* |

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

12, column 4). Neither socio-economic status nor the number of children has a significant impact on the husband's level of stress.

## *INDIRECT EFFECTS*

The same variables that have a significant direct impact on wife abuse, the level of marital conflict, and the severity of the husband's drinking problem also have an indirect influence. The level of stress experienced by the husband, through marital conflict and his drinking problem, has the largest indirect effect, with a coefficient of .132 (see Table 12, column 1). The severity of husband's drinking problem also has a significant indirect impact on wife abuse through marital conflict, with a coefficient of .094 (see Table 12, column 1). Traditional socio-economic status, through the husband's stress, his drinking problem, and marital conflict has a small, yet significant indirect effect with a coefficient of -.045. The duration of the marriage has a slightly smaller indirect effect, -.038, through the husband's drinking problem and marital conflict. Neither the wife's employment status nor the number of children indirectly influence a husband using physical force against his wife (see Table 12, column 1).

As with the direct effects for marital conflict, the level of stress experienced by the husband and traditional socio-economic status, both have a significant indirect impact, .060 and -.047, respectively (see Table 12, column 2). With regard to the severity of the husband's drinking problem, none of the independent variables--traditional socio-economic status, number of children, and number of years married--appears to have an indirect effect (see Table 12, column 3). Due to the placement of the level of stress experienced by the husband in the path model, no indirect effects exist for this variable.

## *TOTAL EFFECTS*

For wife abuse, the amount of verbal marital conflict has the greatest influence, with a total effect of .353 (see Table 12, column 1). The level of stress experienced by the husband and traditional socio-economic status have an identical impact, .154 and -.154 respectively, which is approximately half of the total effect of marital conflict. The severity of the husband's drinking problem has the fourth largest effect, .093. The wife's employment status, number of children, and duration of the marriage all appear to have little or no influence on the husband's use of physical force against his wife (see Table 12, column 1).

The level of the stress experienced by the husband has the strongest influence on the amount of marital conflict with a total effect of .373 (see Table 12, column 2). The severity of the husband's drinking problem has the next largest impact with a total effect of .268. Traditional socio-economic status also has a substantially smaller effect of -.122. The number of years married, followed by the number of children, has even smaller total effects of -.101 and .072, respectively (see Table 12, column 2). The wife's employment status appears to have no influence at all on the amount of marital conflict.

The level of stress experienced by the husband also has the greatest influence on severity of the husband's drinking problem with a total effect of .226 (see Table 12, column 3). Traditional socio-economic status has the next largest impact with a much smaller total effect of -.083. Neither the duration of the marriage nor the number of children appears to influence the severity of the husband's drinking problem (see Table 12, column 3). Finally, since the level of stress experienced by the husband is the first intervening variable, no indirect effects exist and the total influence of the number of years married,

socio-economic status, and the number of children are simply the direct effects, -.103, -.018, and -.001, respectively (see Table 12, column 4).

## *POSSESSION SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS EFFECTS*

Substituting the possession-based socio-economic status measure resulted in fairly similar findings with regard to the direct, indirect, and total effects of all the variables in the four regression equations (see Table 13). However, with regard to the direct impact of socio-economic status, the possession socio-economic status measure generated somewhat stronger effects for wife abuse and the stress experienced by the husband (which is also significant to the .01 level), -.157 compared to -.109 and -.106 compared to -.078, respectively (see Table 12 and Table 13, columns 1 and 4). With regard to the husband's drinking problem, only slightly higher direct effects are generated by the possession socio-economic status, -.079 as compared to -.065. The traditional measure resulted in slightly higher effects, -.075 as compared to -.069 in the equation on the severity of the husband's drinking problem (see Table 12 and Table 13).

Almost identical indirect effects are found with the two different measures of socio-economic status impact (see Table 12 and Table 13). Primarily as a result of the differences in the direct effects, the total impact of the possession-based socio-economic status is somewhat larger for wife abuse, -.202 compared to -.154, slightly higher for the husband's drinking problem and the level of stress experienced by him, -.103 compared to -.083 and -.106 compared to -.078, and almost the same for marital conflict, -.129 compared to -.122 (see Table 12 and Table 13). The total influences of the other independent variables are very similar, with the number of years married having the next largest in-

Table 13. Summary of Causal Effects Utilizing Standardized Regression Coefficients in Model 2 Using the Possession SES - Husbands

| Predetermined Variables | Endogenous Variables: Existence of Wife Abuse | Marital Conflict | Drinking Husband | Stress Husband |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Direct Effects** | | | | |
| Marital Conflict | .371*** | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Drinking-Husband | -.021 | .259*** | ----- | ----- |
| Stress-Husband | -.005 | .314*** | .227*** | ----- |
| Possession SES | -.157** | -.069 | -.079* | -.106** |
| Employment-Wife | ----- | .013 | ----- | ----- |
| Number of Children | ----- | .081 | ----- | .004 |
| Years Married | ----- | -.066 | -.002 | -.094* |
| **Indirect Effects** | | | | |
| Drinking-Husband | .096*** | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Stress-Husband | .133*** | .059*** | ----- | ----- |
| Possession SES | -.045** | -.060*** | -.024* | ----- |
| Employment-Wife | -.005 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Number of Children | .031 | .002 | .001 | ----- |
| Years Married | -.037* | -.036 | -.021 | ----- |
| **Total Effects** | | | | |
| Marital Conflict | .371 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Drinking-Husband | .075 | .259 | ----- | ----- |
| Stress-Husband | .128 | .373 | .227 | ----- |
| Possession SES | -.202 | -.129 | -.103 | -.106 |
| Employment-Wife | -.005 | -.013 | ----- | ----- |
| Number of Children | .031 | .083 | .001 | .004 |
| Years Married | -.037 | -.102 | -.023 | -.094 |
| N | 617 | 617 | 617 | 617 |
| $R^2$ | .168*** | .223*** | .061*** | .016* |

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

fluence and the number of children and the wife's employment status having little total effect on any of the dependent variables in the equations.

# Chapter VIII

# DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

## *SUMMARY*

This study reveals that approximately 19% of the sample reported at least one incident of physical wife abuse during their marriage. It is interesting to note that the frequenies reported by the husbands and wives are similar and differ by less than 2%. The evidence from both models suggests that poor marital relations have the strongest influence on the likelihood of the husband using physical force against his wife. With regard to Model 1 (wife is respondent), the severity of the husband's drinking problem is the second strongest influence, with socio-economic status having the third largest effect on wife abuse. None of the other independent variables--social isolation of the wife, number of children, wife's employment status, or duration of marriage--has a significant direct or indirect effect on the likelihood of a husband using physical force against his wife. The two measures of socio-economic status produced similar findings with regard to the amount of variance explained in wife abuse, approximately 20%.

Dramatic differences are observed in Model 2 (husband is respondent) when the additional intervening variable, the level of stress experienced by the husband, is introduced. When utilizing the traditional measure of socio-economic status, its influence on wife abuse is less than half that of marital conflict and the magnitude of the effect is similar to that of stress. In addition, the influence of the husband's drinking problem is even weaker, approximately two-thirds less than these two variables. The substitution of the possession-based socio-economic measure produced similar findings with regard to drinking, however it has a greater effect on wife abuse and the level of stress experienced by the husband (becomes significant to the .01 level). Only slightly different findings are observed concerning the independent variables. The number of years married has a significant, yet small, indirect effect on wife abuse with the possession-based measure. As with the traditional measure of socio-economic status, neither number of children nor wife's employment status has a significant effect. The substitution of the possession-based socio-economic status measure increased the overall variance explained in Model 2 by less than two percent, to approximately 17%.

With regard to the level of marital conflict, the two different measures of socio-economic status produced similar results. For Model 1, the severity of the husband's drinking problem has approximately three times the effect of socio-economic status. All of the other independent variables appear to have little or no effect. The overall variance explained with regard to marital conflict is between 20 and 21%. In Model 2, the level of stress experienced by the husband has the strongest influence, followed by the severity of the husband's drinking problem. Socio-economic status also has a significant effect, but it is less than one-third as large as the effect of the level of stress experienced by the husband. The duration of the marriage has a slightly weaker influence than socio-economic status. Neither number of children nor wife's employment status appears to

affect the level of marital conflict. The amount of variance explained in marital conflict is slightly higher than wife abuse, between 22 and 23%.

As with marital conflict, both measures of socio-economic status produce similar findings with regard to the husband's drinking problem. For Model 1, socio-economic status is significantly related to the severity of husband's drinking problem, whereas the duration of the marriage has little or no effect. Only two percent of the variance in the husband's drinking problem is explained by these two variables. In Model 2, the level of stress experienced by the husband has the strongest influence on his drinking problem and has more than double the effect of socio-economic status. Neither number of children nor number of years married appears to have any effect on the severity of the husband's drinking problem. The addition of the variable stress triples the amount of variance explained, although it is still less than 7%.

Only Model 2 included as an intervening variable the amount stress experienced by the husband. While the traditional measure of socio-economic status has no significant effect, the possession-based measure is significantly related at the .01 significance level. The number of years married has the strongest effect on the level of stress experienced by the husband when utilizing the traditional measure. The duration of the marriage is also significant with the possession-based measure, but it has a slightly smaller effect. The number of children appears to have little or no influcence. The amount of variance explained in the level of stress experienced by the husband is identical for both measures of socio-economic status, yet is very small, less than 2%.

## *8.1 IMPLICATIONS*

The frequency of wife abuse observed in this study (19%) is considerably less than the 28% reported by Straus et al. (1980) for an American sample. The statistical findings of this study of an urban Thai sample indicates that the number of children has little or no impact on the level of marital conflict. However, the variance on this particular variable is restricted because all of the respondents had a least one child. If married couples without children had been included in the Thai sample, the number of children may have been related to the level of marital conflict and generating a lower rate of wife abuse. The Straus et al. (1980) study revealed that the majority of disagreements between spouses concern their children and that the couples with the highest rates of marital conflict were sixteen times more likely to resolve arguments with physical force. Straus et al. (1980) conclude that this is one explanation for the low rate of wife abuse observed among childless couples. In addition, a recent review by Worthington and Buston (1986) documents that the first child is one of the most disruptive events for a marriage and is a great threat to marital instability and dissatisfaction. Because the Thai sample is restricted to married couples with children, it is very possible that the number of children, particularly the introduction of the first child, increases the frequency of marital conflict. As a result of these differences in samples studied, the variance in the rate of spousal abuse between the two societies, American and Thai, may be even greater than is suggested by the specific frequencies of wife abuse.

As with the number of children, the variance of the duration of the marriage is restricted, due to the inclusion of spouses with a wife who is less than forty-five years old. However, this restriction is not critical for this study as previous research such as Straus et

al. (1980) contends that the majority of violent incidents occur in the early years of marriage by younger men typically under forty years old. While duration of the marriage appears to have little or no effect on wife abuse, marital conflict, or the severity of the husband's drinking problem, it is significant with regard to the level of stress experienced by the husband. It seems that as the marriage matures, the husband generally experiences lower levels of stress. This could be a result of increased adjustment to the marriage and its responsibilities, as w as to his other social roles.

The level of social isolation of the wife also does not appear to be associated with wife abuse. The lack of a relationship could be due to an inadequate measure of the variable. The scale created to assess the social isolation of the wife did not have a strong reliability rating, having an alpha level of approximately .51. In addition, specific items used in previous scales, such as the frequency of changing residences, as well as participation in community and religious organizations (Pagelow, 1984; Bolton and Bolton, 1987; Dobash and Dobash, 1979) were not available in the data-set. Aside from these methodological and construct validity issues, it is also possible that social isolation simply does not have a negative effect in Thai society for the rates of physical wife abuse. Most people in Bangkok, Thailand live in close knit neighborhoods and communities, so a wife is not socially isolated in the same fashion as American wives. For this reason, social isolation may be unrelated to the likelihood of a husband using physical force against her.

Wife's employment status, like the number of children, is also critically restricted and appears unrelated to the level of marital conflict. No information is available on when the wife began working, for what reason, or how long she has been employed. In addition, most of wives who were employed outside the home held positions of relatively low

prestige and low pay. The lack of a relationship between wife's employment status and marital conflict may be due to these restrictions in this sample. The wives' low earnings and occupational prestige may not jeopardize the balance of resource, hence the husband's authority within the marriage. Working wives may not attempt to use these limited economic resources as a tool to gain authority. Her additional resources, under these circumstances, may not encourage any new expectations for a more egalitarian marriage, or challenge male superiority norms. If a working wife does not attempt to change the existing authority structure due to her increased resources, as suggested by Brown (1980) and Whitehurst (1974)[13], then her employment may not lead to increased levels of marital conflict. Another explanation may be that a wife's employment outside the home simply does not have a negative effect on the level of marital conflict, as suggested by the most recent research on American samples (Spitze, 1988).

The level of stress experienced by the husband, the additional intervening variable in Model 2, also has a significant indirect effect on wife abuse, as well as direct effects on marital conflict and the severity of the husband's drinking problem. These results are consistent with the findings reported by Shupe et al. (1987) indicating that stress is associated with disagreements between spouses. Other studies using American samples report that batterers have high levels of stress (Straus et al., 1980; Ganley and Harris, 1978; Mulvey and Lidz, 1984) and that heavy drinkers may begin drinking to allievate perceived feelings of stress (Bolton and Bolton, 1987:89; Deschner, 1984:31; Fleming, 1979:290). The fact that the dependent variable, wife abuse, is dichotomized and may refer to prior as well as current abuse, while stress is measured as current psychological

[13] The restrictions stated above prevents an adequate test of the initial effects of a wife's employment which would constitute the transitional period in a shift in marital power. Both Brown (1980) and Whitehurst (1974) are basing their theoretical propositions on the results generated by a shifting of the distribution of power within the marriage.

feelings, may explain the absence of a direct relationship between the two variables in the model.

This study reveals that the amount of marital conflict has a strong direct effect on the occurrence of physical wife abuse. As mentioned previously, these results are consistent with the Straus et al. (1980) study. Several factors appear to influence the level of verbal marital conflict and indirectly affect wife abuse. The severity of the husband's drinking problem exerts significant direct effects on wife abuse, as well as indirect effects through marital conflict, in Model 1; it produces only a significant indirect effect in Model 2. It appears that the level of stress experienced by the husband, the additional intervening variable in Model 2, mediates the direct impact of his drinking problem on wife abuse. Recent studies using American samples (Kantor and Straus, 1987; Livingston, 1986; Walker, 1986; Pagelow, 1984; Bolton and Bolton, 1987) provide findings consistent with these results. While these findings do not substantiate a specific theory indicating why alcohol abuse and a husband's use of physical force against his wife are related, such as disinhibition theory (Bolton and Bolton, 1987; Kantor and Straus, 1987) or deviance disavowal (Coleman and Straus, 1983), these findings provide substantial evidence for a strong relationship between the husband's alcohol abuse and marital conflict, as well as support for a significant indirect effect of a husband's drinking problem on wife abuse.

It is not suprising that stress, drinking, and marital conflict influence the husband's use of physical force against his wife. Among the independent variables, only socio-economic status consistently influences all of these intervening variables, and wife abuse. Although it has been documented that wife abuse occurs in all socio-economic classes (ie. Straus et al., 1980; Walker, 1984; Fagan, Stewart and Hansen, 1983, Pagelow, 1981:1984), these findings provide support for the contention that physical wife abuse

is more likely to occur within marriages where the husband has a low socio-economic status. This relationship is due in part to the fact that socio-economic status has a significant effect on the level of marital conflict, the severity of the husband's drinking problem, and the level of stress experienced by the husband (possession-based socio-economic status measure only). Socio-economic status may be related to the severity of the husband's drinking problem because he drinks to alleviate feelings of frustration concerning the lack of resources he can provide to his family. His inability to provide resources, along with his alcohol abuse, may create marital conflict, as the wife sees the husband being irresponsible. Finally, all of these intervening variables could be considered manifestations of unresolved feelings of frustration arising from the difficulties associated with low socio-economic status.

These findings do not directly substantiate Pagelow's (1984) contention that powerlessness from underemployment or a stressful work environment may result in family violence. An adequate measure of powerlessness does not exist in the present data-set and, as a result, its effects could not be assessed. In addition, these findings provide an incomplete test of Straus and Allen's (1980) "ultimate resource" theory of violence, as well as other propositions concerning violence as a last resort to reaffirm a position of power (Pagelow, 1984:101; Harris and Bologh, 1985:555; Bolton and Bolton, 1987:60), because this study lacks data that would identify the conditions under which marital violence was more likely to occur. However, the data do support a general resource theory of violence, in which husbands who experience resource deprivation are more likely to physically abuse their wives.

Despite an inability to completely test the specific theories mentioned above, this study does provide strong and consistent evidence of the importance of socio-economic status

with regard to wife abuse, marital conflict, and the severity of a husband's drinking problem. In general, it appears that the lower the socio-economic status and the higher level of stress experienced by the husband, the more likely he is to have a severe drinking problem, and become involved in verbal marital conflict, all of which increase the likelihood of a husband using physical force against his wife. These findings linking socio-economic status and stress, drinking, marital conflict, as well as wife abuse suggest that the social structure of a developing Asian society influence spousal behavior. These findings indicate that the propositions and patterns concerning the effects of marital conflict, abusing alcohol, stress, and socio-economic status on wife abuse which are predictive for American samples also hold for a developing, Asian society.

## *8.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY*

In the creation of the measure for the existence of wife abuse, only three items were available in the data set: whether the wife was ever slapped, hit, or kicked. Other researchers have utilized a quasi-ordinal level scale such as the Straus's Conflict Tactics Scale (1979). Straus's (1979) scale contains eight items ranging from pushing to more violent incidents, such as threatening with a knife. The three items used in this study are all at approximately the same level of seriousness and refer to any point in the marriage. A more stringent measure would include recent acts, such as acts committed in the last year and an ordinal-level scale of the acts.

As mentioned above and in the Implications section, the measure of wife abuse is a dictohomy referring to any one of the three acts of force used by the husband at any point during the marriage. However, the intervening variables have to do with the more recent past, for example the last few months. This is particularly the case for the level of stress experienced by the husband, which is a scale based on items concerning psychological symptoms. Since the time frame for the dependent variable and the intervening and even the independent variables do not all refer to a recent and consistent period of time, the causal effects are more difficult to identify with these data.

Another limitation in this study is that only married couples with at least one child are included in the sample. Childless married couples, cohabitating couples, as well as divorced and separated couples, are excluded. These individuals could manifest widely different rates of wife abuse and could severely alter the estimates of abuse for the overall population.

As mentioned earlier, very few husbands in the sample had less than full employment status. More males who are presently out-of-work and are only able to obtain part-time employment should be included in future samples. In addition, a greater variability in the wife's occupational prestige ranking would enable a more adequate test for the impact of the wife's employment on the amount of marital conflict. A greater range in both of these employment variables would provide a more stringent test with regard to the effects of socio-economic status and wife's employment on marital conflict and wife abuse.

The number of years married is also restricted because the data only include married couples where the wife was less than forty-five years old. Since previous research (Straus et al., 1980) contends that the majority of violent incidents occur during the early years

of marriage, this limitation is not expected to substantially affect the reported frequency of wife abuse.

## *8.3 FUTURE RESEARCH*

Recent research in the area of marital relations has suggested that it is critical to obtain data from both spouses. However, in this study, the reporting of wife abuse by husbands and wives only differed by less than two percent. These findings appear to indicate that with regard to Thai married couples concerning physical wife abuse this may not be necessary. Researchers should weigh carefully the additional costs associated with obtaining responses from both the husband and wife with regard to this culture and these issues.

Future research in the area of wife abuse should attempt to measure all independent, intervening, and dependent variables such that they can be matched on specific points in time, e.g., recent or distant past. A scale is needed to measure the amount and type of physical force used by a husband against his wife. Such a scale should include several acts of physical force, ranging in the degree of seriousness, such as the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979). This would allow the dependent variable to be measured with at least a quasi-ordinal level scale and facilitate more meaningful multiple regression analyses. For comparability and for more adequate testing of established theories the wording in future studies should specify that acts of physical force are used as a means of resolving arguments between the spouses or an attempt to re-establish a position of power within the marriage as suggested by various theories concerning family violence.

As mentioned previously, the two measures of socio-economic status explained approximately the same amount of variance for every equation. Hence, it appears that the possession-based measure is a fairly accurate predictor of the level of stress experienced by the husband, the severity of his drinking problem, the amount of marital conflict, and wife abuse. This is interesting because the possession-based measure more directly reflects the income, rather than the occupational prestige and educational level of the husband. While not diminishing the predictive ability of the traditional measure, and although we can not compare directly the research value of one measure over another, these similar results may suggest less importance of two of the components of the traditional measure. These similar findings generated by the two measures may indicate that higher educational levels and occupational prestige do not offer a great deal of assistance in predicting the level of stress experienced by the husband, his drinking problem, poor marital relations and the likelihood of physical wife abuse. In sum, this study indicates that the possession-based scale deserves some attention as a possible measure of socio-economic status in future social research.

With regard to other, unstudied variables that should be included in a model explaining wife abuse, one is the intergenerational transmission of violence, despite the difficulty in obtaining such data. These data are very important because much of the research on family violence concludes that observing violence in the family of origin is one of the best predictors of future violence, regardless of the type of society studied (Gelles and Cornell, 1983). In addition, intergenerational transmission of violence suggests that a cycle of violence exists and this theory provides support for the contention that violence is learned within the family setting. Furthermore, these conclusions concerning the importance of this variable are based primarily on American samples. It is crucial that these findings be replicated in cross-cultural research.

Information should also be collected concerning the husband's attitudes towards his "right" to a dominant position within the family and the cultural norms for the authority structure prescribed for the marriage. Future research could also include a measure of the husband's role adjustment and his assessment of his wife's role fulfillment, including household duties and inappropriate behavior by a wife (Shupe et al., 1987). Previous studies have demonstrated that batterers often report inappropriate feelings of jealousy and complain that their wife "deserved" the physical abuse because she did not perform her household duties to the husband's satisfaction (Straus et al., 1980; Shupe et al., 1987; Greenbalt, 1985; Gayford, 1983; Pagelow 1984).

A more adequate test of the "ultimate theory of violence" (Allen and Straus, 1980), in which it is proposed that husbands use force as a last resort to establish and maintain power within the family, particularly in the absence of legitimate power through the providing of financial resources, could offer some assistance to theory building in this area of research. This study indicates that low material resources are related to increased levels of stress, alcohol abuse, marital conflict, and ultimately to wife abuse. The findings underscore the importance and the impact that socio-economic status has in the rate of wife abuse even in a developing, Eastern society.

Our data suggest that Thailand has a substantially lower rate of wife abuse than does the United States. However, the findings do conflict somewhat with Campbell's study (1985) which concluded that Thailand had a very low rate of wife abuse. Socio-economic status appears to have a substantial and significant impact on the rates of wife abuse in an Asian, developing society. Perhaps wife abuse rates in Western, industrial-ized societies should serve as a warning to developing countries. Efforts should be made to maintain whatever aspects of the current Asian economic and social structure, so that

socio-economic status does not become a more intergral part of a man's social status. This consistent and significant relationship of socio-economic status with several factors related to wife abuse, as well as the incidence of wife abuse itself, provides strong support for the necessity to improve socio-economic status if an attempt is made to reduce the overall rates of this violent behavior.

The findings from this study contribute to the small, but growing body of research literature concerning wife abuse in non-Western societies. While the national recognition of wife abuse in the late 1970's brought a rush of researchers studying spousal violence in the United States and other Western, industrialized countries, little attention was given to wife abuse in Asian or developing societies. This study presents an empirical test of many of the theoretical propositions derived from studies in Western, industrialized countries on an Asian, developing society. Researchers must continue to test hypotheses concerning spousal violence in other societies to broaden the range of theories. It is only through cross-cultural research that social researchers will be able to refine existing theories and more adequately explain the occurrence of wife abuse in different societies.

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# Appendix A

# DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIABLES IN THE MODELS

## 1.1 INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

**SOCIAL ISOLATION (Only in Model 1 - Wife respondent):** The social isolation of the wife is a scale incorporating the following items: number of good friends, whether or not her household is three generational, has additional married couples, and the number of other adults in the household, whether or not she has relatives in Bangkok, and whether she is orginially from Bangkok. The alpha for this scale with standardized values is .54.

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS MEASURES:** Socio-economic status is measured by two different scales. The first scale incorporates the traditional variables, income, occupational status, and educational level. The alpha for this traditional measure of

socio-economic status is .71. Another scale is created to measure the more subtle indicators of wealth and economic success. This non-conventional socio-economic scale utilizes the following possessions: fan, refrigerator, tele- vision, video, radio, truck, automobile, telephone, and air conditioner. The alpha for this possession socio-economic status scale, which is unweighted, is .71.

**WIFE'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS:** This variable is a single, dictohomized item indicating whether the wife worked outside the home.

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN:** This variable is a single item with all of the respondents having at least one child under the age of eighteen, currently living with the parents. The number of children range from 1 to 7, with 7 indicating 7 or more children.

**YEARS MARRIED:** This variable is a single item with all of the respondents having been married at least one year. The duration of marriage range from 0 indicating less than a year to 98 years.

## 1.2 INTERVENING VARIABLES

**STRESS (Only in Model 2 - Husband respondent):** The following items are combined to create the scale measuring the level of stress focusing on the depression and worry felt by the husband in the past few weeks:

1. Anxious about something or someone?
2. That people are trying to pick quarrels or start arguments with you?
3. So depressed that it interfers with your daily activities?
4. That personal worries were getting you down physically, that is making you physically ill?
5. Moody?

6. Felt you were confused, frustrated, and under a lot of presssure?
7. Are you ever bothered by nervousness, i.e. by being irritable, fidgety, or tense?
8. Do you ever feel that nothing ever turns out for you the way you want it to?
9. Do you have trouble concentrating or keeping your mind on what you are doing?
10. Are you the worrying type--you know, a worrier? (Yes/No)

The response categories for the items one through nine are never, rarely, sometimes, and often. The alpha for this unweighted scale is .84.

**ALCOHOL USE:** While previous research has focused on the relative amount of alcohol the husband consumes, this study uses a scale which attempts to assess the extent of the husband's drinking problem. The following items are combined to create the scale evaluating the existence and severity of the husband's drinking problem: drinking more than planned, failed to do something due to his drinking, arguments because of his drinking. The alpha for this three-item unweighted scale is .72.

**VERBAL MARITAL CONFLICT:** The following instruction was used for the items used to create the marital conflict scale: Now, I am going to read you some things that husbands and wives sometimes agree about and sometimes disagree about. Would you tell me how often each of these caused differences opinion or were problems in your marriage during the past few weeks? The six items listed below are combined into a scale which has an unweighted alpha of .69.

1. Being too tired and not wanting to do anything?
2. Irritating habits?
3. Spending money?
4. Being away from home?
5. Talking to other men/women too often?
6. Drinking alcohol or gambling?

The alpha for this six-item unweighted scale is .69.

## 1.3 DEPENDENT VARIABLE

**PHYSICAL FORCE USED BY HUSBAND:** Only respondents who had reported that they had a serious argument with their spouse were questioned concerning the use of physical force by a spouse on the other spouse. Three forms of physical force are incorporated into a scale to measure the existence of wife abuse in the marriage. These three acts, specifically, are slapping, hitting, and kicking. The alpha for this unweighted scale is .75.

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**Professional Papers:**

1989 Professional Paper Presentation. "Evaluation of Faculty Performance in Extension and Service." James R. Montgomery, Elizabeth G. Creamer, Gerald W. McLaughlin, and Kristi L. Hummer. Annual Meeting of Institutional Researchers, Baltimore, Maryland.

1990 "Meeting the Changing Needs of North Carolina Farmers: Technological, Financial Management, and Marketing Services." Cornelia B. Flora, Jan L. Flora, Elaine David, Estanislao A. Gacitua Mario, Kristi Hummer, Natalie Hunter, Li Li, Julie Machara, Patricia Summers, Anna Zajicek.

**Professional Organizations:**

1989-1990 President, Alpha Kappa Delta, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

1988-1990 Member, Alpha Kappa Delta, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.