

# Introduction

Cora Lee Wetherington and John L. Falk

Despite all the progress that has been made in various areas of drug abuse research, there is an extremely important fundamental issue that remains unsolved. After initial use of an abused drug, why do some individuals proceed to abuse or dependence, while others do not? Why are some people apparently "protected," while others are unprotected or vulnerable? What are the factors that produce this vulnerability; are there factors that protect against it? These are basic, fundamental questions to which answers are desperately needed to make major progress in preventing drug abuse.

On August 2-3, 1994, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) held a technical review, "Laboratory Behavioral Studies of Vulnerability to Drug Abuse," in Bethesda, MD, to address this issue from the perspective of laboratory behavioral studies. The technical review served to review the current status of the research in this field, to review the progress that has been made, and to identify future research needs and directions, including the identification of technical and methodological issues. The presentations and discussions provided a very rich source of information on expanding the current research approaches taken in basic laboratory studies with humans and animals. Numerous recommendations were made for moving into new research directions, tackling thorny methodological and theoretical issues, expanding current methodologies, and exploring areas of research that get at the heart of the fundamental nature of the development of drug dependence. This research monograph is based on presentations and discussions from that technical review.

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