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Journal of Health and Social Behavior 2009, Vol 50 (December):410–426

*We utilize data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth young adult sample (N = 1,488) to investigate whether gender role attitudes and the occupation of and transition to three adult roles (i.e., employment, marriage, and parenthood) contribute to the maintenance of the gender gap in the frequency and quantity of alcohol use. Our results indicate that traditional gender role attitudes are related to less frequent drinking for both men and women, but role attitudes are not associated with the number of drinks consumed. We also find that employment and transitions to employment increase the frequency and quantity of drinking, but less so for women compared to men. Furthermore, marriage, parenthood, and transitions to parenthood are related to less frequent drinking for women only. In terms of the number of drinks consumed, only employment and transitions to employment distinguish men and women. Employment is related to increased quantity of drinking for men, but decreased drinking for women, while transitions to employment have no effect on men, but do decrease the amount of drinking for women. Marriage decreases the number of drinks consumed equally for both men and women.*

Since the 1970s, researchers have debated whether increasing gender equality would result in a narrowing of the gender gap in alcohol consumption. Theorizing about the potential closure of this gap pointed to more women entering the labor force and the liberalization of gender ideology as sources of this change. Scholars referred to the prediction that men

and women would adopt indistinguishable patterns of drinking as the convergence hypothesis (Bell, Havlicek, and Roncek 1984; Calahan 1970; Ferrance 1980; Fillmore 1984; Fraser 1973; Wechsler 1980; Wilsnack and Wilsnack 1978). The logic was that role-related changes connected to women's labor force participation would not only challenge traditional family roles, but would also transform the attitudes of both men and women in other domains, including the appropriateness of certain types of social behavior, such as alcohol consumption (Parker et al. 1980; Temple 1987; Wilsnack, Wilsnack, and Klassen 1984). The possible convergence of men and women's drinking patterns was associated with fears of increasing health problems for women, costs to labor force productivity, and damage to the family as

\* An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2007 American Sociological Association annual meeting in New York, New York. This research was supported, in part, by a Research and Creativity grant from Kent State University to the first author. Address correspondence to C. André Christie-Mizell, Department of Sociology, Kent State University, P.O. Box 5190, 330 Merrill Hall, Kent, OH 44242-001 (e-mail: achrist7@kent.edu).

an institution (Biber, Hashway, and Annick 1980; Calahan 1970; Fillmore 1984).

Contrary to the convergence hypothesis, contemporary research does not indicate that the gender gap in alcohol consumption has re-  
lent. While it is true that more females especially in adolescence may be drinking than previously, there has not been a convergence of adult drinking patterns (Barnes, Welte, and Hoffman 2002; Chilcoat and Breslau 1996; Huselid and Cooper 1992; Temple 1987; White and Jackson 2004). Even holding constant factors known to encourage alcohol consumption,

Foremost among the theoretical frameworks used to explain the relationship between alcohol consumption and gendered attitudes are congruence models (Bem 1974, 1977; cf. Wilsnack and Wilsnack 1978, 1980). These models propose that individuals who internalize traditional sex role attitudes will be motivated to conform to standard gender norms, compared to their less traditional counterparts. This framework suggests that males whose beliefs are congruent with traditional masculine roles and ideals will engage in more risk-taking, such as increased alcohol consumption, while females who adopt conventional notions of femininity will drink less. Alternatively, the internalization of nontraditional gender attitudes contributes to less investment in the cultural norms and demands associated with traditional masculine and feminine roles. This noncongruence with conventional gender-role characteristics leads to the adoption of behavior patterns typical of the opposite sex as a form of rebellion against the dominant norm. Therefore, males who have nonconventional role attitudes would be expected to drink less, whereas females who have nonconventional role attitudes would be expected to drink more. Most research shows support for congruence models, with a significant relationship between gender role attitudes and alcohol consumption (Huselid and Cooper 1992).

We seek to merge research on alcohol consumption, gender role attitudes, and the adoption of adult roles with a focus on employment, marriage, and parenthood. Congruence explanations provide the framework for this amalgamation. Gendered attitudes—traditionalism versus liberalism—not only shape behavior (e.g., alcohol consumption), but also predict the types and timing of adult roles (Fan and Marini 2000). Prior studies have demonstrated that individuals socialized to have conventional gender role attitudes marry earlier, have more children, and are more likely to transition into these roles (marriage and parenthood) with traditional notions that place men in the provider role and make women principally responsible for housework and child care (Fan and Marini 2000; Moen et al. 1997). Because relatively few studies on alcohol consumption have simultaneously explored role attitudes (i.e., how individuals qualitatively feel about role occupancy) and adult roles (i.e., the actual occupation of such roles), we argue that combining information on these factors in one

study may be advantageous for understanding gender differences in alcohol use. Gender role attitudes and adult roles may simply have independent, direct effects on drinking. Alternatively, gender role attitudes, which shape the timing and types of role transitions, may be mediated by adult roles.

Researchers have linked the performance of adult roles, including employment, marriage, and parenthood, to levels of alcohol consumption during young adulthood (Leonard and Mudar 2003). The typical reasoning behind this role transition framework is that d (Leonard and

In addition to different patterns of role adoption, the responsibilities attached to adult roles may also account for different drinking behaviors for women compared to men. The types of roles explored in this research are often referred to as obligatory roles, which involve long-term relationships that tend to be emotionally powerful and stable over time “because of the relative strength of their normative demands on role incumbents” (Thoits 2003:184). Carrying out the tasks of employment, marriage, and parenthood is time-consuming. However, prior research has shown that the normative demands inherent in these roles vary by gender such that women’s work and family roles include greater time constraints and responsibilities (Bird 1997, 1999; Hochschild and Machung 1989). For example, such expectations result in women spending more time in unpaid labor such as child care, household chores, and shopping for family needs (Sayer 2005). Because the occupation of adult roles contributes to less time available for leisure and discretionary activities for women, this pattern may result in women drinking less than men.

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This research project explores the gender gap in alcohol consumption during late adoles-

of age and older were surveyed separately (NLSY-YA) from their younger counterparts. This survey gathered information germane to such issues as delinquent activities, substance use, employment, marriage, and parenthood. It is possible to merge data from the NLSY and NLSY-YA using identification codes that link information about mother and child. From the NLSY-YA, we utilized information from the 2002 and 2004 waves of data. In the baseline year for our study (2002), the young adults were 17–30 old and their mothers were 37–45 years old. With regard to this project, about 400 of the total 1,892 cases eligible for this study had missing data on one or more of the study variables. The results of “complete cases,” mean imputed, selection model, and multiple imputation analyses did not differ substantially. Therefore, only the complete cases analyses (N = 1,488) are presented below. There are 773 men and 715 women in our sample. All analyses presented below were weighted to correct for the oversampling of poor and minority youth. The weighted and unweighted analyses (available upon request) do not differ substantively.

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We use two dependent variables for this study: (1) frequency of drinking and (2) number of drinks per occasion. The survey item, “frequency of alcohol use queried how often alcohol was consumed in the last year. Responses were coded in the following way: 1 (zero to two times in the last 12 months); 2 (three to five times in the last 12 months); 3 (every other month or so six to eleven days a year); 4 (one to two times a month 12 to 24 days a year); 5 (several times a month 25 to 51 days a year); 6 (about one or two days a week); 7 (almost daily or three to six days a week); and 8 (daily). With respect to number of drinks per occasion, this survey question asked respondents to report how many drinks they typically had on any one occasion when they drank in the last 30 days. This measure is coded as a simple count.

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2004). We coded those who reported no religious affiliation and no religious participation as 1 and compared them to all others (coded 0).

We controlled for parents' education (1 = college completion or more for either parent) and the respondents' education (1 = college completion or more).<sup>3</sup> While individuals from all educational levels consume alcohol, those with economic and educational resources can afford to purchase alcohol and have greater access to formal and informal settings where social drinking is expected. Nevertheless, and despite higher levels of consumption, individuals with higher education report fewer health problems associated with drinking, compared to those who experience educational disadvantage (Banks et al. 2006). Finally, utilizing the mother-child component of the NLSY and NLSY-YA, we coded 1 those having a relative with a drinking problem if it was reported that their mother, father, or biological grandparent had a problem with alcohol use. This information comes from the 1988 wave of the mothers' data when these respondents were 3 to 16 years old and living in their mothers' home. With re-

spect to the respondent's father, we include stepfathers if we did not have information for

drinking significantly more than women (3.90 vs. 2.03;  $t = 8.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The sample mean for gender role attitudes was 11.19, and

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Transition to Employment 2002–2004 (1 = Yes)	1.49*** (.38)	1.48*** (.38)	1.49*** (.38)	1.08** (.42)	1.51*** (.36)	1.49*** (.36)
Transition to Marriage 2002–2004 (1 = Yes)	-.20 (.29)	-.21 (.29)	-.19 (.29)	-.24 (.28)	-.57 (.41)	-.19 (.28)
First or Additional Child 2002–2004 (1 = Yes)	-.70*** (.16)	-.73*** (.16)	-.69*** (.16)	-.64*** (.16)	-.65*** (.16)	-.14 (.23)
<i>Religion, Education, and Family History</i>						
No Religious Affiliation/Attendance (1 = Yes)	-.17 (.17)	-.12 (.17)	-.13 (.17)	-.09 (.17)	-.10 (.17)	-.09 (.17)
Parents' Education (1 = College+)	.74*** (.18)	.68*** (.17)	.68*** (.17)	.59*** (.16)	.60*** (.16)	.56*** (.16)
Respondent's Education (1 = College+)	.07	-.08	-.16	-.10	-.12	-.08

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equation 1, which includes gender, gender role attitudes, and all of the control variables, we confirm that women, compared to men, drink less frequently, and that traditional gender role attitudes are inversely related to how regularly an individual drinks. Additionally, parents' education and having a parent or grandparent with a drinking problem increases the frequency of drinking. Equation 2 estimates a model that includes all correlates considered in this study, including adult roles and transitions. Employment has a positive effect on drinking, while marriage is associated with a decline in drinking regularity. During the period of study, transitions to employment increase the frequency of drinking, and the birth of a child reduces drinking. One notable difference in this second model is that older respondents drink with greater regularity. However, similar to the prior specification, women and individuals who hold traditional gender roles drink less frequently. Furthermore, individuals from homes where parents were highly educated, and those with a parent or grandparent with a drinking problem, tended to drink more frequently.

With respect to our four hypotheses and the frequency of drinking, we do not find support for hypothesis 1a that traditional gender role attitudes are positively associated with alcohol use for men; however, as we predicted (hy-

**TABLE 3. Number of Drinks per Occasion (Count) Regressed on Selected Variables and Interactions. National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Young Adult Sample (N = 1,488)**

Independent and Control Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	<i>b</i> (se)	<i>b</i> (se)	<i>b</i> (se)	<i>b</i> (se)	<i>b</i> (se)	<i>b</i> (se)	<i>b</i> (se)	<i>b</i> (se)
<i>Sex, Race, and Age</i>								
Female (1 = Yes)	-1.97*** (.22)	-1.90*** (.23)	-.46 (.55)	-1.92*** (.23)	-1.89*** (.23)	-2.12*** (.23)	-1.91*** (.22)	-1.88*** (.23)
African American (1 = Yes)	-1.13*** (.27)	-1.34*** (.28)	-1.36*** (.27)	-1.38*** (.27)	-1.39*** (.27)	-1.36*** (.27)	-1.38*** (.27)	-1.38*** (.27)
Hispanic (1 = Yes)	-.31 (.39)	-.34 (.39)	-.24 (.37)	-.21 (.38)	-.22 (.38)	-.23 (.37)	-.22 (.38)	-.21 (.38)
Age (Logged)	-1.93*** (.69)	-.78 (.84)	.65 (.81)	-.51 (.81)	-.50* (.81)	-.65 (.81)	-.53 (.81)	-.55 (.81)
<i>Role Attitudes, Adult Roles, and Role Transitions</i>								
Gender Role Attitudes <sup>a</sup>	-.07 (.04)	-.06 (.04)	.08* (.04)	-.07 (.04)	-.07 (.04)	-.07 (.04)	-.197 (.04)	-.198 (.04)
Employment 2002 (1 = Yes)	-.91 (.58)	-.91 (.58)	-1.65*** (.61)	.89 (.56)	.87 (.56)	.89 (.56)	.89 (.56)	.88 (.56)
Marriage 2002 (1 = Yes)	-.93*** (.32)	-.93*** (.32)	-.91*** (.31)	-.85* (.43)	-.88** (.31)	-.90*** (.31)	-.89** (.31)	-.89** (.31)
Parenthood 2002 (1 = Yes)	.24 (.32)	.24 (.32)	.24 (.32)	.27 (.33)	.47 (.49)	.26 (.32)	.27 (.32)	.29 (.33)
Transition to Employment 2002–2004 (1 = Yes)	1.05 (.66)	1.05 (.66)	.96 (.63)	1.14 (.63)	1.14 (.63)	.89 (.64)	1.14 (.63)	1.14 (.63)
Transition to Marriage 2002–2004 (1 = Yes)	-.30 (.51)	-.30 (.51)	-.18 (.49)	-.21 (.49)	-.21 (.49)	-.18 (.49)	-.10 (.71)	-.19 (.71)
First or Additional Child 2002–2004 (1 = Yes)	-.42 (.29)	-.42 (.29)	-.35 (.28)	-.35 (.28)	-.34 (.28)	-.35 (.28)	-.33 (.28)	-.17 (.40)

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<i>Interaction Terms</i>	
Female × Employment	-1.72** (.59)
Female × Marriage	-0.06 (.54)
Female × Parenthood	-.33 (.59)
Female × Transition to Employment	-1.71* (.66)
Female × Transition to Marriage	

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and a family history of drinking problems results in drinking more. Age is no longer a significant predictor. Important to the current analysis and hypothesizing is that gender role attitudes are not related to the quantity of alcohol consumed in either equation 1 or 2, and the only adult role that is related to the number of drinks per occasion is marriage, which decreases drinking.

In terms of our hypotheses and the number of drinks per occasion, we do not find support for either hypotheses 1a or 1b that traditional gender role attitudes would be positively associated with alcohol use for men, but negatively related to drinking for women (non-significant interaction not shown). Nor did we find support for hypothesis 2, that gender roles attitudes are mediated by the adult roles. With respect to hypothesis 3 that gender would moderate the effects of employment, marriage, and parenthood on alcohol use, we did find that gender moderates the effect of employment (hypothesis 3a). In equation 3, the effect of employment on the number of drinks per occasion is moderated by gender. Employment is related to higher-quantity drinking on the part of men, but it actually reduces the number of drinks that women consume. Solving for the interaction, employed men (X = 7.08) drink more in contrast to employed women (X = 4.90), men who are not working (X = 5.43), and women who are not working (X = 4.97).

In equations 6–8, we show our test of hypothesis 4, in which we expected that gender would condition the effects of transitions to employment (hypothesis 4a), transitions to marriage (hypothesis 4b), and adding a first or additional child (hypothesis 4c) on number of drinks per occasion. We find support for hypothesis 4a (Table 3, equation 6) in that gender differentiates the experience of transitions to employment on quantity of drinking. These transitions do not appear to increase drinking among men, but do decrease the quantity of drinking for women. In fact, women who transition to employment (X = 3.18) drink less than transitioning men (X = 7.01),

nontransitioning men ( $X = 6.12$ ), and non-transitioning women ( $X = 4.00$ ).

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

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attitudes compared to women (Table 1,  $p < .05$ ), the scores by gender are much more similar than they would have been two or three decades ago. See Fan and Marini (2000), who empirically verify this narrowing gap using other NLSY data in the period from 1979 to 1987; their basic finding was that not only are men's attitudes becoming increasingly similar to women, but also that in their period of study in which all young people experienced a change toward more egalitarian role attitudes, men actually experienced more change than women.

Another reason why we may not have found support for congruence models is that we only have available to us a measure of gender role attitudes. Our data do not include a measure of how respondents socially construct gender on a masculine-feminine continuum. Given the notable research in this area (Huselid and Cooper 1992), which indicates that such masculine-feminine orientation measures have implications for alcohol consumption, the availability of such a measure may have further clarified the relationship between gender and alcohol consumption.

Third, this research has helped explicate why, contrary to the convergence predictions of a few decades ago, male and female drinking patterns have not become indistinguishable. The original convergence hypothesis implicated changing roles and role attitudes. Interestingly, we do find some evidence for convergence, but not for drinking patterns. Instead, we find convergence for the effects of gender role attitudes. We find that the effects of traditional gender role attitudes have an equally diminishing effect on the frequency of drinking for men and women. However, drinking patterns are still differentiated by gender with respect to adult roles. For women, employment is less related to the frequency of drinking and actually decreases the number of drinks consumed at each drinking occasion. Moreover, marriage and parenthood decrease the regularity with which women drink, but have no impact for men. These patterns suggest that it may be important to understand not only how gender role attitudes affect alcohol use, but also how gender itself may transform roles in ways that maintain the gender gap.

Across our two measures of alcohol consumption, we found that gender was an important moderator of roles and their transitions. For example, why was employment less asso-

ciated with increases in the frequency of alcohol consumption for women, and why were marriage and parenthood more associated with decreases in the regularity of drinking for women but not for men? Following the role adoption/transition framework, such findings support other research that shows that even when men and women actually engage in similar roles the implications for social life are different (Thoits 1992). As reported in numerous studies, the household division of labor and other responsibilities accrued by women through employment, marriage, and parenthood outstrip those accumulated by men (Bird 1997; Christie-Mizell, Steelman, and Stewart 2003; Hochschild 1989; Roberts and Leonard 1997). Within the confines of marriage and parenthood, and even with helpful husbands, women are still primarily responsible for the daily maintenance of the home, the emotional work associated with couplehood, and the care of children (Bird 1999; Frisco and Williams 2003; Lavee and Katz 2002; Simon 1995). Therefore, the adoption of roles requires a major reorganization of time to meet responsibilities that may not leave occasion to frequently engage in alcohol consumption (Curran, Muthen, and Harford 1998; Leonard and Mudar 2003).

An additional and related reason why adult roles may impact women differently than men is that gender socialization also involves the internalization of ideas about appropriate behavior. These ideas are typically more restrictive of women's behavior. In fact, one process associated with gender socialization is that over the life course males are encouraged to more highly value individualistic roles, whereas women are more likely to value roles that express concern and responsibility for the well-being of others (Marini et al. 1996; Christie-Mizell 2006). Even within the context of the same role, the clear implication is that men and women perform and attend to the role differently. Although we control for gendered attitudes to capture this facet of role occupancy, we cannot be certain that our measure covers the wide array of experiences and social pressures faced by women. For instance, compared to employed, married fathers, employed, married mothers are more likely to experience shame, guilt, and distress due to the cultural expectations of what it means to be a good mother and wife (Arendell 2000; Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson 2001; Guendouzi 2006;

McDonald, Bradley, and Guthrie 2005; Williams et al. 1991). One potential outcome of this pressure-filled cultural ideal which specifies that women should be able to successfully juggle family and work responsibilities might be the relegating of drinking—especially frequent or high-quantity consumption—to one of those activities to be avoided because it would not be characteristic of a “good” mother and wife.

Notwithstanding the strengths of our study, our results are limited in a few respects. To begin with, while the moderating effects of gender on the relationship between role occupancy and drinking helped to partially explain the gender gap in alcohol consumption, our data do not include measures of role identity or satisfaction. Certainly, other research indicates that the salience of an identity and the extent to which the performance of a role is intrinsically satisfying affects role performance and the health and behavior consequences that attend that performance (Simon 1995). Next, the age range of our sample is 17–30 years old at baseline, and our findings may not be applicable to individuals in later stages of the life course. Finally, although we control for factors known to be related to alcohol consumption (e.g., family history) and assess two measures of drinking, there may be other differences between men and women (e.g., onset of puberty and physical reactions to alcohol) that may also be important factors in shaping drinking patterns by gender.

In conclusion, early research on gender differences in alcohol consumption predicted that contemporary society would see parallel drinking patterns for men and women (see Calahan 1970). While few research studies in the United States have supported this convergence hypothesis, our study indicates that the gender difference in frequency of alcohol consumption during late adolescence and young adulthood is at least partially explained by the effect of adult roles and transitions for women on drinking. Moreover, employment contributes to young women consuming lower quantities of alcohol compared to men. We also find that as youth mature into adulthood, traditional gender role attitudes are related to less frequent drinking for both men and women. This finding diverges from earlier research on gender role attitudes, but may reflect an overall narrowing in the difference between men’s and women’s attitudes about adult roles (Fan and

Marini 2000). Our work both confirms and extends existing research. Future work in this area should expand the number and types of social roles in an effort to clearly specify how role occupancy impacts drinking behavior. Work of this nature is important not only because it elucidates the processes that shape alcohol consumption, but also because of its implications for the larger body of work which seeks to understand how gender differentially shapes the effect of attitudes and role adoption on health and social behavior.

## NOTES

1. We use the terms alcohol consumption, alcohol use, and drinking interchangeably. In terms of precise measurement, we study the frequency of alcohol use in the last year, ranging from “zero to two” times in the last 12 months to “daily” in the last 12 months and the number of drinks each respondent reports consuming per drinking occasion (see Data and Measures). Our measures can be distinguished from other oft-used measures, such as heavy or binge drinking, alcohol abuse, and alcohol dependence. Heavy or binge drinking is defined as five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women per occasion (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2004). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental

lated to either of our measures of alcohol use and did not substantively change the models presented here. This decision was also supported, in part, because we did not have the same measure of income for each respondent. For individuals still living with their family of origin, we had access to household income generated by parents, but for individuals who lived independently, we had reports of their own household income.

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