

Gender Roles as Mediators of Sex Differences in Adolescent Alcohol Use and Abuse*

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This study tested the hypothesis that internalized gender-role personality attributes and gender-role ideology mediate sex differences in alcohol use and drinking problems in a random sample of 1,077 adolescents aged 13 to 19. Results indicated that gender roles substantially, although not completely, mediated the effects of sex on drinking patterns. The relationships between gender roles and alcohol use were largely consistent with the hypothesis that individuals with conventional gender identities conform more closely to cultural norms that condone drinking among males but not among females. However, effects of the gender-linked attributes of expressivity, emotional control, and instrumentality on drinking also may be interpreted within a framework that views them as functional coping styles. Finally, differences between Black and White teens in the relationships between alcohol use and the masculine attributes of instrumentality and emotional control suggest possible race differences in the functional value of these attributes.

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