

# Relations Between Social Self-Perceptions, Time Use, and Prosocial or Problem Behaviors During Adolescence

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*This study investigated the relations between social self-perceptions, time use, and later involvement in prosocial or problem behaviors during early, middle, and later adolescence. The authors used an idiographic approach to identify four different patterns of social self-perceptions (confident, anxious, unconcerned, desperate) and then examined the relations between group membership and time use. As predicted, social self-perceptions were significantly related to the ways in which adolescents spend their time and to later involvement in later prosocial and problem behaviors. Notably, adolescents who were most self-confident about their social skills (Confident group) and those who were most willing to go to great lengths to make and keep friends (Desperate group) spent significantly more time with peers than those in the other two groups. In addition, patterns of social self-perceptions were significantly related to adolescents' own involvement and their perceptions of friends' involvement in prosocial and problem behaviors.*

**Keywords:** *self-concept; social perceptions; problem behavior; leisure; individual differences*

In recent years, researchers have focused on adolescents' use of discretionary time (e.g., Carnegie Corporation, 1992; Larson, 1994) and their involvement in extracurricular activities (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). This work has typically described the amount of

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unstructured leisure time adolescents have, how they spend it, and the relations between involvement in various types of activities or time use and prosocial or antisocial outcomes. In addition, research in leisure studies has emphasized the ways in which different leisure activities are experienced and the potential benefits of constructive leisure (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Kleiber, 1991).

Researchers in this area have often pointed to the importance of the social context of time use (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997), typically suggesting that "hanging out" with friends in unstructured, unsupervised contexts is related to negative outcomes, whereas spending time with others in adult-sanctioned, structured contexts is related to positive outcomes (e.g., Osgood, 1998; Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman, & Johnson, 1996). However, few of these studies have directly assessed the relations between adolescents' social self-perceptions and their decisions about time use and whether to become involved in prosocial or antisocial activities. Decisions about how to spend time (whether it is playing sports, watching TV, or hanging out) are likely to be highly related to social self-perceptions during adolescence because of increases in peer conformity (e.g., Berndt, 1979; Leventhal, 1994) and self-focus (e.g., Harter, 1998) during this period. In addition, the impact of social self-perceptions on leisure time use is likely to vary as individuals make their way through adolescence and develop their own social niches and self-understanding (Harter, 1990). The current study investigated the relations between social self-perceptions, time use, and involvement in prosocial or problem behaviors during adolescence as well as age-related differences in these relations.

### **Previous Research**

Larson and Verma (1999) reported that about 40% to 50% of adolescents' daily time use is spent in leisure activities, indicating that adolescents have a large amount of discretionary time. Previous evidence suggests that adolescents who use their free time for organized extracurricular activities are less likely to become involved with problem behaviors and delinquent acts, such as stealing (Holland & Andre, 1987), excessive drinking (Eccles & Barber, 1999), and using marijuana (Youniss, McLellan, Su, & Yates, 1999). In the absence of goal-oriented, organized activities, friends may influence each other to become involved in deviant activities (Mahoney, 2001; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1997). Osgood and colleagues have suggested that the more time an adolescent spends in unstructured leisure time with friends, the more opportunities the individual has to engage in deviant activities

(Osgood, 1998; Osgood et al., 1996). Others have found that involvement in certain activities or with particular social groups is related to some negative behaviors, such as higher levels of alcohol consumption (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Larson, 1994; Vicary, Smith, Caldwell, & Swisher, 1998).

In contrast to the negative outcomes associated with unfocused time use, adolescents who spend their leisure time on organized, after-school activities (e.g., sports, clubs, community service, etc.) have better academic outcomes (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams, 2001), like school better (Eccles & Barber, 1999), and are more likely to go on to college and to finish college (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, in press). In addition to extracurricular involvement being related to academic and occupational outcomes, students who are involved with after-school activities report higher self-esteem, greater locus of control, lower rates of depression, and intrinsic motivation (see Kivel, 1998 for review).

What accounts for these positive effects of structured time use? Various hypotheses have been suggested; however, a theme that recurs throughout the literature on adolescent time use and activity involvement is that the positive value of extracurricular activities lies in the social context in which they take place. Little direct evidence for the link between the social world of adolescents and time use is available, however; we know that adolescents make friends within their respective activities in high school (Karweit, 1983) and that individuals who do and do not participate in activities report having friends with similar interests (Eccles & Barber, 1999). In addition, involvement in extracurricular activities that have a high profile within the school system (e.g., large clubs and sports) is related to peer popularity and status (Melnick, Sabo, & Vanfossen, 1993).

Several potential explanations for the relations between the social world and time use have been suggested. For example, Eccles and Barber (1999) suggested that the high levels of academic performance found in those who also participate in after-school activities is due to the fact that friendships are formed within activity settings and that friends positively influence one another's academic values. On a similar note, Mahoney and Cairns (1997) suggested that the benefits of involvement in school-based extracurricular activities may be due to the fact that such involvement increases the social standing of at-risk students, thereby increasing their affiliation with school and activities that take place within the school context.

Another related social explanation is that extracurricular activities provide an arena in which to develop and explore a sense of identity, including both social group identity (Eccles & Barber, 1999) and personal identity (Haggard & Williams, 1992; Kivel, 1998). Adolescents may select activities

that affirm valued aspects of their personalities and allow them to associate with others who they believe are "like them." (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Haggard & Williams, 1992). Indeed, Eccles and Barber (1999) have found links between perceived social group identity, extracurricular activity choices, and both positive and negative behavioral outcomes during high school.

In addition to the emphasis on the social aspects of activity choice and time use, developmental theorists have highlighted the importance of social perceptions for the development of identity (Marcia, 1991), self-esteem (Harter, 1990), activity choice (Jacobs & Eccles, 2000), and achievement in various domains (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995). Two components of social perceptions that appear in several models are social self-competence and relationships with those who provide social support. For example, Eccles and colleagues (1983) include both self-perceptions of social ability and support from others in their expectancy-value model of achievement motivation. Harter (1998) and Connell (1990) also have focused on the importance of self-perceptions in the social world in their respective models. In addition, Connell and his colleagues include "relatedness" to others in their model (e.g., Connell, 1990). Although time use and activity choice are not the focus of any of these models, each of them implies that beliefs about one's social abilities and relationships in the social realm will influence future choices about how to spend leisure time.

In summary, both the activity choice perspectives and the developmental theories about self and motivation are grounded in the notion that social perceptions are related to how adolescents spend their time and who they choose as friends. None of the previous studies, however, has examined the impact of adolescents' perceptions of their own social standing on their choices about how to spend free time; and none of the previous studies have examined age-related changes in how the social world affects such choices during adolescence. We designed this study to fill these gaps.

First, based on theoretical models suggesting that individuals vary on both their social self-perceptions and on their feelings of connection or relatedness to others (e.g., Eccles, Harter, Connell), we asked whether different patterns of social self-perceptions could be identified during adolescence and related to later time use and involvement in prosocial and problem behaviors. Second, we considered the ways in which the age of the adolescent is related to social beliefs and time use. We expected changes in the impact of social self-perceptions on time use because previous research indicates that concern for peers' opinions and peer conformity are highest in early to middle adolescence (e.g., Berndt, 1979, 1996; Leventhal, 1994). Similarly, others report that changing social groups is more difficult in middle adolescence

than in later adolescence (Brown, Dolcini, & Leventhal, 1995; Brown, Mory, & Kinney, 1994) and that adolescents and their friends become increasingly similar with age, including enjoying the same leisure-time activities (Berndt, 1982). Thus, we expected social self-perceptions to have a stronger influence on younger adolescents' decisions about time use than on those of older adolescents.

## METHOD

### Overview

We expected adolescents to hold different perceptions of their social abilities and how they fit into the social world; thus, we used an idiographic approach to characterize groups of adolescents by their patterns of social perceptions. We used multiple measures to assess social self-perceptions, including self-concept of social ability, affect while around friends, social anxiety, and rejection of school norms for popularity. We then tested two hypotheses. First, we predicted that patterns of social perceptions would be related to later time use and involvement in prosocial and problem behaviors. Second, we hypothesized that these relations would vary as individuals move through adolescence. For example, previous research suggests that social conformity and concerns about "fitting in" are at their highest point during early adolescence (e.g., Berndt, 1979, 1996; Leventhal, 1994); therefore, we predicted that younger teens would report higher social anxiety and lower social self-perceptions than older teens. We also expected age-related changes in time use across adolescence. Finally, we hypothesized that the age of the adolescents would interact with social self-perceptions to influence time use and involvement in problem or prosocial behavior a year later.

### Participants

The present study is part of the Childhood and Beyond (CAB) longitudinal project (principle investigators are Eccles, Wigfield, Blumenfeld, and Harold) using a cohort-sequential design to investigate the development of children's self-perceptions, task values, and activity choices. Children, parents, and teachers were recruited through the children's schools; all children in each classroom were asked to participate. Seventy-five percent of children both agreed to participate and obtained parental permission. The first wave of data collection took place in the spring of 1989, when data were collected

from kindergartners, first graders, and third graders attending 10 elementary schools in four primarily middle-class school districts in the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan. The average family income in 1990 was \$50,000, and more than 95% of the children are European-American. The schools were all public schools with varied curricula. Attrition in the sample was due mostly to children moving far away from the school districts sampled. Every effort was made to relocate children each year, and the longitudinal sample included children who continued to live in the same general area, even if they no longer attended participating schools. Participants in the study reported here included 710 students who were in grades 7, 8, and 10 (corresponding to ages 13, 14, and 16) in the spring of 1996. We designate this as Time 1 for this report.

### Procedure and Measures

Self-perception and time use data reported here were collected from the three cohorts at Time 1, and data related to involvement in problem behaviors, influence from deviant friends, prosocial behaviors, and influence from prosocial friends were collected 1 year later at Time 2. Adolescents completed questionnaires during class time in their schools. Most items on the questionnaire were measured with Likert-type response scales.

Social self-perceptions were assessed at Time 1 using four scales: (a) Social Self-Concept, (b) Social Worries, (c) Affect With Friends, and (d) Disregard of Academic Standards for Popularity. All items used 7-point Likert-type response scales. The Social Self-Concept Scale ( $\alpha = .80$ ) consisted of four items (e.g., "How good are you at making friends?"). The Social Worries Scale ( $\alpha = .79$ ) consisted of four items (e.g., "I worry that boys (girls) dislike me"). The Affect With Friends Scale ( $\alpha = .66$ ) consisted of five items (e.g., "How often do you feel left out when you are with your friends?"). The Willing to Disregard Academic Standards for Popularity Scale ( $\alpha = .79$ ) consisted of four items (e.g., "I act dumb to be popular").

Time use was assessed at Time 1 from a series of items asking how much time the respondent spent per week on various activities (e.g., sports, chores, talking on the telephone, hanging out with friends, family activities, volunteer work). The responses ranged from 1 (*no hours*) to 8 (*21 or more hours*). To assess different patterns of time use, a factor analysis was employed (see Table 1). Three factors were identified: (a) time use at home (chores, homework, family, watching TV), (b) time with peers (sports, hanging out, talking

**TABLE 1: Factor Scores: Hours Spent Each Week**

	<i>Home</i>	<i>Peers</i>	<i>Prosocial</i>
Chores	.28	.06	.08
Homework	.30	-.08	.16
Family	.42	-.09	.03
Watching TV	.44	-.02	-.29
Playing sports	.07	.27	.05
Hanging out with friends	-.06	.51	-.16
Phone with friends	-.01	.40	-.03
Working for pay	-.28	.31	.19
Volunteer	-.14	.02	.49
Religious activities	.07	-.13	.40
School clubs	.01	-.02	.33

on the phone, working for pay), and (c) time in prosocial activities (volunteer work, school clubs, religious activities).

Problem behavior was assessed at Time 2 from self-reports of involvement in behaviors that could be considered risky, deviant, or problematic. These self-reports were used to calculate a 14-item Problem Behavior Scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ). Examples of items on this scale are: "Number of times in the last 6 months you have: skipped school, disobeyed parents, got drunk, been sent to the principals office."

Friends' involvement in problem behaviors was assessed at Time 2 by asking the participants about the kinds of behaviors their friends were involved in. This scale was created from seven items that assessed the amount of negative influence the participant might be experiencing from friends ( $\alpha = .84$ ). Examples of questions on this scale include: "My friends encourage me to do dangerous things," "How many of your friends have been suspended from school?" and "How many of your friends get in fights with other kids?"

Prosocial behavior was assessed through self-reports of involvement in prosocial behaviors. Six items were used to create the Prosocial Self Scale ( $\alpha = .74$ ). Examples of items from this scale are "How many times in the last 6 months have you: helped a friend with homework, helped your parents do something important to them, volunteered or done community service?"

Prosocial influence from friends was assessed by asking the participants about their friends' involvement with prosocial behaviors. Examples of this seven-item scale ( $\alpha = .76$ ) are "My friends encourage me to do my best in school," "How many of your friends regularly attend religious services?" and "How many of your friends think it is important to do volunteer work in the community?"

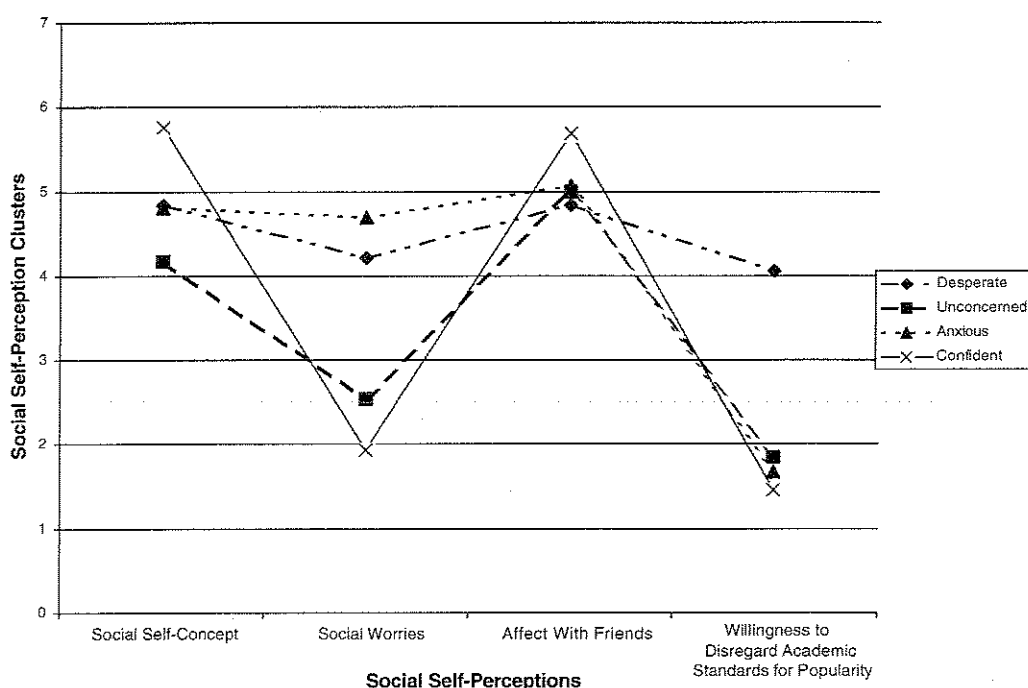


Figure 1. Adolescent social self-perception clusters.

## RESULTS

### Patterns of Social Self-Perceptions

The goal of the first set of analyses was to identify groups of adolescents who had diverse patterns of social self-perceptions. Four groups of adolescents were identified by conducting a cluster analysis of the four social self-perception variables (see Figure 1). The analysis was conducted once with all respondents and then separately by grade of respondent to be sure that the pattern was consistent at each grade level. The same four clusters were found at each grade level and were distinguished by the following characteristics: (a) high social worries and willing to disregard academic standards for popularity (labeled Desperate), (b) low social self-concept of ability but not worried (labeled Unconcerned), (c) high social self-concept of ability and high worries (labeled Anxious), and (d) high social self-concept and high affect while around friends and low worries and disregard of academic standards for popularity (labeled Confident). See Table 2 for distribution into categories by grade. Although the percentage of adolescents falling into the Confident cluster increased with grade and the percentage falling into the Desperate category was lower for 10th graders than for seventh graders, no significant grade differences by social cluster were found,  $\chi^2 = 6.96$  ( $df = 6$ ).



**TABLE 2: Number of People in Each Social Cluster by Cohort**

	<i>Desperate</i>		<i>Unconcerned</i>		<i>Anxious</i>		<i>Confident</i>	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Grade 7	60	32	26	14	33	18	68	36
Grade 8	35	18	37	19	91	47	31	16
Grade 10	45	16	29	10	102	37	101	36

### Social Group and Grade Differences in Time Use

The goal of the first set of analyses was to compare the ways adolescents from each social self-perception cluster differed in how they spent their time and how time use might differ by grade. Based on the literature reviewed earlier, we predicted that younger adolescents would be more concerned about peers and social standing than older adolescents and that the differences between the social groups would be larger at younger ages than at older ages; therefore, we expected both the main effect for grade and the interaction of grade and social group to significantly predict time use. To test these hypotheses concerning the main effects, as well as the interaction of cohort and social group in relation to time use, ANOVAs were conducted using grade (7, 8, 10) and social group as the independent variables, and the time use variables and prosocial/problem behavior variables were included as the dependent variables.

*Social group differences.* These analyses revealed that the social self-perception groups (Desperate, Unconcerned, Anxious, Confident) were significantly related to the ways in which adolescents spent their time: Time at Home,  $F(3, 638) = 4.77, p < .01$ ; Time with Peers,  $F(3, 634) = 7.17, p < .001$ ; Time in Prosocial Activities,  $F(3, 636) = 4.55, p < .01$ . Post hoc comparisons indicated that those in the Desperate group spent significantly less time in home-based activities than those in the Anxious or Confident groups (see Table 3). Not surprisingly, the socially adept Confident group spent significantly more time with peers than those in the Anxious and the Unconcerned groups. They did not differ significantly from the Desperate group on this dimension, however. Those in the Unconcerned group report spending significantly less time on prosocial activities than those in either the Anxious or Confident groups, although no one is spending much time on these activities. These analyses make it clear that social self-perceptions are related to the ways in which adolescents are spending their time. Although everyone spends the most time with peers and the least time on prosocial activities,

**TABLE 3: Mean Time-Use Scores by Social Cluster**

	<i>Desperate</i> (N = 111)		<i>Unconcerned</i> (N = 163)		<i>Anxious</i> (N = 185)		<i>Confident</i> (N = 191)	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Time: Home	3.13	0.89	3.43 <sup>a</sup>	0.86	3.54 <sup>a</sup>	0.84	3.41 <sup>a</sup>	0.94
Time: Peers	4.00 <sup>ab</sup>	1.16	3.69 <sup>b</sup>	1.04	3.88 <sup>b</sup>	1.07	4.26 <sup>a</sup>	1.16
Time: Prosocial	1.92 <sup>ab</sup>	0.94	1.75 <sup>a</sup>	0.69	2.08 <sup>b</sup>	0.81	2.03 <sup>b</sup>	0.85

NOTE: Groups that do not share superscripted letters are significantly different from each other.

**TABLE 4: Mean Time-Use Scores by Grade**

	<i>Grade 7</i> (N = 185)		<i>Grade 8</i> (N = 189)		<i>Grade 10</i> (N = 276)	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Time: Home	3.33 <sup>a</sup>	0.94	3.44 <sup>a</sup>	0.85	3.43 <sup>a</sup>	0.89
Time: Peers	3.63 <sup>a</sup>	1.17	3.96 <sup>b</sup>	1.02	4.19 <sup>c</sup>	1.14
Time: Prosocial	1.81 <sup>a</sup>	0.74	1.98 <sup>ab</sup>	0.80	2.04 <sup>b</sup>	0.89

NOTE: Groups that do not share superscripted letters are significantly different from each other.

those who are willing to disregard standards to please peers and those who feel comfortable socially spend more time with peers than the other two groups. Those who feel anxious spend more time at home and in prosocial activities than those in the other groups.

*Grade differences.* As expected, there were significant differences in the way adolescents of different ages spent their time (see Table 4). Time with Peers increased significantly with increasing age,  $F(2, 634) = 10.44, p < .001$ , and Time on Prosocial Activities increased significantly between seventh and eighth grades,  $F(2, 636) = 2.54, p < .05$ . Interestingly, the average Time at Home did not differ significantly by age. In addition, the predicted interaction between cohort and social group was not found.

### **Social Group and Grade Differences in Later Prosocial and Problem Behaviors**

The second set of analyses was conducted to relate membership in different social self-perception groups to later self-reports of problem and pro-

social behaviors, as well as perceived influences of friends on these behaviors. Once again, we were interested in age differences in the later behaviors, and we expected an interaction of grade and social group for the reasons reviewed earlier. We again used ANOVAs to compare the extent to which the four groups of adolescents reported involvement in problem activities and prosocial activities 1 year later and to compare their perceptions of friends' influences on these types of behaviors. It should be noted that the number of respondents drops in this analysis because fewer respondents had complete data at Time 1 and Time 2.

*Social group differences.* The analyses revealed that the social self-perception groups (Desperate, Unconcerned, Anxious, Confident) were significantly related to both self-reported problem behaviors,  $F(3, 410) = 6.06$ ,  $p < .001$  and prosocial behaviors,  $F(3, 410) = 5.28$ ,  $p < .001$ . The social self-perception groups could also be distinguished by their perceptions of friends' influences on problem behaviors,  $F(3, 410) = 6.13$ ,  $p < .001$ , and prosocial behaviors,  $F(3, 410) = 4.03$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Post hoc comparisons (see Table 5) indicated that those in the Desperate group were significantly more involved in problem behaviors than the Unconcerned or the Anxious groups but did not differ from the Confident group. Interestingly, the Desperate group could not be differentiated from the other groups on prosocial behaviors. The Unconcerned group, however, was significantly less involved with prosocial behaviors than either the Anxious or the Confident groups. The Desperate group reported significantly higher levels of influence from friends on problem behaviors than any of the other three social groups. In addition, the Desperate group reported significantly less influence from friends for prosocial behaviors than either the Anxious or the Confident groups. Interestingly, the Confident group reported significantly more influence from friends for prosocial behaviors than the Unconcerned group but did not differ from the Anxious group.

*Grade differences.* Based on the literature reviewed earlier, we predicted that younger adolescents would be more concerned about peers and social standing than older adolescents and that the differences between the social groups would be larger at younger ages than at older ages; therefore, we expected both the main effect for grade and the interaction of grade and social group to significantly predict time use. As expected, grade differences were found for involvement in problem behaviors,  $F(2, 410) = 5.77$ ,  $p < .01$ , and prosocial behaviors,  $F(2, 410) = 10.65$ ,  $p < .001$ . Post hoc comparisons (see Table 6) revealed significant increases in both prosocial and problem behaviors at later grades. No significant grade differences were found for friends'

**TABLE 5: Mean Problem/Prosocial Behavior Scores by Social Cluster**

	<i>Desperate</i> (N = 64)		<i>Unconcerned</i> (N = 106)		<i>Anxious</i> (N = 121)		<i>Confident</i> (N = 131)	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Problem behaviors	2.13 <sup>b</sup>	0.80	1.76 <sup>ab</sup>	0.76	1.67 <sup>a</sup>	0.65	1.98 <sup>b</sup>	1.01
Problem influence	2.76 <sup>a</sup>	0.99	2.18 <sup>b</sup>	1.01	2.12 <sup>b</sup>	0.98	2.41 <sup>ab</sup>	1.17
Prosocial behaviors	2.98 <sup>b</sup>	1.07	2.79 <sup>b</sup>	1.02	3.35 <sup>a</sup>	1.24	3.27 <sup>a</sup>	1.17
Prosocial influence	3.52 <sup>a</sup>	1.15	3.62 <sup>ab</sup>	1.03	3.92 <sup>ab</sup>	0.96	3.97 <sup>b</sup>	1.15

NOTE: Groups that do not share superscripted letters are significantly different from each other.

**TABLE 6: Mean Prosocial/Problem Behavior Scores by Grade**

	<i>Grade 7</i> (N = 125)		<i>Grade 8</i> (N = 124)		<i>Grade 10</i> (N = 173)	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Problem behaviors	1.73 <sup>a</sup>	0.67	1.81 <sup>a</sup>	0.85	2.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.91
Problem influence	2.19 <sup>a</sup>	1.02	2.26 <sup>a</sup>	1.08	2.45 <sup>a</sup>	1.07
Prosocial behaviors	2.77 <sup>a</sup>	1.14	3.17 <sup>b</sup>	0.99	3.36 <sup>b</sup>	1.18
Prosocial influence	3.67 <sup>a</sup>	1.09	3.81 <sup>a</sup>	1.05	3.87 <sup>a</sup>	1.08

NOTE: Groups that do not share superscripted letters are significantly different from each other.

influence on problem or prosocial behaviors. In addition, the expected interactions of grade and social group were not found for any of these outcomes.

## DISCUSSION

Previous studies have often pointed to the importance of the social context for adolescents' use of free time, typically indicating that hanging out with friends in unstructured, unsupervised contexts is related to negative outcomes (e.g., Mahoney, 2001; Osgood et al., 1996), whereas spending time with friends in adult-sanctioned, structured contexts is related to positive outcomes (e.g., Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Youniss et al., 1999). Despite the fact that other studies (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Haggard & Williams, 1992; Kivel, 1998) have pointed out the importance of adolescents' social networks

for their decisions about how to use their leisure time, the relations between adolescents' social self-perceptions and their decisions about time use have not been empirically tested in previous studies. In addition, prior research has not considered potential individual differences in the social "meaning" that adolescents may attach to various activities and the reasons that they might choose to get involved. In an effort to better understand the relations between these constructs and to consider individual differences, we used an idiographic approach to investigate the relations between social self-perceptions, time use, and later involvement in prosocial or problem behaviors during adolescence.

Previous empirical and theoretical work on the importance of social self-perceptions during adolescence (e.g., Eccles et al., 1983; Harter, 1998; Hartup, 1983) led us to predict that choices about how to spend time would be highly related to how teens feel about their social competence or social acceptance when they are around other teens. Age-related transitions were of special interest, thus we predicted that the impact of social self-perceptions would vary as individuals make their way through adolescence. Based on the peer conformity literature (e.g., Leventhal, 1994) and research on changes in self-concept (Harter, 1998), we predicted that social self-perceptions would have the greatest impact during early and middle adolescence and slightly less impact during later adolescence, after most teens have found their social niches.

Our goal was to extend previous research by using an idiographic approach to examine the relations between different patterns of social self-perceptions and later time use. We identified four different patterns of social self-perceptions (confident, anxious, unconcerned, and desperate), and, as predicted, social self-perceptions were related to the ways in which adolescents spent their time, and they varied according to the social self-perception groups we had defined. Although all groups of adolescents reported spending most of their leisure time with peers and much less time on prosocial activities (e.g., volunteer work, school clubs), adolescents who were most self-confident about their social skills (Confident group) and those who were most willing to go to great lengths to make and keep friends (Desperate group) spent significantly more time with peers than those in the other two groups. Those in the Desperate group also spent less time at home than members of the other groups.

The fact that the Desperate and Confident groups reported spending very similar amounts of time with peers but had very different social self-perception profiles (see Figure 1) highlights the importance of looking beyond "time spent" to examine the meaning of social interactions to the adolescents in-

volved. If adolescents are desperate for peer acceptance and have a low opinion of their social abilities, they may be more willing to spend leisure time with peers who are involved in problem behaviors than those who feel confident about their social skills.

Although our analyses were confined to one dependent time-use variable at a time, the pattern of results suggests that adolescents' social self-perceptions also may be related to how they divide their time between activities. For example, those in the Confident group spent the most time with peers, but they also spent a lot of time at home and on prosocial activities. In other words, the use of their time was varied, making them look well-rounded, rather than focused only in one area. This means that they were also likely to be spending time with a variety of adults as well as a potentially more varied group of peers. It is also interesting to note that, despite being anxious about their social lives, those in the Anxious group were spending more time with peers than those in the Unconcerned group. Members of the Anxious group also spent more time on prosocial activities than the Unconcerned group, suggesting that those in the Anxious group may have been involved in prosocial activities to interact with peers because they felt comfortable with their social status, despite the fact that they spent the least amount of time with peers. Based on the findings from this study, we can only speculate about the potential reasons for these relations; however, future studies could further examine the interesting links hinted at here.

Based on the previous research that suggests links between the social world of adolescents and their involvement in prosocial and problem behaviors, we wanted to look closely at the relations between social self-perceptions and later problem and prosocial behaviors as adolescents move through adolescence. We found that membership in the social self-perception groups was significantly related to self-reported problem and prosocial behaviors as well as to adolescents' perceptions of friends' influences on problem and prosocial behaviors. Interestingly, the Desperate group could be differentiated from the Confident group on the basis of prosocial behaviors and influence rather than problem behaviors and influence, suggesting that adolescents who are confident about their social abilities have a more diverse array of friends and engage in a broader range of behaviors than those who feel less socially adept. Adolescents in the Anxious group are similar to those in the Confident group in terms of prosocial behaviors and influence, but they are not involved in problem behaviors and they report the least influence from friends on problem behaviors (although it is not significantly different from the Confident group). Thus, it appears that Confident adolescents are engaged in a variety of behaviors with a variety of friends, whereas those who

feel anxious about their social skills are focusing primarily on prosocial friends and those who feel desperate for friendship are most influenced by those involved in problem behaviors.

We also were very interested in how the relations between social self-perceptions and time use might change as individuals move through adolescence. Previous research suggests that social conformity and concerns about "fitting in" are at their highest point during early to middle adolescence (e.g., Berndt, 1979, 1996; Leventhal, 1994); therefore, we expected social self-perceptions to play a greater role during early and middle adolescence, and we expected time use to change with age. Indeed, we found that adolescents' Time with Peers increased significantly with age and that Time Spent on Prosocial Activities increased between the seventh and eleventh grades, supporting previous findings showing an increase in time spent with peers during middle and later adolescence (Larson & Kleiber, 1990; Larson & Richards, 1989).

Adolescents also were significantly more likely to be involved in problem behaviors and prosocial behaviors with increasing age; however, no age trends were seen in perceptions of friends' influences on either problem or prosocial behaviors. The predicted age difference in representation within social groups and the expected interaction between cohort and social group were not found, lending little support to our general expectation that adolescents' social self-perceptions have the greatest impact on time use during early and middle adolescence; other findings to directly test this hypothesis did not substantiate it. These mixed findings may be due to the relatively small range of ages that we considered in this study; the youngest group was in seventh grade and the oldest in 10th during the first wave of data collection included here.

In conclusion, this study extends earlier research by including social self-perceptions in an examination of time use and involvement in prosocial and problem behaviors during adolescence. Due to the importance of the social world during the adolescent years, we believed that social self-perceptions would be related to adolescents' choices about how to spend their leisure time and that adolescents who held different beliefs might make different decisions. By using an idiographic approach to the question, we found that adolescents could be distinguished by their patterns of social self-perceptions and that each group made slightly different decisions about how much time to spend with peers and what to do with that time. The findings from this study point to the importance of including adolescents' perceptions of their place in the social world in our studies of how they spend their leisure time. Individual differences in social perceptions may be one of the most important determi-

nants of why adolescents become involved with certain activities and spend time with particular friends. In future research, it will be important to consider the ways in which the social and psychological "meaning" of leisure time use may differentially impact adolescents' participation in a variety of activities.

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