

## The Multidimensionality of Peer Pressure in Adolescence

Donna Rae Clasen<sup>1</sup> and B. Bradford Brown<sup>2</sup>

Received April 1, 1985; accepted August 28, 1985

*A sample of 689 adolescents (grades 7-12) from two Midwestern communities who had been identified by peers as members of one of three major peer groups responded to a self-report survey measuring perceptions of peer pressure in five areas of behavior: involvement with peers, school involvement, family involvement, conformity to peer norms, and misconduct. Perceived pressures toward peer involvement were particularly strong, whereas peer pressures concerning misconduct were relatively ambivalent. Perceived pressures toward misconduct increased across grade levels and pressures to conform to peer norms diminished; grade differences in perceived peer pressures concerning family involvement were community specific. Compared to druggie-toughs, jock-populars perceived stronger peer pressures toward school and family involvement, and less pressure toward (stronger pressure against) misconduct; patterns of perceived pressure among loners were more variable across communities. Results elaborated the process of peer influence in adolescent socialization and identity development.*

A version of this paper was presented at the biennial meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, Toronto, April 1985. The study was supported by a grant to the second author from the Spencer Foundation, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor of Educational Foundations, University of Wisconsin—Whitewater. She received her Ph.D. in 1982 from University of Wisconsin—Madison. Her research interests: adolescent peer groups and peer pressure, and implications of various instructional strategies for gifted students.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Wisconsin—Madison. He received his Ph.D. in 1979 from the University of Chicago. His research interests: effects of peer pressure and peer-group affiliation on adolescent self-concept and identity development, and social development in high school.

## INTRODUCTION

Peer pressure — pressure to think or behave along certain peer-prescribed guidelines — is regarded as a prominent attribute of adolescence. Peer-group relations form an integral component of adolescent socialization (Hartup, 1983) and facilitate individual development of a sense of identity (Erikson, 1968). Peer pressure is a primary mechanism of transmitting group norms and maintaining loyalties among group members. Yet, because most studies of peer influences in adolescence have focused on a single peer group (e.g., Huba, Wingard, and Bentler, 1979), or a specific attitude or behavior (e.g., Collins, 1974; Reister and Zucker, 1968), information regarding peer pressure remains fragmented. It is unclear whether or not teenagers perceive peer pressures as impinging with equal intensity in all areas of their lives. It is also uncertain how such pressures change with age, or how they vary across communities or among different peer groups within a community. In addressing these issues, the present study provides a more comprehensive portrait of adolescent peer pressure that emphasizes its complexity and multidimensionality.

Many researchers have employed Erikson's (1968) ego identity theory to examine the *product* of adolescent development: a sense of identity (Bourne, 1978). Erikson also stipulated a psychosocial *process* of identity development that, although rarely tested, is particularly relevant to studies of peer pressure. Erikson (1968) maintained that peer-group affiliations are almost essential to healthy identity development in adolescence. They allow teenagers to explore interests and ideologies, to test their ability to form intimate peer relationships, and to relinquish psychological dependence on parents while retaining a sense of belonging. The security and support inherent in group membership is a comforting contrast to the adolescent's uncertain sense of self. Thus, belonging to a peer group emerges as a prominent developmental task early in adolescence, but peer-group affiliation is not strictly a matter of individual choice (Newman and Newman, 1976, p. 267):

The adolescent's circle of friends, his interests and style of dress quickly link him to a subgroup which has continuity and meaning within the context of his neighborhood or school. There are demands from within this group to conform to the norms of the group and to demonstrate commitment and loyalty to the other group members.

In effect, peer pressures become the price of group membership. To the extent that peer groups differ in normative interests and activities, the content of peer pressures will vary across members of different groups. Yet, because all groups are oriented toward fostering identity development, certain developmental trends in peer pressures can be expected to supersede group differences. Specifically, to encourage achievement of an autonomous sense of self and intimate attachment to peers (rather than to parents),

pressures toward peer involvement should increase with age, while pressures toward family involvement and conformity to group norms decline.

Results of studies of peer-conformity behavior generally are consistent with Erikson's (1968) postulates. Most researchers have found that early adolescents are more willing than younger age groups to conform to peer pressures (Bixenstine, DeCorte, and Bixenstine, 1976; Costanzo and Shaw, 1966), and that they are particularly receptive to pressures concerning peer-group mores and social interactions (Berndt, 1979; Brittain, 1963). Yet, because these studies have been based almost exclusively on responses to contrived or hypothetical situations, they cannot be taken as an adequate indicator of the type or degree of peer pressures that teenagers commonly confront.

Attempts to measure peer influences on *actual* (rather than contrived or hypothetical) adolescent behavior often have relied on indirect evidence of peer pressure. For example, studies concerned with peer influences on academic achievement have typically operationalized "peer influence" simply as the degree of association between a student's own academic aspirations or achievement and that of his/her best friend or group of friends (Ide, Parkerson, Haertel, and Walberg, 1981). It seems doubtful, however, that such correlations adequately measure peer pressure because similarity is a major criterion of friendship *selection* as well as an outcome of friendship interactions (Kandel, 1978).

Studies of adolescent peer-group interactions have yielded contradictory conclusions about peer pressure. Ethnographers generally have supported Erikson's (1968) and Newman and Newman's (1976) postulates that the adolescent social world is comprised of an array of peer groups, or "crowds," that vary substantially in normative attitudes, interests, and behavior (Buff, 1970; Cusick, 1973; Dunphy, 1963; Larkin, 1979). Although some have reported evidence that crowds do compel conformity to group norms (Cusick, 1973; Reister & Zucker, 1968), others have remained skeptical. Huba *et al.* (1979) found that adolescent drug users did not appear to form a subculture distinctive from nonusers on dimensions other than drug use. Varenne (1982) observed that the tendency for peer interaction to cross crowd boundaries diluted the impact of within-crowd norms or pressures. Coleman (1961) argued that adolescents' preoccupation with achieving membership in the "leading crowd" made most teenagers more attentive to the norms of the elite crowd than their own peer group. In the absence of more systematic data focusing on peer pressure *per se*, the degree to which adolescent peer groups differ in patterns of peer pressure remains unclear.

The ambiguous results and contradictory conclusions arising from these approaches to peer pressure underscore the need for more direct evidence, such as asking teenagers to report on the pressures they perceive from friends.

Adopting this strategy, Brown (1982; Brown *et al.*, in press) discovered that adolescents reported significantly stronger peer pressure to spend time with peers and conform to peer norms than to participate in school or family activities. Pressures from friends to use drugs or have sex were lower than pressures in all other areas; in fact, many reported that friends actively discouraged these activities. Additionally, the strength or direction of several peer pressures differed significantly by grade level and/or gender. Pressure to drink alcohol, for example, shifted from a relatively negative pressure (against drinking) among seventh-grade students to the highest source of peer pressure among twelfth-grade males. Pressures toward drug use and sexual activity also were stronger in later grades. Unfortunately, neither study compared perceptions of peer pressures among members of different peer groups.

The present study examined the characteristics of adolescents' perceptions of peer pressures based on expectations from Erikson's (1968) theory and previous research on teenage peer relations. The purpose was to assess the degree and direction of peer pressures that adolescents encountered in several aspects of their lives, and to determine how perceived peer pressures differed by gender, grade level, and peer-group affiliation. Members of several school crowds across grades 7-12 in two communities responded to a peer-pressure inventory assessing perceptions of peer pressure in five domains: involvement with peers, involvement in school, involvement with family, conformity to peer norms, and misconduct. Based on previous research and theory, three hypotheses were derived:

1. Adolescents will perceive significantly stronger pressures from friends toward peer involvement and conformity to peer norms than toward family involvement or misconduct.
2. Across grade levels, pressures toward peer involvement and misconduct will increase, whereas pressures to be involved with family and to conform to peer-group norms will diminish.
3. Perceptions of peer pressures will differ significantly among members of different adolescent peer groups.

## METHOD

### Sample

Data were obtained from 689 students in grades 7-12 in two Midwestern communities. Approximately half of this group ( $n = 160$  males, 178 females) lived in a small city (9,500 residents) that, despite a heterogeneous mix of socioeconomic strata, maintained a rural, "small town" atmosphere. The town

had one middle school (grades 6-8) and one high school (grades 9-12). The other half of the sample ( $n = 182$  males, 169 females) lived in a predominantly working-class section of a larger urban area (200,000 residents). Respondents were drawn from one of the city's middle schools (grades 6-8) and the high school (grades 9-12) into which it fed. The selected communities provided a contrast in living and school environments, but each was representative of a substantial proportion of American adolescents. The sample was predominantly Caucasian (98% of the "rural" respondents, 93% of the "urban" respondents).

### Identification of Peer Groups and Group Members

All respondents had been identified by peers as members of one of their school's major peer groups, based on a modified version of Schwendinger and Schwendinger's (1985) Social Type Rating (STR) procedure. This procedure allows investigators to identify a school's major peer groups and group members from the *students'* perspective, rather than relying on inferences of adult informants or participant observers (Poveda, 1975; Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1985; Weis, 1974). It involves 45-minute interviews with selected students in each grade level.

The first STR rater in each grade was nominated by school administrators as someone who would be well informed about the school's peer groups and peer relations. A member of the research team approached this student, explained the STR procedure, assured the confidentiality of information given and, if the student was willing to participate, asked the student to name a friend (among students in the same grade) who could serve as a rating partner. This person was then approached, briefed, and asked to participate. Of those asked, 95% agreed to participate. Students were interviewed in pairs (rater and friend) to help participants feel more comfortable and enhance the reliability of responses. To encourage honest responses, interviews were conducted by a member of the research team (trained undergraduates or graduate students who had previous experience working with adolescents) in an empty room away from the school's administrative offices.

Ten to 16 pairs of STR raters, equally divided by gender, were interviewed in each grade (in each school). Each pair was asked to list the major "crowds" they perceived in their school, to briefly describe the "earmarks" of each group, and then to indicate the crowd to which each of the students in their grade belonged. A "crowd" was defined as "a label you put on students who act the same way or do the same sort of things, even if they don't all spend a lot of time together." After classifying classmates into crowds, STR raters

were asked to indicate the leaders (or most prominent members) in their grade of each crowd they had named. This became a pool of names (updated after each STR interview) from which all subsequent STR raters were selected. Because different raters often named the same crowds and the same leaders, after several ratings in a grade it usually became obvious which crowds were prominent and which students ought to be selected as STR raters. Interviewing continued until representatives of all major crowds named by raters had participated and no new crowds emerged.

After all ratings had been completed each crowd named by STR raters was coded into one of 11 major crowd types, using the name and earmark description raters gave the group. The coding was based on a lexicon developed by Brown *et al.* (1985).<sup>3</sup> Interrater agreement on coding crowds into crowd types was 91%. Then a crowd-type assignment (across raters) was computed for each student in each grade. Students were considered members of a specific crowd type if at least half the STR raters assigned them to the same crowd type and less than one-third placed them in any other crowd type.<sup>4</sup>

### Selection of Respondents

In each school, a sample was drawn from members of the three most prominent crowd types that emerged from STR interviews: jock-populars, druggie-toughs, and loners.<sup>5</sup> Respondents were randomly selected from students associated with each crowd, after stratification by gender and grade (11 males and 11 females per crowd per grade per community). Of the 792

<sup>3</sup>Through open-ended interviews with junior and senior high-school students (as well as some recent high-school graduates attending college), Brown *et al.* (1985) identified the range of names students commonly used to describe adolescent peer groups. The names elicited were categorized into major crowd types, that is, synonyms used to describe the same type of peer group. For example, names under the "brain" crowd type included academics, eggheads, intellectuals, intelligentia, smartis, smart group, straight-A's, studious, etc. The 11 crowd-type categories were brains, druggies, jocks, loners, normals, outcasts, populars, toughs, special interest groups (e.g., farmers, band buddies), hybrids (e.g., party-jocks, preppie-brains), and unassignable (miscellaneous) names. An empirical study was conducted to demonstrate the lexicon's usefulness.

<sup>4</sup>Criteria for crowd assignments were purposely not more rigorous to allow both marginal and more central crowd members to be included in the sample. Previous studies of adolescent peer groups have focused almost exclusively on central crowd members, thus possibly overstating the degree of crowd-related differences.

<sup>5</sup>A fourth group was selected for study in each school but excluded from these analyses because the crowd type varied across schools: brains in two schools, normals in one, and "outsiders" (students consistently unknown by STR raters and thus rarely associated with any crowd) in the fourth school. Of the groups included in analyses, the jock-populars and druggie-toughs each combined two separate crowd types. Previous research (Brown *et al.*, 1985) indicated that these combinations were the only pairings of major crowd types whose stereotypic images were not well differentiated. The compatibility of their norms suggested that adolescents regard each of these pairs essentially as a unified group.

students selected, 87% ( $n = 689$ ) successfully completed the questionnaire, 5% ( $n = 41$ ) refused (or were refused permission by parents), and 8% ( $n = 62$ ) were unavailable at the time of testing or completed an unusable questionnaire. A slightly higher proportion of jock-populars (92%) than druggie-toughs (83%) or loners (84%) completed the questionnaire. The refusal rate was higher among loners (10%) than druggie-toughs (5%) or jock-populars (2%). Grade and gender differences in response rates were negligible.

### Procedure and Measures

A self-report questionnaire was group-administered to respondents in an unused classroom by a member of the research staff. The questionnaire included measures of respondents' perceptions of peer pressure, socioeconomic status, and several measures unrelated to the present study. The invitation to participate, as well as instructions for filling out the questionnaire, were phrased so that respondents remained unaware that they had been selected because they were nominated by peers as members of specific peer groups. The questionnaire was administered two months after the STR interviews, using different staff members, so that respondents would not associate the two phases of the study.

### Perceived Peer Pressures

The measure of adolescents' perceptions of peer pressures was empirically derived by asking a pilot group of teenagers to list peer pressures they or others their age encountered. Content analyses of responses indicated that peer pressures clustered in five areas: peer involvement (spending free time with friends, attending parties and school social events, interacting with the opposite sex, etc.), involvement in school (academic and extracurricular), involvement with family, conformity to peer norms (in dress and grooming, musical tastes, etc.), and misconduct (drug and alcohol use, sexual intercourse, and minor delinquent activities). From the initial lists of items an instrument was derived, piloted, and revised.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>An 80-item version of the instrument was piloted on a sample of 101 adolescents aged 12-18. Fifteen other adolescents evaluated the instrument's format and language. Each item contained a pair of polar-opposite statements because adolescents indicated that peer pressure could be toward or against a given activity (e.g., "to drink" or "to not drink"). Items that had limited response variation (those for which most pilot respondents checked "no pressure") and failed to correlate with any scale were dropped. Minor changes in wording were made to clarify confusing or ambiguous items.

The final instrument, labeled the Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI), contained 53 items relatively evenly divided among the five pressure areas. It defined peer pressure for respondents as "when people your own age encourage or urge you to do something or to keep from doing something else, no matter if you personally want to or not." Items were presented in a semantic differential format; each contained a pair of statements representing polar opposite pressures (e.g., "study hard, do your homework" vs. "not study or do homework"; "not do many things with your family" vs. "do lots with your family"). The 7-point scale allowed respondents to indicate the degree and direction of pressure they felt from friends: *a lot, some, or a little* pressure toward the statement on the left; *no pressure, a little, some, or a lot* of pressure toward the statement on the right. "Your friends" was stipulated to provide respondents with a concrete reference point. A copy of the PPI is available from the authors upon request.

Items for each scale were interspersed and counterbalanced (half had the statement representing pressure toward the domain on the left side of the page; half had it on the right side). A score was calculated for each PPI scale after recoding items so that all were scored in the "positive" direction (toward the area). The score, which was the mean of scale-item responses, could range from -3.00 (strong peer pressures against peer involvement, misconduct, etc.) to 3.00 (strong peer pressures toward the area). A score of 0 indicated that respondents either perceived essentially no pressure in either direction or a balance of positive and negative peer pressures. Respondents were randomly assigned one of two forms of the PPI, which differed in order or presentation of items. *T* tests revealed that PPI scale scores did not differ significantly between the two forms.

### Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Because of the different distribution of socioeconomic strata in the two participating communities and because previous studies have linked adolescent peer-group affiliations to SES (Larkin, 1979; Sherif and Sherif, 1964), respondents were asked to describe their parents' current occupations (or past occupation, if no longer in the work force). Responses were coded from 1 (low) to 7 (high), using Hollingshead and Redlich's (1958) index of social positions. Interrater agreement on assignment of occupation codes was 86%.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Protocols were coded by two raters blind to respondents' crowd affiliation and community of residence. Information about parents' education and income was not included in the measure of SES because a large number of respondents (especially in middle school) marked these questions "don't know." Among those who gave codable responses, analyses were rerun, substituting parents' education for occupation as the indicator of SES. None of the findings differed significantly in the two sets of analyses.

### Social Desirability

To assess possible social desirability biases in the PPI scales, the rural respondents' questionnaire also included a 13-item version of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. This version has displayed adequate reliability and validity with adolescent samples (Reynolds, 1982). The measure was not given to urban respondents because of time constraints.

## RESULTS

### Characteristics of PPI Scales

Table I presents the mean score, standard deviation, and internal consistency (based on Cronbach's alpha) of each PPI scale among respondents in both communities. With one exception (the conformity pressures scale among urban respondents), alpha coefficients were 0.70 or higher. Correlations between PPI scales, and social desirability and SES, were uniformly low (below  $\pm 0.20$ ; see Table I). Among a pilot sample of 70 adolescents, test-retest correlations over a six-week interval ranged from 0.48 for perceived misconduct pressures to 0.65 for perceptions of family-involvement pressures. These results indicated that the PPI was a reliable indicator of adolescents' perceptions of peer pressure. The scale scores displayed adequate

Table I. PPI Scale Characteristics in Each Community

	Correlation with				
	Mean	SD	Alpha <sup>a</sup>	SES	SDES <sup>b</sup>
Rural respondents					
Peer involvement	0.87	0.72	0.78	0.12	0.15
School involvement	0.41	0.71	0.71	0.12	0.01
Family involvement	0.27	0.82	0.79	0.13	0.12
Peer conformity	0.40	0.58	0.70	0.06	-0.17
Misconduct	-0.22	0.92	0.87	-0.13	-0.11
Urban respondents					
Peer involvement	0.88	0.69	0.72	0.11	0.19
School involvement	0.53	0.77	0.74	0.04	0.04
Family involvement	0.30	0.88	0.78	-0.03	-0.03
Peer conformity	0.34	0.53	0.60	-0.08	-0.08
Misconduct	0.02	0.95	0.87		

<sup>a</sup>Based on Cronbach's internal consistency statistic.

<sup>b</sup>Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale score; this measure was only given to rural respondents.

internal consistency and test-retest reliability; they were not subject to social desirability biases and were only modestly associated with SES.

### Differences Among Pressure Areas

To determine whether or not respondents perceived different degrees of peer pressure in the five areas addressed by the PPI, a 3 (grade level)  $\times$  3 (crowd type)  $\times$  2 (gender)  $\times$  2 (community)  $\times$  5 (pressure area) analysis of covariance was conducted, covarying for SES and treating the pressure-area scores as a repeated measure. Grade level was collapsed into three categories (grades 7-8, 9-10, 11-12) to reduce variations in cell size and minimize the influence of idiosyncratic (cohort-specific) grade effects. Because of the large degrees of freedom for error (2168), the significance level was set at  $p < 0.01$ .

As expected, mean scores varied significantly among the pressure areas,  $F(4, 2168) = 103.81, p < 0.001$ . Dunn-Bonferroni comparisons (Kirk, 1982) were conducted on all possible pairings of the PPI scales. The alpha for each comparison was set at 0.001 (the result of distributing the familywise alpha of 0.01 among the 10 possible pairs) and the degrees of freedom were derived from the multivariate ANCOVA.<sup>8</sup> Values (mean scores) for the pressure area scores in these comparisons differed slightly from sample means (Table I) because of the omission of cases with missing values. Results generally supported the pressure area differences predicted in the first hypothesis: Students perceived significantly more pressure from friends toward peer involvement ( $M = 0.92$ ) than toward family involvement ( $M = 0.27$ ),  $t(2168) = 13.72$ , or misconduct ( $M = -0.10$ ),  $t(2168) = 25.67$ . Perceived peer pressures toward conformity to peer norms ( $M = 0.37$ ) also were significantly higher than pressures toward misconduct,  $t(2168) = 11.09$ , but contrary to prediction, peer-conformity pressures were not significantly greater than perceived pressures toward family involvement,  $t(2168) = 2.31$ . Additionally, perceived peer-involvement pressures were significantly more positive than peer pressures concerning school involvement ( $M = 0.48$ ),  $t(2168) = 11.21$ , or conformity to peer norms,  $t(2168) = 22.50$ . School involvement pressures, in turn, were significantly more positive than pressures from friends concerning family involvement,  $t(2168) = 6.76$ , or misconduct,  $t(2168) = 9.08$ .

In sum, respondents perceived considerable pressures from peers toward peer involvement, whereas peer pressures concerning misconduct were

### Multidimensionality of Peer Pressure

relatively ambivalent. Scores in the other pressure areas were not as distinctive, although respondents tended to report stronger peer pressure toward school involvement than toward peer conformity and family involvement. It is important to emphasize that PPI scale scores reflected the *direction* as well as magnitude of peer pressures. Thus, results should not be interpreted as evidence that adolescents perceive little peer pressure concerning misconduct. Instead, the relatively low misconduct scale score indicates that adolescents were as likely to report that friends *discouraged* participation in misconduct as that friends encouraged such behavior.

### Differences Within Pressure Areas

To examine the grade and crowd differences predicted in hypotheses 2 and 3, and to explore possible gender and/or community differences in adolescents' perceptions of peer pressure, a 3 (grade level)  $\times$  3 (crowd type)  $\times$  2 (gender)  $\times$  2 (community) analysis of covariance (covarying for SES) was conducted on each PPI scale score. Results of these analyses are summarized in Table II. Because there was only one significant main effect and two

Table II. Results of ANCOVAs on Each PPI Scale Score<sup>a</sup>

Covariate	df	Peer involvement	School involvement	Family involvement	Peer conformity	Misconduct
Socioeconomic status	1	6.58 <sup>d</sup>	11.43 <sup>e</sup>	2.66	0.14	2.80
Main effects		3.21	5.47	1.88	0.46	1.96
Grade level	2	1.11	0.33	3.51 <sup>e</sup>	3.01 <sup>e</sup>	9.01 <sup>e</sup>
		0.55	0.16	2.48	0.95	6.28
Crowd type	2	2.50	9.36 <sup>e</sup>	3.58 <sup>e</sup>	1.72	22.93 <sup>e</sup>
		1.22	4.48	2.54	0.54	6.29
Gender	1	1.56	0.37	0.66	1.59	1.80
		0.76	0.18	0.47	0.50	1.29
Community	1	0.06	6.17 <sup>e</sup>	2.30	2.99	2.81
		0.03	2.95	1.63	0.94	1.96
Interactions <sup>b</sup>						
Grade X community	2	0.39	0.96	2.93	1.82	3.54 <sup>e</sup>
		0.19	0.46	2.08	0.58	2.47
Gender X community	1	5.73 <sup>e</sup>	1.77	2.84	0.06	0.94
		2.80	0.84	2.01	0.06	0.66
Residual (df)	—	(579)	(564)	(563)	(577)	(583)
Mean square	—	0.49	0.51	0.71	0.32	0.70

<sup>a</sup>For each effect, top figure is  $F$  value, bottom figure is mean square.

<sup>b</sup>Only those interaction terms with a significant  $F$  for at least one analysis are included.

<sup>c</sup> $p < 0.05$ .

<sup>d</sup> $p < 0.01$ .

<sup>e</sup> $p < 0.001$ .

<sup>8</sup>To increase the accuracy of these analyses, the mean square of error (MSE) for each comparison was derived from a 3 (grade)  $\times$  3 (crowd type)  $\times$  2 (gender)  $\times$  2 (community)  $\times$  (pressure area) analysis of covariance (covarying for SES), which included the two pressure-area scores to be compared.

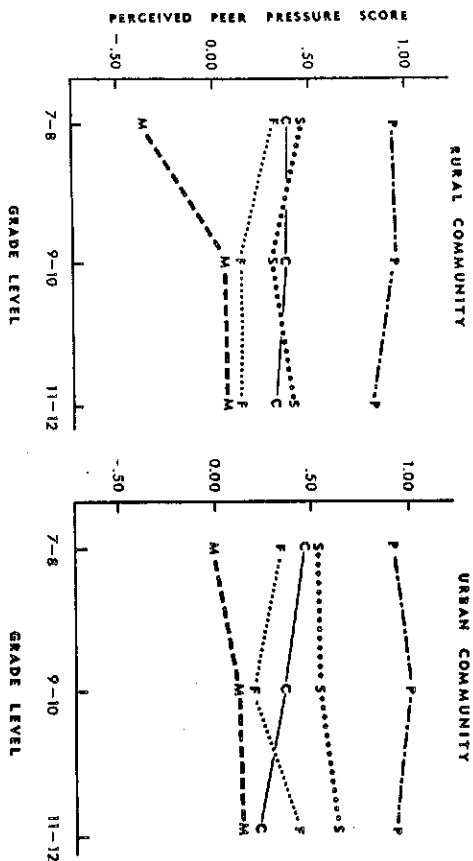


Fig. 1. Differences by pressure area, grade level, and community in perceived peer pressures (P = peer involvement, S = school involvement, F = family involvement, C = peer conformity, M = misconduct).

interaction effects involving community, it appeared as if differences in adolescents' perceptions of peer pressure were not community specific. Nevertheless, so as not to mask community-based variations in grade and/or crowd differences, evaluations of hypotheses 2 and 3 were conducted in each community separately.

#### Grade Differences

Hypothesis 2 predicted that perceived pressures toward peer involvement and misconduct would increase across grade levels, whereas pressures toward peer conformity and family involvement would diminish. Figure 1 presents grade differences in adjusted mean scores on PPI scales (adjusting for effects of gender, crowd type, and SES), separately for each community. Contrary to expectation, the strength of peer-involvement pressures reported by respondents did not differ significantly by grade in either community. Linear trend analyses (based on the adjusted grade scores) indicated that, as predicted, perceived peer pressures toward misconduct did increase with advancing grade among the rural respondents,  $F(1, 295) = 25.34, p < 0.001$ ; differences among urban respondents were in the expected direction, but non-significant (see Fig. 1),  $F(1, 313) = 1.66, ns$ . The predicted decrease across grades in peer pressures toward family involvement was significant among the rural students,  $F(1, 288) = 7.91, p < 0.01$ , but not among students in the larger city, where pressures toward family involvement were highest

#### Multidimensionality of Peer Pressure

Table III. Crowd Differences in Mean Scores on PPI Scales<sup>a</sup>

	Jock-populars	Druggie-toughs	Loners
Rural respondents			
Peer involvement	0.90	0.96	0.83
School involvement	0.50	0.20	0.46
Family involvement	0.28	0.07	0.25
Peer conformity	0.40	0.44	0.35
Misconduct	-0.16	0.27	-0.25
(n)	(123)	(88)	(87)
Urban respondents			
Peer involvement	1.05	0.88	0.79
School involvement	0.71	0.38	0.53
Family involvement	0.46	0.20	0.25
Peer conformity	0.40	0.35	0.27
Misconduct	-0.13	0.49	-0.14
(n)	(133)	(102)	(81)

<sup>a</sup>Scores are adjusted for effects of grade level, gender, and socioeconomic status.

among the older high school students (see Fig. 1). Although perceived pressures toward peer conformity diminished across grades, as predicted, among urban respondents,  $F(1, 309) = 8.76, p < 0.01$ , grade differences among the rural adolescents were negligible,  $F(1, 295) = 0.19, ns$ .

#### Crowd Differences

The third hypothesis predicted that perceptions of peer pressure would vary significantly among members of different peer groups. As indicated in Table II, controlling for the effects of SES, gender, grade level, and community of residence, members of different crowds did report significantly different levels of peer pressure in three of the five PPI domains: misconduct, school involvement, and family involvement. Crowd differences in mean scores on all PPI scales are presented in Table III.

Post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni pairwise comparisons of crowd differences, setting the alpha at 0.01 for each comparison, indicated that in both communities druggie-toughs reported significantly stronger peer pressure toward misconduct than either jock-populars or loners. Perceptions among the latter two groups were not significantly different. In both communities, jock-populars perceived greater pressure from friends toward school involvement than did druggie-toughs. Loners in the rural school also perceived stronger peer pressure toward school involvement than druggie-toughs did. Among urban respondents, however, the degree of peer pressure toward school in-

volvement that loners reported was equivalent to that of druggie-toughs and significantly lower than among jock-populars. Post hoc analyses failed to reveal significant crowd differences in perceived pressure toward family involvement, although in both communities such pressures were lowest among druggie-toughs and highest among jock-populars.

### Summary of Findings

As predicted, the degree and direction of peer pressures perceived by respondents varied significantly among the five pressure areas. Pressures toward peer involvement and, to a lesser extent, toward school involvement were relatively strong, whereas peer pressures concerning misconduct were relatively weak or ambivalent (with many students reporting that friends more often discouraged than encouraged participation in misconduct). Except for a modest gender difference (see Table II), perceptions of peer involvement pressures remained fairly consistent across various demographic divisions of the sample. Pressures in other areas, however, varied by grade level and/or crowd affiliation, with community of residence sometimes serving as a mediating variable. Across grades, adolescents reported diminishing pressures from friends toward conformity to peer norms and increasing pressures to engage in misconduct. Jock-populars presented a different pattern of peer pressures concerning misconduct, school involvement, and family involvement than did druggie-toughs. Crowd comparisons involving loners, on the other hand, varied by type of pressure and community of residence. Compared to these grade and crowd effects, gender and community-based differences in perceived peer pressures were relatively modest.

### DISCUSSION

Although peers have long been recognized as major socialization agents in adolescence, most research has focused on the product rather than the process of peer influence. As a result, peer pressure often has been assumed instead of assessed and has been portrayed as a monolithic, unilateral force in adolescence (e.g., Collins, 1974). The perceptions of our respondents, by contrast, indicated that peer pressure is a multidimensional force, varying in strength and direction across grades, between peer groups, and among different domains of adolescent behavior.

The patterns of peer pressure that we observed were consistent with the image of peers as major socialization forces who foster identity develop-

ment (Erikson, 1968; Hartup, 1983). As socializing agents, peers must compete with teachers and parents for an adolescent's attention. Thus, it is not surprising that peer pressures toward peer involvement were consistently higher than pressures toward school or family involvement. Yet peers also seem to facilitate autonomy development in adolescence by easing pressures toward conformity to peer norms and (at least among the rural respondents) encouraging some distancing from family in the later high-school years. The shift across grades in misconduct pressures—from peers discouraging such behavior to a more neutral or encouraging position (pressure toward misconduct)—may be seen as evidence of the negative socializing influence of peers. Yet, many of the behaviors encompassed by the misconduct scale (use of alcohol or cigarettes, sexual intercourse) become normatively acceptable activities in adulthood. Thus, as others have concluded (Jessor and Jessor, 1979), developmental changes in this area of peer pressure may again reflect the efforts of peers to orient adolescents toward adult norms.

Because peers are often viewed as sources of encouragement for antisocial behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1967; Huba *et al.*, 1979; Stone *et al.*, 1979), our respondents might have been expected to report stronger peer pressures toward misconduct than they did. The patterns we observed, however, were consistent with previous studies of perceived peer pressures (Brown, 1982; Brown *et al.*, in press) and corresponded to other research showing that peers are capable of discouraging as well as encouraging antisocial behavior (Kandel, 1978). The mean score for perceived misconduct peer pressures was lower than for any other PPI scale. It would be unwise, however, to interpret PPI scale scores only in quantitative terms. Modest peer pressure toward drug use, delinquency, or sexual relations may have a more profound impact on an adolescent's well-being than stronger pressures concerning choice of hairstyles or attendance at peer social functions.

In the two pressure areas concerning peer relations—peer involvement and conformity to peer norms—peer pressures were perceived as imposing with equivalent intensity in all crowds. This affirmed the importance of peer pressure in enforcing group norms and maintaining loyalties among group members (Newman and Newman, 1976). Crowd differences in other pressure areas reflected normative distinctions among the groups studied. Social-type raters described jock-populars as more preoccupied with school and less involved in misconduct (except for drinking) than druggie-toughs. The correspondence between raters' stereotypic discriminations among crowds and crowd differences in perceived peer pressures supported the validity of the PPI.

Crowd differences in perceived pressures also helped clarify questions about the normative and behavioral distinctiveness of adolescent peer groups. Huba *et al.* (1979) questioned the existence of a "subculture" of adolescent



drug users because they found no differences between users and nonusers outside of drug-taking behavior. Unlike their comparison groups, which were based on self-reported behavior (concerning drug use), the groups we studied were derived from reputation-based assignments by peers. From the adolescent's own perspective there is more to being a druggie than using drugs, just as there is more to being a jock than athletic prowess (Brown *et al.*, 1985). Researchers must be careful not to equate groupings of teenagers defined by adult-imposed behavioral criteria with the peer groups that teenagers themselves perceive.

Although differences in perceived pressures between jock-populars and druggie-toughs were consistent across communities, the peer pressures reported by loners corresponded more closely to jock-populars among rural respondents and druggie-toughs among urban respondents (see Table III). Because loners by definition lack the cohesiveness of other adolescent peer groups, they may be more susceptible to influence by the norms of other groups. Coleman (1961) claimed that the leading crowd (equivalent to our jock-populars) had the strongest normative influence on adolescents, but the patterns we observed among loners suggested that intergroup influences are more crowd- and community-specific. Alternatively, if Varenne (1982) was correct that cross-crowd interactions encouraged a blending of group norms, then the communities we studied may have significantly differed in the relative "social distance" among crowds. Clearly, researchers need to elaborate the nature of intergroup interactions and influences among adolescent peer groups.

The absence of gender differences in our findings was not as inconsistent with previous studies of perceived peer pressure as was initially apparent. For example, as in Brown's (1982) study, females in our sample perceived significantly more pressure than males to wear the same styles as their friends ( $M = 0.60$  vs.  $0.34$ ) and less pressure than males to have sexual intercourse ( $M = -0.23$  vs.  $0.46$ ). The pressure-area scores on which the present study focused encompassed a broader range of behaviors. At this level, the data support other researchers' claims that sex-role stereotyping and gender differences in adolescents' behavior have diminished in recent years (Conger and Petersen, 1984). Yet the persistence of gender differences in more specific perceived peer pressures merits continued attention in future research.

Our findings corroborated and elaborated previous reports of adolescents' perceptions of peer pressures (Brown, 1982; Brown *et al.*, in press), and also supported Erikson's (1968) and Newman and Newman's (1976) postulates about how peer groups and peer pressures facilitate teenagers' development of autonomy and a sense of identity. The consistency between our findings and other investigations of the multidimensional character of peer pressure should encourage researchers to abandon the com-

mon image of peer pressures as a monolithic, unilateral force in adolescence. Closer attention must be paid to variations in the strength and direction of peer pressures across different dimensions of adolescent behavior, and among different age groups and peer groups. Because of our study's cross-sectional design, inferences about developmental shifts in peer pressures must remain tentative, awaiting confirmation by solely needed longitudinal assessments of peer pressures. Researchers should also explore more implicit forms of peer pressure (pressure of which teenagers are not consciously aware) that probably remained untapped by our instrument. The potential of peer pressure to provide prosocial as well as antisocial influences on teenagers demands continued scrutiny of its contributions to adolescent development.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Sue Ann Eicher and Jeffrey Freeman in the collection and coding of data. Robert Enright, Maribeth Gettinger, and Joel Levin provided helpful comments on drafts of the manuscript. Special thanks is extended to the students and staff of the middle schools and high schools in Platteville and Madison, Wisconsin, who participated in the study.

#### REFERENCES

- Berndt, T. J. (1979). Developmental changes in conformity to peers and parents. *Dev. Psychol.* 15: 606-616.
- Bixenstine, V. E., DeCorte, M. S., and Bixenstine, B. A. (1976). Conformity to peer-sponsored misconduct at four grade levels. *Dev. Psychol.* 12: 226-236.
- Bourne, E. (1978). The state of research on ego identity: A review and appraisal. Part 1. *J. Youth Adoles.* 7: 223-251.
- Brittain, C. V. (1963). Adolescent choices and parent-peer cross-pressures. *Am. Sociol. Rev.* 28: 385-391.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1967). Response to pressure from peers vs. adults: Soviet and American school children. *Int. J. Psychol.* 2: 199-207.
- Brown, B. B. (1982). The extent and effects of peer pressure among high school students: A retrospective analysis. *J. Youth Adoles.* 11: 121-133.
- Brown, B. B., Lohr, M. J., and McClenahan, E. L. (in press). Early adolescents' perceptions of peer pressure. *J. Early Adoles.*
- Brown, B. B., Lohr, M. J., and Trujillo, C. M. (1983). Adolescents' perceptions of peer group stereotypes: Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Buff, S. A. (1970). Greasers, dupers and hippies: Three responses to the adult world. In Howe, L. K. (ed.), *The White Majority*, Random House, New York.
- Coleman, J. S. (1961). *The Adolescent Society*. Free Press, New York.
- Collins, J. K. (1974). Adolescent dating intimacy: Norms and peer expectations. *J. Youth Adoles.* 3: 317-328.

- Conger, J. J., and Petersen, A. C. (1984). *Adolescence and Youth* (3rd ed.). Harper & Row, New York.
- Costanzo, P. R., and Shaw, M. E. (1966). Conformity as a function of age level. *Child Dev.* 37: 967-975.
- Cusick, P. A. (1973). *Inside High School*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York.
- Dunphy, D. C. (1963). The social structure of urban adolescent peer groups. *Sociometry* 26: 230-246.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, Youth and Crisis*. Norton, New York.
- Hartup, W. W. (1983). Peer relations. In Heathington, E. M. (ed.) *Handbook of Child Psychology: Socialization, Personality and Social Development* (Vol. 4). John Wiley & Sons, New York.
- Hollingshead, A., and Redlich, F. (1958). *Social Class and Mental Illness*. Wiley, New York.
- Huba, G. J., Wingard, J. A., and Bentley, P. M. (1979). Beginning adolescent drug use and peer and adult interaction patterns. *J. Consult. Clin. Psychol.* 47: 265-276.
- Ide, J. K., Parkerson, J., Haertel, G. D., and Walberg, H. L. (1981). Peer group influences on educational outcomes: A quantitative synthesis. *J. Educ. Psychol.* 73: 472-484.
- Jessor, R., and Jessor, S. L. (1979). *Problem Behavior and Psychological Development: A Longitudinal Study of Youth*. Academic Press, New York.
- Kandel, D. B. (1978). Homophily, selection and socialization in adolescent friendships. *Am. J. Sociol.* 84: 427-436.
- Kirk, R. E. (1982). *Experimental Design* (2nd ed.). Brooks/Cole, Monterey, Calif.
- Larkin, R. W. (1979). *Suburban Youth in Cultural Crisis*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Newman, P. R., and Newman, B. M. (1976). Early adolescence and its conflict: Group identity vs. alienation. *Adolescence* 11: 261-274.
- Poveda, T. G. (1975). Reputation and the adolescent girl: An analysis. *Adolescence* 37: 127-136.
- Reynolds, W. M. (1982). Development of reliable and valid short forms of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. *J. Clin. Psychol.* 38: 119-125.
- Rieser, A. E., and Zucker, R. A. (1968). Adolescent social structure and drinking behavior. *Personnel Guid. J.* 47: 304-312.
- Schwendinger, H., and Schwendinger, J. S. (1985). *Adolescent Subculture and Delinquency*. Praeger, New York.
- Sherif, M., and Sherif, C. W. (1964). *Reference Groups*. Regnery, Chicago.
- Stone, L., Miranne, A., and Ellis, G. (1979). Parent-peer influences as a predictor of marijuana use. *Adolescence* 14: 115-122.
- Vareme, H. (1982). Jocks and freaks: The symbolic structure of the expression of social interaction among American senior high school students. In Spindler, G. (ed.), *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York.
- Weis, J. G. (1974). Styles of middle-class adolescent drug use. *Pac. Sociol. Rev.* 17: 251-285.