Relatively few adolescents spent their free time engaged in constructive activities. Less

than 20% reported that they read for pleasure; 15% worked daily on hobbies, arts, or crafts; 20%

reported that they participated in youth groups or organized recreational programs once a week

or more; 20% took weekly classes outside of school in music, art, language, or dance; one in

eight adolescents said they took weekly sports lessons outside of school; and one in fourteen

students reported that they volunteered or performed community service activities. In late

adolescence, these youth spent their time working in relatively low-skilled jobs, with 27% of

tenth graders and 60% of twelfth graders working seven or more hours per week during the

school year.

Adolescent time use patterns were also found to be predictive of later engagement in

risky behavior. Compared to those who reported spending one to four hours per week in

extracurricular activities, adolescents who reported spending no time in school-sponsored

extracurricular activities were 57% more likely to have dropped out by the time they would have

been seniors; 49% more likely to have used drugs; 37% more likely to have become teen parents;

35% more likely to have smoked cigarettes; and 27% more likely to have been arrested. These

significant negative relationships were found after controlling for related family, school, and

student characteristics such as parent education and income levels, parent involvement in school-

related activities, and students’ grades. Up to a point, students who spent more time (5-19 hours

per week) in extracurricular activities were even less likely to engage in risky behavior