ACTIVITIES, IDENTITY AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

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The focus of this paper is on the potential benefits and risks associated with adolescent activity involvement, and on the intersecting relations among identity, activity choices, and peer networks. Four types of involvement are considered: Prosocial (church and volunteer activities), Team Sports (any school team), School Involvement (pep club, student council), and Performing Arts (drama, marching band). These organized extracurricular activities were selected because they require effort, and are settings in which adolescents can express their identities and passions (Csikszentmihalyi & Kleiber, 1991).

Introduction

Why might individual differences in leisure time use be important?
(SEE OVERHEAD #1)

1. The first and most common perspective focuses on the benefits of activity involvement for healthy adolescent development. The release of A Matter of Time by the Carnegie Corporation of New York put the spotlight on the role productive use of time might play in successful adolescent development. It illustrated how much discretionary time adolescents have and how much of this time is spent on unstructured activities like "hanging out" with one's friends, watching television, and listening to music. It argued, consistent with other reports and studies of youth activity, that constructive, organized activities would be a better use of the adolescents' time for the following types of reasons:

> Idle time is the devil's playground - doing good things with one's time takes time away from opportunities to get involved in risky activities;
>
> One can learn good things while engaged in constructive activities - things like specific competencies, prosocial values and attitudes; and
>
> Involvement in organized activity settings increases the possibility of establishing positive social supports and networks.

Discussions of the developmentally beneficial role of adolescent leisure contrast relaxed leisure and constructive, organized activities. Relaxed leisure is characterized as enjoyable, but not demanding (watching TV). Constructive leisure requires effort, and provides a forum in which to express one's identity or passion (sports, performing arts, leadership activities) (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi & Kleiber, 1991; Haggard & Williams, 1992). We know little, however, about the instrumental role such leisure plays in adolescent development.

Some recent recsearch has focused on this issue, and has indicated positive consequences of participation in organized activities. For example, Mahoney and Cairns (1997) found that extracurricular activities were related to lower chance of school dropout, particularly during the early high school years and for high risk youth. Mahoney has also shown a connection to reduced rates of criminal offending (Mahoney, 1997). In addition, adolescents involved in a broad range of adult-endorsed activities report lower rates of substance use than their non-involved peers (Youniss, Yates, & Su, 1997).

In this paper, we examine benefits (better GPA and higher rates of college attendance) and risks (engagement in risky behavoir, including substance use) associated with participation in constructive leisure, specifically in sports and extracurricular activities.

2. Second, studying the activity involvement of adolescents provides us with a more complete picture of the social context of development during this period. What do adolescents do when they are not in formal educational or family settings? Forty percent of adolescent waking hours are discretionary (not school, homework, employment, or chores), yet we know almost nothing about what they do with their leisure time (for an exception, see Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987). We need to know more about a wider range of social settings, including athletics, school clubs and activities, and involvement in community service.

Activity choices are assumed to part of larger system of psychological and social forces that we know influence development (i.e., they provide insight into the following intersecting circles of influence: identity, peer groups/crowds, activities). Peer crowds can express a leisure "culture," providing an opportunity to identify with a group having a shared sense of "style." This perspective is represented in the work of people like B. Brad Brown. (e.g., 1990), Penelope Eckert

(e.g. Jocks & burnouts: Social categories and identity in the high school), Gary Alan Fine (e.g., With the boys: Little league baseball and preadolescent culture), Rainer Silbereisen (Silbereisen, Noack, & von Eye, 1992). Similarly, leisure may help to clarify personal identity while maintaining relationships with peers.

Today we will report results from a longitudinal study of adolescent development in which we use both of these perspectives to look at adolescents' participation in various constructive leisure activities (extracurricular activities). First we will summarize the evidence we have regarding the protective and risk properties of extracurricular activities on adolescent development between the 10th and 12th grades. Then, we will present a series of findings related to the intersecting relations among identity, activity involvement, and peer networks.

STUDY OVERVIEW

First, however, let us provide you with a brief overview of the study.
(SEE OVERHEAD #2 - STUDY DESIGN)

The data come from the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (MSALT). This is a longitudinal study that began with a cohort of sixth graders drawn from 10 school districts in southeastern Michigan in 1984. The vast majority of the sample is white and comes from working and middle class families living in primarily middle class communities.

We have followed approximately 1800 of these youth through eight waves of data collection: 2 while they were in the sixth grade, 2 while they were in the seventh grade, one while they were in tenth grade, one while they were in 12th grade, one in 1992-3 when most were 21-22 years old, and one in 1996-1997, when most are 25-26.

The data were collected via self-administered questionnaires which were completed at school during regular school hours. For the 10th and 12th grade waves, the adolescents were released from their classrooms to fill out the questionnaire in a large common room - usually the lunchroom. In addition, complete school records from grade five to grade 12 were collected for all participants - these included grades, absences, courses taken, and any disciplinary measures taken

by the schools. The young adult surveys were mailed to the participants' homes and returned via post-paid envelopes.

RESULTS DISCUSSION - PART 1: DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES

First, we describe the patterns of males and females in activity involvement. In the tenth grade, we collected detailed information on the adolescents' involvement in a wide variety of activities in and out of school. Initially, we examined extent of participation in organized leisure. Adolescents checked off all clubs and activities on a list (SEE OVERHEAD #3 - MEASURES).

We computed a total number of activities by summing all the in-school and out-of-school clubs and activities that were checked. (SEE TABLE 1) As you can see in Table 1, girls participate at higher rates than boys. The average is between one and two clubs. In addition, it should be noted that 31% of the sample did not participate in any activities or clubs.

Sports were composited separately, with a sum of all teams checked. Not surprisingly, boys participate at higher rates than girls, and 45% of the study participants do not compete on any school athletic team. Similarly, boys spend more hours on sports per week than girls. (SEE TABLE 1)

A composite representing breadth across a variety of types of activities (sports, community service, church-related, performing arts, school involvement, and art) was created, and girls are active in a broader range of organized activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION PART 2: BUT DOES CONSTRUCTIVE TIME-USE MATTER?

So, in the tenth grade, boys are involved in greater depth in sports, and girls are more eclectic in their extracurricular involvement. What sequelae emerge in 12th grade and young adulthood?

With the publication of A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours, the Carnegie Corporation alerted the nation to the importance of adolescents' after school activity involvement. This report summarized the little existing evidence regarding how beneficial such involvement might be for healthy adolescent development. We now summarize our findings regarding this important question.

In addition to the detailed information we collected on involvement in positive extracurricular activities at both the 10th and 12th grade waves, we also collected detailed information on the adolescents' involvement in risky/problematic activities like drinking, getting drunk, skipping school, and engaging in dangerous behaviors just for the thrill of it. In each case we asked how often in the last six months they had engaged in each of theses activities. We also collected cumulative GPA's at the 11th and 12th grades, and in our 1992-3 wave we ascertained whether they were attending college. In this section, we highlight the relationship between 10th grade extracurricular activity involvement and these other behavioral outcomes.

Depth and Breadth of Participation

We examined the long term predictive role of the four general participation composites described earlier. In regressions controlling for verbal and math ability, maternal education and gender, total number of clubs and activities predicted increased likelihood of college attendance, higher 11th grade GPA, lower rates of getting drunk in 12th grade, and less frequent use of marijuana in 12th grade. The last two regressions also controlled for the 10th grade level of the risk behavior, and thus indicated that participation in more activities predicted a smaller increase in substance use from 10th to 12th grade. The two sports composites - hours spent on sports and number of sports teams - both predict increased likelihood of college attendance, but do not predict risk behavior. Number of sports also predicts 11th grade GPA. Finally, the breadth of activities is positively related to college attendance and GPA. For graphs of the relationship between these composites and college attendance, 11th grade GPA, and getting drunk, see Figures A, B, and C. (Adjusted means from ANCOVA's are reported, controlling for ability and mother's education.)

SHOW FIGURES A, B, C

Activity Type

We next examine whether specific types of extracurricular activities are more beneficial than others. For these analyses, we have clustered the extracurricular activities into four categories: Prosocial Activities - church attendance and participation in volunteer service type activities; Performance Activities - participation in school band, drama, and dance; Team Sports; and School Involvement - participation in student government, pep club, and/ or cheerleading. These categorizations do not include depth or breadth (hours or total numbers of activities), but instead focus on the actual content or domain of the activity.

-SHOW FIGURE 1-

In this sample males are more likely to engage in at least one sport activity than females ($F = 63.72$, $p < .001$). In addition, gender differences were significant for Prosocial Activities and School-Involvement ($p < .01$ in each case).

-SHOW FIGURE 2-

FIGURE 2 illustrates the findings for involvement in Prosocial Activities. As you can see adolescents involved in prosocial activities in 10th grade report less involvement in problem type behaviors; this difference is especially marked at grade 12, two years after the activity data were collected. These result suggests that Prosocial Involvement is a protective factor with regard to the age-related increases in these risky behaviors.

We tested this hypothesis more directly using longitudinal regression analysis. The results are shown on the next figure.

- SHOW FIGURE 3 -

Each bar represents one regression equation. In each equation, we entered the 10th grade level of the risky behavior first in order to get an estimate the extent to which each of the other predictors explained change in frequency of engaging in the particular risky behaviors. We next entered gender and mother's educational level since these have emerged in other studies as

predictors of involvement in these types of risky behaviors. Finally we entered 10th grade prosocial activity involvement. The standardized beta's for each of these predictors at the final step are illustrated here in a fashion that lets you easily compare the magnitude of the predictive relationship. As one would expect, the strongest predictor (the blue line) is the 10th grade level of involvement in the risky behavior - suggesting considerable stability in the individual differences in these behaviors over the high school years. Nonetheless, involvement in Prosocial Activities is related to change in this engagement in a protective direction - that is, the students who are involved in activities like attending church and doing volunteer work show less of an increase in these risky behaviors over the high school years than their non-involved peers.

- SHOW FIGURE 4 -

What about involvement in Team Sports? FIGURE 4 illustrates the relation of involvement in Team Sports to engagement in risky behaviors. Apparently, involvement in team sports at grade 10 is a risk condition for engagement in these risky behaviors at grade 12. When one tests this hypothesis using the type of longitudinal regression analyses just described for Prosocial Activities, being involved with Team Sports does indeed contribute significantly to an increase in alcohol use and getting drunk over the high school years after controlling for mother's education and student gender. But as we shall see later, involvement in Team Sports serves as a protective conditions for academic outcomes.

Before leaving the discussion of Team Sports, we need to point out a very interesting gender effect at grade 10 only.

- SHOW FIGURE 4b -

At grade 10, Team Sports appears to be related in a protective way for females and in a risky direction for males for alcohol use. Because this is not also true at grade 12, we will not try to explain it in the short time we have today. But it is an intriguing finding.

- SHOW FIGURES 5A and 5B -

The next two figures focus on participation in the Performing Arts. The mean level differences indicate that adolescents involved in Performing Arts at grade 10 are less frequently engaged in risky behaviors at both grade 10 and 12. This is particularly true for alcohol-related behaviors. However, when one controls for prior levels of drinking, we could find no evidence that 10th grade involvement in performing arts affects the direction or magnitude of change in drinking behavior over the high school years.

Like the data for Team Sports, we found an intriguing gender difference associated with participation in Performing Arts. Although there is no association between participation in Performing Arts and school attendance for females, there is for males: Males who participate in Performing Arts report skipping school less frequently peers and are reported as absent less often in their school records than their non-involved males.

Thus far, we have focused on the role of extracurricular activities as a protective or risk condition for involvement in problem or risky behaviors. We did not present any findings for the School Involvement category because it was unrelated to any of these risky behaviors. The strongest evidence of a protective role emerged for participation in Prosocial activities like church and volunteer activities. One would have to conclude based on what we have presented thus far that participation on Team Sports is a risk condition for drinking behavior.

- SHOW FIGURE 6A -

But what about academic outcomes? We will present evidence of two types of academic outcomes: grades and college attendance. FIGURE 6A summarizes the findings for 11th grade GPA. Again these bars summarize the standardized regression coefficients from a step-wise regression analysis. We entered both the quantitative and verbal scale scores from the DAT test (a standardized achievement test given in all of the schools in our sample) as a control for prior achievement levels. We entered mother's education level as a control for relevant family background characteristics and we entered gender to control for the fact that females get better grades than males in high school. We then entered participation in each of the four extracurricular activities in four separate regression equations. (It should be noted that all four also make

independent significant contributions when they are entered together in the same regression equation.) The purple section illustrates the size of these beta's. Each one is significant at the $p <$ .01 level. Each one predicts in the positive direction indicating that participation in each of these activities is related to obtaining a higher than expected GPA at grade 11 based on the usual predictors of GPA. Clearly, the background characteristics account for much more of the variation in GPA than does activity involvement. Nonetheless, these analyses provide pretty clear evidence that participation in these types of extracurricular activities provides a protective context in terms of academic performance during the high school years.

-SHOW FIGURE 6B-

These conclusions are given further support by the next Figure which illustrates the same type of regression analyses with full time college enrollment at age 21 as the dependent measure. In this case, three of the four types of extracurricular involvement are predictive of college enrollment after controlling for the relevant background variables ($p < .01$): School Club Involvement, Team Sports, and Performing Arts. Involvement in Prosocial Activities is not predictive of this outcome.

What can we conclude? The evidence presented thus far is mostly consistent with the conclusion reached in the Carnegie report A Matter of Time. However, the pattern is not as simple as one might expect. Both the magnitude and the direction of the relations depends on the outcome being considered and, to some extent, on the gender of the adolescent. For example, although participation in Team Sports is related to increased GPA and increased probability of attending college full time, it is also related among males to such risky behaviors as drinking alcohol. Similarly, although being involved in school spirit and leadership clubs does not appear to reduce the frequency with which one does risky things like use drugs, drink alcohol and skip school, it is related in a positive direction to our indicators of academic success. We think this pattern of results makes good sense when one considers the nature of high school peer groups - which we will do shortly. The findings are also consistent with other studies reporting that some involvement in risky activities like drinking and cutting school are not necessarily problematic in terms of their consequences for long term educational success. One must take into account the meaning of the particular behavior in the broader context of the adolescent's life and development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION, PART III: SYNERGISTIC FORCES

Which brings us to final portion of our talk. To fully understand both the meaning and the potential influence of adolescents' extracurricular activity choices, one needs to step back and consider this behavior in the larger context of adolescent behavior and development. The meaning of any particular activity is likely to be related to its connection to the adolescent's identity and peer group.

We would like to end our talk with some examples of our attempts to study the interrelations among these three spheres of influence (identity. peer group, and activities). At the tenth grade, we asked the participants to make a prototype judgment regarding their identity. Since the movie The Breakfast Club was quite popular at the time, we asked the participants to indicate which of five characteristics was most like them. We told them to ignore the sex of the character and base their selection on the type of person each character was. The adolescents had no difficulty with their selection - less than 5% left the question blank. But how did their selection relate to kinds of activities, both positive and negative, in which they were engaged?

-SHOW FIGURES 7-8

FIGURE 8 illustrates the distributions of identity types for each of our four extracurricular groups. The largest concentration of identity types engaged in prosocial activities is the Brain. No single identity type stands out among the group of adolescents involved in performing arts so we won't talk further about this group today. As one might expect, the Jocks stand out in the Team Sports group. And as was portrayed in the movie, the Princess types stand out in the School-Involvement group. Let us now look at the association of each of these identity types with our outcome measures.

- SHOW FIGURE 9-

FIGURE 9 shows the expected pattern for college attendance, which was measured 4-5 years after the self-categorization as a Breakfast Club stereotype. The Brain has the highest rates of college attendance and the Criminal has the lowest.

- SHOW FIGURE 10

Finally, FIGURE 10 shows a predictable pattern for involvement in risky behaviors. Not surprisingly, the Criminal is highest on all four of these behaviors and the Brain is the lowest. But consistent with the results we reported earlier on the association of activity involvement with drinking behavior, both the Jock and the Princess report relatively high levels of alcohol use at grade 12. This finding is especially interesting given the stability of group differences across the two-year gap between the self-identification as a Criminal or Jock and the rating of the risk behaviors. (The patterns of risk behavior were similar, but less pronounced, in tenth grade.

These preliminary results suggest that there is a link between identity and activity involvement. But if the notion of overlapping spheres of influence is correct one needs to look at the association of both identity and extracurricular involvement to the nature of one's peer network. To look at this association, we asked the participants to indicate what proportion of their friends had various characteristics with 5 = all, 3 = about half, and 1= none.

-SHOW FIGURE 11 -

FIGURE 11 illustrates the results for the five characteristics most directly related to the outcomes we have focused on thus far. The Delinquent stands out as having the fewest proportion of friends who are doing well academically and plan to attend college, and as having the highest proportion of friends engaged in the three indicators of risky behavior. The Brain has the most consistent set of friends - both high on academic outcomes and low on risky behaviors. But interestingly, once again the Jocks and Princesses have a more mixed peer network. On the one hand, the proportion of their friends who look good on our academic outcomes is about the same as the Brain's network. On the other hand, the proportion of their friends who drink and skip school is significantly higher than the proportion of the Brain's friends who engage in these risky

behaviors. This could be one reason why being involved in Team Sports leads to increases in both drinking and academic achievement.

-SHOW FIGURE 12 -

This brings us back to the association between extracurricular involvement and one's peer network. The results are illustrated in Figure 12. We have organized this table slightly differently because so many of the adolescents did not report participating in some of the categories of activities. This figure illustrates the mean level of the responses for those adolescents who reported being involved in each of the four types of extracurricular activities as well as the grand mean for comparison purposes. Again what is interesting is that those youth involved in either Team Sports or School Clubs and Organizations report a relatively high proportion of friends (compared to the grand means) who are both doing well on our academic outcomes and drinking alcohol regularly. In contrast, those youth involved in prosocial activities like the Brain's have a higher proportion of friends than the population mean who are doing well on our indicators of academic success and are less involved in these three indicators of risky behaviors than the population mean.

These two patterns could help explain why only prosocial activities appear to serve a protective function in terms of both sets of outcomes. It is among this group of adolescents that the three spheres of influence converge on both positive academic outcomes and low involvement in risky behaviors.

A different pattern of convergence characterizes those youth involved in team sports and school clubs and organizations. For these two groups, both one's identity group and one's peer group are associated with positive academic outcomes and relatively high levels of alcohol consumption. Consequently, it should not be surprising that involvement in these activities are related to a different pattern of change over the high school years than participating in prosocial activities.

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Overhead #1

WHY STUDY ADOLESCENT LEISURE?

1. Potential developmental benefits?

* constructive, organized activities vs. relaxed leisure
  - develop skills
  - contribute to community
  - belong to valued group
  - establish supportive networks
  - deal with challenges

* limited data about instrumental role of leisure

2. More complete picture of social context

* 40% of adolescent waking hours are discretionary

* intersecting circles of influence
  - activities
  - peer crowds
  - identity

Overhead #2

MSALT DESIGN

WAVE	YEAR	GRADE	SAMPLE
1	FALL '83	6	2,909
2	SPRING '84	6	
3	FALL '83	7	2,619
4	SPRING '85	7	
5	SPRING '88	10	1,304
5B	SPRING '89	11	188
6	SPRING '90	12	1,384
7	SUMMER '92 - '93	12+2 (OR 3)	1,842
8	SPRING '96 - '97	12+6 (OR 7)	1,061 AND GROWING

Overhead #3

Activities

SPORTS

Do you compete in any of the following school teams (varsity, junior varsity, or other organized school program) *outside of PE*?
(Check all that apply)

___Baseball
___Gymnastics
___Softball
___Football
___Ice Hockey
___Other (specify)_____
___Volleyball
___Tennis
___Basketball
___Cheerleading
___Wrestling
___Track/Cross Country
___Swimming/Diving
___Soccer
___Golf
___Field Hockey

SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Do you participate in any of the following activities or clubs at school?
(Check all that apply)

___Student government
___Band or Orchestra
___Debate club/Forensics
___Art
___Peer counseling
___Service clubs
___ROTC
___Pep club, Boosters, or Cheerleading
___Tutoring in math, science, or computers
___Tutoring in other academic subjects
___Career related club
___Other (specify) _____
___Science fair
___Math club
___Dance
___Gaming club (D & D)
___Sports clubs
___Drama
___S.A.D.D
___Computer club
___Foreign language club
___Chess club

Do you participate in any of the following clubs or activities outside of school?

___Athletic/recreational club
___Scouts/Girls or Boys Clubs/Ys
___Junior Achievement
___Church groups
___Other(specify)_____
___Pop or Rock band
___4-H
___Political campaign
___Volunteer/service work

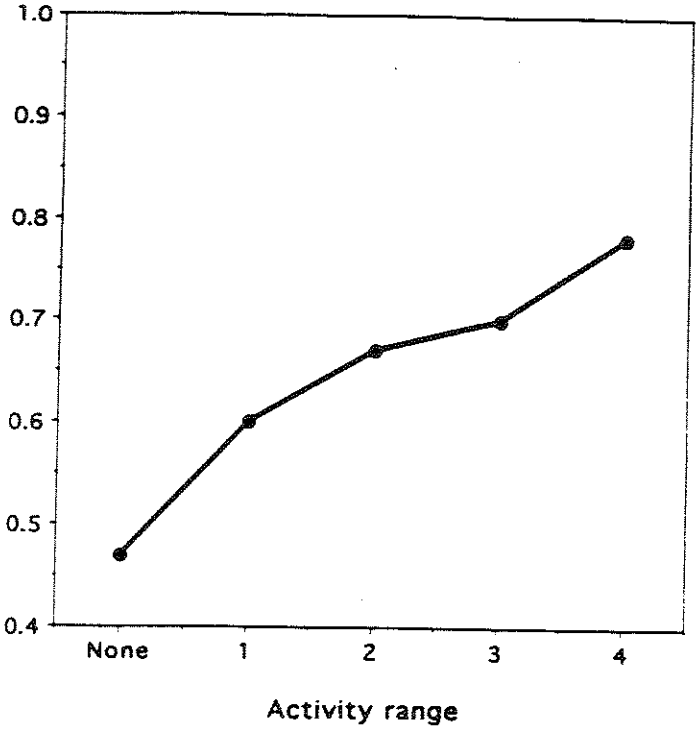
Table 1

Tenth Grade Means (and Standard Deviations) of Participation Composites by Gender

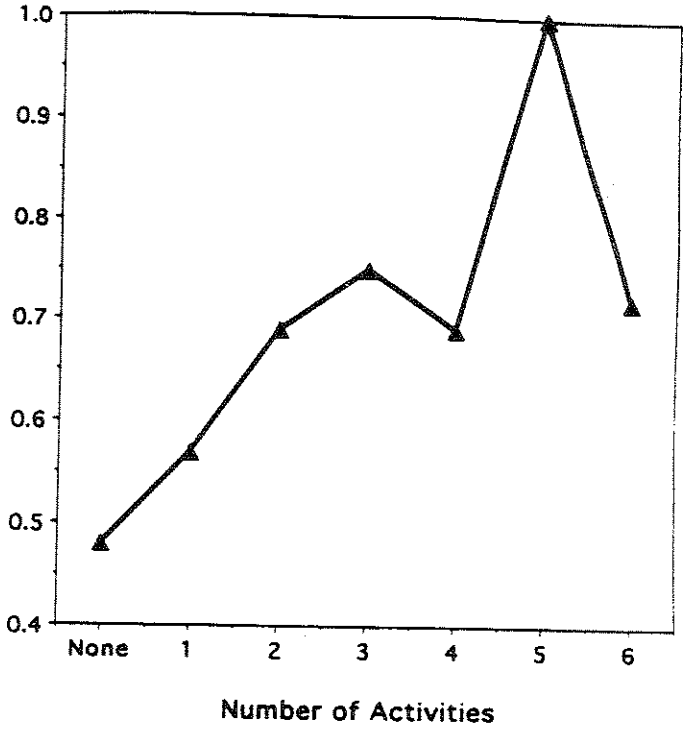
	Girls	Boys	F
Total # of Activities	1.79 (1.71)	1.33 (1.44)	25.49 ***
Total # of Sports	.95 (1.45)	1.74 (1.96)	66.33 ***
Hours Spent on Sports/Week	7.54 (7.97)	13.91 (10.56)	122.13 ***
Breadth of Participation	1.54 (1.19)	1.21 (.90)	28.21 ***

Figure A

Rate of full-time college attendance
by range of activities



Rate of full-time college attendance
by number of activities



Rate of full-time college attendance
by number of sports

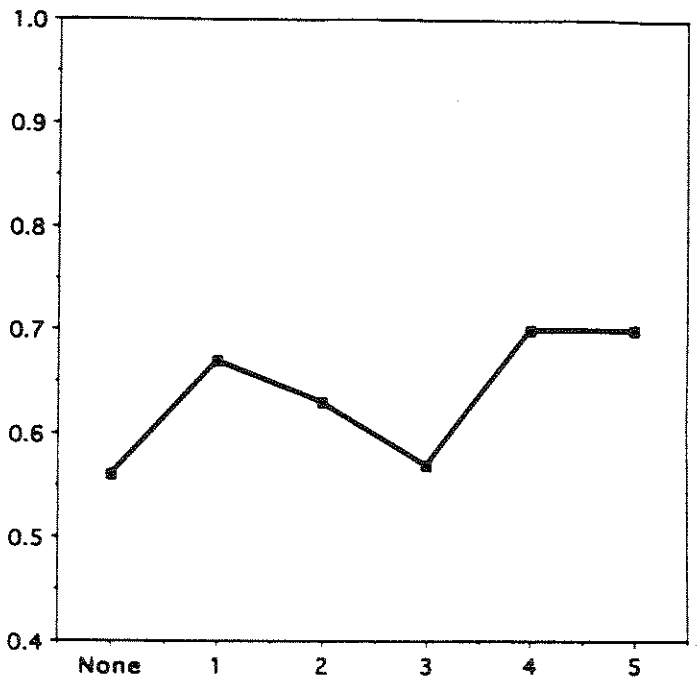
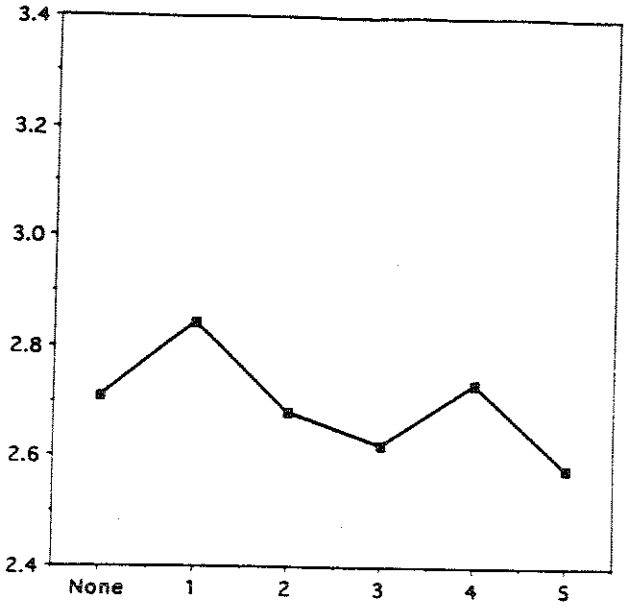


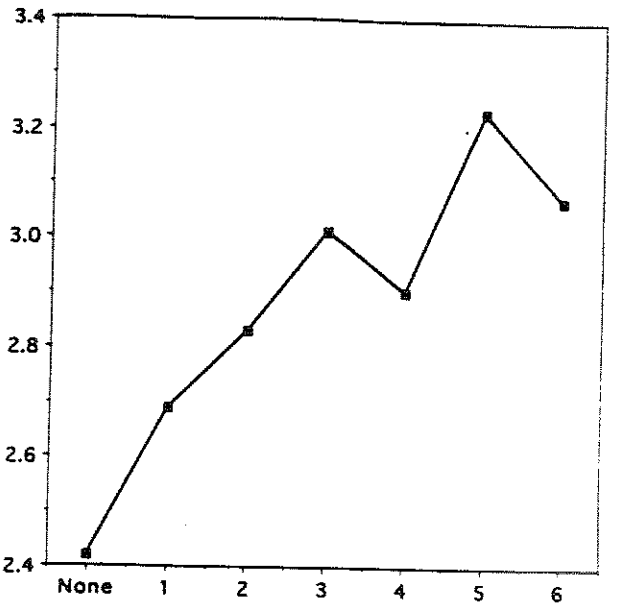
Figure 3

11th Grade GPA by number of sports



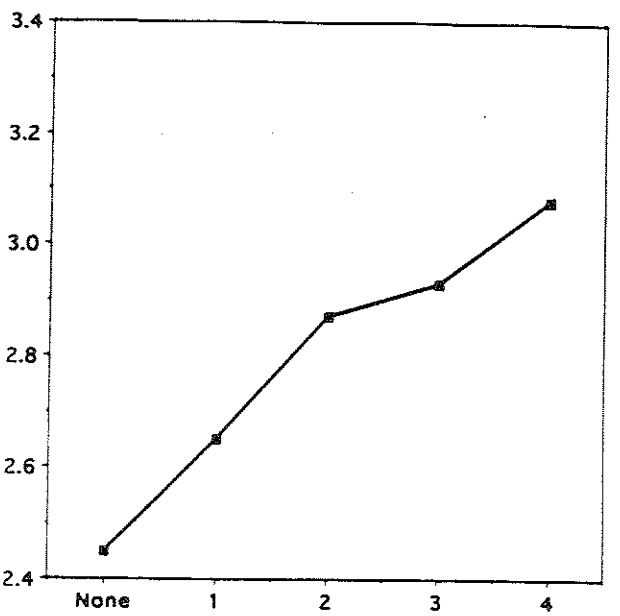
Number of Sports Teams

11th Grade GPA by number of activities



Number of activities

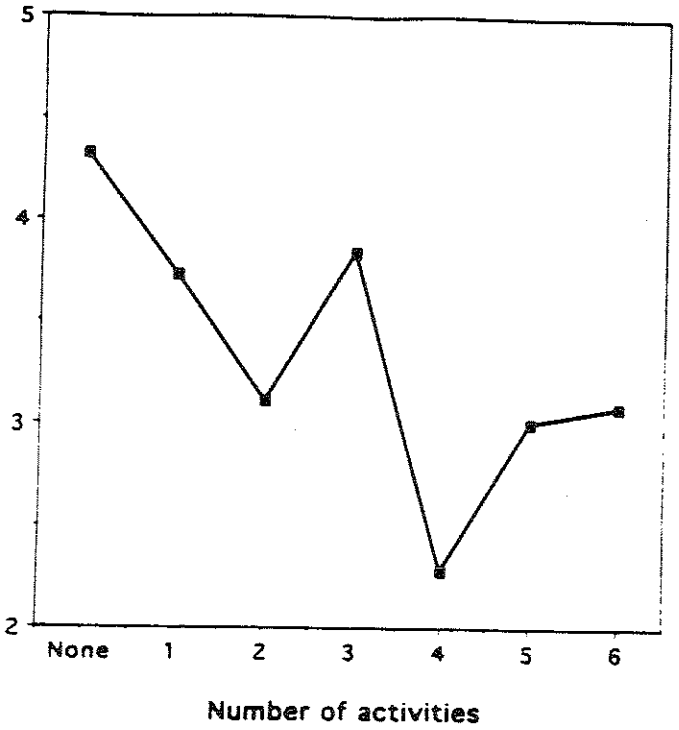
11th Grade GPA by range of activities



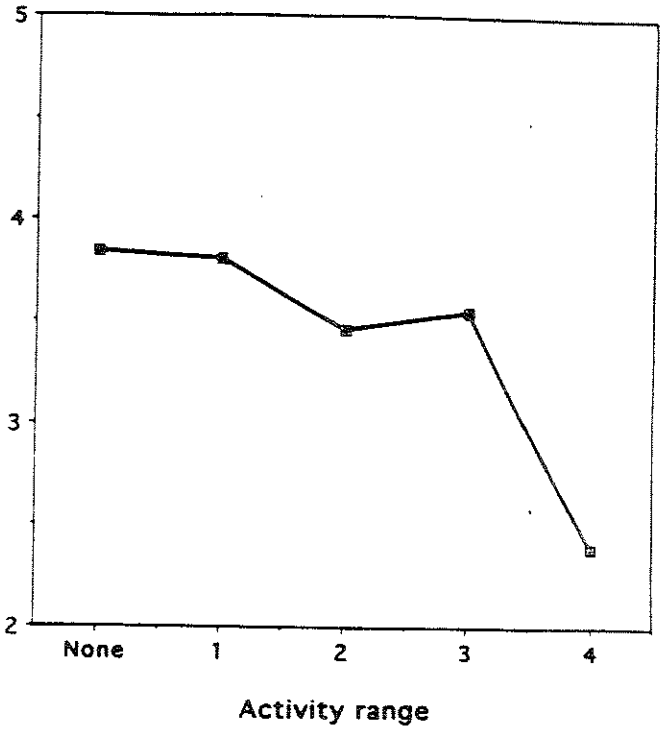
Activity range

Figure C

Frequency of getting drunk by number of activities



Frequency of getting drunk by range of activities



Frequency of getting drunk by number of sports

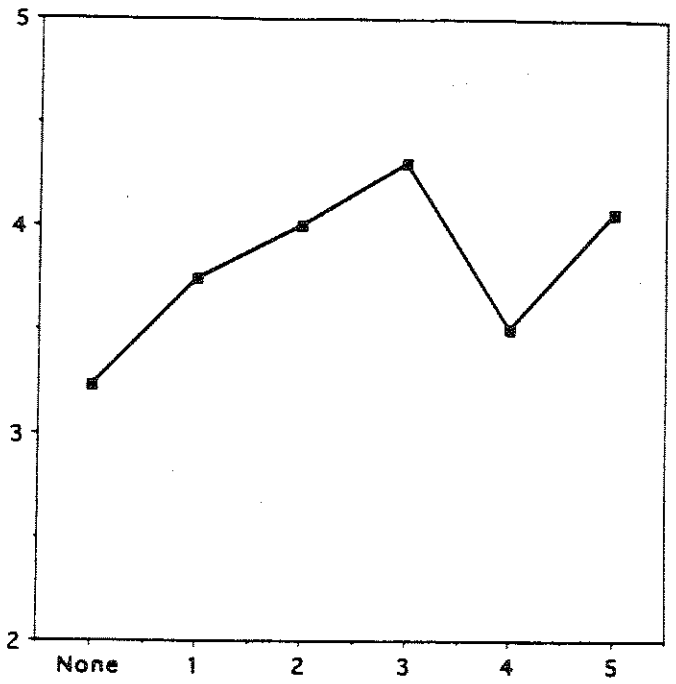


Figure 1. Percent in Activities by Gender

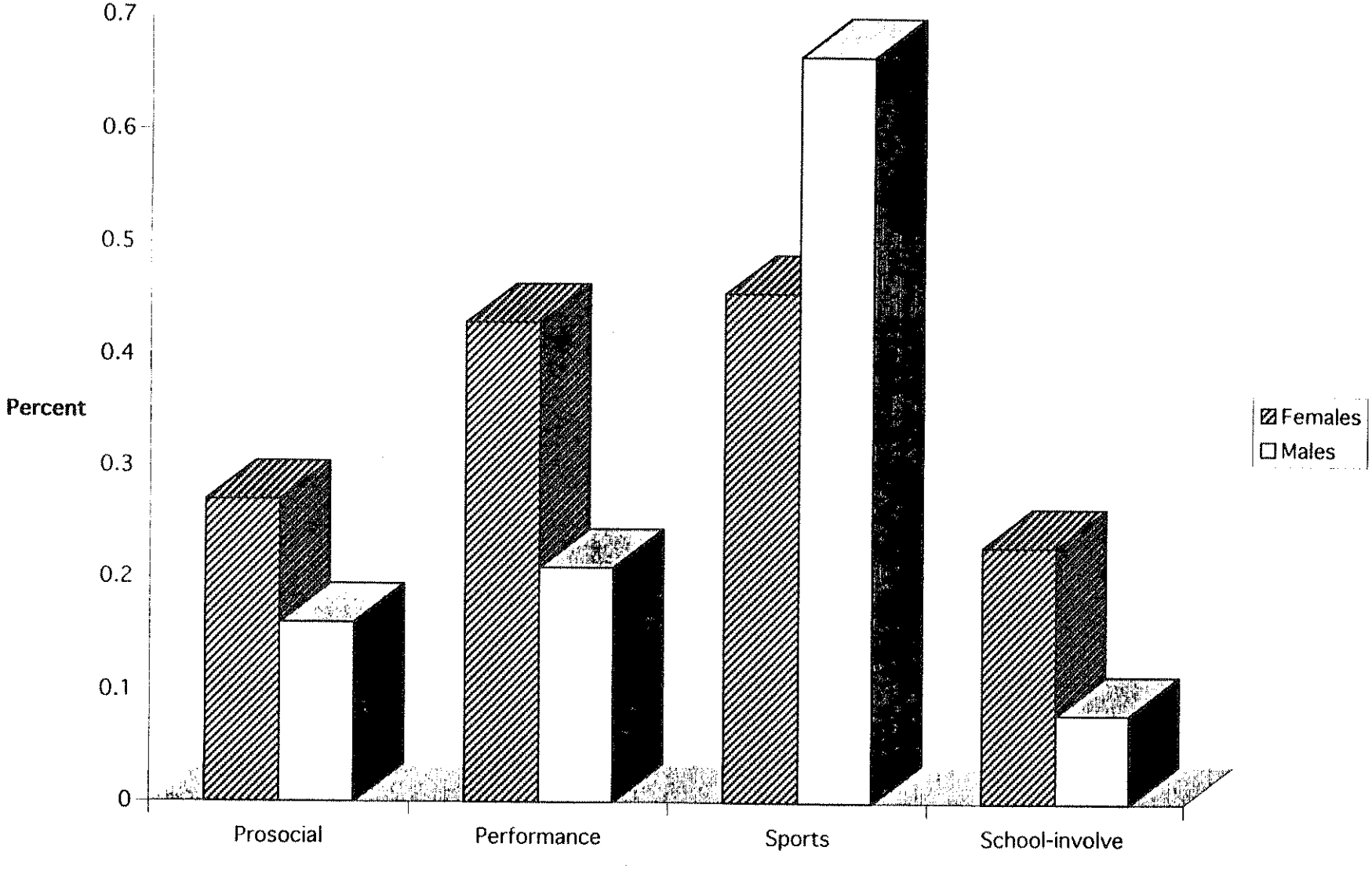


Figure 2

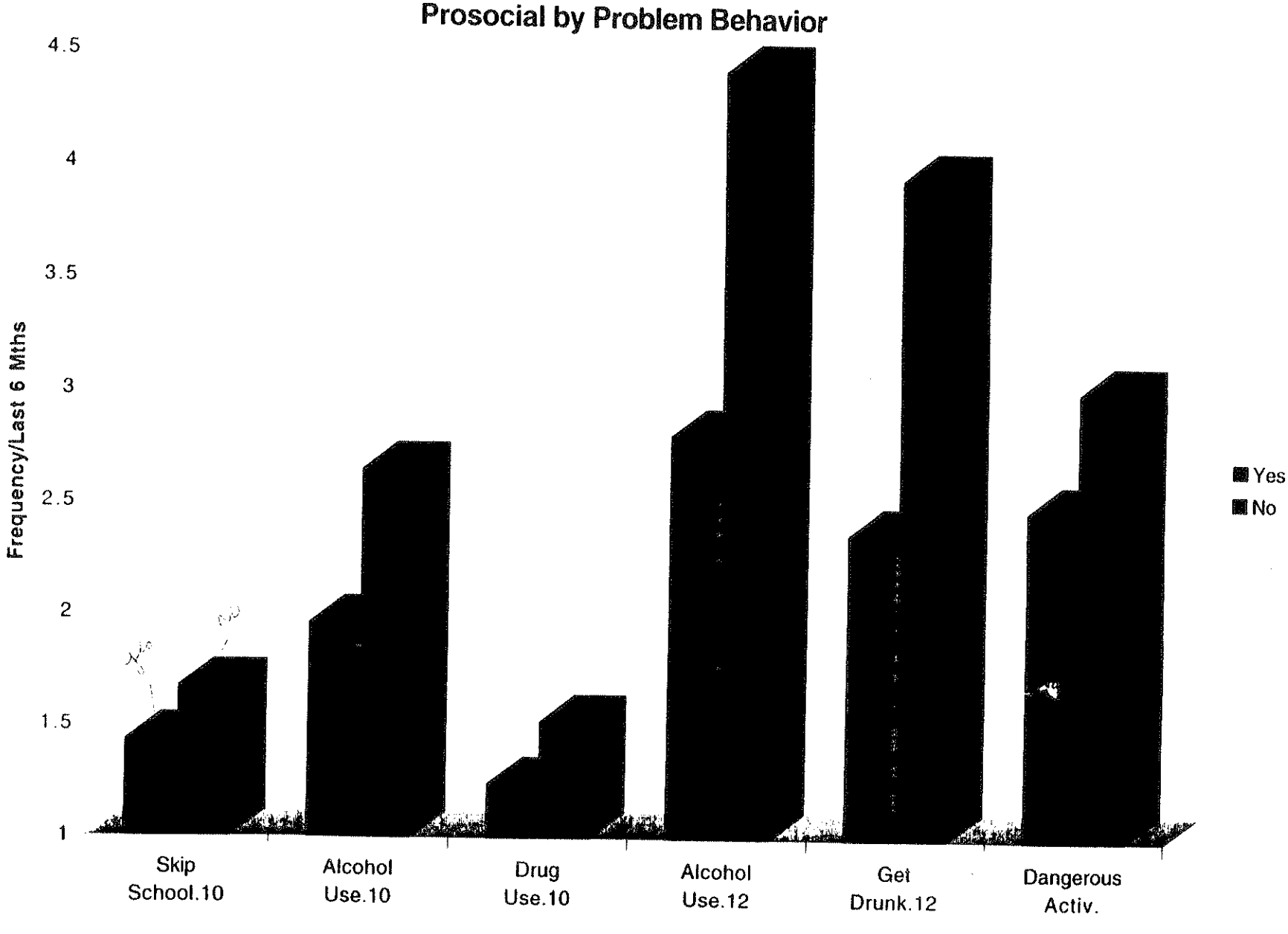

Prosocial by Problem Behavior
Frequency/Last 6 Mths
4.5
4
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
Skip School.10
Alcohol Use.10
Drug Use.10
Alcohol Use.12
Get Drunk.12
Dangerous Activ.
Yes
No

Figure 3. Predicting Change in Problem Behavior

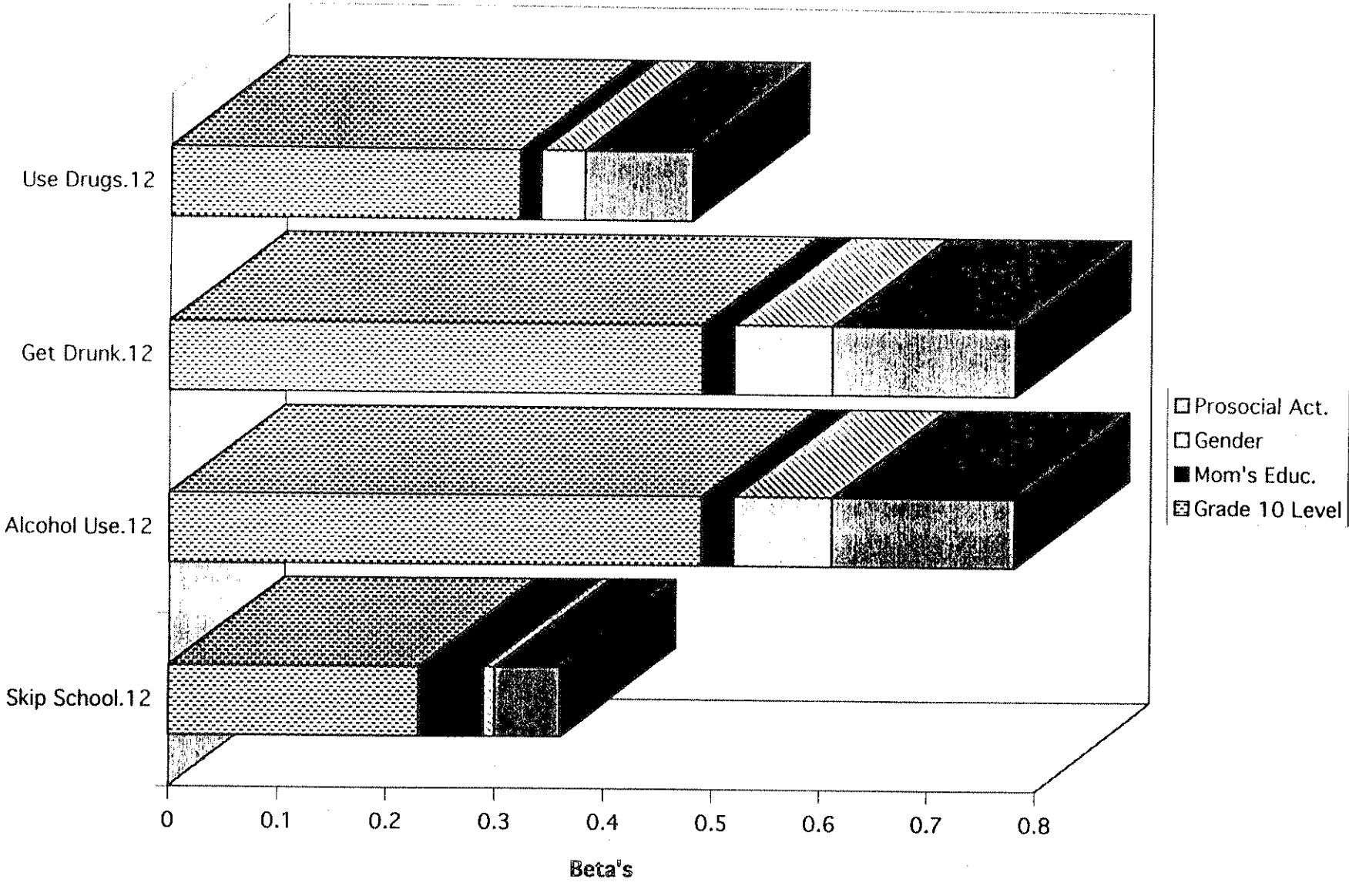


Figure 4. Problem Behaviors by Team Sports

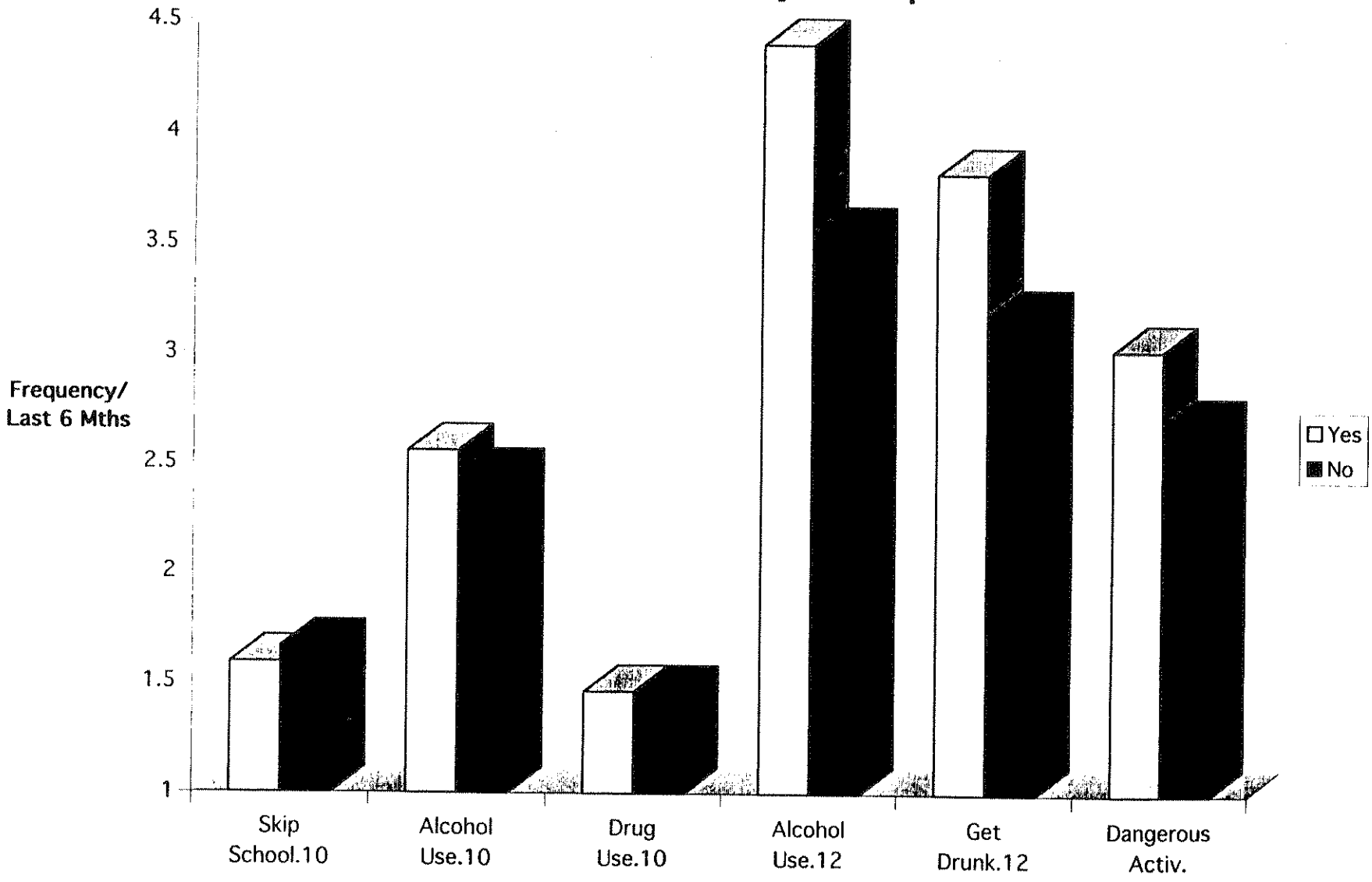


Figure 4B. Alcohol Use: Grade 10

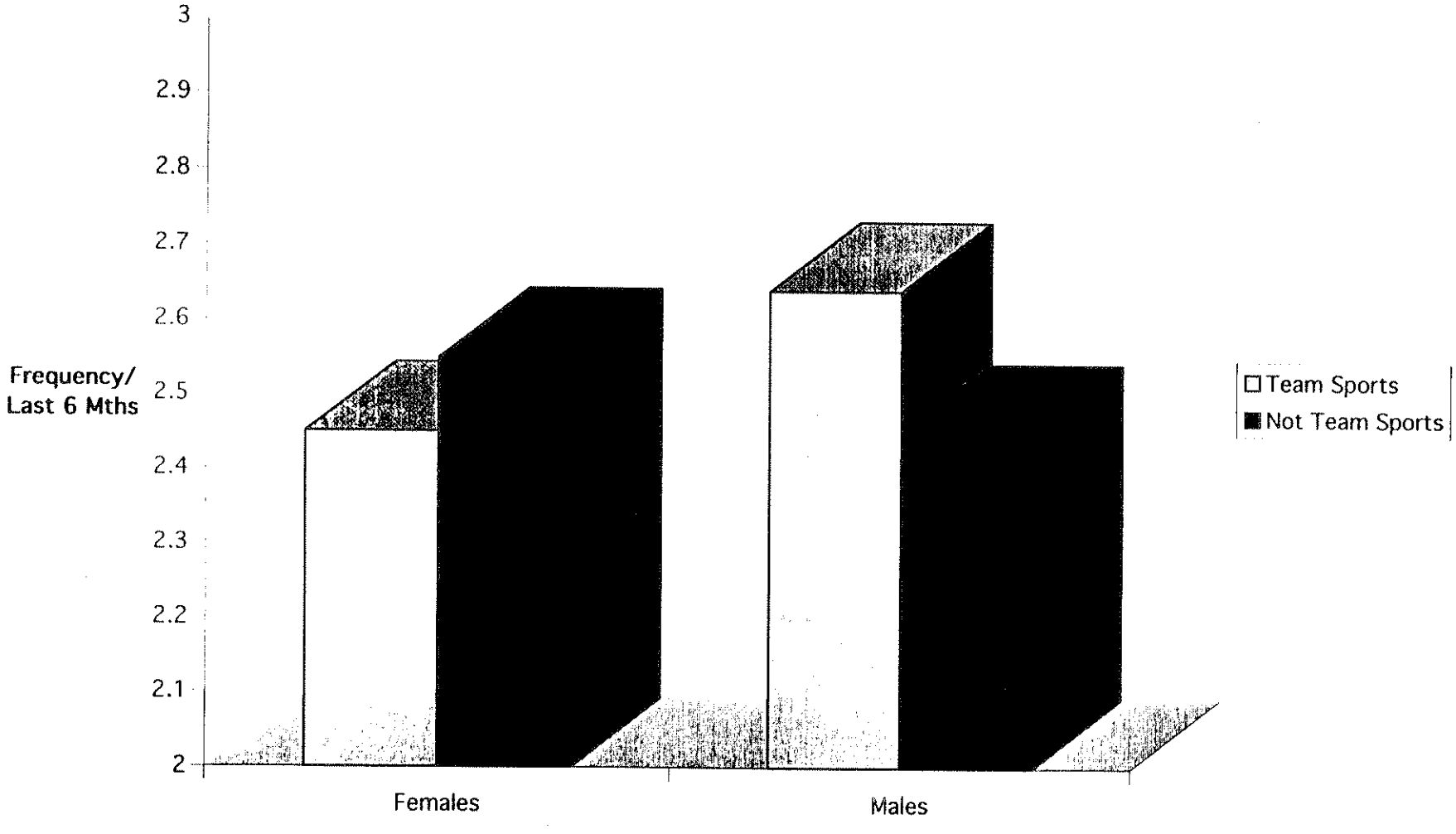
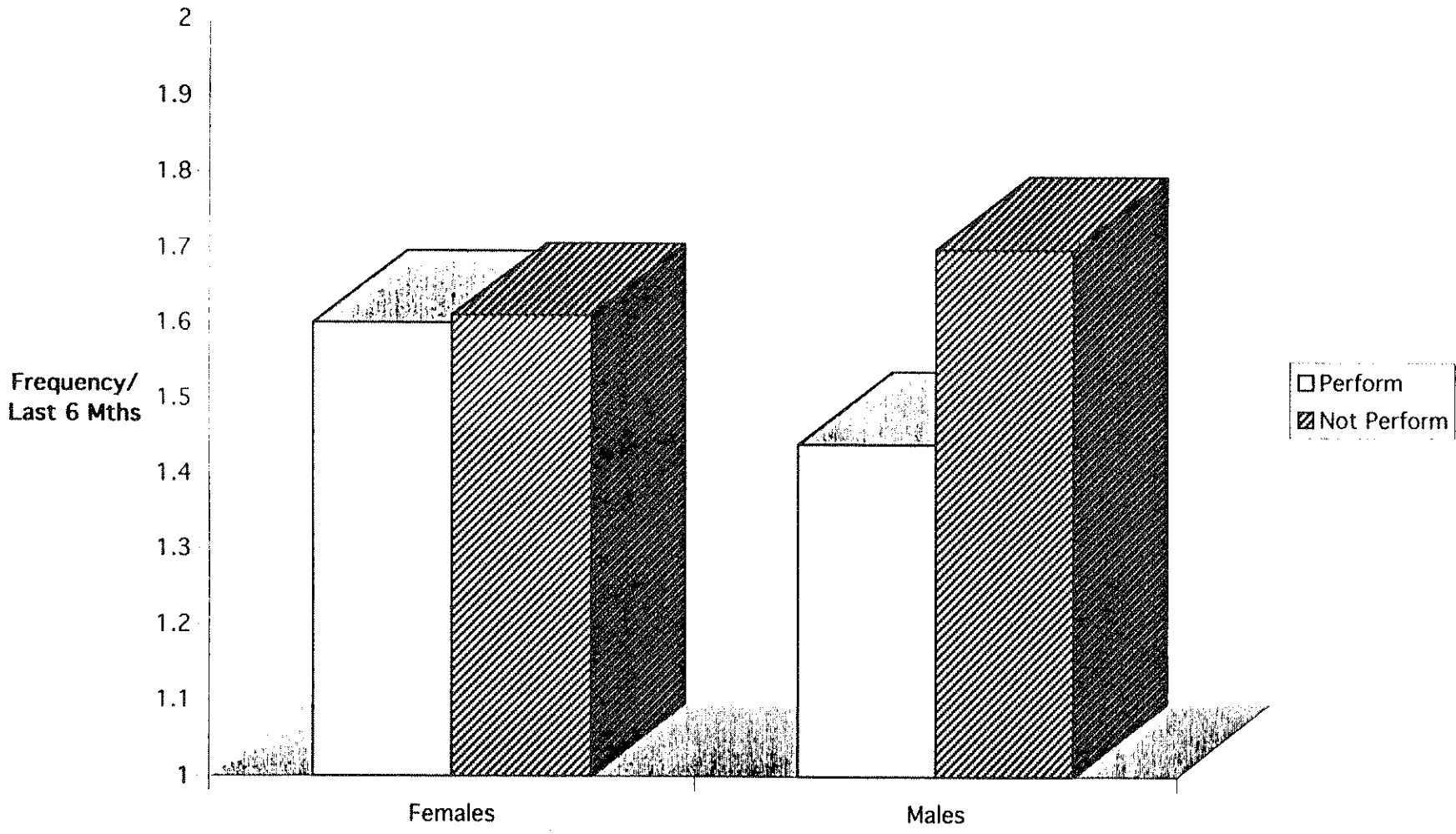


Figure 5A. Frequency of Skipping School



SRCD 1995, MSALT Data

Figure 5B. Total Days Absent: School Report

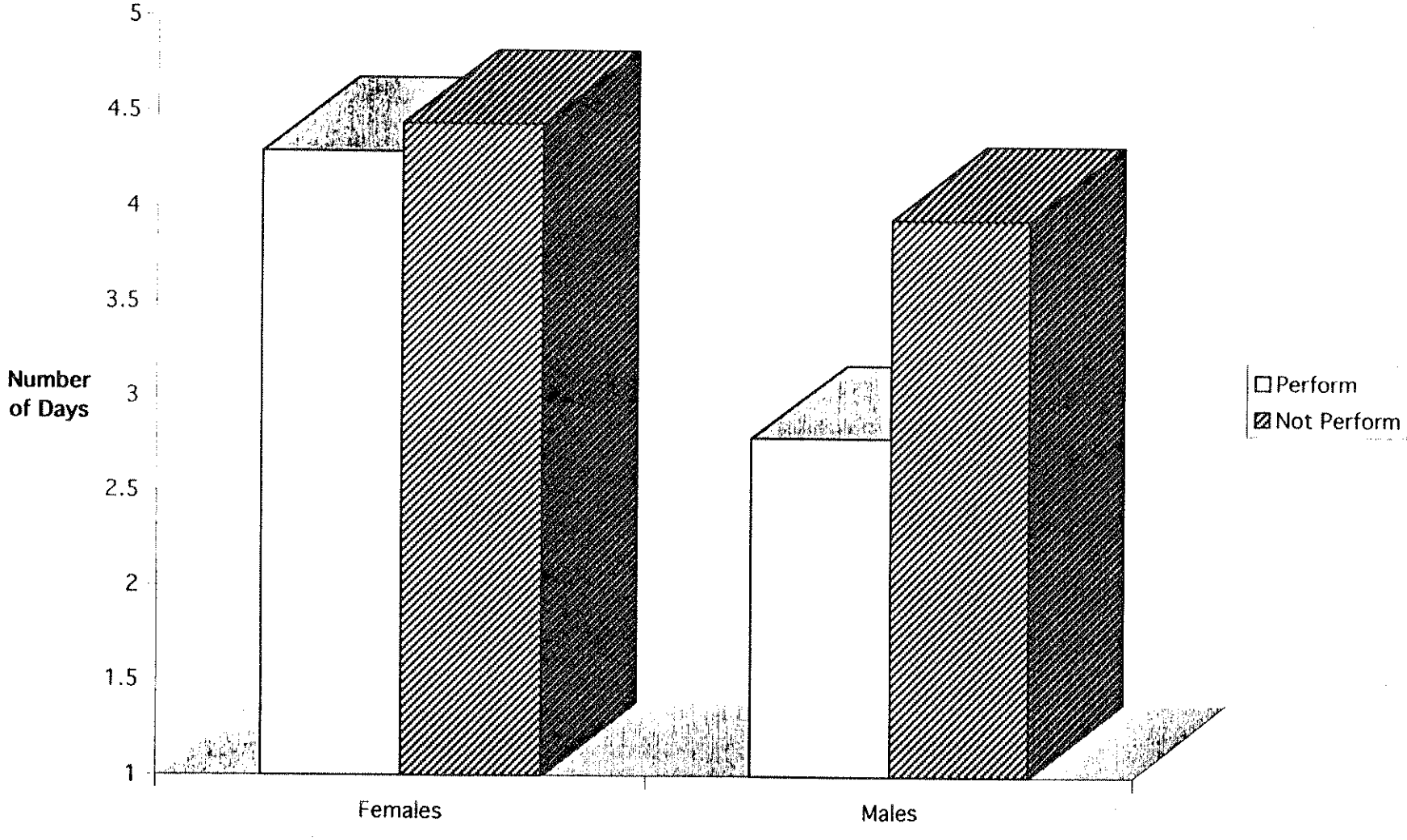


Figure 6A. Predicting 11th Grade GPA

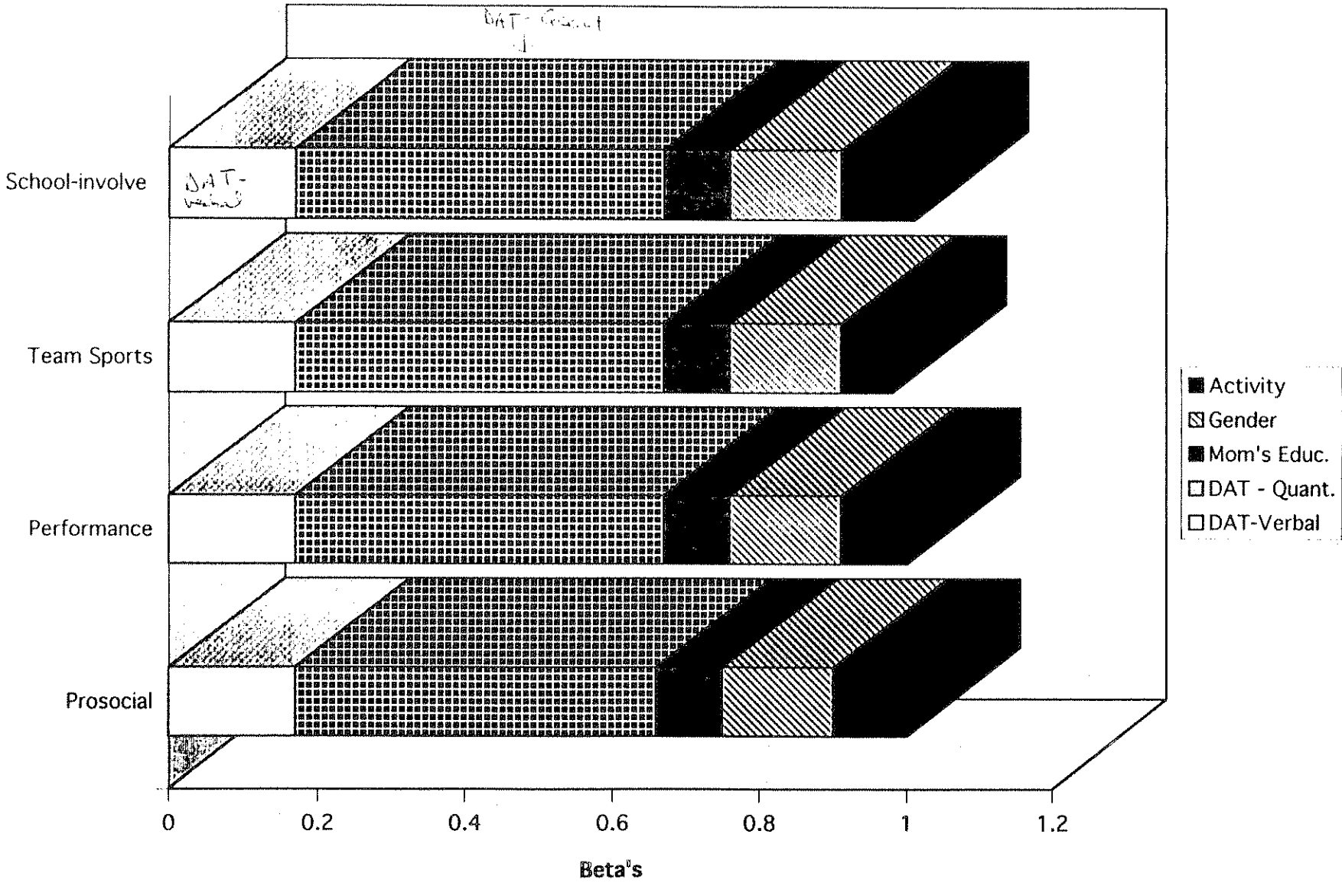
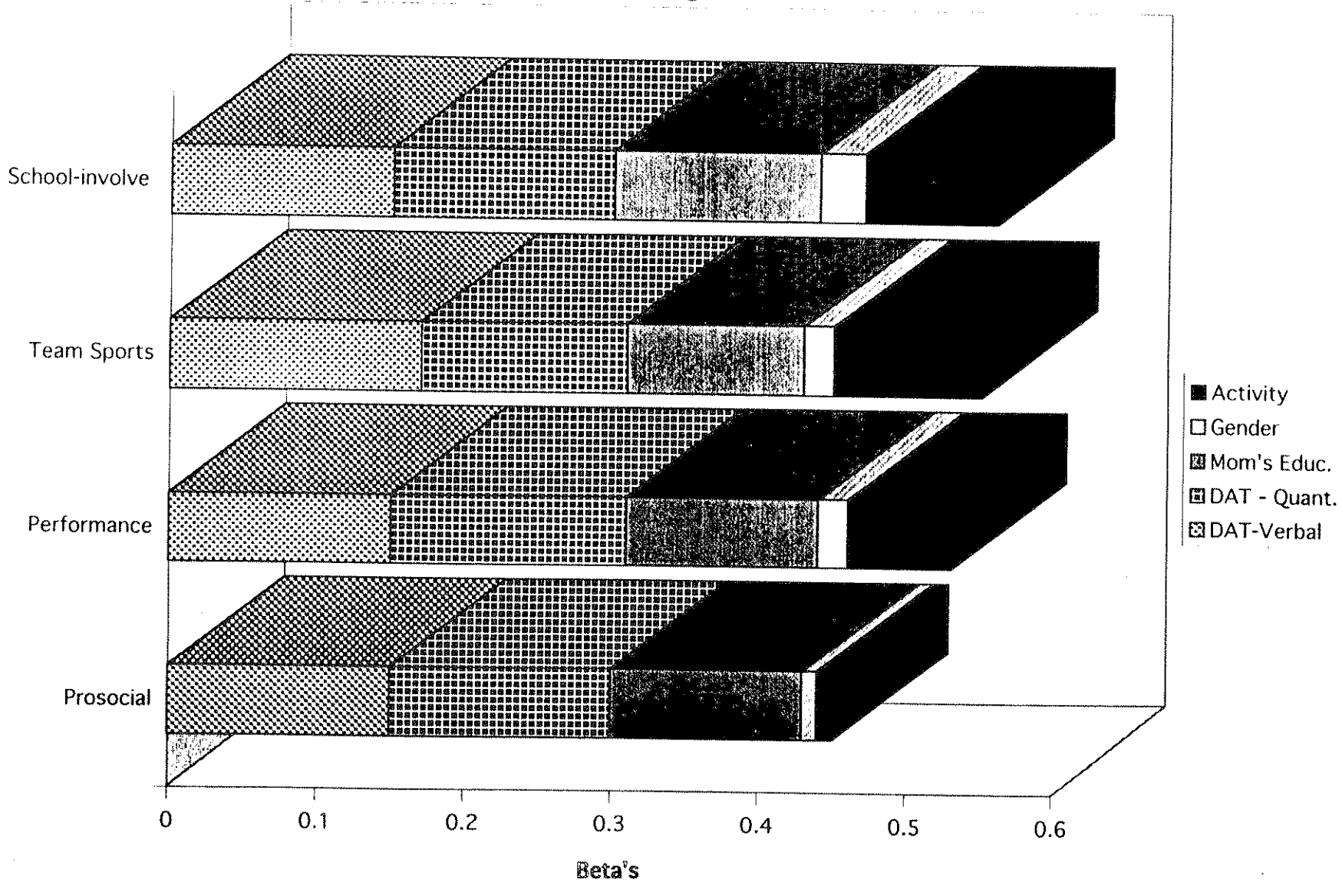


Figure 6B. Predicting FT College Enrollment at 21



(Fig 7

the "CRIMINAL"
9%

the "JOCK" 28%

the "BASKET-CASE"
11%

the "BRAIN"
12%

the "PRINCESS"
40%

Figure 8. Grade 10: Activities by Identity

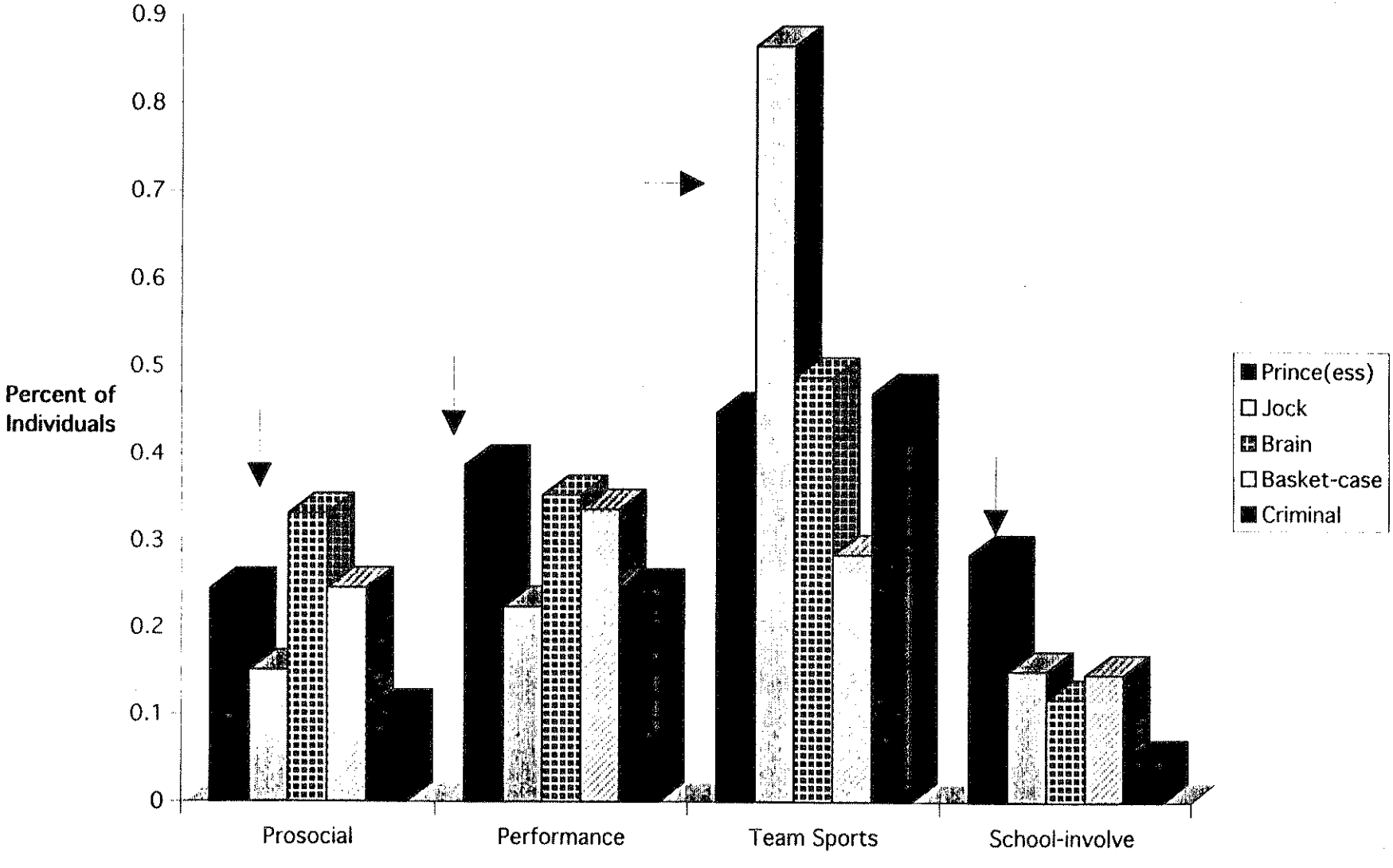


Figure 9. Attending College at 21-22

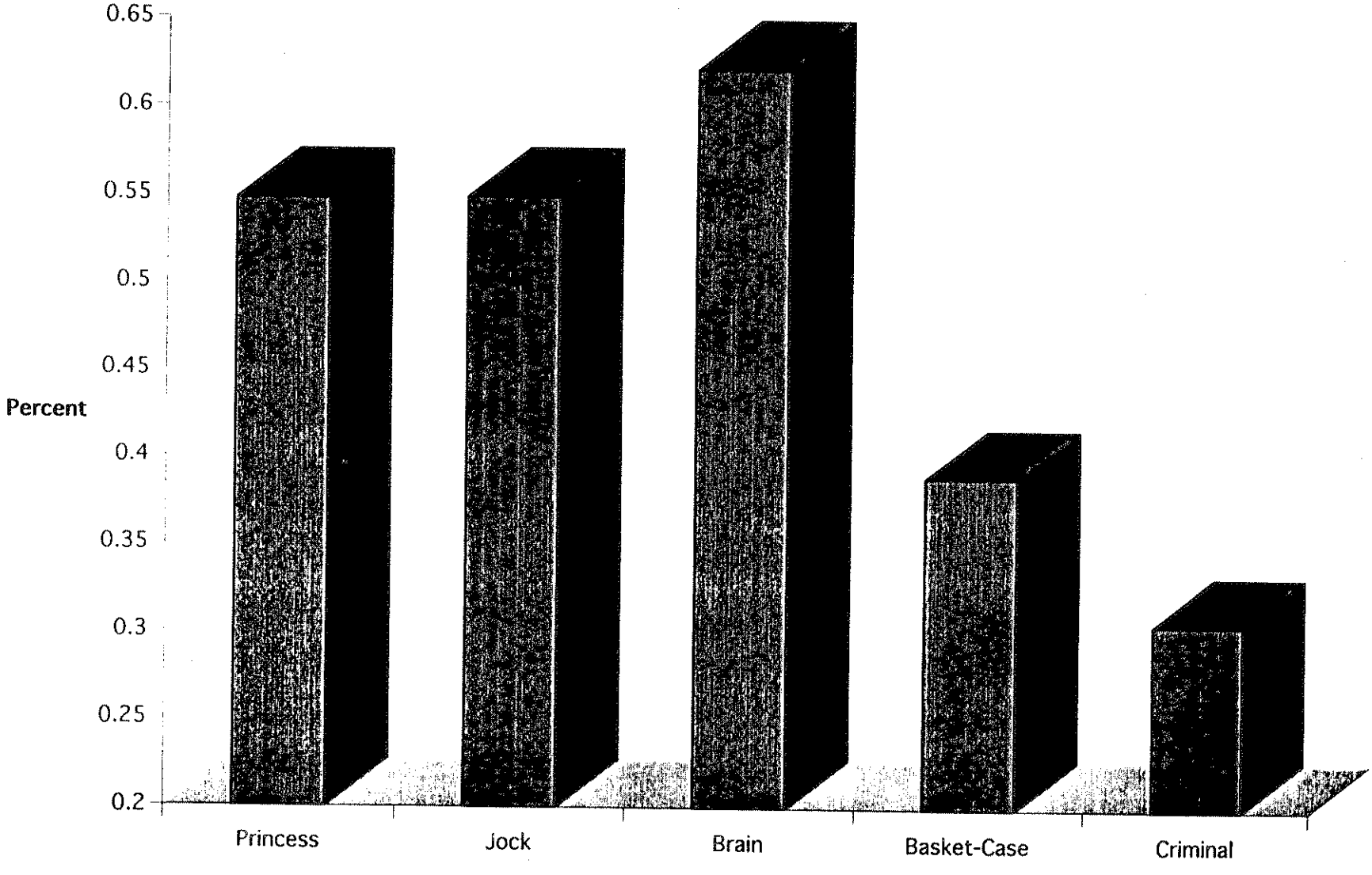


Figure 10. Grade 12 Problem Behaviors by Grade 10 Identity

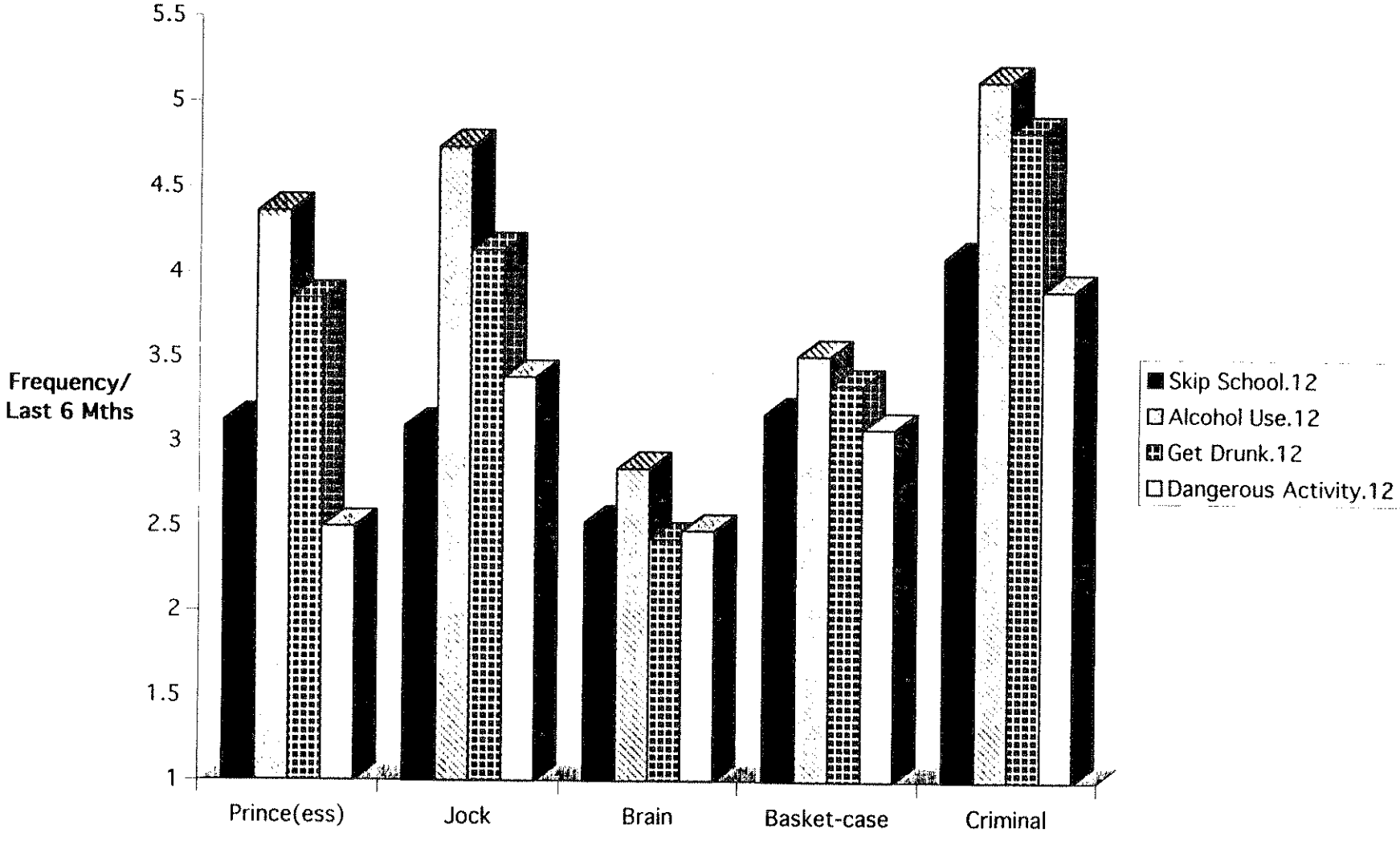


Figure 11. Friend Characteristics by Identity

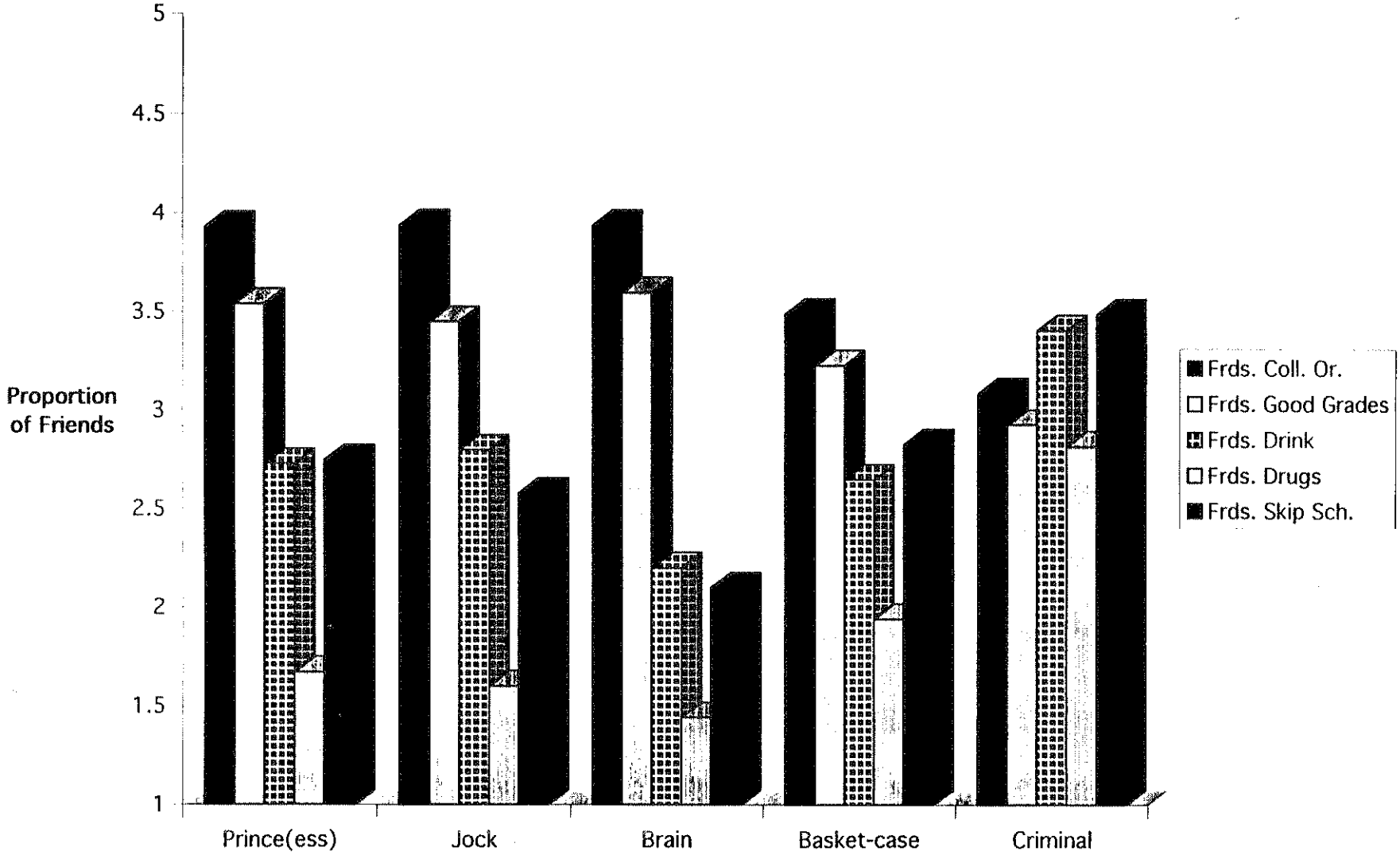


Figure 12. Friend Characteristics by Activity