

**Peer Crowd-Based Identities and Adjustment:
Pathways of Jocks, Princesses, Brains, Basket-Cases, and Criminals**

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Background

The focus of this paper is on the long term adjustment patterns associated with the intersecting relations among identity groups and gender in adolescence. We think that “Breakfast Club Identities” reflect the adolescent “peer crowd” phenomenon, wherein the emergence of reputation-based peer groups represents adolescents’ social cognitive efforts to systematize and deal with their social context (Brown, 1990). In addition to providing a medium of cognitive categorization, previous research has demonstrated that crowds synergistically structure the friendships and activities that characterize different pathways through adolescence (Brown, Dolcini, & Leventhal, 1997; Eccles & Barber, 1999).

Method

Participants were from the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (MSALT). Longitudinal survey from approximately 900 MSALT participants at Waves 5, 6, 7, and 8 are included in these analyses, and were collected at tenth grade, twelfth grade, and three and six years after high school, respectively. The participants were asked in the tenth grade (Wave 5) to make a prototype judgment regarding their identity: “Which character in the movie “The Breakfast Club” is most like you?”

Analyses

Analyses were conducted to examine cross-time patterns of substance use and mental health. A 2 (gender) X 5 (Breakfast Club Identity) repeated measure MANOVA was performed for each dependent variable, nesting the 4-level “time” component within subjects. Table 1 and a series of charts summarize between and within subjects effects revealed by these analyses. Tables 2 and 3 summarize means, standard deviations, and n’s for each outcome. Table 4 summarizes scale information regarding the adjustment and risk behavior items employed in the study.

RESULTS

Substance Use

1. **Drinking.** Overall drinking levels differ by virtue of a between subject identity group main effect. Significant linear and quadratic effects of time indicate that alcohol use continues to increase across time, but that the rate of increase attenuates as participants get older (see Table 1 and figure). Both the linear increase and the “leveling off” of the rate of alcohol usage are, however, moderated by an interactive effect of gender and identity.

2. **Getting Drunk.** Identity groups and gender groups differ in levels of getting drunk overall. A quadratic “leveling off” pattern is again revealed. Though getting drunk increases between ages 18

and 21, it is leveling off by age 24 among our participants. The linear increase component in the data is moderated by an interactive effect of gender and identity.

3. **Marijuana Usage.** Identity group and gender independently and interactively affect marijuana use overall. Time, as well, has a significant effect. The linear trend upward does not level off in the sample as a whole, though the upward linear trend is moderated by gender, by identity group (at the trend level), and by a gender/identity interaction.

Adjustment

4. **Depression.** Overall depression levels differ by identity group. Significant linear, quadratic, and cubic contrasts reveal that depression levels decrease over time, but that this decrease is moderated by a leveling off at Wave 7 (age 21). The downward linear effect is moderated by gender. Females experience a more dramatic reduction in depressed mood than do males.

5. **Worry.** Worry levels differ overall among identity groups. Time exerts a significant linear and cubic effect. Worry abates after age 16, rises to a peak at 21 and then clearly declines thereafter. Interestingly, this peak and attenuation occurs equally for all identity and gender groups.

6. **Perceived Social Isolation.** Perceived social isolation overall differs for participants in the various identity groups. Though a significant linear effect marks a downward trend in sense of isolation, identity group is again associated with some differences.

7. **Self-esteem.** Self-esteem levels differ by identity group. While levels of self-esteem rise across time, there is a significant leveling off of this trend in the early adult period.

Conclusion

Breakfast Club Identity choices were frequently predictive of longitudinal patterns in substance use and mental health domains. Variations in patterns across adolescence and young adulthood were associated with gender and Breakfast Club Identity as main effects and in interactive effects as well. Normative trends in development are experienced differently by individuals depending upon their self-nominated position within the social milieu.

The current study suggests that crowd identity effects extend well beyond adolescence. It would not be appropriate to suggest that our novel measure of identity is analogous either to in-depth psychoanalytic measures of the self nor to measures in studies dedicated to the peer crowd phenomenon. However, the predictive power of our construct over an expanse of 8 years suggests that we have tapped something important—perhaps a perceptual construct through which adolescents encode, by way of social construction, pervasive matters of personal choice and agency.

Table 1. Multiple Analysis of Variance Summary: F Values and Significance Levels for Full Model Assessed through Repeated Measures Tests of Between Subjects Effects and Within-Subjects Contrasts with Time Nested Within Subjects

| Effect | Between Subject Effects | | | Within Subjects Contrasts with Time Nested within Subjects | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|----------|--------------------|--|-----------------|-------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Gender | Identity | Gender by Identity | Time: Linear | Time: Quadratic | Time: Cubic | Time by Gender | Time by Identity | Time by gender by social identity |
| Substance use | | | | | | | | | |
| Drinking | | 4.50 ** | | 194.64 *** | 15.16 *** | | | | 2.76 * lin 2.44 * qu |
| Getting drunk | 6.30 * | 3.58 ** | | | 5.59 * | na | 2.53 * lin | | |
| Marijuana use | 5.16 * | 4.02 ** | 3.09 * | 12.23 ** | | | 5.95 * lin | 2.63 * cu | 2.47 * lin 2.70 * cu |
| Mental health | | | | | | | | | |
| Depression | | 5.66 *** | | 29.38 *** | 7.54 ** | 8.39 ** | 8.50 ** lin | | |
| Worry | | 2.78 * | | 15.74 *** | | 41.96 *** | | | |
| Social isolation | | 5.00 ** | | 46.30 *** | | | | 2.72 * cu | |
| Self-esteem | | 4.14 * | | 5.64 * | 7.75 ** | 4.36 * | | | |

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and Longitudinal n's for Substance Use Domains.

| | Age 16 | | Age 18 | | Age 20 | | Age 24 | | N's | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---------|------|--------|------|---------|------|--------|------|---------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|----|
| | females | | males | | females | | males | | females | | males | | | | | | | |
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | N | N | | | | | | |
| Drinking | 2.80 | 1.81 | 1.50 | 0.58 | 4.57 | 2.48 | 3.00 | 1.63 | 5.05 | 1.84 | 4.72 | 1.81 | 5.75 | 1.89 | 87 | 4 | | |
| princesses | 2.19 | 1.30 | 3.41 | 2.20 | 3.96 | 2.68 | 5.23 | 2.39 | 5.81 | 1.08 | 5.44 | 1.58 | 6.26 | 1.46 | 27 | 39 | | |
| jocks | 1.62 | 0.74 | 1.85 | 0.93 | 2.52 | 1.57 | 3.85 | 2.43 | 4.00 | 1.84 | 5.00 | 1.82 | 5.80 | 1.82 | 21 | 20 | | |
| brains | 2.23 | 1.66 | 1.40 | 0.89 | 3.69 | 2.22 | 2.40 | 2.19 | 4.81 | 1.83 | 4.73 | 1.82 | 5.20 | 2.68 | 26 | 5 | | |
| basket-cas | 2.33 | 1.53 | 2.17 | 2.40 | 3.00 | 2.65 | 5.50 | 2.81 | 5.67 | 2.31 | 6.67 | 0.58 | 5.17 | 2.23 | 3 | 6 | | |
| criminals | 2.45 | 1.64 | 2.65 | 1.97 | 4.04 | 2.46 | 4.57 | 2.52 | 5.01 | 1.79 | 4.91 | 1.78 | 5.95 | 1.74 | 164 | 74 | | |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Getting Drunk | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| princesses | | | | | 3.88 | 2.18 | 3.60 | 1.95 | 3.50 | 2.03 | 4.20 | 2.39 | 2.86 | 1.75 | 3.20 | 1.92 | 121 | 5 |
| jocks | | | | | 3.31 | 2.52 | 4.42 | 2.08 | 4.03 | 1.94 | 4.62 | 2.26 | 3.50 | 1.70 | 4.36 | 2.06 | 32 | 45 |
| brains | | | | | 2.19 | 1.52 | 3.43 | 2.09 | 2.46 | 1.73 | 4.00 | 2.22 | 2.81 | 2.10 | 3.52 | 2.09 | 26 | 23 |
| basket-cases | | | | | 3.35 | 2.12 | 2.25 | 1.75 | 3.46 | 1.89 | 3.88 | 2.23 | 2.81 | 2.01 | 4.13 | 2.59 | 37 | 8 |
| criminals | | | | | 3.17 | 2.04 | 5.13 | 2.64 | 3.83 | 1.60 | 5.00 | 2.56 | 4.50 | 1.38 | 5.13 | 2.42 | 6 | 8 |
| Total | | | | | 3.50 | 2.20 | 3.99 | 2.19 | 3.46 | 1.98 | 4.40 | 2.25 | 2.98 | 1.84 | 4.12 | 2.15 | 222 | 89 |
| Marijuana use | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| princesses | 1.29 | 0.87 | 1.25 | 0.50 | 1.74 | 1.48 | 1.00 | 0.00 | 1.96 | 1.54 | 3.25 | 2.63 | 1.51 | 1.16 | 1.50 | 1.00 | 89 | 4 |
| jocks | 1.12 | 0.44 | 1.21 | 0.70 | 1.72 | 1.74 | 1.89 | 1.72 | 2.20 | 2.02 | 1.71 | 1.80 | 2.32 | 2.27 | 1.95 | 1.96 | 25 | 38 |
| brains | 1.05 | 0.21 | 1.10 | 0.31 | 1.14 | 0.47 | 1.85 | 1.57 | 1.14 | 0.35 | 2.25 | 1.83 | 1.41 | 1.05 | 1.85 | 1.53 | 22 | 20 |
| basket-cas | 1.46 | 1.50 | 1.00 | 0.00 | 1.81 | 1.39 | 1.00 | 0.00 | 2.35 | 1.87 | 1.40 | 0.55 | 2.50 | 2.25 | 3.40 | 2.51 | 26 | 5 |
| criminals | 3.00 | 2.00 | 3.50 | 2.95 | 2.00 | 1.73 | 4.50 | 2.51 | 1.67 | 1.15 | 4.50 | 2.81 | 1.00 | 0.00 | 4.67 | 2.58 | 3 | 6 |
| Total | 1.29 | 0.95 | 1.36 | 1.15 | 1.67 | 1.42 | 1.99 | 1.81 | 1.94 | 1.60 | 2.15 | 2.02 | 1.76 | 1.61 | 2.22 | 2.04 | 165 | 73 |

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Longitudinal n's for Mental Health Domains.

| | Age 16 | | Age 18 | | Age 20 | | Age 24 | | N's | | | | | | | |
|------------------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|
| | females | | females | | females | | females | | females | | | | | | | |
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | | | | | | |
| Depression | 4.27 | 1.16 | 4.80 | 1.86 | 3.80 | 2.27 | 3.58 | 1.18 | 4.27 | 1.85 | 3.24 | 1.36 | 4.13 | 2.22 | 136 | 5 |
| princesses | 4.10 | 1.34 | 3.60 | 1.18 | 3.13 | 1.11 | 2.97 | 1.18 | 3.22 | 1.19 | 2.83 | 1.06 | 3.13 | 1.35 | 37 | 54 |
| jocks | 4.22 | 1.49 | 3.58 | 1.08 | 3.41 | 1.28 | 3.86 | 1.46 | 3.43 | 1.51 | 3.51 | 1.32 | 3.20 | 1.26 | 33 | 34 |
| brains | 4.90 | 1.26 | 4.19 | 1.18 | 3.48 | 0.82 | 3.88 | 1.24 | 4.19 | 1.09 | 3.45 | 1.17 | 3.56 | 1.40 | 40 | 9 |
| basket-cas | 5.11 | 1.11 | 3.59 | 1.13 | 3.67 | 1.31 | 4.26 | 1.48 | 3.22 | 0.78 | 4.15 | 1.76 | 3.81 | 0.99 | 9 | 9 |
| criminals | 4.37 | 1.27 | 3.69 | 1.20 | 3.32 | 1.22 | 3.60 | 1.27 | 3.41 | 1.32 | 3.28 | 1.32 | 3.29 | 1.35 | 255 | 111 |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Worry | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| princesses | 3.76 | 1.46 | 3.10 | 1.47 | 3.67 | 2.16 | 4.39 | 1.23 | 4.33 | 1.78 | 3.85 | 1.46 | 3.20 | 1.37 | 132 | 5 |
| jocks | 3.00 | 1.12 | 3.46 | 1.69 | 3.44 | 1.57 | 4.04 | 1.25 | 4.17 | 1.40 | 3.53 | 1.47 | 3.68 | 1.52 | 35 | 52 |
| brains | 3.59 | 1.71 | 2.94 | 1.56 | 2.77 | 1.59 | 4.16 | 1.40 | 3.80 | 1.36 | 4.02 | 1.55 | 3.68 | 1.59 | 33 | 34 |
| basket-cas | 4.08 | 1.44 | 3.56 | 1.65 | 3.74 | 1.31 | 4.78 | 1.24 | 4.52 | 1.71 | 4.27 | 1.38 | 4.19 | 1.21 | 39 | 9 |
| criminals | 4.33 | 1.48 | 3.78 | 1.15 | 2.93 | 1.16 | 4.59 | 1.12 | 4.59 | 0.98 | 4.41 | 1.73 | 4.19 | 0.75 | 9 | 9 |
| Total | 3.70 | 1.48 | 3.32 | 1.60 | 3.23 | 1.57 | 4.38 | 1.26 | 4.13 | 1.40 | 3.91 | 1.48 | 3.74 | 1.46 | 248 | 109 |
| Self-esteem | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| princesses | 4.47 | 1.24 | 5.00 | 1.27 | 5.80 | 0.87 | 4.77 | 1.25 | 4.47 | 1.19 | 4.83 | 1.26 | 4.80 | 0.99 | 137 | 5 |
| jocks | 4.68 | 1.27 | 5.09 | 1.03 | 4.97 | 1.23 | 5.19 | 1.13 | 5.08 | 1.15 | 5.05 | 1.17 | 5.30 | 1.28 | 37 | 54 |
| brains | 4.38 | 1.47 | 4.67 | 1.32 | 5.08 | 1.33 | 4.79 | 1.40 | 5.14 | 1.21 | 5.03 | 1.19 | 5.26 | 0.93 | 33 | 34 |
| basket-cas | 4.16 | 1.33 | 4.07 | 0.66 | 4.52 | 1.13 | 4.38 | 1.18 | 4.78 | 1.52 | 4.36 | 1.27 | 4.56 | 1.33 | 40 | 9 |
| criminals | 3.67 | 1.03 | 4.63 | 1.15 | 5.04 | 1.23 | 4.44 | 1.18 | 5.00 | 1.04 | 4.44 | 1.26 | 4.52 | 1.30 | 9 | 9 |
| Total | 4.41 | 1.29 | 4.84 | 1.15 | 5.01 | 1.24 | 4.76 | 1.25 | 5.04 | 1.18 | 4.80 | 1.25 | 5.14 | 1.19 | 256 | 111 |
| Social Isolation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| princesses | 3.51 | 1.11 | 4.90 | 2.04 | 3.70 | 2.22 | 2.90 | 1.09 | 3.50 | 1.27 | 2.61 | 1.28 | 3.40 | 2.53 | 135 | 5 |
| jocks | 3.50 | 1.19 | 3.26 | 1.22 | 2.93 | 1.21 | 2.46 | 1.17 | 2.81 | 1.26 | 2.38 | 0.87 | 2.50 | 1.42 | 37 | 54 |
| brains | 3.67 | 1.19 | 3.79 | 1.19 | 3.34 | 1.48 | 3.29 | 1.37 | 3.25 | 1.52 | 2.97 | 1.19 | 2.99 | 1.34 | 33 | 34 |
| basket-cas | 4.31 | 1.29 | 4.28 | 1.66 | 3.22 | 0.94 | 3.28 | 1.28 | 3.72 | 1.06 | 2.75 | 1.26 | 2.83 | 1.12 | 40 | 9 |
| criminals | 3.89 | 1.62 | 2.50 | 0.83 | 3.78 | 1.35 | 3.39 | 1.32 | 2.67 | 1.00 | 3.28 | 1.28 | 3.39 | 1.41 | 9 | 9 |
| Total | 3.67 | 1.21 | 3.52 | 1.35 | 3.18 | 1.35 | 2.96 | 1.20 | 3.04 | 1.33 | 2.67 | 1.22 | 2.79 | 1.44 | 254 | 111 |

Table 4. Substance Abuse Items and Adjustment Scales (with Items and Reliability Statistics)

Substance Abuse

Think about the last six months. About how many times did you do the things listed below?
(1 = never; 2 = once; 3 = 2-3 times; 4 = 4-6 times; 5 = 7-10 times; 6 = 11-20 times;
7 = 21 or more times)

Drink alcohol

Get drunk

Use marijuana or hash

Adjustment:

How often do you: (1 = never; 7 = very often)

Depression

Feel unhappy, sad, or depressed

Feel lonely

Feel that difficulties are piling up so high you can't overcome them

Standardized item alpha's for W5-W8 between .70 and .75

Worry about Future

Worry that you will not get a good job when you are an adult

Worry that your family may not have enough money to pay for things

Feel discouraged about the future (not available in Wave 5)

Standardized item alpha's for W5-W8 between .63 and .76

Social isolation

Feel lonely

Have trouble fitting in with others

Standardized item alpha's for W5-W8 between .51 and .54

Self Esteem

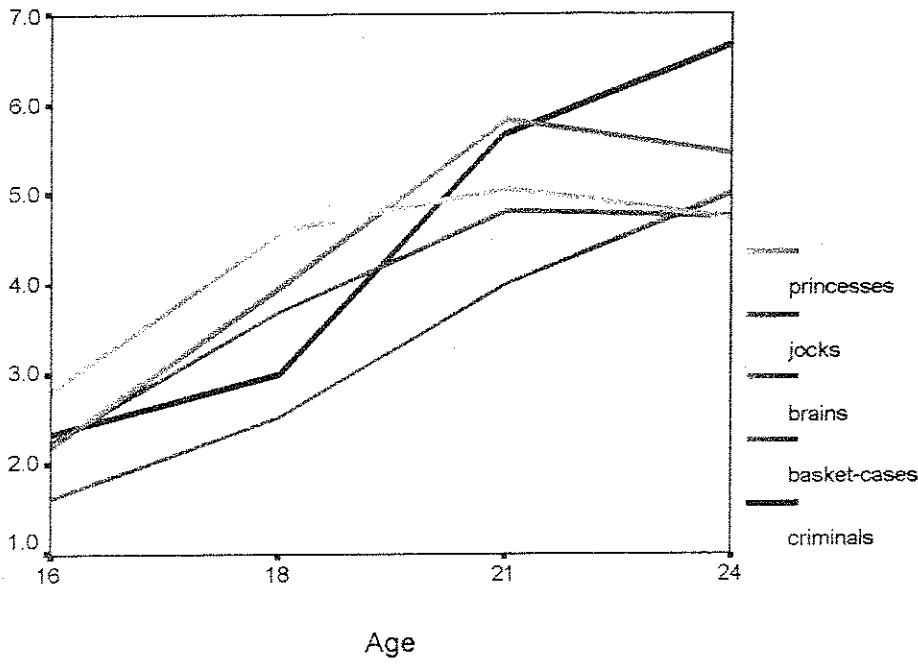
Feel sure of who you are (what kind of person you are)

Feel satisfied with yourself the way you are

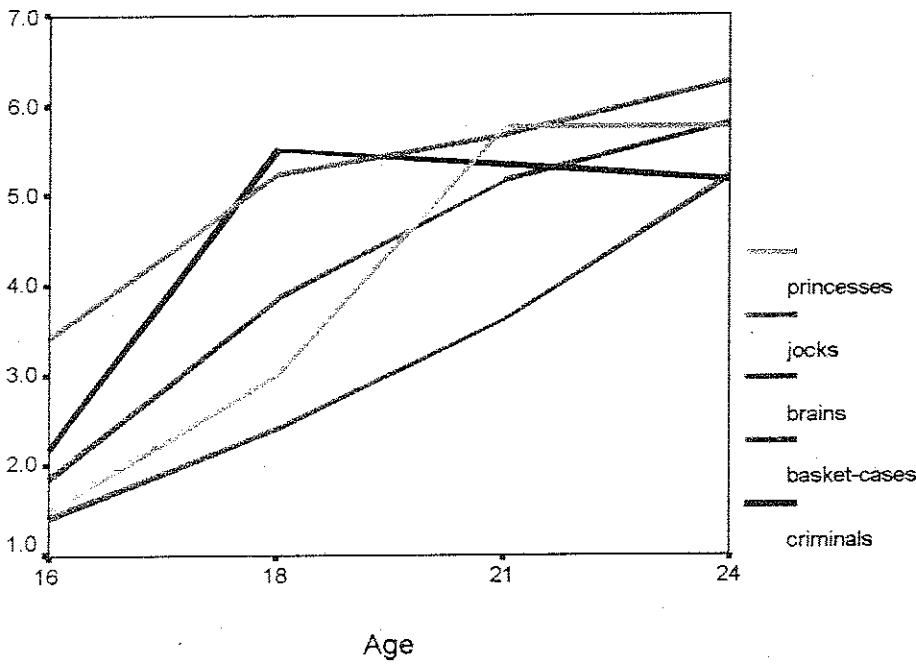
Feel good about yourself

Standardized item alpha's for W5-W8 between .78 and .82

Mean Levels of Drinking for Females

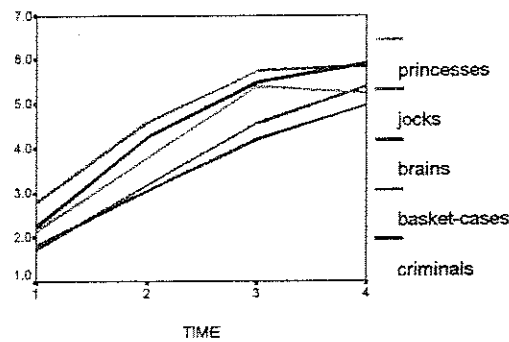


Mean Levels of Drinking for Males



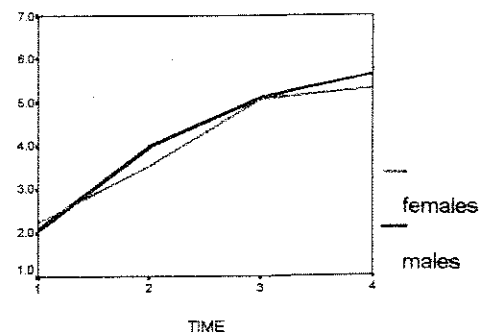
Means for Drinking

Males and Females Combined



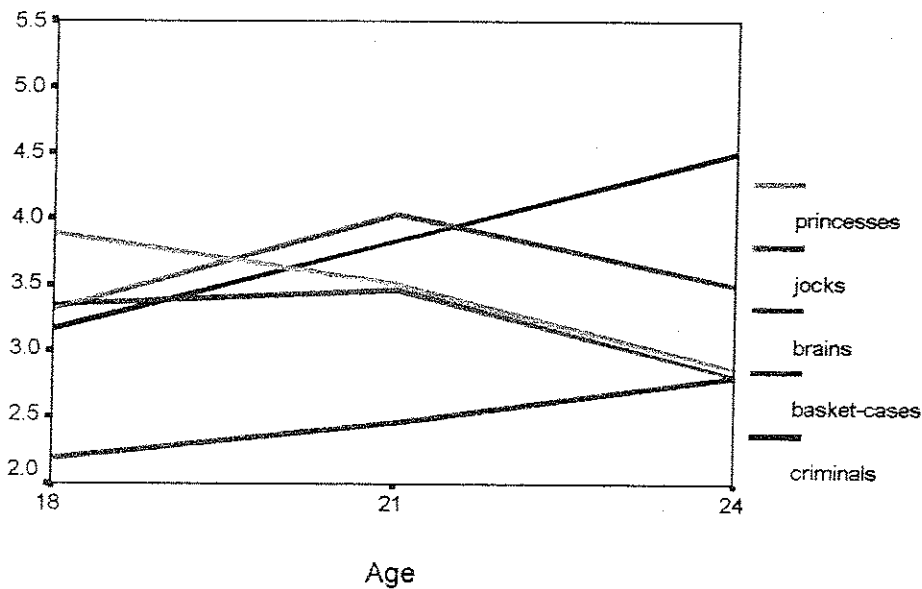
Mean Levels of Drinking

for Females and Males



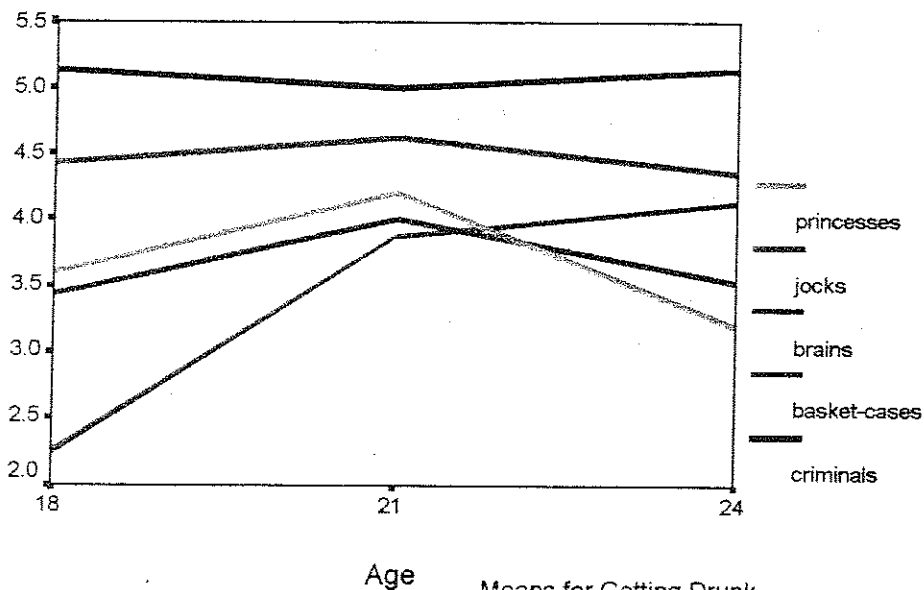
Mean Levels of Getting Drunk

for Females



Mean Levels of Getting Drunk

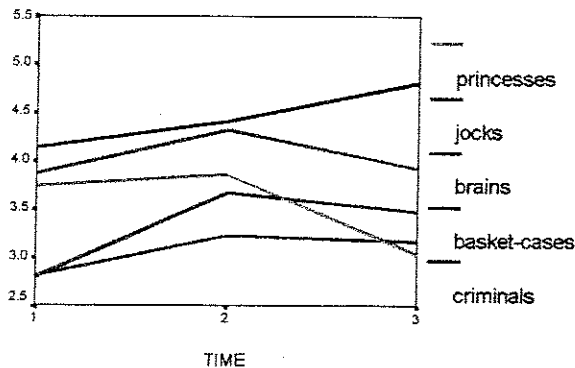
for Males



Age

Means for Getting Drunk

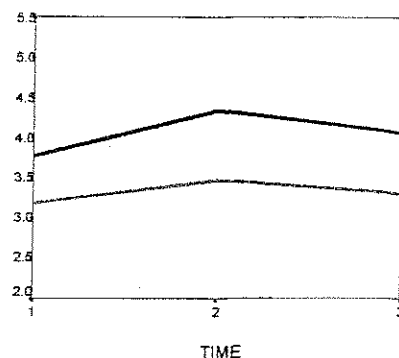
Males and Females Combined



TIME

Mean Levels of Getting Drunk

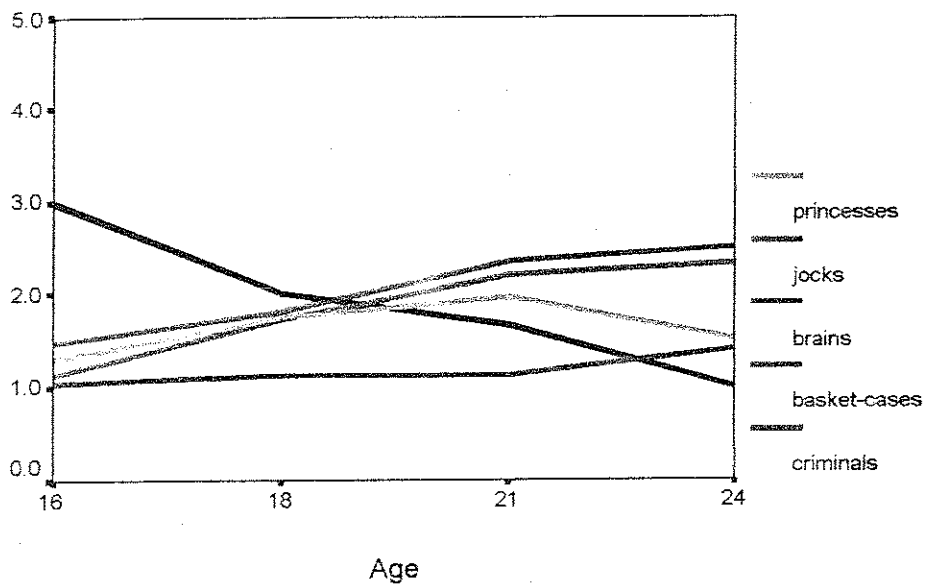
for Females and Males



TIME

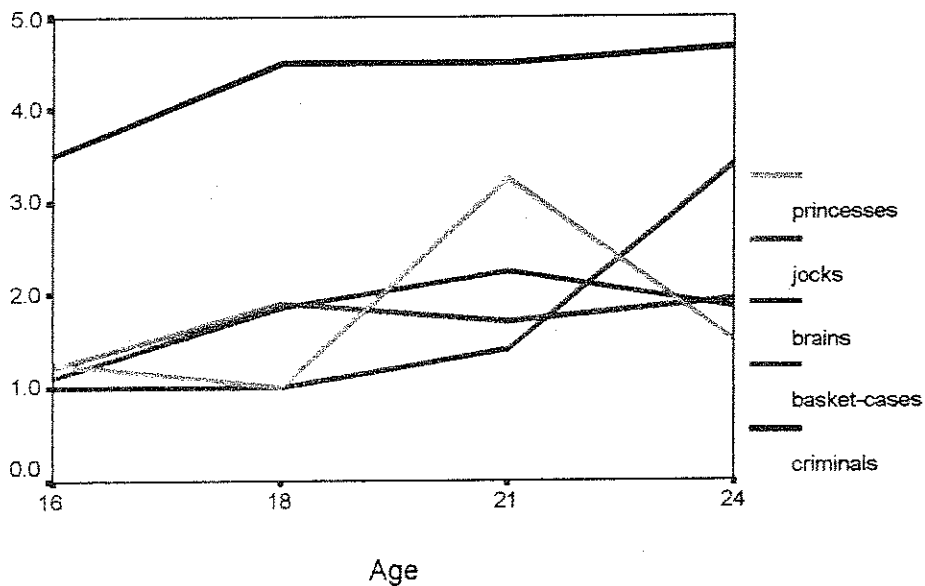
Mean Levels of Marijuana Use

for Females



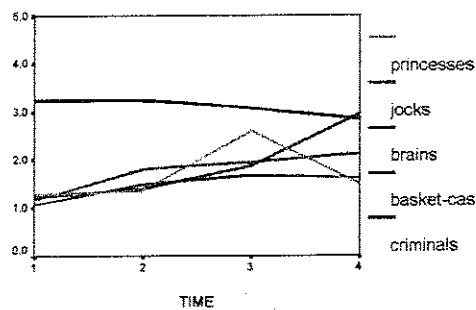
Mean Levels of Marijuana Use

for Males



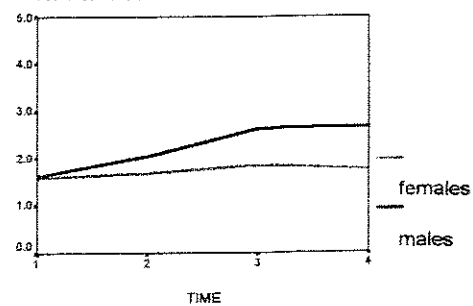
Means for Marijuana Usage

Males and Females Combined

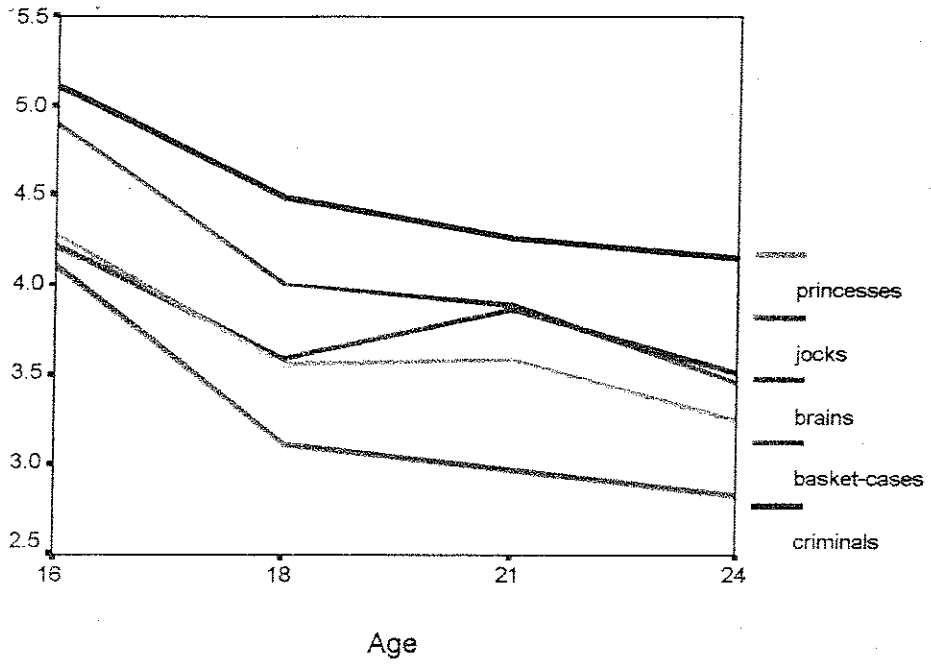


Mean Levels of Marijuana Use

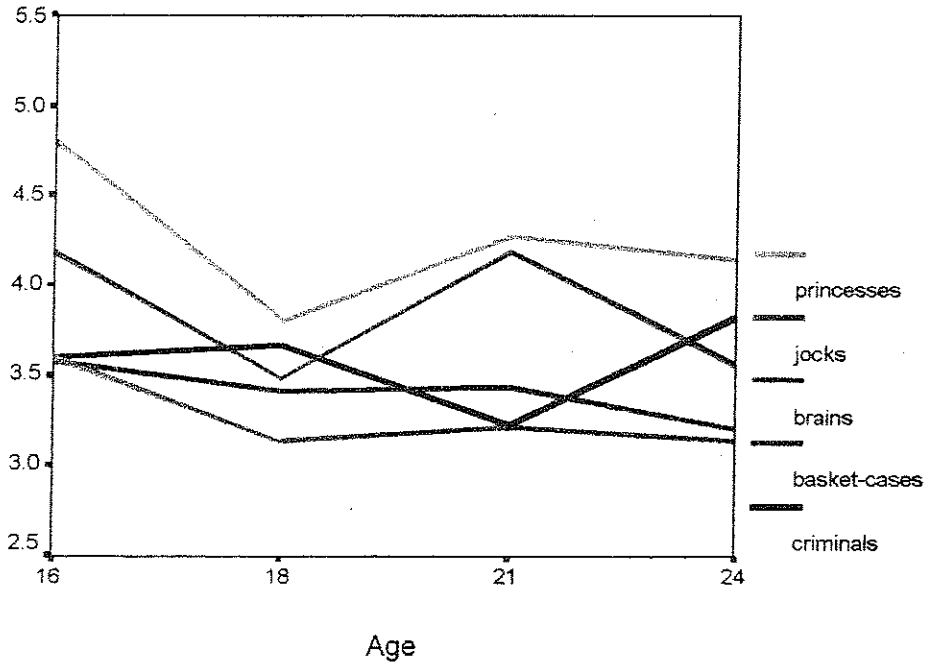
for Females and Males



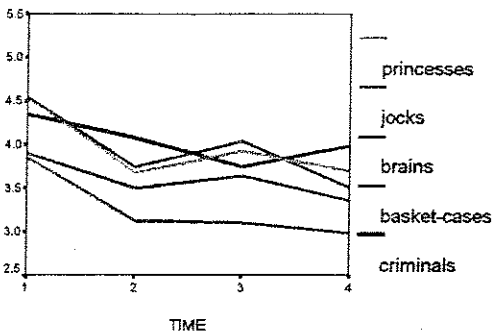
Mean Levels of Depression for Females



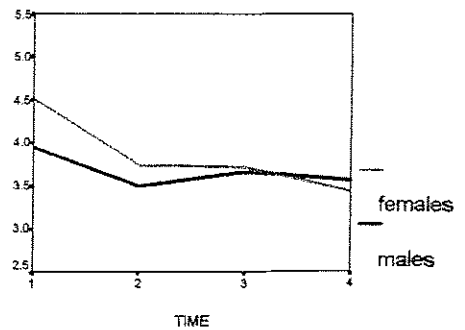
Mean Levels of Depression for Males



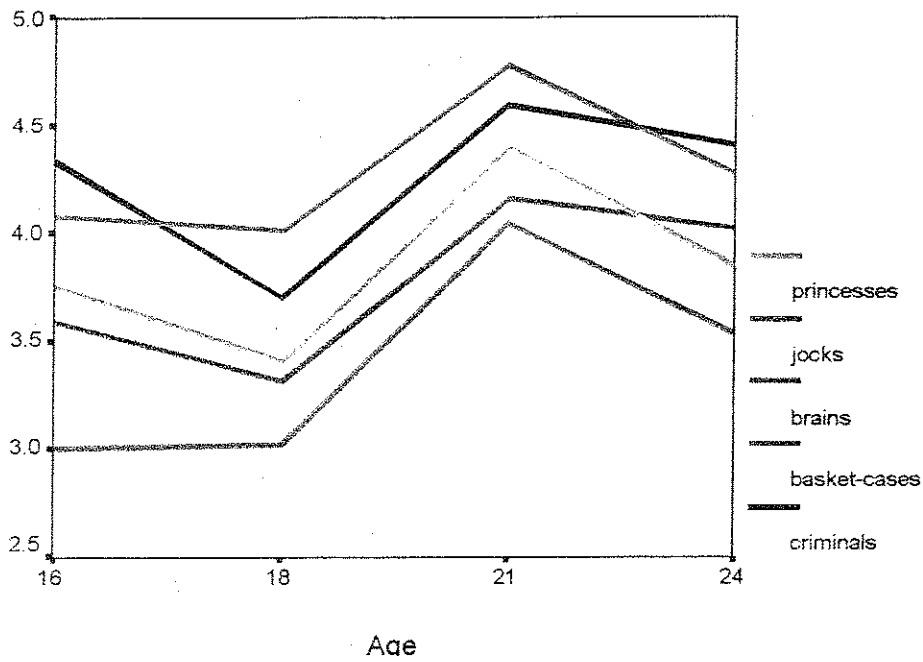
Means for Depression
Males and Females Combined



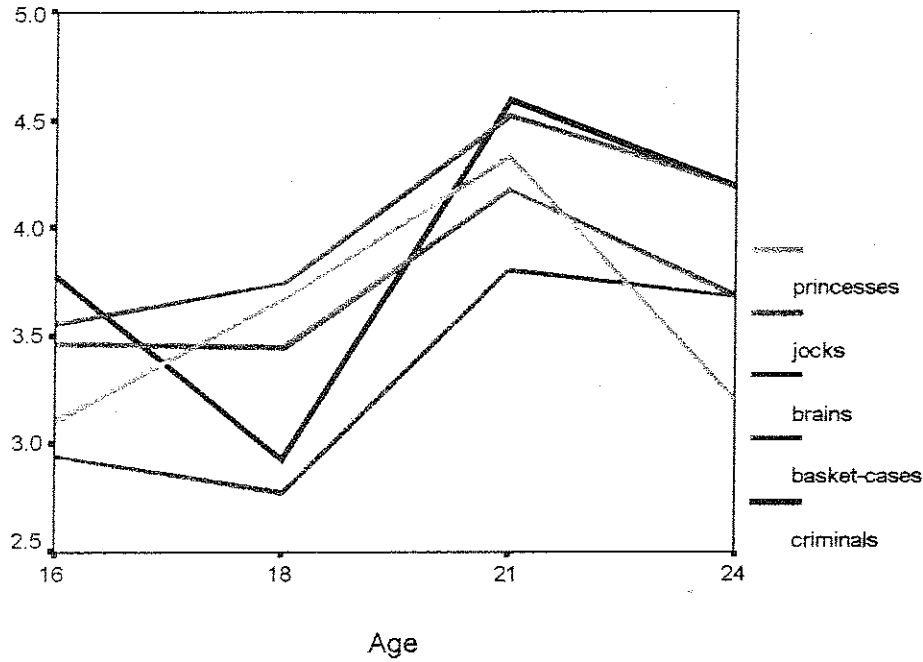
Mean Levels of Depression
for Females and Males



Mean Levels of Worry for Females

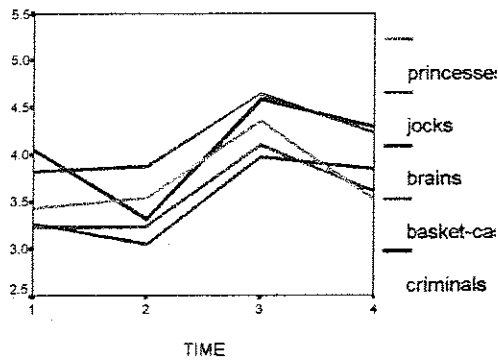


Mean Levels of Worry for Males

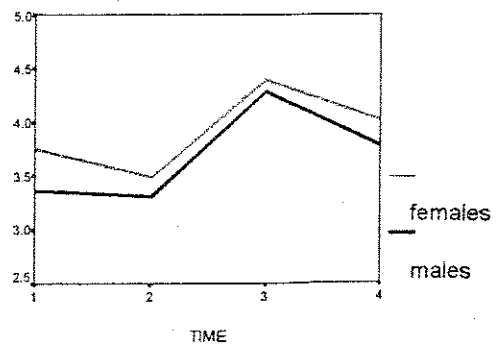


Means for Worry

Males and Females Combined

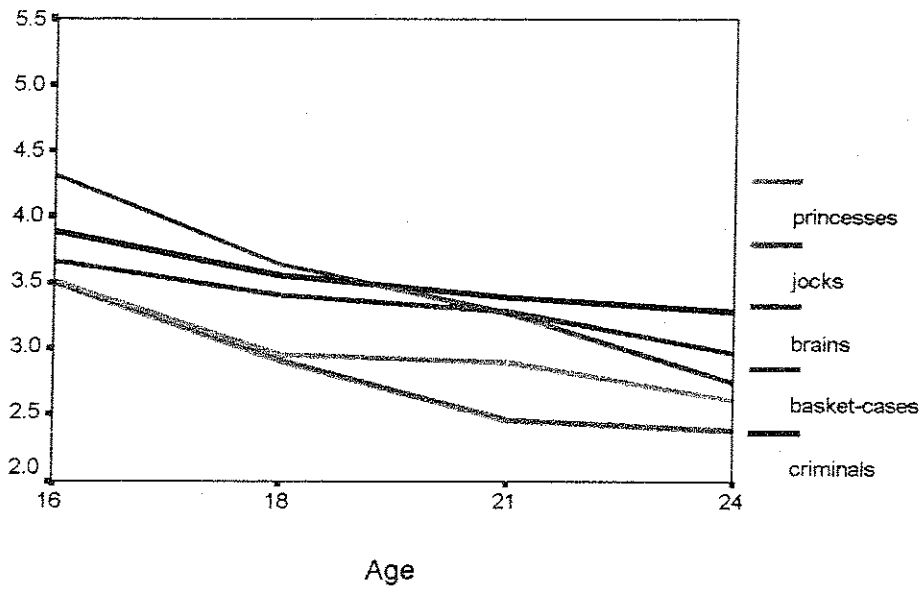


Mean Levels of Worry for Females and Males



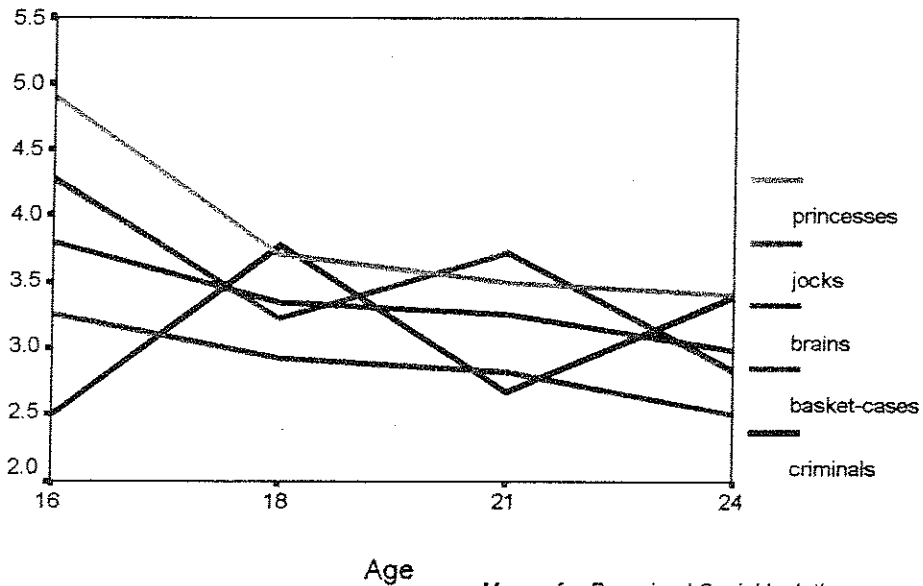
Mean Levels of Perceived Social Isolation

for Females



Mean Levels of Perceived Social Isolation

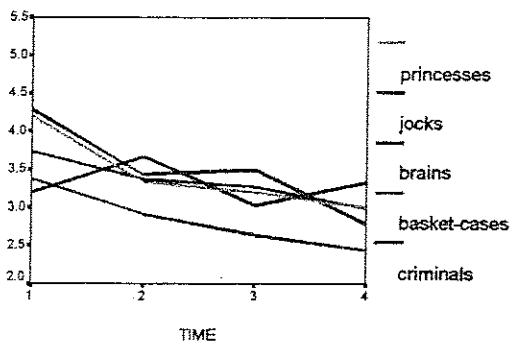
for Males



Age

Means for Perceived Social Isolation

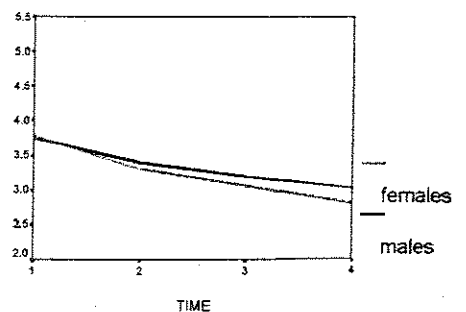
Males and Females Combined



TIME

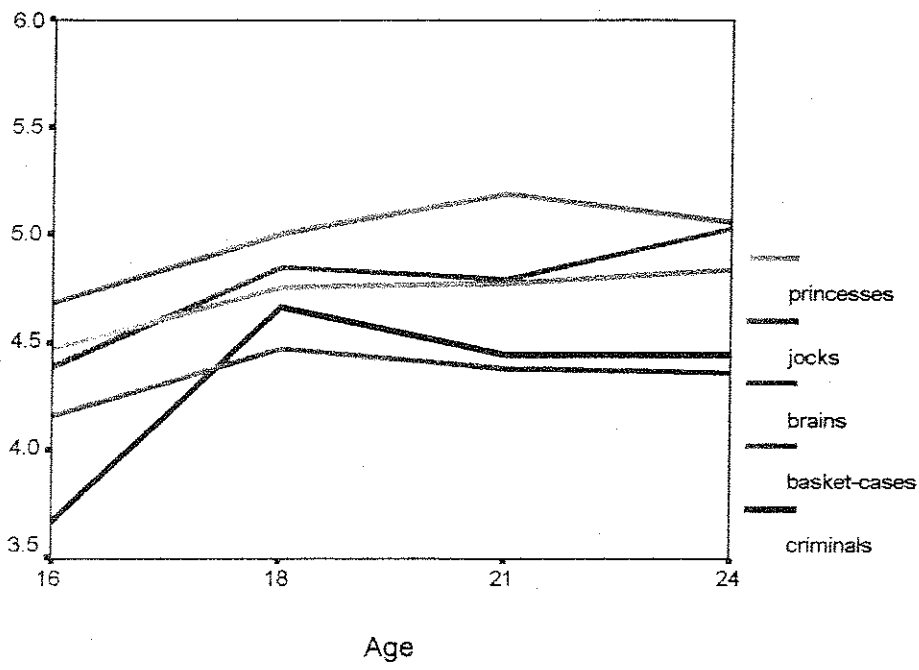
Mean Levels of Perceived Social Isolation

for Females and Males

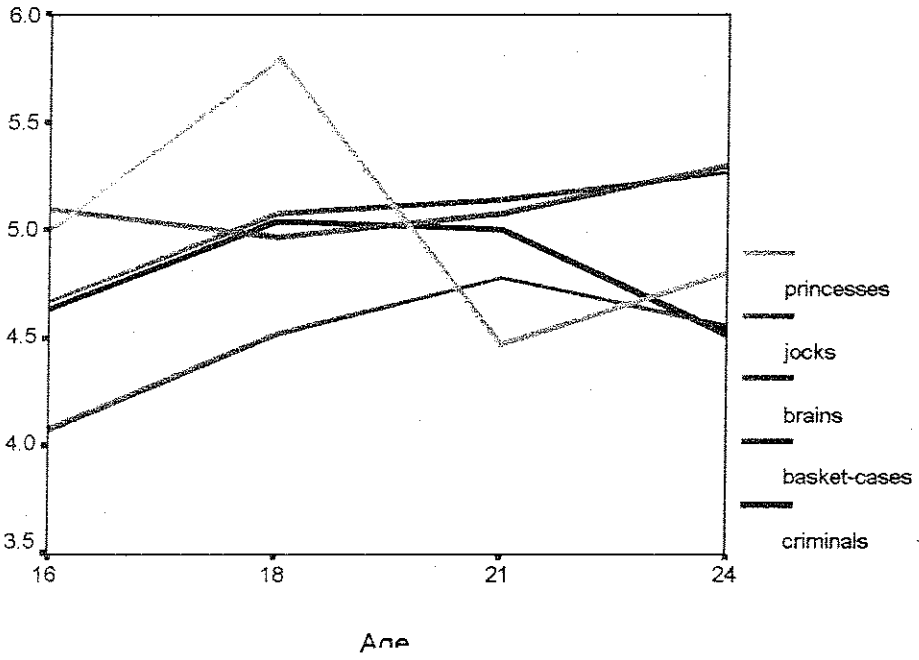


TIME

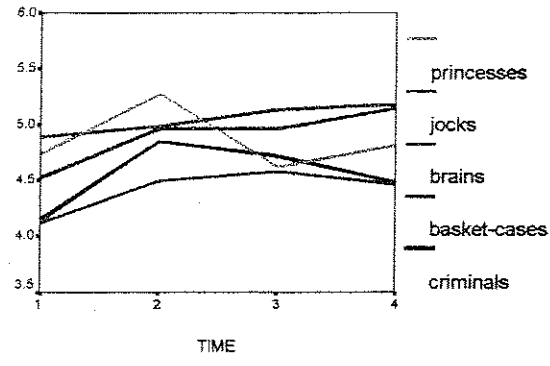
Mean Levels of Self-esteem for Females



Mean Levels of Self-esteem for Males



Age
Means for Self-esteem
Males and Females Combined



Mean Levels of Self-esteem
for Females and Males

