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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the influence of community context on the attitudes of rural and nonrural adolescents toward their own future geographic and social mobility. Part of a national sample in a longitudinal study of career development, the 1,060 subjects were public school students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 from 3 contrasting Illinois communities. Subjects completed questionnaires based on those used in the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), and some also participated in the experience sampling method for obtaining self-reports on activities and moods. Some analyses were replicated using NELS data. Hypotheses were that rural adolescents would be more likely than their nonrural counterparts to have future residential preferences that would be incompatible with their career aspirations, and that the resulting conflict would lead to uncertainty and negative affect regarding the future. Questionnaire data revealed a greater prevalence among rural than among nonrural adolescents of a potential conflict between the perceived importance of staying close to parents and relatives and moving away from their area. Those adolescents expressing this potential conflict were more likely to indicate feeling empty, angry, and pessimistic about their futures. Compared to urban and suburban students, rural adolescents (particularly rural males) expressed more hesitancy about pursuing further education, more anger about their futures, and more worry and lower motivation when doing activities related to their future goals. Contains data tables, figures, and 16 references. (Author/SV)

When Moving Up Implies Moving Out: Rural Adolescent Conflict in the Transition to Adulthood

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Abstract

This research used questionnaire and Experience Sampling Method data to examine the influence of community context on the attitudes of rural and nonrural adolescents toward their own future geographic and social mobility. As part of a national sample in a longitudinal study of career development, subjects were public school students in grades six, eight, ten, and twelve from three contrasting Illinois communities. Some of the analyses were replicated using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS). Hypotheses were that rural adolescents would be more likely than their nonrural counterparts to have future residential preferences which would be incompatible with their career aspirations, and that the resulting conflict would lead to uncertainty and negative affect regarding the future. Questionnaire data revealed a greater prevalence among rural than among nonrural adolescents of a potential conflict between the perceived importance of staying close to parents and relatives and moving away from their area. Those adolescents expressing this potential conflict were more likely to indicate feeling empty, angry, and pessimistic about their futures. Compared to urban and suburban students, rural adolescents tended to express more hesitancy about pursuing further education, more anger about their futures, and more worry and lower motivation when doing activities related to their future goals. Rural males appeared to be particularly affected by the negative consequences of the potential conflict.

One of the major themes of adolescence in the United States is the visualization of and preparation for future occupational roles. To explore how this process of career choice occurs, an interdisciplinary team of researchers at the University of Chicago has undertaken a national five year longitudinal study, the Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development. A one year pilot study was completed in August 1992, and the full scale study is now in its second year. In both, the multi-method approach includes questionnaires, the Experience Sampling Method, and interviews with students, parents, teachers, and school administrators. The present research uses a subset of the data obtained from the first year of the full scale study.

The Sloan pilot study was conducted using samples of adolescents from three Illinois communities: an urban Chicago neighborhood, a Chicago suburb, and a rural small town. One of the preliminary conclusions from that study is that community and school contextual factors have an influential role in adolescent career development (Bidwell, Csikszentmihalyi, Hedges, & Schneider, 1992). This result is consistent with other research findings that the educational and occupational aspirations of adolescents differ with respect to the type of community in which they live.

The pattern which has emerged from several studies is that students from rural communities tend to have less ambitious post-secondary educational plans and career aspirations than their nonrural counterparts (Bidwell, et al., 1992; Sarigiani, Wilson, Petersen, & Vicary, 1990; Sebring, Campbell, Glusberg, Spencer, &

Singleton, 1987; Zimbelman, 1987). The lower aspirations of rural youth may not be attributable to lower achievement motivation or a more external locus of control. Zimbelman found no differences on these dimensions between rural adolescents and those from a small city.

The present research does not attempt to narrow in on other specific explanations for the difference in aspirations, but instead broadens the scope of the inquiry by seeking to place rural adolescent educational and career aspirations in the context of decisions facing adolescents as they make plans to leave high school and eventually enter the adult labor force. More specifically, the focus here is how aspirations for social mobility develop alongside preferences for residential location. Exploring the interaction of these two strands of future plans may, in the end, lead to a more holistic understanding of the process of adolescent career development in rural settings.

Many rural students do, of course, develop and realize high educational and occupational aspirations. However, some evidence suggests that rural students who are otherwise highly motivated and able to achieve may experience more ambivalence or indecision about their future plans than comparably able nonrural students. Small town students were more likely than others to answer "Don't Know" to a question in the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) asking for occupational expectations (Bidwell, et al., 1992). Out of all small town schools, this answer was given least frequently in schools in which few students are in a college prep-

aratory track. Uncertainty was more prevalent in those rural schools having a moderate to high proportion of their students in college tracks.

If uncertainty is indeed more common among college-bound rural than nonrural students, it may be because of conflicting aspirations. As Sarigiani, et al. recognized among their rural subjects,

> the positive wish to stay in the community with family and friends may also become a negative pressure for those who must leave to attain their goals. Some individuals may decline pursuing further education to better preserve these familial and friendship bonds (1990, p. 52).

Unlike students in suburbs and cities who can likely go to college and find professional jobs in their metropolitan areas if they so desire, rural students who want to develop their talents must often leave their communities permanently. If these adolescents are strongly attached to their families, friends, and communities, they may also desire to maintain these ties and remain close to home. Because of the narrow range of educational opportunities and professional positions available in a small town, this desire would be in conflict with the aspiration to develop a high level career.

Two separate follow-up studies of groups of adult males who had been surveyed many years previously, while attending rural high schools, have demonstrated the relationship between geographic and social mobility for rural adolescents. Chand, Crider, and Willits (1983) confirmed Rieger's (1972) finding that men who had held higher occupational aspirations in high school were more likely as adults to reside in less rural areas. Both studies also showed

that migrants achieved more prestigious careers than nonmigrants. One reason for this difference may be because those who migrated tended to have higher levels of the abilities and motivation relevant to career advancement. Nevertheless, Rieger concluded that the effect of this self-selectivity is minor and that migration itself plays an important facilitative role in the career development of former rural residents. Neither of these studies proves the existence of any conflicts in aspirations, but they do suggest that a desire to remain in a rural area would be largely incompatible with ambitious career aspirations.

If asked about their residential plans, perhaps most rural adolescents would express expectations of future migration, but many may at the same time be reluctant to leave. As high school students, virtually the same proportion (72%) of future nonmigrants as migrants in Rieger's (1972) study expected to leave their rural area. However, nonmigrants who had expected to leave were less likely to report being eager about this prospect, while eventual migrants more often indicated enthusiasm. A reluctance to migrate was also evident among the 1972 high school graduates of Mansfield, the rural American hamlet studied by Peshkin (1978). Fewer than 15% were attracted to living in an urban area of over 100,000 people, and more than one-third would have preferred to remain in their home town, even if given an opportunity to move.

The preference to remain in or near the community of one's youth may be equally prevalent among urban and suburban adolescents as it is among those from rural areas. Whether it is or not, non-

rural youth who fulfill their desire to stay do not limit their educational and career opportunities as much as rural youth who remain. Moreover, some evidence suggests that rural community ties are stronger. Hummon (1992) has reported that irrespective of the social and economic characteristics of the community, residents of smaller, more rural places express greater satisfaction with their communities than residents of more densely populated areas. This result accords with the earlier finding of Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) that lower population density is the second most important factor in determining whether people will express regret at the prospect of leaving their home community. Given that rural families often have long-standing roots in their communities, the most important factor Kasarda and Janowitz found, length of residence, very likely also plays a significant role in strengthening rural community attachment.

One of the factors that acts to bind rural adolescents to their communities is the existence of strong intergenerational networks which serve to transmit shared values and attitudes. Schneider and Borman (1993), in an ethnographic account of the small Illinois town which serves as the rural site in the present study, described how the town's dense relational networks contribute to a feeling of comfort among the high school students. These adolescents appeared to have internalized their community's values, perpetuating the preference for the small town atmosphere.

Psychological bonds with a community can not only influence preferences for a specific locale of residence. If specific

preferences become impossible to realize, those who feel such bonds will likely be drawn toward places of a similar nature. As Feldman (1990) has documented, patterns of ideas, feelings, and values that relate individuals to a particular community become part of their identity and are often generalizable to settlements of the same type. Thus, if and when adolescents do move out of their rural communities, they are likely, as "small-town people" to prefer a similar type of community. For high-aspiring youth, such a preference would be nearly as likely to lead to a conflict in future desires as would staying in the home town, given the limited range of opportunities in most rural areas.

Although very little previous research has directly addressed the possibility of a conflict between residential and occupational preferences for rural American youth, several studies of adolescents in remote areas are suggestive. For example, Ovando studied an isolated Alaskan village of 375 residents and concluded that

> for the majority of the [high school] students there is the dilemma of having very strong positive feelings for the community yet also wanting a level of economic security that might force them to leave (1984, p. 26).

Condon (1988) found these same mutually incompatible aspirations among Inuit youth growing up in a similar-sized Canadian Arctic island community. Certainly, most rural areas of the United States are not as isolated and different from the rest of the country as these villages are. Still, these illustrations may hold instructive parallels to the less extreme conflicts facing some rural adolescents.

Young adults in one rural Maine community not far from more urbanized areas were interviewed by Donaldson (1986) about their decisions regarding residence and work. "For most, a central theme was the attempt to reconcile attachments to community and past with a desire--or economic need--to be a part of the modern American mainstream" (p. 122). Donaldson concluded that for these youth, community context had a significant influence on their life decisions. "Paths leading outward, and perhaps upward, which might appear normal to more cosmopolitan youth were clearly approached with more ambivalence by many [of the rural] youth" (p. 123).

Although the studies just cited may lend support to a theory of conflicting aspirations among rural youth, such a theory has never been empirically tested against a comparison group of non-rural adolescents. The primary aim of the present study is to make this comparison and to assess whether the theory can be applied to a broader range of rural American adolescents. This objective leads directly to the hypothesis that a conflict between residential preference and career development is more prevalent among rural than nonrural adolescents. The experience of such a conflict would likely carry some important implications, one of which could be a greater than average difficulty formulating definite career and educational plans. A secondary hypothesis would propose that those adolescents across all types of communities who have potentially conflicting aspirations tend to experience greater degrees of indecision and hesitancy regarding their career plans than do other youth of otherwise comparable characteristics.

Undoubtedly most adolescents pass through periods of uncertainty about their plans for the future, and this can be one of their major sources of frustration. Not surprisingly, Fuqua and Seaworth (1987) found a substantial relationship between career indecision and anxiety among first year undergraduates. Applying this result to the present theory would suggest that if students with conflicting aspirations experience more uncertainty, they are also more likely to have feelings of anxiety about their future goals. Thus, a further hypothesis of this study is that when thinking about the future or doing something important to their future goals, these adolescents experience more negative affect than those with no potential conflict.

The stated hypotheses generate a parallel set of hypotheses in which the experience of rural adolescents is compared to that of urban and suburban youth. If more rural than nonrural students have conflicting aspirations, then they could be expected, on the whole, to experience more uncertainty and negative affect regarding the future. Comparing the three community types may also reveal differences which cannot be explained by a theory of conflicting aspirations. In any community indecision and anxiety would likely reach their peak in the high school years, while students are thinking about several important decisions regarding their transition to adulthood. To discover any possible developmental trends, all of the hypotheses will be tested for age differences. Although no gender patterns can be predicted, the importance of

gender to identity demands that tests be conducted along this dimension as well.

Method

Subjects

The full-scale Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development includes a subject pool of over 4,000 public school students in grades six, eight, ten, and twelve from twelve sites across the United States. The present study uses the data from three of the sites: an urban Chicago neighborhood, a Chicago suburb, and a rural small town in northern Illinois. These sites were chosen for their location in the same area of the country, to control for possible regional differences. Several demographic differences among the populations of the sites must be noted. The urban area contains a largely Hispanic population of lower economic status, while the suburban population is a racially mixed upper-middle class community. The residents of the small town and its surrounding countryside are predominantly white, non-Hispanic, and middle class.

Within each site, two groups of subjects participated. Members of a focal group of 24 in each grade were asked to do the Experience Sampling Method for a week, to be interviewed, and to complete several questionnaires. A larger group of cohort students completed the questionnaires only. This resulted in a total of 1060 subjects across the three sites, 267 of whom participated in the ESM part of the study. Students were selected to be represen-

tative of the different academic tracks, economic backgrounds, and ethnicities of their respective school populations.

Because of variations in student availability at each school, the number of cohort subjects varied widely by grade level within each site. To correct for any possible bias resulting from the unequal numbers, questionnaire responses were weighted such that equal representation was achieved from each grade within each site and from each site within each grade. The weights were designed so that the overall level of sample inflation matched the overall level of deflation; the total sample size was thus unaffected. The ESM data were not weighted, because there were no substantial disparities in sub-sample sizes among the focal students.

Instruments and Procedures

Questionnaires. Both focal and cohort subjects were asked to complete several questionnaires, from which only selected items were used in the present study. One of the questionnaires was used in two versions, one appropriate for middle school age students and one for high school students. Each version contained a series of questions replicating those used in the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), in which a large nationally representative sample of eighth graders was surveyed. The questionnaire used in that study was extended and re-administered to these students in 1990 and 1992 when most were in the tenth and twelfth grades, respectively. The data from the public school students in this national sample will be used for comparative purposes and as a validity check on results obtained from the three

sites in the present study. Each of the questions to be examined had multiple response options. To detect whether the frequency of each response differed by site, gender, or grade, Chi-square tests were used.

One of the survey questions (which was not on the NELS instruments) asked, "When thinking about the future, do you feel any of the following?" Subjects circled a number on a seven-point scale which represented the range from "Not at all" to "Very much" for the following adjectives: confident, worried, empty, enthusiastic, doubtful, lonely, curious, angry, and powerful. Factor analysis of the responses to these items revealed three clusters which were labeled as follows:

Pessimism: Average of angry, empty, lonely, doubtful, & worried

Optimism 1: Average of powerful & confident

Optimism 2: Average of curious & enthusiastic.

Differences by site, gender, or grade in average ratings of these three composites and the nine adjectives were tested for using Analysis of Variance.

Experience Sampling Method. As Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1987) have shown, the ESM is a method with the psychometric precision of a self-report instrument and the contextual validity of a naturalistic research design. In the Sloan study, pre-programmed wristwatches were used to page the focal students eight times each day over the course of a normal week. The respondents were asked to keep the watch and a self-report booklet with them wherever possible and to respond to each signal whenever possible.

Upon hearing a signal, respondents were to complete a self-report form which elicits detailed and comprehensive information about their location, activities, companions, and psychological states at that moment. The stratified random schedule of signals was designed to be unpredictable to the students, while at the same time providing a representative sample of each subject's moods and activities for that week. Approximately 8400 valid self-reports were obtained from the 267 subjects. All subjects included in the analysis responded to at least 15 signals over the course of their ESM week.

The ESM self-report form contained both free response and scaled items. Free responses to the questions "As you were beeped... Where were you?", "What was on your mind?", and "What was the main thing you were doing?" were coded using a comprehensive coding scheme. For the scaled items, the large number of responses from each subject allows the use of within-subject standardized z-scores as a relative measure of a subject's experience in any particular context. The z-score for each response is calculated as the number of standard deviation units the raw score is from that person's own mean response. The person's mean response has a z-score of zero; raw scores less than this have negative z-scores, and raw scores greater than the mean correspond to positive z-scores. In an attempt to encompass the multiple dimensions of quality of experience, the following continuous z-scored variables were used as dependent measures:

Variable	Question on ESM self-report
Concentration	"How well were you concentrating?"
Ease of Concentration	"Was it hard to concentrate?" (Reversed)
Wish	"Did you wish you had been doing something else?" (Reversed)
Happy..Sad Strong..Weak Active..Passive Sociable..Lonely Proud..Ashamed Clear..Confused Relaxed..Worried	"Describe your mood as you were beeped:" (Bipolar scales: Very, quite some, neither, some, quite, very)

In addition, factor analysis indicated the validity of constructing several composite variables as follows:

Variable	Defined as:
Mood	Average of happy, strong, active, sociable, proud, involved, & excited
Motivation	Average of wish, interest, & enjoyment
Affect	Average of happy, sociable, proud, & relaxed
Potency	Average of strong, active, & excited
Esteem	Average of living up to own expectations, living up to other's expectations, feeling good about self, how well succeeding, & feeling in control

The particular context within which these measures were examined was defined by standardized scores on the ESM question "How important was [the main activity you were doing when signaled] in relation to your future goals?" Only the self-reports on which subjects indicated that their main activity of the moment was highly important to their future goals (with z-scores above 0.5) were included in the analysis. This criterion was met by slightly less than a third of each subject's self-reports. Taking data only from these self-reports, each person's standardized scores on the dependent measures were averaged so that the unit of analysis would be the aggregated responses of an individual rather than a single

self-report form. Analysis of Variance was then performed on each of the quality of experience measures noted above, using the factors of community context, gender, and grade level as independent variables.

Preliminary Analyses. To assess whether the demographic differences noted above could account for any differences among the three sites in average responses on the study instruments, preliminary analyses focusing on race and parent education were performed. Parent education was defined as the higher of the mother's or father's educational attainment (as reported by the student). This variable appeared to serve well as a proxy for socio-economic status; the suburban parents were found to be the most well-educated, followed by the rural and then the urban parents. The average for each site differed significantly from the other two. An analysis of each of the questionnaire and ESM items included in this study revealed very few significant differences in average responses based on parent education. Similarly, few differences based on race or ethnicity were found. In the report of results, these two factors will be noted only when it is probable that they have contributed to a particular result.

Results and Discussion

Conflicting Aspirations for the Future

Importance of Living Close. None of the questions in the Sloan study questionnaires probed for the respondents' specific residential preferences or expectations. Nevertheless, two

questions which are relevant to this issue will be helpful. Both are items in a list which follows the question "How important is each of the following in your life?" For each of these items, respondents were asked to circle "Not important", "Somewhat important" or "Very important." The pattern of response to the item "Living close to parents and relatives" differed significantly by site, as Table 1 shows. In this case, the site differences are not as important as is the fact that adolescents from all three sites think that living close is relatively important. The combined proportions of "Somewhat" and "Very important" responses given by the urban, rural, and suburban samples were 93%, 88%, and 77% respectively. Further, although the proportion of students choosing "Not important" increased with grade across all sites, a large majority of high school seniors from all three sites still answered with one of the other response options.

Data from the NELS tenth and twelfth grade follow-ups revealed response patterns that differed somewhat from those of the Sloan sub-sample, in that the proportion of NELS rural adolescents responding with "Not important" was greater than the proportion of urban and suburban youth giving that response. Still, "Somewhat important" was the most prevalent response among adolescents from all three community types, as it was among the three sites from the Sloan sub-sample (See Table 1).

Some caution must be used in applying this result to the stated hypothesis, because the question does not directly address the importance of remaining in the home community and it does not

at all address the importance of residing in a similar type of community. However, among adolescents for whom proximity to parents or relatives is important, the range of acceptable residential locations is severely limited, if not entirely restricted to the home community area. Thus, the question does give an indication of the range of residential options that are consistent with an adolescent's values and attitudes.

Importance of Getting Away. Although students from all three areas find it relatively important to live close to parents and relatives, the rural students have a slightly greater tendency also to believe that it is important to "Get away from this area of the country." On this item, 49% of the rural sample circled either "Somewhat important" or "Very important," as did 44% of the urban sample and 40% of the suburban sample (See Table 1). Within each grade, half or more of the urban and suburban subjects chose "Not important," whereas half or more of the rural students, except in the sixth grade, chose one of the other response options. Overall, a greater proportion (17%) of the rural students circled "Very important" than did the urban (8%) and suburban (11%) students. As Table 1 shows, the general pattern of results was also found in the nationally representative NELS sample in both the tenth and twelfth grade follow-ups. It may be an indication that rural adolescents recognize the limitations in the range of career opportunities available in their area. Unfortunately, the question does not provide a means of assessing the respondents' attitudes toward getting away.

A Potential Conflict. The situations mentioned in the two questions just examined--"living close" and "getting away"--are very likely to be mutually incompatible. In rare cases, parents or other family members may be planning to move along with a young adult, or the adolescent may be planning to live close to a geographically distant relative. Most adolescents, though, will not be able to realize both of these possibilities simultaneously. This presents no conflict in future mobility plans for those who feel that one or the other situation is not important. A conflict is quite likely to arise, however, among those adolescents who believe that both living close to parents and getting away are important in their lives.

To assess the prevalence of this potential conflict, all students who answered "Somewhat" or "Very important" on both the "living close" and the "getting away" questions were placed in a "potential conflict" category. Students who answered "Not important" to either question were assigned to a "No conflict" category. All students not answering both questions were left out of the analysis of this variable. Because the conflict variable was derived from two items, each with three response options, the probability by random chance of being in one of the two conflict categories is not fifty-fifty. It should be noted that of the nine possible combinations of response to the two questions, five (56%) lead to placement in the "No conflict" category, while only four (44%) lead to the designation of "Potential conflict." This response bias toward "No conflict" affected all sub-groups of the

sample equally, making no correction for it necessary. Nevertheless, the bias must be a consideration in any interpretation of results.

The proportion of students in the conflict category differed significantly by community type. Taking all four grades together, 43% of the rural sample had conflicting responses, whereas 39% of the urban sample and 30% of the suburban sample fell into this category (See Table 2). Moreover, 7% of the rural sample responded "Very important" to both questions, while less than 4% of each of the nonrural samples responded this way.

The potential conflict was found to be most prevalent in the eighth and tenth grades; over 50% of the rural sample in these grades (but less than 42% of the nonrural samples) had conflicting responses. As Figure 1 shows, there was also an interaction between grade and site. In the urban site, sixth graders were most likely to be in the conflict category. In the other two sites, the prevalence of the conflict reached a peak in eighth grade.

Although there were no gender differences in the prevalence of the conflict when all three sites were lumped together, there was a gender by site interaction. Urban and suburban females were more likely than their male peers to be in the conflict category, whereas rural males were more likely than rural females to have a potential conflict. Because of this interaction, no significant site difference was found among the females, while the site difference was significant among males (See Table 2).

Both of the questions which determine the potential conflict

were asked on the NELS questionnaire. In the tenth grade follow-up, rural students did not differ significantly from the others in the relative frequency of conflict. By the twelfth grade, however, the same sample of rural adolescents had a greater proportion in the potential conflict category than either the urban or suburban samples (See Table 2). As in the Sloan sub-sample, this difference by community type was more pronounced among twelfth grade males than among their female peers.

In this large data set, the prevalence of the conflict was found to differ by race and parent education. Whites were the least likely to give conflicting responses, whereas Hispanics and African Americans were the most likely. This difference could not have contributed to the higher frequency of the potential conflict among the rural respondents, because compared to the urban and suburban areas, the rural communities participating in the NELS had the lowest proportion of minorities.

The rural communities also had the lowest levels of parent education. The prevalence of the potential conflict was found to increase with decreasing parent education when responses from the three community contexts were combined. However, when the contexts were examined separately, this trend was found only among the nonrural students and was in fact reversed for the rural students. By the twelfth grade, rural students were more likely to have given conflicting responses if one of their parents had a college degree than if their parents were less well-educated. Because of these opposing trends, a significant difference by community context in

the relative frequency of potential conflict was found only among high school seniors whose parents had completed college.

Uncertainty about Future Plans

Certainty of Further Education. Several questions asked respondents about their future plans. One of them, asked of high school students only, was "How sure are you that you will go on for further education after you leave high school?" Table 3 shows the sophomore pattern of response; similar results were obtained from the seniors. Of the four response options, "Very sure I'll go" was chosen by a majority of students from all sites. Still, clear differences among the sites were evident. Compared to students from the suburb, more of the urban and rural students chose one of the other three responses. Slightly more of the rural than the urban students were certain that they would attend college. Among those who gave an equivocal response, the rural sample was the group with the largest percentage choosing "I probably won't go," whereas the largest percentage of "I probably will go" responses came from the urban sample.

This pattern of response was roughly consistent with that of the national sample of tenth grade NELS subjects (the question was not asked in the same form of twelfth graders). The rural adolescents were less likely to respond with "Very sure I'll go" and more likely to choose each of the other response options than the nonrural adolescents (See Table 3). Perhaps most important in this result is the greater frequency with which the rural students chose one of the more equivocal responses, "I probably will" or "I prob-

ably won't go." Forty-one percent chose one of these responses, compared to 36% of each of the urban and suburban samples. This trend occurred despite the fact that overall, whites tended much less than Hispanics and African Americans to give one of the equivocal responses.

The lower levels of education that rural students' parents tend to have could account for part of their uncertainty about college plans. As parent education increased, uncertainty decreased, i.e. across all sites, more students chose "Very sure I'll go." Some significant variation, however, remains unexplained by parent education. When comparisons were made only among those students whose parents do not have a four year college degree, the differences in response distribution persisted, with rural students still more likely to choose an equivocal response than the other students were. The community context differences lost statistical significance among those whose parents have at least a four year degree.

Immediacy of College Plans. Responses to a similar question, "Do you plan to go to college after you graduate from high school?" provide more evidence of a hesitancy among some rural youth to follow through with plans for career development. As shown in Table 4, the modal response from all three sites was the choice "Yes, right after high school," though a lower proportion of urban youth responded this way than did the others. The second most frequent response by urban adolescents was "Don't know." By contrast, the second most frequent response by rural youth was either

"Yes, after staying out of school for one year" or "...for over a year." Nearly one-fifth of the rural students indicated plans of waiting.

Analyses of the longitudinal NELS data suggest a developmental trend in the tendency of rural students to put off college. The proportion of rural students saying they would wait a year or more before entering college increased from the tenth to the twelfth grade, whereas these responses became less popular among the non-rural students as they went from tenth to twelfth grade (See Table 4). In both the tenth and twelfth grades, the rural NELS subjects were more likely than the nonrural subjects to circle "Don't Know" in response to the college plans question. Again, this pattern could not be predicted by racial response trends (Whites and Asians were the least likely to answer "Don't Know" and most likely to respond "Yes, right after high school").

The differences in response distribution could also not be explained by the lower levels of parent education in the rural sites. As parent education increased across all sites, the proportion of students responding "Yes, right after" increased and the proportion who don't know or want to wait decreased. However, within each level of parent education (less than a college degree and college or more), significant differences in response by community context persisted, such that rural students were still the most likely to respond "Don't know" and, among seniors, the most likely to indicate plans of waiting a year or more.

One reason some adolescents plan to wait a year or more before

entering college may be so that they can work in order to earn enough money to pay for some or all of the expenses. If this is the case, one would expect that the more economically disadvantaged adolescents would tend more to plan on waiting. This expectation is consistent with the result that the adolescents from the most affluent community in the Sloan subsample, the suburb, are the least likely to plan on waiting a year or more before entering college. However, the urban community in the sample is much more economically depressed than the rural community, and yet the urban adolescents are less likely to plan to wait than the rural youth are (even among only those who did not respond "Don't know"). Thus, economic conditions cannot fully explain why the rural adolescents tend more to say they plan to go to college but not right away.

Effect of Potential Conflict on Future Plans. High school sophomores across the three sites taken from the Sloan study differed in their response to the college plans question based on their conflict category, as shown in Table 5. Those who had given conflicting responses on the questions about living close and getting away were much more likely than others to indicate plans of waiting a year or more before entering college or of not going to college. They were also more likely to respond "Don't know." The NELS national sample revealed other significant patterns. On the question regarding certainty of education, those 10th graders in the conflict category were more likely to choose one of the two "probably" response options and less likely to choose one of the

two "very sure" options than their peers who did not indicate having the potential conflict. Further, the proportion of those in the conflict category who chose the response "Don't Know" for a question asking for their expected career at age 30 was slightly greater than the proportion of non-conflict adolescents choosing that response (See Table 5).

Affect Regarding the Future

Effects of Potential Conflict. A separate Analysis of Variance which included the conflict variable as an independent factor (in addition to site, gender, and grade) was conducted. It revealed that average ratings on the composite measure of pessimism and two of its factors differed significantly by conflict category. Across all three sites, those adolescents in the conflict category expressed greater degrees of feeling empty and angry than the non-conflict adolescents. Those with a potential conflict also had higher average ratings on the measure of pessimism than those without one (See Table 6). To test for the possible confounding of conflict category and site (given that more of the respondents with a potential conflict are from the rural site), a separate test was conducted in which responses were weighted to achieve equal representation from each site within each conflict category. This analysis yielded results equivalent to those from the unweighted analysis.

In the only significant conflict by grade interaction, average ratings of "angry" steadily decreased with grade level among those in the non-conflict category. By contrast, a general increase with

grade level was found among the adolescents who had indicated a potential for conflicting aspirations. The highest levels of anger were expressed by the tenth graders in the conflict category (See Figure 2).

Several interactions occurred between the conflict variable and gender (See Figures 3a through 3c). Males with a potential conflict appear to experience particularly negative affective consequences. They were the group expressing the lowest levels of the second measure of optimism (as well as its two factors, confidence and enthusiasm) and the highest levels of emptiness. They were also the least likely to indicate being worried, but their average ratings on this adjective did not differ significantly from the other males. The females with a potential conflict were the group expressing the most worry about the future. Paradoxically, although they had higher average "empty" ratings than did females in the non-conflict category, they also had higher average optimism ratings.

Site Differences. Significant differences among the three sites occurred in the average ratings of six of the adjectives, and the results appear somewhat mixed (See Table 7). The rural adolescents tended to express higher degrees of anger than students from the other two sites, but they gave the lowest average ratings of the three sites to "doubtful" and "lonely." The highest "powerful" and lowest "curious" ratings were obtained from the urban sample, while the average rural responses fell in between the suburban and urban averages on these two adjectives. There were

site differences in average ratings of each of the three composite variables, with the rural students having averages in between those of the other two samples on all three.

Across all three sites, white students tended to give comparatively low ratings to "doubtful" and high ratings to "curious;" Hispanics, by contrast, expressed much more doubt and less curiosity about the future. These ethnic trends could have contributed to the site differences seen on ratings of these two adjectives.

To determine whether the higher ratings of "anger" given by the rural students could be attributed to the higher proportion of them with a potential conflict, a separate analysis was performed in which responses were weighted to achieve equal representation from each conflict category within each site. The results were equivalent to the unweighted results on all adjectives except "lonely," "enthusiastic" and the composite measure of pessimism. Differences in average ratings of these three measures lost statistical significance. The fact that the others did not change means that the higher degree of anger expressed by rural adolescents cannot be fully explained by their greater likelihood of having potentially conflicting aspirations.

Grade by Site Interactions. On six of the adjectives, significant grade by site interactions were found. Depicted in Figures 4 and 5 are the patterns of response for the two adjectives in which the rural trend clearly contrasts with the grade trends of the other two sites. In contrast to the urban and suburban average

ratings of "curious," which generally increased with grade level, the rural averages showed a lower level of curiosity in the tenth and twelfth grades than in the sixth and eighth grades. The pattern is reversed in the responses to "angry." Here, average ratings by rural students increased with grade, whereas average ratings by nonrural students decreased.

Quality of Experience During Activities Related to Future Goals

Types of Activities Related to Future Goals. Taking only those ESM self-reports in which the focal subjects reported that the main activity they were doing was highly important to their future goals, the actual nature of what they reported doing differed only slightly across the three sites. In most activity categories, the proportion of rural responses fell in between the proportions of urban and suburban responses. The most commonly reported type of activity which subjects deemed of high future importance was academic and other productive tasks. Approximately half of all the activities subjects reported as highly important were of this type.

Effect of the Potential Conflict. Analysis of Variance revealed that those adolescents identified as having a potential conflict in future aspirations tended to describe their mood during moments of high future importance as more passive than active. By contrast, the non-conflict group tended more to choose ratings closer to the active side of the scale (Active z-scores, in conflict: -0.05, no conflict: 0.08; $F(1, 232) = 6.02$, $p < .05$).

Site Differences. Significant site differences were found in

average responses on the "relaxed..worried" scale and on the composite measure of motivation. When doing something they considered important to their future goals, the rural students had the lowest average z-scores of the three sites on both of these variables. The rural sample had an average z-score of -0.01 on the motivation measure, whereas the suburban average was 0.04 and the urban average was 0.14 ($F(2, 242) = 3.03$, $p < .05$). Both the rural and the suburban students also tended to rate their mood in this context as more worried than relaxed (Relaxed z-scores, rural: -0.14, suburban: -0.12, urban: 0.04; $F(2, 236) = 4.38$, $p < .05$).

Site by Gender Interactions. An interaction between site and gender occurred on the variables affect, happy, motivation, wish, and relaxed. The patterns shown for the composite variables in Figures 6 and 7 are representative of the results on all five measures. Gender differences exist in each case but the direction of that difference depends on residential location. Whereas the rural males expressed a more negative quality of experience in all five of these dimensions than did the rural females, the pattern was reversed in the suburban sample. Suburban females uniformly tended to rate their experiences more negatively than the males did. On all five measures average z-scored ratings given by rural males and suburban females were negative, i.e. below their individual means for the week. The direction of the gender difference in the urban sample mirrored that of the rural sample, though the magnitude was much less extreme.

Compared to urban and suburban males, rural males had the

lowest average z-scores on the variables affect, motivation, happy, and relaxed. Urban and rural males had equivalent levels on the measure of ease of concentration, levels lower than their suburban counterparts. Taking the males only, all of these site differences were significant at the .05 level. By contrast, rural females did not have the lowest z-scores among all females on any of these measures nor on any others in which a significant site difference occurred among females.

Conclusion

Compared to urban and suburban adolescents, rural youth were found to be more likely to experience a potential conflict between two virtually incompatible residential outcomes, living close to family and getting away from their area. This conflict appears to contribute to the greater hesitancy of rural youth to pursue higher education than even their more economically disadvantaged urban counterparts. Across all community types, the potential conflict was shown to be related to pessimism regarding the future. The rural adolescents were more likely to express feeling angry about the future, a feeling that increased with grade. In contrast to their nonrural peers, their curiosity about the future decreased with grade. Finally, when the importance of their daily activities to their future goals was high, rural adolescents--males, in particular--reported experiencing lower motivation and more worry than did the nonrural subjects.

In sum, the results strongly suggest that a significant

proportion of rural youth experience a conflict between the incompatible (for them) trajectories of desired socio-economic and geographic mobility. The consequences of this conflict appear to be a greater hesitancy tc pursue ambitious aspirations and a more negative outlook regarding the future.

TABLE 1: *Importance of "Living Close" & "Getting Away" by Type of Community*

	Percentage Responding			
	Rural	**Urban**	**Suburban**	**Chi-Square**
Importance of living close to parents & relatives				
Sloan Subsample All Grades				
Somewhat Important	51.2	53.6	47.7	24.1***
Very Important	36.9	39.0	29.5	
NELS 1990 10th Grade				
Somewhat Important	55.1	53.4	54.5	28.1***
Very Important	21.9	27.1	24.4	
NELS 1992 12th Grade				
Somewhat Important	58.3	54.7	55.3	74.4***
Very Important	14.1	21.2	18.1	
Importance of getting away from this area of the country.				
Sloan Subsample All Grades				
Somewhat Important	31.6	36.6	29.1	12.3*
Very Important	17.1	7.6	11.0	
NELS 1990 10th Grade				
Somewhat Important	33.5	32.2	32.1	17.3**
Very Important	21.0	18.0	18.3	
NELS 1992 12th Grade				
Somewhat Important	38.7	35.8	37.0	74.5***
Very Important	23.9	19.7	18.9	

Note: "Not Important" responses not shown
Sloan Subsample: N = 670 6th, 8th, 10th, & 12th Graders
NELS 10th Graders: N = 15571
NELS 12th Graders: N = 14262
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

TABLE 2: *Prevalence of Potential Conflict in Mobility Aspirations by Type of Community and Gender*

	Percentage with Potential Conflict[a]			
	Rural	**Urban**	**Suburban**	**Chi-Square**
Sloan Subsample All Grades				
All Respondents	42.9	39.1	30.1	8.1*
Males only	48.0	36.2	27.5	8.7*
Females only	39.4	41.5	32.3	2.4
NELS 1990 10th Grade				
All Respondents	39.7	39.7	37.8	5.4
Males only	38.2	38.6	38.6	0.1
Females only	41.1	40.8	37.1	11.6**
NELS 1992 12th Grade				
All Respondents	43.2	41.4	39.3	17.4***
Males only	42.6	41.2	38.2	11.5**
Females only	43.7	41.7	40.3	6.5*

[a]**Potential Conflict:** Indicated by responses of "Somewhat Important" or "Very Important" to both of following items:

- "Living close to parents and relatives"
- "Getting away from this area of the country."

These were in a list which followed the question "How important is each of the following in your life?"

Sloan Subsample: N = 664 6th, 8th, 10th, & 12th Graders
NELS 1990: N = 15709 10th Graders
NELS 1992: N = 14427 12th Graders
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

TABLE 2. *Tenth Graders' Certainty of Further Education by Type of Community*

	Percentage Responding			
	Rural	**Urban**	**Suburban**	**Chi-Square**
How sure are you that you will go on for further education after you leave high school?				
Sloan Subsample 10th Grade				
Very sure I won't go	6.3	6.5	0	
I probably won't go	8.0	4.3	2.6	18.7**
I'll probably go	21.7	28.3	14.7	
Very sure I'll go	64.0	60.9	82.8	
NELS 1990 10th Grade				
Very sure I won't go	4.1	2.3	3.0	
I probably won't go	9.0	6.0	7.5	52.6***
I'll probably go	31.5	30.0	28.9	
Very sure I'll go	55.4	61.7	60.6	

Sloan Subsample: *N* = 337 10th Graders
NELS 1990: *N* = 15628 10th Graders
** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

TABLE 4: *Immediacy of College Plans by Type of Community*

	Percentage Responding			
	Rural	**Urban**	**Suburban**	**Chi-Square**
Do you plan to go to college after you graduate from high school?				
Sloan Subsample 10th & 12th Graders				
Yes, right after high school	69.3	59.2	91.9	
Yes, after staying out of school for one year *or* Yes, after staying out of school for over a year	18.9	15.8	4.1	49.0***
No, I don't plan to go	8.5	6.6	0.9	
Don't know	3.3	18.4	3.2	
NELS 1990 10th Grade				
Yes, right after HS	53.5	60.3	59.2	
Yes, after year or more	16.7	18.5	16.9	82.7***
No, I don't plan to go	18.6	11.1	14.2	
Don't know	11.1	10.1	9.7	
NELS 1992 12th Grade				
Yes, right after HS	71.6	75.9	78.5	
Yes, after year or more	17.0	15.6	14.5	92.9***
No, I don't plan to go	5.3	3.2	3.3	
Don't know	6.1	5.3	3.7	

Sloan Subsample: N = 370 10th & 12th graders
NELS 10th Graders: N = 15154
NELS 12th Graders: N = 13881
*** $p < .001$

TABLE 5: *Tenth Graders' Future Plans by Potential Conflict Status*

	Percentage Responding		
	With Conflict	**No Conflict**	**Chi-Square**
How sure are you that you will go on for further education after you leave high school?			
Sloan Subsample 10th Grade			
Very sure I won't go	4.8	3.4	
I probably won't go	7.5	3.0	4.9
I'll probably go	22.4	18.5	
Very sure I'll go	65.4	75.1	
NELS 1990 10th Grade			
Very sure I won't go	2.5	3.3	
I probably won't go	7.7	7.2	10.2*
I'll probably go	30.3	29.2	
Very sure I'll go	59.5	60.4	
Do you plan to go to college after you graduate from high school?			
Sloan Subsample 10th Grade			
Yes, right after HS	51.9	72.2	
Yes, after year or more	23.9	10.0	15.0**
No, I don't plan to go	8.4	5.5	
Don't know	15.8	12.2	
NELS 1990 10th Grade			
Yes, right after HS	57.3	59.3	
Yes, after year or more	18.0	16.8	6.7
No, I don't plan to go	14.3	14.1	
Don't know	10.4	9.8	

Continued

TABLE 5 *Continued*

	Percentage Responding		
	With Conflict	**No Conflict**	**Chi-Square**
What is the job or occupation you expect to have at age 30?			
NELS 1990 10th Grade			
Don't know	10.7	9.6	4.2*
[All other responses]	89.3	90.4	

Sloan Subsample: *N* = 299 10th Graders
NELS 10th Graders: *N* = 14631
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

TABLE 6: *Affect Regarding the Future by Potential Conflict Status*

	Mean Responses[a] With Conflict	No Conflict	*F* Value
Composite Measures			
Pessimism: Mean of Angry, Empty, Lonely, Doubtful, & Worried	3.04	2.76	7.77**
Optimism 1: Mean of Confident & Powerful	5.05	4.88	1.09
Optimism 2: Mean of Curious & Enthusiastic	5.37	5.39	0.03
Angry	2.61	2.21	5.15*
Empty	2.57	2.06	16.5***
Lonely	2.61	2.46	0.94
Doubtful	3.23	3.10	1.14
Worried	4.16	3.94	2.45
Confident	5.24	5.29	0.21
Powerful	4.87	4.48	3.72
Curious	5.48	5.57	0.01
Enthusiastic	5.24	5.21	0.06

[a]Mean responses on a seven point scale to the question, "**When thinking about the future do you feel any of the following? ...**

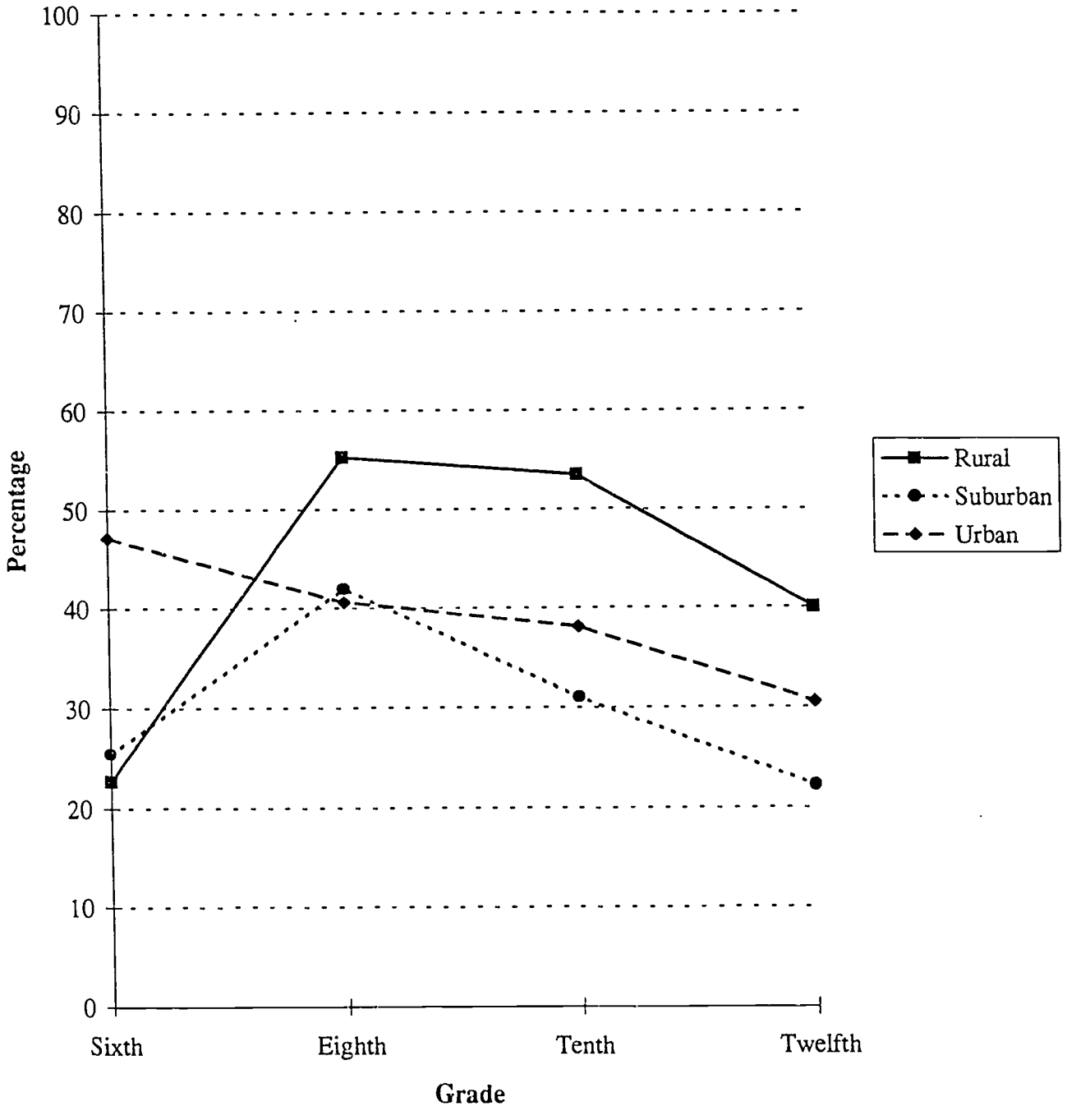
Note: Reported *F* Values are the result of a 2 (Conflict) by 2 (Gender) by 3 (Site) by 4 (Grade) ANOVA.
N = 635 6th, 8th, 10th, & 12th Graders
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

TABLE 7: *Affect Regarding the Future, by Site*

	Mean Responses			
	Rural	**Urban**	**Suburban**	***F* Value**
Composite Measures				
Pessimism: Mean of Angry, Empty, Lonely, Doubtful, & Worried	2.85	3.04	2.80	6.15**
Optimism 1: Mean of Confident & Powerful	5.02	5.03	4.76	3.68*
Optimism 2: Mean of Curious & Enthusiastic	5.44	5.09	5.53	12.0***
Angry	2.62	2.54	2.19	8.37***
Empty	2.35	2.47	2.25	2.41
Lonely	2.43	2.77	2.48	4.90**
Doubtful	2.96	3.41	3.08	9.75***
Worried	3.88	3.99	3.99	0.96
Confident	5.23	5.22	5.26	0.18
Powerful	4.82	4.83	4.26	9.83***
Curious	5.57	5.09	5.74	14.7***
Enthusiastic	5.30	5.05	5.41	3.94*

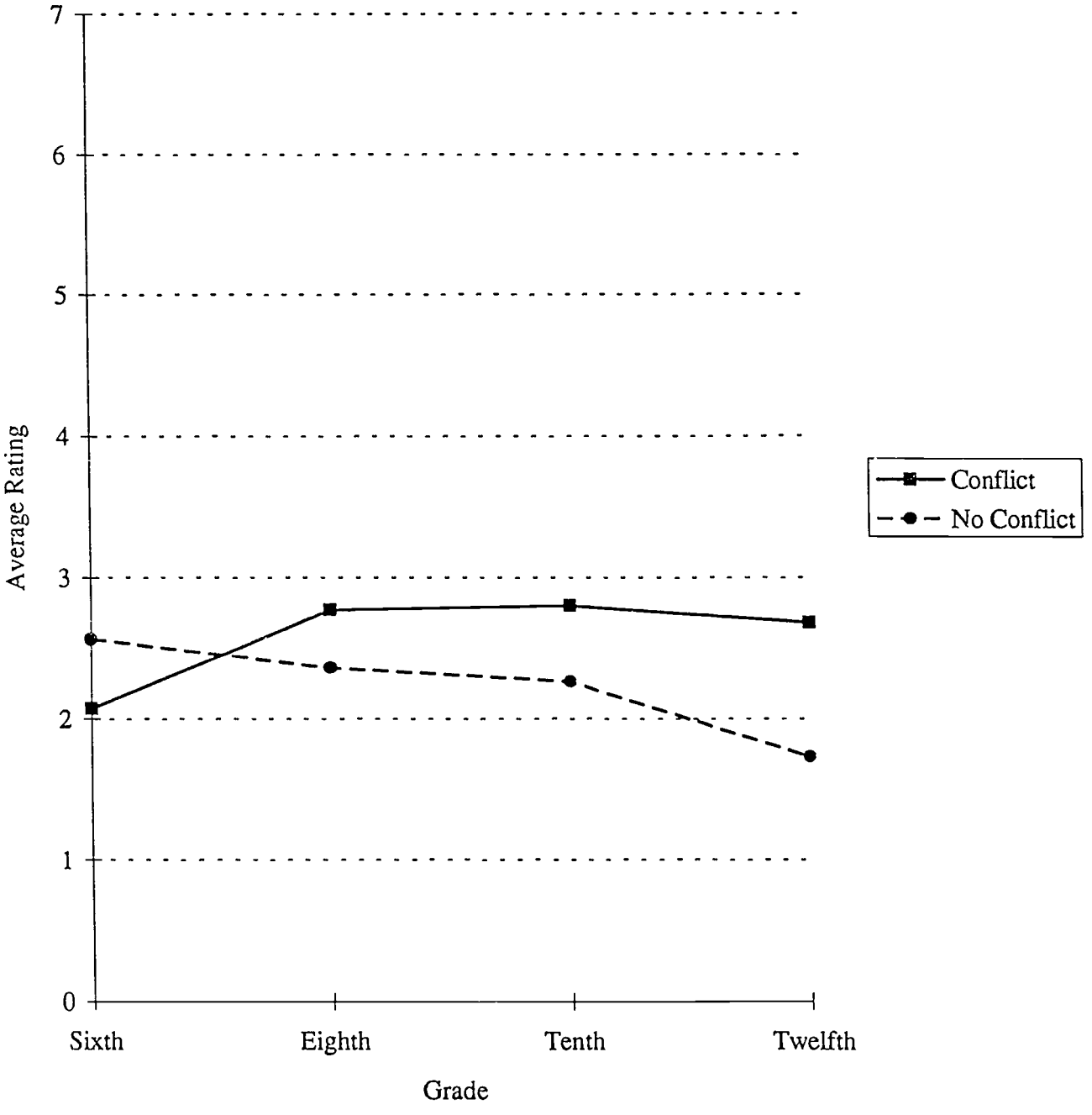
Note: Reported *F* Values are the result of a 2 (Gender) by 3 (Site) by 4 (Grade) ANOVA.
N = 975 6th, 8th, 10th, & 12th Graders
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

FIGURE 1: *Potential Conflict By Type of Community & Grade*



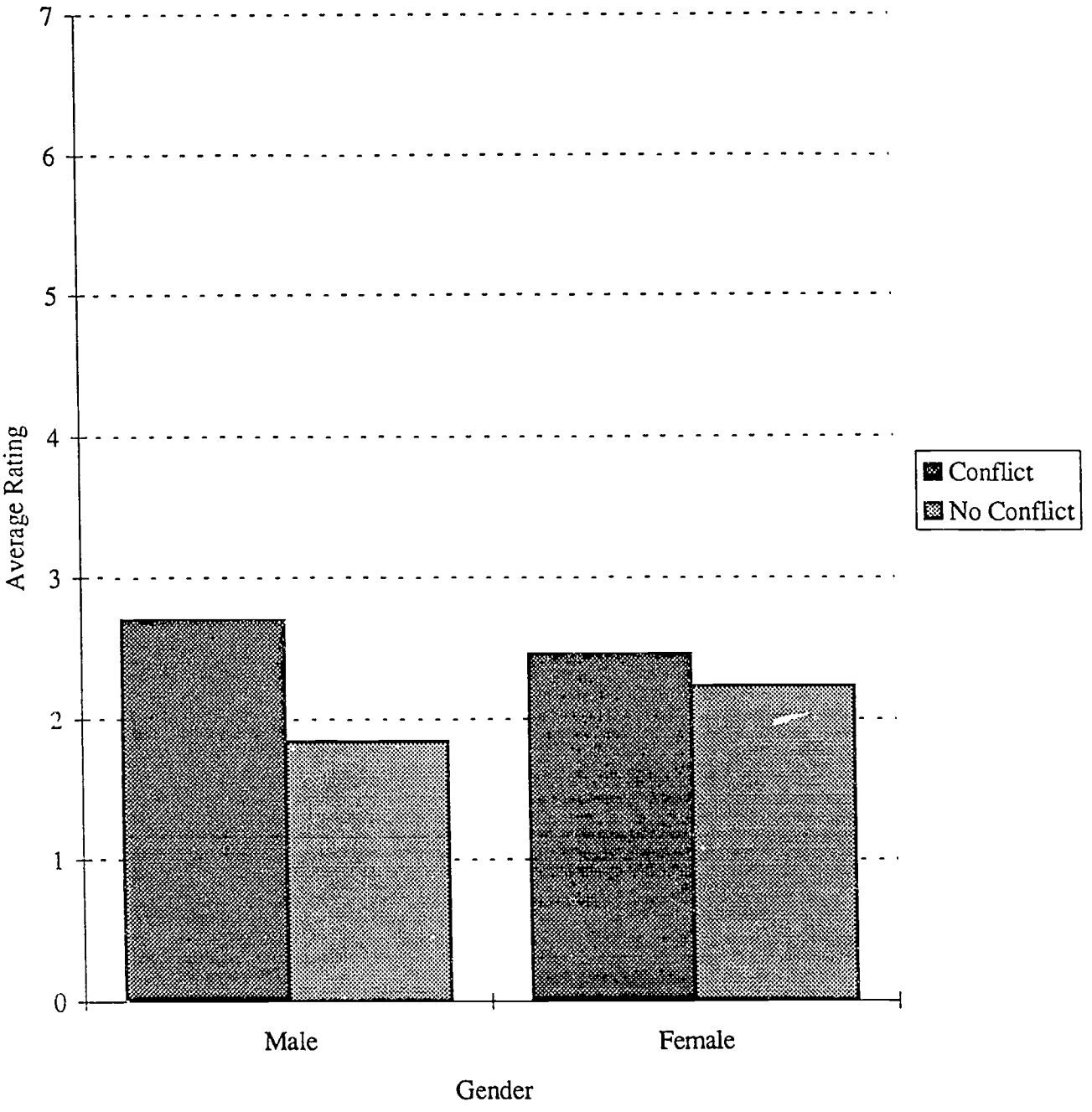
N = 664; Grade 6 Chi-square = 9.1, $p < .05$; Grade 8 Chi-square = 2.9, ns.;
Grade 10 Chi-square = 6.1, $p < .05$; Grade 12 Chi-square = 4.1, ns.

FIGURE 2: Angry by Potential Conflict by Grade



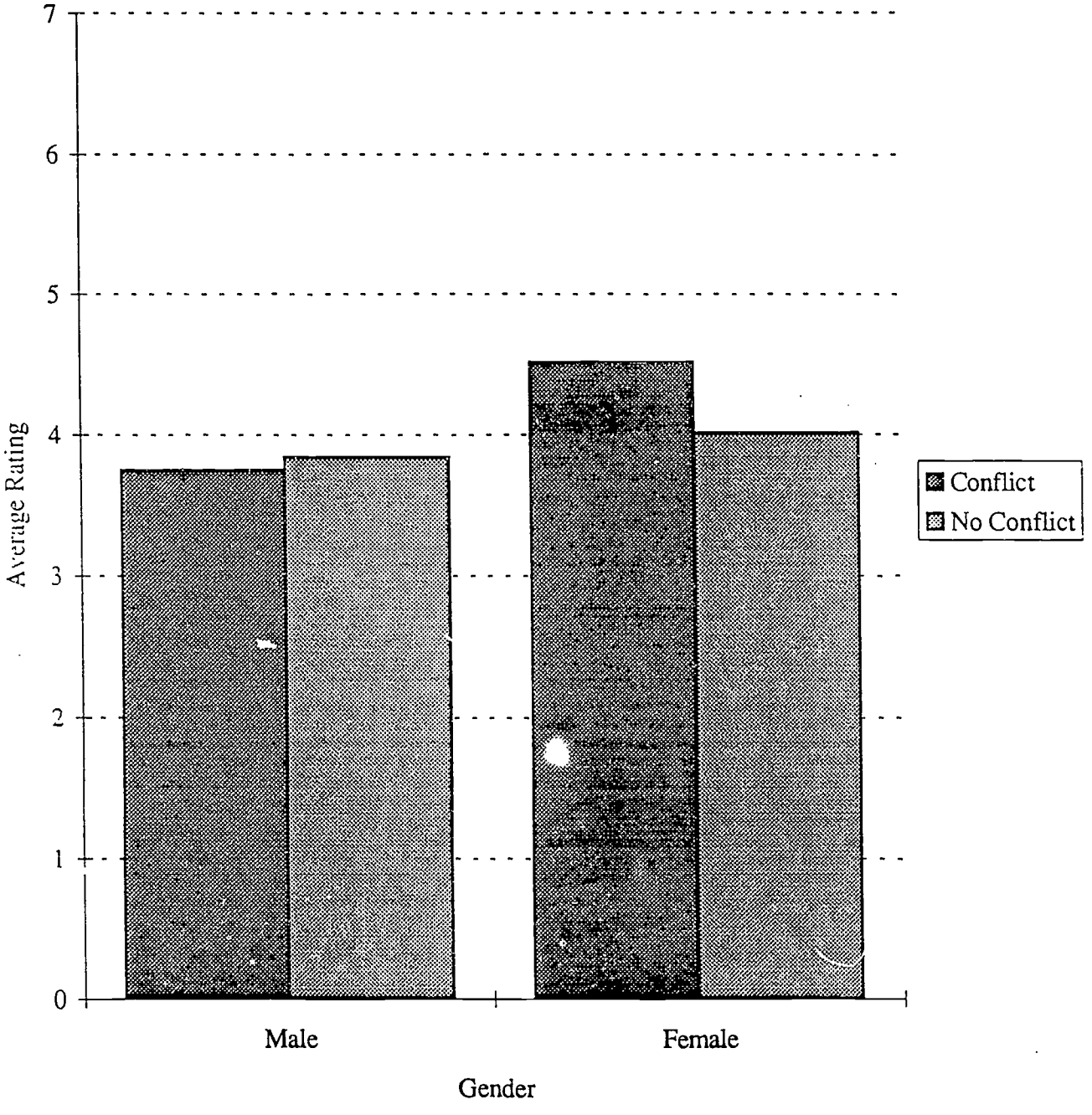
N = 639; $F(3, 592) = 5.2$, $p < .01$ Interaction

FIGURE 3a: *Empty by Potential Conflict by Gender*



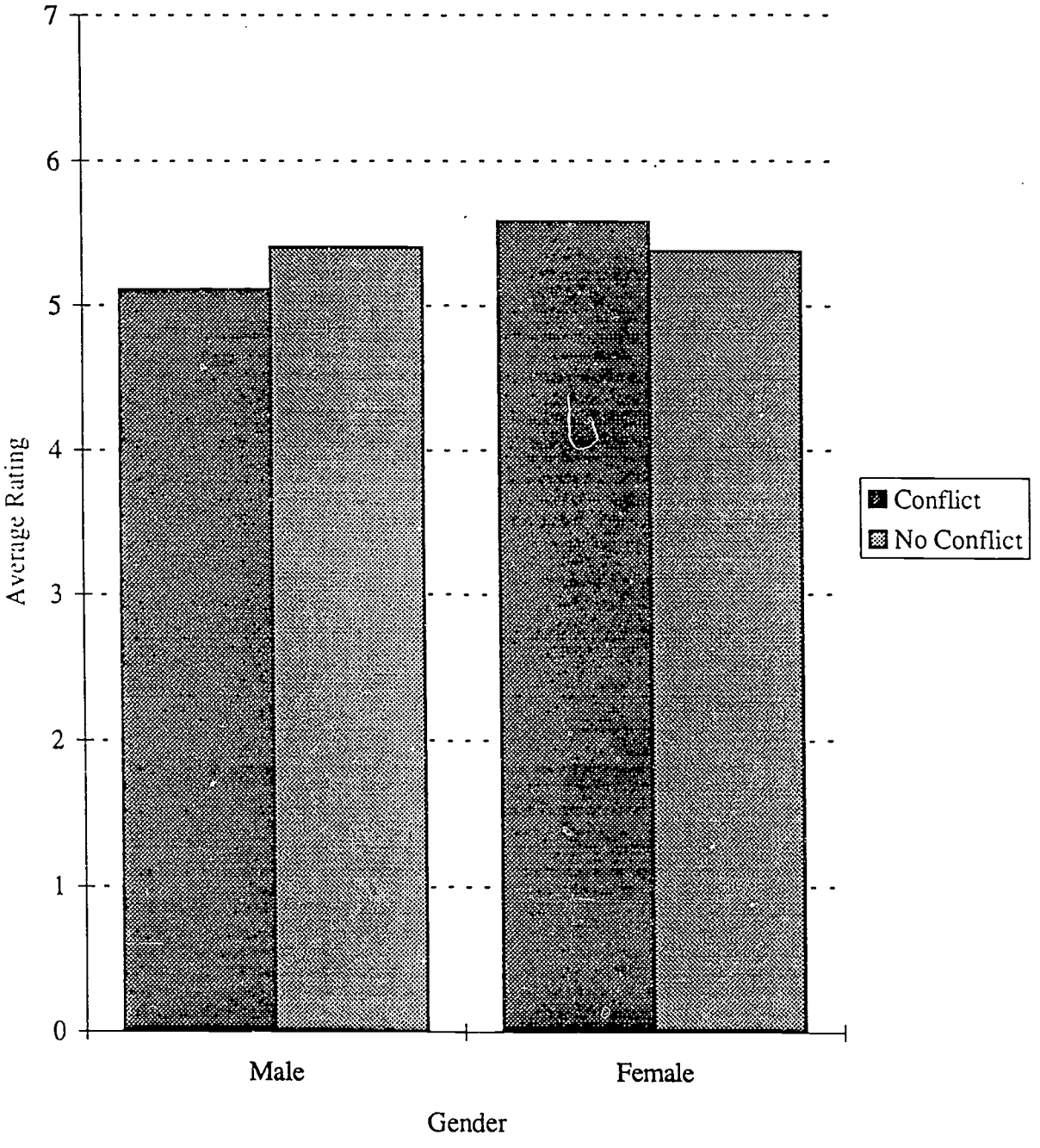
N = 636; F(1, 589) = 6.18, p < .05 Interaction

FIGURE 3b: *Worried by Potential Conflict by Gender*



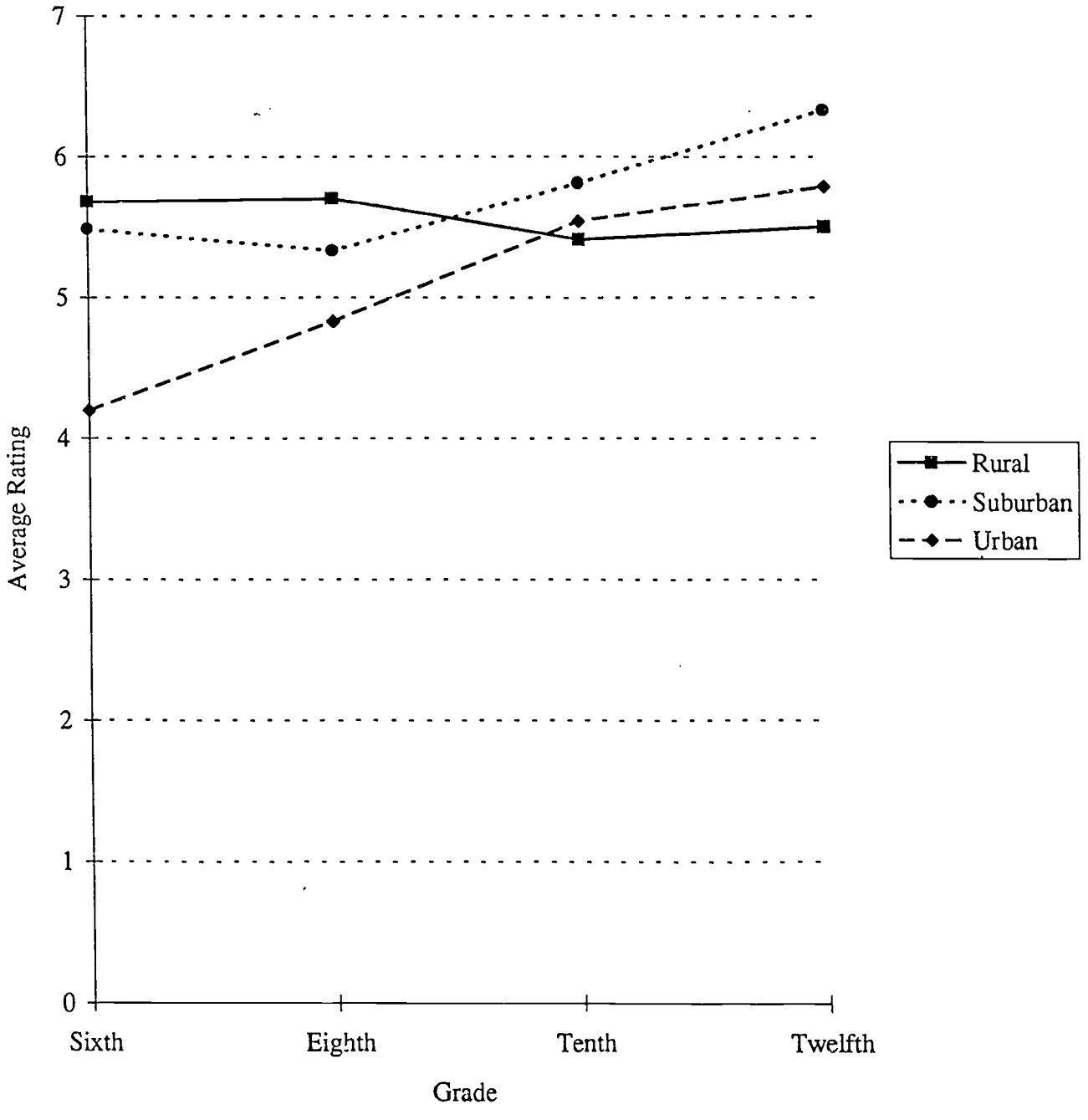
N = 640; F(1, 593) = 4.32, p < .05 Interaction

FIGURE 3c: *Optimism 2 by Potential Conflict by Gender*



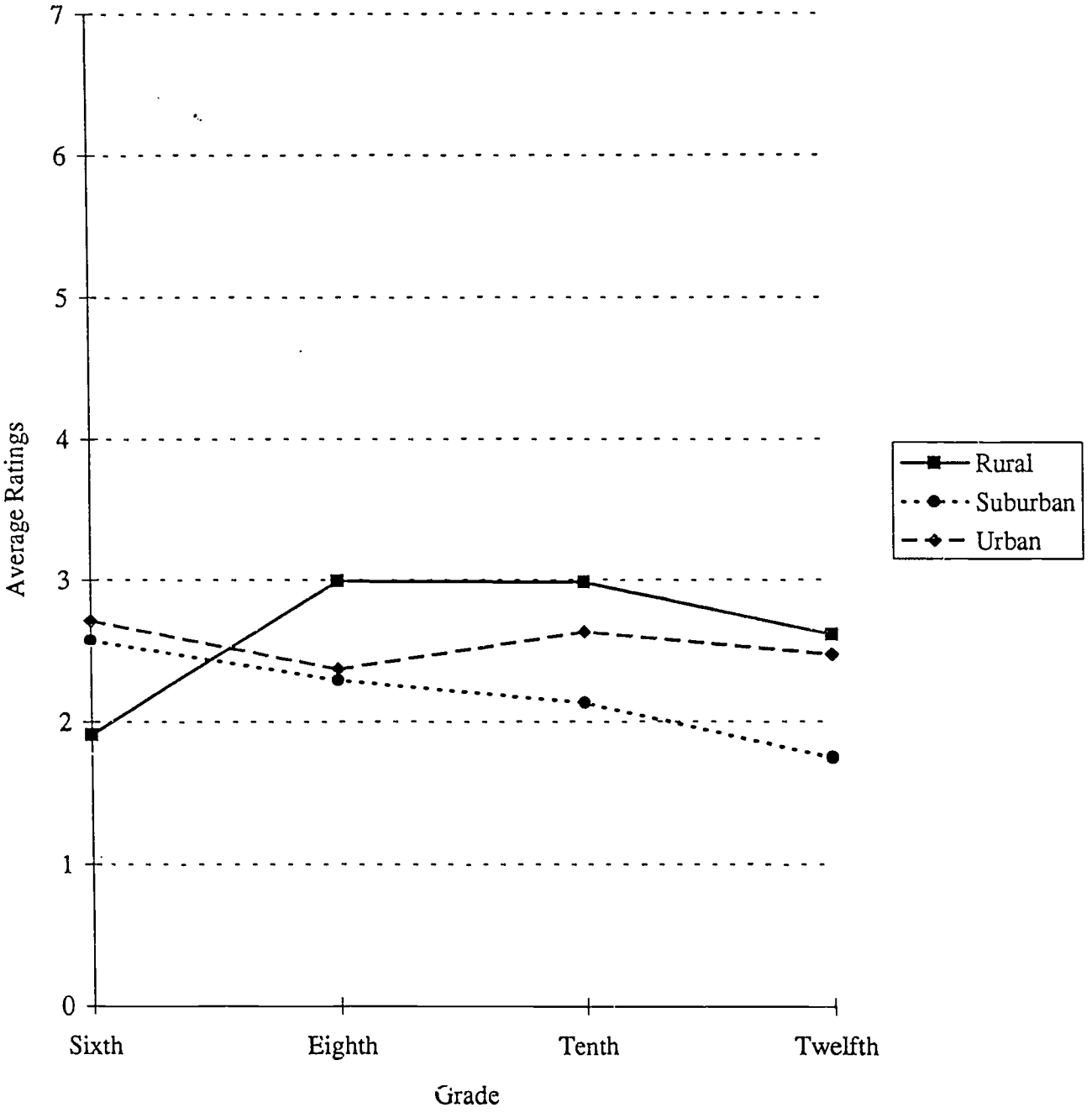
Optimism 2: Average of Curious and Enthusiastic
N = 640; $F(1, 593) = 5.23$, $p < .05$ Interaction

FIGURE 4: *Curious by Site by Grade*



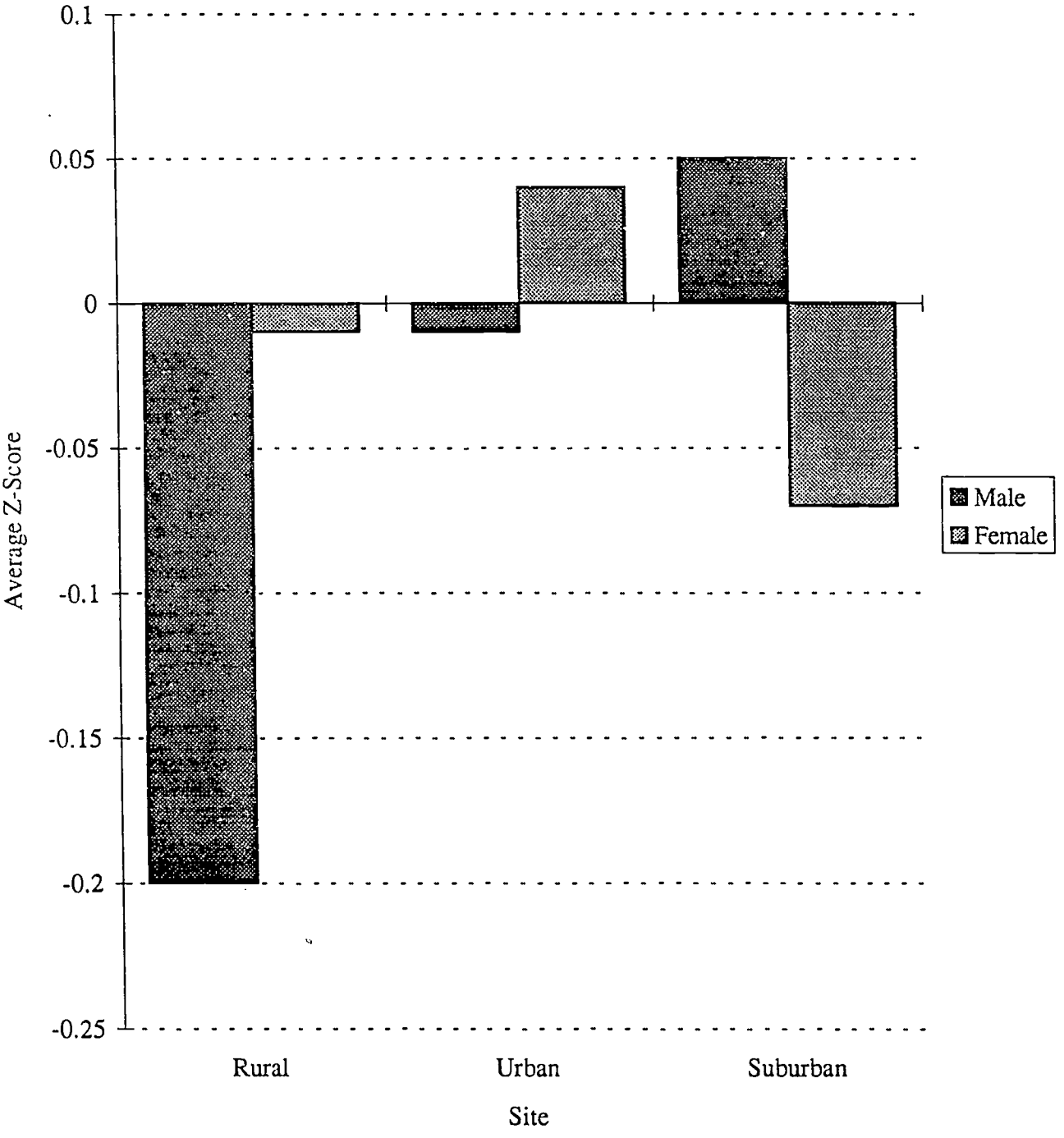
N = 941; $F(6, 917) = 6.85$, $p < .001$ Interaction

FIGURE 5: *Angry by Site by Grade*



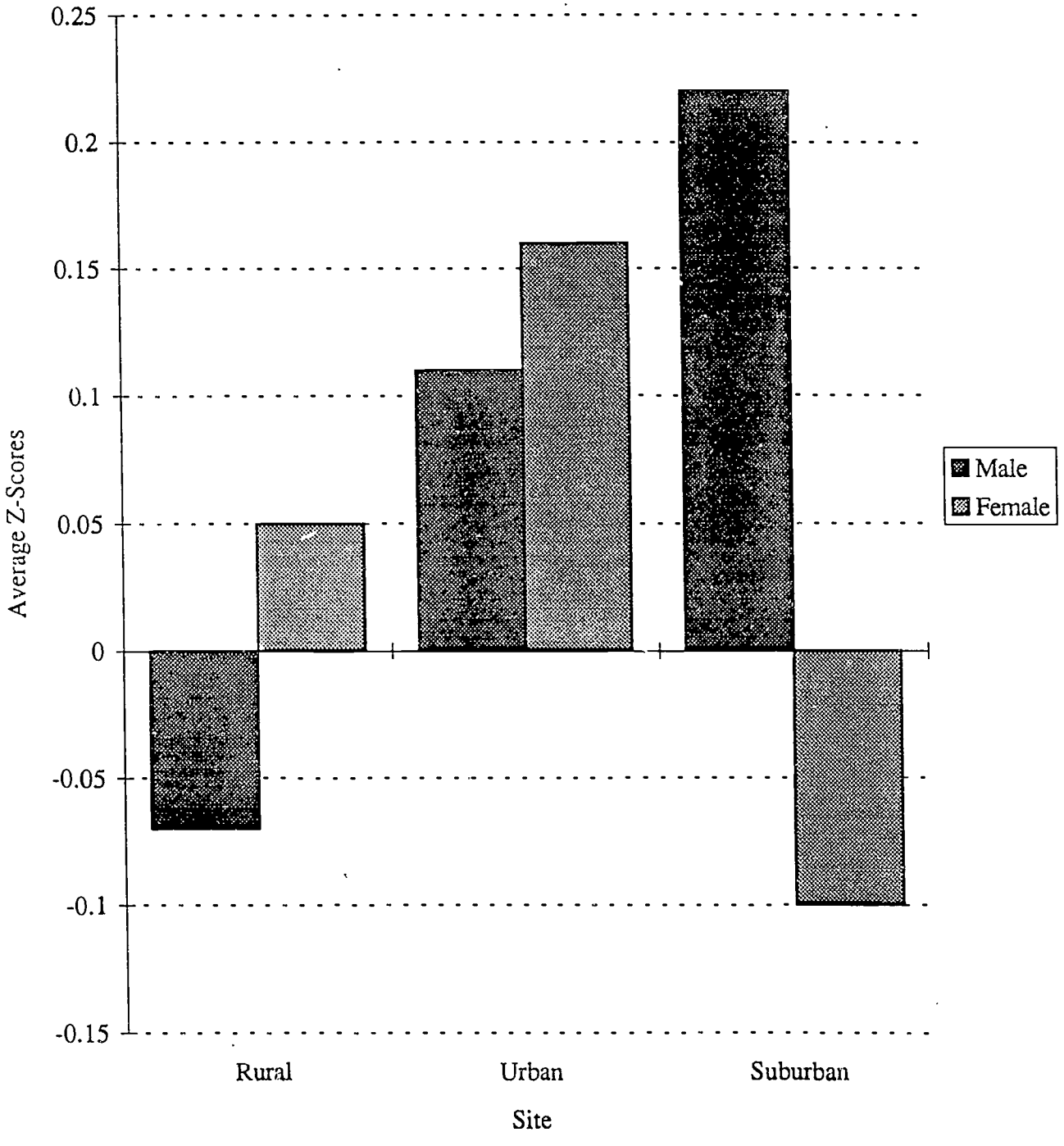
N = 942; F(6, 918) = 4.84, p < .001 Interaction

FIGURE 6: *Affect by Site by Gender When Future Importance is High*



N = 263; F(2, 239) = 3.72, p < .05 Interaction

FIGURE 7: *Motivation by Site by Gender*
When Future Importance is High



N = 266; F(2, 242) = 7.14, p < .01 Interaction

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