

Nonconventional Family Life-Styles and School Achievement: A 12-Year Longitudinal Study

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The life-styles of countercultural, nonconventional families have potential risks as well as benefits for children's school achievement. The effects on children's school achievement of nonconventional family organization, parents' values and commitment to their family life-style, and family stability were examined in a 12-year longitudinal study of 146 nonconventional families and a comparison group of 43 stable, two-parent conventional families. In spite of considerable instability and other potential risk conditions in nonconventional families' lives (single parent or unmarried couple status, frequent change, stigma, low incomes, and others), most of their children do as well or better in school than a comparison group of conventional families. These effects were still present after adjusting for child WISC-R, gender, and family SES. Those children doing best in school come from families who have a stronger commitment to their nonconventional family life-style while those doing less well have families with a lower commitment. Children in single parent families had grades similar to those of children in two-parent families. Family stability—regardless of the form of the family (single parent or couple)—also was associated with higher grades. Strong commitment to meaningful values regarding the importance of one's family life-style can protect children against some of the risks that were a part of many countercultural family's lives.

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The countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s are more than a part of social history. Their influence remains very much alive and relevant to contemporary family and educational research. Countercultural values and practices have spread widely into the general political culture (Gitlin, 1987; Keniston, 1968) and have influenced environmentalism (Weisner, Bausano, & Kornfein, 1983), new communal and religious movements (Kanter, 1972; Tipton, 1982; Zablocki, 1980), changing conceptions of family life (Kornfein, Weisner, & Martin, 1977; Lamb, 1982), and changing moral and ethical values and commitments (Bellah et al., 1985). Countercultural parents had a strong commitment to values such as nonmaterialism, sex egalitarianism, environmentalism, or alternative achievement goals, among others. They often chose nonconventional family and household situations, such as communal, unmarried couple, or single parent by choice arrangements. They positively valued experimentation and change in many spheres of life (Eiduson & Weisner, 1978). Innovative for their time, these features of countercultural life-styles are widely found throughout society 20 years later.

Although the participants in the countercultural life-styles of the 1960s and 1970s are now in mid-life, and they (perhaps inevitably) have changed with the times, their influence may still be visible in how they choose to form families and raise their own children.¹ Our paper focuses on the school achievement of these "children of the children of the '60's" (Weisner & Eiduson, 1986). We will show that in spite of considerable instability and other potential risk conditions in these families' lives (unusual family situations, frequent change, stigma, low incomes, and other conditions), most of their children do as well or better in school than a comparison group of conventional families. Those children doing best in school come from families who have a stronger commitment to their nonconventional family life-style while those doing less well have a lower commitment. Family stability—regardless of the form of the family (single parent or couple)—also was associated with higher grades. We believe that strong commitment to meaningful values regarding the importance of one's family life-style can protect children against some of the risks and life changes that were a part of many countercultural families' lives.

Our study was exploratory, in the sense that we knew of family circumstances that might put children growing up in nonconventional family life-styles at risk for school achievement, but also knew of conditions (such as relatively high formal education among parents, or a strong commitment to nonconventional values and life-styles) that might lead them to do as well or better than our comparison group. We also were aware that school achievement is multiply determined and that nonconventional life-styles and values, although we expected them to be influential, were not the only or even necessarily the most important influences on children's school achievement.

Nonconventional Family Life-Styles and School Achievement

Life-span developmental research suggests that the effects and definition of family life-styles are the result of "agreements" among family members and their cultural milieu (rather than being fixed and invariant institutional or cultural categories):

Instead of viewing family norms as "givens," we can see them as agreements worked out through family interaction. By taking this process view of interdependence, life-course analysis moves back and forth between the individual and the group. (Elder, 1987, p. 186)

The countercultural movement certainly opened a new era of negotiations within families, as well as with the normative standards of the culture of the time. Indeed, Elder comments that the renewed interest in life-course studies itself was in part due to the "social discontinuities" of that decade (1985, p. 15) and led to new formulations in the field of life-course socialization (Nesselroade & Eye, 1984; Baltes & Brim, 1980). We thought that nonconventional family life-styles might influence children in school due to the active questioning and high involvement in change characteristic of many such families.

There is also good reason to believe that chains of family influence that extend across generations can contribute to resilience in children—or to multigenerational problems. Werner and Smith (1989), for instance, describe cross-generational family influences that encouraged child resilience in the face of significant risks for school achievement and physical and psychosocial health. Elder (1974) also showed the powerful mediating influence of family constellations, child's gender, and family stability in how adolescents responded to the Great Depression.

The new family forms, pioneered to some extent by nonconventional families, require new family and household classifications for social science as well. Categories like "single mother," "common-law" relationship, or "traditional" married couple, for example, are inadequate to capture the values and cultural commitment that nonconventional parents invested in their family life-styles. Furthermore, nonconventional parents changed their family arrangements frequently. Stability in family life was not necessarily a central goal for many of these families; static categories miss the change and flexibility in family life. New ways of classifying family life-styles are needed that go beyond classifications based on marital status and domestic group organization, ones that include family values and commitment to a life-style as integral parts of the classifications, as well as judgments of stability. We will present an example of such a family classification scheme and show its usefulness in predicting children's school achievement.

Risks in Nonconventional Family Life-Styles

There were good reasons for concern that some of the children growing up in nonconventional, countercultural families would be at risk. For in-

stance, there were many single mother households among the nonconventional family arrangements (Kornfein, 1985); some parents were unmarried, living in various kinds of "social contract" arrangements (Alexander, 1978); still others lived in communal or collective living groups of various kinds (Weisner & Martin, 1979). Divorce, separation, and family and household change were common. Many of these kinds of family circumstances, familiar in the counterculture, have been shown to be associated with lower educational achievement in some children (Boyd & Parish, 1985; Hetherington, Camara, & Featherman, 1978, 1983; Scott-Jones, 1984; Shinn, 1978; Thompson, Alexander, & Entwisle, 1988). Studies have shown differences in teachers' perceptions of children in divorced versus two-parent families (Guttman, Geva, & Gefen, 1988; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978); these perceptions have led to differences in parental involvement and knowledge of school tasks and other areas (Blechman, 1982; Stevenson & Baker, 1987).

Family instability also was more common in the lives of many nonconventional parents. We define family instability as relatively frequent changes in mates or in household composition. Instability and change in family circumstances have been associated with educational difficulties for children, due to mechanisms such as the stress of cumulative changes (Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford, & Blyth, 1987), the stress of gaining a new parent (Amato & Ochiltree, 1987), lower teacher expectations of children from such families (Guttman et al., 1988; Hess & Camara, 1979; Rist, 1970; Santrock & Tracy, 1978; Brophy & Good, 1974), parental time and workload pressures (Milne, Meyers, Rosenthal, & Ginsburg, 1986), the effects of parental adjustment to a new family life-style that directly affects the adjustment of the child (Hess & Camera, 1979), or differences in the availability of male identification figures (Bandura & Walters, 1963). Higher instability in family organization may be associated with a more uncertain everyday domestic routine or "arena of comfort" (McLanahan, 1983) and possibly with less opportunity for the inclusion of literacy-enhancing activities in such routines (Walberg & Marjoribanks, 1976). Nonconventional parents experienced all the normal stresses and pressures of changing relationships in the 1970s and 1980s. But, in addition, there was a commitment to experimentation among many countercultural families that often led to a high rate of change in spouses or mates in the early years of their children's lives (Weisner, 1986a).

Furthermore, many nonconventional families had low and unpredictable incomes, and some received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC); this clearly could put some of the children of nonconventional families at risk for educational achievement, just as is true for conventional families with income problems (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Entwisle, Alexander, Cadigan, & Pallas, 1986; Entwisle & Hayduk, 1988; McLanahan, 1985; Thompson, Alexander, & Entwisle, 1988). The various sources of instability in their lives related to divorce and separation added to their economic concerns. Also, some nonconventional parents chose "voluntary poverty"

(Weisner, 1982; Weisner & Weibel, 1981), an intentionally simplified non-materialistic life, while others chose alternative religious preferences, which led some families away from careerist or material interests.

Finally, many nonconventional families experienced significant stigmatizing and derogatory labeling due to their unusual religious preferences, dress, political beliefs, drug use, sexual preferences, culturally unusual conduct, and freewheeling life-styles. Families combining several of these practices would be even more likely to be stigmatized and perhaps have children experiencing difficulties in school, as the work on cumulative effects of risk suggests (Garnezy & Rutter, 1983).

Protective Factors in Nonconventional Life-Styles

However, in spite of significant risks, there were reasons to expect that the children from nonconventional families might do well in school. Parents who chose a family life-style *because it had a coherent cultural meaning for them* might not have children at educational risk. For instance, there is reason to believe that a sense of meaningfulness or commitment to a life-style can influence the way in which otherwise risky, difficult circumstances are experienced (Weisner, 1986b; Weisner & Eiduson, 1986). The varied kinds of coherent cultural meaning systems (D'Andrade, 1984) espoused by many countercultural families included a rich mixture of ideas, schemas, norms and practices, institutional involvements, and personal emotional significances for family members. An earlier study provided some evidence for a positive effect of commitments like these. Cognitive functioning and socio-emotional assessments of children (through age 6) in nonconventional families revealed only a few, scattered differences between children in conventional and nonconventional life-styles (Eiduson, Kornfein, Zimmerman, & Weisner, 1982). Family members who share a consistent schema and values about the family life-style they are in—for instance, that it is a valued, desirable, and culturally meaningful kind of family situation to them—might have children with better school outcomes, even if their family life-style is relatively unstable.

Among the studies we reviewed identifying the kinds of family conditions that can place children at risk, some also emphasize that it is the overall *quality* of the family life-style that matters for school outcomes. Quality includes the role of mediating contextual circumstances (income, race, or ~~parental expectations and values, for instance~~), *rather than simply the state* of being single or unmarried by itself, (e.g., McLanahan, 1983). The quality of a life-style can offer protection from risk, and values commitments are among the qualities that can offer such protection to families and children.

In addition, many countercultural families were deeply committed to achievement goals. Quite contrary to the perception of counterculture participants as "laid-back" or unconcerned nonachievers, many sustained efforts to reach moderately difficult, challenging goals. In other words, achievement striving remained important to the lives and experience of

many individuals in the counterculture. Marjoribanks (1987) describes a "getting by" versus a "getting ahead" orientation among families, a distinction that characterizes achievement in countercultural families as well. What many in the countercultures were redefining were the goals worth striving for, the things worth achieving, and the obstacles worth overcoming to achieve those goals. These alternative achievement goals included the attainment of inner harmony and personal peace and understanding; religious salvation in a variety of alternative religious communities; a nonmaterialistic values orientation; artistic and musical expression; political changes; new relationship styles in families and between the sexes; and environmental sensitivity. These alternative goals were pursued with as much fervor and intensity as culturally conventional goals such as attractive physical appearance, high salaries, high status career and occupational success, or high test scores and school grades.

Nonconventional families often engaged in intense conversations about their goals and actions, and included children in these discussions from an early age (Weisner, 1982). Many felt part of a social movement and felt a sense of belonging and identity, which may have been transmitted to their children (Kornfein, Weisner, & Martin, 1977; Weisner, Kornfein, & Alexander, 1986). Of course, these socialization processes did not occur in all nonconventional families; nor are they unique to such families. However, there is evidence that many nonconventional parents encouraged such socialization patterns.

Many nonconventional family life-styles, then, are unusual in (a) certain of their values orientations and their commitment to such values; (b) their nonconventional family organization (e.g., single parents and unmarried couples by choice); and (c) a positive attitude towards family and social experimentation, as well as an increased likelihood of change and instability. Fraser, Walberg, Welch, and Hattie (1987) identify these as among the factors influencing school achievement, although they emphasize that school achievement is multiply determined. Our study explored the long-term influence of values, family organization, and change on school achievement, recognizing that while nonconventional families had life-styles that could put their children at risk, many also had proactive values and commitment to their life-styles that might help their children do well in school. Although instability and nonconventional family life-styles might be difficult for children, a strong family commitment to the values behind their life-style might be an asset.

Hypotheses

We examined five exploratory hypotheses, all based on the idea that parental commitment to a nonconventional life-style might well protect children against potential educational risk due to such features as instability or single parenthood. Table 1 and the Analysis Plan (below) indicate the specific group comparisons suggested by each hypothesis. The five hypotheses are the following

1. We expected to find differences in school achievement across family life-style groups. Other influences, such as SES, child sex, or the child's cognitive ability, could also influence school achievement. However, we expected that children would still have varying school achievement due to growing up in different kinds of nonconventional family life-styles, in addition to any effects of SES, child sex, or child cognitive abilities.
2. Children from nonconventional families should do as well as or better than a conventional comparison sample, if the nonconventional parents sustained a commitment to their values and life-style. Without such a commitment, nonconventional families might do worse than the comparison sample. In other words, we proposed that nonconventional family life-styles might positively affect children's school grades if the parents were strongly committed to their countercultural values and life-styles (tests of this hypothesis are indicated by cells with a "2" in Table 1).
3. Children from nonconventional families with a higher level of commitment to their life-style should do better in school than children in nonconventional families with a lower commitment. This comparison controls for family organization and directly compares countercultural families to each other, based on parents' different levels of values commitment (indicated by cells with a "3" in Table 1).
4. Children from nonconventional families that are both unstable and have low commitment should do the poorest in every relevant comparison (cells with a "4" in Table 1).
5. Family organization might also influence school achievement apart from parents' life-style commitment (cells with a "5" in Table 1). Children of single parents or children in unstable families might not do as well as those in two-parent families, for instance.

To explore these hypotheses, we needed a sample in which we had a substantial number of nonconventional families with high commitment to their values and life-styles, as well as nonconventional families with lower commitment, and a comparison group of conventional families. To explore the effects of family organization and family stability, we needed relatively stable one-parent and two-parent families, as well as a group with more unstable family organization. We also needed longitudinal data on families, children, and school achievement. The next section describes such a sample, the Family Lifestyles Projects, and the measures we used.

Methodology

Sample Selection

The Family Lifestyles (FLS) Project, founded by Bernice Eiduson and colleagues (Alexander, 1978; Eiduson, Cohen, & Alexander, 1973; Eiduson &

Table 1
Post Hoc Comparisons of Mathematics and Reading Grades by Conventional and Nonconventional Family Life-Styles and Stability/Family Organization

Family life-style group	Conventional comparison sample	Nonconventional values group					
		Lower commitment			Higher commitment		
		Stable one-parent	Stable two-parent	unstable	Stable one-parent	Stable two-parent	unstable
Conventional comparison sample							
Nonconventional values							
Lower commitment							
Stable one-parent	2	5					
Stable two-parent	2						
Unstable	2,4	4,5	4,5				
Higher commitment							
Stable one-parent	2	3		4			
Stable two-parent	2		3	4	5		
Unstable	2			3,4	5	5	

Note. Lower or higher commitment means lower or higher commitment to one's family life-style. The post hoc comparisons of interest are marked with a number or numbers which reflect the hypotheses to be tested. The hypotheses are numbered in the text. (Hypothesis 1 is omitted since it does not involve post hoc comparisons of family groups.)

Weisner, 1978), has been following a sample of 205 families since 1974-75. Of these families, 154 lived for some period of time in nonconventional situations: 47 single mothers by choice (Kornfein, 1985), 53 "social contract" (non legally married) couples (Alexander, 1978), and 54 in various kinds of communes and group living situations (Weisner & Martin, 1979).

We also assembled a comparison sample of two-parent, married couples in the same socioeconomic and age group as the nonconventional sample. Forty-one of the comparison group families were selected through a sample from obstetricians throughout California. These physicians were asked to nominate from their current cases an expectant mother in a married couple relationship. Ten additional conventionally married couples were selected through staff contacts in the Los Angeles area.

It was not easy to assemble this large a group of families for intensive study. The task was even more difficult because our prospective longitudinal design required that we reach women while they were pregnant and interview them during their third trimester, with permission to study their child from birth onwards. To find nonconventional families, we used every technique of recruitment we could, including advertising in alternative media, and contacting birthing centers and physician offices where countercultural and nonconventional parents tended to go. We sometimes used snowball sampling (in which we started with one already found participant, and included up to two additional pregnant women known to her), as well as personal contacts of staff and acquaintances. Our criteria for selection ensured that nonconventional lifestyles would include communes, single mothers, and social contract couples in approximately equal numbers. However, we did not measure parents' values orientations, their degree of commitment to their life-styles, or their reasons for choosing their life-styles until *after* families were selected. Hence our sampling strategy ensured the assembling of a large group of nonconventional families without predetermining these families' values or commitment, which in fact varied widely.

Data were gathered on parent demographic background and values beginning at the last trimester of pregnancy through 6 years. Data on family organization were obtained throughout a 12-year period using interviews and telephone conversations with parents and during three home visits between birth and age 6. School data were collected at three time periods from ages 7 to 12, in Grades 1, 2, and 6.² Teachers provided math and reading grades of the children at Grades 1, 2, and 6.³

Attrition in this study remained extremely low. The student, parent, and teacher measures were at least 95% complete through 12 years. School data for Grades 1, 2, and 6 were obtained for 202 children, or 98% of the original sample.

Sample Description

To test the long-term influences of nonconventional families on school achievement, we required a way to group these families that would cap-

ture the nature and stability of their family circumstances over time and their degree of commitment to nonconventional values and life-styles. We established six nonconventional family groups by dividing the nonconventional families into those with higher or lower commitment to their life-style, and then dividing each of these categories into stable one-parent, stable two-parent, and unstable family organizational patterns. Our seventh group consisted of the comparison sample. A wide range of working to upper-middle class families were represented; all were Euro-Americans. All parents were living in California at entry (about half were still in California 12 years later) and were between the 20th and 90th national percentile on our socioeconomic measures when selected. Mothers had completed an average of 14 years of education, and fathers 16 years, by the time their child was 6. Mothers were between 18 and 32 years of age when first interviewed; 75% were about to have their first child; 47% of the children were girls and 53% were boys.

Values. Eiduson et al. (1973) defined eight values orientations that characterized the countercultural movement: alternative achievement goals, pronaturalism, humanism, more concern with the present compared to a future orientation, concern with standards other than scientific ones, acceptance of authority other than conventional or scientific authority, sex egalitarianism, and nonmaterialistic orientations. Weisner et al. (1983) studied pronaturalism in the FLS sample. Pronaturalism included a complex of values and practices involving environmental concern, emotional and personal openness, and a "laid-back, mellow," relaxed interpersonal and socio-emotional orientation. The Eiduson et al. (1982) and Weisner and Wilson-Mitchell (1990) studies of sex egalitarianism in the FLS sample found selective effects of familial efforts to socialize their children and change familial roles. These data suggested that values may have been fervently held, but were only *selectively* translated into family forms and practices.

Family organization and stability. Data on the family organization of the parents were collected at 10 time periods: birth of the child, 6 months, 1 year, 1½ years, 2 years, 3 years, 4½ years, 6 years, 9 years and 12 years. Family living arrangements were coded as single parent, married couple, or unmarried couple at each point in time.⁴ We assessed the pattern of changes or stability in the family across four developmental periods in the child's life: birth to age 3; age 4 to 6; age 7 to 9; and age 10 to 12. These periods correspond roughly to infancy and toddlerhood, preschool and kindergarten; and elementary school and early middle school grades.

We first examined stability of family organization with each time period. Two raters classified each case as a "stable one-parent," "stable two-parent," or "unstable" family. Unstable families presented a typical picture of intermittent, unpredictable male involvement in the child's household throughout the 12 years. Change became less frequent as parents got older, regardless of the family category or previous levels of change.

Next, judgments were made for each family as to the predominant kind

of family situation the child experienced over the 12-year period. For example, a parent who had frequent change in the first 3 years of the child's life, but then settled into a couple relationship, got married, and remained married thereafter, would be classified under the stable two-parent family category in terms of the child's and parents' overall experience. Thirty-three percent of the families classified as stable one- or two-parent never changed over the 12 years of our study. Another 50% of these families classified as stable overall, changed once, but usually early in the child's life. The remaining 17% with two or more changes classified as stable single parent are single mothers who briefly lived with a partner early in the child's life, and then returned to single status for the remaining years. Thus stable single parent or stable couple families, in terms of our overall assessment, consisted of families whose *predominant* circumstances over a 12-year period were single parent or couple households.

Many of the more stable parents "never considered any other kind of family life-style," as one conventional comparison sample mother said to us. Other parents remained in a stable social contract, unmarried situation for many years because "my father and mother had a very bad marriage, and I won't repeat their situation," as one mother said, or because "marriage is just not important in our relationship," or because "I won't let the state or any legal vows get involved in my family," in the words of another. Many single mothers tried relationships and marriage because they "could not deal with the financial and personal stress of being a single parent" permanently, while in the words of another single parent, "I am the first college graduate from my family, and a feminist," and "if there is no permanent, one man in my life, that is alright with me." Family stability and change were in every case a complex combination of financial, personal, and family value issues—although there were also those parents who said to us, "I don't honestly know, really, why I am in this life-style."

Our assessment method, hence, involved careful examination of the pattern of stability for 194 cases with sufficient data from birth to age 12. Our case by case assessments produced three overall groupings: 18.6% ($n = 36$) of the sample were stable single parent families, 64.4% ($n = 125$) were stable two-parent families, and 17.0% ($n = 33$) were unstable families. These are the three groups of families used in our quantitative analyses to summarize stability and family organization. There was 94% agreement between raters for ratings of family organization and stability from birth to 12 years. Cohen's Kappa (Hollenbeck, 1976) equaled .89, which is the proportion of agreement after chance agreement is removed.

Conventional and nonconventional family values and commitment to the counterculture. We also grouped the families according to their overall commitment to the nonconventional values orientations described above and listed in Table 2. Each parent's values orientation was assessed at the third trimester, and at child's age 3 and age 6, using open-ended interviews with parents who were asked directly about their values. We also had par-

Table 2
Descriptive Data for Family Life-Style Groups

Parent measures	Family life-style group									
	Conventional			Nonconventional— lower commitment			Nonconventional— higher commitment			p
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	
Family commitment to the counterculture ^a	43	1.98	(.85)	54	2.93	(1.12)	92	3.98	(1.08)	.00
Mother values ^b										
Conventional achievement	43	3.72	(.39)	54	3.74	(.36)	92	3.53	(.39)	.00
Conventional authority	43	4.30	(.29)	54	4.12	(.27)	92	4.03	(.30)	.00
High future orientation	43	4.51	(.24)	54	4.35	(.28)	92	4.28	(.33)	.00
Materialism	43	4.67	(.32)	54	4.12	(.50)	92	4.17	(.35)	.00
Humanism ^c	43	3.42	(.29)	54	3.40	(.26)	92	3.44	(.36)	.78
Pronaturalism ^c	43	3.39	(.32)	54	3.63	(.41)	92	3.98	(.45)	.00
Sex egalitarianism ^c	43	3.82	(.35)	54	4.16	(.47)	92	4.36	(.52)	.00
Father values										
Conventional achievement	41	3.92	(.38)	25	3.62	(.37)	72	3.55	(.35)	.00
Conventional authority	41	4.10	(.28)	25	3.90	(.27)	72	3.89	(.35)	.00
High future orientation	41	4.26	(.46)	25	4.05	(.38)	72	4.15	(.34)	.10
Materialism	41	4.74	(.41)	25	4.26	(.44)	72	4.23	(.40)	.00
Humanism	41	3.41	(.24)	25	3.42	(.30)	72	3.50	(.35)	.25
Pronaturalism	41	3.17	(.33)	25	3.50	(.56)	72	4.11	(.76)	.00
Sex egalitarianism	41	3.67	(.41)	25	4.10	(.52)	72	4.24	(.59)	.00

Note. Lower or higher commitment means lower or higher commitment to one's family life-style. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

^aCommitment assessed using a five-point rating scale; a higher score indicates more commitment. ^bValues assessed using eight questionnaire items; scale ranges from 1 to 8. ^cA higher score on humanism, pronaturalism, and sex egalitarianism indicates a more nonconventional values orientation.

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ents complete values rating scales (Weisner & Rochford, 1980). Items comprising these scales were drawn from existing scales, as well as from our own project measures. We also asked parents directly about their commitment to a nonconventional life-style, and we scored their responses.

Although 154 families were originally recruited into the sample due to their nonconventional *family* arrangements, some of these parents did not remain in those family circumstances very long, and others proved to have only a weak commitment to their nonconventional life-style and relatively low scores on nonconventional values. Hence, there were nonconventional families (in terms of their family circumstances at the time of recruitment and thereafter) who did not have countercultural values, based on our measures of values and parents' own statements. We therefore examined the predominant *pattern* of parents' values responses and their life-styles commitment over the first 6 years, as was done for family organization and stability. We conducted a holistic assessment of the 154 nonconventional families, using field notes, interviews, and questionnaire measures of commitment and countercultural values. Families were then divided into those who had a clear and sustained nonconventional or countercultural orientation ($n = 92$) and those who did not ($n = 54$). *Crossing the three family categories (stable single parent, stable two-parent, and unstable family circumstances) with our two groups of parents high and low in commitment to values, produced six family categories.*

One of the social contract couples in our study said that "the counterculture has been the single most important influence in our lives; it is a positive force which makes us think and brings up questions." Other families had a strong commitment to social and political agendas such as environmentalism, ethnic and gender equality, the anti-war movement, and others. But there were also apolitical families among some of the low values commitment nonconventional parents and also among the conventional comparison sample. There were comments among such families that they, too, "intended to contribute to society and make a mark," or that "I'm pretty conservative in my values and politics."

The conventional comparison sample families comprise a seventh group in our study. These are largely stable, two-parent families with relatively conventional values. Of course, the families in our comparison group also brought cultural meaning and commitment to their life-style. Our focus on nonconventional family life-styles and nonconventional values does not imply that conventional families lack such commitment or that there is not a range of values in that sample. Yet, there clearly is a difference between actively *countering* the conventional cultural norm with a set of alternative and often highly emotionally and politically charged life-style choices, and a largely implicit, "taken for granted" commitment to sustaining the cultural norm. Committed nonconventional parents highlighted and challenged cultural norms and behaviors, thereby making their commitment much more explicit and salient. Elective single parenthood, communal living, and

social contract marriages among Euro-American women in 1974 and 1975, for example, represented bold and controversial family life-style decisions for that era, with even less normative acceptance at that time than is the case today. Committed nonconventional families actively questioned the implicit, taken-for-granted everyday cultural world around them. It was this proactive experimenting and construction of different cultural meanings that differentiated the nonconventional from the more conventional parents.

As can be seen in Table 2, nonconventional/higher commitment mothers and fathers as a group were always higher than the conventional comparison group parents on pronaturalism and sex egalitarian values, and lower on conventional achievement goals, beliefs in conventional authority, having a strong future orientation, and materialistic values ($t(200) = 8.11, p < .001$; $t(200) = 6.45, p < .001$; $t(200) = 2.84, p < .05$; $t(200) = 5.83, p < .001$; $t(200) = 4.43, p < .001$; and $t(200) = 7.26, p < .001$, respectively). This same pattern also occurs in comparisons on pronaturalism, sex egalitarianism, and conventional achievement values between the nonconventional/higher commitment mothers and fathers and the nonconventional/lower commitment parents ($t(200) = 5.11, p < .001$; $t(200) = 2.44, p < .05$; and $t(200) = 3.29, p < .01$, respectively). The nonconventional/low commitment group was sometimes virtually identical to conventional families (e.g., in their conventional achievement values), more often in between conventional and nonconventional/higher commitment (e.g., pronaturalism, acceptance of nonconventional authority, sex egalitarianism), yet very close to the nonconventional/committed families on nonmaterialism.

The pattern for values and countercultural commitment shown in Table 2 remained similar over the 6 years for which data were available. The canonical correlation between mothers' values at trimester and when the child was age six, for instance, was .66 ($X^2(64, N = 189) = 230.08, p < .001$), and the canonical correlation for fathers' values was .78 ($X^2(64, N = 60) = 106.96, p < .01$). When the parent values at trimester and family countercultural commitment measures were subjected to a discriminant analysis, these measures jointly and significantly discriminated (F approximation to Wilks's lambda = 24.54, $p < .001$) between the three family groups: conventional, nonconventional lower values commitment, and nonconventional higher values commitment families. And, 82.5% of the cases were correctly classified by the discriminant function.

Other School and Family Measures

Student grades. Math and reading grades were provided by teachers at Grades 1, 2, and 6 and converted to a five-point scale (1 = F, 5 = A). Grades were used rather than standardized achievement scores since grades are more closely linked to the classroom curriculum (Freeman, Belli, Porter, Codere, Schmidt, & Schwille, 1983; Haas, Haladyna, & Nolen, 1990) and provide a measure of student effort and teacher perception of a student (Keith, 1989; Thompson et al., 1988). Grades are "much more implicated

than test scores in the social psychology of the schooling process" (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988, p. 41), which means that grades are more likely to capture the effects of family life-styles than standardized achievement test scores. In any event, school grades in the FLS sample are significantly correlated with school achievement test scores for the 58% to 66% of the cases on whom we were able to obtain achievement scores at each assessment.⁵

The correlations between mathematics grades over time are .36 for Grades 1 and 2; .19 for Grades 2 and 6; and .07 for Grades 1 and 6. The correlations between reading grades over time are .48 for Grades 1 and 2; .32 for Grades 2 and 6; and .19 for Grades 1 and 6.

Student cognitive scores. Children were given the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) at 6 years, the Stanford-Binet at age 3, and the Bayley at age 1.

Family SES. Socioeconomic status was calculated at 6 years using Hollingshead's scale combining father's and mother's education and occupation (Hollingshead, 1975). Six years was used since that was the last date at which we had complete SES records, it was midway through the 12 years of the study, and most of the change in family SES had occurred by that point. Hollingshead's codes for occupation and education were used to create four measures: mother's occupation and education and father's occupation and education. The four measures were weighted and averaged according to the method described by Hollingshead. If the mother was employed, her measure for occupation was included in the composite SES score along with the father's measures. In the case of a single mother, only her measures of occupation and education were included in the score. The composite score ranges from 8 to 66.

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of the seven family groups on the child's WISC-R score at age 6, and the composite Hollingshead SES family rating. Inspection of the WISC-R means shows that only the unstable nonconventional/higher values commitment family group had higher child WISC-R scores than the conventional comparison sample mean of 114 ($t(182) = 3.70, p < .01$). Children in the nonconventional/lower commitment families had somewhat lower WISC-R means than the conventional group, but none of the differences was significant. Conventional comparison group families had significantly higher SES than all three nonconventional/lower commitment families ($t(182) = 3.96, p < .01$; $t(182) = 4.68, p < .001$; and $t(182) = 6.72, p < .001$, respectively). Within the nonconventional families, the unstable lower commitment families had significantly lower SES than the higher commitment two-parent and unstable families ($t(182) = 4.49, p < .001$; and $t(182) = 3.17, p < .05$).

Analysis Plan

First, we computed the means and standard deviations of mathematics and reading grades for the seven groups (stable one-parent, stable two-parent,

Table 3
Means of Covariates by Conventional and Nonconventional Family Life-Styles and Stability/Family Organization

Family life-style group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Child WISC-R FQ scores			
Conventional comparison sample	43	114.21	(13.61)
Nonconventional families			
Lower commitment			
Stable one-parent	15	113.44	(13.34)
Stable two-parent	19	109.22	(12.90)
Unstable	20	105.47	(11.67)
Higher commitment			
Stable one-parent	18	121.78	(14.58)
Stable two-parent	63	115.68	(13.82)
Unstable	11	127.00	(12.68)
<i>F</i>		4.85***	
Family SES ratings ^a			
Conventional comparison sample	43	49.55	(9.52)
Nonconventional families			
Lower commitment			
Stable one-parent	15	33.29	(12.96)
Stable two-parent	19	32.79	(10.50)
Unstable	20	28.88	(12.43)
Higher commitment			
Stable one-parent	18	39.41	(14.37)
Stable two-parent	63	42.41	(13.05)
Unstable	11	42.18	(15.76)
<i>F</i>		8.87***	

Note. Lower or higher commitment means lower or higher commitment to one's family life-style. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

^aSES is a composite score created using Hollingshead's scale (Hollingshead, 1975) with the lowest SES score = 8, and the highest SES score = 66.

****p* < .001.

and unstable families among nonconventional families with higher or lower commitment, and the conventional two-parent comparison sample). These data are presented in Table 4. Next, we compared the seven family groups using analyses of covariance on repeated measures of grades as the within factors variable (Table 5). Mathematics and reading grades were analyzed separately.

Analyzing math and reading scores by grade level also provides a time dimension: change in scores from first through sixth grade, and the interaction of changes in scores with family groups. For each significant *F* ratio,

Table 4
Mean Grades^a by Conventional and Nonconventional Family Life-Styles and Stability/Family Organization

Family life-style group	School Grade					
	<i>n</i>	1	2	6		
Mathematics grades						
Conventional comparison sample	43	4.16	(.79)	4.32	(1.06)	3.74 (1.07)
Nonconventional families						
Lower commitment						
Stable one-parent	15	3.86	(.74)	4.00	(1.30)	4.00 (.82)
Stable two-parent	19	3.40	(1.08)	3.37	(1.31)	3.64 (.93)
Unstable	20	2.90	(1.25)	2.68	(1.38)	3.35 (1.12)
Higher commitment						
Stable one-parent	18	3.50	(.51)	3.75	(1.00)	3.77 (1.09)
Stable two-parent	63	3.92	(1.09)	4.19	(1.20)	3.91 (.95)
Unstable	11	4.54	(.69)	4.60	(.84)	4.00 (.89)
Reading grades						
Conventional comparison sample	43	4.00	(1.07)	4.07	(1.27)	3.91 (.98)
Nonconventional families						
Lower commitment						
Stable one-parent	15	3.53	(1.51)	4.14	(1.29)	4.13 (.92)
Stable two-parent	19	3.46	(1.32)	3.50	(1.37)	3.67 (1.18)
Unstable	20	3.00	(.97)	2.68	(1.67)	3.18 (1.07)
Higher commitment						
Stable one-parent	18	3.33	(1.28)	3.63	(1.59)	3.87 (.89)
Stable two-parent	63	3.95	(1.11)	4.19	(1.32)	4.02 (.90)
Unstable	11	4.55	(.69)	4.80	(.63)	4.30 (.67)

Note. Lower or higher commitment means lower or higher commitment to one's family life-style. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

^aMathematics and reading grades are coded on a 5-point scale (1 = F, 5 = A).

univariate analyses of covariance were conducted for each subject at each grade level (see Table 5).

Post hoc comparisons between family groups were made using Bonferroni *t* statistics for adjusted means, following our hypotheses (see Table 1). The comparisons of interest examined overall differences across the seven groups, adjusted for SES, child sex, and child cognitive test scores (Hypothesis 1); contrasted each of the nonconventional family groups with the conventional two-parent comparison sample (Hypothesis 2); compared nonconventional family groups with lower or higher commitment, controlling for family organization and stability (Hypothesis 3); compared nonconventional, low commitment unstable family groups with all other groups

Table 5
Analyses of Covariance of Mathematics and Reading Grades

	<i>F</i> ratios				
Source	<i>df</i>	All grades ^a	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 6
Math					
Family life-style group	6	7.90***	5.57***	4.72***	.97
Grade level	2	.13			
Family life-style group × Grade Level	12	1.43			
Reading					
Family life-style group	<i>df</i>	4.29***	2.13	2.72*	2.45*
Grade level	2	1.49			
Family life-style group × Grade Level	12	.85			

^aBased on an analysis of covariance with repeated measures.

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

(Hypothesis 4); and compared different family arrangements (single, couple, and unstable) within each of the nonconventional family groups (Hypothesis 5).

The covariates include family SES at 6 years, children's 6-year cognitive test scores (assessed with the WISC-R), and child sex (Table 3). The covariates have all been implicated in differential school achievement (Fraser et al., 1987; Santrock & Tracy, 1972; Thompson et al., 1988), and the family life-styles groups differ on all three covariates.

Results

First, we searched for overall differences in grades across family life-style groups, controlling for the effects of covariates (Hypothesis 1). Tests for the assumptions of equality of within-group regression coefficients and com-

pound symmetry of variance-covariance matrices indicated that these assumptions were met. Analyses of covariance of mathematics and reading grades for Grades 1, 2, and 6 showed statistically significant family life-style group effects (see Table 5). Table 6 shows the seven family life-style group means adjusted for child IQ, child sex, and family SES. *Family life-style group had a significant effect on both mathematics and reading grades controlling for differences in child IQ and sex, and family SES.* Grade level, however, had no significant effect on reading and math scores; nor was there a significant effect of family life-style groups and grade level interaction. Next, we looked for which groups were different within each grade level. Univariate analyses of covariance at each grade level showed statistically significant differences between children of different family groups for mathematics at Grades 1 and 2 and for reading at Grades 2 and 6 (see Table 6). Although the pattern is the same, the effects are more pronounced for reading as children get older (e.g., significant reading effects appear after Grade 1), and effects are less pronounced for math as children get older (e.g., math effects disappear at Grade 6).

In the first set of post hoc comparisons, we examined differences between the conventional comparison sample and each of the six nonconventional family groups (Hypothesis 2). The only family life-style group that differed from the comparison sample was the group with children living in unstable nonconventional/lower commitment families; these children had significantly lower math grades for two comparisons: Grade 1 math ($t(179) = 4.84, p < .001$) and Grade 2 math ($t(179) = 4.43, p < .01$). As we expected, children from nonconventional/higher life-style commitment stable families and children from nonconventional/lower commitment stable families did not differ from children in the conventional comparison sample on any measure. *Only the combined effects of instability and low commitment to the nonconventional life-style led to differences in school grades, compared to the conventional comparison group children.*

Did higher commitment to nonconventional family life-styles affect school grades, controlling for family structure and stability (Hypothesis 3)? The results show that only among the unstable families was there a significant difference in children's math and reading grades [Grade 1 math ($t(179) = 3.63, p < .01$); Grade 2 math ($t(179) = 3.60, p < .01$); and Grade 6 reading ($t(179) = 3.08, p < .05$)]. Post-hoc comparisons showed that even after controlling for child cognitive ability at school entry, child sex, and family SES, *children in nonconventional unstable families in which there is a higher commitment to that life-style do better in school than children in nonconventional unstable families with lower commitment.* No differences were found between families of higher and lower commitment within stable one- or two-parent families.

As expected, children from unstable nonconventional, lower commitment families had significantly lower math and reading grades than children from nonconventional, higher commitment, two-parent families in four of

Table 6
Adjusted^a Mean Grades by Conventional and Nonconventional
Family Life-Styles and Stability/Family Organization

Family life-style group	School Grade			
	<i>n</i>	1	2	6
Mathematics grades				
Conventional comparison sample	43	4.26	4.27	3.77
Nonconventional families				
Lower commitment				
Stable one-parent	15	3.81	3.89	3.98
Stable two-parent	19	3.41	3.21	3.69
Unstable	20	2.93	2.68	3.41
Higher commitment				
Stable one-parent	18	3.34	3.52	3.69
Stable two-parent	63	3.95	4.04	3.91
Unstable	11	4.29	4.44	4.04
<i>F</i>		5.57***	4.72***	.97
Reading grades				
Conventional comparison sample	43	3.99	4.02	3.96
Nonconventional families				
Lower commitment				
Stable one-parent	15	3.54	4.03	4.08
Stable two-parent	19	3.66	3.48	3.74
Unstable	20	3.29	2.88	3.22
Higher commitment				
Stable one-parent	18	3.13	3.28	3.79
Stable two-parent	63	3.93	4.01	3.98
Unstable	11	4.08	4.39	4.31
<i>F</i>		2.13	2.72*	2.45*

Note. Lower or higher commitment means lower or higher commitment to one's family life-style.

^aAdjusted by child WISC-R score, sex, and family socioeconomic status.

*** $p < .001$. * $p < .05$.

six comparisons (Hypothesis 4) [Grade 1 math ($t(179) = 4.05$, $p < .01$); Grade 2 math ($t(179) = 4.14$, $p < .01$); Grade 2 reading ($t(179) = 3.11$, $p < .05$); and Grade 6 reading ($t(179) = 3.22$, $p < .05$)]. Although not significant, these children had the lowest adjusted math scores at Grade 6. Contrary to our expectations, their adjusted reading grades at Grade 1 were not significantly different than any other group. As noted earlier, these children had significantly lower math grades than children from the conventional comparison sample families for 2 years of math, as indicated above for the comparisons with the conventional sample.

Finally, we directly tested for differences in children's grades due to family organization (one-parent, two-parent, unstable) (Hypothesis 5). Children in single parent families did not have significantly different grades at any grade level than children from two-parent families within nonconventional/lower commitment families or higher commitment families. Children in unstable families did not differ significantly from other children within the higher or lower commitment families. *Single parent status in our sample, if sustained over time, was not related to lower grades. Instability in family organization over time did not lead to lower grades when controlling for values commitment, child IQ, SES, and child sex.*

Note that the magnitudes of the differences between the highest and lowest families in reading and math grades were fairly large: about one grade to two grades on our five-point scale (1 = F, 5 = A). The magnitudes of the differences in grades, if they were to continue through high school and college, would matter for learning and school success. However, even the unstable nonconventional/lower commitment families (the lowest group in our sample) have children earning Cs on average, so the sample overall is doing rather well in school.

Discussion

Considering the often highly unusual life-styles of many of these families, their economic difficulties, family changes, and so forth, the overall success in school of the children in these life-styles is notable. The results generally confirm our view that some nonconventional life-styles can protect children against possible difficulties in school. However, others can put children at risk. A strong parental commitment to one's family life-style can contribute positively to children's school achievement. The general *absence* of differences between the comparison sample and the nonconventional family life-style groups (except for the lower commitment, unstable families) suggests (but, of course, does not itself prove) that the nonconventional families were doing many things that promoted school achievement.

Other research with the FLS sample has identified some of the home characteristics that were associated with school competence among nonconventional FLS children (Eiduson et al., 1982; Weisner, 1982; Weisner et al., 1983). Although the nonconventional parents may have been highly experimental with their own diet and health care, for instance, our data showed that this experimentalism did not extend to their children's health care. Virtually all the FLS children had medical care and inoculations, regardless of life-style. The nonconventional/more committed parents were observed talking with their children as often or more than the comparison sample. They often used question frames and treated their child as a "pretend" co-equal interlocutor (Weisner, 1982). Similarly, the nonconventional families were no different from the conventional comparison group on interview questions in which we asked how important is it for their child to do well in school, how far they want their child to go, or what their

career goals for their child are. Goals having to do with success at literacy were not perceived by countercultural families as necessarily in conflict with other countercultural values such as nonmaterialism, pronaturalism, or nonconventional achievement—indeed, literacy goals usually were seen as complementary for many families.

But, nonconventional families did report that they were more likely to say that they had an influence on their child's classroom ($X^2 (12, N = 181) = 32.14, p < .001$), and a number of studies suggest that parents' participation in their children's schools is correlated with child achievement (e.g., Entwisle & Alexander, 1990; Fraser et al., 1987; Iverson & Walberg, 1984). The nonconventional/higher commitment two-parent families, for instance, had 46.7% of parents who said that they had weekly contact with their child's school, and another 26.7% reported occasional contact. Comparable data for the comparison sample were 18.6% weekly and 32.6% occasionally. Our qualitative data also suggest that many committed nonconventional families were actively involved in their children's schools. Parents talked with us about working in the classroom, talking with their child's teachers, attending school meetings, or going to school board meetings (even getting elected to the board). For those nonconventional parents with a high degree of political activism and with an awareness of the connections between policies of the larger society and the functioning of schools and classrooms, proactivism in their children's schools was a not uncommon extension of their world view.

The results also confirm the view that school achievement is multiply determined: socioeconomic status, children's tested cognitive abilities prior to school entry, stability of family organization, and the degree of parental commitment to a particular nonconventional life-style and to countercultural values—all these were associated with school grades. In fact, our results suggest that IQ and socioeconomic status *mediate* the family life-style effects on school grades, since family life-styles themselves are implicated in both social status and child's IQ prior to school entry. Although the multiplicity of influences on school achievement has been demonstrated in many studies (e.g., Fraser et al., 1987), the FLS sample is unique in showing the importance of the role of cultural values and commitment to a nonconventional family life-style, among influences on school outcomes.

The FLS families exemplify an important point about the multiple paths that can lead to good school performance in children: *many kinds of family organization, with a variety of associated values, led to school success in our sample.* Middle class two-parent married couples certainly provide one model, but so do committed, relatively stable single parents and even unstable family life-styles with a countercultural values orientation and commitment to that kind of life-style. It is particularly noteworthy that children in single parent families do as well in school through sixth grade as do children in two-parent families. Of course, our group of single mothers is unique in many ways, and the nature of our sample no doubt influenced these

results. Other studies we reviewed above did find differences in school achievement among children in single parent families. The relatively high educational range of many of these mothers and the commitment of some to feminist, activist values and life-styles make our group of single mothers more likely to weather the difficulties that many face. Only an unstable family situation with a lower values commitment to such a life-style on the part of parents led to lower grades in our sample. Our interpretation of this pattern of results is that a coherent cultural meaning associated with a family life-style is an important component, among others, of how that family situation is *experienced* by parents and children and its consequences for school achievement.

Although our approach interprets the direction of effects as going from the family context to the child, there might well be child-to-family influences as well. For example, more verbal, school-ready children prior to entry into first grade might shape parents' responses to their child, influence a change in home environment favoring literacy or numeracy skills, and perhaps even encourage more positive parental values regarding education. Such children might even influence parents to remain in a stable family relationship. It is possible that the child's relative success in school is a mutually reinforcing feature of parents' assessment of their success as parents and the success of their family life-style, and that this validation process might be stronger among nonconventional families.

Although our focus in this study has been on school grades, it is likely that school behaviors other than grades and cognitive competence, more generally, might be as or more strongly influenced by nonconventional family life-styles. In preliminary work on teacher ratings of the FLS children, we have found such effects, but the pattern of results differs in a number of ways from those found for grades. For instance, children in higher commitment nonconventional families have significantly higher (more positive) social and behavioral teacher ratings on the Lambert and Schaefer scales at all three grades than do children in lower commitment nonconventional families, and are similar or higher in most comparisons to the children in the conventional comparison sample families. And there are significant sex difference interactions as well (girls tending to score higher). Unlike the data on grades, the effects of nonconventional family life-styles on social and emotional ratings by teachers decline over time, while sex differences increase over time.

It also would be interesting to observe directly these children in the classrooms, in discourse with their teachers and peers, for instance. Are they more likely than other children to question actively social conventions and the teachers' opinions? Are children in nonconventional families socially accepted in their classrooms, in situations where their nonconventional family circumstances or parental values orientations are known to others? The glimpses of the children's social behavior from teachers' com-

ments in their notes to us at Grade 6 provide some preliminary evidence that this is true, but further work needs to be done on these children's lives in school, in addition to their school grades.

Our family categories incorporated two features not usually included in family types: meaningfulness of and commitment to a family life-style, and the stability of the family arrangement. Both of these features proved important to children's school achievement. The meaningfulness of a family life-style to parents, particularly parents' commitment to it, was related to better school grades, controlling for stability and family organization. Instability seems to lead to lower grades in our sample only when there is no parental commitment to that particular kind of life-style. The results suggest that these effects persist over at least 6 years of school. We predict that this pattern would still be found as these children move into high school.

The impact of family structure on school achievement depends not merely on household and marital criteria for family categories. It is also important to consider how families have negotiated the meaning of their family circumstances with one another and with the culture around them, and whether they have sustained their family life-style over time. The standard family categories do not typically consider either commitment or long-term stability, but rather focus exclusively on domestic arrangement and marital status. The categories usually used to group families, such as single parent, unwed mother, divorced, unmarried couple, or married couple, are not capturing important differences in values, commitment, and stability, which influence children living in these kinds of families. It is worth considering the potential benefits for research as well as school policy and practice if the standard family organization categories were expanded. Family types should incorporate the values and meanings they have for family members, and the degree of stability over time, since our work suggests that values and stability add significantly to understanding the relationships between family life and school achievement.

Notes

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¹We use the term family "life-style" to capture the combination of values, orientation, personal commitment, cultural meanings, family organization, and marital status: a way of life. Family "organization" specifically refers to household or domestic group circumstances and marital arrangements—for instance, a particular kind of household, such as single mothers and their children.

²The term "birth to age 6" refers to data collected prior to first grade, and "ages 7 to 12" refers to data collected thereafter. Since children's grades were assessed at the end of the school year, children's modal age at the first school data collection is 7. We use "grade one" for simplicity, but "grade one" includes children in grades one and some in grade two. At "grade one," for instance, 60% of the children were in first grade and 40% were in second grade. Math and reading data were pooled within each of the three school data collection points since no differences were found between children's grade levels at any of the three time periods.

³Although our data set extending over 12 years is extremely rich, it nonetheless had some limitations. We do not have data on family values and commitment after age 6. No peer ratings of children were available, nor child interviews or self-assessments regarding school. Our measures underestimate the amount of change and instability since, even though we have 10 data points available for nearly all families, changes in between contacts were not always known.

⁴Eight families with children living in communes for 12 years were excluded from the nonconventional family sample, since they represent a specialized family adaptation qualitatively different from other families.

⁵Achievement test scores were obtained from the various national standardized tests used in different school systems—11 different national standardized tests at Grade 1 and 16 tests at grade 2, for instance. In this sample, achievement test scores were correlated with math grades, $r = .35, p < .01$, and reading grades, $r = .62, p < .01$, at grade level 1; with math grades, $r = .38, p < .01$, and reading grades, $r = .53, p < .01$, at grade level 2; and with math grades, $r = .31, p < .01$, and reading grades, $r = .34, p < .01$, at grade level 6.

Many other variables, not included in the present analysis, were also collected in school. Several measures of student social and emotional behavior in the classroom are available as well. When children were in Grades 1, 2, and 6, teachers rated social and emotional school adjustment using the Lambert Pupil Behavior Rating Scale (PBRs) (Lambert, Hartsough, & Bower, 1979) and the Schaefer Classroom Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, Edgerton, & Aaronson, 1978). The Lambert scale is an instrument (11 items) used to assess students' social, emotional, and cognitive adjustment to school. The Schaefer Classroom Behavior Inventory has 42 items intended to assess a student's extroversion, creativity, distractibility, verbal intelligence, task orientation, introversion, considerateness, and dependence. These additional school measures are mentioned in the discussion.

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