WELCOME TO MIDDLE AGE!
(And Other Cultural Fictions)

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Children of the 1960s at Midlife: Generational Identity and the Family Adaptive Project

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I have always been and still feel connected to it in my heart. I think [the hippie movement is] the best thing that happened. . . . There wasn't any way in which it was harmful.

The hippie revolution in those days—we really could feel we could make a difference in the world. . . . I still believe most of the ideas from that revolution.

I was not really true to myself when I was part of the counterculture. If I had been truer to myself, I would have been straighter.

I don't feel that I belong to a generation. . . . It is probably my open-mindedness that I don't feel part of . . . you know, anything.

I didn't *calcify* the way some of my friends have.

I don't like it [the countercultural generation] now. . . . It isn't like I am locked in the sixties, or whatever.

We messed it up for them [our children], even though we intended not to. . . . We had ideals which we didn't manage to achieve.

. . . for people my age, I think a lot of lives were derailed by the sixties, because when you're in your twenties is a time you're

supposed to be doing certain things and for a lot of us, we weren't preparing for real life, or we refused to prepare for real life [as I hope to prepare my teenager now].

I am hippie about money, but not about drugs.

Because I felt so lost, I used.

COUNTERCULTURAL PARENTS AT MIDLIFE

Most members of the countercultural, 1960s generation are now somewhere in their forties or early fifties—at an age Americans consider to be midlife. Since 1974-75, we have had the privilege of following a group from this generation, 150 countercultural parents living in nonconventional family arrangements (communes, single mothers by choice, and unmarried or "social contract" couples). We also have followed a comparison group of fifty two-parent married couples. All the mothers in our study gave birth in 1974 or 1975. We revisited these parents most recently in 1993–94, as their children reached their late teen years, and talked with them about their identification with the counterculture. Our essay describes parents' reports on their generational identity at midlife and their adolescent children's beliefs and circumstances.

We thought that nonconventional family lifestyles might influence midlife beliefs because of the active questioning and high involvement in change characteristic of many such families. Among its other consequences, 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, Glen Elder comments that the renewed interest in life course studies was in part due to the "social discontinuities" of that decade (1985, 15), which led to new formulations in the field of life course socialization (Nesselroade and Eye 1985; Baltes and Brim 1980).

As the quotes above from parents' interviews suggest, generational identity varied in content, salience, and affective meaning. Family troubles, personal problems or successes, drug use, poor or wise economic choices—all influence how generational identity is experienced at midlife. In addition, all these parents now have teenage children, and they see their children's well-being (or lack thereof) as resulting partly from countercultural parental values and life choices. These beliefs about their children shape the parents' feelings about their generational identity.

Furthermore, most parents have retained some values of the countercultural era, such as antimaterialism or egalitarianism. Sixty-three percent responded with a yes or qualified yes to the question, Do you think that the counterculture, overall, has made a positive contribution to society? (Weisner and Garnier 1995). But this leaves a considerable number of parents with less positive views. When we listened more closely to parents' personal and family stories, we found that the countercultural cohort diverged. Over the years, the group has fragmented, producing individuals with many different life trajectories and experiences and with different views of their generational identity.

A number of classic longitudinal cohort studies have followed the consequences for children of a generational cohort experience, and they have also found that effects for children and families varied. Recall, for instance, that the effects of the Depression were not uniform for children or parents (Elder 1974; Elder et al. 1986). There was not a direct correlation between degree of hardship and child outcomes, for instance. Fathers already unstable became more so during periods of economic hardship. Fathers who were more stable and resourceful to begin with were relatively calm under economic calamity. The *predictability* of the home environment mattered, not just the level of family income. Consequences of the Depression also differed for sons and daughters, with sons having a more difficult time in many circumstances. Just as for the countercultural parents in our study, the Depression experience was refracted through the relational and emotional circumstances of the family.

This interaction between family dynamics and sociocultural change is found across a variety of studies of generational change (Elder 1991). Katherine Newman (1988; in this volume) found that the experience of downward mobility for women who were used to the hardships of the Depression or World War II was different from that of women growing up later. The former group were used to deprivation; the latter often did not know what to do when it came. The former wanted material possessions; the latter sometimes said that the experience of economic deprivation was good for them because it got them away from a false materialism. Werner and Smith (1977) found that different adaptive strengths assisted Kauai families at different points in their children's development, and that hardships and calamities on Kauai varied in their effects as a result of family resilience. These kinds of psychosocial adaptive responses also can be found in life course descriptions of upper-middle-class New England men and their families (Weiss 1990).

An important variation in our countercultural sample concerns how involved parents were in the values and practices of the era over time. We compared parents who sustained a relatively high commitment to countercultural values and identity over eighteen years with parents whose countercultural identity declined or significantly changed. The sustained high generational identity group had more satisfying and less troubled family lives and felt that their teenage children had done at least "okay." This group was made up of those who had been most active in their countercultural life. That is, they tried to incorporate their countercultural values into everyday family practice early in their children's lives. Parents who did not bring countercultural ideals into sustained, shared family practice tended to experience a decline in generational identity. Because most countercultural parents in our study began their family life with high countercultural identity, and because family experience and personal struggles varied thereafter, successes and failures in subsequently achieving family goals related to the counterculture account in part for change in the meaning of generational identity at midlife.

One view of midlife is that it is a cultural construction that labels and deeply constrains us. Most countercultural parents in our study were well aware of this aspect of midlife in particular and cultural norms in general. Most parents we talked with did *not* succumb to midlife generational "labeling," "aging," or "staging." They neither damned nor glorified midlife and the counterculture. They were reflective, critical, quirky, and resistant to "cultural discourses" about their generation and midlife. They saw the stages of midlife as events to be critiqued and questioned, just as they had critiqued politics and social convention in their youth. After all, many countercultural parents are comfortable with a critical stance vis-à-vis cultural categories generally, and the concept of midlife was no exception.

This critical stance toward life stages extends to family life and parenting as well as their views of midlife. They perceive that there is more than one plausible, defensible, possible way to be a family or a parent and that experimenting and trying out possibilities is a valuable and important process, a part of their social and cultural identity. They are also living in a social-historical era in America with more available cultural models for family life and life careers than may have ever existed before in history in one society (Weisner 1986a).

These parents did not critique cultural categories (categories of the countercultural era of their youth or categories like middle age now) because they were afraid they otherwise might get trapped in these categories, but because of something more psychosocially powerful. They saw midlife as a time of important adaptive problems for themselves and for their teenage children, a time when they hoped their cultural goals for their children were being realized. During this period, generational identity is filtered through the family project of assisting, or sometimes resisting, teenage development. And adolescents, of course, contribute their own dynamic to the process. They sometimes reject their parents' generational culture, reassess it, and rebel, since adolescents in the 1990s have their own generational culture.

Our evidence suggests that midlife is an important and recognized time of life for the countercultural parents we interviewed, and that it is more than a purely culturally represented fiction. Midlife involves thinking back on one's own youth, as well as attending to the teenage developmental transitions of one's children. Our theory is that midlife also is a joint, yoked transition of adolescent children and parents. Parents experience, define, and respond to midlife in part because of the teenage transition of their children. This transition involves intrapsychic concerns, revisions, and realizations of parents' cultural goals and parents' attempts to provide for safety and continuity in their teens' lives. Reassessments of parents' own generational identities are nested in these midlife projects. Our view is that midlife is a "cultural fiction" only in the sense that cultures provide developmental pathways for our lives that always involve sets of stories, moral values, and activities. However, these cultural developmental pathways are in response to panhuman, universal experiences during the midlife period. These experiences include our children's transitions into and out of adolescence.

We also present some evidence regarding what everyone, including countercultural parents, wants to know: How did the children of countercultural parents turn out? We found that, overall, in educational achievement their teens were doing as well or better than teens from our comparison families (two-parent married couples) and national samples. We have evidence that countercultural parents' cultural goals and values have indeed been adopted by their teens, although not in a straightforward way. We also suggest that a strong generational identity, including a sustained commitment to countercultural values, can

actually offer some protection for children and parents alike as they face the often difficult tasks of family life.

MIDLIFE AS AN ADAPTIVE PROJECT

Our view of midlife and generational identity is ecocultural; that is, we believe that development occurs in an ecocultural niche that provides resources, constraints, goals, values, and cultural practices that make development possible (LeVine 1977; LeVine et al. 1994; Whiting and Whiting 1975; Whiting and Edwards 1988). There is a developmental niche for children (Super and Harkness 1980, 1986) and an ecocultural niche for families and communities (Weisner 1984, 1993, 1996; Gallimore et al. 1989). A set of possible cultural careers is a part of this niche (Goldschmidt 1990), possible life trajectories that are the joint product of biology, ecology, history, and culture.

Cultural categories like "midlife," which are a part of our cultural career, do not arise in language and practice at random. They arise because they encode adaptive challenges and problems that emerge at certain times in life. For example, many of the countercultural parents we talked with were responding to their children as they completed high school, were beginning college or work, were leaving home, emerging sexually, developing close relationships (including marriage and childbirth), and struggling for economic autonomy. These projects fall into the three areas of adolescent developmental change that any culture ignores at its peril: the onset of fertility, reproduction, and marriage; participation in productivity, survival, and competence; and the commitment to a morality, ideology, and spirituality (Schlegel and Barry 1991; LeVine 1977; Schlegel 1995).

Midlife is a relational stage of life experienced through one's children as well as a cultural life stage and a personal transition. At midlife, parents try to assist and resist their teen's generational change—the same kinds of changes that happened to them when they were youths first embracing the counterculture. Midlife and the teenage transitions that go with it are jointly predictable perturbations in the development of the parent-child unit across the life course (Chisholm 1983; 1992). This is the sense in which midlife and adolescence are yoked together.

However, adolescence is far more often explicitly marked in cultures around the world than is midlife. Is adolescence, therefore, more clearly a cross-culturally identifiable stage in human development, whereas midlife, being relatively unmarked, not celebrated in ceremo-

nies or rituals, is not? Midlife is not a sharply marked life stage; it has very wide malleability in timing and salience in cultures around the world. We suggest that midlife actually is marked by its being yoked with the adolescent developmental transition. Many cultures have adolescent initiation ceremonies, or relatively early marriage and associated negotiations and ceremonies soon after puberty, and there are accompanying changes of residence, transfers of property, and realignments of kin and affinal relations as a result. All these kinds of cultural markers are coded ethnographically and thought of as adolescent linked. But who is arranging all those ceremonies? Transferring that property? Rearranging where family members live and sleep? Having grandchildren in their lives? Parents at midlife, of course. Midlife transitions *are* there in the ethnographic record, but are described and *represented* as the adolescent and marital transitions of parents' adolescent children rather than as distinctive life stages of the parents themselves.

Our study, like all the chapters in this volume, is culturally, historically—and in our case, generationally—situated. Our sample are all parents with teenage children. Hence parents' reflections on their lives and their pasts in the counterculture era were mixed with their observations of how that era affected their children and their family life. Generational identity for parents brings into sharp focus the problems their adolescents are experiencing. This makes the yoked intergenerational aspects of midlife no doubt more salient for our particular study and for our parent and teen participants. We also interviewed more mothers than fathers, and perhaps women experience midlife as more family and child centered than do most fathers. And this is a cohort study by design—it frames children's lives and their parents' circumstances in a particular American ecocultural place.

But the nature of our sample and cohort, even though sociohistorically specific, nonetheless makes more vivid certain features of midlife and generational identity that we believe are very widespread: the yoked teen/parent transition; the importance of processes of assistance and resistance for teens and parents; and the importance of family-mediated experience for a positive, continuous generational identity. However, we do not intend by our focus to suggest that other features of midlife (e.g., bodily changes, spiritual renewal, commodification, or gender role changes) are unimportant. Adults without children or living apart from their children, as well as teens estranged from parents,

have variant experiences no doubt, as do ethnic minorities and other subgroups and communities.

IDENTITY, SELF, AND GENERATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The countercultural generation experienced a set of presumptively similar formative experiences at a similar age, and this is what defines them as part of a generational cohort (Newman 1988, 287 n. 17). A countercultural, or 1960s, generational identity is, by definition, shaped by collective experience, not least because of its appropriation by the media and political debates. The countercultures of the late sixties and early seventies included two central goals: an exploratory, spiritual, hedonistic, drug-using, experimental lifestyle; and political activism, antiwar and protest movements, and a moral critique of society. The birth cohort of our study (people born 1942–55, approximately, who lived through their late teens and early adult years during the countercultural turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s, and became parents in 1974–75) cannot avoid taking a position regarding this generational identity; ignoring it is a position. An individual's generation is among the set of cultural and physical characteristics—gender, race, region, clan and family, birth order, ethnicity, language, religion, and physical appearance—that often seems to matter to identity.

Generational identity is one of the social sites for the self. It is the set of representations (about present and past cultural experiences) that is held in the mind and used to organize understandings of self. Did you demonstrate against the war? Serve in it? Did you join a women's group? Did you smoke much dope? Were you a hippie? Did you sleep with a lot of people? Did you live in a commune or a collective? Generational identity includes a sense of accountability for both the past and the present. Generational identity is recast throughout life to serve the strategic interests of the person and the self; it is elaborated or suppressed depending upon the audience or the pain of the experiences.

A personal generational identity is formed with all the varied capacities of the mind. It is repressed, denied, feared, and idealized through psychodynamic processes. It is used to tell stories about the past, stories that take on a life of their own, accounting for our present and shaping the future. Generational identity provides a cultural model used to drive action and organize memory. It is used as a template to appraise, evaluate, and make strategic, locally rational choices about current relationships, political events, and children's lives. What this means is that

even if a generation shares similar collective historical and demographic experiences, the mind will uniquely refract and transform those experiences. The same is true for developmental transitions—a unique ideoverse is formed out of those transitions by each person. The common experiences remain but are altered both by common mental processes that transform them and by the unique life experiences that refract their meanings.

THE COUNTERCULTURE GENERATIONAL IDENTITY

What *were* those presumptively formative, commonly shared experiences that shaped a countercultural generational identity? First of all, the counterculture generational identity was morally and emotionally charged at the time, and the counterculture, hippies, and 1960s idealism remain as hotly debated now. Newt Gingrich made sure to mention that he was opposed to "it," and that "it" is the cause of many of the political and social ills he sees in the nation. George Will (1995) wrote a column, titled "A Bad Era," damning 1960s generational "irresponsibility" in parenting in a *Newsweek* issue reporting the death of Jerry Garcia. Bill Clinton now and again invokes the "Kennedy legacy" as his formative influence; he is from the age cohort of the 1960s, however gingerly he identifies with it.

The consequences of the counterculture are debated, including whether there really were any consequences. Whatever one's judgment of the time, or one's beliefs about its consequences, it is said to have a central core of beliefs and values (Berger 1981; Flacks 1988; Gitlin 1993; Gottlieb 1987; Keniston 1968, 1971; Miller 1991; Partridge 1973; Reich 1970; Roszak 1969; Tipton 1982; Yinger 1982): free, drug taking, self-enhancing, experimental, morally aware, emotionally labile and externalized, politically radical, antiwar (especially Vietnam), pro-Civil Rights, egalitarian, antimaterialistic, pronatural, antiauthority, spiritual, and communitarian.

Just in reviewing this list, we have some reason to wonder about the homogeneity of the 1960s generational identity. The counterculture had many "generational units" in it (Mannheim 1972); that is, subgroups with very different experiences. Gitlin and Kazin (1988, 49) defined counterculture ideals as in "constant flux—civil rights, student, anti-war, countercultural, feminist, gay, and none of the above." The countercultural generation was influenced by a political movement (Gitlin 1993), a moral search for personal meaning (Bellah et al. 1985), a desire for the "natural," open, and free (Berger 1981; Reich

1970), by the baby boom, by the economic expansion of the time (East-erlin 1980), by the search for new forms of religious and spiritual expression (Rochford 1985; Weisner 1986b), and by the particular subsets of American youth who formed it. Yet, whether out of convenience or conviction, the generation often is portrayed as a "tribe"—coherent, continuous, perhaps scattered and wiser now than then, but still a spiritual tribe. As one member of the generation put it:

> We are still a generation far more united than divided. . . .
> I felt like nothing so much as an anthropologist visiting
> her own tribe. For the Sixties generation is a tribe with its
> roots in a time, rather than in a place or a race. Like many
> human tribes, we were founded on a vision. We share a
> culture; we share a religion, though many would not call
> it that; and so we approach the 'power age' of forty, and
> a second chance to make an impact on the world, we share
> a fascination with our origin myth, the experiences of
> the Sixties that, to a great extent, made us who we are.
> (Gottlieb 1987, 8–9)

The two core principles of the counterculture most often mentioned are the exploration of all aspects of life and continuing progressive moral critique of self and others. The parents in our study certainly mention both of these a lot. For Todd Gitlin (1993) and two recent television series, one on Berkeley activism and the other on the sixties, the core of the counterculture was political activism, with experimentation (cultural and otherwise) coexisting uneasily. Gitlin expresses his experience of the essence of the era in terms at once grandiose and egocentric—just the way the era was for many. To him, the 1960s "took their point from the divine premise that everything was possible and therefore it was important to think, because ideas have consequences. Unraveling, rethinking, refusing to take for granted, thinking without limits—that calling was some of what I loved most in the spirit of the Sixties" (Gitlin 1993, 7).

The counterculture's ideals, ideas, and ideologies were not original; most came from diverse sociohistorical origins, and many were contradictory. The sources for countercultural ideals include at the least earlier American communitarian thought (see, e.g., Bellah et al. 1985; Zablocki 1980), American populism, European socialism, and folk understandings about the primitive and, thus supposedly, natural way to live (Yinger 1982; Erasmus 1977; Reich 1970). As one well-known

member of the 1960s generation, Billy Joel, put it, with regard to politics in particular, "We didn't start the fire/It was always burnin'/Since the world's been turnin'."

The counterculture would be seriously misunderstood, however, if viewed solely as a collection of positive values, freeing ideologies, radical politics, self-expansion, tribelike cohesion, and spiritualism—as do recent videos (Law 1990), film series, and books (see, e.g., Bellah et al. 1985; Tipton 1982). If you look more closely and talk with participants, you will hear other, darker sides to the counterculture: violent, grotesque, health-endangering, exploitative, sometimes sexist, and cruel. The counterculture could and did *hurt*. Many parents in our study experienced some of these injuries and gave painful reports about the damage done to themselves and to others. Many regret such aspects of their past and present and blame the 1960s and its aftermath for their bad experiences. Listening to a broad range of countercultural parents, not only the financially successful and those with sustained values, does not leave us with a romantic or consistently positive view of the 1960s era.

These varied strands of the counterculture reflect what we heard when we talked with parents at midlife about their generational identity. Parents disagreed about every aspect of the period, including whether they still had a countercultural identity at all. Their moral evaluations of the period, their descriptions of what it meant to them and what it *did* to them, were highly diverse. The countercultural generational identity at midlife is complex, refracted by troubled lives, mixed with thoughts of their teenagers' present circumstances and possible futures. Our results are not inconsistent with findings from several other studies that have examined the effects of participation in social movements of the 1960s and 1970s in later life (DeMartini 1983; Fendrich and Lovoy 1988; Jennings 1987; Marwell and Aiken 1987; Nassi 1981; Whalen and Flacks 1989). Participants in such movements, like most of our parents, report a continuity of values, continued political activism (although at lower levels of activity), a less fervent expression of ideology, and much more modest or selective implementation of values in everyday life.

Although the content of what parents mean by a countercultural generational identity varies, and its valence has often changed, generational identity is still salient. Most of our parents are still largely liberal, progressive, feisty, experimental, quirky, going against—countering— society. Many are still making a lasting impact on society at midlife.

Those who sustained this kind of countercultural generational identity were generally less troubled in other areas of their life since the 1970s, and were more successful at putting their values into practice in their family and personal life. Before turning directly to data on generational identity, we first summarize our study population and some of the measures we used; next we turn to our qualitative data on parents' generational identities at midlife and then to the question parents and others alike seem most often to want to know: How did the children of the children of the sixties turn out?

SAMPLE

The Family Lifestyles Project has followed a sample of 200 conventional and nonconventional European-American families since 1974–75 (Eiduson and Weisner 1978). We contacted two hundred mothers during their third trimester of pregnancy and have been following them, their mates, and their children ever since. Attrition has been phenomenally low. When we contacted these participants in 1992–94, we reached 100% of the mothers, 98% of the teenagers, and 48% of the fathers or other mates.

At the time of recruitment, 150 families were in nonconventional family arrangements, including fifty single mothers, fifty social contract couples (not legally married), and fifty in communes or group-living situations. The nonconventional families were located by using snowball and network sampling, by advertising in alternative media of all kinds, and by obtaining referrals from clinics and obstetricians preferred by countercultural clients. We also tramped through the hills in northern California where many communards had set up camp. Our comparison sample of fifty two-parent, legally married couples comprises forty parents located through a random sample of obstetricians in major urban areas of California and an additional ten located through staff contacts.

The total sample represents a range of lower-working-class to upper-middle-class European-American families. All parents were between the 20th and 90th percentile on the Hollingshead combined socioeconomic and educational scale when selected. The average age of the mothers at the birth of the child was twenty-five years old, with a range from eighteen to thirty-two. Their birth cohort centered on 1949 (plus or minus seven years), placing them squarely in the middle of the countercultural period. Fathers (i.e., the child's biological father)

were slightly older, with an average age of twenty-eight and a range from nineteen to forty-two. Mothers had completed an average of fourteen years of education and fathers sixteen years by the time the child was six. Seventy-five percent of the children were firstborn.

All the parents were selected without any knowledge of the parents' socioeconomic status (SES); nor did we know beforehand the parents' parents' SES. We did not know parents' commitment to various countercultural values until after they were selected (based solely on their nonconventional family lifestyles) for the study and then interviewed. Hence, there were no formal selection criteria that could have resulted in a sample of persons with an advantaged background or with a particular set of value orientations or kind of generational identity.

Of the mothers who started out as single parents, 39% were still single mothers when their teenagers reached eighteen. Of the social contract couples, 36% were still in that family arrangement. Only 14% of the families who had been in communes at the start of the study were still living in communes. Of the two-parent, legally married couples in the comparison sample, 73% were still married in 1992–94.

Figure 1 illustrates the overall change in families in the longitudinal sample over an eighteen-year period. When the study started, the women were in the third trimester of pregnancy and each lifestyle (single, social contract, communal, and two-parent married) comprised roughly 25% of the total sample. Married couples rose to 52% of the total by the end of the eighteen-year period, whereas communards dropped precipitously to 4% and social contract couples to 11%. Single parents first dropped and then increased steadily to a current 28% of the total sample. A new category, "unstable" family situations, appeared once the study began. These were families that changed frequently and for whom we could not establish a predominant lifestyle pattern. After early instability in a large number of the families, the persistently unstable group declined to 5% after eighteen years.

MEASURES

Parents were interviewed shortly before their child was born, and at child ages 1, 3, 6, and 18. These were semistructured interview/conversations: parents' and teens' comments about generational identity, the counterculture, and values are drawn from these interviews for use in this chapter. Parents and children were interviewed at home at age 18, and at offices at the University of California, Los Angeles,
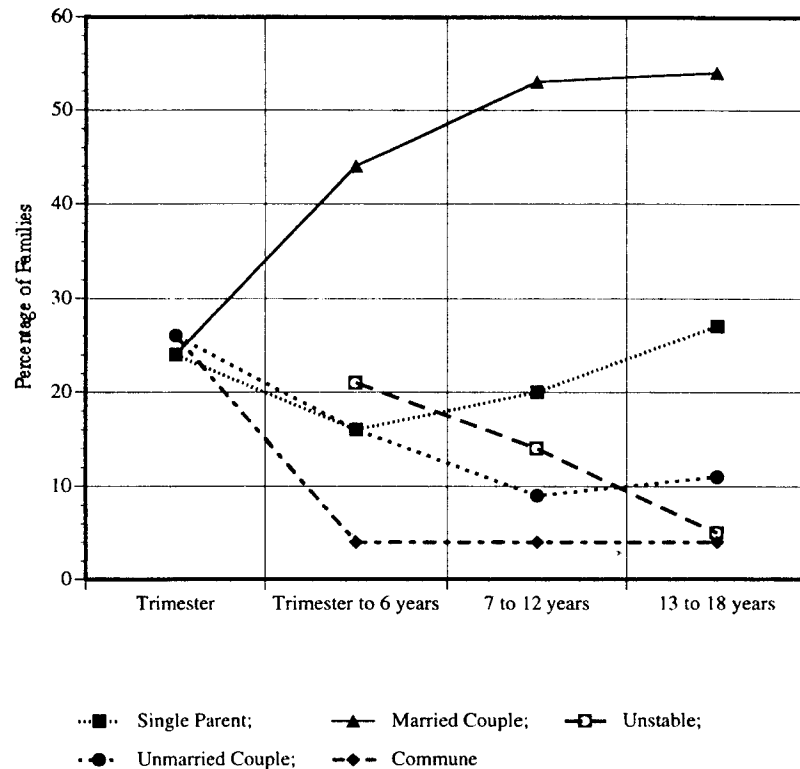
FIGURE 1 Percentages of family lifestyle arrangements from trimester to eighteen years of age

at ages 1, 3, and 6. (Families also were visited at home when the children were six months, eighteen months, and five years old, but these data are not included here.) Parents also completed questionnaires asking about values, countercultural orientation, drug use, and child rearing, among other topics. Adolescent children were interviewed as well about their own values, drug use, school and peers, and social and political attitudes. A representative subset of countercultural families participated in ethnographic visits, and some of these field notes have also been included in the study.

Values.—We initially defined eight values that characterized the countercultural movement: alternative achievement goals, pronaturalism, humanism, a present rather than future orientation, an acceptance of nonconventional authority, gender egalitarianism, low interest in

scientific and rational understanding, and antimaterialism (Eiduson et al. 1973). Weisner et al. (1983) and Weisner and Eiduson (1986) studied "pronaturalism" in the Family Lifestyles Project sample. Pronaturalism includes a complex of values and practices, such as environmental concern, emotional openness, and a "laid-back, mellow," relaxed interpersonal and socioemotional orientation. Eiduson et al. (1982), Weisner and Wilson-Mitchell (1990), and Weisner et al. (1994) report on gender egalitarianism as a value and a practice: families changed domestic tasks and roles, provided androgynous clothing, toys, play styles, and media for children, and encouraged mixed-gender play and friendships, for instance. However, there were only mixed results, more pronounced for girls, from familial efforts to socialize their children and change familial roles, in gender-egalitarian ways.

We assessed each parent's value orientations during the third trimester and at the child's ages 3, 6, and 18, using open-ended interviews. We asked parents directly about the eight values listed above. We also had parents complete values-rating scales (Weisner and Garnier 1992). Items for these scales were drawn from published scales, as well as from our project measures. We also asked parents about their commitment to a nonconventional lifestyle and to nonconventional values, and parents' answers are presented in the qualitative summaries in this chapter.

Drug use of teens and parents.—We assessed teenagers' and parents' drug use through the use of standardized interview and questionnaire items at the child's ages 3, 6, and 18.

School achievement.—The children's school grades and enrollment histories were obtained in first, second, sixth grades and the third or final year of high school; SAT scores were also obtained for all teens who took the test.

Social and political attitudes.—We asked the adolescents to complete the Student Information Form (Astin et al. 1993), which asks a wide range of survey questions concerning student attitudes. For the past twenty-eight years, a national sample of students entering U.S. colleges has completed this survey. We also asked teenagers about their beliefs and attitudes in our open-ended interviews and during ethnographic visits.

Interview questions and field notes on generational identity.—In addition to quantitative analysis of values, drug use, school achievement, and social attitudes for all two hundred participants in the study, we drew a subsample of forty-two nonconventional families from the

study for intensive qualitative analysis based on parents' self-reported countercultural commitment. We examined our field notes and qualitative interviews for patterns of response to our questions regarding generational identity: In the course of listening to what parents and teenagers said, fieldworkers used probes and thematic topics to expand understanding.

• How do you see the broad social movements that were occurring at the beginning of the project in 1975 [seventeen, eighteen years ago]—radical politics, feminism, alternative families, freer sexuality, drug use, folk music, new religions, and so on—in retrospect?

• How do you now view your own countercultural participation and family lifestyle choice?

• How would you rate your (and your spouse's) commitment to counterculture? (1 = no commitment; 7 = strong commitment) And why?

• Looking back now, how do you see the countercultural movement? In what ways was it beneficial/harmful? What has replaced it today, if anything? What are some examples? Do you think there should be something like it today? Something replacing it? What should it be?

• How have your lifestyle choices influenced your life today?

• Do you feel that you carry a generational identity? Is it important to you? Why? If not, is there a reason why you do not see yourself as part of a generation? Are there generational categories or labels that are not a part of your identity? How do you see your generation as distinct from your child's generation? How do the two differ?

Patterns in Countercultural Commitment over Eighteen Years, 1975–93

Five patterns of change in generational identity over time.—The questions about countercultural commitment had been asked at the beginning of the study, and repeated seventeen years later at our teen followup. We compared the two responses and examined the patterns and directions of change in countercultural identity over this period for every family. These data were used to group the parents in our study into five categories: those who declined in their countercultural, generational identity (HiLower), those who sustained a low sense of that identity through the study (LoLo), those whose countercultural identity remained strong and consistent throughout the years (HiHi), those

who currently called themselves "boomers" and were not any longer countercultural in orientation regardless of their prior countercultural experience (HiBoomer), and an "other" category composed of parents who were unable to classify themselves clearly or who had varied views of their generational identity—for example, that their identity stems from the 1950s rather than the 1960s and 1970s (LoOther).

There are differences in SES and other characteristics across the five groups, but they are trends; none were significant by chi-square test. Sixty-nine percent of the HiHi group was in the upper two quintiles on SES when the study began compared to 40% of the HiLower; 50% of the HiLower was in the middle quintile. The Boomer group was also higher in SES. When we revisited the families in 1992–94, the HiLower and other currently lower generational identity parents were slightly lower in SES, but again, not statistically significantly lower. The HiHi and Boomer mothers were also slightly older than the other groups were in 1975: HiHi mothers were twenty-six (plus or minus 3.8 years), for instance, compared to a mean of nearly twenty-five (plus or minus 4.3 years) for the HiLower mothers, but these are nonsignificant trends.

We focus most of our analysis on the two predominant patterns: families with higher, more sustained countercultural commitment over the eighteen years of our study (HiHi); and lower, more varied, declining identity (HiLower). But first, we summarize the fuller, more complex portrait of the entire sample and each of the five patterns of generational identity.

HiBoomer families (19%).—Some parents had a strong commitment to a countercultural identity in 1975 that was replaced by a "baby boom" identity by 1993. These parents reported their generational identities as belonging to the baby boom era, rather than the countercultural era. One single mother talked about her identification with the "role-playing thing." It made her think that she had a certain path to take and then, when the 1960s happened, "it just showed me that I had a whole world to choose from." Another commented, "I think the 60s was my response to what happened in the 50s." Those identifying with the baby boomers mentioned the difficulty they had in finding work as young adults. "I was in the middle of that huge cohort of job hunters," said one of the parents. Several of those parents who identified with the baby boomers continued to describe their lifestyle as "compatible with" but not part of the 1960s generation.

LoLo families (11%).—These parents had a relatively weak commitment to a countercultural identity in 1975 that remained low through 1993. Said one parent, "I feel like there's a lot of depravity in our generation. . . . I think we have a generation of people who are crooks." A father identified himself as part of the 1990s, not some earlier period. "It's just evolution, so to speak. Everybody evolves . . . they thought this way then, they think this way now." Our case materials suggest that these families with low generational identity were more changeable and troubled in their family circumstances. In fact, their low generational identity from the start was related to their more chaotic, unstable lives.

LoOther (18%).—Some parents had a relatively weak commitment to a countercultural identity in 1975 that was replaced by some other identity or by an inconsistent response by 1993. These parents often reported themselves as having a partial 1960s generational identity but only in retrospect: they only now see how the 1960s may have changed them. One mother commented that she no longer saw herself as "an isolated person, but as really a part of a broader group. In my generation . . . I've had some really true friendships with people. I look back at all that stuff basically fondly now." Others reported that they gained some spiritual renewal from that period but were not directly interested or involved in the counterculture.

We now turn to a more extended view of the two predominant groups of parents composing 55% of the sample: those with a relatively high countercultural commitment at midlife (HiHi), and those with a declining countercultural identity by midlife (HiLower).

HiHi parents (31%).—Many of the parents in this group were still living a life that reflected countercultural values. Although they certainly were not homogeneous, these parents shared a certain moral orientation toward what life's goals should be and how one should live in the world. In varying degrees, for instance, most parents in this group still placed little value on material things and a great deal of value on spiritual or personal growth. Many had very little disposable income, but, on the other hand, few lived in poverty. For instance, one single mother supported herself and a 12-year-old daughter on less than $20,000 a year, but their economic status was not a major concern of hers. They felt a certain pride in frequenting secondhand clothing stores; it became something of an adventure. As another mother commented, "I find wonderful stuff that other people spend weekends

shopping for in shopping malls. Andrew [her son] probably has more clothes and more toys than most people but they just happen to be used." Another single mother turned down well-paying jobs if they sapped too much of her creative energy; her priority was writing fiction and poetry and she did not want to be emotionally and mentally drained by a tedious nine-to-five job. These same women, however, as they approached midlife, wondered how they would feel about their economic situation as they got older. "I really want a house" said one. "I feel like I'm going to be forty-nine years old. It's not like 'I deserve it,' but then I think, 'this is really only reasonable, to own your own house.' "

Some in this group were doing extremely well financially, living an affluent lifestyle. Although these people were grateful for their economic security, most felt some guilt about their situation. One mother felt apologetic for living in an upper-class suburb in southern California. She insisted that her values were not the same as those in the rest of her community. Another mother struggled with labels: "Because of Eric's job we do have money, we ride in limos because he's in the music business, so we have that yuppiness—but money's not the only thing to me." She later decided she could best be described as a "hippie-yuppie." About half of those in the high-commitment group started off in 1975 with somewhat higher SES than the countercultural sample as a whole and stayed there. The other half started off with a somewhat poor SES and got better off.

Danielle is an example of a mother whose economic status improved. She offered one of the statements that opened this chapter: "I think [the hippie movement is] the best thing that happened." She also commented regarding the counterculture, "I feel that in my heart we are brothers and sisters; that we are one and that we are divine." Her story illustrates a sustained commitment to countercultural values, in spite of changes in her family lifestyle:

> Danielle entered the project in a social contract relationship. When her daughter Sarida was born, she married the father "to make things easier for the child." The family lived in rural northern California in a cabin with water and a woodburning stove but no electricity. By the time Sarida was four-and-a-half, her parents had separated and Danielle was living as a single mother. At the six-year visit,

Danielle was living a more middle-class lifestyle, still in northern California. She was again in a social contract relationship and lived with her partner for four years before he was killed in an automobile accident. Over the next seven years, she dated several men but did not live with any of them. She returned to school for a doctorate in family therapy and moved to Hawaii to set up a private practice. She started living with Roy when Sarida was seventeen and married him the following year.

At the eighteen-year visit, Danielle talked about trying to maintain her 1960s values related to spiritual awareness while living a comfortable middle-class life. Although she enjoyed her professional and financial success, she worried about keeping a balance between achievement and spiritual growth. She marks the beginning of her spiritual growth to using psychedelic drugs in the 1960s. "It was in psychedelics that I first experienced the divine." At that time, she made a decision to reject the values of her very wealthy family. "It was the best thing I did, because our values are so different."

Danielle is a strong believer in "the mind-body connection." She practices meditation and studies metaphysical philosophy. When she was diagnosed with chronic fatigue, she sought treatment at a holistic clinic and now uses acupuncture and lives a "totally pure life" (no drugs, very little alcohol) to control her symptoms. She has made a conscious effort to pass these beliefs and practices on to Sarida and believes she has been successful. Danielle is still strongly gender egalitarian and proud of being involved in the Green Party, a new environmental political group.

Spiritual or personal growth was important to many other parents in the high-commitment group. Their spirituality traveled many paths: following a vision quest according to Native American practices; practicing meditation; returning to the Catholic Church and finding comfort in liturgical ritual; finding spirituality in nature; studying tai chi chuan; joining a secular Jewish community. Several parents had very negative feelings toward organized religion: "I think it [religion] comes

from peoples' fear and their inability to cope. To me religion is the most backward way of dealing with the world."

Although only about 8% of counterculture families were still in communes by 1992, three out of four of these families were in the HiHi group seventeen years later (the remaining former communards are all parents who no longer have a countercultural identification and are often disaffected and bitter [HiLower]). Many in this group continued to value various forms of communal living, usually in rural settings. In one case, a divorced mother became quite successful at selling real estate. The first property she bought was a fourplex; she had no interest in living in a single-family situation, so she used two of the units for herself and rented out the other two. Her tenants have become part of her extended family. One of the fathers purchased a plot of land with seven other people, each of whom had a family dwelling on the land. He described his living situation as "semicommunal." Several families still owned parts of the land they had lived on during the 1960s and 1970s and made a point of returning periodically to reunite with former commune members. Those who no longer live in a community residence sometimes still retain their contacts and spiritual commitments to their group.

Children often diminished the intensity and practice of parents' generational identities. One couple was committed to maintaining their family in a stable, married, noncountercultural lifestyle so as not to expose their children to a difficult and changeable lifestyle similar to the one the father had experienced as a child. He felt that this commitment had a positive effect on his children. "Our children think that we were a couple of hippies. . . . We've told them all the stories of our lives after they were born, and before. They like that . . . they think it's funny."

Sarah and Jack were living in a social contract relationship at the start of the project. They married when their child Tanya was a year old due, in part, to their concern that, should Sarah die, Jack might be denied custody of the baby. Jack also felt that a legal marriage was important so that society would not look down on Tanya and treat her badly.

Over the next ten years, Jack and Sarah had two more children and moved from California to Washington state

and then to Hawaii. By the eighteen-year visit, the couple had divorced, and Tanya and one of her brothers were living with Jack in the family home that Jack had built. Jack was doing quite well as a contractor. His focus was on "maintaining the stability of what we have left of our family . . . with the house and keeping everything going on day to day, for the children." Although he still professed a strong commitment to the counterculture, some of his values had changed. Before he had had gender-egalitarian views; now he felt that women should stay home with their families and men should be the breadwinners. He decried the current economic situation that forced women to join the workforce in order to maintain a decent standard of living.

As parents, members of this group had emphasized certain values with their children: social responsibility, environmental concern, anti-materialism, and open and honest communication within the family. A minority had smoked pot with their children. Other parents had been very open about their past drug use but made it clear to their children that they would prefer that the children did not follow in their footsteps. Others were comfortable with their child smoking pot if the child was "sensible and responsible."

Not surprisingly, many of the teens in the high-commitment group praised the open lines of communication in their families and felt they could discuss any topic with their parents. Jennie, for example, felt her family was different from most American families. "To me, I think we're more spiritual—we're willing to talk about things. I think we're more communicative than most kids and their parents." Janna explained that she was always honest with her parents. "Because when you start hiding things, then subconsciously it can build up with guilt in your mind. And that's what makes you wig out later in life. . . . I think if you're open, even with drug use, I think you're a lot happier. I think you feel better about what you're doing."

These teens also felt fortunate to have been raised with so few rules. Mutual respect marked the relationships between parents and children; one teen commented on how much he appreciated never being talked down to as a child. Some teens, however, were not sure they would raise their children with so much freedom. And others were determined to

provide their families with more financial security than they had had growing up.

One teen said that she had a reputation for having the "coolest mom," especially during junior high school and high school. Her friends would discuss things with her mother—such as drugs and sex—that they could not discuss with their own parents. On the other hand, it was hard having a mother who could not afford to send her even five dollars, as was the case when a teen was in San Francisco, unemployed, and "living off Top Ramen." She also wonders whether it would have been better for her to have had more boundaries growing up.

Other teens described their parents' countercultural values as some-what of a burden. Jane was annoyed by her parents' constant emphasis on social responsibility. She felt her parents were unfairly critical of her for not doing more to help the disadvantaged, and she felt guilty for not working at a soup kitchen. She also found her mother's anti-materialistic views annoying. She saw nothing wrong with spending money on new clothes, as opposed to always going to secondhand stores. For the most part, though, the teens in the high-commitment group respected their parents' values as well as their lifestyle. "I never saw my parents as that different from other people," Nell commented. "Except that my dad had longer hair than most people's parents. It's not like it's a different lifestyle. I think it's actually a better lifestyle . . . growing your own vegetables and having your own goods and chicken for food."

HiLower (24.5%).—Another group of midlife parents had reported a high commitment to the counterculture from the time their child was born until the child was roughly age 6, but significantly less commitment by the eighteen-year interview. Their stories detailing the causes for this decline often included ideological changes, personal struggles with drugs, and interpersonal problems. Many parents had lost the conviction that countercultural identity mattered to them. Such an identity became irrelevant, feared, or blamed for their current troubles.

Some parents no longer particularly identified with the 1960s because they did not feel, in retrospect, that they had been "true to themselves" at that time. These parents look back on their countercultural identity in 1975 as a false identity. Jessie, one of the mothers in this group, thought that if she had been truer to herself she would have

been "straighter." She struggled to raise her daughter as a single parent. Her midlife is improving—but not because of the sixties in her view.

At the time of the first interview, Jessie was in a social contract relationship "out of love" for the father of her daughter. She and her partner separated when their daughter Lissa was four years old. Jessie remarried when Lissa was twelve and moved with her new husband to Oregon. She returned to school, got a bachelor's in geology, and entered graduate school. At the eighteen-year visit she reflected on her past. She said that she now felt that living in a social contract relationship was "morally wrong"; she was more comfortable in a traditional marriage. Her experience with drugs in the 1960s was largely a charade; while her partner took acid, she would break off a little and "pretend" to take it. When she met her present husband, she felt relieved to be returning to the values of her family of origin.

Jessie was apprehensive about Lissa becoming sexually active at too young an age and had urged Lissa to be careful with drugs. She knew that Lissa smoked pot and went to parties where they took the drug "ecstasy." She told Lissa, "I don't want you taking drugs. . . . I've seen a lot of people destroyed."

A number of parents with declining or denied generational identity had been heavily involved in the drug scene of the 1960s and 1970s. In a few cases, drugs continued to play a central and negative role in their lives. At the extreme, one family was temporarily homeless after both parents had lost their jobs. At nineteen, their teen was working full-time and giving most of her earnings to her parents. She told the interviewer that she was afraid her parents were using the money to buy drugs. Another single mother had struggled with drug addiction most of her child's life. She felt that she started using drugs as a reaction to her chaotic home life. "Because I felt so lost, I used."

Others had been involved with drugs, but stopped using them during their pregnancy. If they started up again, they stopped when their children were young. One single mother stopped when her child was born. "It was just time to take a break," she commented. Another mother stopped before she was pregnant even though her close friends were still smoking heavily. "I did it to experience a different kind of

consciousness; I didn't know who I was; I was just darn sure I didn't want to be like my parents." To those parents in our study who had been involved with drugs, much of the overall counterculture era was clearly associated with the drug scene; once they stopped using they no longer felt committed to that period. For them, the positive features of the counterculture were submerged by the negative effects of the drugs or family struggles they associated with drugs.

Some of the parents expressed real bitterness about the era and their experience of it, which they felt led to a troubled life. They strongly but negatively identify with their generation in an angry way. One mother commented, "It wasn't real easy. It would have been okay if I wasn't drinking or using. I think it would have been just fine. But then if I wasn't [using], I don't know if I would have been in that kind of a movement." She felt that the countercultural movement was "okay," but that many people—including herself—were "really lost."

A number of parents followed the values and practices associated with the counterculture, but not because of the social movements of that time. They resisted defining their life choices as due to having belonged to a generation. One said, "It's not what we [in our communal group] were doing at all [i.e, participating in the counterculture]. I guess in that respect I have always been a countercultural person but I never thought of it as the counterculture." Another said, "There have always been countercultural *people* and there always will be." These parents resist being associated with a 1960s generational identity because they feel that the countercultural lifestyle is broader than the 1960s generation or any social movement.

Nora and Dan, for example, were living as a social contract couple in 1975. Nora made clear then that she did not consider herself as living an alternative lifestyle. She "was just doing what was natural; it's just who I am." At twenty-two, she was an experienced and expert midwife held in high regard by many of the community obstetricians. She described marriage as a "silly institution," saying that she and Dan were "married in the deepest sense of the word." The family subsisted on public assistance, with Nora and Dan sharing childcare tasks and Dan doing most of the housework.

By the eighteen-year contact Nora and Dan were still together as a social contract couple. They had four children

between the ages of thirteen and twenty. Dan was working in the defense industry with computers, Nora had gone back to school to get licensed in midwifery, the children were all in school or employed. She still had a thriving practice in midwifery; many of her clients now were illegal immigrants, who were comfortable with midwives and needed inexpensive care, whereas in the past most were counterculture families who wanted a "natural" childbirth in their homes. She talked at length about the values she had tried to instill in her children: gender egalitarianism, a strong belief in the inherent value of all human beings, concern for the environment, liberal political beliefs with an emphasis on improving conditions for the underclass, and a skepticism about the intentions of governments. She rejected the notion of a generational identity, insisting that what she cultivated was a "human identity." She commented that she herself was raised in a countercultural manner when she grew up in the late 1940s and 1950s, and the 1960s just seemed routine to her.

Some parents thought that carrying a generational identity of any kind meant a lack of personal growth and self-enhancement. To them, living within cultural categories restricted self-development; it implied living in the past or persisting in a stage one should grow out of. These parents recognized their generational identity but denied most of its relevance to their current lives. This is itself, perhaps, a countercultural trait: always questioning the past, always reconstituting aspects of meaning and identity. One parent did not identify with what her same-age countercultural-era friends were going through. "It has something to do with not living in a big house in the suburbs but also that I didn't *calcify* the way some of my friends have." Another mother said "I don't like it [the countercultural generation] now. . . . It isn't like I am *locked* in the sixties, or whatever."

Other parents now felt that they should have been identified with some other group. An identity of resistance *was* central to them but it was not the counterculture movement that was central. One mother had started to feel that she did belong to a generational group—but not the 1960s generation: "I only identify with women who are fifty, who have been molested, who are discovering their power, and learning to . . . come into their own, playing drums, who are growing and look-

ing to each other for support." In a related fashion, other parents identified with one aspect of the counterculture (such as feminism) but rejected the others (such as spiritual concerns or drug use)—indeed, denied the value and utility of these aspects of the counterculture. Thus they had a very qualified generational identity, specific to one or another strand of the counterculture.

Toby considered herself a feminist, not a 1960s countercultural product. She said that she had never considered herself a hippie. "To us, the hippies were lazy, they didn't do anything. That was not me. I studied alternative things and was interested in a new world. I still am, but now more so on an individual level. Feminism taught me this. It's making a lasting impact on people as individuals that is important."

For some, the commitment to the counterculture was replaced by a spiritual awakening. One mother, who had been part of a commune when her child was born, became involved with a New Age church after having a vision during which she spoke in tongues. At the eighteen-year interview she was deeply committed to her religion. Another mother joined a yoga community after years of reading and searching for truth. She looked back with disbelief at her countercultural days: "To just live as a hippie is very selfish. You were doing it for yourself; you weren't thinking about anyone else."

For Wendy, commitment to the counterculture and spiritual awakening were one and the same. She talked about her reasons for joining her residential religious community: "At that time . . . it was the Vietnam War and I just felt the political situation in the country was so hopeless that there was nothing you could do politically. Part of my reason for going was the only thing you could do was to try and work on yourself . . . and I wanted to live in a spiritual community that as a group, could somehow change the country." She stayed for fifteen years and left, after becoming very disillusioned with the leaders, whose lifestyles were not consistent with their Buddhist teachings. She described the changes in her attitude: "Now, am I committed to a religious group and willing to live in a communal situation? No. Am I willing to have no material possessions? No. Am I worried about retirement? Yes. It's not like I've become a conservative or something, or even that I would go get a job in a corporation." But she wants

nothing more to do with group living. "I did it for fifteen years and basically it was a failure. I'm very disillusioned with group situations."

Some parents, no longer committed, still expressed some nostalgia about the period. "It was wonderful—I'm glad I did it, and I'm glad I'm alive and healthy." One described herself as an ex-hippie saying, "I still, in a lot of ways, feel like the person I was then, but I have to live in a different world and environment now." She felt guilty when she considered her upper-middle-class lifestyle. "Now I seem to care [about material things] too much, which isn't really good. I see myself turning into my mother in a lot of ways and I don't like that." Her feelings reflected a larger group of parents who still had some identification with the counterculture but much diluted or conflicted. Another mother said, "I went to all of the antiwar demonstrations. I went to all the love-ins. I went to all the concerts. I did all that then. So I'm part of that generation, but I'm just not as involved. . . . I'll leave that up to the kids."

Some of the teens who grew up in the HiLower or LoLo groups of families had also become very involved with drugs. One had been a heavy acid user; after a bad trip he stopped using but continued to sell it. Several others reported smoking "a lot" of pot, but there were also teens who had made the conscious decision not to start smoking. Some teens had unhappy memories of their early years related to drugs and alcohol. One remembered being left in the car with other children while his mother and her friends went bar hopping. "I guess he felt like I was abandoning him a lot—I was all he had, and I moved around a lot," commented his mother.

Sometimes, teens made an effort to be positive about their parents' countercultural involvements even though they had not appropriated any of their parents' ideals and had not excused the pain the parents may have caused them. Jason talked about his family's economic struggles: "I think my parents made the decision to follow their ideals rather than do what would have made them wealthy. It has some negative material consequences, and the sadness in my life is that I am way too aware of these material consequences." He was not sure he would be happier than his parents as an adult, but he was confident he would be richer. For some teens, then, the memories and personal losses they experienced made them unlikely to say they had a positive attitude toward their parents' family lifestyles.

For the most part, however, these teens had surprisingly positive attitudes toward their parents' lifestyles—often much more positive than in their own reports. The son of Wendy, who had lived in a religious community for 15 years, respected his mother's decision to live a "nonmaterialistic lifestyle." He appreciated growing up with the realization that "there was something more out there besides a nine-to-five job and financial security." The son who remembered being left in the car also talked at length about how much he had been positively influenced by his mother's spirituality.

But like the teens in the HiHi group, they also had more conventional ideas about how they would like their children to be raised: with more financial security, in a two-parent home, and with more father involvement. "I want to live in a house and not an apartment," Evie explained. "My parents will never own a house. And I want a house where I can have a yard with a dog—that's my thing."

COUNTERCULTURAL IDENTITY AND FAMILY LIFE

A countercultural generational identity at midlife is higher among parents who, in their previous years of family life, tried practices that were intended to be countercultural, challenged implicit cultural conventions, and tried to reflect their values in how they lived out family life with their children. Sex-egalitarian values for raising children, for example, involved reallocating domestic tasks, picking special toys, developing nongendered stories for children, and so forth (Weisner and Wilson-Mitchell 1990; Weisner et al. 1994). Pronaturalism—a concern for the environment and for a free (i.e., "natural") expressiveness—is another example (Weisner et al. 1983). Living out a very modest life with respect to material possessions, including a kind of voluntary poverty, is another area of life with direct translation of countercultural values of antimaterialism into family practice (Weisner 1982). Political activism incorporating family members into activist groups, causes, marches, and so on, is yet another example. The HiHi and HiLower parents both had relatively high countercultural values and ideals in their youth. But parents who attempted to translate those values into family practices were more likely to have retained their countercultural identity at midlife, as their children moved through adolescence.

Those who actively tried to put their countercultural goals into practice in child rearing in 1980 were more likely to be in the HiHi group of parents in 1994. In 1980, 47% of the HiHi families had been high innovators in actual family practice, compared to 24% of the en-

tire sample and 18% of the HiLower parents. Most HiLower parents were classified early in the study as having countercultural values as well as some practices, but the Lower parents showed only modest or inconsistent *incorporation* of them into practice in family life as their children grew up.

Family Lifestyle and Generational Identity

Parents who started out with a high commitment to the counterculture and who are still identified with it (HiHi) lived in varied family styles. What distinguishes their family patterns over time is their commitment to sustaining their family circumstances, whether as single mothers, as social contract couples, in some sort of collective living situation, or in legal marriage. Parents with a sustained high countercultural identity were single mothers by choice for most of their child's life (40%) or in a stable married-couple family (33%), with 13% each either in communes or in unstable, changing family situations. The single mothers in the HiHi group were more likely to have stayed single for most of the child's life, rather than divorcing, remarrying, or living with mates for years at a time and then leaving. Of these other paths, changing partners over time is the most common.

In contrast, 73% of the HiLower parents who started off high but *declined* in their generational identity have been in two-parent family situations for most of the child's life. However, most of these are re-marriages or unmarried couple situations that have been changing over time. Those who never had a particularly strong generational identity—the LoLo and LoOther groups—are predominantly single mothers whose status is due to circumstance—divorce, separation— more than to ideological commitment. Sixty percent were in unstable, changing family circumstances.

Since the HiHi and HiLower groups began the study similarly high in generational identity, the longitudinal data suggest that it is the *family* experiences, especially instability and troubles in parents' family lives, that lead to the changes in identity over the years more than the other way around. Clearly generational identity *at* midlife and family experiences *leading up to* midlife are interconnected, so our design does not allow strong causal inferences. Nonetheless, successfully achieving a sustained, meaningful, congruent family life using values, goals, and practices from the countercultural era seems to assist in maintaining that positive generational identity over time. Parents who started out with countercultural orientations who were not able to achieve this

kind of family adaptive resilience more often have abandoned that identity, blame it for their problems, deny it ever was important to them, or find it a false self.

Continuity in Countercultural Values: Parents' Generational Identity and Adolescent Development

Two of the central concerns of our countercultural parents at mid-life were: the adaptive competence of the teenage children, and parents' success at transmitting their countercultural values to their teens. This is also the single most common question we are asked about the sixties parents and their "children of the children of the sixties": So, how did the kids turn out?

Parents hoped that the positive values from their past would live on in their children, but also recognized how different their children's world today is, and, in many cases, how much their family life now did not match their plans of eighteen years ago. Listening to parents one might conclude, and worry as they do, that things have changed so much in their lives, and in the world around their children, that little continuity is likely at this particular point in midlife—a point when teens complete high school and many begin their move out of their parents' home. The extent of change and turmoil, drug use, and economic hardship experienced by a subset of our parents and teens might also lead to concern about the teens' future, for these are real risks. Was there continuity between parents and teens in values and ideals, and what were the levels of competence and achievement as the teens complete high school?

To answer this question, we turn to analyses performed on the full Family Lifestyles Project sample of parents and teens. We include interview materials from the forty-two nonconventional families we studied intensively, in order to complement the quantitative findings with family stories that exemplify the qualitative patterns in the families.

Value Orientations

The countercultural parents in our study had teenagers who tended to share their parents' values. Further, parents with a sustained values commitment and generational identity over the eighteen years of our study had children who were more similar in values than parents whose generational identity had declined.

For example, table 1 shows our data on eight values dimensions, comparably measured over an eighteen-year period. All eight correla-

TABLE 1. Correlations of Mother Values and Teen Values across Time (N = 200)

Value Domain[a]	Time of Survey				
	Mother, Trimester and 3-Year	Mother, 3-Year and 6-Year	Mother, 6-Year and 18-Year	Mother, Trimester, and Teen, 18-Year	Mother and Teen, 18-Year
Achievement	.11	.55**	.19**	−.08	.15*
Authority	.48**	.71**	.63**	.33**	.40**
Humanism	.09	.48**	.42**	.33**	.40**
Materialism	.19**	.40**	.49**	.14*	.21**
Scientific Knowing	.24**	.52**	.50**	.30**	.20**
Pronatural	.44**	.69**	.60**	.32**	.30**
Future Orientation	.29**	.66**	.26**	.08	.19**
Sex Egalitarian	.52**	.62**	.50**	.32**	.45**
Canonical Correlation[b]	.71**	.78**	.72**	.63**	.54**

[a] Values assessed with eight questionnaire items each; scale ranges, 1–8.
[b] Canonical correlation computed between two sets of eight value domains.
* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$.

tions between mothers and their teens are statistically significant, more than between mothers and their own values orientations when they were pregnant eighteen years earlier. The canonical correlations are particularly striking and show a substantial common variance across all eight values (Weisner and Garnier 1992, 1995).

Nevertheless, the teens and parents vary in the strength of their commitments to these eight values. Values and cultural goals were transmitted—but also transformed. In our sample, values are selectively transformed by new generational cohort effects, by parent or teen gender, and adolescent rebellion against parents. For example, most parents in conventional as well as countercultural lifestyles turn out to be less materialistic than their adolescent children. Differences in materialism show a generational, cohort influence, as well as a countercultural influence. Teens and parents alike were responding to the economic changes of the 1980s and 1990s. Times are tougher, there are fewer jobs than job seekers, and wages are flat or declining. These current economic conditions were clearly influencing teens' (and parents') cultural goals and values. Our field notes and interviews with teens and parents were filled with concerns about jobs and long-term financial security. Many voluntarily poor countercultural parents regretted their nonmaterialistic pasts, feeling that it is too late for them to enter the economic mainstream.

Teens worried about a declining economic future.—Teens with worries about their own future were also worried about their parents' ability to support themselves in their old age. As one teen commented regarding his family's economic circumstances, "I think they might have some problems. . . . I get a little worried. I feel like I'm the parent."

Differences in gender-egalitarian values show a gender effect as well as a countercultural effect. The teenage girls and their mothers in the study were more committed to gender egalitarianism than boys and fathers—this is true for both conventional and nonconventional families. The countercultural parents (mothers and fathers alike) also were more feminist and egalitarian than parents in our comparison sample. But mothers and daughters are more feminist and egalitarian in values *within* the countercultural sample as well. This holds for parents with sustained (HiHi) as well as declining generational identity. The character of feminist beliefs among most of our countercultural teens and parents at midlife is predominantly liberal and humanistic, rather than a more radical feminist orientation (Stein 1995).

Another important feature of intergenerational transmission of cultural values is that adolescents would resist or oppose their parents' beliefs about accepting normative societal authority. Teens who grew up in our conventional comparison sample were *less* likely than their parents to say that they accepted such authorities as politicians, advice books, and experts. Teens in countercultural families with sustained countercultural identity (HiHi) were *more* likely to say that they *accepted* such authority than teens in other groups, even though the HiHi group *parents* were most likely to counter authority. Boys and girls alike showed this pattern. Parents with declining generational identity were in the middle on this measure, as were their teens. Our interview data with teens support the interpretation that teens tended to do the opposite of what their parents sometimes said regarding such matters as following or resisting authority—in part simply because it was opposite. Teens in our sample did resist, rebel, and reject (although selectively) society's norms as had their parents. But they also rebelled against their parents' authority—whichever direction their parents tended to lean toward, they sometimes just leaned the other way.

Social and political attitudes of teens.—The teens in our sample, like their parents, were clearly more liberal in political and social attitudes than their peers. We asked the teens in our study to respond to the Freshman Questionnaire, which has been used to monitor the values and attitudes of college freshmen since 1966 (Astin et al. 1993). Most of the differences between the countercultural and the national sample were in the area of *political attitudes* and *values orientations* and *not* in such domains as aspirations, self-perception of abilities, or favorite activities.

The teens in our sample were substantially more left of the political center than the national Astin sample (table 2). Only 4% of the teens from our countercultural families said they were "right of center," compared to 23% of the national sample. Fifty-nine percent of teens from higher-values commitment families (HiHi) identified themselves as liberal or far left in their political views (adding together the first two rows in table 2), compared to 47% from HiLower or LoLo families, 44% of the conventionally married comparison sample, and 27% of the Astin national-sample freshmen.

Teens in our sample also had significantly stronger humanistic, nonviolent, and egalitarian views than the national sample teens. They were more likely to be in favor of the legalization of marijuana, more likely to feel that the federal government is not doing enough to stop

TABLE 2. Comparison of Political Views of Family Lifestyle Project Adolescents, with a National Sample of College Freshmen[a]

Political View	Conventional Comparison Sample (%) (n = 43)	Nonconventional, Higher Commitment (%) (n = 98)	Nonconventional, Lower Commitment (%) (n = 53)	National sample of freshmen[a] (%)
Far left	0.0	8.5	8.0	2.5
Liberal	35.9	51.1	38.0	24.7
Middle-of-the-road	38.5	36.2	50.0	49.9
Conservative	23.1	4.3	2.0	21.4
Far right	2.6	0.0	2.0	1.5

[a] Student information responses of 220,757 first-time, full-time freshmen attending two- and four-year colleges and universities are described in Astin et al. (1993). Numbers indicate percentage identifying themselves as holding a particular political view.

pollution, and more likely to disagree with the statement that married women should remain in the home (table 3).

Our findings were that, compared to a comparable national sample (Astin et al. 1993), the teens from our countercultural families were much more liberal than their U.S. peers and shared their parents' liberal social values. Countercultural parents seem to have successfully transferred many of their ideals to their children. Furthermore, the parents with a sustained generational identity (HiHi) more often had teens with values similar to their own than did those parents with declining identities (HiLower). For one mother, the similarities between her generation and her son's were at once amusing and a bit discouraging. "I notice there's a segment of today's kids who are wandering off to Grateful Dead concerts, smoking a lot of pot," she said, laughing. "And I think 'Oh don't do that'; I mean I know it's a lot of fun, but it's so unoriginal for one thing."

In spite of the clear success of most countercultural parents to have carried their goals and ideals into their children's lives, many parents did not see these signs of relative continuity. Paradoxically, many parents believed that their teens were *unlike* them, were much more conservative than they were, and were part of a current teen generation very different from them. They struggled to come to terms at midlife with their goals of creating some continuity between their own and their children's ideals.

Parents often focused on the many changes they perceived in the cultural and economic circumstances of their teens' birth cohort compared to theirs and the effect of these changes on the discontinuity parents perceived in values and beliefs between them and their children. Sharon talked about her son, Evan, for example. "Evan's generation has it tough—there's not as much hope and the world is more depressing now. A lot of kids in this generation feel really angry about a lot of things; that's kind of depressing. And frankly there's nothing very wonderful or special about them. Our generation . . . everything was open to us and everything was exciting and I don't see that for them. The music was wonderful. Look at the music today, there's nothing coming out today. I think it's much more difficult."

Parents also focused on relatively small differences in values between family members, which loom very large *within* the family but not from the perspective of national samples. Many of our parents thought their own generational identity weakened and countercultural

TABLE 3. Comparison of Responses by Family Lifestyle Project Adolescents, with the National Sample of College Freshmen

Questionnaire Item	Conventional Comparison Sample (%) (n = 43)	Nonconventional, Higher Commitment (%) (n = 98)	Nonconventional, Lower Commitment (%) (n = 53)	National sample of freshmen[a] (%)
Agree strongly or somewhat:				
The federal government is not doing enough to promote disarmament.	69.8	84.4	82.4	64.3
The federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution.	83.7	95.9	92.1	84.4
The death penalty should be abolished.	14.8	38.6	23.1	22.1
If two people really like each other, it's all right for them to have sex even if they've known each other for only a very short time.	48.8	67.8	67.9	44.8
The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family.	39.5	10.3	13.5	24.2
Marijuana should be legalized.	28.6	62.3	54.6	28.2
Objectives considered to be essential or very important:				
One should help others who are in difficulty.	53.5	65.3	73.5	63.6
One should participate in an organization like the Peace Corps or Vista.	9.3	22.9	18.9	25.6
One should develop a meaningful philosophy of life.	55.9	66.4	75.5	44.6

[a] Student information responses of 220,757 first-time, full-time freshmen attending two- and four-year colleges and universities are described in Astin et al. (1993).

values commitments declined, of course. But this is a judgment relative to their own pasts or their perception of relative changes with their own past friends and peers. In contrast, we have already seen how relatively liberal, or feminist, or concerned with the environment the nonconventional families actually are overall, compared to the Astin sample or our own comparison sample.

Those families with declining generational identity and values (Hi-Lower) were definitely more likely to blame their teens' problems on the counterculture itself as well as in part on themselves and their family situations. Annie commented on the lack of stability in her son Noah's life, emphasizing that Noah's generation is coming from a more unstable lifestyle than she came from. "I was almost going to say 'dysfunctional,' but we all come from that, so that's really not the right word." Her own family or origin, for example, had been much more stable than what she had to offer her own son, in her view.

PROTECTIVE EFFECTS OF A SUSTAINED GENERATIONAL IDENTITY AND VALUES COMMITMENT

Schooling.—Significantly more teens living in nonconventional families with a strong commitment to their lifestyle and values (HiHi) remained in high school and graduated compared to either teens in nonconventional families with a lower lifestyle commitment (Hi-Lower), or teens in the conventional comparison sample. Stronger commitment to nonconventional lifestyle values also significantly correlated with higher grade point averages and SAT scores. This finding holds after we control for parental socioeconomic status and the child's IQ at age 6.

Parental values seemed to help protect adolescents from substance use and related school problems. In our sample, many of the usual troubles of adolescents and their families lead to noncompletion of high school in about 8% of teens (e.g, heavy drug use, family stresses, a history of school trouble). A sustained generational identity offered both some family stability and, we believe, some parental ability to provide their children with meaningful cultural and personal interpretations regarding family problems. Parents in more troubled, changing family situations without sustained generational identity, had teens who were more likely to stop out or to drop out fully. Furthermore, children who stopped out of school were more likely to go back and complete high school if they grew up in families with more stability and stronger generational identity. Adolescents in stronger commitment

families reported in our interviews and in questionnaires that their parents were more positively involved with their children, more accepting of individuation, more child centered and less rejecting, and more likely to value and encourage verbal interaction than parents in families with lower or declining values commitment (Garnier et al. 1995). (Academic data summarized in Weisner and Garnier 1992; Garnier, Stein, and Jacobs 1995; Garnier and Weisner 1994; Weisner and Garnier 1994.)

Drug use.—Countercultural parents were often heavy drug users, and their adolescents were heavier drug users than their age cohort when compared to national survey data and our comparison sample. The magnitude of differences was substantial: National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) national survey data reported that 18% of boys and 16% of girls use hard drugs; our adolescents reported use two to three times higher. The National Institute of Drug Abuse reported 24% of boys and 18% of girls as using cannabis; about 50% of our teens reported use (see Johnston et al. 1993).

Our parents worried about teen drug use. The nature of drug use has changed, many said; they often felt that their own use had been a major mistake. They often recalled that because their mates were now or had been users, family life had been ruined. They hoped never to repeat this mistake. At midlife, many of the parents in our study altered their beliefs regarding the significance of drug use and feared its influence because it threatened the future of their children.

Our data suggested that daughters in our nonconventional sample are relatively heavier users than daughters in the NIDA survey data and that the negative effects of drug use affected girls more in our countercultural sample. Associated with girls' drug use were more dropouts, pregnancy, leaving home before graduation from high school, and more troubled interpersonal relationships than reported for boys and their parents.

Parents with greater continuity in their generational identity were less likely to have teens who were heavy drug users compared to families with declining identity and commitment. The effect of continuity in values and countercultural generational identity persisted after controlling for family stability, parents' prior and current drug use, and SES. Again, parents' explanations and the meanings they gave their teens regarding drug use seem to have provided some protective effect. (Data summarized from Garnier and Stein [1994], and Garnier and Weisner [1992, 1995]).

CONCLUSION

An interesting paradox marks European-American parents' talk about their midlife course and countercultural generational influence. The counterculture emphasized the collective in many of its values and social practices. Communes, group decision making, resource sharing, open family life, and a "spirit of community" were shared values of the "new tribes." Yet when many countercultural parents talked about their own identity and what had led them to live their lives in certain ways, they, like most Americans, were reluctant to say, "I was a product, at least in part, of a social movement; it was the subculture of the time that shaped my present identity." They were reluctant to lose the personal agency and choice that Americans suppose directs their cultural careers. They implicitly at least, utilized an individualistic, self-affirming, autonomous definition of what produced their life course. They either spoke of the self as personally constructed by individual choice rather than social forces, or they critiqued the counterculture for having *denied* them the ability to be agents of their destiny. Parents most often described their generational identity at midlife as influenced by and influencing their internal, private self, a self with agency, goals, values, and feelings of worth (Modell 1996). Parents did, however, consider at least one social group—their *family*—a powerful social force shaping identity. Family losses, change, and instability as well as successes were often mentioned. In the implicit view of our informants, social and political movements (prior or current) are less salient for self and identity than either personal experience or family.

Parents experiencing sad and sometimes tragic life events were more likely to blame the counterculture directly for their suffering, whereas those with more satisfying lives attributed their satisfaction to their *own* agency, albeit perhaps aided by the cultural movements of the 1960s. Happier countercultural parents more often described their cultural career as a series of personal achievements and decisions, perhaps loosely informed by their earlier experiences. In this respect, the parents in our study were thinking about the self and about identity much as all Americans do. Countercultural parents' goals and values and family practices were different than other Americans' in many ways, but these parents' model of the individual and egocentric self was similar to the conventional American model (Markus and Kitayama 1994).

Our results point to the importance of family life in the formation and expression of generational identity at midlife. A sustained, consis-

tent generational identity can make the difference between a positive or negative life experience between youth and midlife and can have protective effects for teens and parents alike. By focusing on family influence and personal identity over time, we are certainly not in any way suggesting that the culture-historical world around the families—its economy, cultural representations of aging and gender and class, the American concern with school achievement, and certain cultural definitions of "success" in adolescence—did not matter to parents' views of their generational identity. Rather, we look at the family and personal levels of identity to bring out the *meanings* of the wider culture-historical world. Exclusively economic or demographic models sometimes miss or omit family and personal meanings entirely.

Similarly, some versions of cultural discourse theories and cultural constructionist theories do not take account of agentic actors, with both a social and a private self, with cultural as well as personal goals, actively responding to cultural constraints and opportunities. The parents and teens in our samples were not overly constricted or overdetermined by cultural categories ("the sixties," "midlife").

The countercultural generation is but one of many American generational units engaging in its adaptive project. Our results cry out for comparisons to other American subcultures, ethnic groups, and parents and children reaching their adolescent and midlife transitions in other populations around the world. Our focus on this particular group of countercultural families is intended to contribute to comparative developmental study such as in this volume, and should not be prematurely generalized to other American subcultures.

We have emphasized the successes as well as failures, in the parents' eyes, of countercultural experimentation with family life. Families sometimes lost a positive generational identity or despaired that their idealistic goals from the sixties were not met in society or in their own family experience. Although individuals may have despaired at midlife in some cases, we should not lose sight of the wider achievement of the countercultural movement. Their family experiments were examples of cultural evolution at work: parents trying out new practices, new family forms, in the service of their cultural and personal goals. Some practices survived, some did not.

This view fits, we believe, with many of the classic longitudinal developmental studies that take culture and cohort into account. Life course analysis of this kind moves back and forth between the individual's desires and planful strategizing to achieve goals, and the regulatory,

normative influence of the cultural community (Elder 1987, 186; LeVine 1979; LeVine et al. 1994). Many of the ideas and practices of the counterculture have diffused into the wider society, so that many Americans actually no longer recall that there was a time when these were rare, stigmatizing, and difficult paths to take: single parenthood by choice, unmarried couples raising children, gender-egalitarian child rearing, environmental concerns brought into the home and community, returning to at-home births and experimenting with nonconventional birthing practices and less medicalization, the practice of non-Western religion and new spiritual movements, healthier and safer foods and diets. In the 1970s, only the counterculture and other "deviant and minority groups" advocated those things. Other experiments tried at the time have not diffused because they were too hard to put into practice, had significant social or personal costs, or did not fit with other American goals: communal living, "open" family relationships, isolation from family and community, excessive drug use, voluntary poverty (as opposed to frugal living), and others.

Perhaps midlife, among its other meanings in our culture, is the time when parents are able to recall and assess the results of their successful and sometimes flawed experiments as youths, as they see their own adolescent children facing some of the same adaptive projects. Midlife for countercultural parents was and is a negotiated agreement between self, family, and society (past and present), not the playing out of some invariant institutional-normative imperative. Indeed, American family norms themselves were revised by the nonconventional family lifestyle members in our study. In similar fashion, midlife for parents and teens is in part an agreement worked out, revised, and made visible in family interactions and values.

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