What's in a family? Family conceptualizations of Flemish college-aged students (1997-2018)

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Objective: Inspired by previous research, we investigated how perceptions about family have changed among first-year university students at KU Leuven (Flanders, Belgium) between 1997 and 2018.

Background: The question of what constitutes a family has puzzled scholars for years, yet empirical information on this topic, especially from young adults, is limited. The perceptions are important because studies have found a link between perceptions about families and family behavior.

Method: We collected a convenience sample of first-year university students at KU Leuven in 1997 ($n = 674$) and 2018 ($n = 471$) via online and offline questionnaires. Using cross-tabulation analysis, we compared the data to consider changes in perceptions about families and investigate differences.

Discussion: We found that students in 2018 are more receptive to postdivorce arrangements, pets, and deceased family members in their conceptualizations of family. Also, we note that conceptualizations of families including friends are not widespread, indicating that the “family” is not yet established among respondents. We find that women, versus men, students with low socioeconomic status (parental), versus high socioeconomic status, and those from nonintact families, versus intact families, hold more inclusive family views.

Implications: Our findings contribute to a better understanding of how Flemish college-age students perceive families. This information, however limited, can provide valuable information for policymakers, opinion leaders, and (family) therapists.

In recent decades, the institution of the family has been the subject of dramatic changes in Western societies. Marriage and the number of children in families are declining, and unmarried cohabitation (pre- and postmarital), extramarital childbearing, and divorce are increasing (Corijn & Van Peer, 2013). One of the main characteristics of this is the weakening of the connection among marriage, sexuality, and procreation (Matthijs & Vanassche, 2016). As the close bond between these characteristics of “the family” is eroding, growing up in a nuclear family (two married parents and at least one child living together) is becoming less common. This is particularly the case in Flanders, the region where this study was conducted (Corijn & Van Peer, 2013). An interesting question is whether these trends have led to a different perception of what constitutes a family among young people.

In this article, we investigate whether there has been a shift in first-year college students’ conceptualizations about family over the past 20 years (between 1997 and 2018) at KU Leuven, the largest university in Flanders, Belgium. Over the past 20 years, enrollment rates at Flemish universities have increased significantly. This increase implies that Flemish university students have become increasingly representative of young adults in Flanders. However, it is important to highlight that social selection mechanisms persist in terms of economic situation and migration background and that such mechanisms were more pronounced in 1997 than in 2018 (Diversity Office, 2013).

The work of Levin and Trost (1992) offered empirical and theoretical grounding for our study. They carried out a large-scale, cross-sectional investigation of perceptions about family in the Swedish population, which was subsequently replicated (Ford, 1994) and (Gavriel-Friend & Shilo, 2016) among university students in the United States. In this research, we measure conceptualizations of families across two groups at different time points: November 1997 and October 2018. This repeated cross-sectional design may yield an informative contribution to understanding of how young adults’ perceptions of family have

changed, allowing exploration across the backdrop of social, cultural, and demographic changes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What's in a Family?

Family is a debated term among scholars, policymakers, and laypeople. Many studies restrict themselves to the distinction between the so-called intact (e.g., married or cohabiting partners) and not intact (e.g., divorced and widowed persons) families. This typology does not always capture what (young) people consider to be a family, particularly as single parent families, co-parenting, and stepfamilies are becoming more common (Bernardes, 1999; Cheal, 2002).

As for people's perceptions of family, the work by Levin and Trost (1992) is a historical key study. These researchers presented 16 family scenarios to a representative sample of the Swedish adult population, asking them to indicate whether they consider each scenario to be a family. Their findings indicated that adult participants believed a family consisted of two parents and at least one child, regardless of the marital status of the parents. Separated and divorced partners, same-sex couples, and (nonresidential) grandparents were not generally considered to be family members (Levin & Trost, 1992). Ford (1994) and Gavriel-Fried and Shilo (2016) replicated this study among university students in the United States, with similar results. Additionally, other research on this subject has been carried out among children and adolescents. In a study of children aged 9 to 13 in New Zealand in 2006, Rigg and Pryor (2007) found this group to be rather inclusive when it comes to perceptions of families. Although the nuclear family remains popular, participants identified alternative family forms involving same-sex couples (with children) to be a family in this research. Adolescents are found to be more restrictive and selective in this regard (Anyan & Pryor, 2002).

Recent evidence of changing perceptions about family can be found in studies on the boundaries between families and other types of relational ties. Bush, Walker, and Perry (2017) have found that blurring boundaries between friends and families are increasingly common, which points to a need for more nuanced classifications of families. They stated that “ties characterized as both friends and family members may function more like one or the other type of relationship, introducing complexity and unexplained variation ... between roles” (p. 96). These multiplex relations, containing a mixture of kinship and friendship, where friends are increasingly considered to be family members, are called *framilies* (Bush et al., 2017).

A difference in who constitutes family can be found in reports of relationships with pets, a field that has received considerable attention of the past years. Many people believe that relationships between humans and pets are beneficial not only to the animal but also to the owner (Barlow, Hutchinson, Newton, Grover, & Ward, 2012). Barlow et al. (2012) found that people are sometimes more likely to be attached to companion animals than to romantic partners and rate relationships with companion animals as less anxious and as containing less avoidance than interpersonal (romantic) relationships. However, there are interpersonal differences when comparing attachment to a single romantic partner (or to multiple other humans) with attachment to animals (Barlow et al., 2012). Pets have been found to provide important social support for people who are unmarried, whereas families with children hold much lower attachment to the families’ pets (Barlow et al., 2012). There is no general consensus for these findings in the literature, inviting additional research into the human–animal attachment dynamic (Barlow et al., 2012).

The research population of this study in 1997 and 2018 consists of young adults, and they are by no means a homogenous group with regard to perceptions about family. Previous research in Western Europe and the United States has shown that there are differences in

perception of family based on gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and family type (Axinn, Emens, & Mitchell, 2007; Esping-Andersen, 2016; Ford, 1994; Levin & Trost, 1992). This literature indicates that women, individuals of high SES, and those from nonintact families are more progressive in their views than men, those with low SES, and people from intact families. This group of women was found to be more open to alternative family structures and show less support for traditional family configurations (Axinn et al., 2007; Esping-Andersen, 2016).

The Flemish Situation

Flanders, and Belgium as a whole, is no exception when it comes to the decline in marriage and fertility rates; increases in divorce rates, unmarried cohabitation, and extramarital births; and rising levels of education and employment of women outside the home (Corijn & Van Peer, 2013). Since the 1970s, many first marriages in Flanders are preceded by a period of unmarried cohabitation (Pasteels, Lodewijckx, & Mortelmans, 2013). In 1997, unmarried cohabitation was not yet fully institutionalized in Flanders (Corijn & Van Peer, 2013). In 2018, unmarried cohabitation is a key phase in the life course of many young adults. Divorce already had a legal framework (including divorce by mutual consent) in place since the Code Civil (Matthijs & Vanassche, 2016), but several amendments over the course of the past 4 decades have made divorce increasingly accessible and attractive, for example, by easing the grounds for divorce at the beginning of the 1970s and introducing custody (1995) and residential co-parenting (2006). Today, nearly one in three youngsters in Flanders has experienced a parental separation (Lodewijckx & Luyten, 2017).

THE PRESENT STUDY

Sample

In this article, we investigate whether there has been a shift in first-year KU Leuven (Flanders, Belgium) students' perceptions about who constitutes families over the past 20

years (comparing information across participations from 1997 and participants in 2018). Although sociodemographic variation in this group is limited (based on social selection related to university enrollment), first-year students' perceptions may provide indications for actual or future family formation behaviour among this group (Axinn et al., 2007). Although the scope of this study is limited, studying this group is partly but increasingly indicative of Flemish young adults in general. In Flanders, enrollment in tertiary education has increased for several decades and continues to increase currently, which means that, given social selection mechanisms in terms of economic situation and migration background, Flemish university students are increasingly representative of young adults in Flanders. Levin and Trost's cross-sectional study provides the empirical basis for this research, but we applied certain modifications to their research design. Because we were interested in investigating changes in perceptions about family, our design was repeated cross-sectional with two measurements using the same items: one in November 1997 and another in October 2018. The following were the concrete research questions:

RQ1: How have perceptions of family forms evolved between 1997 and 2018 in first-year university students?

RQ2: Are there differences in perceptions by gender, socioeconomic status, and parental cohabitation status?

Data

The 1997–1998 data were collected by means of a pencil-and-paper questionnaire among first-year students from five courses at KU Leuven: psychology, pedagogics, physics, mathematics, and computer sciences. The survey was administered during one lecture in November 1997 during the 1997–1998 program year. After deleting nine cases due to missing data for all questionnaire items, the dataset in 1997 contained 674 students. This student cohort was compared with a cohort of first-year students enrolled in a sociology

course at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at KU Leuven in the academic year 2018–2019. In total, 471 of the 570 students (83%) enrolled in the course completed this questionnaire, which was now administered online.

Planned Analyses

First, we used cross-tabulation analysis to conduct a between-group comparison in which the data from 1997 was compared with the data from 2018. Subsequently, while continuing to use cross-tabulation analysis, we performed within-group comparisons looking for differences in students' perception of family based on gender, SES, and family type within each assessment, for 1997 and 2018 separately.

Measures

Perceptions of family. To evaluate students' perceptions about what constitutes family, we used the 16 items by Levin and Trost (1992). Each item describes a fictional family. For each item, students indicated whether they considered the described group to be a family (yes or no). In this research, five items were added, resulting in a total of 21 items. These items were in both the 1997 and the 2018 study. These additional items involved family forms with remarried parents, co-parenting, grandparents, deceased family members, pets, and friends of parents or children (Matthijs & Van den Troost, 1998). The choice of fictional family forms added was based on recent literature that suggested that these concepts are increasingly important in perceptions about family (Bush et al., 2017; Guthrie, Marshall, Hendrick, Hendrick, & Logue, 2018). A final note concerns the terminology. In Dutch, two concepts are used to describe a family: *gezin* and *familie*. Whereas *gezin* is used to describe the nuclear family, *familie* refers to the extended family. To adhere to Levin and Trost's original terminology, we asked students about their perceptions on a *gezin* (nuclear family).

Sociodemographics. The students of both cohorts were asked to indicate age, gender, parental marital status, and educational attainment of their parents. At both times, the

majority of student participants were female. At KU Leuven, there is a vast gender divide between fields of study, with girls often favoring the humanities. Internal KU Leuven documentation shows that the gender ratio in our dataset (Table 1) mirrors the gender composition of first-year students at these courses at KU Leuven (Diversity Office, 2013). As stated earlier, the 1997 data were collected among first-year students from five courses at KU Leuven: psychology, pedagogics, physics, mathematics, and computer sciences. Although the sociodemographic distribution in the humanities will be similar in 1997 and 2018 (Diversity Office, 2013), there may be a larger share of male students in physics, mathematics, and computer sciences. For an overview of sociodemographic characteristics, see Table 1.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparison of 1997 and 2018 data (Table 2) shows that one aspect is present in the six most highly rated family types at both times: parenthood. Five of the six situations identified as family also touched on the importance of both parents living together in the same household. These two aspects were indicative of the traditional definition of a nuclear family. The observation that perceptions of families today are more complex and diverse than in the past does not imply the erosion of the perception of family as being nuclear. This is similar to findings by Gavriel-Fried and Shilo (2016) among university students in Israel and the United States.

In 1997, the perception that a divorced parent and his or her child(ren) constituted a family was limited. By 2018, respondents were far more likely to conceptualize such a situation as a family: 37% in 1997 versus 71% in 2018. This growing perception that a divorced parent and his or her children are considered a family could be related to amendments to Belgian divorce legislation in 1994 and 2006, which paved the way for co-parenting among divorcees (Matthijs & Vanassche, 2016). This made it possible for young people to live with mother and father alternately after divorce, and it may have resulted in the

perception that the configuration of nonintact families were “normal” family situations. Students in 1997 likely had limited experience with co-parenting arrangements following recent legislation, whereas students in 2018 have had more experience with these new arrangements (see also the growing number of students with divorced parents in Table 1). However, this situation is certainly not unique to the Flemish context. When we revisit Gavriel-Fried and Shilo’s (2016) findings, we note that students in the United States were more likely to apply the family label to single-parent families than Israeli students. Given that Flemish students seem to lean toward their American colleagues, perhaps our study adds to existing indications of intercultural differences in family conceptualizations?

Other situations, especially those where the parties involved do not share activities such as sleeping, eating, and bringing up children, are perceived much less as families. For example, divorced parents who no longer live together were conceptualized as a family by less than 20% of students at both times. This is roughly the same in 1997 and 2018, but we do note a decrease in the willingness to consider friends as family members in 2018. This suggests that the idea of family situations, in which friends are perceived to be family, is not at play here, adding to the recent literature on this subject (Bush et al., 2017).

Pets, most frequently dogs, were increasingly perceived to be family members, with a 24% growth between 1997 and 2018. Recent studies have shown that people experience human–animal and human–human relationships in similar ways, with similar attachment styles toward their romantic partners and their pets (Guthrie et al., 2018). Pets can act also as a substitute for a close human interaction and counterbalance the consequences of poor or absent human relationships (Barlow et al., 2012). Human–animal relationships counterbalancing poor human–human relationships may explain why this family form is more popular among students from nonintact families at both time points. It may also explain the increased popularity of this family type because the share of students from nonintact

families has tripled between 1997 and 2018, indicating a composition effect.

Another concept that gained traction is that deceased family members can (still) be a part of the family. An explanation can be the changing face of funeral rites in Flemish society. Twenty to 30 years ago, burial was the dominant way of disposing of a deceased family member (Botterman & Hooghe, 2009). By 2018, the occurrence of cremation has increased sharply, and surpassed burial as the dominant method in Flanders (Pontes, 2016). After cremation, it is possible to disperse the deceased's ashes or for families to receive an urn or mourning jewel containing (part of) the deceased's ashes. This latter choice allows them to take the deceased home and give them a place (e.g., on a mantelpiece). Having this item at home rather than having a gravestone in a cemetery, might reinforce the idea that the deceased is still a member of the family, as that person is still present in the family home. Whether or not a deceased family member remains part of the family (in the perception of the respondents) may also depend on who exactly passed away. For example, the death of a sibling or parent may be thought of differently from the death of a grandparent, aunt, or uncle. We presented this statement in rather general terms and could not make such a distinction, but we suggest that future research take this into account.

In terms of sociodemographic group differences, we found that students from nonintact families, those with low SES, and female students, are generally more accepting of complex family situations than those from intact families, those with high SES, and male students. To illustrate, an unmarried, cohabiting lesbian couple with a child is considered to be a family by female students (+6%), those from nonintact families (+8%), and those with low SES (+9%) in 1997. This can be found at both time points. The fact that women are more accepting of complex families (e.g., after divorce) than men is not new. Previous research in Belgium and the Netherlands has shown that men think more traditionally about families than women do because men experience more of a marriage benefit (e.g., increased well-being)

than women (Leopold, 2018). As for the role of SES, it is well documented that although divorce used to be predominantly for the highly educated, this trend has reversed. Now, we find that the divorce rate of less educated individuals is higher than that of the highly educated. This indicates that low SES youth encounter alternative family types more often, which could explain their higher acceptance of complex family situations (Esping-Andersen, 2016).

Limitations

Among the items describing a fictional family, most of them described intact or nonintact families, and few described stepfamilies or homoparental families. These families are varied in their structure and more common today than 2 decades ago. Although we felt it was necessary to include new family types because of their increasing prevalence in society, it is possible that our items did not fully describe the complexity and nuance of such relationships, introducing bias in the perceptions of family with stepfamilies or homoparental families. For example, students may differentiate between male and female homosexual partners when conceptualizing family. The finding that such family concepts receive more support in 2018 than they did in 1997 may be explained by the fact that they are more common in 2018, which means that young adults today are more familiar with them than they were in 1997. By learning more about such family configurations and (in)directly experiencing that worthwhile relationships can exist in them, perceptions about such types of families may change over time.

We would also like to touch upon the terminology used in the survey. As mentioned, two concepts are used in the Dutch language to describe a family: *gezin* and *familie*. To adhere to Levin and Trost's original terminology, we asked students about their perceptions on a *gezin* (nuclear family). Although some may argue that using *gezin* introduces bias due to the focus on the nuclear family, it is important to remember that laypeople conceptualize the

family in their own way: Everyone has different ideas about what exactly falls under such family concepts. As Levin and Trost stated,

Our perspective indicates that individuals can conceptualize family in their own way.

Even if it is preferable for scholars, as laypeople, we do not need to agree on what is family generally or what is our own family. From outside we can never decide what is family for a certain person. It is relatively easy to know who are members of the household but not the family. (Levin & Trost, 1992, p. 350)

Despite highlighting interesting emerging ideas in perceptions about family, this study also has some limitations. The composition of the two groups of students under comparison is somewhat different: In 1997, we consider students from five courses at KU Leuven: psychology, pedagogics, physics, mathematics, and computer sciences. In 2018, all students are from psychology. This might introduce bias to the comparison. Additionally, these results cannot be generalized to a wider student or youth population. As we mentioned in the methodology section, the sociodemographic variation in our sample is limited because it is based on social selection related to university enrollment. In Flanders, there is a disproportionately high number of university students with highly educated parents and a disproportionately low number of students with a migration background. Such social selection mechanisms were also more pronounced in 1997 than in 2018 (Diversity Office, 2013). These concerns mean that our sample does not allow us to make generalizing statements about perceptions of family in young people based on the results. Furthermore, we were unable to provide more in-depth statistical analyses due to data limitations. The data from 1997–1998 were collected before the digitization of data at KU Leuven and were unavailable for the writing of this paper. This meant that we were unable to merge the digital 2018 data with the nondigital data from 1997, leading to a lack of statistical power in the analyses. The information on the 1997 data was retrieved from a book chapter by Matthijs

and Van den Troost (1998). Despite this limitation, the descriptive findings are in line with recent literature and societal trends in Flanders, and we therefore hope that family scholars aim to build on our study and provide more statistically robust findings.

Implications

First, based on the responses from these two cohorts by which we examine perceptions of who constitutes family, the traditional idea of the family is not eroding. Parenthood and partnership remain the stable, defining, and distinguishing criteria of this family model. However, we do note a higher tolerance for postdivorce arrangements (e.g., single parent families, co-parenting), particularly among certain groups (students with separated or divorced parents, young women, low SES groups).

Also, we find no evidence that the so-called family is gaining popularity among young adults. In fact, the contrary seems true. For Flanders, this is policy relevant information as reflected in the ongoing societal discussion and adopted amendments to inheritance legislation in Flanders dealing with the option of bequeathing a larger share of an estate to people other than one's children (such as friends). Previous law designated 75% of a Flemish person's estate for their children. After this new amendment came into effect, that share has decreased to 50%. Recent political discussions on this topic find some political parties favor a lower inheritance tax rate for friends. The general idea that, from a legal perspective, friends can assume such centrality that they could be considered family does not carry much weight among the young people we surveyed.

Another relevant observation is the concurrence we find for the feeling that deceased family members remain part of the family. As the number of cremations and the options to keep (part of) the ashes of the deceased at home have increased, the (symbolic) presence of the deceased in the household appears to be more pronounced than when someone is buried in a graveyard. Again, this may explain why we found a sharp increase in the proportion of

young people who perceive deceased family members as part of the family between 1997 and 2018, a period during which cremations have increased sharply in Flanders. But what does this mean for surviving family members? The presence of the ashes in the household may be a valuable factor in the grieving process to some, but to others, it may result in mixed or even painful feelings. This is a point of concern for grievance counselors and therapists. What this means in practice is dependent on the relationship between the deceased and the survivor. Typically, losing a child is far more profound for parents (also for long-term well-being outcomes) than for a child to lose a parent (particularly at an older age). In sum, we find that our study has opened several new and interesting avenues in family research, particularly on the family and on families with deceased members. We encourage others to investigate these new and evolving dynamics of the family.

AUTHOR NOTE

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Table 1

Descriptive results (percent)

Sociodemographics	1997 (<i>n</i> = 674)	2018 (<i>n</i> = 471)
Gender		
Male	29	20
Female	71	80
Mother's highest level of educational attainment		
Primary/secondary education	36	26
Higher education	59	72
Don't know	5	2
Father's highest level of educational attainment		
Primary/secondary education	37	31
Higher education	63	65
Don't know	—	4
Parental cohabitation status		
Married/cohabiting	86	65
Divorced/not cohabiting	11	29
Widowed	3	6

Table 2

Perceptions among the student cohort of what constitutes family (in percent of yes answers), ranked by cohort difference in percent

	1997–1998 (<i>n</i> = 674)	2018–2019 (<i>n</i> = 471)	Difference
1. Wouter's parents are separated. Wouter lives with his father. His mother, Inge, lives in another part of town and sees her son every other weekend. Are Wouter and Inge a family?	37	71	+34
2. Kurt is divorced from Griet. They have a young daughter who now lives with Griet. Kurt lives in another part of town. Kurt sees his daughter at least every other weekend. Are daughter and father a family?	37	71	+34
3. Annie lives with her friend. They have three dogs. Are these five a family?*	48	72	+24
4. Can a dead person still be thought of as a member of the family?*	65	85	+20
5. Maria and Jean are the grandparents of Daniel, but they live apart. Are these three persons a family?	12	20	+8
6. Eva and Peter are married with a daughter, Naomi, who lives with them. They also	87	93	+6

have a son, Bart, who lives in another town. Are these four a family?

7. Cecilia is divorced and has a 10-year-old daughter, Karin, living with her. Are they a family?

90 95 +5

8. Lena and Lisa are in their 30s, living together as partners. Lotte, Lisa's 6-year-old daughter, lives with them. Are these three a family?

87 92 +5

9. Peter is divorced from his wife Kathy. They have a young son who went to live with Kathy after the divorce. Are Peter and his ex-wife a family?

4 9 +5

10. Kristel has divorced and remarried a man without children. She has a 6-year-old son from her first marriage. Are these three a family?*

91 95 +4

11. Inge and Erik have been living together for some time and are now separated. They have a young son, Wouter, who now lives with his father, Erik. Are Inge, Erik, and Wouter a family?

15 18 +3

12. Ilse and Dirk are both thirty and married. They have a 6-year-old son. Are they a family?

99 99 +1

13. Anja and Stijn are in their thirties, living together, unmarried. They have a six-year-old daughter. Are these three a family?

98 99 +1

14. Karel and Kurt are both 30 and live together as partners. Neither of them has a child. Are they a family?	60	60	—
15. Jan, An, and Jasper are brothers and sister, all aged around 30. They live in the same house. Are they a family?	61	61	—
16. Jef and Maria are the grandparents of young Kim who lives with them. Kim's mother and father are divorced and live elsewhere. Are the grandparents and their grandchild a family?*	81	78	−3
17. Greta and Patrick are in their 30s and have lived together, unmarried, for 3 years. Are they a family?	65	59	−6
18. Jaak and Mona are married and have a 10-year-old daughter. Mona has a close friend with whom she can talk about anything and open her heart. Are these four a family?	18	7	−11
19. Veerle and her husband are living under the same roof as Veerle's brother-in-law. Are they a family?*	39	27	−12
20. Anna and Marcel are a middle-aged, childless married couple. Are they a family?	80	67	−13

21. Fanny and Fred have a teenage son, Jan. Jan's friend Henk lives with them. Are these four persons a family?

67

51

-16

Note. Items with an asterisk were not included in Levin and Trost's (1992) original version.

Table 3

Perceptions among the student cohort of who constitutes family by mean differences in percent of “yes” answers by socioeconomic status (SES), gender, and family structure.

	1997–1998 (n = 674)			2018-2019 (n = 471)		
	SES difference	Gender difference	Family structure difference	SES difference	Gender difference	Family structure difference
1. Married or cohabiting, with children (6, 8, 12, 13)	–3.8%	+6.3%	+0.5%	+0.5%	–0.3%	+0.5%
2. Divorced/separated/repartnered, with children (1, 2, 7, 10, 11)	+2.6%	+2.8%	+1.0%	–3.4%	+2.8%	+2.8%
3. Married or cohabiting, without children (14, 17, 20)	–11.7%	+3.3%	+4.0%	–5.3%	+14.0%	+10.0%
4. Divorced/separated/repartnered, without children (9)	—	–2.0%	–10.0%	+2.0%	–6.0%	–2.0%
5. Family (18, 21)	–1.5%	–5.5%	+2.5%	+5.5%	–5.5%	–3.0%

6. Pets (3)	–13.0%	+6.0%	+14.0%	–9.0%	+20.0%	+12.0%
7. Deceased relative (4)	–3.0%	+26.0%	–5.0%	+2.0%	+17.0%	–5.0%
8. Alternative family types (5, 15, 16, 19)	–5.0%	+3.0%	–0.5%	–5.5%	–5.3%	+5.0%

Note. Differences in SES: percent of “yes” answers among high SES students – percent of “yes” answers of low SES students. Differences in gender: percent of “yes” answers female students – percent of “yes” answers male students. Differences in family structure: percent of “yes” answers of students of nonintact families – percent of “yes” answers of students of intact families. We first calculated the group differences for each statement individually. We then grouped several statements into eight categories and calculated the mean difference of the statements included in each category.