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ABSTRACT

Analysis of data collected from ninth and twelfth grade boys and their parents investigates whether parent-child agreement on goals reflects parental influence. The analysis leads to the following conclusions: (1) parent-child agreement cannot be viewed as a wholly spurious basis for imputing influence; (2) agreement measures based on the child's report of the parent's goals lead to different outcomes than those based on the parent's own report; (3) the child's report of the parent's goal reflects the child's projection of his own goals onto his parents; and (4) the evidence of direct goal transmission from parent to child is stronger among older boys, but a paternal influence in the form of the son's modeling his father appears to be stronger among the younger boys. No evidence was found to support the hypothesis that agreement on goals varies with the quality of the parent-child relationship. (Author)

PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON EDUCATIONAL GOALS*

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of data collected from ninth and twelfth grade boys and their parents is directed toward determining whether parent-child agreement on goals can be accepted as evidence of parental influence. The analysis leads to the following conclusions: (1) Parent-child agreement cannot be viewed as a wholly spurious basis for imputing influence, although any simple agreement measure tends to overstate the amount of influence involved. (2) Agreement measures based on the child's report of the parent's goals lead to different outcomes than those based on the parent's own report. (3) The child's report of the parent's goal seems to reflect the child's projection of his own goals and criteria of goal-setting onto his parents. (4) The evidence of direct goal transmission from parent to child is stronger among the older boys, but a paternal influence in the form of the son's modeling his father appears to be stronger among the younger boys. No evidence was found to support the hypothesis that agreement on goals varies with the quality of the parent-child relationship.

Studies of the process by which young people establish educational goals have repeatedly made use of the assumption that such goals are influenced by significant others and that parents are highly significant in this regard. The basic theoretical perspective involved views educational goals as one outcome of the socialization process and the family as a major agent of socialization. It posits a strong future orientation for parents as they view their maturing children, and assumes that the intimate interaction between parent and child is the context within which parental views of the future are transmitted to the child. Research based on this perspective has provided considerable evidence of parental influence on the child's educational goals. (See Haller and Portes, 1973; Kandel and Lesser, 1969; Sandis, 1970 for a review of much of this literature.)

Yet, the evidence is not wholly satisfying. It raises a number of difficult questions. What is actually shown in most such studies is that the child's goals are quite similar to those of his parents.[1] One possible explanation of such an outcome that would not involve parental influence as such is to assume that both parent and child develop goals independently, based on similar external influences. For instance, if socio-economic position in the society influences one's values or one's view of the opportunity structure, the fact that parent and child live within the same socio-economic stratum may lead them to adopt the same goals (Kandel and Lesser, 1969). Even within the family itself, there are common experiences which may independently influence the goals of both parent and child. For instance, the results of the child's performances at school and in other evaluated settings are known to both parent and child - through report cards and other external feedback mechanisms. If we are to attribute parent-child agreement to parental influence, therefore, we must first be sure that agreement cannot be explained through reference to such external influences on both parties.

Some studies (cf, Sewell, Haller and Ohlendorf, 1970) use another somewhat different measure of parental influence, however. Instead of agreement between the expressed goals of parent and child, what we will call "actual agreement," they use agreement between the child's expressed goal and the child's report of the parent's goal. We will refer to this as a measure of "perceived agreement." If the parents' actual goals and the child's perception of them are identical, measures of agreement and perceived agreement will also be identical, and one can simply use one measure as a proxy for the other. Since there is evidence that parent-child agreement is greater when perceived parent goal is used (Hyman, 1959), however, it seems likely that the two measures will lead to different outcomes when used in models of parental influence. If they do, we will also need to face the problem of finding the reason for the difference and using it in our theory of parental influence.

There is another question raised by studies of parental influence on educational goals. Since most of the analysis that has been done is based on the inference of influence based on agreement or perceived agreement, it would strengthen the case if evidence of influence could be presented that goes beyond this inferential basis. For instance, we would expect that parents vary in the extent to which they influence their children's educational goals. We would also expect that those parents who are most effective in influencing their children ought to have a different kind of relationship with their children than those who are less effective. It thus seems reasonable to expect that the characteristics of the parent-child relationship should be associated with parent-child agreement or with whatever other inferential evidence we have of influence. Others have not found such an association (Kandel and Lesser, 1969), but the

hypothesis is worth further testing.

Finally, the fact that this particular area of investigation deals with goals whose accomplishment occurs in late adolescence or early adulthood also raises another kind of question. If parental influence operates in children's establishment of educational goals, one might expect it to be more apparent the older the children get, if for no other reason than that such goals become more salient and the steps needed to accomplish them become more determinative as the child gets older. Parents might be expected to express more concern and work harder at influencing their children to seek educational goals as important points of decision draw near. Their response to specific events related to the accomplishment of educational goals, such as the reports of the child's grades, would presumably be more pointed and impressive to the child. On the other hand, much of the literature on adolescence would suggest that parents' influence on their children decreases during those years and influences from outside the family increase (Douvan and Adelson, 1966; McDill and Coleman, 1965). It will therefore be important for our understanding of the role of parents in the educational goal-setting of their children to see if parental influence tends to increase or decrease during the adolescent years.

The above considerations have led to the analysis to be reported in the sections that follow. In brief, our guiding questions are:

(1) Can parent-child agreement on educational goals be viewed as a spurious basis for imputing parental influence since agreement can be explained by external factors affecting the goals of both parties?

(2) Is the child's perception of the parents' goals a satisfactory proxy for the parents' actual goals?

(3) To the extent that actual and perceived agreement are not the same, how can we best explain the difference?

(4) Is it possible to demonstrate the effects of parental influence on other than inferential grounds based on analyses of agreement and perceived agreement?

(5) Do the patterns of agreement and perceived agreement, or whatever other evidence we have of parental influence, differ for younger and older adolescents?

Sample, Method and Approach

In a recent study, conducted by the first author (Kerckhoff, 1971) detailed information was collected in 1969 about the background and goals of samples of school boys in Fort Wayne, Indiana. In addition, interviews were conducted with both parents of subsamples of the boys. The original study population included all of the twelfth grade boys in the five community high schools and all of the ninth grade boys in five of the thirteen junior high schools, the five being chosen so as to maximize the distribution of socio-economic characteristics. Subsamples of the boys were randomly selected from these populations, and efforts were made to interview the parents. Replacement by a predetermined randomized process was used when it was impossible to obtain interviews with those originally selected. For present purposes, only families in which both parents were present and were interviewed will be included, and the analysis is restricted to white families.[2] There are seventy-six twelfth grade and sixty-seven ninth grade families included.

The analysis is carried out within the framework of a flow of influence model, growing out of the work of Blau and Duncan (1967) and most closely following the model reported by Sewell, Haller and Ohlendorf (1970). This model views the family's social status and the boy's IQ as antecedent variables influencing the boy's academic performance level, and all of these variables in turn are seen as influencing the boy's educational goals. In the usual conceptualization of parental influence on goals, some index of parents' goals is put in the model between academic performance and the boy's goals. The parents are thus seen as influenced in their own goal-setting by their social status, the boy's intelligence, and his prior academic performance. In turn, whatever influence the parents' goals have on the boy is seen both as reflecting these earlier factors and as an independent source of influence. Figure 1 presents this model.

Figure 1 about here

Such a model requires several kinds of measures. In the present study, the social status of the family is indexed by the educational attainment of the father (six categories) and the level of his occupation (Duncan score), this information being obtained from the father.[3] The boy's IQ and grade average for the two years prior to the study were both obtained from the school records. Each respondent (father, mother, son) was asked "How much more schooling do you expect (your son) to get," and the same six response options were provided in each case, ranging from quitting high school before graduation to obtaining a graduate or professional degree. In addition, the sons were asked: "As far as you know, how much schooling does your father (mother) want you to get?"[4] Besides these variables needed to construct the model shown in Figure 1, a number of

measures of the parent-child relationship were available, based on questions used with the boy and with his parents. A discussion of these measures will be postponed until a later section of the paper.

The analysis is guided by the five questions raised earlier, and the paper is organized in five parts, each one dealing with one of these questions. A final discussion of the overall results is then provided.

Is Agreement a Spurious Basis for Inferring Influence?

If agreement between parent and child can occur because of their independent responses to shared external sources of information and influence, it is possible that we can account for the observed parent-child agreement without reference to parental influence. It has been shown, for instance, that if we randomly select an unrelated parent and child from within the same SES category, they will tend to agree on a number of measures more than random pairs selected without reference to SES (Dentler and Hutchinson, 1961). Certainly such adult-child agreement cannot be attributed to parental influence. Kandel and Lesser (1969) have explicitly shown that SES, as an index of shared contextual factors, can partially explain parent-child agreement on educational goals. Parents and children share more than a common social status, however. One very important shared source of information which might be expected to influence the educational goals both set is the periodic report given by the school system on the child's performance. It seems reasonable to assume that, without reference to any interpersonal influence process, we might account for some parent-child agreement as a function of their similar interpretations of the long-range implications of the child's prior academic performance. In addition, it might be argued that both parents and the child have other sources of information about the

performance potential of the child on which they could independently establish expectations of his future educational attainment. Although we do not have explicit data on such sources of information, we might use the child's IQ as a crude proxy index.

It is actually part of the basic formulation of the model shown in Figure 1 that parents' goals influence the son's goals net of the influence from the other factors to the left in the model. It shows family SES, boy's IQ, and boy's academic performance as influencing both parent and child, but it shows parents' goals influencing son's goals over and above these common influences. Unless there is such a net effect, therefore, the model will fail to demonstrate any parental influence.

Table 1 about here

Table 1 presents data which indicate that there is, indeed, evidence of the importance of parents' goals in explaining son's goal, net of the other factors in the model. The first column reports the zero-order correlations between parent's goal and son's goal. The second column reports the correlations between the residuals of the parent's goal and son's goal measures, net of the effects of the other, external variables. "Net agreement" is thus the partial correlation of parent's and son's goals controlling for the variables to the left. Although the external variables account for a great deal of the observed agreement between parent and child, they do not account for all of it by any means.[5] We cannot conclude, therefore, that agreement is a wholly spurious basis for inferring influence, although net agreement is a more defensible measure of influence as such.

Are Agreement and Perceived Agreement the Same?

Since some studies of parental influence on children's goals use information collected from the parents and the children (Kandel and Lesser, 1969; McDill and Coleman, 1965) while others use only information from the children (Sewell, Haller and Ohlendorf, 1970), it is important that we see if the choice between these two measures makes a difference in the conclusions one might draw about the importance of parental influence. A first step in examining this question is to see if parent-child agreement and net agreement are different when the child's report of parent's goal is used than it was in Table 1 when the parent's own report was used. Table 2 presents the results of this analysis, following the same form as shown in Table 1, but using parent's perceived goal in place of parent's actual goal. We thus have measures of perceived agreement and net perceived agreement.

Table 2 about here

When these coefficients are compared with those in Table 1, they appear to be highly similar in the twelfth grade but rather different in the ninth. In the ninth grade, the zero-order coefficients are higher for perceived agreement than for actual agreement, and the net perceived agreement coefficients are also higher than the net actual agreement coefficients. Thus, whether we use the original or the net coefficients, we find more evidence of parental influence when perceived parent goals are used than when actual parent goals are used. At least in the ninth grade, therefore, we cannot view perceived parent goals as a simple proxy for actual parent goals.

Table 3 shows this same outcome in greater detail and in the form of the flow of influence model shown in Figure 1. Only the last two steps in that model are reported for simplicity - the paths affecting parents' goals

and the paths affecting son's goal. Each pair of rows in the table represents a different model. For instance, the first two rows present the twelfth grade model in which mother's actual goal is used, the column headed "Parent Goal" thus reporting the path and metric regression coefficients for the effects of that measure on the son's goal. The next pair of rows shows the same analysis using the son's perception of the mother's goal. And so on.

Our principle concern is with the adjacent pairs of rows, representing the outcome using actual compared with perceived parent goals. Looking first at the "Parent Goal" column, the results are as expected from our comparison of Tables 1 and 2. In the twelfth grade, the effects of parent's goal on son's goal are very similar whichever measure of parent's goal is used, while in the ninth grade the effects are quite different.[6] It is clear that we would view the effect of parents' goals as more powerful in the ninth grade if we used perceived parents' goals as our measure instead of actual parents' goals. It is also true that the overall model is more powerful when perceived parents' goals are used in the ninth grade, the R^2 for son's goal being larger in the case of both the mother and the father.

Table 3 about here

Other differences are seen in Table 3 as well. In both the ninth and twelfth grades the R^2 for the mother's actual goal is larger than for the son's perception of her goal while the reverse is true for the father. Evidently the four external factors (father's occupation and education, son's IQ and grades) more fully explain one kind of parent goal measure for the mother and the other kind for the father. Also, in the ninth grade, the strongest paths to perceived parent goal (mother or father) are from father's

education, while the strongest paths to actual parent goal are from either IQ or Grade. We will return to this finding in the next section. In other comparable cells of Table 3 there are other differences in the coefficients depending on which parent goal measure is used, but these may simply reflect the limited size of our samples.

There are enough differences involved, however, to suggest that which measure of parent goals is used makes a difference to the outcome of the analysis and to the probable interpretation of that analysis in terms of the importance of parental influence. At least this is the case in the ninth grade. We cannot therefore, use actual parent's goal and perceived parent's goal as interchangable measures, not only because they lead to different interpretations of the importance of parental influence, but also because they are not associated in the same way with the other variables in the model.

Explaining Differences between Actual and Perceived Parents' Goal

The previous analysis has shown that parent's actual and perceived goals do not perform in the same way in the analysis of parental influence represented by the model in Figure 1, although the direct effect of parent's goal on son's goal is strong, whichever measure is used. The fact that they perform differently auggests that they may be measuring somewhat different things. The differences in the analysis have, of course, been much more apparent in the ninth than in the twelfth grade. Even in the twelfth grade, however, the effect of the parent's perceived goals on the son's goal is stronger than the effect of the parent's actual goals. The problem of explaining the difference between the two measures exists, therefore, in both cohorts, although it is a much more glaring problem in the ninth grade.

In seeking explanations for these differences, two rather opposite possibilities came to mind. First, it seemed at least possible that parents' verbal reports to us of their goals may not be wholly consistent with the overall impression they give their children. A child may know what the parent "really believes" and be more willing to tell us than the parent is. The intimacy of the parent-child relationship and the child's greater openness in responding to questions may lead to our obtaining a different (and more wholly valid) measure from the child than from the parent. A very different explanation could be founded on the assumption that parent-child communication about educational goals is not sufficiently continuous and precise for the child to have accurate knowledge of the parents' goals. When we ask him about his parents' goals, he thus has an insufficient basis for reply, and his response is more in the form of his view of what

their goals "might be" or "ought to be." In such a case, we might expect him to use his own standards in estimating his parents' goals. That is, he may well be projecting his own goals onto his parents in the absence of adequate information. The first of these interpretations attributes the difference between parents' reports and the child's report to the inadequacy of our measure of parents' actual goals. In the second, we would attribute the difference to inadequacies of the child's information about the parents' actual goals. We believe the evidence is more consistent with the second explanation, although it hardly proves its validity.

As a first step in viewing this evidence, we can differentiate between two kinds of possible parental influence: direct transmission of the parent's verbalized goal, and some other, unknown kind of influence. In Table 2 it is shown that net perceived agreement is greater in the ninth than the twelfth grade, but it is sizeable in both cases. These coefficients represent the degree of perceived agreement net of the four external variables. We would expect that at least some of that net perceived agreement would be due to direct goal transmission from parent to child - the child correctly perceives the parents' verbalized goals and adopts them. One way to indicate such direct goal transmission is to enter the parent's actual goal as an additional independent variable in the kind of analysis that led to the net perceived agreement coefficients in Table 2. Thus, we would have the partial correlation of perceived parent goal and son's goal net of both the external variables and parent's actual goal. If the net perceived agreement is due solely to direct transmission of verbalized parental goals, the net agreement (the correlation of the residuals) would be zero. To the extent the net agreement is greater than zero, we need to consider other ways of explaining perceived agreement.

Table 4 about here

Table 4 reports these residual coefficients. Although all of these are definitely smaller than those reported in Table 2, they all deviate from zero.[8] As would be expected from the previous analysis, the residual correlation is stronger in the ninth grade. The combination of direct parental goal transmission and the effects of the external factors thus accounts for most but not all of the observed perceived agreement, and the younger boys continue to present the greater problem of explanation. Whatever the other, unknown source of explanation may be, it appears to be stronger in the ninth than the twelfth grade.

One clue to this other factor came to light when each of the goal measures was regressed on the four external factors. It was very striking in that analysis that, at least in the ninth grade, the regression coefficients differed sharply for the several dependent variables. In general, the two SES measures (father's occupation and education) were much more important in explaining son's goal and son's perception of parents' goals, and the two intellective measures (IQ and Grade) were much more important in explaining the parents' actual goals.[9] In Table 5 we have summarized the partitioning of the explained variance in these analyses.

Table 5 about here

It is, of course, impossible to partition all of the explained variance between these two pairs of variables since there remain unassignable correlation effects (See Duncan, 1970), but the pattern is quite clear nonetheless.

Table 5 shows that, in the ninth grade, son's goal is heavily influenced by the SES measures while both parents' actual goals are more strongly influenced by the intellective measures. The pattern for both perceived parents' goals is much more like that for son's goal than for either of the parents' actual goals. By the twelfth grade, the SES measures are quite weak in all cases, although they are strongest for son's goal and father's perceived goal. In short, the boys' reports of their parents' goals reflect the same sources of influence as their reports of their own goals, even where the parents are apparently actually responsive to quite different influences.

With respect to our two suggested explanations of the different outcomes using perceived and actual parents' goals, this pattern seems much more consistent with the projection explanation. The answers the boys give when asked about their parents' goals reflect the same sources of explanation as when we ask them about their own goals. These sources of explanation are very different from those for the actual parent goals in the ninth grade. It is also in the ninth grade that perceived agreement is so much greater than actual agreement (see Tables 1 and 2) and where the sons less accurately report their parents' goals (see footnote #7). The other explanation suggested (based on the child's intimacy with the parent) would require us to argue here that there is a greater difference between the parent's verbalized and "real" goals in the ninth grade than in the twelfth. We see no reason to think that parents would change in this way during these three years, but it does seem reasonable to expect that the boys might change. The factors shown to influence the twelfth graders' goal-setting are different from those for the younger boys, and they are very similar to those that influence their parents' goals. We thus interpret these findings as suggesting changes in

the boys which increase their similarity to their parents and bring about a convergence of their goals, their parents' goals, and their perceptions of their parents' goals.[10]

The mother-father differences found throughout the analysis also suggest that the sons use their own basis of goal-setting to estimate their parents' goals when they are ignorant of the parents' actual goals. Actual agreement is greater between mother and son (Table 1), and sons more accurately report the mother's goals (see footnote #7), but perceived agreement is as great or greater between father and son (Table 2). The son's report of his father's goal is more fully explained by the external variables than is his report of his mother's goal (Table 3), but the combination of the external variables and parent's actual goals leaves more of the son's perceived agreement with father than mother unexplained (Table 4). That is, there is less evidence of direct goal transmission between father and son. Finally, the pattern of explanation of son's own goal is closer to the pattern of explanation of son's perception of father's goal than it is for any other goal measure (Table 5). All of these patterns hold in both cohorts, though they are clearer in the ninth grade. Thus, with respect to their fathers, sons seem to be less well-informed, to assume greater agreement than there really is, and to reply as if their fathers were responsive to the same factors to which they (the sons) are responsive. In short, the sons seem to <u>know</u> more about their mothers' goals and to <u>assume</u> more about their fathers', and their assumptions reflect their own standards of goal-setting.

All of these findings are consistent with the view that the boy's knowledge of their parents' goals is incomplete and they tend to assume agreement in the absence of contrary evidence. We would thus suggest that perceived agreement is a function of at least three kinds of influence: the effects of

the external factors, direct goal transmission from parent to son, and the son's tendency to assume parent-child agreement. It seems quite likely that at least some of the perceived agreement is "in the eye of the beholder."

Other Evidence of Parental Influence

The earlier analysis has shown that direct goal transmission does seem to occur, although the agreement measures reflect other factors as well. There is thus good reason to look for more direct evidence of parental influence. The literature on childhood socialization (see Goslin, 1969) would lead us to expect that parents are more likely to influence their children if they have an active, emotionally satisfying relationship with them. Such a relationship not only encourages the child to emulate the parent and to adopt his (or her) goals, it also provides the interpersonal mechanism through which the child can become accurately informed about his parents' goals for him. Thus, to the extent that such a close relationship exists, we would expect greater actual agreement, greater perceived agreement, and greater accuracy of the son's report of the parents' goals.

To follow this line of reasoning within the limits of our data set, we devised simple measures of agreement and accuracy for each parent-child pair and examined their association with a large number of measures of the parent-child relationship. The agreement and accuracy measures were the absolute differences between the two relevant measures. For instance, actual disagreement was measured by subtracting the son's goal from the parent's goal, ignoring the sign of the difference. If the son and parent agreed, the difference was zero; otherwise, it was a number representing the number of steps apart they were in the code categories of the educational goals responses.

There were twelve such measures: Actual agreement, perceived agreement and accuracy in reporting of mother's and father's goals in the ninth and twelfth grades. The measures of the parent-child relationship were taken from the boy's questionnaire and from the parents' interviews. They include measures of how much the parents respect the boy's ideas, how close he feels to them, how frequently they engage in common activities, how much they talk about issues of mutual interest, whether the parents attempt to explain their rules and decisions to him, whether he sees their rules as acceptable, and so on. In many cases, very similar measures were available from the son and both parents.

It is not worth reporting the results of this analysis in detail since it was almost completely negative. That is, there was no consistent association between <u>any</u> of these measures of the quality of the parent-child relationship and <u>any</u> of the measures of agreement or accuracy.[11] Such negative findings have been reported before (Kandel and Lesser, 1969; Sandis, 1970), thus giving us greater confidence in concluding that the general quality of the parent-child relationship is unrelated to the degree to which the son adopts his parents' educational goals.[12]

The data presented earlier suggest another kind of evidence of parental influence, however. Thus far we have carefully limited ourselves to a focus on direct parent-to-child goal transmission as an indication of parental influence. We have seen that such goal transmission seems to be weaker in the ninth than in the twelfth grade and weaker in the case of the father than the mother. However, we have also shown (Table 5) that the SES measures are much stronger sources of explanation in the ninth grade than in the twelfth, and that they are stronger <u>only</u> in explaining son's goal and the two perceived parent goal measures. We have used this finding to support our argument

that younger boys at least tend to project their own goals onto their parents. It can be argued with equal cogency that these data show that, in the absence of wholly adequate information about parental goals and with a limited understanding of the educational attainment process, ninth grade boys use the father's social status to establish their own goals. That is, they use their fathers as models, and they assume that their parents set goals on the same basis.[13]

It can thus be argued that our data reflect two sources of parental influence. Direct parent-to-child goal transmission is evidently weaker in the ninth grade, though there is evidence of it in both cohorts. The modeling effect on the other hand, is much more apparent in the ninth grade. It may well be, then, that as the boys get older their goal-setting process becomes much more like that of their parents for two reasons. First, they become better informed about their parents' goals and tend to adopt them. Second, they achieve a better understanding of the educational attainment process and thus depend less on parental role models and more on projections of their own past performances - which is what their parents do all along.

Does Parental Influence Increase or Decrease with Age?

It is clear that no simple answer can be given to this question. If we use our evidence of parent-to-child goal transmission as the index of parental influence, there appears to be more influence in the twelfth grade. At least the correlations of the residuals reported in Tables 2 and 4 show a sharper decline in the twelfth than the ninth grade. Adding parents' actual goals to the external variables goes further in explaining the older boys' perceived agreement with their parents.

On the other hand, if we accept the suggestion made in the previous section that sons may well use their fathers as models in setting educational goals, and if the power of the SES measures to explain son's goal is accepted as an index of modeling, parental influence of this type seems to be stronger in the ninth grade. We have been unable to devise a satisfying basis for summing these two effects so as to argue that the overall effect is stronger in one cohort than the other. However, using these indices of influence, it does seem to be true that as modeling decreases, goal transmission increases. Not only do the SES measures assume less importance in the explanation of the boy's goals in the twelfth grade, but the twelfth grade pattern of explanation of the boys' goals has come to fit the pattern found for the parents even as early as the ninth grade. In other words, not only do the son's goals tend to agree with those of his parents more as he gets older, but he seems to base those goals more fully on the criteria used all along by his parents.

Conclusion

Returning to the five original questions, it is possible both to provide some tentative answers and to suggest further possible efforts at clarification. We have been unable to account for parent-child agreement on educational goals wholly in terms of external factors that might independently influence parents and their children to establish the same goals, although much of the agreement can be accounted for in that way. We have been satisfied that this finding makes it reasonable to continue to speak of parental influence when using agreement as an index. Since we have not included all possible shared external factors in the analysis, however, one could disagree with that conclusion. For instance, both parent and child may know that a very low (or high) proportion of students in the local high school go to college, and that common knowledge may influence both parent and child in setting educational goals. We doubt that such additional external factors will account for all of the parent-child agreement, but it may be worth looking beyond the kind of evidence we have examined.

We are even more satisfied that the analysis of the differences between parents' actual and perceived goals points up important issues to be taken into account in the use of a model such as that in Figure 1. It is clear that it makes a considerable difference which measure of parents' goals is used. Although the difference in direct effect of parents' goals on son's goal is quite minor in the twelfth grade, it is very large in the ninth. And even in the twelfth grade, other differences in the paths produced and the amounts of variance explained when using the two kinds of measure are large enough that they could at least lead to different interpretations of the sources of parents' goals if not son's goal.

The evidence supporting our suggestion that sons tend to perceive agreement when they have inadequate information about their parents' goals is highly inferential, but there are some strong patterns in the data which are at least consistent with that interpretation. Our suggestion that younger sons are more likely than older ones to use their fathers as models when stating educational goals is also highly inferential, but the two sets of inferences (about assuming agreement and the modeling of the father) tend to reinforce each other. The younger sons undoubtedly not only have inadequate information about their parents' goals, they are also probably much less well-informed about the realities of the educational attainment process. These two kinds of ignorance make it easier for them to use their fathers as reference points, to expect to obtain a bit more education than their fathers, but not to be too concerned about academic performance as a mechanism of attainment. The parents use a very different basis for establishing goals, and, by the time they are in the twelfth grade, so do the sons.

Although such interpretations of the findings seem reasonable and consistent, they are not as well-founded as we would like. The disturbing thing about them is that they use a logic to explain group or category differences that would lead us to expect parallel individual differences, but we have been unable to find those individual differences. For instance, the sons perceive greater agreement with their fathers than their mothers even though they have less actual agreement with their fathers. Our interpretation would lead us to argue that this is because the boys interact less with their fathers (and thus know less about them) but identify more with them (and thus assume agreement on goals). This would lead us to

expect that those boys who interact more with their fathers should be more accurate in reporting their fathers' goals, and those boys who feel closer to their fathers should perceive greater agreement with them. Our analysis of the association between difference scores and the quality of the parent-child relationship, however, does not support this expectation. We are thus left with the inferences and with the problem of finding other evidence to test their adequacy.

FOOTNOTES

1. Throughout, we will refer to "parents' goals" but in all cases we mean "parents' goals for their child" rather than for themselves.
2. The original choice of families for the parent interviews was made within black and white subsamples independently because of an interest in black-white differences. The present analysis is restricted to whites because of the massive differences observed between the races. Most important for present purposes, the degree of parent-child agreement on goals and the extent to which the boys' goals could be explained by reference to family characteristics were both much lower in the case of the black boys. A discussion of these very great black-white differences within the context of this short paper is not Possible, and we have thus restricted our attention to the data from the white families. Of those interviews attempted with white parents, 73% were completed in the twelfth grads sample and 80% in the ninth grade. In both grades, approximately 30% of those families in which interviews were completed were two-parent families in which both parents were interviewed. In such cases, the parents were interviewed simultaneously but separately in their homes whenever Possible.
3. The analysis presented here was also carried out with mother's education and number of children in the family as additional SES variables. The outcome was highly similar. The simpler analysis is used here because it is easier to see the patterns in the data. The same patterns are found in the more complex analysis, but a more involved computation is necessary to point them out. In general, size of family

is a very weak variable, and mother's education reduces the effect of father's education somewhat while adding little new information.

4. The basic issue of what kinds of question are the best for eliciting an individual's "goals" is clearly raised by these questions. (See Han [1968] for a cogent discussion of this issue.) Should goals be viewed as "pie in the sky" wishes or realistic expectations? Although we cannot resolve that issue here, we have opted for the latter interpretation. Actually, the study included both kinds of questions. The respondents were also asked how much education the boy would get if he did what they <u>really</u> <u>wanted</u> him to do. An analysis parallel to the one presented here was conducted using these questions. The basic outcome was considerably "weaker" in that parent-child agreement on wishes was less than on expectations and the boy's view of what his parents "wanted" agreed more with their expectations than with their wishes. Thus, if the parents' goals are influencing the sons' goals, the expectations measure seems to have a better chance of demonstrating it. It is also true that the measures used here are closer to those used by Sewell and his associates in their several reports.

5. In terms of percentages of variance explained, the zero-order correlations show that we can account for from 37.7% to 47.7% of the variation of the sons' goals by reference to the parents' goals while the residual correlations show that, net of the other variables, parents' goals can account for from 16.9% to 22.2% of the variance of the sons' goals.

6. Both path and metric regression coefficients are presented because in making comparisons across models it is best to look at the regression coefficients, but it is easier to compare the relative effects of variables within a single model by reference to the path coefficients. See Blalock, 1967.

7. It is also true that even in the twelfth grade the accuracy of the boys' perception is far from perfect. The correlations between parents' actual goals and son's perceived parents' goals are .78 and .63 for mother and father, respectively, in the twelfth grade and .68 and .60, respectively, in the ninth.

8. Whatever the statistical significance of such partial coefficients, one might want to emphasize their relative size, compared with the original perceived agreement zero-order correlations, rather than their absolute size. For instance, in the twelfth grade, son's report of mother's goal originally explained 44.3% of the variance in son's own goal (the square of the zero-order coefficient). Net of the effect of the external factors, son's report of mother's goal explained 18.7%, and net of both the external factors and mother's actual goal, it explains 6.5%. Thus, we have been able to account for 85% of the original perceived agreement. This is somewhat less true for father-son perceived agreement in the twelfth grade, and much less true for perceived agreement with both parents in the ninth grade. For instance, just over 60% of the original perceived agreement is explained in the case of ninth grade fathers and sons.

9. Most of this analysis is reported in Table 3, where the general pattern for actual and perceived parents' goals can be seen in the odd-numbered rows. A parallel analysis was carried out using son's goal as the dependent variable and the four external factors as the independent variables.

10. It may be, of course, that the twelfth graders are projecting as much as the ninth graders seem to be, but since their own goal-setting bases are similar to those of their parents', there is little evidence of it in these data.

11. As a precaution against reaching an unwarranted negative conclusion, we also recomputed difference scores using the residuals derived by removing the effects of the four external variables on the goal measures. This, in effect, was to see if the degree of parent-child agreement (or son's accuracy) net of the antecedent variables was associated with the quality of the parent-child relationship. The results were equally non-significant.

12. Kandel and Lesser state that the parent's report of efforts to influence the child to accept particular educational goals was associated with the level of parent-child agreement in their study. We had no directly comparable measure, but we had the sons' assessment of how important they thought their parents' (perceived) goals were to the parents. We correlated this measure with the twelve difference scores. There was a weak but consistent tendency for those boys who thought parental educational goals were important to the parents to agree with them more, to perceive greater agreement, and to report the parents' goals more accurately. Of twelve correlations, eleven were in the expected direction,

but only two were greater than .30 (twelfth grade sons' actual agreement with and accuracy in reporting their fathers' goals).

13. Actually, the sons' goals are higher than their fathers' attainments and somewhat lower then their parents' goals in both cohorts. See Simmons and Rosenberg (1971) for an interesting analysis and interpretation of children's occupational goal-setting in relation to parent social position. Their data also suggest that children aspire to higher levels than their fathers have attained but use their fathers as a reference point.

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Table 1. Actual Parent-Child Agreement and Net Agreement*

	Agreement	Net Agreement
12th Grade		
Mother-Son	.691	.427
Father-Son	.674	.471
9th Grade		
Mother-Son	.646	.416
Father-Son	.614	.411

*Actual agreement is the zero-order correlation between parent's and son's goals; net agreement is the partial correlation, controlling for father's occupation and education, and son's IQ and grades.

Table 2. Perceived Parent-Child Agreement and Net Agreement*

	Perceived Agreement	Net Perceived Agreement
12th Grade		
Mother-Son	.669	.433
Father-Son	.666	.416
9th Grade		
Mother-Son	.699	.519
Father-Son	.737	.551

*Perceived agreement is the zero-order correlation between son's goal and his perception of his parent's goal; net agreement is the partial correlation controlling for father's occupation and education, and son's IQ and grades

Table 3. Path and Regression Coefficients, Son's Goal Model Using Parent Goal and Perceived Parent Goal

Cohort and Dependent Variables	Independent Variables					R^2
	FaOcc	FaEd	IQ	Grade	ParGoal	
12th Grade						
MoGoal	.095(.006)	.167(.136)	.049(.006)	.554(.119)*		.489
SonGoal	-.097(-.006)	.224(.200)*	.202(.025)*	.191(.045)	.422(.462)*	.592
PercMoGoal	.052(.003)	.192(.136)	.100(.010)	.437(.082)*	-	.380
SonGoal	-.078(-.005)	.220(.196)*	.184(.023)*	.226(.060)*	.388(.487)*	.594
FaGoal	.146(.009)	.045(.038)	.086(.010)	.487(.107)*	-	.381
SonGoal	-.119(-.008)	.276(.246)*	.186(.023)*	.220(.051)*	.423(.451)*	.611
PercFaGoal	.203(.010)	.108(.075)	.014(.001)	.542(.100)*	-	.483
SonGoal	-.140(-.009)	.251(.223)*	.217(.027)*	.204(.049)	.408(.519)*	.587
9th Grade						
MoGoal	.117(.006)	.144(.101)	.145(.015)	.350(.081)*	-	.400
SonGoal	.157(.009)	.284(.223)*	.118(.014)	-.012(-.003)	.388(.435)*	.567
PercMoGoal	-.006(-.000)	.410(.276)*	.060(.006)	.223(.050)	-	.349
SonGoal	.205(.012)	.149(.117)	.146(.017)	.020(.005)	.465(.543)*	.617
FaGoal	.206(.011)	.055(.040)	.236(.025)	.190(.046)	-	.321
SonGoal	.128(.008)	.320(.252)*	.089(.010)	.055(.014)	.361(.389)*	.565
PercFaGoal	-.004(-.000)	.451(.302)*	.158(.015)	.148(.033)	-	.405
SonGoal	.204(.012)	.107(.084)	.093(.011)	.047(.012)	.516(.607)*	.635

NOTE: In each cell, the first number is the path coefficient; the number in parentheses is the metric regression coefficient.

*Coefficients which are at least twice their standard error.

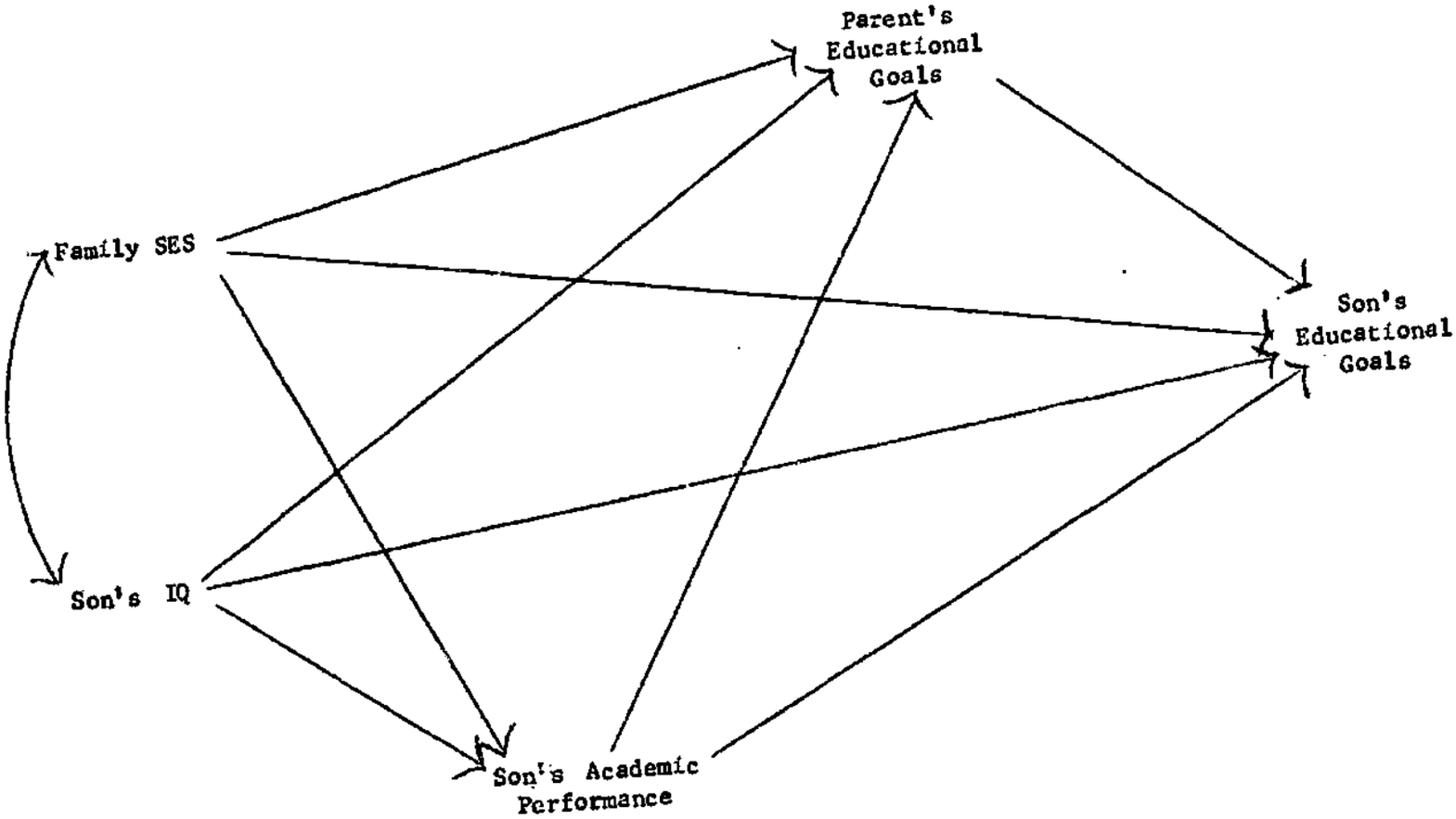
Table 4. Residual Perceived Agreement, Net of External Factors and Parent Goals

	Residual Perceived Agreement
12th Grade	
Mother-Son	.254
Father-Son	.265
9th Grade	
Mother-Son	.400
Father-Son	.458

Table 5. Partitioning of Explained Variance (R^2) of Son's Goal, Parents' Goals, and Parents' Perceived Goals

Dependent Variable	Variance Explained By: IQ + Grade	FaOcc + FaEd	Correlation Effects	Total Explained
12th Grade				
SonGoal	.330	.072	.098	.500
MoGoal	.323	.058	.108	.489
PercMoGoal	.247	.053	.080	.380
FaGoal	.289	.032	.060	.381
PercFaGoal	.302	.082	.099	.483
9th Grade				
SonGoal	.074	.252	.140	.476
MoGoal	.211	.058	.131	.400
PercMoGoal	.071	.164	.114	.349
FaGoal	.151	.061	.109	.321
PercFaGoal	.088	.201	.116	.405

Figure 1


Parent's Educational Goals
Family SES
Son's Educational Goals
Son's IQ
Son's Academic Performance