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## Matching Adolescents with Foster Mothers and Fathers: An Evaluation of the Role of Temperament

Robert G. Green, Ph.D.,<sup>1,4</sup> Dean Braley, M.S.,<sup>2</sup> and Anne Kisor, Ph.D.<sup>3</sup>

*We tested the notion that better foster care adjustment would be observed when the temperaments of mothers and fathers were matched with those of adolescent foster children. We hypothesized that families in which foster parents and foster children had high (easy) scores on subscales of the Revised Dimensions of Temperament Scale (DOTS-R) would also report higher family functioning and higher foster care adjustment than parents and children from families in which one or both family members had low (difficult) scores on these scales. The hypotheses were supported when the mothers and fathers family assessments were used but rejected when the mothers and fathers managers and adolescents were tested. Methodological and substantive explanations for the findings are discussed and recommendations for foster care practice and continuing research are provided.*

**KEY WORDS:** foster care adjustment; temperament; Revised Dimensions of Temperament Scale; family assessments.

The purpose of foster family care is to provide planned, time-limited treatment resources while children's biological families attempt to ameliorate problems that necessitated out-of-home placement, or until longer-term placement can be found (Kadushin & Martin, 1988; McMurtry & Lie, 1992). Foster parents provide substitute parental roles and assume temporary responsibility for their foster children's basic needs. Because foster care is frequently the recommended course of treatment in a wide variety

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## Matching Adolescents with Foster Mothers and Fathers: An Evaluation of the Role of Temperament

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The purpose of foster family care is to provide planned, time-limited treatment resources while children's biological families attempt to ameliorate problems that necessitated out-of-home placement, or until longer-term placement can be found (Kadushin & Martin, 1988; McMurtry & Lie, 1992). Foster parents provide substitute parental roles and assume temporary responsibility for their foster children's basic needs. Because foster care is frequently the recommended course of treatment in a wide variety

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of disruptive situations including illness, disability, abuse and neglect, it is not surprising that close to a quarter of a million children are in foster placement (Merkel-Holguin, 1993).

There is almost universal agreement among child welfare experts that the best foster care outcomes are achieved when children and families are carefully "matched" before placement (Doelling & Johnson, 1990; Kadushin & Martin, 1988; Smith, 1989). Consequently, the task of placing foster children with carefully selected parents is one of the most crucial tasks of the child welfare professional (Fanshel, Finch, & Grundy, 1990). In spite of the importance of pre-placement matching, however, very little research has examined the characteristics of successful child-family matches. Rather, most foster care studies have focused independently on characteristics of foster children and foster parents (Doelling & Johnson, 1990). Studies of foster care outcome, most of which have relied on the number or length of placements as measures of success, have shown correlations between placement stability and children's demographic (Jenkins & Diamond, 1985; McMurtry & Lie, 1992; Seaberg & Tolley, 1986) emotional, and behavioral characteristics (Dore & Eisner, 1993; Fanshel & Shim, 1978; Olsen, 1982; Stone & Stone, 1983).

The correlates of foster care success for parents have been studied less directly. In fact, most of the parental studies have relied chiefly on subjective indicators of "successful" or "effective" parenting (Ray & Horner, 1990). These studies have investigated parental demographics (Borgatta & Cautley, 1966; Campbell, 1980), parenting attributes such as preparedness and motivation (Pardeck, 1983), and personal characteristics such as altruism (Campbell, 1980), tolerance (Roe, 1976), and personality traits (Jordan & Rodway, 1984; Ray & Horner, 1990).

Thomas and Chess' (1977) interactional "goodness-of-fit" hypothesis provides one of the few available psychosocial models for assessing child-family matches in foster care. This framework attempts to explain children's adaptive behavior by focusing on the congruence of childhood temperaments with parental environments. A major focus of this research has been on the way in which different parental responses to childhood temperaments predispose children to particular behavioral outcomes, including child psychopathology. Contrariwise, more adaptive behavior in childhood is thought to be facilitated when children with particular temperaments are matched with more favorable or congruent parental environments (Lerner, 1983; Windle, 1992). Temperament is defined by the goodness-of-fit researchers as a stylistic rather than a performance attribute. Dimensions of temperament reflect how, rather than how well, people perform certain tasks and participate in social activities. These dimensions, including such attributes as energy, flexibility, and mood, describe variation in behavior

but are not concerned with underlying dynamics or explanations (Lerner, 1984; Thomas, Chess & Birch, 1968; Thomas & Chess, 1977; Windle & Lerner, 1986; Windle, 1992).

Thomas and Chess' (1977) notions have been evaluated in educational settings and among physically handicapped children and their families. Studies have examined the fit between children's temperament and environmental demands (Lerner, 1982; Lerner, 1983; Lerner, Lerner & Zabski, 1985; Palermo, Spiro & Nesselroade) and with mothers' temperament (Wallerstein, Hubert, & Varni, 1988). Findings from the educational studies provided consistent support for the goodness-of-fit hypothesis. These studies have shown that children with temperaments that were expected or valued by peers, parents and teachers, had higher levels of school and social adjustment, school achievement, and parent-child interactions than children whose temperaments were in lesser harmony with these social environments (Lerner, 1983; Lerner et al., 1982; Lerner et al., 1985). Wallerstein et al. (1988) investigated the goodness-of-fit between temperaments of children with congenital physical disabilities and the temperaments of their mothers. Although there was no support for the goodness-of-fit hypothesis in this study, these investigators did find a relationship between children's temperaments and their psychosocial adjustment.

Although the goodness-of-fit hypothesis seems readily applicable to foster care placement, only two studies have tested the model in foster care settings (Doelling & Johnson, 1990; Gould, 1987). Both used versions of the Dimensions of Temperament Survey (DOTS) (Lerner et al., 1982) to assess foster children's temperaments and a modified form of the DOTS to assess foster parents' temperament expectations for their foster children. Both studies provided limited support for the child temperament-parental expectations hypothesis among foster mothers. In the Gould study, placement disruption was less likely when mothers expectations were similar to their foster children's actual temperament scores on the mood, intensity, responsibility, and approach subscales. And, using the DOTS-R, a more recent version of the same temperament instrument, Doelling and Johnson (1989) found that mothers with children who did not meet their expectations on the positive mood scale received lower evaluations on the Foster Placement Evaluation Scales (FPES). Only this study directly assessed the temperaments of foster parents and foster children. In their Florida sample of foster families, Doelling and Johnson (1989) found that foster care workers gave inflexible mothers and negative mood children poorer foster placement scores on the FPES than pairs with more compatible temperaments. Because only a small number of foster fathers completed assessment instruments, there is no available empirical information about the role of temperament fit among foster children and their fathers.

The failure to collect information about foster fathers in the temperament matching studies is certainly not unique. Indeed, the bulk of foster care research has focused attention and instrumentation solely on foster mothers (Davids, 1971; Lloyd, 1982). One of the contributions we make to the foster care research-literature in the present study, therefore, is the collection and analysis of data from an equal number of foster fathers and foster mothers. We also address other important sampling and measurement limitations in our partial replication and extension of these studies. For example, by including only foster care families with adolescents, we control for variation in age, a traditionally important variable in foster family research (Pardeck, 1985). We also extend the comprehensiveness of previous measurement packages by administering a standardized measure of family functioning, and a measure of the perceived "fit" between each family and foster child. Finally, we include the observations of all family members and of selected service providers on both dependent variables.

## METHOD

### Subjects

The foster families who participated in the study resided in urban areas of Virginia and West Virginia. All children were placed in foster homes by Braley and Thompson, a private human service firm, through contractual arrangements with both states. Referrals were received from the local offices of the Department of Social Services in Virginia and from the Department of Health and Human Resources in West Virginia. Data were originally collected from a total of 76 (89.4%) of the 85 families served by Braley and Thompson at the time of the study. To examine the role of temperament among foster fathers and to control for the age of foster children, only two-parent families with at least one adolescent child (12 years and over) were included in our sample. The 16 developmentally disabled adolescents who were unable to complete paper and pencil tests without supervision were also excluded from the study. Consequently, the final sample included 40 foster families.

Seventeen of the children (43%) were in their first foster care placement, 10 (25%) had been placed once before, and 13 (32%) had been placed 2 or more times. The mean age of the 40 children was almost 16 (15.7) years, a majority (35) were Caucasian, and more than half (24) Protestant. There was a considerable amount of variation in the foster families' incomes. The majority (24) earned between \$21,000 and \$40,000 during 1992. However, seven percent made less than \$21,000 and 10 reported in-

comes of \$41,000 or higher. The average number of years of education for the fathers and the mothers was 12.9 years. Twenty had at least one biological child in their household.

### Measures

The parents' and adolescents' temperaments were assessed with parallel forms of the 54-item Revised Dimensions of Temperament Survey (DOTS-R) (Lerner, et al. 1982; Windle, 1992). Responses for all were on a Likert-type scale which require subjects to assess whether the 54 statements, when applied to themselves, are usually false (1), more false than true (2), more true than false (3), and usually true (4). The DOTS-R has adequate reliability and concurrent validity (Carson, Council & Volk, 1989; Council & Windle, 1992).

To evaluate the degree to which the foster children, foster parents, and child care workers perceived the quality of their matches, the researchers and Braley and Thompson clinical staff developed the Match Assessment Scale (MAS) (Green & Kisor, 1993). The MAS is comprised of 3 items on a 4 point agree-disagree response scales which ask respondents to assess a) "the fit" between the foster child and foster family, b) the "match" of child with family, and c) the likelihood the current foster care plan would be completed. Scores on the MAS may range from 3 to 12, with higher scores indicative of better matches. The alpha coefficients for the MAS for the mothers (.89), fathers (.80), and foster children (.78) were all acceptable for use in our analyses.

A standardized measurement of family adjustment was obtained through the administration of the general functioning scale of the Family Assessment Device (Epstein et al., 1983). This scale is comprised of 12 statements describing the general climate and the relationship system within the family unit. The foster family members' responded by selecting one of four alternatives provided: strongly agree (1), agree (2), disagree (3), and strongly disagree (4). Scale scores for each family member were created by computing a mean for the sum of the 12 items. Lower scores are indicative of higher functioning. For the FAD, and for all scales included in the questionnaire, the word "family" was replaced with "foster family." The reliability and validity of the FAD has been previously established in a series of studies (Miller et al., 1985); chronbach's alphas in the present study were acceptable for the mothers (.95), fathers (.79), and adolescents (.86).

## Procedures

All data were cross-sectional, collected through the administration of a questionnaire to foster children and foster parents. Parallel forms of the questionnaire were administered to foster children and foster parents. A third form of the questionnaire was completed for each family by the case manager. Data were collected over a three-week period.

The analyses of all possible relationships between the multiple measures of dependent variables and multiple perspectives from which each is assessed, and all possible parent-child temperament combinations of the 8 scales of the DOTS-R for each family member, would require hundreds of statistical tests. The task of interpreting the resulting matrices and the potential Type I error introduced by such a procedure, suggested a more focused, hypothesis testing approach to data analysis. Consequently, only the positive mood (PM) and the flexibility-rigidity (FR) subscales of the DOTS-R, the scales which have most consistently discriminated among levels of foster care adjustment (Doelling and Johnson, 1990; Gould, 1987) are included in the data analysis. A recent factor analysis of the DOTS-R scales has suggested that the flexibility-rigidity and positive mood scales are both dimensions of adaptability, a higher order construct recognized as a major goal of foster care (Windle, 1992).

The PM scale consists of 7 items. Alpha coefficients for the mothers (.84), fathers (.79), and adolescents (.78) were similar. However, the alpha coefficients on the 5-item FR scale for the mothers (.75) suggested greater internal consistency than those obtained for the fathers (.59) and adolescents (.43).

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 (DOTS-R Scales) summarizes the means for all three family members on the PM and FR temperament scales and for the family members and the case managers on the two family adjustment scales. Interestingly, the means for the adolescents on the PM (mean = 22.70) and FR (mean = 13.33) scales were similar to those of a sample non-clinical high school students from homes in suburban New York state (Windle, 1992). Means for the high school students were 23.31 for the PM scale and 14.79 for the FR scale. Mothers' PM scores were higher than the fathers and the adolescents' ( $p \leq .001$ ), and on the FR scale, the mothers and fathers means were higher than the adolescents' ( $p \leq .001$ ).

## Matching Adolescents with Foster Mothers and Fathers

Table 1. Family Members and Case Managers Means for the DOTS-R Subscales the Matching Assessment Scale (MAS) and the Family Adjustment Device (FAD)

|                            | Mothers | Fathers | Child | Case Manager |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|-------|--------------|
| <sup>a</sup> Mood (DOTS-R) | 26.08   | 24.26   | 22.71 | —            |
| <sup>b</sup> Flexibility   |         |         |       |              |
| Rigidity (DOTS-R)          | 16.88   | 16.11   | 13.38 | —            |
| <sup>c</sup> MAS           | 10.43   | 10.09   | 9.58  | 9.81         |
| <sup>d</sup> FAD           | 1.54    | 1.76    | 1.82  | 1.95         |

<sup>a</sup>Mothers greater than fathers and adolescents,  $p < .001$ ; <sup>b</sup>mothers and fathers greater than adolescents,  $p < .001$ ; <sup>c</sup>mothers greater than case managers,  $p < .05$ ; <sup>d</sup>mothers less than adolescents and case managers,  $p < .01$ .

### The Family Adjustment Device and the Match Assessment Scales

For the FAD, overall means for all family members suggested family high functioning for the foster families; all were above clinical cut-off points previously established for the general functioning scale (Epstein et al., 1983). More positive family functioning scores, however, were obtained for the mothers than for the fathers, children, and case managers ( $p < .01$ ). For the MAS, there were no differences among the family member reports, however, the mothers reported better matches than the case managers ( $p < .05$ ).

Correlational analyses revealed greater agreement among family members and case managers on the MAS Scales than on the FAD. Statistically significant Pearson Correlation coefficients were obtained for all pairs except fathers and case managers on the MAS. The strongest agreement for the MAS was between the fathers and mothers,  $r = .59$ ,  $p < .001$ , and the children and case managers,  $r = .49$ ,  $p < .01$ . The children and the case managers' assessments of family functioning on the FAD were also rather highly correlated,  $r = .45$ ,  $p < .01$ . However, there were no statistically significant correlations between the mothers FAD assessments and the assessments of mothers, fathers, or the case managers.

### Tests of the Temperament Combinations

Before testing the goodness of fit hypotheses, DOTS-R temperament scores for the mothers, fathers, and children were correlated directly with FAD and MAS scores. None of the temperament scores were correlated

with the FAD and only the mothers FR scale was correlated with the MAS,  $r = .36, p < .05$ .

By using the parents' and children's' PM and FR scales, four different parent-child temperament combinations were developed by pairing: a) the PM scale scores of both parent and child; b) the FR scale scores of the parent and child; c) the PM scale scores of the parent and FR scores of the child; and, d) the FR scale scores of the child and PM score of the parent. Children who score low on these scales have been viewed as "difficult" (Doelling and Johnson, 1990; Lerner, 1983; Thomas and Chess, 1977; Wallander et. al, 1988). Thus, low or rigid scores on the FR scale and low or negative scores on the PM scale identify "difficult" children. Accordingly, we hypothesized that "mismatched" parent-child dyads comprised of rigid parents and/or parents with negative moods whose children have similarly low or difficult scale scores would have poorer family and foster care adjustment than better 'matched' parent child dyads consisting of high scoring foster parents who have either difficult or easy children.

To test these goodness-of-fit hypotheses, we compared the means of the matched and mismatched parents and children on the MAS and the FAD. We used the median score in each temperament distribution to establish a decision rule for these group assignments. Thus, scores at the median and below in each temperament scale distribution were judged to be low (difficult) and scores above the median in each distribution were judged to be high (easy).

#### Mothers Instruments

As summarized in Table 2, statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) in the predicted direction resulted for one of the four FAD *t*-test comparisons and for two of the four MAS comparisons of matched and mismatched dyads when the mothers' reports of family and foster care adjustment were used. Statistically significant differences emerged for both dependent measures when the "rigid mother/negative mood child" mismatch group was compared to the matched dyads. There was also another statistically significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) on the PAS measure when the mean of mother-child mismatch on positive mood was compared with the temperamentally more congruent dyads.

#### Fathers Instruments

As summarized in Table 3, the *t*-test comparisons of the FAD and MAS means for the father-child dyads resulted in statistically significant differ-

Table 2. Comparison of the Means of the Mismatched Mothers Group and More Favorably Matched Mothers on the Family Adjustment Device (FAD) and on the Match Assessment Scale (MAS)

| Temperament Combination<br>Using the DOTS-R |                      | Family Assessment Device |                  |                |          | Match Assessment Scale |                  |                |          |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------|------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------|
| Mother                                      | Child                | Mismatched<br>Mothers    | Other<br>Mothers | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> | Mismatched<br>Mothers  | Other<br>Mothers | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Flexibility Rigidity | 1.56                     | 1.53             | 0.21           | N.S.     | 10.08                  | 10.60            | 0.80           | N.S.     |
| Positive Mood                               | Positive Mood        | 1.67                     | 1.48             | 1.26           | N.S.     | 9.50                   | 10.77            | 1.95           | .029     |
| Positive Mood                               | Flexibility Rigidity | 1.46                     | 1.57             | 0.78           | N.S.     | 10.00                  | 10.61            | 0.93           | N.S.     |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Positive Mood        | 1.72                     | 1.44             | 2.10           | 0.21     | 9.58                   | 10.84            | 2.03           | .025     |

Range of N of Cases: mismatched, 10-12; matched, 24-27.

**Table 3.** Comparison of the Means of the Mismatched Fathers Group and More Favorably Matched Fathers on the Family Adjustment Device (FAD) and on the Match Assessment Scale (MAS)

| Temperament Combination<br>Using the DOTS-R |                      | Family Assessment Device |                  |                |          | Match Assessment Scale |                  |                |          |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------|------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------|
|   |                      | Mismatched<br>Fathers    | Other<br>Fathers | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> | Mismatched<br>Fathers  | Other<br>Fathers | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> |
| Father                                      | Child                |                          |                  |                |          |                        |                  |                |          |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Flexibility Rigidity | 1.88                     | 1.72             | 1.02           | N.S.     | 9.12                   | 10.37            | -1.77          | .043     |
| Positive Mood                               | Positive Mood        | 1.95                     | 1.65             | 2.27           | .015     | 9.33                   | 10.47            | -1.84          | .037     |
| Positive Mood                               | Flexibility Rigidity | 1.82                     | 1.71             | 0.82           | N.S.     | 9.53                   | 10.40            | -1.40          | N.S.     |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Positive Mood        | 1.94                     | 1.67             | 2.05           | 0.24     | 9.54                   | 10.33            | -1.21          | N.S.     |

Range of N of Cases: mismatched, 8-13; matched, 21-27.

ences,  $p < .05$ , in four of the eight tests. Differences in the predicted direction for both the FAD and MAS emerged when negative mood fathers were matched with negative mood adolescents. As in the case of the mothers data, the rigid parent/negative mood child group reported poorer family functioning (FAD) than their comparison group. In addition, the rigid father/rigid adolescent comparison demonstrated that these mismatched fathers reported lower MAS scores ( $p < .05$ ) than the better matched fathers.

#### Adolescents' and Case Manager's Instruments

For the adolescents and the case managers data, comparisons of the FAD and MAS were conducted for the parent-child dyads created when the adolescents were paired with their mothers and again when they were paired with their fathers. These tests are summarized in Tables 4 and 5. Clearly, the results of these comparisons are dramatically different than those obtained when the mothers' and fathers' measures were compared. Only 1 of the 16 tests conducted with the adolescents data and 2 of the 16 tests conducted with the case managers data were statistically significant.

#### DISCUSSION

We tested the notion that better foster care adjustment would be observed when the temperaments of mothers and fathers were matched, in a particular way, with those of their foster children. Following Thomas and Chess' (1977) interactional goodness-of-fit proposition, it was hypothesized that families in which foster parents and foster children had high (easy) scores on selected subscales (positive mood and flexibility-rigidity) of the DOTS-R would also report higher family functioning and higher foster care adjustment than parents and children from families in which one or both family members had low (difficult) scores on these scales. Because earlier temperament matching studies had selected samples from heterogeneous age groups of foster children, from both single and two-parent families, and had encountered difficulty recruiting two-parent fathers to participate, we made special efforts to control for each of these factors. We limited our sample to foster adolescents who had been placed in two parent families and collected data from all family members and from professional staff.

Similar to the results of other multi-perspective and multi-measure studies of family relationships (Green & Vosler, 1993; Olson, 1982), the outcomes of the hypotheses we tested were different for different family members, and for the case managers. However, our statistical tests also



**Table 4.** Comparison of the Means of the Mismatched Children's Group and More Favorably Matched Children on the Family Adjustment Device (FAD) and on the Match Assessment Scale (MAS)

| Temperament Combination<br>Using the DOTS-R |                      | Family Assessment Device |                   |                |          | Match Assessment Scale |                   |                |          |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|
| Mother                                      | Child                | Mismatched<br>Children   | Other<br>Children | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> | Mismatched<br>Children | Other<br>Children | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Flexibility Rigidity | 1.83                     | 1.81              | 1.02           | N.S.     | 9.75                   | 9.50              | -.26           | N.S.     |
| Positive Mood                               | Positive Mood        | 1.96                     | 1.76              | 2.27           | N.S.     | 9.05                   | 9.78              | -.74           | N.S.     |
| Positive Mood                               | Flexibility Rigidity | 1.90                     | 1.78              | .82            | N.S.     | 9.40                   | 9.66              | -.26           | N.S.     |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Positive Mood        | 1.90                     | 1.67              | 2.05           | N.S.     | 9.50                   | 9.62              | -.13           | N.S.     |
| <i>Father</i>                               | <i>Child</i>         |                          |                   |                |          |                        |                   |                |          |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Flexibility Rigidity | 1.91                     | 1.77              | .67            | N.S.     | 9.43                   | 9.62              | -.17           | N.S.     |
| Positive Mood                               | Positive Mood        | 2.07                     | 1.69              | 1.97           | .028     | 8.75                   | 10.00             | -1.35          | N.S.     |
| Positive Mood                               | Flexibility Rigidity | 1.98                     | 1.73              | 1.30           | N.S.     | 9.19                   | 9.80              | .66            | N.S.     |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Positive Mood        | 2.02                     | 1.73              | 1.45           | N.S.     | 9.00                   | 9.84              | -.87           | N.S.     |

Range of N of Cases: mismatched, 8-13; matched, 23-28.

**Table 5.** Comparison of the Means of the Mismatched Case Managers Group and More Favorably Matched Case Managers on the Family Adjustment Device (FAD) and on the Match Assessment Scale (MAS)

| Temperament Combination<br>Using the DOTS-R |                      | Family Assessment Device |             |                |          | Match Assessment Scale |             |                |          |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------------|----------|------------------------|-------------|----------------|----------|
| Mother                                      | Case Manager         | Mismatched<br>CM         | Other<br>CM | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> | Mismatched<br>CM       | Other<br>CM | <i>t</i> value | <i>p</i> |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Flexibility Rigidity | 1.98                     | 1.93        | .30            | N.S.     | 9.25                   | 10.08       | -.26           | N.S.     |
| Positive Mood                               | Positive Mood        | 2.07                     | 1.90        | 1.09           | N.S.     | 9.10                   | 10.07       | -.74           | N.S.     |
| Positive Mood                               | Flexibility Rigidity | 1.95                     | 1.94        | .05            | N.S.     | 9.27                   | 10.03       | -.26           | N.S.     |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Positive Mood        | 2.05                     | 1.89        | 1.06           | N.S.     | 9.16                   | 10.12       | -.13           | N.S.     |
| <i>Father</i>                               | <i>Case Manager</i>  |                          |             |                |          |                        |             |                |          |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Flexibility Rigidity | 2.05                     | 1.92        | .74            | N.S.     | 9.12                   | 10.00       | -1.33          | N.S.     |
| Positive Mood                               | Positive Mood        | 2.16                     | 1.85        | 2.18           | .018     | 9.08                   | 10.16       | -1.91          | .032     |
| Positive Mood                               | Flexibility Rigidity | 2.04                     | 1.89        | .98            | N.S.     | 9.53                   | 9.95        | -.73           | N.S.     |
| Flexibility Rigidity                        | Positive Mood        | 2.08                     | 1.89        | 1.22           | N.S.     | 9.36                   | 10.00       | 1.07           | N.S.     |

Range of N of Cases: mismatched, 8-13; matched, 25-30.

revealed very clear patterns of similarity between the mothers and fathers perceptions of family dynamics and adjustment and between the perceptions of the adolescents and the case managers.

When we used the mothers' and fathers' assessments of family and foster care adjustment as dependent variables, our hypotheses were supported; the notion of goodness-of-fit was clearly reflected in the data. There was no consistent pattern of direct association between the mothers' and fathers' temperament and the measures of family and foster care adjustment. However, combinations of parent-adolescent temperament scores were consistently associated with both outcome measures. Specifically, when temperamentally "easy" children were matched with temperamentally similar mothers and fathers, the parents in these dyads reported higher family functioning and better foster care adjustment than parents in "unmatched" dyads on three of the four temperament combinations tested. For each of these three parent-child combinations (flexible parents and flexible adolescents, positive mood parents and positive mood children, and flexible parents and positive mood adolescents) the goodness-of-fit hypotheses were supported.

For the mothers data, the most favorable combination emerged when flexible mothers were matched with positive mood adolescents. Mothers in these groups reported more favorable scores on the FAD and on the MAS than mothers in comparison groups. For the fathers, however, the most favorable results were achieved when positive mood fathers were matched with positive mood adolescents. The goodness-of-fit hypotheses were rejected only when positive mood parents and flexible children were tested against unmatched groups. On the other hand, there was no support at all for the goodness-of-fit hypotheses when the adolescents' and the case managers' reports of family functioning and of foster care adjustment were used as outcome measures.

To try to understand these divergent findings across different observers of family functioning, we reviewed the descriptive statistics and mean testing for the assessments of family functioning and of foster care adjustment for all four observers. As reported earlier, these findings showed clearly that the parents experienced the family environments more positively and perceived the adolescents to be better matched than did the adolescents and the case managers. It might be argued, therefore, that this parental tendency to report more favorably about their families' dynamics and adjustment reflected a social desirability bias. Notwithstanding the confidentiality afforded by the research procedures, the elevation of these scores might reflect an attempt on the part of the parents to influence the agency's views of their family's adjustment and therefore the longevity of the placement. However, even if this response bias was operating in the

present study, we could find no reason to believe it would influence the parents in the "easy" temperament groups and not parents in the "difficult" temperament groups. Consequently, we discounted this methodological explanation for our findings.

A more substantive explanation for the different findings for the parents when compared to the case managers and adolescents concerns the relative sensitivity afforded the "insiders" (parents) and the "outsiders" (case managers and adolescents) to adolescent temperaments which do not "fit" (Olson, 1982). As family "insiders" who must respond to and integrate the foster child's temperament with their own and with their spouses, the foster parents are more likely than are the adolescents themselves or the B.A. level case managers to be aware of and to report the attitudinal and behavioral accommodations required by the presence of a temperamentally "difficult" child within the family system. The consistency with which our findings for the mothers replicated earlier findings (Doelling & Johnson, 1990; Gould, 1987) gives this interpretation even greater strength. Indeed, finding a second time that temperamentally rigid mothers with negative mood adolescents report less satisfactory foster care matches and poorer family functioning than other foster mothers merits particular consideration in the future placement of adolescents in foster homes.

In light of the paucity of available empirical information concerning the role of foster fathers in foster care placement and adjustment, our findings suggesting that the goodness of fit between the fathers' temperaments and the temperaments of their foster children may be equally, if not more important, than the findings concerning the mothers. Whereas inflexible mothers had the greatest problems with negative mood children, fathers with negative moods themselves had the greatest difficulty with these children. Negative mood fathers, when paired with negative mood children, reported lower levels ( $p < .05$ ) of both family functioning and of foster care adjustment.

Although our findings do suggest that parent-child temperament match may influence perceptions of foster care adjustment among foster mothers as well as foster fathers in two parent families, the research design, sample size and limited variability on the dependent variables precluded the examination of triadic family temperament combinations. That is, we were not able to explore whether families with "easy" mothers, fathers and adolescents, for example, achieved higher levels of functioning than families where only two of the three family members were "easy," or to compare the relative importance to family dynamics of the mother-adolescent matches with that of the father-adolescent matches. Consequently, while continuing research in this area needs to specifically address the issue of temperament match in single-parent foster families, additional studies

should also investigate the role of goodness-of-fit in triadic foster family systems.

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