

YOUTH IN FOSTER HOME CARE: A SOCIAL SYSTEM  
ANALYSIS OF CONGRUENCE IN PERCEPTIONS  
OF YOUTHS, FOSTER MOTHERS,  
AND SOCIAL WORKERS

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: PROBLEM AND APPROACH

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which there was congruence in the perceptions of (1) the youth in foster care, (2) his foster mother, and (3) the social worker responsible for placement supervision. The focus of these perceptions was primarily on the adjustment and coping behavior of the youth. "Coping behavior" was used to indicate that part of the youth's behavior that could be observed and measured.<sup>1</sup>

The research proceeded on the basis that care in foster homes provided by social welfare agencies was an example of a social system. This particular social system consisted of at least three significant subsystems: (1) the youth, (2) his foster mother, and (3) the social worker who represented the child welfare agency. These three positions, together, formed the foster care system. The foster care system could be understood only with reference to the interactions of these three subsystems.

An assumption made in the study was that where there was congruence in perceptions of the three members of the foster care system, the system would function with greater effectiveness for the youth. Conversely, absence of con-

gruence within the foster care system, would lead to stress and strain for members of the system and might cause the system to be less effective in benefitting the youth.

✓ This study focussed on each youth's behavior as perceived and assessed by all members of the three-person <sup>system?</sup> <sub>system</sub> foster care system. The youths, their foster mothers, and social workers were asked to give a rating of each youth's degree of general happiness, health, peer relationships, strivings for independence, school achievement, and how well the youth was managing in the present foster home. Using these variables, this study determined the extent of congruence in perceptions of members of each youth's foster care system, and assessed the impact of congruence-incongruence on the youth's own perceptions of himself within the system. The study was concerned with identifying some similarities and differences between congruent and incongruent foster care systems. <sup>purpose</sup>

Previous studies of foster home care examined individual aspects of care. ✓ This study viewed foster home care as a system of interactions; ✓ it was predicated on the belief that understanding the impact of foster care on the youth could be determined by examination of perceptions of members of each foster care system regarding the youth's behavior. ✓ The essential hypothesis posed was that the congruence-incongruence of expectations and perceptions, communicated to him by members of the foster youth's role set, would have direct bearing on the youth's perceptions of him-

self within the foster care system. If congruent perceptions tended to contribute to the youth's effective functioning in a foster system, determination of characteristics of such systems might contribute to increased understanding of foster home care and assist placement agencies in their search for "best" homes for adolescents needing out-of-home care.

### Theoretical Framework

Throughout its history, the social work profession has had dual concern for personal systems and their environments. Gordon states that

. . .the central concern of social work . . .is  
 . . .the matching of people's coping patterns with  
 the qualities of the impinging environment for  
 the purpose of producing growth-inducing and  
 environment-ameliorating transactions.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than identifying or setting specific norms of human behavior, or specifying characteristics of an ideal environment, the emphasis of the social work profession has been on individualizing the person-situation complex. The profession's implicit goal has been to achieve the best match between the person and his environment. Professional intervention matches something in person and situation; it helps persons move toward situations where their capacities are sufficiently matched with the demands of the situation to enable them to cope successfully with those demands.

The phenomenon of concern at this interface is the transaction between individual and environment. Transaction may

be defined as "exchange in the context of action or activity".<sup>3</sup> This action or activity includes both person-activity and environment-activity that impinges upon the person. This concept is consistent with the belief that to grow and develop, individuals must experience positive exchanges between themselves and their environments.

Professional social work intervention includes efforts to change both individual coping behavior and qualities of the impinging environment. The profession views as "best" those transactions that support and promote natural growth and development within the individual, and at the same time are ameliorative to the environment. Amelioration refers to making the environment more conducive to healthy growth and development for all members in society. Individuals must achieve certain kinds of exchanges with the environment to fulfill their natural cycle of growth and development. If these exchanges are not possible, the individual's growth and development are limited or distorted. Maximum growth and development of the human organism and amelioration of the environment are essential conditions for implementation of values held by the social work profession and democratic society. Members of the profession, and those societies within which it is practised, believe that each person should be given opportunity to grow and to develop to his fullest capacity, both for his own and society's betterment.

Foster home care for children and youth is an

example of social work practice. It is a child welfare service, staffed by social workers, with the purpose of providing substitute family care. This care is deemed essential when the young person's own family cannot care for him temporarily, or for an extended period of time. It is based on the belief that for most children and youth, family life provides the best milieu within which they may grow and develop. When the child or youth's own parents are unable or unwilling to implement essential aspects of the parental role, parent surrogates are assigned to fill this role. Foster home care is a method of making the child's or youth's environment more conducive to his healthy growth and development.

Foster home care is the concern, primarily, of the young person in need of this type of alternative living arrangement, the foster parents who open their home, and the social worker who sanctions the placement. These persons form the nucleus of foster home care; together, they constitute a small social system that is meant to benefit the dependant child or youth. Knowledge from system theory may be utilized to provide understanding of the relationships between these individuals. ✓

### Systems Theory and Social Work Practice

Gordon Hearn was the first social work theorist to apply knowledge from systems theory to social work practice.<sup>4</sup> Human systems are perceived by Hearn at all levels

of organization, as open organismic systems; their principal distinguishing characteristic is the exchange of energy and information with their environment.

Hearn states that the general system approach to knowledge in social work has special relevance. The reasons he gives for this are:

The general systems approach . . . is based on the assumption that matter, in all of its forms, living and non-living can be regarded as systems and that systems, as systems, have certain discrete properties that are capable of being studied. Individuals, small groups . . . families and organizations . . . can all be regarded as systems with certain common properties . . . . If the . . . approach could be used to order knowledge about the entities with which we work, perhaps it could also be used as the means of developing a fundamental conception of the social work process itself.<sup>5</sup>

Studies have confirmed Hearn's

. . . belief that the entities with which we work have the properties of systems; that social workers typically work with systems at different levels in their work on a case; that one can devise a universally applicable model of the systems universe, and use it to systematize a substantial body of social work theory developed in other frameworks; and that there is a generic core in literature of social work theory and practice.<sup>6</sup>

Hearn believes that the general systems approach may help organize social work knowledge for teaching and practice, and develop a fundamental conception of the social work process leading to new insights and knowledge.

Additional values of systems theory to social work are given by Sister Mary Paul Janchill. She writes that this approach "may make possible a value-free exploration of the relational determinants of behavior through its focus

on a synchronic analysis of interacting systems", because it attempts to determine the forces that are reaching the person both emotionally and socially. Secondly, systems theory

... emphasizes an understanding of cause by the observation and interpretation of function consequences, both manifest and latent. It directs the practitioner to see that the reason for behavior may emerge by tracing the function of such action for another system, rather than its expression in the person or system of origin.

*much of therapy  
family system  
50th family*

Third, she believes that general systems theory

... could push the development and systematization of knowledge by relating processes to outcomes, thereby enhancing predictive ability for designated interventions in a system relevant to the person-in-situation configuration.

Fourth, this theory "presents the challenge of identification and selection of appropriate points for intervention but leaves open the question of strategy and technique".<sup>7</sup>

#### Foster Home Care as a Social System

Foster home care has the characteristics of a social system. It is "a bounded set of interrelated activities that together constitute a single social entity".<sup>8</sup> Foster care possesses distinctive properties and a unity of its own; it is more than merely the total of its components--it is a coordination of them. Each part of the system, whether it be the foster home, the foster parents, the child welfare agency representative, or the individual needing alternative living arrangements, can be understood only in relation to each other part, and to the larger whole. The boundaries



of this social organization are always at least partially open to the natural and social environments in that individuals, materials, energy and information are exchanged. As subparts of the system are parts of a larger whole, they will always be interrelated. The actions of any one part of the system will either directly or indirectly affect many parts, if not the entire system. There is always some degree of internal ordering among component parts of the foster care system, but the patterns and degrees of this ordering vary.

Sociological theorists have presented models in attempting to increase understanding of social systems. Three of these are: (1) the mechanical or equilibrium model, (2) the organic model, and (3) the process or adaptive model.<sup>9</sup>

The mechanical or equilibrium model presents the system as being composed of elements in mutual interrelations which may be in a state of equilibrium, such that any changes in the elements or their interrelations away from this equilibrium position are counterbalanced by changes tending to restore it. The main criticism of such a model is that it tends to overemphasize maintenance, equilibrium, adjustment within the system and views process and change as deviations. This model emphasizes maintenance of the status quo within the system; it is a model of "conservatism and conformism".<sup>10</sup>

The organic model views society as having many of the same characteristics of an organism because of the mutual dependence of its parts.<sup>11</sup> This model presents the belief that mature organisms, by the very nature of their organization, cannot change their given structure beyond very narrow limits and remain viable. This view does not take into account socio-cultural systems having the ability to adapt to varying situations. There is no one specific structure that is viable and normal for every society.

The process or adaptive model perceives society as a complex, multifaceted, fluid interplay of widely varying degrees and intensities of association and dissociation. It focusses on the actions and interactions of the components of an ongoing system. Various types of structures are needed for differing situations; the system is able to respond to these differences with differing structures.

Buckley argues that the complex adaptive system model best affords conceptualizations of the processes whereby sociocultural structures are developed, maintained, elaborated or changed. He believes that equilibrium and homeostatic models are inadequate for analysis of socio-cultural systems.<sup>12</sup> Buckley's framework is based on modern systems research, especially General Systems Research, information and communication theory. He understands any sociocultural system as a complex, adaptive system, which by its very nature generates, elaborates, and restructures patterns of meanings, actions and interactions.

Buckley's model emphasizes the fluid and tentative nature of sociocultural structures. This model focusses on the following features of stability and flexibility needed for adaptation:

(1) There needs to be a continuous introduction of variety into the system. This variety may refine or revitalize the pool of commonly usable information within the system. The sources of this variety of information include

. . . exigencies of the external and internal environment, the normative ambiguity . . . the range of permissive alternatives . . . planned and unplanned innovation, random and structured deviance, and social and cultural differentiation of many kinds.

(2) Tension is seen as being a normal, ever-present dynamic agent which must be kept at an optimum level if the system is to remain viable. Tension is perceived as being produced by the normal impulses to action, the "role-strain" of everyday social relations, and incongruence in role expectations. A relatively high level of satisfaction of members' needs must also be present; both individual needs and those generated by the system must be satisfied.

(3) Selection processes must be present whereby the perceived variety that appears as uncertainty, ambiguity, or conflict may be sorted out. Full two-way communication networks and information flows are vehicles whereby tensions, expectations and intentions are communicated; these allow, also, for selective responses to be made. The transactional processes of exchange, negotiation, or bargaining are morphogenic processes out of which emerge relatively stable

structures. The definitions, expectations, motives and purposes that develop within and outside given systems act to reconstitute, elaborate and change them by a complex of feedbacks. These feedback loops are essential to effective goal attainment by the system.

(4) Out of the continuous transactions within the system there needs to emerge some relatively stable accommodations and adjustments. Buckley divides stabilizing mechanisms underlying such adjustments as follows:

(a) "congruencies" or "symmetries" within interpersonal role matrices that may be consciously negotiated or fortuitously discovered. These congruencies or symmetries are said to constitute the foundations of a legitimate order and its normative system of authority and control. They afford general agreement by each system member of the other's status.

(b) There may be differential power distribution within role matrices. In these instances patterns of compliance are institutionalized on the basis of coercive sanctions. Buckley terms these instances of non-legitimized power. An example of this would occur when a foster mother dominates the other members of the foster care system and does not allow the youth or the social worker to have any impact on her role performance.

Buckley describes his model of social system as "morphogenic" or developing. He perceives social systems as moving towards increased order, adaptability, unity, or

operational effectiveness. A morphogenic system demonstrates that it has increasing ability to deal effectively with both its environment and its own sub-systems. A morphogenic foster care system will overcome the stresses and strains that may be felt early in placement of the youth in the foster home, and move toward giving the youth a positive and beneficial living experience.

### The Three-Person Social System

The social system containing three persons has been the subject of scholarly discussion stemming from the writings of Georg Simmel. He characterized the three-person group as being unstable, with the tendency to separate into a two member coalition (a dyad) and an isolate. Simmel considered vital the manner in which the position of the third person impinged upon the other two; whether this third position was one of mediator, as holder of the balance of power, or as a constant disturber of the solidarity enjoyed by the other two. He described how conflict between two members of a group could bring satisfaction and strength to a third, and how the sense of unity within a pair could be threatened by the mere presence of a third person.<sup>13</sup>

Mills, among others, supports Simmel's basic hypothesis that threesomes tend to break apart into a pair and a third party. He found, however, that the third party might be seen as a common enemy, or scapegoat, and serve to cement the coalition of the other two as much as threaten

it. Conflict between two members of the triad may or may not result in benefits to the third member. Mills found that the development most threatening to the position of any member of the triad was the solidarity between the other two.<sup>14</sup>

In the three-person foster care system that is the focus of this study, an hypothesis is that the youth who tends to be an isolate within the system will manage less well than the youth who is paired in his perceptions with another member of that system.

Research carried out with regard to foster home care may be divided into three categories: (1) foster children in care, and in adult life; (2) foster parents, with regard to their motivation for becoming foster parents, their recruitment, training and supervision; and (3) child care workers, regarding the decision-making process and continuing contact with the foster child and his foster parents. The weighting of the studies has usually been in the direction of investigating failure rather than success. Very few studies have presented knowledge regarding factors that tend to make foster care succeed from the child or youth's point of view, or how foster children feel about any aspect of the experience at all.<sup>15</sup>

A limited number of studies have been utilized to discover the degree of congruence in views held by different family members,<sup>16</sup> and between social workers and clients,<sup>17</sup> but no report of a study could be located that examined

foster care as a three party system and asked parallel questions to the individual in foster care, his foster parent(s) and social worker.

### Status and Role

The component elements of social systems are social positions or "statuses", and "social roles". These two concepts are fundamental to the description and analysis of any social system.

"Status" is a position in a social system occupied by designated individuals; for example, "foster child", "foster parent", "social worker". "Role" refers to the individual's behavioral enacting of the patterned expectations attributed to that status; it refers to the way the individual acts and responds to his particular status. The concepts of status and role serve to connect the culturally defined expectations with the patterned behavior and relationships which comprise social structure.

Any particular social system involves patterns of reciprocal roles. Impact of the system upon an individual may be studied through observation of role behavior of members as they affect the focal person. The term "focal person" is used to identify the particular individual within the system who is the focus of the study. It is most useful if observations are restricted to role behavior of those members of the system who have direct contact with the focal person. The term "role-set" may be used to indicate

"that complement of role relationships which persons have by virtue of occupying a particular social status".<sup>18</sup> In this study, the focal person is the youth in foster care. The role set of the youth is composed primarily of his foster parents and the social worker from the placement agency as well as the youth, himself. Other individuals may be considered members of the foster youth's role set; these would include other children in the foster home, grandparents of the foster family, the youth's own siblings, his own parents and other family members, his peers from school and the neighborhood, and his school teachers. For the purpose of this study, however, the prime role-senders, the most intimate members of the youth's role-set, are considered to be his foster mother, the social worker from the placement agency, and the youth, himself. These three status positions are considered the most significant. Others may or may not be important in the role-set, but at least three subsystems must be present in any foster care system.<sup>19</sup>

A basic source of disturbance in the role-set is the structural circumstance that an individual occupying a particular status has role-partners who are differently located in the social structure. These others will have, to some degree, values and expectations that differ from those held by the focal person. It is rare for all in the role-set to have the same values and role-expectations. It is more usual for role-partners to come from diverse social statuses and to have some degree of difference in social



values. In the role-set of the youth in foster care, the youth, his foster mother and social worker may have quite different values and role expectations for each other.

All members of an individual's role-set depend on his role performance to some degree. The reciprocal nature of roles means that these others require the individual's particular role to enable them to perform their own tasks. A woman, for example, cannot be a foster mother without a foster child in her home. Because each member of an individual's role-set has a stake in his performance, they develop beliefs and attitudes about that individual. These prescriptions and proscriptions held by members of a role-set are designated as "role expectations". Role expectations held for a certain individual by a member of his role-set will reflect that member's conception of the individual's role and his abilities. The content of these expectations includes what the individual should do, the kind of person he should be, and how others should relate to him. Role expectations held by members of the individual's role-set represent standards in terms of which they evaluate his performance. These expectations tend to be communicated to the individual either directly or indirectly. The potential behaviors which serve to define a role are prescribed by expectations of members of the role-set.

The numerous acts which make up the process of role setting are both informational and influential. They are directed towards the focal member to bring about conformity

with expectations of other members of the role set. These acts, called "role pressures", may be directed toward accomplishment of formally specified responsibilities, or may be directed toward making life easier or more pleasant for other members of the role set, or both of these. Role pressures include all requirements and demands that are communicated to the focal person.

Role pressures may vary along a number of dimensions. Some of these dimensions are: sign (prescriptive and proscriptive), magnitude (strength of the influence attempt), specificity (extent to which the expected behaviors or attributes are made concrete and in detail), intensity (extent to which the focal person is allowed freedom of choice in complying or refusing compliance), and range of conditions under which compliance is intended.<sup>20</sup>

When a system is examined from the vantage point of an individual within a role, the members of the role-set and the pressures which they direct to him are part of that focal person's environment. [The individual responds to the system in terms of his perception of it. He responds, not to the objective organization in his social environment, but to that representation of it which is in his psychological environment. Thomas enunciated this concept as "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences".<sup>21</sup>] Individuals respond not only to the objective factors of a situation, then, but also (and at times primarily) to the meaning the situation has for them.

For any individual, there is not only a sent role, but a perceived role. The perceived role consists of perceptions and cognitions of what was sent. How closely the perceived role corresponds to the sent role will depend on the set of role senders, the focal person, the properties of the senders, the receiver, and the substantive content of the sent pressures.

The sent role is the means by which the system communicates to the individual the sanctions (both positive and negative) associated with his particular role. The received role, however, is the immediate influence on behavior and the immediate source of motivation to role performance. Each sent pressure can be regarded as arousing in the focal person a psychological force of some magnitude and direction.

In addition to the motivational forces aroused by role pressures, there are important sources of motivation for role performance within the individual. The intrinsic satisfaction derived from the content of the role would be one of these forces. In a sense, each person is a role-sender to himself. He has a conception of his role and a set of attitudes and beliefs regarding what he should and should not do. He has some awareness of what behaviors will fulfill his responsibilities or further his own interests. The youth, going into a foster home, for example, has a preconception of what will be expected of him

and of how he will act.

Two effects of behavior by members in a role-set are role conflict and role congruence.

### Role Conflict and Role Congruence

It has been shown that the concept of social role takes into account the fact that various members of the role-set may hold quite different expectations toward the focal person and impose pressures on him toward different kinds of behavior. To the extent that these role pressures give rise to role forces within the individual he will experience psychological conflict. Pressures to change behavior represent new and different forces with which the individual must cope. The stronger the pressures from role senders, the greater is the conflict created for the focal person. Too, the individual might satisfy his role senders, but not himself; conflict in this situation would be in terms of the forces generated internally and unsuccessfully to resist the external pressures of the role senders.

Much role conflict can be thought of as a type of inadequate role sending. There may be lack of agreement or coordination among role senders which produces a pattern of set expectations which either contains logical incompatibilities or which does not take into account adequately the needs and abilities of the focal person. This would occur, for example, if an older youth wishing additional independence, was expected to remain dependent on his foster

mother.

Role ambiguity is another source of possible role conflict. Role ambiguity is a concept which describes lack of availability of required information regarding a given role within the system. When required information is communicated clearly and consistently to a focal person, it will tend to produce in him an experience of certainty regarding role requirements, and of his place within the system. When information is lacking, the individual will experience ambiguity leading to tension and anxiety. There will also be a reduction in the extent to which demands and requirements of the role are successfully met. Foster parents may have definite expectations of characteristics of "good" foster children; these will need to be communicated to each foster child if he is to know what is expected of him. Such messages need to be both free of ambiguity and not in conflict with the youth's own expectations.

The degree of objective role conflict depends on the configuration of role pressures that are actually exerted by role senders on the focal person. His experience of this conflict will depend on both its objective magnitude and on certain characteristics of the focal person. The potential degree of clarity or ambiguity in a role may be assessed by an investigation of the available relevant information within the role-set.

The degree of objective ambiguity for any focal position will depend on the availability of information to

that position. The experienced ambiguity of the occupant of the position will reflect the objective situation as it interacts with relevant properties of the particular individual.

Role pressures that affect the immediate experience of the focal person in a situation have both perceptual and cognitive aspects. These include the focal person's perceptions of the demands and requirements placed on him by role senders, and his awareness or experiences of psychological conflict. The focal person's experience of a situation is a function of the objective demands to which he is subjected at any given time. When members of the role set are generally supportive of the focal person's performance, this fact is perceived and the response is generally one of satisfaction and confidence. When pressures are directed towards changes in the behavior of the focal person, or when they are contradictory to one another, the experience tends to be fraught with conflict and ambiguity, evoking responses of tension, anger, or indecision. The reactions of each focal person to a situation are determined by the nature of his experience in that situation. The likelihood of his responding by attempting rational problem solving will depend on the opportunities he perceives for creating acceptable changes either in the situation or in his own behavior.

When faced with a situation of role conflict, the youth must respond in some manner. Whatever pattern of response is adopted may be regarded as his attempt to attain

or regain an adequately gratifying experience in the role-set. Identifiable patterns include compliance, persuading role senders to modify incompatible demands, or avoiding the source of stress. Affective or physiological symptoms may result from the individual's attempts to cope with these pressures. Goode uses the term "role strain" to describe the "felt difficulty in fulfilling the role obligations".<sup>22</sup>

An enunciation earlier, alienation of the focal person from other members of his role-set tends to exist when (1) expectations of the focal person for himself do not correspond to expectations others have concerning him, and (2) when there is disagreement between other members of the role-set regarding their expectations of the focal person. In those situations where there is dissonance or incongruence in expectations and perceptions, the individual may experience internal conflict as well as disruption of his relationships with other members of his role-set. The result of such disruptions, if they are not too severe, however, may be a beneficial renegotiation of expectations by members of the focal person's role-set.

The opposite of role conflict, role congruence is a term that may be used to describe the situation in which the focal person perceives that the same or very similar expectations or requirements are held for him by others in his role-set regarding his role performance. These expectations are similar between other members of the role-set and between these members and the focal person. In the foster

care system there would be congruence in those situations where the youth in foster care, his foster mother, and the social worker representing the child welfare agency, were all in agreement regarding expectations and the youth's role performance.

Foster parents and social workers have expectations regarding the way the focal role should be performed and have perceptions about the way the young person in foster home care is actually performing. Each role-sender behaves toward the focal person in ways determined by his own expectations, and anticipations of the focal person's responses. Each influences the focal person in the direction of increasing conformity with his own expectations. The youth, too, has expectations and perceptions of his own role performance. Role expectations lead to role pressures. In order to determine the likelihood and nature of sent role pressures, the expectations and perceptions of each role sender must be investigated. Understanding the degree of conflict or congruence in the role follows consideration of the total pattern of expectations and pressures communicated by members of the role-set. Investigation of the role expectations and perceptions held by members of the role-set and by the focal person himself should indicate the potential in the situation for conflict or congruence.

Borhek stated that the

. . . incongruent definitions of objects and situations may originate in a number of ways and may simply consist of the object being seen from many



different points of view. . . .On the other hand, incongruent definitions . . .may be definitely conflicting and can involve quite different definitions of the same aspects of the same object . . . (so that) he is defined quite differently (and) is exposed to incongruent definitions of himself.<sup>23</sup>

When this latter occurs, the person is subject to role incongruence. Sociological theorists have presented two opposing points of view with regard to the effects of role incongruence on the social system.<sup>24</sup> Parsons has stated that role conflict "creates a situation incompatible with a harmonious integration of personality with the interaction system" and "exposure to conflicting expectations . . .may be presumed to be the generic situation underlying the development of ambivalent motivational structures with their expression in neuroses, in deviant behavior, or otherwise".<sup>25</sup> Buckley, on the other hand, perceives conflict as an inherent part of social systems and sees it as an opportunity for the system to change to meet the needs of its members; he does not view conflict, per se, as being system-destroying and necessarily harmful to members of the system. Parsons wishes to minimize potentially disruptive behavior, Buckley would use such disruption to enable the system to change and so better meet the goals of the system and the sub-systems within it. Buckley, however, would not consider a social system to be morphogenic if it were unable to cope with the stresses and strains that result from a lack of role congruence.<sup>26</sup>

Congruence and incongruence are concepts that, in

themselves, are devoid of any subjective content. They are not meant to imply either happiness or unhappiness; they are terms used to describe expectations of a focal person--either homogenous or variegated. They refer to something which is external to the individual, something characterizing certain of his social relationships.

This study is concerned with congruent-incongruent perceptions within the foster care system and their effects on the focal person--the youth living in foster home care.

#### Background of the Study

This study of congruent-incongruent aspects in foster home care of youth was made possible by the availability of data gathered as part of a demonstration project conducted in a southern California County into the "Needs of Older Children Living Away from Home". The overall goal of this demonstration project was to identify the needs of (state) AFDC eligible youth (ages 16 to 20) who could not live with their own families, and to determine suitable services for these youths.<sup>27</sup> Data were gathered from the case record files, the youths themselves, their foster parents, and their social workers. The focus of these enquiries included the youths' present living situation, relationships with peers, school progress, vocational aspirations and preferred future living arrangements.

There were four sections of the demonstration project:

1. On April 30, 1969, the County Welfare Department was responsible for eighty-six youths in out-of-home care. Characteristics of these youths were taken from case records and reported in Project Report #1 (A Social Survey of Older Youths in Out-of-Home Care: An Analysis of 237 Case Records).<sup>28</sup> This Report included information regarding each youth's own family history, his experience with foster care, and his present situation.

2. In June 1969, when arrangements were made for the eighty-six youths to be interviewed, fifty-one of them were available and agreed to be seen. The findings of these interviews have been reported in Study Report #2 (An Analysis of Social Characteristics and Needs of 51 Youths Living in Foster Homes). This Report provided additional data regarding the youths, gathered from the youths, themselves. Areas discussed included perceptions of their own family situation, experience with out-of-home care and plans for the future.

3. Following completion of interviews with the fifty-one youths, an attempt was made to see their foster parents. Where there was a difference between answers given by foster parents, the foster mother's impressions and perceptions were recorded. The results of these interviews with foster parents were reported in Study Report #3 (An Analysis of Social Characteristics and Perceptions of 47 Foster Parents Providing Out-of-Home Care for Youth). This Report gave information about each foster parent's socio-economic background, experience with fostering, and perceptions of the

youth currently in the home.

4. The thirty-one social workers assigned to the fifty-one youths were all interviewed. Each social worker responsible for the case at the time the youth was interviewed, was seen. The results of these interviews are reported in Study Report #4 (An Analysis of Perceptions of 31 Social Workers Responsible for Administering Out-of-Home Care for Youth). Social workers were questioned about their professional experience and background, the foster home program, and their perceptions of the youths in the study.

The interview was chosen as the main method of data collection as it allowed the interviewer to be aware of any lack of comprehension or misunderstanding of questions by respondents. Interviews allowed better control of the influence of question sequence; possible answers to later questions did not color answers to earlier questions. The interviews permitted meaningful probing on leads given by respondents. It was felt that the respondent's relationship with the interviewer might contribute to the validity of the findings. The ultimate value of the interview was dependent upon the interviewer's knowledge of developmental psychology and his ability to apply this knowledge in a sensitive way. Interviews are the most common approach to the study of attitudes, values and perceptions.

The interviewers were young men and women in their twenties. They were all experienced social workers and met the requirements of understanding human behavior. They

were staff members of the County Department of Public Welfare. One interviewer had worked with the project since its inception. Two additional interviewers joined the project staff during their summer vacation from a Graduate School of Social Work; these two were on educational leave from the Department.

A short orientation program was conducted for the interviewers by the Project Supervisor and the writer prior to their first interview. The purposes of the program were two-fold: (1) to acquaint them with the nature and goals of the study, and (2) to increase their understanding of ways of conducting research interviews.

Foster parents were not seen by the same individual who earlier talked with the youth in the home. It was hoped that by changing interviewers, the concept of the confidential nature of the replies given would be reinforced, and objectivity of the interviewer in recording responses would be increased.

Interviews with each of the youths, foster parents, and social workers took over one hour to complete. During the research interviews, some similar questions were asked of each member of the foster care system, and some different questions were put to them. The same content areas were discussed with each member of the system, although the same questions were not specifically asked, nor was the order of asking questions necessarily consistent between subsystem members. All interviews were conducted between

June 15 and August 15, 1969.

Answers were recorded on schedules during interviews. Each interviewer was responsible for coding his own schedules under the supervision of the writer. The coded data were then punched on IBM cards and sorted.

This writer carried major responsibility for writing the Project Study Reports while under contract to the County Welfare Department during the summer months of 1969.

In the context of the present study, as already indicated, each foster home placement situation was considered a social system. The system consisted of three positions: (1) the youth, (2) his foster mother, and (3) the social worker representing the County Welfare Department. The three positions in the placement situation may be viewed in relationship to each of the other positions within the system.

This study utilized perceptions of the youth's adjustment and coping behavior by the three members of the foster care system to determine the degree of congruence that was present within the system, and to determine possible coalitions within each system. The formation of coalitions was seen as depending upon different members of the foster care system being in agreement in their perceptions of the youth.<sup>29</sup> The extent of congruence was determined by answers given to parallel questions. There were five possible coalitions that might be determined by the extent of congruence in the answers given to any specific question:

(1) The youth, foster mother, and social worker all gave similar answers.

(2) The youth and his foster mother were in agreement; the social worker's answer differed from that given by the other two.

(3) The youth and the social worker were in agreement; the foster mother's answer differed from that given by the other two.

(4) The foster mother and social worker were in agreement; the answer given by the youth differed from that given by the other two.

(5) The youth, his foster mother and the social worker all gave different answers to the same question.

Use of these categories of congruence enabled the determination of areas which were likely to be perceived similarly and which were likely to give indications of coalitions and isolates. Categories (4) and (5) showed the youth to be isolated in his perception from other members of his foster care system.

## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>"Adjustment" was defined as behavior conforming to expectations of system members. Gordon uses the term "coping behavior" to capture that part of total human behavior that traditionally has been of primary interest to social work--namely, that behavior at the surface of the organism which is capable of being consciously directed to the environment. . . .Coping behavior fully includes the broad repertoire of behavior that may be directed to the environment and which potentially, at least, can be brought under conscious control". William E. Gordon, "Basic Constructs for an Integrative and Generative Conception of Social Work," in Gordon Hearn (ed.) The General Systems Approach: Contributions Toward an Holistic Conception of Social Work (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1969), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Gordon, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Gordon Hearn, Theory Building in Social Work (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958).

<sup>5</sup>Hearn, General Systems Approach, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Hearn, General Systems Approach, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Sister Marie Paul Janchill, "Systems Concepts in Casework Theory and Practice," Social Casework, 50 (February, 1969), 81-83.

<sup>8</sup>A. D. Hall and R. E. Fagen, "Definition of a System," General Systems, 1 (1956), 18.

<sup>9</sup>A critique of these models is presented in Walter Buckley, Sociology and Modern Systems Theory (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), chapter 2.

<sup>10</sup>Ludwig von Bertalanffy, General Systems Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications (New York: George



Brazilier, 1968), p. 196. Examples of the mechanical or equilibrium model are Talcott Parsons, The Social System (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1951), and George C. Homans, The Human Group (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1950).

<sup>11</sup> Spencer was the first to believe that "the permanent relations among the parts of a society are analogous to the permanent relations among the parts of a living body". Herbert Spencer, "The Nature of Society" in Talcott Parsons, et al. (eds.) Theories of Society (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 140. This approach also has influenced Parsons, somewhat.

<sup>12</sup> Walter C. Buckley, Modern Systems Research for the Behavioral Scientist (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 511-512. The following discussion utilizes material in this publication and Buckley's earlier Sociology and Modern Systems Theory, pp. 159-161.

<sup>13</sup> Georg Simmel, The Sociology of Georg Simmel, translated and edited by Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1959), especially pp. 118-162.

<sup>14</sup> Theodore M. Mills, "Power Relations in Three-person Groups," American Sociological Review, 18 (August, 1953), 351-357.

<sup>15</sup> Two of the few studies reported in the child welfare literature where the research investigator was able to have direct access to foster children or former foster children are: Eugene A. Weinstein, The Self-Image of the Foster Child (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1960), and Elizabeth G. Meier, Former Foster Children as Adult Citizens (Columbia University: New York School of Social Work, DSW Dissertation, 1962).

<sup>16</sup> For example, Lillian E. Troll, "Similarities in Values and Other Personality Characteristics in College Students and their Parents," Merrill-Palmer Quarterly of Behavior and Development, 15 (October, 1969), 323-336.

<sup>17</sup> See Dorothy Miller, et al., "Effectiveness of Social Services to AFDC Recipients," prepared under contract to the State of California, Assembly Rules Committee, LCB #13110, 1968.

<sup>18</sup>Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1957), p. 379.

<sup>19</sup>A previous study conducted earlier in 1969 interviewed a sample of foster parents of these youths and found the homes to be mother-dominated.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Neal Gross, et al., Explorations in Role Analysis (New York: Wiley, 1958).

<sup>21</sup>Quoted by Robert K. Merton, p. 421.

<sup>22</sup>W. J. Goode, "A Theory of Role Strain," American Sociological Review, 24 (August, 1960), 483.

<sup>23</sup>J. T. Borhek, "A Theory of Congruent Experience," Pacific Sociological Review, 8 (Fall, 1965), 91.

<sup>24</sup>A third stance is taken by von Bertalanffy; to him, "stress too is an ambivalent thing", p. 192.

<sup>25</sup>The Social System, p. 282.

<sup>26</sup>Two writers who state beneficent consequences of conflict are: J. T. Borhek, "A Theory of Incongruent Experience," and Lewis Coser, The Functions of Social Conflict (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956).

<sup>27</sup>Each State has a program of financial aid and services to needy families with children, commonly known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Under terms of the original Social Security Act (1935), a child's dependency was based on the physical or mental incapacity of the parent, the death of a parent, or continued absence of a parent from the home. Beginning in 1962, the Federal government shares in financial assistance given to both parents in the home if one parent is incapacitated or unemployed, provided the State included unemployment as a cause of deprivation. To be covered, the child must be living in the home of a parent or specified relative. If the child has been removed from his own home by court order and lives in an approved foster home, and his family was receiving AFDC prior to his being placed, then he may also be covered by the program. The Federal government participates in payments by the State to needy families until the youngest child is 18, or 21 if he is attending school, vocational school, college, university, or other educa-

tional facility.

<sup>28</sup> This larger number includes 151 youths in out-of-home care who are the responsibility of the Probation Department. Full citations for all four Project Reports are given in the Bibliography.

<sup>29</sup> A coalition is formed when at least two system members give and receive adequate unambiguous information regarding the focal person's role performance. Within coalitions expectations of the focal person for himself correspond to expectations others have concerning him, and there is agreement between members regarding expectations of the focal person.

## CHAPTER II

### THE STUDY GROUP: DESCRIPTION OF FOSTER CARE SUBSYSTEMS

The focus of this study was on the congruence-incongruence in perceptions within the three-member foster care system composed of the youth in foster home care, his foster mother, and the social worker representing the County Welfare Department that had responsibility for foster home placement and supervision of the youth.

Fifty-one youths in foster home care were interviewed in the latter part of June 1969. Foster mothers and social workers of most of these fifty-two youths were also seen. In six foster care systems, however, incomplete answers were given by social workers or foster parents in crucial areas of the study. This study reports the congruence-incongruence determined in forty-five foster care systems for which complete, or very nearly complete, schedules were obtained.

A comparison was made regarding certain characteristics of the forty-five youths, for which sets of schedules were available from all three members of their foster care systems, with the total number of eighty-six youths in out-of-home care under the jurisdiction of the Welfare Department at the time of the study. This comparison showed

similar percentage distributions regarding these characteristics between the total number of youths in out-of-home care and those in the study sample.<sup>1</sup>

### The Youths

Some personal and social characteristics of the forty-five youths between the ages of sixteen and twenty are presented in this section. These characteristics deal with the youth as an individual and with his experience in foster home care.<sup>2</sup> In passing, it should be stated that interviewers were favorably impressed with the youths in the sample. Their neat appearance, mature demeanor and the cooperation they gave, were often reported.

Many more of the youths in the study were female than male. Twenty-nine of the young people (64 percent) were girls or young women; only sixteen of the sample were boys or young men.

Eighteen was the median age of the youths; forty percent of the sample were this age.

Most youths were Caucasian; twenty-six youths fell within this category. The second largest ethnic group was youths of Mexican-American ancestry; eight youths had Spanish surnames. Five Negro youths comprised eleven percent of the sample. The following table shows the frequency of membership in the three most common ethnic groups by sex:

TABLE 1

## MEMBERSHIP IN ETHNIC GROUPS BY YOUTHS' SEX

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Caucasian	8 (50%)	18 (62%)	26 (58%)
Mexican-American	3 (19%)	5 (17%)	8 (18%)
Black or Negro	1 ( 6%)	4 (14%)	5 (11%)
Other	4 (25%)	2 ( 7%)	6 (13%)
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	16	29	45

The youths were asked questions regarding their education, both past and present. Grade placements ranged from Grade 9 to second year university. The largest number of youths, sixteen (36 percent), were in Grade 12 during the 1968-69 academic year. Twelve youths (26 percent) were in Grade 11, and eight youths (18 percent) were in lower grades. Nine youths were in college, university, or other post-high school facility. Correlating the sex, age, and grade of the youths in the study gives:

TABLE 2  
YOUTHS BY AGE, SEX AND GRADE PLACEMENT

Age	Grade 9		Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12		Post-high		Total
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	
16	-	-	2	2	2	1	-	1	-	-	8
17	1	-	2	-	-	4	1	3	-	-	11
18	-	-	-	1	3	2	1	7	-	3	17
19	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	2	8
20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Total	1		7		12		16		9		45

This Table shows that there were more than twice as many females as males in Grade 12 or enrolled in post-high school educational programs. It also shows that some youths were enrolled in grades lower than would be expected. A significant number of the youths, twenty-three (51 percent) reported that they were held back at least one grade in school. Those that were held back most often repeated grades one, two, or three.

The youths in this study reported that they had attended many elementary and high schools. Three was the median number of elementary schools that youths had attended; the median number of high schools attended was also three. As a group, the youths had little of the continuity of experience that accompanied consistent attendance at the same school.

Despite changes in schools and the fact that one-half previously failed a year, thirty-nine youths, almost ninety percent of them, felt that they presently did as well as, or better than, others in their classes. Only six youths perceived themselves as below average in their school work.

As well as being questioned regarding themselves, and their school progress, youths were also asked about their experience in out-of-home care.

Thirteen youths, almost one-third of the sample, left their own homes to enter foster care when they were either fourteen or fifteen years old. Another third left



their own homes in their sixteenth year or later. The remaining third left their own homes prior to their fourteenth birthday; the largest number within this latter group left their own homes before their third birthday.<sup>3</sup>

The median length of time that the youths stated they had received foster home care is more than three years, but less than five years. Less than one-quarter of the youths stated they have been in foster homes for more than ten years; a similar number had received foster care for less than one year. The following table gives the length of time that the youths stated they had received foster home care:<sup>4</sup>

TABLE 3

## TOTAL OUT-OF-HOME CARE RECEIVED BY YOUTHS

Less than 12 months	10 (22%)
One or two years	6 (13%)
Three or four years	13 (29%)
Five or six years	1 (2%)
Seven or eight years	3 (7%)
Nine or ten years	1 (2%)
More than ten years	11 (24%)

Almost one-half the youths reported that they had been in their present foster home for less than a year; twenty-one youths (47 percent) reported moving to their present place of residence within the last twelve months. The median length of time the youths reported they had been in their present foster home was more than one year, but

less than three years. Six youths (13 percent) stated they had been with their current foster parents for ten years or longer.

Youths who had been in the same foster home for a lengthy period of time often tended to become regarded as "own" by the families with whom they lived. One girl, who had been in the same home for twelve years was quite resentful of visits from the social worker. She was reluctant to be interviewed for the study as she no longer considered herself to be "foster".

In discussing relationships with social workers from the County Department of Public Welfare, youths were asked questions regarding the number of workers they had talked with, the frequency of contacts, and their perceptions of the social worker's function.

Youths in the sample have known many social workers. Almost one-half the total number of youths have had three or more social workers assigned to them. Nine youths (20 percent of the total) reported having had six or more workers. Only seven youths continued to see the worker originally assigned.

Most youths reported that they usually talked with their social worker less often than monthly, but when asked specifically the last time they had spoken with their social worker, over one-half the youths stated they had seen their worker during the preceding month. Most youths remembered the last contact with their social worker as being initiated by the worker rather than by themselves.

The main function of the social worker, in the minds of the youths, appeared to be to ensure that their present living situation continued to be suitable. The worker's value in assisting with problems in general, or between the youth and his foster parents, was identified as important by some youths; others saw the worker as mainly providing concrete help such as procuring additional funds for their special needs. None of the youths identified maintaining contact with their own family of origin, or helping make plans for the future as prime tasks of the social workers.

When asked to identify what the social worker had done to improve the youth's situation, budgeting and other concrete services were named most frequently; these were cited by nineteen youths (42 percent). One-third of the youths stated that they either did not need any help from their social worker, or did not receive any help. Some tasks identified by the youths that might apply especially to them were: to have the worker give "moral support" when needed, to "watch over" their living situation, or as a person to turn to when problems arose and counselling was needed. Five youths were unable to determine any role for the social worker who visited them and their foster parents.

The following vignette is illustrative of the data received from the youths and gives some indication of the feelings that accompanied the giving of information:

Joanna, 17, sighed and shrugged her shoulders somewhat helplessly when asked how many social workers she had talked with from the Welfare Department. In the two years that she had been living in foster homes, she had four different social workers call to see her. Only one of the workers saw her for three or more times. Joanna said that she would have liked to talk more about "things" with the social workers, but that she needed time to get to know them and "see if I really can trust them". Joanna felt that the workers were often more interested in "checking" with her foster mother than talking with her. She was pleased, however, that some additional funds had been granted by the Department to enable her to continue piano lessons; her foster parents had felt that Joanna might have to give up her music as they could not provide both the transportation to get Joanna to her teacher and also pay for the lesson:

#### The Foster Mothers

The forty-five youths in this study lived in forty-two foster homes. Three sets of foster parents each had two youths boarding with them; thirty-nine foster parents each had one youth in the sample living with them.<sup>5</sup>

Foster mothers were questioned regarding their present socio-economic status, their experience as foster mothers, and asked to give their perceptions of the youths. Socio-economic characteristics of foster mothers, and their experience as providers of out-of-home care for youths will be discussed in this section; their perceptions of the youths in the sample will be discussed in chapter

three.

Seventy percent of the foster mothers responsible for youths in this study were Caucasian; seven (16 percent) were Negro, and three were Mexican-American. Foster homes tended to be of the same ethnicity as the youths placed in them.

In the majority of the foster homes there were two parents present. Thirty-five homes (83 percent) had both foster mothers and foster fathers living in the home.<sup>6</sup> Seven homes, however, had no father in them. Foster mothers tended to be somewhat younger than their husbands. The median age for foster mothers was between the ages of forty-one and fifty; the median age for their husbands was between fifty-one and sixty.

Foster parents usually had been married for a considerable length of time. Twenty-two couples (52 percent) stated that they had been married for over twenty-one years; however, three couples reported that they had been married for less than five years. Eighteen foster mothers (43 percent) had been married previously; fourteen (40 percent) foster fathers had previous marriages, also.

In general, foster mothers had received more formal education than their husbands. The median grade attained by foster mothers was Grade 12; foster fathers, between Grades 10 and 12. Nine (20 percent) foster mothers reported

that they had some university education, but only one foster father attended university. Almost half the foster mothers had taken courses to increase skills, most often clerical or nursing.

Over one third of the foster mothers, fifteen, worked outside their own home. The median family income was between \$7,000 and \$9,000 annually. This figure was consistent with data available for the County which gave \$8,400 as the average earnings.<sup>7</sup>

Foster home licensing regulations concern boarding homes for children until they reach their sixteenth birthday; licenses are not required for homes in which older youths are placed.<sup>8</sup> Twenty-two (52 percent) of the homes in which youths in the sample stayed had been licensed at some time by the County Department of Public Welfare. Only twelve of the homes (28 percent) were currently licensed, however. The median length of time that those homes which had been licensed had taken foster children or youths was four years. The median number of foster children or youths placed in those homes during the four years was two.

Foster mothers tended to have had considerable experience with childrearing. Three was the median number of their own children raised by foster mothers; the median

number of own children still at home was one. Only three of the forty-two foster mothers in the sample never had children of their own. Almost half the foster mothers had at least one other foster child in the home as well as the youth.

The length of time foster mothers have been responsible for foster children ranged from a few months to over twenty years. In that time, the number of children placed ranged from one, to a few homes where well over twenty children and youths had been placed. Some present foster mothers previously had been responsible for children in day-care and so became known in their communities as willing to open their homes to children.

Many foster parents first opened their homes because family members knew of children or youth in need of alternative living arrangements. Twenty-five (60 percent) of the foster mothers remembered first taking foster children as a result of being asked by a friend or relative to care for their child, or because one of their own children knew someone who needed a foster home. Only four foster mothers (9 percent) remembered being formally recruited by the County Department of Public Welfare. One woman began fostering at the suggestion of the social worker who placed a baby for adoption in her home.

Foster mothers, almost without exception, agreed that they were active participants in the decision-making process that preceded the child or youth's move into their home. Some foster mothers spoke of "humanitarian" reasons: "He needed a home and I couldn't say 'No'", or "If I can help just one child, everything I've done will be worth it". Another foster mother said, on first meeting her own daughter's friend from school who needed another place to live, "I took to her", showing development of an immediate bond between them. One foster mother reported that she "could hardly say 'No'" when the local high school football team and coaches "descended" upon her on behalf of a valuable player who needed alternative living arrangements close to the school, to enable him to continue playing on a winning team. As a group, youths in this study tended to make known to their peers the wish for alternative living accommodation, they also tended to be active in seeking another home on their own.

#### The Social Workers

Twenty-eight social workers had responsibility for out-of-home care supervision of the forty-five youths in this study. Most workers had responsibility for one youth in the sample; however three workers had responsibility for two youths, three workers supervised three youths



each, and two workers were each responsible for five youths.

As a group, the social workers responded very favorably to the research interviews. They had obvious concern for the youths they talked about. The positive attitude that the research interviewers encountered seemed to be due equally to empathy the workers felt for the youths, and their professional appreciation that research into the foster care system might enable them to give better services to young persons living away from their own homes. A few workers asked for copies of the research schedule as they saw in it an outline of areas that might profitably be discussed with the youths to better enable the worker to gain understanding of them in their situation. The obvious use of role and system theories as a framework within which the questions were posed was remarked on favorably by some workers.

Interviews were, in every case, conducted in the workers' own offices; at times, at their desks, and on some occasions in interviewing rooms within the various agency divisions.

Workers in the sample were equally divided according to sex. Fourteen social workers were male; and fourteen, female. Over one-half the workers were in their twenties--

fifteen (53 percent). Seven workers (25 percent) were between thirty and thirty-nine years of age. The remaining six workers were over forty.

The majority of social workers were married. Nineteen of the workers (67 percent) were presently married; three others had been married previously but were separated or divorced. Six workers (21 percent) had never married.

Almost all social workers who had been married had children of their own. Two was the median number of children in the social workers' own families. These children ranged in age from pre-school to adulthood with most of them presently in their teens.

The social workers were primarily Caucasian. Twenty-one workers were Caucasian, five were Negro, and one worker was Mexican-American. A comparison of ethnic backgrounds of the youths, foster mothers and social workers in the sample is given in the following table:

TABLE 4

A COMPARISON OF ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS OF MEMBERS  
OF FOSTER CARE SUBSYSTEMS

	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
Caucasian	26 (58%)	29 (69%)	21 (75%)
Negro or Black	5 (11%)	7 (16%)	5 (17%)
Mexican-American	8 (13%)	3 ( 7%)	1 ( 4%)
Other	6 (13%)	3 ( 7%)	1 ( 4%)
	<hr/> 45	<hr/> 42	<hr/> 28

When queried regarding their own religious preference, the largest number of social workers, eleven (39 percent), stated "Protestant"; about half this number stated they were "Unitarian". Although only eight workers did not specify any adherence to a religion, some others who did specify one, made it clear that they did not consider themselves to be active in the churches of their choice.

All social workers in the sample attended university for at least four years and have received baccalaureate degrees. The majority of the workers, seventeen (60 percent) held a Bachelor of Arts degree or its equivalent. The other eleven workers had some graduate school education (most usually in a School of Social Work). Of this latter group, six (21 percent of the total sample) held a Master of Social Work degree.

As well as being questioned about themselves as individuals, the social workers were also asked about their work experience. Most social workers stated that they had been employed by the County Welfare Department for less than five years; only five workers had been with the Department for five years or more. The largest group of workers in the sample, twelve (42 percent), stated that

they had been with the Department for two years or less.

Social workers tended to have had their present work assignments for a comparatively short period of time. This was due, in part, to the fact that the Department, at the time the study was conducted, had just completed reassigning many social workers as a result of implementing a policy which separated financial eligibility determination from the giving of other social services. Sixteen workers (56 percent) had their present case-loads for less than one year; another eight workers had their present assignment for less than two years. Only three workers had their current case-load for more than three years.

Character-building and recreation agencies (YMCA, YWCA, Scouts, etc.) gave many workers experience with youth, as did previous staff positions with the County Welfare Department or other community health and welfare agencies. Most social workers either worked with youths in a voluntary capacity or in previous professional positions (not always social work--former school teachers and nurses were represented in the sample).

The combination of the workers' own life experiences, their university education regarding the nature of man and ways of helping, and previous paid and voluntary work experience with youths, all contributed

to giving the workers a feeling of competence in the performance of their responsibilities.

## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix A, "Comparison of Characteristics of Youths in the Total Group and the Sample Group," regarding age, sex, ethnic background, age at original placement, and total length of time in present foster home.

<sup>2</sup>Appendices B, C, D, contain Tables giving frequencies of characteristics discussed that are not given in Tables within the chapter.

<sup>3</sup>Only two youths in the sample entered foster care when they were between four and seven years of age; none left his own home in his tenth or eleventh year.

<sup>4</sup>In answering this question, some youths differentiated between a first move out of their home to live with a relative (most often an aunt) and a later move into the home of a non-relative. The latter move was taken by the youth as the beginning of foster care, even if the agency had sanctioned the earlier plan.

<sup>5</sup>One foster home contains two sisters, both receiving out-of-home care.

<sup>6</sup>Over 60 percent of the foster parent interviews were conducted with both foster parents present.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. California Labour Statistics Bulletin, (June, 1969), p. 30.

<sup>8</sup>Historically, the doctrine of parens patriae has not extended beyond what the community considered "childhood".

CHAPTER III  
RESEARCH FINDINGS: AN ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES  
OF SUBSYSTEM MEMBERS

This chapter analyzes certain answers given by members of the three foster care subsystems. These answers concern certain of the youth's characteristics, adjustment, and present coping behavior as perceived by the youths, their foster mothers and social workers. As indicated earlier, the term "coping behavior" focusses on the broad repertoire of the youths' activities that are directed to the immediate environment. The principal areas of this study concern the youth as an individual (his health, happiness, strivings for independence and education) and as a recipient of out-of-home care in a foster home. In the latter section, questions were asked regarding the youth in the foster home and concerning his relationship with his social worker.

The choice of the particular variables measured in this study followed a review of studies that dealt with determinants of mental health or "sense of well-being" in individuals.

Jahoda listed six major approaches that had been used in attempting to categorize concepts relating to mental health. These are: (1) the attitude of the individual

toward himself; (2) the individual's life style and degree of growth, development, or self-actualization; (3) the quality of integration of the personality; (4) the autonomy of the individual which serves to single out his degree of independence from social influences; (5) the perception of reality; and (6) the mastery over environmental influences.<sup>1</sup>

Gurin, et al., considered not only the individual's own estimate of his well-being, but sought to explore ways in which the individual could evaluate his own well-being. He included in this evaluation the person's evaluation of his own happiness, absence of worries, and feelings of self-satisfaction.<sup>2</sup>

Meier assessed her respondents' sense of well-being using the criteria of (1) their having a feeling of adequacy in performing the functions for which they were responsible (as husband, bread-winner, etc.), and (2) their experiencing pleasure in carrying out activities in the various areas of adaptation. She believed both criteria to be influenced by the person's perception of the social norms and his incorporation of these norms as standards for his own behavior. Meier believed that feelings of adequacy and inadequacy might be based on comparison of the self with others.<sup>3</sup>

Four questions regarding the youths' characteristics and coping behavior in this study asked respondents to rate youths by comparing them to others the same age regarding:



1. How well does the youth get along with his/her peers?
2. How happy is the youth?
3. How would you rate the youth's present health?
4. Could the youth live independently now?

Analysis of the answers to these questions will precede further discussion of other principal questions.

Answers given to each question are analyzed in two ways:

(a) reporting the frequency of responses by the three foster care subsystems, and (b) indicating the amount and type of congruence present within each foster care system regarding answers to that particular question. The typology of congruence established is as follows:

- Type 1: The youth, his foster mother and social worker all gave the same answer to the question, (YFMSW).
- Type 2: The youth and his foster mother gave the same answer, the social worker answered differently, (YFM).
- Type 3: The youth and his social worker gave the same answer, the foster mother answered differently, (YSW).
- Type 4: The foster mother and social worker gave the same answer, the youth answered differently, (FMSW).
- Type 5: The youth, his foster mother and social worker all gave different answers to the same question, (INCONG).

Answers given by subsystem members regarding each youth's peer relationships, happiness, health, and readiness for independent living will be analyzed in turn.

### Rating of Youths' Peer Relationships

That individuals continually interact with a set of potentially-significant others whose opinions, expectations and evaluations are perceived and evaluated, has been appreciated for a considerable period of time.<sup>4</sup> To the adolescent, the peer group is of vital importance; it is to his peers that the adolescent looks for much psychological support.<sup>5</sup> The youths, foster mothers and social workers were asked their perceptions of how well each youth got along with others the same age.

#### (a) Frequency of Responses

The following table indicates the frequency of responses given by members of foster care subsystems regarding their perceptions of how well each of the forty-five youths got along with his peers.

TABLE 5

PERCEPTIONS OF HOW WELL YOUTHS GOT ALONG WITH PEERS			
<u>Rating</u>	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u> <sup>6</sup>
Well	36 (80%)	27 (60%)	15 (33%)
Average	4 ( 9%)	9 (20%)	19 (42%)
Poor	2 ( 4%)	5 (11%)	11 (24%)
Uncertain	3 ( 7%)	4 ( 9%)	--

Most youths in the sample rated themselves as getting along "well" with their peer group. Fewer foster mothers gave such a positive rating; fewer still social workers perceived the youths as getting along "well" with

others the same age.

Social workers tended to rate youths as "average" in peer relationships. Almost one-half the youths received an "average" rating by their social workers. Fewer foster mothers rated the youths' peer relationships as "average"; and only four youths gave themselves this rating.

More social workers rated youths' peer relationships as "poor", than did foster mothers or youths.

#### (b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

The following table indicates the frequency of congruent-incongruent responses given to the question regarding the youths' peer relationships by members of the forty-five foster care systems.

TABLE 6

#### FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT-INCONGRUENT RESPONSES

##### REGARDING YOUTHS' PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Typology of congruence-incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Foster care systems	14 (31%)	16 (36%)	3 (7%)	8 (18%)	4 (9%)

When the ratings given each youth were compared, there was congruence (YFMSW) in fourteen foster care systems; in twelve of these systems all members of each foster care system agreed the youth got along "well" with his peers.

In thirty-one systems there was not agreement in

ratings given regarding youths' peer relationships. In those systems where youths and the foster mothers were in agreement, and the social workers differed from them (Type 2), the workers in all but one case rated the youths lower; in only one foster care system did the social worker rate the youth's peer relationship higher than did the other two members.

In the few foster care systems where youths and social workers were congruent in the answers given, and the foster mother disagreed (Type 3), the foster mother gave a lower rating.

In ten of the twelve foster care systems where there was no congruence at all between the youths' ratings and those given by the foster mothers and social workers (Type 4), the youth gave themselves higher ratings than did other members of their foster care systems.

#### Rating of Youth's Happiness

Rather than attempt to determine possible indicators of the degree of happiness projected by the youths, foster mothers and social workers were asked directly "How happy is the youth?"; the youths were asked, "How happy are you?". Admittedly a difficult concept to measure, most members of foster care systems exhibited little difficulty in answering this question.<sup>7</sup> The social workers had most difficulty with the question; they tended to wish for definitions and other points of reference, and in giving an answer were more likely to put riders on their statements.

A four point rating scale was utilized to record

answers on the schedules. The youth could be perceived as "Very happy", "Happy", "Unhappy" or "Very unhappy". For purposes of the present analysis, however, answers were given on a two-point scale: "Happy" and "Unhappy". Perceptions must, by their nature, be subjective and little was gained in making the division between "Very happy" and "Happy"; the choice of one or the other of these terms was quite arbitrary and tended to be meaningless. Also, various subsystem members tended to find it more difficult to determine the degree of happiness although its presence or absence was reasonably easily reported.

#### (a) Frequency of Responses

The following table indicates the frequencies of responses given by subsystem members regarding the youths' happiness:

TABLE 7

#### FREQUENCIES OF RESPONSES REGARDING YOUTHS' HAPPINESS

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
Happy	40 (89%)	42 (93%)	37 (82%)
Unhappy	5 (11%)	3 ( 7%)	6 (13%)
Uncertain	-	-	2 ( 4%)

Youths, social workers and foster mothers all tended to see the youths as being happy rather than unhappy. Comparing answers between subsystems, it was seen that foster mothers were most likely to perceive youths as being happy

(or at least most willing to report this perception); youths tended to see themselves as being about as happy as their foster mothers reported. Fewer social workers perceived the youths as being happy than did foster mothers or youths.

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

The following table gives the types of congruence determined in the various foster care systems by answers to this question:

TABLE 8

CONGRUENT-INCONGRUENT RESPONSES REGARDING  
THE YOUTHS' HAPPINESS

Types of congruence- incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	32 (71%)	7 (16%)	2 (4%)	4 (9%)	-

All but one of the many systems in which there was congruence (Type 1--YFMSW) in ratings given, reported that the youth was "happy"; only one youth was rated "unhappy" by all three subsystem members.

In thirteen foster care systems there were various types of incongruence; but in no system was any member alone in his perception of a youth's happiness or unhappiness. In every system at least two of the three members were in agreement.

In those systems in which the youth and foster mother only agreed the youth was happy (Type 2) the social

worker tended to rate him as unhappy.

When the youth disagreed with ratings given by his foster mother and social worker, in every instance he perceived himself as being unhappy.

### Health

Members of each foster care system were queried regarding their perceptions of the youth's present health. As with other personal ratings (happiness, for example) no definition was offered and the respondent's subjective or objective perception, as stated, was recorded. The youths, generally, seemed proud to report their good health as did their foster mothers (who may have felt some reflected glory in being able to report their youth as being in good health). Social workers tended to prefer to separate their answers to enable them to report perceptions of the youths' (1) physical health and (2) mental health. They were requested to give one overall rating colored, of course, by their considering, in juxtaposition, mental and physical health.

#### (a) Frequency of Responses

Almost all youths perceived themselves, and were seen by their foster mothers and social workers, as being in excellent or good health. Members of each foster care subsystem rated only two youths as being in poor health.

The following table indicates the frequencies of answers given regarding the youths' present health.

TABLE 9

## FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES REGARDING YOUTHS' HEALTH

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
Excellent	23 (51%)	30 (67%)	22 (49%)
Good	20 (44%)	13 (29%)	21 (47%)
Poor	2 ( 4%)	2 ( 4%)	2 ( 4%)

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

The following table gives the types of congruence found in the various foster care systems regarding perceptions of the youths' health:

TABLE 10

## CONGRUENCE-INCONGRUENCE OF PERCEPTIONS

## OF YOUTHS' HEALTH

Types of congruence-incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	15 (33%)	8 (18%)	11 (24%)	10 (22%)	1 (2%)

In only one-third of the foster care systems was there congruence in the answers given this question. In all systems classified as Type 1 (YFMSW), there was agreement the youth was in excellent or good health.

In those systems where there was incongruence between the rating given by the social worker and that given by both the youth and his foster mother (Type 2--YFM), the social worker tended to give a lower rating.

The foster care system classified as Type 3 (YSW), where there was incongruence between the rating given by



the foster mother and that given by both the youth and social worker, included six systems where the foster mother rated the youth as less healthy, five in which she rated him more healthy.

When the youth's own rating differed from that given by both other members of his foster care system, he tended to see himself as less healthy; this was the situation in most systems classified as Type 4 (FMSW) or Type 5 (INCONG).

In general, where there was incongruence in answers given by one member of the foster care system and the other two, the one who differed most often perceived the youth as being less healthy.

As noted in the previous section, members of each of the three foster care subsystems rated two youths at present in poor health. Five youths (four females and one male) received these six poor ratings. In only one system did more than one member give a poor rating; these particular ratings were given by a seventeen year old girl and her social worker, both noting that she had "a bad lung", her foster mother rated her as being in good health. Two youths had epilepsy, but neither gave herself a poor health rating although one's social worker and the other's foster mother did so. One girl was very depressed at the time she was interviewed; although she gave herself a poor rating, neither her foster mother nor her social worker did, when they were interviewed later. The lone male in the group suffered from

a congenital spine defect; he did not rate himself in poor health although his foster mother did. This young man, however, felt he might have difficulty securing employment in the future as a result of his condition.

### Independent Living

It is an expectation in this culture that older adolescents will begin to prepare themselves to move away from their families and establish themselves independently in the community. Such moves are usually sanctioned by parents and they, too, take steps to enable the young person to move out on his own. To determine perceptions of the youths in this study being ready to live away from a family, members of the foster care systems were asked if each youth could, indeed, live independently now?

#### (a) Frequency of Responses

The following table gives the frequencies of responses to this question:

TABLE 11  
PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTHS' READINESS  
FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
Yes	34 (75%)	21 (47%)	M 19 (42%)
No	11 (24%)	22 (49%)	19 (42%)
Uncertain	-	2 (4%)	6 (13%)
No answer	-	-	1 (2%)

Many youths perceived themselves being quite capable of living independently. Only about half as many were seen as ready to be on their own by their foster mothers and social workers.

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

The following table gives the number of foster care systems classified into the type of congruence-incongruence found within them by answers given this question:

TABLE 12

FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT-INCONGRUENT PERCEPTIONS

REGARDING YOUTHS' READINESS FOR

INDEPENDENT LIVING

Types of congruence incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	14 (31%)	6 (13%)	7 (16%)	11 (24%)	7 (16%)

There was congruence in perceptions reported regarding the youths' present ability to manage independently in less than one-third of the foster care systems, Type 1 (YFMSW). In the majority of these there was agreement that the youth was ready to live independently; in three systems there was agreement that the youth was not ready to take this step.

In almost seventy percent of the foster care systems, answers given this question were incongruent between sub-system members.

In most of the six systems where only the youth and his foster mother agreed the youth could probably manage independently, the social worker stated that the youth was not yet ready to be on his own. In two cases the worker disagreed with the other two and said the youth could manage independently.

In seven instances the youth and social worker agreed in their perception, but the foster mother did not, Type 3. In three of these systems the foster mother stated the youth was not ready to be on his own; in four systems, that he could manage.

Eighteen youths were alone in their assessment of ability to manage independently (Types 4 -- FMSW and 5 -- INCONG). In fifteen of these systems, the youth felt he could manage, but received no support for this view from either his foster mother or social worker.

As far as the youths were concerned the most difficult thing about living independently had to do with budgeting and paying bills. Foster mothers and social workers tended to concur with this view; they were also concerned about the youths' level of maturity and ability to manage generally.

When older youths in the sample, those eighteen years of age and older, were separated from the total group the frequency distribution remained similar regarding their apparent readiness to live alone, but there were changes in congruence of answers given.

TABLE 13

## FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES CONCERNING OLDER

## ADOLESCENTS' READINESS FOR

## INDEPENDENT LIVING (n=26)

	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
Yes	20 (77%)	13 (50%)	12 (46%)
No	6 (23%)	12 (46%)	9 (35%)
Uncertain	-	1 (4%)	5 (19%)

TABLE 14

## FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT-INCONGRUENT PERCEPTIONS

## REGARDING OLDER YOUTHS' READINESS

## FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (n=26)

Types of congruence					
incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster					
care systems	11 (42%)	2 (8%)	4 (15%)	4 (15%)	5 (19%)

When Table 14 was compared with Table 12 it was seen that there was a higher frequency of Type 1 -- YFMSW congruence with the over-eighteen year old youths, than with the younger ones. Forty-two percent of the older youths gave answers that were similar to those given by other foster care system members, whereas only thirty-one percent of the total youth group gave congruent answers.

It would appear that although youths at younger ages perceived themselves as ready to manage independently, this view was not shared by other foster care system members

until the youth was older.

### Education

The youths in the sample gave the impression that they took their education seriously. Although some young persons used the interview to voice dissatisfaction with the school system, school subject matter and teaching staffs, positive factors pertaining to school were as often mentioned. As a group the youths saw themselves working about as hard as others in their classes, and doing about as well in achievement as their class-mates. Consistent studying, completing homework assignments and getting along with the teachers were all perceived as essential. The students appeared optimistic regarding their ability to complete high school successfully to enable them to graduate.

All youths in the sample were attending high school, university or college; to do so was one of the requirements for their continuing to receive financial assistance through the AFDC program. Continuing success in an education program was important to the youths for two major reasons:

- (1) they were aware of the need for an adequate education to enable them to compete successfully vocationally, and
- (2) the financial support presently received would terminate if they withdrew from school, college, university or other educational or vocational training program.

Two questions regarding education were asked members

of each foster care subsystem: (i) How well does the youth do in school? and (ii) Is the youth likely to be successful in a post-high school educational program?

How well does the youth do in school?

(a) Frequency of Responses

The following table indicates the frequency of responses given the question regarding the youths' school progress.

TABLE 15

PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTHS' PRESENT  
SCHOOL PROGRESS

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
Above average	7 (16%)	8 (18%)	10 (22%)
Average	32 (71%)	28 (62%)	22 (49%)
Below average	6 (13%)	8 (18%)	10 (22%)
No answer	-	1 (2%)	3 (7%)

In most foster care systems, the youths, foster mothers and social workers all rated the youth as doing at least as well in school as the others in his class. Although the particular youth perceived as being "above average" and "below average" may have differed between members of the subsystems, each subsystem tended to see as many youths in one of these categories as in the other. More youths stated that they were doing "average" than were given this rating by foster mothers; and more foster mothers gave this rating than social workers. Social workers rated

more youths as both below average and above average than did either youths or foster mothers.

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

The following table shows the frequency of congruent (Type 1) and incongruent (Types 2-5) responses given by members of the same foster care system regarding the youths' present school performance.

TABLE 16

FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT-INCONGRUENT RESPONSES  
REGARDING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Typology of congruence-incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	20 (44%)	5 (11%)	7 (16%)	9 (20%)	4 (9%)

Congruent ratings were given in less than one-half the foster care systems. Where there was congruence, there was most often agreement that the youth was "average" in school performance.

In twenty-five of the foster care systems there was not congruence in answers given this question.

In those systems where youth and foster mothers were in agreement (Type 2), members of these two subsystems tended to perceive the youth as "average" and the worker rated him lower.

Seven systems were classified as Type 3 (YSW). In these systems where the foster mother differed in her per-



ception from the other two system members, on four occasions she gave a lower rating; on three occasions, higher.

In those systems where the youth's perception was incongruent with that reported by his foster mother and social worker, youths tended to give themselves higher ratings.

Is the youth likely to be successful in a post-high school educational program?

To answer this question regarding education, subsystem members had to take into account the youth's ability, his vocational interests, and the nature of the present work-world that gives premium to higher education as a prerequisite to employment.

#### (a) Frequency of Responses

The following table gives the frequency of responses to this question:

TABLE 17

#### FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES REGARDING THE YOUTH CONTINUING HIS EDUCATION

	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
Yes	34 (75%)	37 (82%)	31 (69%)
No	9 (20%)	6 (13%)	6 (13%)
Uncertain	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	7 (16%)

Most members of the three foster care subsystems believed youths should continue their education after high

school, and would likely be successful in so doing.

Foster mothers were most likely to support youths' continuing their education; the youths, themselves, were not quite so definite. Social workers tended to be less positive that the youths should seek additional education.

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

The types of congruence and incongruence within the various foster care systems determined by answers to this question are shown in the following table:

TABLE 18

CONGRUENT-INCONGRUENT RESPONSES REGARDING YOUTHS  
CONTINUING THEIR EDUCATION

Typology of congruence-incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	27 (60%)	8 (18%)	2 (4%)	5 (11%)	3 (7%)

There was agreement (Type 1--YFMSW) in over one-half the foster care systems in answers given this question. In almost every case where there was congruence, there was agreement that the youth was likely to be successful and that he should continue his education. In only one foster care system was there agreement that the youth should not continue his education.

In most cases where the youth and his foster mother agreed (Type 2), it was felt that the youth should continue his education; the social worker did not agree with this

perception in these systems.

There were two instances where youth and social worker agreed, but the foster mother did not (Type 3).

There were eight foster care systems where the youth was alone in his view regarding himself and further education. In most of these systems the youth felt he should not enrol in a post-high school course.

### The Youth in Foster Care

#### The Youth in the Foster Home

Five questions were asked members of foster care systems regarding the youths in their present homes. These questions are:

How well is the youth managing?

What is the foster mother's usual method of discipline?

What is the youth's usual reaction to discipline?

How does the youth feel about doing the chores expected of him in the foster home?

About how many evenings a week does the youth spend away from home?

The purpose of this set of questions was to get a picture of the youth in his present living situation from the perspectives of the youth, his foster mother and social worker, and to determine the extent of congruence between perceptions within each foster care system.

How well is the youth managing in his present foster home?

#### (a) Frequency of Responses

The following table gives the frequency of responses

by members of foster care subsystems regarding their perceptions of how well each youth was doing in his present foster home.

TABLE 19

PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH'S ABILITY TO MANAGE  
IN PRESENT FOSTER HOME

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
Very well	32 (71%)	30 (67%)	24 (53%)
About average	11 (24%)	13 (29%)	14 (33%)
Not very well	2 ( 4%)	2 ( 4%)	4 ( 9%)
No answer	-	-	2 ( 4%)

Members of foster care subsystems were in agreement that the majority of the youths in the sample were managing "very well" in their present foster homes. Most youths questioned rated themselves as presently doing "very well" in their foster homes. Fewer foster mothers gave this rating and even fewer social workers (although it was, nevertheless, the rating given the majority of youths).

More social workers rated youths as managing "about average" than did foster mothers. Youths gave themselves this rating in only eleven foster care systems.

"Not very well" ratings were given twice as frequently by social workers than either foster mothers or youths. Although four youths received this rating from social workers, only two youths and two foster mothers rated youths as not managing very well in their present foster

homes.

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

The following table indicates the frequency of congruent-incongruent responses given the question regarding how well the youth was presently doing in his foster home.

TABLE 20

FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT-INCONGRUENT RESPONSES  
REGARDING YOUTH IN PRESENT  
FOSTER HOME

Typology of congruence-incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	23 (51%)	11 (24%)	6 (13%)	4 (9%)	1 (2%)

There was congruence in one-half the foster care systems regarding perceptions of how well youths were doing in their present foster homes. In nineteen foster care systems in which there was congruence, there was agreement that the youths were doing "very well".

In seven of the eleven systems where the social worker did not agree with ratings given by the youth and foster mother (Type 2), the worker gave a lower rating than the other two, and in two cases a higher rating. In two foster care systems the worker did not give a rating.

In six systems the foster mother did not agree with the rating given by both the youth and social worker (Type 3). On four occasions the foster mother gave a lower rating; and twice, a higher rating.

Five youths rated their managing in the foster home differently than did either their foster mothers or social workers. Of this number, three youths rated themselves as doing better, and two as managing less well than reported by foster mothers or social workers.

### Discipline

Two questions regarding discipline were asked members of foster care systems in the sample: (i) What is the foster mother's usual method of disciplining the youth? and (ii) What is the youth's usual reaction to discipline from foster parents?

What is the foster mother's usual discipline method?

#### (a) Frequency of Responses

The following table gives frequencies of responses to this question of subsystem members:

TABLE 21

#### PERCEPTIONS OF FOSTER MOTHERS' USUAL

DISCIPLINE METHOD			
<u>Method</u>	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
Talk things over	27 (60%)	21 (47%)	30 (67%)
Place restrictions	5 (11%)	4 ( 9%)	7 (15%)
Scold, nag	11 (24%)	6 (13%)	1 ( 2%)
Ignore youth or situation	-	11 (24%)	1 ( 2%)
Other	1 ( 2%)	1 ( 2%)	-
No answer	1 ( 2%)	2 ( 4%)	6 (13%)

The usual method of discipline, reported by members of foster care subsystems, was for the foster mother to talk over the situation with the youth. The frequency of the use of this approach indicated some awareness on the foster mothers' part that discussion produced more desired results than scolding, nagging or placing restrictions. However, almost twice as many youth reported that their foster mothers did tend to scold or nag them than foster mothers, themselves, reported. Some foster mothers stated that they attempted to ignore situations as a way of coping with them; no youths reported this. It may have been that the foster mothers "ignored" certain situations by not verbalizing their displeasure, although this feeling was communicated, nevertheless, to the youths.

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

Table 22 indicates the types of congruence-incongruence within the foster care systems regarding answers to this question:

Typology of congruence-incongruence	TABLE 22				
	CONGRUENCE OF RESPONSES REGARDING				
	DISCIPLINE METHOD				
	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	13 (29%)	7 (15%)	13 (29%)	7 (15%)	5 (11%)

There was congruence in less than one-third of the

foster care systems in answers given this question. Where there was congruence, the most frequent answer given was that the method used to discipline the youth was for the foster mother to talk over her concern with him.

In thirty-two systems incongruent answers were given. In systems where the social worker's answer differed from that given by the youth and his foster mother (Type 2), in three of them the worker did not agree that the foster parent talked over the situation with the youth, and in a similar number, the worker did not agree that scolding or nagging was the prime discipline method used.

Foster parents reported that they tended to ignore the youth's behavior in some systems although both the youth and social worker (Type 3) reported that the usual discipline method was to talk things over.

In those systems where there was complete incongruence in responses, Types 4 and 5, foster mothers said they ignored the situation, youths reported that their foster mothers nagged, and social workers believed that the youths and foster mothers usually talked things over.

The second question concerning discipline in the foster home was "What is the youth's usual reaction to discipline from his foster mother?".

#### (a) Frequency of Responses

The following table indicates frequencies of responses to this question:



TABLE 23

## FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES REGARDING YOUTHS'

## ATTITUDE TO DISCIPLINE

<u>Response</u>	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
Agreement	26 (58%)	21 (47%)	16 (35%)
Passive acceptance	9 (20%)	11 (24%)	10 (22%)
Rejection/resent- ment	9 (20%)	11 (24%)	9 (20%)
No answer	1 ( 2%)	2 ( 4%)	10 (22%)

The most frequent response given by members of all subsystems was that the youth agreed with his foster mother's action. More youths, however, gave this response than foster mothers. The latter, gave this response more frequently than social workers.

In general, youths tended to agree with their foster mothers regarding discipline. Youths, foster mothers and social workers perceived that eight out of every ten of the youths in the sample did accept their foster parents' attempts to discipline them.

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

The types of congruence-incongruence within the foster care system, in the sample are shown in the following table regarding answers given by members of each of the forty-five foster care systems:

TABLE 24  
 FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT-INCONGRUENT RESPONSES  
 REGARDING YOUTHS' REACTIONS  
 TO DISCIPLINE

Typology of congruence-incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	10 (22%)	13 (29%)	7 (15%)	5 (11%)	10 (22%)

Despite the fact that frequencies of responses between subsystems were consistent, there were only ten foster care systems that gave congruent (Type 1) answers to the question. In most instances where there was agreement in answers given by youths, foster mothers, and social workers, they concurred that the youth openly agreed with his foster mother's discipline.

Where there was incongruence in answers given, the youth and his foster mother were more likely to agree on his response to discipline (Type 2), than were the youth and social worker (Type 3).

In systems where the youths were alone in their perception (Types 4 and 5), they stated that their reaction to discipline was more positive (that they tended to agree with their foster mothers) than was reported by foster mothers or social workers.

#### Chores in the Foster Home

There is an expectation in many homes that the

whole family will be involved in some of the essential work entailed in family living. Eighty-five per cent of the foster mothers reported that they expected the foster youth to do some chores. Those commonly expected of youths in this sample were: taking care of their own rooms, helping with the dishes after meals, and housework in general.

Willingness to be involved in household tasks tended to reflect both expectations of foster mothers, and the youth's acceptance of responsibility. Acquiescent performance of chores might be expected to enhance feelings of responsibility in a youth whose contributions are appreciated. If carried to an extreme, however, such performance might reflect and perpetuate dependency or lack of autonomy.

Members of foster care systems were asked each youth's feelings about being involved with chores in the foster home.

(a) Frequency of Responses

The following table indicates frequencies of responses by various subsystem members regarding youths' attitudes to chores.

TABLE 25

PERCEPTIONS OF THE YOUTHS' FEELINGS ABOUT  
CHORES IN THE FOSTER HOME

	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster mothers</u>	<u>Social workers</u>
Resent chores	7 (15%)	-	8 (18%)
Happy to do them	37 (82%)	43 (96%)	33 (73%)
No answer	1 ( 2%)	2 ( 4%)	4 ( 9%)

The majority of members in each foster care subsystem agreed that youths nearly all appeared to be quite happy doing those chores expected of them. No foster mother indicated any youth as resenting being asked to do chores in the foster home. Both youths and social workers, however, gave a somewhat less positive account, although they agreed that at least seven of every ten youths seemed happy doing chores that the foster family expected.

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

Table 26 gives the types of congruence-incongruence determined in each foster care system by the answers to the question regarding the youths' usual attitudes to doing chores:

TABLE 26

CONGRUENCE OF RESPONSES WITHIN FOSTER CARE  
SYSTEMS REGARDING ATTITUDE  
TOWARD CHORES

Typology of congruence-incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	28 (62%)	8 (18%)	3 (7%)	4 (9%)	2 (4%)

There was Type 1 congruence in answers given in six out of ten foster care systems. All members of congruent systems agreed the youths seemed happy doing those chores expected of them.

Seventeen systems did not show congruence in per-

ceptions. The most common type of partial congruence found in these systems was a dyad composed of the youth and his foster mother (Type 2). In all of these, the social worker stated that the youth was somewhat resentful about chores, but both youths and foster mothers said there were no problems in this regard. In six systems the youth was alone in his perception (Types 4 and 5). Most often, he stated that he felt resentful regarding chores, but this was not reported by either his foster mother or social worker.

#### Time Away from Foster Home

Some youths had part-time employment and gave this reason for being away from their foster homes. Such employment tended to reflect a substantial degree of autonomy, and appeared to contribute to the youth's feelings of independence. Another reason for the youth's absence from his foster home was that he simply preferred to be somewhere else, primarily because he was not very happy at home; this, of course, was one reason why some youths in the sample were no longer living with their own families. Determining the amount of time the youth was usually away from his foster home in the evenings was felt to be one way of measuring the youths' feelings about his present foster home. One young man, for example, in answer to this question responded "As often as I can"; he was most unhappy in his placement and had already requested his social worker assist him in finding another place to live.

(a) Frequency of Responses

The following table gives the frequencies of time spent away from the foster home reported by youths, foster mothers and social workers; the second part combines the findings for clarification.

TABLE 27

## FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES REGARDING YOUTHS'

## TIME AWAY FROM FOSTER HOME

<u>Time Away</u>	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
None: youth almost always at home	1 ( 2%)	6 (13%)	5 (11%)
One evening	5 (11%)	7 (16%)	5 (11%)
Two evenings	15 (33%)	17 (38%)	11 (24%)
Three evenings	8 (18%)	9 (20%)	8 (18%)
Four evenings	9 (20%)	1 ( 2%)	3 ( 7%)
Five evenings	3 ( 7%)	3 ( 7%)	3 ( 7%)
Six evenings	1 ( 2%)	-	-
Seven evenings	3 ( 7%)	2 ( 4%)	-
No answer	-	-	10 (22%)
Two evenings or less	21 (47%)	30 (67%)	21 (47%)
Three evenings or more	24 (53%)	15 (33%)	24 (53%)

The most common answer given this question by youths, foster mothers and social workers was that youths

were away from their foster homes two evenings a week. In general, foster parents tended to state that the youths were away from the foster home less often than youths and social workers reported. The median number of evenings away, according to foster mothers, was two; the youths and social workers gave the median number as three.

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care System

The following table types the responses given this question within the various foster care systems:

TABLE 28

FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT-INCONGRUENT RESPONSES

REGARDING NUMBER OF EVENINGS

YOUTH IS AWAY FROM

FOSTER HOME

Typology of congruence-incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	11 (24%)	15 (33%)	9 (20%)	8 (18%)	2 (4%)

There was agreement in less than one-quarter of the foster care systems in answers given this question.<sup>8</sup> In systems where there was congruence, there tended to be agreement that the youth spent either two or three evenings away from home each week.

In one-third of the systems, youths and foster mothers were in agreement (Type 2), but the worker did not give the same response. The most frequent reason for the

difference was the worker simply did not know and could not give an estimate.

Type 3 systems in which the youth and social worker agreed, but the foster mother did not, showed that foster mothers tended to state youths were away from home less often.

In ten systems, youths' answers did not agree with those given by either the foster mothers or social workers. In most of these, youths stated they are away from home more often.

#### The Youth and the Social Worker

Two questions were asked members of each foster care system that focussed on youth-social worker interaction.

These questions were: How often does the social worker see the youth? and How has the social worker helped the youth?

#### How often does the social worker see the youth?

##### (a) Frequency of Responses

The following table gives frequencies of responses to the question regarding frequency of social worker-youth contacts.

The median frequency of contacts between the youth and his social worker was reported as monthly by foster mothers and social workers, less often by youths. Three times as many social workers stated they saw the youths "more often than monthly" than youths or foster mothers



reported. Over one-half the youths reported that they saw their workers "less often than monthly", although workers reported that they saw over one-half the youths monthly or more often than monthly.

TABLE 29  
PERCEPTIONS OF FREQUENCY OF WORKER-YOUTH  
CONTACTS

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
More often than monthly	3 ( 7%)	3 ( 7%)	10 (22%)
Monthly	17 (38%)	22 (49%)	15 (33%)
Less often than monthly	23 (51%)	20 (44%)	20 (44%)
No answer	2 ( 4%)	-	-

Part of the discrepancy in reporting may have been due to the fact that workers counted a visit to the foster home, during which time they saw the youth, as a contact with him; but youths tended to count only those interviews that were held with them, alone. Many youths gave the impression of wishing to see the workers by themselves, as well as in family-type interviews; they seemed to feel that, in the latter, the focus tended to be more on the foster mother than themselves.

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

The table that follows indicates the frequency of congruent-incongruent responses to the question regarding frequency of social worker-youth contacts:

TABLE 30  
 FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT-INCONGRUENT RESPONSES  
 REGARDING SOCIAL WORKER-YOUTH  
 CONTACTS

Types of congruence-incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	13 (29%)	10 (22%)	11 (24%)	6 (13%)	5 (11%)

Answers given this question were congruent in less than one-third of the foster care systems. Where there was congruence, the most frequent response was the the social worker saw the youth less often than monthly.

In systems where youth and foster parent were in agreement, Type 2, the social worker tended to state that he saw the youth more frequently than reported by the other two system members.

In six systems where the foster mother disagreed with the other two regarding frequency of social work contact (Type 3), the foster mother stated that contacts were more frequent; in five systems, less frequent. Similarly, in those systems where the youths were alone in their perceptions (Types 4 and 5), they stated that they were seen more often than other system members reported, as frequently as they said they had fewer contacts with their workers.

How has the social worker helped the youth?

(a) Frequency of Responses

Table 31 gives the frequencies to this question:

TABLE 31

PERCEPTIONS OF HOW THE SOCIAL WORKER

HAS HELPED THE YOUTH

	<u>Youths</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Social Workers</u>
Concrete help	18 (40%)	18 (40%)	20 (44%)
Counselling, advice	4 ( 9%)	13 (29%)	13 (29%)
Watch over situation	8 (18%)	3 ( 7%)	2 ( 4%)
Other	6 (13%)	1 ( 2%)	1 ( 2%)
Nothing of consequence	9 (20%)	10 (22%)	9 (20%)

Concrete help (such as giving information regarding community resources, helping with job-finding, and securing additional funds for special projects for the youths) was considered by members of all the subsystems to be the greatest contribution made by the social workers. There was agreement, also, in all subsystems that social workers had contributed really nothing of any consequence to one out of five youths. Although foster mothers and social workers perceived a substantial counselling role for the workers, few youths reported this as being significant for them.

(b) Congruence of Responses Within Foster Care Systems

The following table indicates the frequency of congruent-incongruent responses given the question regarding help that the youths have received from their social workers.

TABLE 32  
FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT-INCONGRUENT RESPONSES  
REGARDING HELP THE YOUTH  
HAS RECEIVED FROM  
HIS SOCIAL WORKER

Typology of congruence-incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Number of foster care systems	9 (20%)	12 (27%)	6 (13%)	10 (22%)	8 (18%)

Congruent answers were given this question in only one out of five foster care systems.

In eighty percent of the foster care systems there was not agreement in perceptions between members regarding how the social worker had helped the youth, or if he had helped at all. In half of these systems, the youth did not agree with either his foster mother or social worker with regard to benefits he had received from contact with the worker (Types 4 and 5).

Youths agreed with their foster mothers (Type 2) twice as often than with their social workers (Type 3) regarding help received from the workers.

A comparison of congruence-incongruence in answers

to two questions regarding the youth-social worker interaction is given in the following table:

TABLE 33  
CONGRUENCE-INCONGRUENCE IN FOSTER CARE  
SYSTEMS REGARDING YOUTH-SOCIAL  
WORKER INTERACTION

Typology of congruence-incongruence	1	2	3	4	5
Frequency of contacts	13 (29%)	10 (22%)	11 (24%)	6 (13%)	5 (11%)
Benefits of contacts	9 (20%)	12 (27%)	6 (13%)	10 (22%)	8 (18%)

To neither question were there congruent answers in even thirty percent of the foster care systems. Despite the fact that there was more likely to be congruence between youths and social workers (Type 3) with regards frequency of contacts, there was more likely to be agreement between workers and foster mothers (Type 4) concerning help the worker had given the youth. In answers given both questions, a substantial number of youths did not agree with responses given by either their foster mothers or social workers.

### Summary

#### Youth Characteristics

When the number of high ratings given youths regarding the four characteristics presented is compared, it is seen that:

a) youths tended to give themselves the greatest number of high ratings regarding positive peer relationships and readiness for independent living;

b) foster mothers gave the youths high ratings most often concerning their happiness and health;

and c) social workers were consistently most likely to give youths the greatest number of low ratings. In every case, the social workers perceived the youths, as a group, being less able to get along with peers, less happy, somewhat less likely to be in excellent health, and less ready for independent living, than rated by either youths or foster parents.

Congruent answers were most likely to occur in foster care systems regarding perceptions of the youths' degree of happiness. Youths and foster mothers were most likely to agree on how well the youth got along with his peer group. Although the most frequent type of congruence concerned only one-third of the sample, Type 1 was the most usual regarding perceptions of the youths' health. Youths tended to be alone (Types 4 and 5) in the answers they gave concerning readiness for independent living.

### Education

Comparing frequencies of responses given by subsystem members with regard to the youth's education, it was seen that:

a) frequencies were closer together than in the

previous section. There was less difference in frequencies of replies given questions dealing with education, than the youths' characteristics.

b) social workers were most likely to perceive the youths as doing above average work in school, and more likely to complete high school successfully than other system members.

c) foster mothers were most likely to feel that the youth would be successful in a post-high school training program and should continue their education.

d) in answers to both questions, youths tended to rate themselves as less able than did foster mothers or social workers.

Type 1 congruence was most often found in answers to the two questions; its frequency was sixty percent regarding post-high school programs and forty-four percent dealing with present school achievement.

#### Foster Home

Analysis of answers given questions regarding the youth in his present foster home showed that there tended to be limited congruence within foster care systems.

In responses to only one of the five questions was there substantial congruence. The question which afforded greatest congruence dealt with the youths' feelings about chores. Sixty-two percent of the foster care systems gave congruent answers to this question.

About one-half the foster care systems showed congruence in answers given the question regarding how well the youth is managing in his foster home.

In none of the responses to the other three questions was the amount of congruence greater than thirty percent.

Responses that had the least congruence dealt with the youths' usual reaction to discipline from foster mothers; there was congruence in less than one-quarter of the foster care systems in answers given that question.

In this chapter answers given to questions asked members of the foster care system in the sample, were reported. Responses to questions regarding the youths' characteristics and coping behavior were analyzed in two ways: (1) by reporting the frequency of responses, and (2) indicating the amount and type of congruence present within each of the forty-five foster care systems. Questions focussed on the youths as individuals, as students, and as members of foster care systems. In the next chapter the focus will be on similarities and differences between foster care systems whose members tend to give congruent answers, and systems whose members tend to give incongruent responses to questions discussed in this chapter.



### FOOTNOTES CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>Marie Jahoda, Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health (New York: Basic Books, 1958), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Gerald Gurin, et al., Americans View Their Mental Health (New York: Basic Books, 1960), p. x.

<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth G. Meier, "Former Foster Children as Adult Citizens," unpublished doctoral dissertation. (New York: Columbia University, New York School of Social Work, 1962), p. 389.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, William James, The Study of Psychology. Vol. I. (New York: Holt, 1890); Charles H. Cooley, Human Nature and Social Order (New York: Scribner's, 1902); George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

<sup>5</sup>Cf. James S. Coleman, The Adolescent Society (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1961), p. 312.

<sup>6</sup>In this, and succeeding tables, percentages have been rounded so that each column may not add to exactly 100%.

<sup>7</sup>One girl termed this question "a bummer" to indicate her response to being asked it.

<sup>8</sup>In measuring congruence, answers were classified as congruent if there was no more than one day's difference between them. That is, a foster care system was classified as congruent if two responses were the same, with the third response differing by only one day.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONGRUENT AND INCONGRUENT ASPECTS

Previous chapters presented the theoretical approach used in this study and described the study group composed of youths, foster mothers and social workers. Answers given by these members of foster care systems to questions asked of them, have been reported. One purpose of the present chapter is to determine similarities and differences between characteristics of subsystem members who tended to give congruent answers, with those members who gave replies that were not consistent with those given by the youth. A second purpose is to analyze further youths' perceptions of their behavior, comparing answers given by youths in congruent foster care systems with those in incongruent systems.

In each foster care system the type of congruence was determined by comparing answers given each of the parallel questions asked its members. By counting the number of each type of congruence-incongruence in answers given by the three subsystem members, it was possible to ascertain the most frequent type of congruence-incongruence in each system.<sup>1</sup>

Using this method to differentiate congruent from incongruent foster care systems, twenty-eight were consider-

ed congruent; answers given questions more often fell within Type 1 (YFMSW) classification than any other. Members of four foster care systems most frequently gave answers that showed agreement in perceptions between youths and foster mothers only (Type 2--YFM).<sup>2</sup> In no system was agreement between the youth and his social worker (Type 3) the most common type. Type 4 (FMSW) and Type 5 (INCONG) classifications were combined as in both of these youth was alone in his perceptions; members of thirteen foster care systems gave answers that were most often of this type.<sup>3</sup>

#### Similarities and Differences in Characteristics of Subsystem Members

A comparison of characteristics of members of the twenty-eight congruent foster care systems and the thirteen systems was completed to determine the presence of any significant differences between the two types of systems.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Youths

Comparisons of the age, sex, ethnic background, age at original placement, and length of time in present foster home are given.

#### Age

The following table gives the age distribution of youths in congruent and incongruent foster care systems:

TABLE 34  
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF YOUTHS IN CONGRUENT  
AND INCONGRUENT SYSTEMS

<u>Age</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
16	4 (14%)	4 (30%)
17	5 (18%)	3 (23%)
18	12 (43%)	5 (38%)
19	6 (22%)	1 ( 7%)
20	1 ( 3%)	-

The median age of youths in both congruent and incongruent systems was seventeen years. There was no significant difference in the number of youths under or over seventeen years of age in congruent and incongruent systems ( $z=1.21$ ;  $p>.05$ ). Age was not a factor in the likelihood of a youth being in one type of system rather than another.

This finding was contrary to expectations that followed a review of the literature regarding phases in adolescence. Blos, for example, writes of the eighteen to twenty<sup>year</sup> old as registering "gains in purposeful action, social integration, predictability, constancy of emotions, and stability of self-esteem" compared with younger youths.<sup>5</sup> Butler, reporting findings from the twenty-five year longitudinal Study of Health and Development of Normal Children conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health, separated adolescence into three stages: early (12-14), middle (14-16), and late (17-20). She, too, reported differences be-

tween youths in middle and late phases of adolescence.

Comparing the two phases, she reported youths in the latter as having:<sup>6</sup>

1. Greater identification with parents and family members.
2. Greater integration of personal standards and attitudes with those of the family.
3. Larger financial contribution to the family.
4. More sympathetic relationship with younger siblings.
5. Improved balance between satisfactions within and outside the family unit.
6. Much greater consideration of vocational interests, aptitudes, and opportunities.

The clearest evidence that a child is in the third phase of adolescence is that he has found ways to become accepted in an adult role within the family.

Given these statements regarding the older adolescent more likely to be in a consolidation phase following resolution of earlier personal and familial conflicts, it was expected that older youths would tend to be found in congruent systems, younger adolescents in incongruent systems. This, however, was not the finding regarding this particular group of adolescents. There was as much likelihood that younger youths would be perceived similarly as older ones.

A reason for the lack of increase in congruent perceptions regarding older adolescents appeared to stem from the fact that foster mothers and social workers did not perceive these youths as having reached the developmental level consistent with their age. Although chronologically, some youths were considered in the "late" phase of adolescents, their behavior and expectations of others in their

role set, did not approach Butler's third phase.

### Sex

The following table gives the sex distribution of youths in congruent and incongruent foster care systems:

TABLE 35  
SEX DISTRIBUTION OF YOUTHS IN CONGRUENT  
AND INCONGRUENT SYSTEMS

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
Male	9 (35%)	7 (55%)
Female	19 (65%)	6 (45%)

$z=1.21$ ;  $p>.05$

This study represented perceptions of foster mothers, primarily, rather than both foster parents, and social workers. It might have been expected that girls in foster care would more likely be found in congruent systems. This was not the finding, however; both social workers and foster mothers were as likely to have congruent perceptions of adolescents boys as girls. There was not a significant difference in the proportion of male to female youths in congruent and incongruent foster care systems.

### Ethnic Background

The following table gives ethnic backgrounds of youths in congruent and incongruent systems:

TABLE 36  
ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF YOUTHS IN CONGRUENT  
AND INCONGRUENT SYSTEMS

	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
Caucasian	15 (54%)	9 (69%)
Black or Negro	4 (14%)	1 ( 7%)
Mexican-American	5 (18%)	3 (23%)
Other	4 (14%)	-

A comparison of Caucasian youths in congruent and incongruent systems indicated there was not a significantly larger number in the latter. The same was true regarding youths of other than Caucasian ethnic backgrounds; there was no significant difference in the number of congruent rather than incongruent systems ( $z=.97$ ;  $p>.05$ ).

Youths in this study were rarely placed across ethnic lines. No Black or Negro youth was in a Caucasian home, and no Caucasian youth was in a Black or Negro home. However, a few Black and Caucasian youths were placed in homes where foster parents were either of mixed ethnicity, or there was an inter-racial marriage. Mexican-American youths tended to be placed more often in Caucasian homes than any other.<sup>7</sup>

### Placement History

Two factors pertaining to the youth's experience with foster care that might have had a bearing on his being in a congruent rather than incongruent system, were his age at first leaving his own home, and the length of time the youth had been living in the present foster home.

### Age at Original Placement

The following table indicates ages at which youths were first placed in out-of-home care.

TABLE 37  
AGE YOUTHS ORIGINALLY PLACED IN  
CONGRUENT AND INCONGRUENT  
SYSTEMS

<u>Age</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
Under 3	3 (11%)	3 (25%)
4-9	6 (22%)	-
10-15	10 (35%)	6 (45%)
16 and older	9 (32%)	4 (30%)

The median age at which youths in both groups first moved into out-of-home care was between ten and fifteen years. There was no significant difference in ages between the two groups. Age at which the youth first began foster care did not have significance to his being in a congruent or incongruent foster care system.



Had the difference in age at first placement been significant between the two groups, this might have been due to individuals becoming socialized to the foster role as a result of long experience with it, or first coming in contact with social agency personnel at an early, impressionable age. The foster role, however, may be sufficiently understood among youths, that little practice is needed if one ever has to fill it.<sup>8</sup>

#### Length of Time in Present Foster Home

It might have been expected that the longer a youth had been in a specific foster home, the better the chance would have been that his perceptions of himself would be similar to the foster mother's perceptions. However, if the youth was considered to be in a "stable placement" by his social worker, it might be that somewhat less attention would have been paid to him by the worker.

The following table indicates the length of time youths in congruent and incongruent foster care systems had lived in their present foster homes.

TABLE 38

#### LENGTH OF TIME IN PRESENT FOSTER HOME

<u>Time</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
Less than 12 months	14 (50%)	5 (38%)
One or two years	5 (18%)	3 (23%)
Three years or longer	9 (32%)	5 (37%)

As noted in Chapter II, most youths in the study had been in their foster homes for a comparatively short period of time. Although a larger percentage of youths in the congruent group had been in their present home for less than a year, the difference was not statistically significant, between youths in the two systems ( $z=.73$ ;  $p>.05$ ).

Youths who had been in their present foster home for longer periods of time were not more likely to be in congruent systems, than those who had lived for a shorter time with the same foster family. It might have been expected that the longer the youth was in the same family, the more likely he would have been in a congruent system. The foster care system however, included the social worker and was not considered congruent unless he, too, gave congruent responses. Social workers tended to spend less time with "long term" foster placements; believing that things were generally "going well" in such foster homes, the social worker may not have known the specifics of the situation, and so not given answers congruent with those given by the other two system members.

#### Foster Mothers

A comparison of data regarding certain personal characteristics of foster mothers and of their experience with giving foster home care, was carried out to determine the presence or absence of any differences between foster mothers in congruent systems and those in incongruent

systems.

a). Personal characteristics that might have a bearing on the foster mothers' perception of the youths in their homes include age, level of education, and number of own children.

### Age

The age of the foster mother was a possible predictor of her being congruent in her perception with the youth in her home. That is, younger foster mothers, those nearer the youth's own age, might be more likely to see him as he sees himself than foster mothers who are considerably older than the youth. The following table compares the ages of foster mothers in congruent foster care systems and those in incongruent systems.

TABLE 39  
AGE OF FOSTER MOTHERS IN CONGRUENT  
AND INCONGRUENT SYSTEMS

<u>Age</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
21-30	2 ( 7%)	1 ( 7%)
31-40	4 (14%)	3 (23%)
41-50	13 (46%)	4 (30%)
51-60	8 (28%)	4 (30%)
61 and over	1 ( 3%)	1 ( 7%)

$z = .75; p > .05$

The median age for both groups of foster mothers was between forty-one and fifty. A higher percentage of foster mothers in incongruent systems were in both the older and younger age ranges than foster mothers in congruent systems; this difference, however, was not statistically significant at the .05 level. There was little difference in the age distribution of foster mothers in the two groups. Age of the foster mother appeared to have little connection with the congruence or incongruence of any particular foster care system. There was not a significant difference between foster mothers who were, on the one hand, closer to the youth's own age or, on the other, similar in age to the youth's natural parents.

#### Education

The level of education attained by foster mothers was another possible factor in determining the likelihood of their perceiving the youths in ways similar to their perceptions of themselves. The following table gives the level of education of foster mothers in congruent and incongruent systems.

TABLE 40

#### EDUCATION OF FOSTER MOTHERS IN CONGRUENT AND INCONGRUENT SYSTEMS

<u>Education</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
Grade 9 or less	1 ( 3%)	4 (30%)
Grade 10-12	19 (66%)	8 (61%)
Some university or college	8 (28%)	1 ( 7%)

The median level of education attained by foster mothers in the two groups was similar--between Grades 10 and 12. However, Table 40 shows that there were two significant differences regarding education. A statistically significant higher number of foster mothers in the incongruent group left school earlier than those in the congruent group, and a higher number of foster mothers in the latter group attended university or college.

School achievement may be based on intellectual capacity, motivation, and opportunity. Some foster mothers in the incongruent group, with increased opportunity, might have gone further in school. Nevertheless, findings did show that, for whatever reasons, a significant number of foster mothers who had the most education were in congruent foster care systems.

In congruent systems, the foster mother's own school achievement appeared to be related to that of the youths who were themselves in their last years of high school or beginning higher education. The foster mother's own success in a similar endeavor appeared to increase her understanding of the youth.

#### Number of Own Children

Experience in child-rearing might be considered a possible factor in a foster mother's ability to see the youth as he sees himself, as a result of the amount of experience in raising her own children the foster mother

has had. A comparison of the numbers of own children raised by foster mothers in congruent and incongruent systems is given in the following table.

TABLE 41  
NUMBER OF OWN CHILDREN RAISED BY FOSTER  
MOTHERS IN CONGRUENT AND  
INCONGRUENT FOSTER  
CARE SYSTEMS

<u>Number</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
None	2 ( 7%)	1 ( 7%)
One	7 (25%)	7 (54%)
Two or three	9 (31%)	-
Four or more	10 (35%)	5 (38%)

Foster mothers in congruent foster care systems tended to have had more experience in raising their own children than those in incongruent systems. Two-thirds of the foster mothers in congruent systems were raising, or had raised, two or more of their own children; less than forty percent of the other foster mothers had so much experience. The median number of own children raised by mothers in the congruent group was two-three; in the incongruent group, one.

The difference of proportions test was applied these findings and showed a significant difference, at the .05 level, in the number of foster mothers in congruent and incongruent systems who had raised two or more of their own

children. Those in congruent systems had raised, or were raising, a larger number of own children ( $z=1.7$ ;  $p<.05$ ).

Practice, while it may or may not "make perfect", did have a significant positive effect on the ability of foster mothers to perceive youths in their care similarly to the way they saw themselves.

The meaning of raising children, to the mother, must be considered as well as the number she has raised. Other studies, have found that older children and youth appeared to manage better in homes where foster parents were older and higher on the social class scale; infants and younger children apparently doing better in homes where "motherliness" was more openly displayed, more often found in families of lower social class. In such families, the woman's main function was to be home "raising my babies", rather than finding fulfillment in the world of work away from home. That foster mothers of youths in this study assumed that role for both social and personal gratification is reinforced by the fact that one-third of them also worked outside the home as well as caring for foster children and youth.

b) A second cluster of characteristics that might have had a bearing on the foster mother's ability to see the youth similarly to the way he saw himself, concerned her experience with giving foster care. Three indicators that might have had special relevance were: (1) how long has the foster mother taken foster children?, (2) to how

many children has she been a foster mother? and (3) the number of other foster children presently in the home.

#### Length of Time as a Foster Mother

A factor in the determination of which foster mothers were most likely to see the youths as they saw themselves, might have been the amount of time each foster mother had been taking foster children into her home. The essential hypothesis was that foster mothers who had foster children or youth over a longer period of time would be more likely to perceive the present youth congruently with his own perception, than those who had little experience with fostering. The following table indicates the length of time foster mothers in the two groups had foster children.

TABLE 42  
LENGTH OF TIME FOSTER MOTHERS HAVE  
TAKEN FOSTER CHILDREN

<u>Time</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
Less than one year	5 (17%)	5 (38%)
One or two years	8 (28%)	2 (14%)
Three to nine years	8 (28%)	4 (30%)
Ten years or more	7 (25%)	2 (15%)

The median length of time foster mothers in the incongruent group had taken foster children was one or two years; the median length of time mothers in the congruent group had taken foster children was over three years. Over



half the foster mothers in the incongruent group had foster children for less than three years, but over half the foster mothers in the congruent group had taken foster children for longer than that. This difference, however, was not statistically significant at the .05 level;  $z = .64$ ;  $p > .05$ .

The length of time the foster mother had acted in that role was not necessarily related to her ability to perceive the youth in ways that were similar to those in which he perceived himself. The longer she had taken foster children, the more likely she may have been to see the youth in the same way he saw himself.

#### Number of Foster Children

A corollary predictor to the previous one is the number of children and youths that have been placed in the foster home. Experience gained in providing foster care to a number of individuals might have been a potential indicator of a foster mother's ability to see the youth as he perceived himself.

The following table gives the number of foster children that have been placed in the homes in this study.

TABLE 43

#### NUMBER OF FOSTER CHILDREN THAT HAVE BEEN PLACED IN CONGRUENT AND INCONGRUENT FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS

<u>Number</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
One	11 (39%)	6 (46%)
Two	3 (10%)	2 (5%)
Three or more	14 (50%)	5 (38%)

Foster mothers in the congruent group tended to have had more foster children and youths placed with them than foster mothers in the other group. The difference in proportions between homes which had served on foster child or youth, and those which had been used to place two or more, was not statistically significant, however,  $z=.84$ ;  $p>.05$ .

The number of youths, or children, placed in the foster home did not appear to have a relationship to the foster mother's ability to see the youth as he saw himself. Foster mothers who had more foster children did not necessarily tend to be congruent in their perceptions with the youths more often than those who had fewer foster children placed in their homes.<sup>9</sup>

#### Other Foster Children Presently in the Home

As well as determining earlier experience with fostering, foster mothers were also asked if there were, at the time, other foster children in the home besides the youths who were of particular concern to this study.

The following table indicates the number of homes in which other foster children were currently placed.

TABLE 44

#### OTHER FOSTER CHILDREN IN CONGRUENT AND INCONGRUENT FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS

<u>Number</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
None	15 (53%)	7 (54%)
One	4 (14%)	4 (30%)
Two or more	9 (31%)	2 (15%)

Slightly less than one-half the foster mothers in both groups did have other foster children presently staying with them. There was no significant difference between foster homes with other foster children and those without and the likelihood of congruence.

The presence of other foster children in the home did not necessarily make it more likely that the foster mother would tend to perceive the youth in the home in a similar way to which he perceived himself.

Three foster homes each contained two youths in this study. Of the six foster care systems that these three foster homes represented, four were classified as congruent; none, incongruent. The remaining two were examples of Type 2 (YFM) systems. The presence of another foster youth about the same age appeared significant to the likelihood of congruence, rather than another foster child considerably younger.

#### Social Workers

Age and sex of the social worker were two possible determinants of his or her perceiving the youth as he saw himself within the foster care system. The length of time the worker had known a particular youth, and the frequency of his contacts with the young person, were two other possible predictors of his perception being similar to the youth's.

Age

Age of the social worker was seen as having a possible connection with his ability to see the youth in a way similar to the youth's perception of himself. It was felt that younger social workers might more likely be found in congruent foster care systems; older workers, in incongruent systems.

The following table gives ages of workers in both congruent and incongruent systems.

TABLE 45

AGE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN CONGRUENT AND  
INCONGRUENT SYSTEMS

<u>Age</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
20-29	13 (46%)	8 (62%)
30-39	5 (18%)	4 (31%)
40-49	5 (18%)	-
50-59	5 (18%)	1 ( 7%)

The highest frequency of social workers in both groups was in the twenty to twenty-nine year range. However, a much higher percentage of workers in the incongruent group were under thirty years of age, and almost all of them were under forty; the median age was twenty to twenty-nine. In contrast to this, the median age was thirty to thirty-nine for social workers in congruent systems and over one-third of them were more than forty years old. This latter age difference of workers was found statistically significant beyond the .05 level ( $z=2$ ;  $p<.05$ ).

Although the age of the foster mother did not prove significant, the age of the social worker could be considered a predictor of his being in a congruent or incongruent foster care system. Older social workers were significantly more often represented in congruent systems; younger workers, in incongruent systems.

#### Sex of the Social Worker

The social worker's sex was a possible determinant of his being in a congruent or incongruent foster care system. The following table gives the sex of workers in congruent and incongruent foster care systems.

TABLE 46

#### SEX OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN CONGRUENT AND INCONGRUENT FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
Male	11 (39%)	5 (38%)
Female	17 (61%)	8 (62%)

From this table it was observed that the sex of the social worker made no significant difference to the likelihood of his or her being in a congruent or incongruent foster care system.

#### Length of Time Worker has Known Youth

A possible predictor of the likelihood of the worker's perception of the youth being similar to the youth's own perception, might be the length of time the social worker had known the youth.

The following table gives frequencies of the time social workers in congruent and incongruent groups have known the youth in the study.

TABLE 47  
TIME SOCIAL WORKERS HAVE KNOWN YOUTHS IN  
CONGRUENT AND INCONGRUENT SYSTEMS

<u>Length of Time</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
Less than one year	18 (65%)	10 (77%)
One to two years	8 (29%)	1 ( 7%)
More than two years	2 ( 7%)	2 (15%)

As noted in an earlier chapter, most social workers had known youths in the study for a comparatively short period of time. The possibility of the worker having known the youth for longer than one year appeared greater in the congruent systems. More social workers in congruent systems had known the youth for at least a year, than in incongruent systems. Despite the lack of similarity, the difference was not sufficient to be statistically significant at the .05 level when a comparison was made between the proportion of workers who had known the youths for less than one year and those who had known them longer.

Findings indicated that neither the length of time the youth had been with a particular set of foster parents, nor the duration of contact with a particular social worker, were significant to his being in a congruent foster care system. Length of time, the most easily measured variable, was not adequate to explain presence or absence of congru-

ence in perceptions within foster care systems.

### Frequency of Social Work Contacts

The number of times each month the worker usually saw the youth might be considered an indicator of the likelihood of his perceiving the youth in a way similar to that in which he perceived himself. That is, the more frequent the contacts, the more likelihood of there being congruence in the perceptions of youth and social worker.

The following table gives the frequency of contacts by social workers with youths in the congruent and incongruent groups, as reported by workers.

TABLE 48.

#### FREQUENCY OF SOCIAL WORKER-YOUTH CONTACTS

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
More often than monthly	4 (14%)	5 (38%)
Monthly	12 (42%)	2 (15%)
Less often than monthly	12 (42%)	6 (46%)

Most youths in both groups were seen monthly or less often, however, a higher percentage of youths in the congruent group were reported to be seen this frequently. A larger percentage of youths in the incongruent group were reported as seen more often than monthly, than in the congruent group. The difference in these latter percentages was significant at the .05 level ( $z=1.7$ ); social workers who saw youths less frequently were more likely to perceive them in ways similar to which they perceived themselves.

It may have been that social workers who had more frequent contacts, did so at crises points in the youths' lives when decisions were having to be made and worked through, so that it was more difficult to ascertain their true feelings about themselves. Social workers who saw youths less often may have taken the "long view" and saw the youth in larger perspective, not clouded by immediate concerns. Whatever the reason or reasons, findings of this study did indicate a negative relationship between frequency of social worker-youth contacts and the likelihood of congruence.<sup>10</sup>

### Youths' Perceptions in Congruent and

#### Incongruent Systems

#### Happiness

Frequencies of responses by various subsystem members regarding the youth's apparent degree of happiness were presented in an earlier chapter. The focus here is on the youths' perceptions of themselves and the determination of any difference in responses given by youths in congruent and incongruent foster care systems.

The following table indicates responses given by youths in the two groups regarding their happiness:



TABLE 49  
RESPONSES GIVEN BY YOUTHS IN CONGRUENT AND  
INCONGRUENT SYSTEMS REGARDING  
THEIR HAPPINESS

	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
Happy	27 (97%)	9 (69%)
Not happy	1 ( 3%)	4 (30%)

This Table shows that a significantly higher percentage of youths in the congruent group gave themselves a "happy" rating than did those in the incongruent group.

Managing in Present Foster Home

A comparison was made of youths' perceptions of how well they were managing in their present foster homes, between those in congruent systems and incongruent ones. The following Table gives this comparison:

TABLE 50  
RESPONSES GIVEN BY YOUTHS IN CONGRUENT AND  
INCONGRUENT SYSTEMS REGARDING HOW WELL  
THEY WERE MANAGING IN PRESENT  
FOSTER HOME

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Congruent</u>	<u>Incongruent</u>
Very well	23 (82%)	6 (46%)
Average	5 (17%)	6 (46%)
Not very well	-	1 ( 7%)

A significant number of youths in congruent foster care systems rated ability to manage in their present foster home much higher than those in incongruent systems ( $z=2.31$ ;  $p<.05$ ). Over one-half the youths in incongruent systems rated their managing as "average", but the majority of youths in congruent systems gave themselves "very well" ratings.

Answers to both questions regarding own personal happiness and managing in present foster home, showed that a significant number of youths in congruent systems did see themselves as both happier and managing better. This finding established the main hypothesis of this study to be correct: that the congruence-incongruence of expectations and perceptions as communicated to him by members of the youth's role set will have direct bearing on his perceptions of himself within the foster care system. A significantly higher number of youths in congruent systems did see themselves as happier and managing better than youths in incongruent systems.

#### Summary

Percentage differences were often found in frequencies of characteristics of subsystem members in congruent and incongruent systems. However, when a difference of proportions test was applied, few significant differences between the two systems at the .05 level were encountered.

### Youths

There were no significant differences in characteristics of youths in congruent and incongruent systems.

Characteristics analyzed included: age, sex, ethnic background, age at original placement and time in present foster home.

### Foster Mothers

There were no significant differences regarding the foster mother's age, length of time as foster mother, or presence of other foster children in the home. There was, however, a significant difference in the number of own children; foster mothers in congruent systems had a significantly larger number of own children. Also, foster mothers in congruent systems tended to have had more formal education.

### Social Workers

The sex of the worker and length of time he or she had been assigned to the youth did not differ significantly between congruent and incongruent systems. Social workers over forty years of age, however, were significantly more often in congruent systems. A significant number of social workers who had contact more often than monthly (their own estimate) were in incongruent foster care systems.

Although there was no significant difference in characteristics of youths in the two systems, there was a significant difference in answers youths gave regarding

their perceptions of their own happiness and how well they were managing in the foster home. To both of these questions, significantly larger number of youths in congruent systems gave more positive responses.

#### FOOTNOTES CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>Two examples will clarify the method used:

(i) Members of Peter's foster care system gave answers that were typed as follows: Type 1 (YFMSW)--9 answers, Type 2 (YFM)--1 answer, Type 3 (YSW)--2 answers, Type 4 (FMSW)--1 answer, and Type 5 (INCONG)--1 answer. His foster care system members were, thus, more likely to give answers that were congruent (Type 1--YFMSW) than incongruent; this is considered to be a congruent foster care system. (ii) Ann's foster care system members gave answers that were typed as follows: Type 1 (YFMSW)--1 answer, Type 2 (YFM)--2 answers, Type 3 (YSW)--3 answers, Type 4 (FMSW)--4 answers, and Type 5 (INCONG)--4 answers. In this example more answers are typed as 4 and 5 than any other; this is considered to be an incongruent foster care system.

<sup>2</sup>Characteristics of these foster care systems are given in Appendix E.

<sup>3</sup>Determination of twenty-eight congruent and thirteen incongruent foster care systems out of a total of forty-five systems proved significant at .05 level ( $x^2$ ).

<sup>4</sup>The t test for difference of proportions was utilized to determine significance at the .05 level.

<sup>5</sup>Peter M. Blos, On Adolescence (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), 128.

<sup>6</sup>Ruth M. Butler, "Mothers' attitudes toward the social development of their adolescents," Social Casework, 36 (June, 1956), 286.

<sup>7</sup>An example of the latter was Ramon; his father deserted the family and his mother was returned to Mexico. He was presently staying in the United States as educational opportunities were better for him; he visited his mother in Tijuana every four to six weeks.

<sup>8</sup>There is further discussion of significance of age at placement to later development, in Chapter V.

<sup>9</sup>In Chapter V there is further discussion of this finding regarding the number of other foster children in the home.

<sup>10</sup>There is further discussion of youth-social worker contacts in Chapter V.

## CHAPTER V

### FOSTER HOME CARE AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which there was congruence in perceptions within forty-five foster care systems. Each system was composed of a youth, his foster mother, and the social worker responsible for placement supervision. The focus of these perceptions was on the adjustment and coping behavior of the youths.

Assumptions on which this study was based were:

(1) foster home care was considered a social system; (2) the three subsystems forming the nucleus of the foster care system were the youth, his foster mother, and the social worker representing the placement agency; and, (3) congruent perceptions would tend to be present in functional, rather than dysfunctional, systems.

The essential hypothesis that this study posed was that the congruence-incongruence of expectations and perceptions communicated by members of the youth's role set would have direct bearing on his perceptions of himself within the system. If this hypothesis were correct, determination of characteristics of congruent system members would

contribute to understanding foster care and assist the placement agency in its search for "best" homes for adolescents needing out-of-home care.

To test the hypothesis, interviews were held with members of the forty-five foster care systems and schedules completed. Questions concerned personal characteristics, experience with foster care, and perceptions of the youths' present adjustment and coping behavior.

Previous chapters presented the study findings with regard to: characteristics of subsystem members, answers to questions asked of them, and types of congruence-incongruence within foster care systems determined by answers given. Findings concerning differences between foster care systems that tended to give congruent answers and those that tended to give incongruent answers were also reported.

#### Responses to Questions and Congruence within Systems

Answers given by subsystem members regarding youths' characteristics, present adjustment and coping behavior were analyzed in two ways: (1) reporting frequencies of responses, and (2) indicating the amount of congruence-incongruence within each foster care system as determined by these answers. A typology of congruence-incongruence was established for foster care systems.

#### Characteristics

Analysis of ratings indicated that youths tended to give themselves the greatest number of high ratings regard-



ing their ability to get along with peers, and their readiness for independent living. Foster mothers gave high ratings most often concerning the youths' health and happiness. Social workers were less likely to give high ratings for any of these characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Within individual foster care systems, congruence in answers was most likely to occur regarding the youths' degree of happiness and present health. Foster mothers and youths most often agreed in descriptions of peer relationships. Answers tended to be incongruent that dealt with the youths' readiness for independent living; only the youths tended to see themselves as ready to be on their own.

#### Education

Answers given to questions regarding education showed youths tended to rate themselves as less able than reported by foster mothers and social workers. Congruent answers were given in only about one-half the foster care systems concerning youths' present level of school achievement or the advisability of taking post-high school courses.

#### Foster home

Responses to questions regarding the youth in his present foster home showed that youths tend to be perceived as managing well. Social workers, however, tended to give less positive assessments than did youths or foster mothers. "Talking things over" was reported as the most common method

utilized by foster mothers in handling matters of discipline; most youths were reported as accepting their foster mothers' discipline. Chores are usually considered part of living in any home, foster homes included. Most youths were reported as completing chores without undue resistance.

Youths tended to be away from their foster homes on two evenings each week. Congruence regarding answers given these questions was most often found concerning chores and how well the youth was managing. Answers tended to be incongruent to questions relating to discipline method and the youth's reaction to it, as well as the number of evenings the youth was absent from his foster home.

#### Social Worker

Youths tended to report seeing the social worker less often than was reported by workers and foster mothers. One in five members of each foster care subsystem was of the opinion that the present worker had done nothing of consequence to help the youth. This was due, in some part, to the fact that many workers quite recently changed assignments and had little contact with the youth. Where workers were reported as being of assistance, the most usual type of help was of concrete nature. To both questions regarding the youth and his worker, there was incongruence in seventy percent of the answers given within foster care systems.

### Conclusion

Responses given by youths in congruent systems tended to differ from those given by youths in incongruent systems regarding perception of their own happiness and how well they were managing in the present foster home. Youths in congruent systems perceived themselves as both happier and managing better in their foster homes.

These findings served to establish the hypothesis that the congruence-incongruence of expectations and perceptions communicated by other members of the youth's role set, would have direct bearing on his perception of himself within the foster care system. Youths in congruent systems were most likely to perceive themselves as happier and managing better within those systems.

Knowledge of characteristics of individuals most likely to be in congruent foster care systems should contribute to the placement agency's decision-making process regarding "best" homes for adolescents in need of alternative living arrangements. Characteristics, as determined in this study, of "best" (i.e. congruent rather than incongruent) foster care systems follows.

### Congruent and Incongruent Foster Care Systems

Foster care systems were grouped according to the most usual type of congruence found in answers to questions regarding the youths. Twenty-eight systems were regarded as "congruent"; answers given by members tended more often

to be congruent than incongruent. Thirteen systems were classified as "incongruent" as answers tended to not be in agreement between system members.<sup>2</sup> A summary of characteristics of subsystem members, in congruent and incongruent systems, follows.

### Youths

Youths in the study ranged in age from sixteen to twenty years; the median age was eighteen. There were almost twice as many girls or young women in the sample than boys or young men. Most youths were of Caucasian background although Mexican-American and Black or Negro youths were represented. Scholastic standing ranged from youths in Grade 9 to second year university; the median was Grade 12.

Age at original placement in out-of-home care ranged from under three to eighteen; the median age was early adolescence. Youths in the study had received foster care for less than one year, to more than fifteen years; the median length of time youths had been in care was between three and four years. Most youths had been in their present foster homes between one and three years.

Youths in congruent foster care systems tended to present some differences in characteristics from those in incongruent systems, but none that were statistically significant at the .05 level.

The possible relationship between age of leaving one's own home and future success in a foster home or adult

life has been a path of inquiry for many studies. Parker and Trasler, in two British studies, reported a decline in the rate of successful fostering as age at separation from the natural mother increased; this concurs with findings of this study.<sup>3</sup> Meier's study, conducted in the United States, predicted that individuals who had been placed in foster care prior to attaining their fifth birthday, would achieve lower ratings in social effectiveness as adults. Her findings, however, did not support this prediction; those who had entered foster care prior to their fifth birthday did not achieve lower ratings when compared with others placed after five years of age.<sup>4</sup> No significant difference was found in this study regarding age at which youths first began foster care and presence in congruent or incongruent foster care systems.

#### Foster Mothers

Foster mothers ranged in age from the mid-twenties to mid-sixties; the median age was between forty-one and fifty. Over one-half the foster mothers had been married for longer than twenty years. They have had considerable experience with child-rearing; the median number of own children already raised, or still at home, was three. Almost half the group had other foster children in the home, as well as the youth who was the focus of this study.

Some significant differences were apparent in characteristics of foster mothers in congruent compared with

incongruent systems. Foster mothers in the former had more child-rearing experience than foster mothers in incongruent systems. This finding concurs with Colvin who noted that "most adequate" foster parents had more children of their own than did "least adequate", in his study.<sup>5</sup> An effect of having had experience with own children prior to being successful with fostering is suggested by Kadushin when he states that, while foster mothers have "a need for satisfaction in contact with children, such needs, having been met in their own life experience, are not likely to be so imperious and urgent as to make for heavy demands on the foster child".<sup>6</sup>

The age and sex of the foster mother's own children in the home have been found significant in determination of "success" of placements.<sup>7</sup> The element of competition between "own" and "foster" children or youth did not appear to be a factor in this study. Competition may be minimized by the fact that, in many foster homes, "own" children had left the home prior to the foster youth's arrival. Indeed, one woman reported that her youngest son made her promise, when she expressed the wish to be a foster mother, that she wait until he had left home. Another foster mother said she began fostering "when my daughter got married". A third foster mother told the interviewer that her son, now married, "talked her out" of adopting a child, so she began taking foster children, instead.

When a sibling of the foster child accompanied him to the home, or when he was placed with another foster child, placements have tended to be more successful.<sup>8</sup> In the present study, it was not found statistically significant that foster mothers in congruent foster care systems were more likely to have other foster children in the home; thus, support cannot be given earlier findings. However, in the three families where two youths in the study were placed, four of the six systems were classified as congruent; two were Type 2 (YFM).

The age of the foster mother, in this study, appeared to make no significant difference to the likelihood of her being in a congruent system. Previous studies have also given inconclusive findings regarding the age of foster mothers deemed "more successful" or "more adequate". The findings of each study have given preference to foster mothers of a certain age, but there has been disagreement between studies regarding what that age should be.<sup>9</sup>

Studies of foster parents tend perceive "blue collar" families as best.<sup>10</sup> Foster parents, whose income was enhanced by the presence of foster children in the home have been reported as doing well with them. Foster families in this study have incomes from below \$3,000 to more than \$13,000; the family median income for both congruent and incongruent systems was \$7,000-\$9,000. No significant difference was determined regarding foster family income and congruence. Allied to income, however, is education.

A significant number of foster mothers in congruent systems had received more formal education than those who were not.

### Social Workers

Social workers responsible for foster home supervision of the youths ranged in age from late twenties to early fifties; the median age was between twenty and twenty-nine. Half the social workers in the study were male; one-half, female. Almost all social workers were of Caucasian background; five were Negro and one, Mexican-American. Most workers were married; many had children of their own. All workers attended university for at least four years and received baccalaureate degrees; almost one half had post-graduate education in social work, six held a Master of Social Work degree.

Older social workers were more likely to be members of congruent foster care systems than younger ones. Frequency of contacts appeared to have no significance on the likelihood of systems being congruent rather than incongruent, neither was the length of time the worker has known the youth positively correlated with congruence.

No studies of characteristics of more, compared with less, effective social work practitioners could be located. In broader studies of foster care, however, the impact of frequent changes in agency personnel has been noted. A 1966 study carried out in Wisconsin, for example, stated that as a result of staff turnover, "about one-third



of the (foster) mothers said there have been times when they didn't know who their caseworker was".<sup>11</sup>

The significance of staff turnover for the child or youth, as well as the foster mother, has been reported in the literature. Moynihan found, as did the present study, that caseworker replacement rate was higher than foster family replacement. His report of a study of twenty older children living in foster homes, in computing a median, showed they had lived in the same foster home from the date of placement for eight years, but had a different caseworker every year.<sup>12</sup>

Flynn, alluding to the number of changes in workers during the young person's foster care experience, stated that "it is clear . . . the result is an intensification of the child's mistrust of any interpersonal relationship".<sup>13</sup> The findings of this study did not support the breadth of Flynn's statement. It was only the social worker-youth relationship that appeared impaired, not all interpersonal relationships.

#### Application of Social Systems Analysis to Study Findings

Social system theories, with their focus on relations between parts of the system, appear admirably suited to be utilized as a framework for understanding foster home care. The function of the foster care system--the provision of suitable alternative living arrangements

within which the individual will grow and develop--and its nucleus (youth, foster mother and social worker) are easily identifiable.

Given the three theoretical models of social systems presented in Chapter I, those of Parsons and Buckley appeared to have potential relevance for this study.

Parsons, it will be remembered, takes the position that the stability of social systems largely derives from conformity of role partners to one another's expectations. Congruent expectations are expected to occur when equilibrium has been established within the system. The maintenance of this equilibrium is important to the system and, without it, the system flounders in its ability to perform the functions for which it was established.

Buckley in his perception of a social system, puts emphasis on the system needing to have ability to cope with change, rather than merely readjust to an equilibrium. To Buckley, the dynamic within the system that allows it to cope with difference, and to change accordingly, separates social systems from other kinds.

Both Parsons and Buckley focus on the study of relations within components of the system. It is these relationships that tie the system together and provide a method whereby one may look at the system as a unit of activity. Buckley has defined a system as "a whole which functions as a whole by virtue of the interdependence of its parts".<sup>14</sup>

One aspect of the interdependence of parts of a system is perceptions members have of each other's, and their own, role performance. There are a variety of status positions within any system; role performance refers to the individual's enactment of his particular status.

This study examined perceptions of role performance regarding members of the foster care system with special attention being paid to how the youth, who was at present living in a foster home, was perceived and saw himself.

Application of social systems analysis to this study's findings had special relevance regarding:

(1) The effects of tension, produced by membership changes, on the system.

(2) Impact on the functioning of the system of differences in perceptions among system members.

(3) Perceived roles of foster mothers and social workers by system members.

(1) The Effect of Tension, Produced by Membership Changes, on the System

Parsons' model of a social system leads to the expectation that any change in membership within the system results in a state of disequilibrium and inadequate functioning. Buckley, on the other hand, writes of the inevitability of change and variety in social systems, and need for maintenance of "an optimum level of tension in the system".<sup>15</sup>

This study demonstrated that the length of time the youth had lived in the foster home had no significant relationship to the likelihood of congruent youth-foster mother perceptions. The length of time the worker had known the youth had also neither positive nor negative significance to his perception being congruent with those of other system members.

The finding that more recently placed youths were not necessarily less likely to be in congruent foster care systems, indicated that it may be during the first weeks of placement that his role-set is most attuned to the youth as a unique individual. Tension surrounding introduction of the youth into a new foster home, appeared to enhance the system's functioning, rather than impair it. Introduction to the system of the foster mother, whether it was the first out-of-home placement or subsequent, may have been a dynamic that increased effective functioning of the system.

In the social work literature, this early time in a new placement is often referred to as "the honeymoon" period.<sup>15</sup> During this time the child or youth is expected by system members, to be on his best behavior. This gives way to a period of testing, during which the child or youth "probes the limits of behavior foster parents will accept",<sup>17</sup> and when a plea for reassurance is expressed or acted out that he really is wanted in that particular home.

It is during this second period, Charnley writes, "that both he and the foster parents particularly need their social worker. It is then . . . that repressed feelings are closest to the surface and most easy to get at".<sup>18</sup> By the time this second period arrives, if the social worker has had contact with the youth for a long enough time, then he is more likely than previously to be in agreement with the youth in his perceptions. The foster mother, however, having become used to the youth behaving in one way, is more likely to have difficulty in remaining congruent in her perceptions with him.

It is not until the young person and his foster family have successfully coped with this second phase, that Charnley considers him to be "really placed".<sup>19</sup>

The impact of placement (and replacement) on children, and the need for careful decision-making regarding placements, are both well-documented in the social work literature.<sup>20</sup> This knowledge may help explain increased congruence early in placement. Social workers might have felt comfortable discussing the first phase of new placements, rather than the second.

The fact that when one member of a foster care system left, the system did not collapse, supports Buckley's contention that social structures, to be effective, must be able to deal with such change. In each case in the study where the youth felt he could no longer remain in his

present foster home, he had the experience of knowing he had the continuing support of the social worker who would help him affect a change. Also, although many social workers changed caseload assignments during the time the study was undertaken, there was not a larger than usual number of crises in foster homes accompanying the changes. In both these situations, although there was division within the systems, one adult member maintained a dyad with the youth; he was never alone.

Another kind of tension present in the foster care system occurs when there are differences in perceptions among system members.

## (2) Impact on the Functioning of the System of Differences in Perceptions Among System Members

Given that the amount of contact between youths and their foster mothers was relatively constant, the frequency of contact between them and the social worker was a variable that might have been expected to be related to congruence within the system. That is, social workers who had most contact with the youths and foster mothers might be considered most likely to have congruent perceptions. The study, however, did not support this supposition. Social workers who saw youths more often were significantly less likely to be congruent in their perceptions. This finding did not appear to be consistent with the expectation that systems need to achieve equilibrium prior to congruent

perceptions being held by members.

Two factors have special significance regarding communication within a system: (1) the type of communication, and (2) the frequency of communication. Buckley writes of systems needing a "full, two-way communication network, extending throughout all parts of the system to provide adequate linkage of components and to make possible the various feedback loops essential to effective goal attainment".<sup>21</sup> That the foster mother-youth network tended to be established rather quickly due to their proximity to one another, is rather obvious. What was not so clear was the reason, or reasons, why the social worker-youth communication network did not tend to lead to congruent perceptions, when there were more frequent contacts.

Another finding of this study gave clues that served to answer the apparent enigma: Social workers tended to perceive youths as managing less well than did foster mothers, or the youths, themselves. It is assumed that this perception was communicated in both subtle and direct ways to the youth. The choice of words used in discussion and types of questions asked, indicated to the youth the worker's perception of him.

The impact of the social worker's perception of the youth's adjustment and coping behavior on the youth appeared, however, to be lessened due to his less frequent contacts. The time between messages received from the so-

cial worker appeared to give youths opportunity to sort out the discrepancy, by allowing greater impact to be felt from messages received from foster mothers. Communication with his foster mother was more likely to reinforce the way the youth perceived himself as functioning. The youth-foster mother transaction was both more frequent and more congruent than youth-social worker transactions. The consistency of the former assisted the youth in coming to terms with the inconsistency of the latter.

Another possible explanation was one suggested by Shibutani who wrote that the choice made between different perspectives might depend upon the person's sentiments towards the significant others. That is to say, feeling more positively about his foster mother in the first place, increased the youth's chances of agreeing with her. When sentiments were negative, however, "a person may go out of his way to spite his mentors by rejecting their expectations".<sup>23</sup> Studies of small groups have indicated a similar dynamic operating. Dittes, for example, stated that the extent to which an individual is influenced by a group depends largely upon the attractiveness the group has for him.<sup>24</sup>

### (3) Perceived Roles of Foster Mothers and Social Workers

Both Buckley and Parsons would agree that effective social systems must give a relatively high level of satisfaction to members' needs. They would concur that both



individual needs and those generated by the system must be satisfied.

Findings of this study indicated a difference in perceptions of types of needs met by foster mothers and social workers within foster care systems.

#### Foster Mothers

To youths, foster mothers were more likely to be seen as need-meeting members of the system. They were perceived, in most cases, as well able to function in a nurturing, befriending, supporting role for the youth. Youths, in talking of their foster mothers, commented "She's just like a mother to me", and "She does all she can to help me". Other youths reported: "We communicate" and "She treats me like an equal".

In placement decision-making an attempt is made to match the individual youth and the individual foster home when the assistance of a social worker is requested. Selection of foster homes has "moved from a concern with the physical adequacy of the home to a greater sensitivity to social-psychological adequacy of the home".<sup>25</sup>

Foster mothers, in the minds of most of the youths in the study, are both expected, and able, to meet their day-to-day needs. The same was not found regarding social workers.

#### Social Workers

Social workers did not appear to have a continuing

role in the minds of many youths. One youth reported she felt social workers should be more careful to respect her privacy; another said workers "Should not get involved in personal feelings unless it is asked for". Other youths felt that social workers did have a role, but limited to such things as "He got me a job", "She helped me get out of the first foster home", and "He helps me with the money problem".

Neither personal nor system needs were seen by many youths as being met consistently by their social worker. That system needs were not met was indicated by such comments as: "Each worker contradicts an earlier one", or "They never say the same thing twice". One young lady reported that social workers "Should let people know the rules, if there are any". A seventeen year old boy felt that different social workers tended to not give equal treatment; he spoke from experience of having the same thing accepted by one worker and refused by another.

The original function of the social worker, to assist in finding alternative living arrangements, remained to many youths his only responsibility. Status difference within the foster care system may prevent even this function from being effectively carried out.

Freidson, discussing dilemmas in the doctor-patient relationship, writes of the "separate worlds of experience and reference" each brings, that are always in potential conflict with each other.<sup>26</sup> Status differences between

social worker and youth are similar in many ways to those found in the physician-patient relationship. The worker attempts to preserve his professional detachment by seeing the youth as a case to which he applies general rules and categories that he has learned from his education and experience. The youth, on the other hand, judges what is, or is not being done for him from his own personal point of view; he is not concerned with "needs of youth", his concern is his own need. Although worker and youth may have the same goal in mind--a happier living situation, for example--proposed solutions may differ and even the definition of the problem may not be the same.

Rosenfeld, in a review of research findings regarding non-use of available professional help, also suggested that many factors found to be associated with continuance could best be understood as reflections of an underlying congruence or lack of congruence; he termed the latter "strangeness" between helper and client. His view suggested that the explanation for the finding that discontinuance is related to social class difference between client and worker may reside in the lack of congruence between the views of the worker and those of the client occasioned by the social class distance that separates them.<sup>27</sup>

Another aspect of the worker's status is that, to many youths, the social worker as an agency representative, served as a negative reminder of the fact that they were unable to live with their own families.<sup>28</sup> To the foster

mother, the social worker reinforced, with each visit, the fact that, no matter how much she may have wished to forget, the child in her home was not her own, and she did not have the final authority. Similar to Ambinder, this study found that foster mothers perceived their role as parent surrogates. They saw social workers as supervising generally, and helping when called upon with particular problems.<sup>29</sup> In carrying out the supervisory function for which he is responsible, the social worker visits the home. These visits may be threatening to the foster mother and are apt to make her defensive. Kadushin writes of the need for workers to appreciate foster parents as unique individuals in their own right with their own needs, rather than as mere suppliers of an "environment" for the youth.<sup>30</sup>

Each individual's status within the foster care system, his individual needs, perceptions, and preconceptions have a bearing on his own and the other's role performance.

An effect of frequent staff changes is the type of function staff members are expected to perform.

Buckley used the term "role validation" to describe the situation where a member's role performance meets expectations of other members of his role-set. It describes congruence with what a person presents behaviorally, and his perception of behavior expected of him.

From this study, the social worker's role perceived by youths, foster mothers, and social workers themselves,

appeared to be primarily one of performing administrative functions.<sup>31</sup> Daily decision-making and problem-solving were carried out in the foster home with few appeals to the worker.

The social worker's administrative function has two aspects: one relates to find foster homes for those youths who cannot find alternative living arrangements for themselves; and, the other, to assist youths by discussing possible alternative living situations. This entails discussion of differences between foster homes, or between foster homes and other available facilities. These discussions need to take place both when the youth first enters out-of-home care and, later, if re-placement is needed.

Most workers, in the perceptions of other system members, did not move beyond the enactment of an administrative role. This may have resulted from frequent changes in workers. Problem-solving, beyond environmental manipulation, entails development of a relationship of mutual trust that cannot occur when the youth is unsure of seeing the same worker consistently over a period of time.<sup>32</sup>

Other factors that might impede the worker from serving additional functions within the foster care system bear directly on the youth and his foster mother.

The youth may hesitate to share problems with his social workers as he may feel to do so is to be disloyal to his foster mother. To disclose shortcomings experienced in the foster home, he may feel, would be to invite un-

pleasant repercussions. Also, the social worker representing the agency that sanctioned his placement in the home, may be expected by the youth to have negative feelings about an individual who seems to question the wisdom of the placement.

The narrow function that the social worker generally performs appeared sufficient in the eyes of most foster mothers. They gave the impression of feeling competent to handle their own duties quite independently.<sup>33</sup> Foster mothers were not asking for the worker to have more involvement in the foster care system.

If social workers are to widen their function, to move beyond a rather circumscribed administrative role, there would need to be agreement regarding such change by other members of the system, as well as willingness by the workers.

Weinstein found that adequate understanding of their foster status and the agency's continuing role were important for the young person's well-being.<sup>34</sup> In his review of research in child welfare, Fanshel noted that "Failure to clarify the role of the agency . . . appears to reflect a weakness in the kind of casework provided".<sup>35</sup> In the present study, it will be remembered, one social worker in five reported having done nothing of consequence to help the youth, and no worker spoke of the need to assist a youth in coming to terms with his foster status. It would appear that the worker's conception of the purpose of contacts was

not appreciated sufficiently to allow this important function to be communicated to the youth.

Foster care is a compensatory system for children and youths who are unable to live with their own parents. Findings of this study indicated that the social worker tended to be perceived as intruding into the foster family system once it had been established. The worker's presence in the home from time to time served to remind both foster parents and youths that they were not, in fact, a family. The social worker has a role in decision-making regarding matching a youth with a home, but once the youth has become established, the worker's role diminishes; his continuing presence may even decrease the advantages that the alternative living arrangement was designed to serve.

The lack of being perceived as "therapist", or at least "helper", by other members of the foster care system poses a dilemma for the social worker who has prepared for enactment of that role. The worker is faced with answering the question, "If I cannot be a therapist, what can I contribute, professionally, to the system?". This study suggests that emphasis be placed on the administrative, decision-making aspects of foster care that matches the youth with the "best" foster home.

### Conclusions

Foster home care is often the only alternative living arrangement available to youths who can no longer

remain at home. It will probably continue to be the main resource for child welfare workers, primarily because it does seem to benefit youths who are placed; foster mothers, too, receive satisfaction from giving this service. That it remains the only viable alternative to living in one's own home, however, may be a reflection on the social work profession's tendency to continue with those programs that are familiar--at times stretching them to meet additional needs--rather than locating and developing new resources.

Social work practice regarding foster home care for youth tends to focus energies on decision-making regarding placement and the first weeks of the move into a new home. Staff turn-over appears to negate the possibility of youths forming sustaining relationships over a period of time with one worker. Social workers change more often than foster home placements in many cases. The concept of the agency as the responsible institution for child welfare in the community that is constant in its concern, does not appear to be understood by the youths in this study.

Systems theories can contribute to understanding foster care. In fact, the program cannot be understood without discussion of relations between: (1) the individual in need of alternative living arrangements, (2) the foster mother who opens her home, and (3) the representative of the community agency charged with responsibilities for child welfare programs. The importance of congruence in perceptions of system members has been shown in this study;



characteristics of subsystem members that tend to be in congruent systems have also been reported. With the continually increasing need for alternative living arrangements for youths, foster home care may not be the complete answer, but until further research has been conducted regarding other living arrangements, foster homes will continue to be the prime resource available in the community. Recruitment and maintenance of those foster homes which best meet the needs of youths placed in them, must be the prime goal of social workers charged with responsibility for locating alternative accommodation, until other resources have proven more effective.<sup>36</sup>

Application of social system analysis to findings of this study afforded opportunity to determine the effects on the system of two kinds of tension: that produced by changes in system members, and tension which resulted from incongruent perceptions between members. The study, also, produced further information regarding differing roles of system members.

#### Further Research

This study was based on perceptions of individuals. No baselines of objective data were established. Further studies might first determine such things, for example, as "school achievement" by use of data concerning grades achieved, class standing, and scores on intelligence tests. Perceptions of system members might then be related to a

core of objective data, rather than comparing perceptions, alone.

The fact that there tended to be differences in youths' perceptions of their happiness and how well they were managing in foster homes, has been established. Further studies might examine these variables in more depth to arrive at characterological determinants or behavioral predictors of youths who are most likely to benefit from this type of out-of-home care.

This study lends itself to being the first part of a longitudinal series. Questions future studies might attempt to answer include: Although youths in congruent systems tend to feel happier now, does this necessarily mean they will function better in adult life? Is today's congruent system more or less likely to be tomorrow's setting for a foster family crisis? Are youths who are able to overcome the incongruent messages received from foster mother and social worker likely to be more or less firm in a sense of their own identity as young adults in their mid-twenties? Does such a struggle, if there is one, enhance self-reliance, or does it serve to lessen the individual's feelings of competence?

Many youths in the study did not begin to receive out-of-home care until they were approaching the age that most young persons begin to emancipate themselves from their own families. Foster care, however, is designed primarily for younger children in need of alternative living arrangements for a period of time, after which they will

return to live with their own parents. In contrast, many of these youths themselves requested alternative accommodation be found as they felt they could no longer remain at home; these youths will probably never return to their own parents' home as dependents. The alternative living arrangements available in a community determine the options open to youths who wish to leave their own homes. Institutional care is available for the severely emotionally disturbed or delinquent youth, but for the remainder the only alternative is to move in with another family and resume a dependent relationship with parent surrogates. Alternatives to foster care for older adolescents more suited to their developing independence, such as boarding homes, communal type living, and apartments, needs to be further evaluated. Too, the policy of making payments directly to the youths, entrusting them to manage responsibly, rather than continuing to have payments made directly from the Welfare Department to the foster mother, might serve to enhance the development of independence in youths.

Foster care is an example of a child welfare service that is available for children and youth. As developing, growing individuals they need the consistency of congruent communication from foster system members. When incongruent expectation and perceptions are communicated, youths tend to feel less happy and perceive themselves as managing less well in the foster home. Adolescents in foster care demonstrate that they have the ability to find

alternative living arrangements, to cope with changes in family living, and to be partners in the decision-making process regarding themselves.

This study utilized social system theory to provide a frame of reference within which the network of interactions that formed the nucleus of any foster home care system might be considered. Information regarding the impact of foster home care on youths can be gained from analysis of perceptions of system members regarding the youths' adjustment and coping behavior. Analysis of congruence in perceptions of youths, their foster mothers, and social workers, showed that these interactions could not be predicted from knowledge of each of these system members, alone. Although previous studies examined individual aspects of care, this study viewed foster home care as a system of interactions that primarily involved the youth, his foster mother and social worker responsible for placement supervision.

## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup>Hughes would term this tendency an example of "hyper-functionalism" in the social workers, if their training and experience as problem-solvers tended to make them more likely to perceive dysfunctioning than adequate functioning in clients. Everett C. Hughes, "What Other?," in Arnold M. Rose (ed.), Human Behavior and Social Processes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Co., 1962), p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>In the remaining four foster care systems the most frequent type of congruence was a coalition of youth and foster mother; characteristics of these four systems are reported in Appendix E.

<sup>3</sup>Reported in Dinnage and Pringle, pp. 173 and 150.

<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth G. Meier, op. cit., p. 347. Of interest are reports of two studies concerning adults who moved as children from their own homes into institutional care. Those who moved from their own families while still infants were seen as managing less well than those who were not separated until they were between the ages of two and four. See M. L. Kellmer Pringle, "Emotional Adjustment Among Children in Care," Child Care, XV (London, January 1961), 5-12; and Henry S. Maas, "The Young Adult Adjustment of Twenty Wartime Residential Nursery Children," Child Welfare, 42 (February, 1963), 57-72.

<sup>5</sup>Ralph Colvin, (1962), p. 47.

<sup>6</sup>Child Welfare Services, pp. 377-8.

<sup>7</sup>Trasler and Parker both reported that where there was an own child of the same age and sex as the foster child, placements tended to be unsuccessful. Op. cit. Murphy reported that foster girls did better if there was an own older daughter in the home, but not if there was an own younger child.

<sup>8</sup>Trasler, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Workers in a New York City agency tended to perceive younger foster mothers as being more adequate; this was reported by Ralph Colvin, "Toward the Development of a Foster Parent Aptitude Test" in Quantative Approaches to Parent Selection (New York: Child Welfare League of America, 1962), p. 47. Trasler found, however, that success was associated with foster parents over forty (op. cit., p. 219). Weinstein tended to concur with Trasler and noted that younger mothers tended to "structure the placement situation in terms of adoption rather than boarding care". This created in the young person demands that were incompatible with his own view of the situation and made it more difficult for the foster parent to share the youth with either the agency or natural parents. (Weinstein, op. cit., p. 53.) Parker, in a British study, found "a slight association between success and increasing age of the foster mother" (R. A. Parker, Decision in Child Care (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), reported in Dinnage and Pringle, p. 173).

<sup>10</sup> Parker reported that "the lower the economic class of the foster parents, the more likelihood there was of the placement being successful"; Dinnage and Pringle, p. 173. The editors did not give an income floor for individuals deemed by Parker as "most successful". Murphy, op. cit., noted that "poor risk" boys did best with skilled manual workers' families, but "good risk" boys did best in white collar homes.

<sup>11</sup> Wisconsin Department of Public Welfare, Focus on Foster Families (Wisconsin: Department of Public Welfare, 1966), p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> William Moynihan, "Reader's Forum--Developing Foster Child's Identification with Agency," Child Welfare, 42 (April, 1963), 193.

<sup>13</sup> Flynn, (1963), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Buckley, (1968), p. xvii.

<sup>15</sup> Buckley, (1967), p. 207.

<sup>16</sup> Charnley uses the term: "company manners period" to describe this first phase. Jean Charnley, The Art of Child Placement (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p. 51.

<sup>17</sup>Kadushin, (1967), p. 388.

<sup>18</sup>Charnley, p. 51.

<sup>19</sup>Charnley, p. 51.

<sup>20</sup>See, for example: Charnley, op. cit.; D. Jehov, "Empirical and Theoretical Developments in the Study of Discontinuous Parental Love," Social Work, 23 (January, 1966), 8-16; Sarah Stone, "Children Without Roots," Social Service Review, 27 (June, 1953), 144-152; Edmund V. Mech, "Practice Oriented Research on Separation in Child Welfare" in Miriam Norris and Barbara Wallace (eds.), The Known and Unknown in Child Welfare Research (New York: Child Welfare League of America, 1965), 40-77; Trasler, op. cit.; David Franshel, "Specialization in the Foster Parent Role," Child Welfare, 40 (March and April, 1961), 17-20 and 19-23.

<sup>21</sup>Buckley, (1967), p. 206.

<sup>22</sup>Studies have shown that people tend to rationalize away observations that are inconsistent with their own beliefs. See, for example: Waldo Burchard, "Role Conflicts of Military Chaplains," American Sociological Review, 19 (1954), 528-535; and Allen L. Edwards, "Rationalization in Recognition as a Result of a Political Frame of Reference," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 36 (1941), 224-235.

<sup>23</sup>Tamotsu Shibutani, "Reference Groups and Social Control" in Arnold M. Rose (ed.), Human Behavior and Social Processes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1962), p. 141.

<sup>24</sup>James E. Dittes, "Attractiveness of Group as Function of Self-Esteem and Acceptance by Group," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 59 (1959), 77-82. For additional studies of group dynamics, see Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander, Group Dynamics: Research and Theory (3rd ed., New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

<sup>25</sup>Kadushin, (1967), p. 375.

<sup>26</sup>Rose Friedson, p. 209.

<sup>27</sup>Jona Michael Rosenfeld, "Strangeness Between Helper and Client: A Possible Explanation of Non-use of Available Professional Help," Social Service Review, 38

(March, 1964), 17-25.

<sup>28</sup> Findings of a British study, reported an older foster child, discussing her memory of separation from home as saying, "When I first met you I hated you because you were associated with the breakup of my home. I hated you when you told me things and shut my mind because I thought you could not know what it was like". Kadushin, (1967), p. 386.

<sup>29</sup> Walter Ambinder, (1962).

<sup>30</sup> Kadushin, (1967), p. 400.

<sup>31</sup> This is consistent with Tabbert's finding that workers, in the eyes of clients, tend to be perceived as a "data resource" rather than filling the more traditional "therapist" role. Wynn Tabbert, "The Development of Social Competence: A Comparative Analysis of Social Work Practice," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Los Angeles, California: University of Southern California School of Social Work, 1970). Another study that corroborates this finding was conducted in Santa Clara County, California: See "The Myth of the Casework Relationship," AFDC "Services"--After Five Years, What are the Results?, (Santa Clara Department of Social Services, 1970), 20.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Flynn, alluding to the frequent changes in social workers, noted that this tended to lead to "a growing tendency on the part of the foster family to 'go it on their own'". (Flynn, (1963), p. 6.) This study tends to confirm Flynn's statement.

<sup>34</sup> Weinstein, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> Fanshel in Maas, p. 94.

<sup>36</sup> Group homes as resources for adolescents needing out-of-home care have been reported in social work literature; see, for example: Arthur Greenberg, "Agency-owned and -operated Group Foster Homes for Adolescents," Child Welfare, 42 (April, 1963), 173-179; Norman Herstein, "What is a Group Home?," Child Welfare, 43 (October, 1964),



403-414; Irving Rabinow, "Agency Operated Group Homes," Child Welfare, 43 (October, 1964), 415-442; Miriam Schwartz and Isadore Kaplan, "Small Group Homes--Placement Choice for Adolescents," Child Welfare, 40 (November, 1961), 9-13.

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## APPENDIX A

### COMPARISON OF CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTHS

#### IN TOTAL GROUP AND SAMPLE

#### 1. Sex

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Sample</u>
Male	31 (36%)	16 (36%)
Female	35 (64%)	29 (64%)

#### 2. Age

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Sample</u>
16	18 (21%)	8 (18%)
17	25 (29%)	11 (24%)
18	29 (34%)	17 (38%)
19	11 (13%)	8 (18%)
20	3 ( 3%)	1 ( 2%)

#### 3. Ethnic Background

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Sample</u>
Caucasian	47 (55%)	26 (58%)
Negro	9 (10%)	5 (11%)
Mexican-American	16 (19%)	8 (18%)
Other	14 (15%)	6 (13%)

4. Age at Original Placement

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Sample</u>
Under 3 years	13 (15%)	8 (18%)
4-9 years	13 (15%)	6 (13%)
10-15 years	30 (35%)	17 (38%)
16 years and older	27 (31%)	14 (31%)
Not reported	3 ( 4%)	--

5. Total Length of Time in Present Foster Home

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Sample</u>
Less than one year	37 (43%)	21 (47%)
One to three years	30 (34%)	15 (34%)
Four years or more	19 (21%)	9 (20%)

Total group N=86

Sample group n=45

## APPENDIX B

### ADDITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTHS

#### Education

Repeated a grade	Yes	23	(51%)
	No	22	(49%)

#### Number of schools attended

<u>Number</u>	<u>Elementary</u>	<u>High School</u>
1	8 youths	3 youths
2	11	14
3	8	8
4	6	10
5	6	2
6+	5	8
Not reported	1	-

#### Foster Care

#### Number of social workers assigned

One	7	(16%)
Two	14	(31%)
Three or more	20	(44%)

## APPENDIX C

### CHARACTERISTICS OF FOSTER MOTHERS

#### Age of Foster Parents

<u>Age</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>	<u>Foster Fathers</u>
21-30	3 ( 7%)	1
31-40	7 (16%)	4
41-50	17 (40%)	12
51-60	13 (30%)	13
61+	2 ( 5%)	5

#### Length of Time Married

#### Previous Marriages

Less than one year	1 ( 2%)	Foster Mothers
1-5 years	2 ( 5%)	18 (43%)
6-10 years	3 ( 7%)	Foster Fathers
11-15 years	4 ( 9%)	
16-20 years	3 ( 7%)	14
21 years	22 (52%)	
Widowed, separated or divorced	7 (16%)	

#### Approximate Family Income

Under \$3,000	4 ( 9%)	\$9,000-10,999	8 (19%)
\$3,000-4,999	5 (12%)	11,000-12,999	3 ( 7%)
5,000-6,999	10 (24%)	13,000+	5 (12%)
7,000-8,999	7 (16%)		

Education

<u>Level</u>	<u>Foster Fathers</u>	<u>Foster Mothers</u>
None	5 (12%)	-
Grades 1-6	3 ( 7%)	3 ( 7%)
7-9	10 (24%)	3 ( 7%)
10-12	8 (19%)	13 (30%)
High School Graduation	15 (36%)	14 (33%)
University	1 ( 2%)	9 (22%)

Ethnic Background of Foster Mother

Caucasian	29 (69%)
Black/Negro	7 (16%)
Mexican-American	3 ( 7%)
Other	3 ( 7%)

Foster Mother Work Outside Home?

Yes	15 (36%)
No	27 (64%)

Number of Own Children

None	3 ( 7%)
One	12 (28%)
Two	5 (12%)
Three	6 (14%)
Four	6 (14%)
Five+	10 (24%)

Number of Own Children Still at Home

None	18 (43%)
One	14 (33%)
Two	2 ( 5%)
Three	3 ( 7%)
Four or more	5 (12%)

Age of Youngest Child at Home

None	18 (43%)
Under 10	5 (12%)
11-20	19 (45%)

Length of Time Taken Foster Children

Less than one year	10 (24%)
One or two years	10 (24%)
Three to five years	5 (12%)
Six to nine years	10 (24%)
Ten years or longer	7 (16%)

Number of Foster Children

One	17 (40%)
Two	6 (14%)
Three or four	4 ( 9%)
Five to nine	6 (14%)
Ten or more	9 (22%)

Number of Other Foster Children Presently in the Home

None	24 (56%)
One	7 (16%)
Two	6 (14%)
Three	3 ( 7%)
Four or more	2 ( 5%)



APPENDIX D  
CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL WORKERS  
(n=28)

<u>Sex</u>	Male	14 (50%)	Female	14 (50%)
<u>Age</u>	20-29	15 (53%)		
	30-39	7 (25%)		
	40-49	2 ( 8%)		
	50-59	4 (14%)		
<u>Marital Status</u>	Single	6 (21%)		
	Married	19 (67%)		
	Separated or Divorced	3 (11%)		
<u>Religion</u>	Protestant	11 (39%)		
	Roman Catholic	6 (21%)		
	Unitarian	3 (11%)		
	None given	8 (28%)		
<u>Ethnic Group</u>	Caucasian	21 (75%)		
	Mexican-American	1 ( 4%)		
	Black or Negro	5 (17%)		
	Other	1 ( 4%)		

Length of Time with County Welfare Department

Two years or less 12 (42%)

Three or four years 11 (39%)

Five years or more 5 (17%)

Time with Current Assignment

Less than one year 16 (56%)

One or two years 8 (28%)

Three years or more 3 (11%)

Unknown 1 (4%)

Responsible for Youths in the Study

20 (71%) workers had one youth

3 (11%) workers had two youths

3 (11%) workers had three youths

2 (8%) workers had five youths

APPENDIX E

CHARACTERISTICS OF FOUR FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS

WHERE YOUTH AND FOSTER MOTHER

ARE MOST OFTEN CONGRUENT

IN THEIR PERCEPTIONS

(TYPE 2)

i) Youths

<u>Age</u>	17	3	<u>Sex</u>	Male	2
	19	1		Female	2
<u>Age First Left</u>	Infant	2	<u>Time In</u>	less than one	
				year	2
<u>Own Home</u>	14-16	2	<u>Present</u>	4 years	1
			<u>Home</u>	10+ years	1

ii) Foster Mothers

<u>Age</u>	41-50	2	<u>Education</u>		
	51-60	1		Grades 10-12	2
	61-70	1		H. S. Graduation	2
<u>Length of Time Fostering</u>			<u>Number of Foster Children</u>		
	4 years	1		2	1
	6 years	1		10+	3
	9 years	1			
	10+ years	1			

Number of Own ChildrenOther Foster Children at

1 1

Present

2 1

0 2

3 1

1 -

5 1

2 1

3 1

iii) Social WorkersSex Male 2Marital StatusEthnic Back-

Female 2

Married 4

Ground

Caucasian 4

Age 20-29 2Time Known Youth

30-39 -

less than 1 year 2

40-49 1

1-2 years 2

50-59 1

APPENDIX F

YOUTH STUDY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Youth Study Number \_\_\_\_\_

Youth Name \_\_\_\_\_ Social Survey No. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Foster Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_

Social Worker Name \_\_\_\_\_ District No. \_\_\_\_\_

II. Interviewed by \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time Began \_\_\_\_\_ End \_\_\_\_\_ Approx.  
Length \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Private \_\_\_\_\_ Others Present \_\_\_\_\_

Note any special circumstances \_\_\_\_\_  
.....  
\_\_\_\_\_

## YOUTH STUDY SCHEDULE

## III. CURRENT SITUATION

- O. We want to ask you some questions about how you're getting along now, how you feel about certain things and your opinion on certain subjects.
- 1a. One thing we've been talking about with young people is what kinds of things they do well and enjoy doing. What are some of the things that you do well and enjoy doing?
- 1b. How much do you get a chance for \_\_\_\_\_ these days?
- 1c. What are some of the other things that you enjoy doing in your leisure time?
- \*2a. About how many evenings a week do you spend away from home?
- 2b. What do you do?
- 2c. How do you spend your weekends?
- 3a. Do you belong to any groups or clubs at school or in the community? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
- 3b. Which ones?
- 3c. Do you attend regularly?
4. Would you rather spend your spare time:  
alone \_\_\_\_\_, with one or two friends \_\_\_\_\_, with  
a group of friends \_\_\_\_\_, other \_\_\_\_\_?

---

\*Those questions asked each member of the foster care system are marked with an asterisk (\*).

- 5a. Do foster parents encourage you to bring your friends home?
- 5b. Same sex \_\_\_\_, opposite sex \_\_\_\_, both \_\_\_\_.
- 5c. If foster parents permit this, do you feel comfortable or not in inviting them?
- 5d. Why is that?
- 6a. Do you go out on dates?
- 6b. Do you go steady?
- 6c. For how long?
- \*7a. How do you feel that you get along with the other kids your age?
- 7b. Why is that?
- \*8. Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are these days?
- 9. Compared with others your age, how would you rate your physical appearance?
- \*10. Which of the following best describes your usual health right now?
  - 11a. What is the longest period of time that you have ever been in bed for sickness or an accident?
  - 11b. How many times have you been sick in bed (as much as a day) in the past year?
  - 11c. Have you missed any school because of sickness?
  - 11d. If yes, how much?
  - 12a. How many times have you been treated by a doctor (outside of school) for injury or accident in

the past six months?

12b. Do you take any medicine or pills prescribed by a doctor?

12c. Do you take any medicine or pills not prescribed by a doctor?

13a. Do you get severe headaches?

13b. Do you have asthma?

13c. Do you have any allergies?

MONEY: Now I have some questions about money.

14a. Do you have spending money?

14b. Where does it come from?

15. Is the amount of money that you have available about: the same as your friends \_\_\_\_, less than most of your friends \_\_\_\_, more than your friends \_\_\_\_.

16a. Now, all in all, how do you feel about the money you have--is it enough for you, or could you use more? Enough \_\_\_\_, need more \_\_\_\_.

16b. Can you tell me the reasons you'd like more money?

16d. All in all, how much would you say kids your age need to have?

16e. Should kids your age in foster care get an allowance from the Welfare Department?

16f. At what age?

17a. As far as clothing is concerned, do you have



about as many clothes as the others in your class at school?

17b. Are they the right kind?

17c. If no, why not?

17d. Do you choose your own clothes?

17e. Who goes with you?

18a. Do you have transportation when you need it?

18b. Is it easy or difficult to get transportation to go places?

18c. Why is that?

19. What chores do you have to do in the home?

\*19k. How do you feel about doing these things?

20. From your experience in the home, do you feel you're learning enough to be able to manage your own place by yourself later on?

21. Regarding yourself, how do you feel about:

21a. Smoking? ☐ harmful ☐ uncertain  
☐ not harmful ☐ no opinion

21b. Drinking? ☐ harmful ☐ uncertain  
☐ not harmful ☐ no opinion

21c. Marijuana? ☐ harmful ☐ uncertain  
☐ not harmful ☐ no opinion

21d. Speed or barbiturates? ☐ harmful ☐ uncertain  
☐ not harmful ☐ no opinion

- 21e LSD?                    ☐ harmful                    ☐ uncertain  
                                  ☐ not harmful                    ☐ no opinion
22. When kids your age get into trouble (become delinquent) do you think this is generally a result of: a) Not knowing better ☐,  
 b) Knowing it's wrong but not caring ☐,  
 c) Chance or very great temptation ☐,  
 d) Just doing what everybody else is doing ☐.
23. What do you think of the police?  
☐ generally pretty good (doing a satisfactory job).  
☐ very uneven in their performance (some do good, some bad).  
☐ are unfair, and sometimes, even are brutal.
24. By and large, do you think kids can learn from the older generation?
- 25a. How do you regard religion?
- 25b. Are you an active member of a church?
- 25c. If yes, what church?

Next we have some questions about how you're feeling these days--some of the things you're happy about, and some of the things you're not too happy about.

26. What are some of the things that you feel pretty happy about these days?
27. Many kids have told us about things they're not completely happy about. What are some of the

things you're not too happy about these days?

28. If you could change yourself in some way, how would you want to change?
29. Compared to your life today, how do you think things will be in ten years from now--do you think things will be happier for you than they are now, not quite as happy, or what?
30. Why is that?

#### IV. PREVIOUS OUT OF HOME CARE

0. Now let's talk about your having to live away from home.
31. How old were you when you first left your own home?
32. What was the reason for your first having to leave home?
- 33a. How many foster homes have you been in?
- 33b. Which foster home has meant the most to you?
- 33c. (If the present one;) How long did you stay there?
- 33d. Why do you feel it meant more than the others?
- 33e. How old were you when you moved there?

#### V. PRESENT OUT OF HOME CARE

0. Now let's talk about where you're living now.
34. How long have you been with Mr. and Mrs. ( )?

- 35a. Who was mainly responsible for your coming to this home?
- 35b. Do you feel that you participated in choosing this home?
- 35c. If yes, how?
- \*36. How are you managing in this home?
- 37a. As you look at it, what do you particularly like about this home?
- 37b. AS you look at it, what do you particularly dislike about this home?
- 38a. Do you have your own room?
- 38b. If no, would you prefer to have your own room?
- 38c. How much time do you spend in your room?
- 39a. How about the food? Is it o.k.?
- 39b. Why?
- 40a. Are there other kids in the home?
- 40b. If yes, how many?
- 40c. How do you get along with them?
- 41a. What are some of the things you like or dislike about your foster father?
- 41b. What are some of the things you like or dislike about your foster mother?
- 42. What kinds of things do you talk over with your foster parents?
- \*43a. How would your foster parents deal with you if they didn't approve of what you did?

\*43b. How do you react to that?

44a. Living in your present foster home, have you had any trouble with the law over curfew?

44b. Any other problems with the law?

44c. If so, what?

Sometimes if children who live in foster homes visit their families, it seems to make things easier for them, but for some children it seems to make things harder.

45a. Would you recommend that young people in foster homes have contact with their families?

45b. Why do you think that?

46. Are your parents living?

46a. Do you know where your mother is?

46b. Where is she?

46c. How often do you have contact with her?

46d. Visit \_\_\_\_ Letter \_\_\_\_ Telephone call \_\_\_\_.

47a. Do you know where your father is?

47b. Where is he?

47c. How often do you have contact with him?

47d. Visit \_\_\_\_ Letter \_\_\_\_ Telephone call \_\_\_\_.

48. Do you have any brothers or sisters?

48a. Do you know where they are?

48b. Where are they?

48c. When did you last have any contact with them?

48d. Visit \_\_\_\_ Letter \_\_\_\_ Telephone call \_\_\_\_.

- 49a. Do your foster parents encourage you to visit your own parents or relatives?
- 49b. Have your foster parents tended to welcome your own parents or relatives if they visited?
- \*50a. How often do you usually see your social worker?
- 50b. When was the last time you saw the social worker?
- 50c. Was it your idea to see him/her or his/her idea to see you?
- \*51. What do you see as the job of the social worker who comes to see you or your foster parents?
- \*52. What has your social worker done to improve or help your situation in foster care?
- 53. How many social workers have you had?
- 54a. Which was the one you liked best?
- 54b. Why?

VI. FUTURE OUT OF HOME CARE AND ADULT LIVING PLANS

- 0. Explain "living on own"; describe different possibilities for independent living arrangements.
- 55. Thinking about kids your age living away from their own home, what do you think would be the best living arrangements for them?
- 56a. Would you particularly like living in a "group foster home" with other boys (girls) around your age?

56b. Why?

\*57a. Could you live on your own?

57b. Why do you think that?

58. If you were to live on your own, what type of living arrangements would be best for you?

59a. Living on your own, how much money do you think you'd need a month? Total \_\_\_\_.

59b. Of this amount, how much would go for:

_____ food	_____ transportation
_____ rent	_____ clothing
_____ recreation	_____ other
Revised Total _____	

60. What experience have you had handling money?

61. If you were living on your own, you would have a great many responsibilities. Which do you think would be the most difficult things to do?

62. If you were living alone and got in trouble, who would you call to help you out?

63a. Now let's look ahead in your future, do you expect to marry?

63b1. (Male) After your marriage would you expect or want your wife to work?

63b2. (Female) After your marriage would you expect or want to work?

64a. After you marry, where do you want to live?

64b. Would you prefer to:

\_\_\_\_\_ live in an apartment

- \_\_\_\_\_ rent a house
- \_\_\_\_\_ live in a house you were buying
- \_\_\_\_\_ live with parents or relatives
- \_\_\_\_\_ other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

65a. Do you want to have children?

65b. If yes, what size family would you like?

## VII. EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

0. Now we want to talk about school, o.k.?

66a. What grade were you in in 1968-69?

66b. What are the things you like and/or dislike about school?

\*67. How well do you do in school compared to others in your classes?

68. How hard do you think you work in school compared to other students in your class?

69. Doing well in school depends on many things. What things do people have to do in order to do well in their classes?

70a. How good a reader do you think you are compared with others your age?

70b. How much do you like reading?

71. How many elementary schools have you gone to?

72. How many schools have you gone to since grade 7?

73. Were you ever held back a grade in school? If so, what school year? ( ).

74. Do you plan to finish high school?



- 75. Is there anything that might keep you from graduating?
- 76. If you decide to leave, could anything influence you to stay? What?
- \*77a. Do you think you'd like to continue your education after high school?
- 77b. If so, what type of education?

#### VIII. VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

- 0. Now, let's talk about employment and jobs.
- 78a. Do you want to work this summer?
- 78b. Do you have a job for this summer?
- 78c. If yes, what is the type or kind of job you have (hope for)?
- 79. In terms of your future right after leaving high school, what do you want to do?
- 80. Why did you decide that you wanted to do this?
- 81a. Have you taken any vocational aptitude tests or other tests regarding your abilities?
- 81b. If yes, did your school counsellor discuss the results with you?
- 81c. In respect to these tests, would you like to take: , \_\_\_\_ some, \_\_\_\_ more, \_\_\_\_ none.
- 82. Who have you talked to regarding your plans?  
(If frequent, mark F).
- 83. Of these persons or others, who do you think would be most helpful to you in achieving what

you want to do?

84a. What might stand in the way of achieving your job or training plans?

84b. Do you believe that race or religion will be a factor?

84c. Do you think there are any physical or health factors that will affect your job or training plans?

84d. If yes, what are they?

85. In thinking about work, what are some of the more important things to you in a job: (Number in order of importance).

86a. What do you plan to do about military service?

86b. Attitude seems to be:

\_\_\_\_\_ positive \_\_\_\_\_ negative \_\_\_\_\_ indifferent

IX. Thinking back about some of the things we've talked about (enumerate section headings), is there anything you'd like to add?

X. Can you think of any things that can be done to improve the foster home program?

