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Using data from the National Survey of Current and Former Foster Parents this study examined how foster parents first found out about the need for foster parents (mass media, other foster parents, religious organization, or civic organization) affected foster family service (number of children fostered, years of fostering service, fostering of children with special needs, and families' intent to continue fostering). Respondents who became aware of the need for foster parents through religious organizations fostered for more years; respondents who became aware through mass media fostered for fewer years. How foster families first found out about the need for foster parents did not differentially affect other foster family service measures. Implications for foster parent recruitment and future research are discussed.

Three-fourths of the 568,000 children in foster care live with foster families (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2001). Even with the rise in the use of kinship families, agencies place approximately two-thirds of children in non-kinship families (DHHS, 2001). However, there is a chronic shortage of foster families (DHHS, 1993). This is due in large part to the fact that many certified families quit fostering within the first year of service (Baring-Gould, Essick, Kleinkauf, & Miller, 1983; Casey Family Programs, 2000; Chamberlain, Moreland, & Reid, 1992; Pasztor & Wynne, 1995; Ryan, 1985; U.S. General Accounting Office [GAO], 1989), and many families who continue are not willing to foster children with special needs (DHHS, 1993).

Considerable practice wisdom exists concerning how to re-
cruit foster families (Barbell & Sheikh, 2000; Casey Family Pro-
grams, 2000; Pasztor & Wynne, 1995). However, very little re-
search exists concerning recruitment in general, and there is even
less regarding how to recruit families willing to foster for a num-
ber of years and willing to foster children with special needs.
This paucity of research makes it difficult for agencies to know
how to recruit foster families effectively, and this is especially
problematic because recruitment is time-consuming and expen-
sive (Barbell & Sheikh, 2000; Craig & McNally, 1982; Rodwell &
Biggerstaff, 1993).

To help agencies shape recruitment efforts we examine the
relationships between how foster parents first became aware of
the need for foster families (awareness source) and the type and
length of service provided by these families. "Type of service"
refers to the number of children fostered and the number of types
of special-needs children fostered. "Length of service" refers to
years of fostering and the intention to continue fostering.

The effects of awareness source on the type and length of ser-
vice for subgroups of foster parents are examined to better target
recruitment efforts. Specifically, we examine whether the effects
of awareness source are different for those who: are European-
and African-American; live in rural and non-rural areas; have
different motivations to foster; do and do not have previous
exposure to fostering; and do and do not have previous exposure
to persons with specials needs.

Previous Research on Awareness Source

Recruitment campaigns have two goals: (a) to raise public
awareness about fostering and the need for foster families, and (b)
to recruit qualified foster parents (DHHS, 1993; Glassberg, 1965;
Meltsner, 1984; GAO, 1989). To accomplish these goals agencies
primarily use four venues to publicize information about foster
care and the need for family foster homes: (a) mass media (news-
papers, television, radio, billboards, printed material), (b) per-
sonal contacts with foster parents, (c) churches, and (d) commu-
nity or civic organizations. It is important to note that researchers
have not always distinguished awareness source from other fac-

tors that had a determining influence on the decision to foster. However, in order to be comprehensive, we have included studies in this review that provided information on recruitment source, in general, even though they might not have been examining uniquely the awareness source.

Mass Media

Mass media is used widely to recruit foster parents (Child Welfare League of America [CWLA], 1991; DHHS, 1993) and generates a high number of inquires about fostering (CWLA, 1991; Moore, Grandpre, & Scoll, 1988; Ougletree, 1957; Siegel & Roberts, 1989). This method has the advantage of recruiting diverse families interested in fostering while at the same time educating the community at-large about the purposes of foster care and the roles foster parents can play in children's lives (CWLA, 1991; Coyne, 1978; Donley, 1984; Glassberg, 1965; Horejsi, 1989; Lawrence 1993; Meltsner, 1984; Pasztor & Burgess, 1982; Pasztor & Wynne, 1995; Pasztor et al., 1989; GAO, 1989). A disadvantage is the high attrition rate that occurs between initial inquiry and final approval (Glassberg, 1965; Sacks & Case, 1968; Smith & Gutheil, 1988). In addition, in order for media campaigns to result in greater numbers of applicants, agencies must be prepared to respond to the high volume of inquires about fostering generated by media campaigns (Pasztor & Burgess, 1982; Pasztor & Wynne, 1995)

A national survey of child welfare agencies demonstrated that 83% of agencies used public service announcements and/or public speaking opportunities, and 82% advertised in the newspaper (CWLA, 1991). About 72% used exhibit booths at community events, posters, and billboards. Although mass media generated more inquires than did other recruitment methods, only 14% of agencies believed these inquiries led to foster parent retention (CWLA, 1991).

Reports on the effectiveness of mass media are mixed. Although some researchers have questioned its effectiveness for recruiting foster parents (e.g., Groze, McMillen, & Haines, 1993), many have reported positive results (Larson, Allison, & Johnston, 1978; Moore et al., 1988; Ougheltree, 1957; Palmer, 1981; Siegel & Roberts, 1989). Moore et al. (1988) found that it was the most effective method and that applicants recruited through mass

media were as qualified as those recruited using other methods. The effectiveness of mass media also seems to have increased slightly over time. Twenty-nine percent of foster families licensed after 1985 reported that they first became aware of the need for foster families primarily through mass media, compared to 23% licensed before 1980 and 21% licensed between 1980 and 1985 (DHHS, 1993).

Results also suggest that mass media might be more effective in recruiting under some circumstances, for some types of people. It seems to be more effective in urban areas than in rural areas. About 28% of urban foster parents first heard about the need for foster parents through the media, compared to 23% of rural foster parents (DHHS, 1993). In addition, compared to applicants who indicated that they were motivated to help children, applicants who reported being motivated by self-oriented concerns were more likely to have heard about fostering through television (Kraus, 1975). However, two studies (Coyne, 1978; Groze et al., 1993) reported that mass media is less effective for recruiting families to foster children with special needs. Researchers also suggest that foster parents' familiarity and experience with persons with special needs (i.e., physical and mental disabilities, AIDS) facilitated targeted recruiting efforts (Groze et al., 1993; Roberts & Siegel, 1988).

Personal Contact with Current Foster Parents

The use of current foster parents in recruitment campaigns has been advocated widely (Friedman, Lardieri, Murphy, Quick, & Wolfe, 1980; Glassberg, 1965; Horejsi, 1977; Pasztor & Wynne, 1995; Pedosuk & Ratcliffe, 1979; Sacks & Case, 1968; Smith & Gutheil, 1988; Stone, 1967; GAO, 1989; Valluzzo, 1984). Advantages of personal contact include the communication of enthusiasm and authenticity. Potential applicants are able to ask questions and express concerns. Disadvantages include the limited number of people current foster parents can contact and the potential serendipitous nature that might characterize personal contact if agencies do not formalize this method as part of their overall recruitment plan.

Many researchers have found that interpersonal contact, particularly contact with foster parents, is the most effective recruitment method (Abbey, 1974; Coyne, 1978; DHHS, 1993; Fried-

man et al., 1980; Kriener & Kazmerzak, 1995; Radinsky, Freed, & Rubenstein, 1963; Smith & Gutheil, 1988). Coyne (1978) also reported that interpersonal contact was more effective than mass media for making people aware of the need for fostering and successfully influencing people to pursue fostering. In a national survey of child welfare agencies, 80% of the agencies reported that contact with current foster parents was a useful recruitment strategy, although only half of the agencies reported a systematic recruitment plan that involved current foster parents (CWLA, 1991).

Churches and Community Organizations

In a national survey of child welfare agencies, 61% of the agencies reported involving civic or religious organizations in recruitment campaigns (CWLA, 1991). One advantage of recruiting through churches and community organizations is that participants already are embedded in a social network that can provide additional information and support. Recruitment in this arena also facilitates an interactive process such that churches and community organizations can fulfill some of their service and support goals by aiding in the recruitment process. A disadvantage is that a limited audience is reached.

Pasztor et al. (1989) stressed the importance of developing recruitment strategies that are community-based, culturally responsive, and easily replicated; the use of churches and community organizations in recruitment can facilitate this community-based approach (also see Barbell & Sheikh, 2000). Churches and civic organizations might be particularly influential in rural areas (DHHS, 1993; Kriener & Kazmerzak, 1995) and with African-Americans (Brunton & Welch, 1983; Glassberg, 1965; Herzog, Sudia, & Harwood, 1971; Ougheltree, 1957; GAO, 1989). There also is some evidence that foster parents who were recruited through church were more likely to be altruistically motivated and more interested in the general welfare of children than those who were recruited using other methods (Kraus, 1975).

Targeted Recruitment

Although research has been limited, there is some evidence that a recruitment plan should include a general, systematic recruitment effort, as well as recruitment strategies that are aimed at reaching and attracting potential foster parents with specific

characteristics (Pasztor & Wynne, 1995). In this study, we examine the role of five characteristics that potentially shape interest in or willingness to consider becoming a foster parent. Motivation to foster, previous experience with someone who has provided or received foster care, and previous involvement with a person who has special needs are characteristics that seem to influence awareness source and interest in becoming a foster parent (Groze et al., 1993; Roberts & Siegel, 1988). Race is a potentially important specific characteristic because the racial background of children who need care might influence the community needs for foster parents and because recruitment campaigns need to be culturally sensitive (Barbell & Sheikh, 2000; Brunton & Welch, 1983; Fisher, 1971; Neilson, 1976; Pasztor & Wynne, 1995). Residence (i.e., urban, rural, or suburban) might be an important contextual factor because specific awareness sources might be more effective in non-rural than rural areas (and vice versa) (DHHS, 1993).

Although there is some suggestion in the literature that these background characteristics might be useful to consider in the recruitment process, there is no research that has examined how these characteristics interact with awareness source to influence length and type of foster family service. In this study, we suggest that that these factors might moderate the associations among awareness source and length and type of fostering service because they shape the context of personal and familial decision-making and role performance.

Research Questions

Considerable practice wisdom exists concerning the recruitment of foster families, but very little research exists concerning the efficacy of different awareness sources. Much of the existing research is dated and limited to regional samples of unknown representativeness. More importantly, research has not examined the effect of awareness source on the type and years of service provided by foster families. Also, little research exists that has examined the extent to which different awareness sources work differently with different types of people. Thus, the following research questions were examined in this study:

• What percentage of foster families report that they first heard of the need for foster parents from different sources?

- Does awareness source predict the total number of children fostered?
- Does awareness source predict the number of years of fostering?
- Does awareness source predict the number of types of special-needs children fostered?
- Does awareness source predict foster families' plans to continue fostering?
- Are any of the empirical relationships outlined in the above questions moderated by residence, race, fostering motives, exposure to persons with special needs, or exposure to fostering?

Methods

The data for this study are from The National Survey of Current and Former Foster Parents (NSCFFP) (DHHS, 1993). The NSCFFP was conducted in 1991, and is the only study of current and former foster families based on a national probability sample. The purpose of the NSCFFP was to collect extensive information potentially useful in agency and public policy planning regarding recruitment and retention of foster parents.

Sampling Procedures

The NSCFFP used a multistage stratified sampling design with probability sampling at each stage so that the findings generalize to the 1991 U. S. population of approved, licensed, or certified foster families. States were stratified by level of foster care payment. Counties were stratified by residence and level of unemployment. Foster parents were stratified by their current and former status, and current foster parents were stratified by their length of service. Ultimately, data were collected from foster parents living in 27 counties in 9 states. The unweighted sample contains 1048 current (116,964 weighted) and 265 former foster homes (63,823 weighted).

For this study only data from current foster families were used, because awareness source data were only collected from these families. Also, the focus of this article is on non-kinship family foster homes because this is the most prevalent type of care for children, and recruitment issues probably are different for kinship and group home caregivers. Consequently, family

foster homes approved to provide kinship care, group care, or unspecified "other" types of foster care were excluded from the sample. Of the total sample of 1048 current foster homes, 876 current foster homes (108,592 weighted) were approved as family foster homes and not approved as a kinship, group, or an "other" type of foster home. In addition, the sample for this study was limited to European-American and African-American foster parents because race was used as a moderator variable and the samples sizes of other racial groups did not allow for adequate comparisons. The final sample, then, consisted of 771 current foster homes (95,798 weighted). The population-weighted sample was used in order to obtain representative national estimates. Estimates were computed using the Jackknife (JK1) replication approach. The replicate and full sample weights were used in the analyses. Data were analyzed using WesVar (Version 3.0, SPSS 1998). WesVar is used to analyze data collected using complex sampling designs (Johnson & Elliott, 1998).

Measurement

The NSCFFP is a large and complex data set. Four categories of variables were used in this study: (1) demographic characteristics; (2) awareness source; (3) type and length of foster family service; and (4) moderating variables.

Demographic characteristics. Family-level characteristics used for descriptive purposes include: income, marital status, number of children, and whether they adopted children. Individual-level characteristics include: race, age, educational level, and employment status.

Awareness Source. Respondents were asked "How did you first hear about the need for foster parents?" and asked to choose one of the following: (1) "Television or radio announcement, poster, or other advertisement," (2) "From another foster parent," (3) "Through my church or other religious organization," (4) "Through a civic or community organization," (5) "From a foster child," (6) "Was a foster child," or (7) "Inquired about adoption and was also told about foster parenting." Because only sources 1–4 have been addressed in any detail in the recruitment

literature, sources in categories 5, 6, and 7 were combined into an "other" category.

Foster Family Service.   Respondents were asked how many children they had fostered and the year they were approved to foster. Because data were collected in 1991, number of years fostered was calculated by subtracting the year of approval from 1991. Respondents also were asked if they intended to continue to foster over the next three years. A response of "yes" was coded 1 and "no" was coded 0.

Respondents were asked whether they had fostered the following: (1) a developmentally disabled/mentally retarded child, (2) a physically handicapped or seriously ill child, (3) a drug-exposed infant or newborn, (4) a child born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or other alcohol-related disorders, (5) a child born with AIDS virus, (6) a mentally ill or emotionally or behaviorally disturbed child, or (7) a sexually abused child. For each type of special-needs child fostered a variable was created and coded 0 for "have not fostered" and 1 for "have fostered." A count variable then was created for total number of types of special-needs children fostered, and this variable has a potential range of values from 0 through 7. Because data are from current foster parents, fostering service measures (i.e., number of years fostered, number of children fostered, and number of types of special-needs children fostered) refer to service provided thus far (as of 1991) in a family's fostering career.

Family race and residence.   Respondents were assigned a "0" if they were European-American and a "1" if they were African-American. For married couples, respondents were assigned a "0" if both parents were European-American and a "1" otherwise. Respondents were assigned a "0" if they lived in an urban or suburban area and a "1" if they lived in a rural area.

Fostering motivation.   Respondents were asked to think about why they were interested in becoming a foster parent. They were asked to review a list of 27 possible reasons and mark "yes" if they endorsed a given reason and "no" if they did not. Mplus was used to conduct an exploratory factor analysis of the tetrachoric correlations among the 27 motivation items (Muthen & Muthen,

2000). Weighted least squares (WLS) estimation was used. The promax method was used to rotate the WLS estimates (Gorsuch, 1983). This is an oblique rotation procedure (one that allows factors to be correlated), which was used because there was no *a priori* reason to believe that the factors should be uncorrelated. Three factors emerged. The first centered on wanting children but not being able to have them through birth or adoption (5 items). We labeled this motive "wanting children." The second centered on wanting to provide a good home to a child and give love to a child who needed care (six items). We labeled this motive "giving to children." The third centered around wanting to foster for more utilitarian, self-oriented reasons such as helping a distressed marriage, getting help around the house, and providing needed companionship (six items). This motive was called "satisfying family needs." Each respondent received a score calculated by summing responses for each motive.

Exposure to foster children. Respondents were asked four questions about previous exposure to foster children: whether they (1) had been a foster child, (2) had lived in foster homes or relatives' homes, (3) had foster or adopted brothers or sisters, or (4) had close friends or relatives in foster care. Respondents were assigned a "0" if they answered no to all four questions and a "1" if they answered yes to any of the four questions. The intent of this measure was to assess whether or not a person had previous exposure rather than the extent of exposure.

Exposure to persons with special needs. Respondents were asked if they had worked or volunteered with handicapped, retarded, or disturbed children. Respondents also were asked if they had a family member who was handicapped, retarded, or emotionally disturbed. Respondents were assigned a "0" if they answered no to both of these questions and a "1" if they answered yes to either question.

Results

Respondents

The majority of information in the present study was provided solely by foster mothers (64.5%) or jointly by foster mothers and

foster fathers (29.1%). A small percentage was provided solely by foster fathers (6.4%).

Characteristics of Respondents

Family-level data.   Table 1 shows family-level demographic characteristics of current foster parents. Three-fourths of families included married couples or couples living as married couples. Income levels were diverse, with 41% of families with an income less than 25,000, 32% with an income between 25,000 to 39,999, and 27% with an income of greater than 40,000. Seventy-six percent of families had at least one birth child and 33% of families had adopted at least one child. Approximately 39% of families lived in suburban areas, 35% in urban areas, and 26% in rural areas. Seventy-five percent of families were European-American.

In terms of fostering motives, 51% of families reported one or more "wanting children" motives, 67% of families reported four or more "giving to children" motives, and 34% of families reported one or more "satisfying family needs" motives (see table 5 for descriptive data). Twenty-five percent of families had been exposed previously to foster children and 35% had been exposed previously to persons with special needs.

Individual-level data.   As shown in Table 2, 24% of foster mothers and 14% of foster fathers were African-American. Eighty-five percent of mothers and 86% of fathers had at least a high school education. Eighteen percent of mothers and 25% of fathers had a bachelor's degree or higher. A vast majority of fathers were employed full-time (83%), whereas only 35% of mothers were employed full-time. Forty-eight percent of foster mothers were not employed outside of the home. The mean age of mothers was 44.3 years (SD = 10.6) and the mean age of fathers was 45.2 years (SD = 11.0).

Awareness Source

About 36% first heard about the need for foster parents through other foster parents, 28% through mass media (television, radio, poster, or other advertisement), 9% through a civic or community organization, 4% through a church or other religious organization, and 24% through other sources. The "other"

Table 1

Characteristics of Current Foster Homes

Characteristics	Total families (n=95,798)
Marital Status	
Married or living as married	74.2
Divorced	11.2
Separated	2.2
Widow/Widower	6.6
Never married	5.8
Race	
African-American	24.9
European-American	75.1
Number of Birth Children	
0	24.0
1	15.0
2	21.3
3	18.1
4	10.6
5 or more	11.0
Any adopted children	32.7
Annual Family Income	
< 15,000	15.5
15,000–19,999	13.1
20,000–24,999	12.7
25,000–29,999	11.8
30,000–34,999	10.6
35,000–39,999	9.8
40,000–49,000	8.7
> 50,000	17.8
Geographical location	
Urban	35.0
Suburban	38.9
Rural	26.1
Number of years fostering $M = 6.7$ ($SD=6.5$), Median = 5	
< 2 years	13.4
2 - 3 years	28.0
4 - 5 years	17.1
6 - 10 years	20.3
>10 years	20.2

Note. The percentage of missing data was 4.4% or less for all variables. In two parent families, families were considered European-American when both parents were European-American.

Table 2

Parent Characteristics of Current Foster Homes

	Total families (n=95,798)	
	Mothers (n=94,255)	Fathers (n=73,085)
Characteristics	%	%
Race		
European-American	75.6	86.0
African-American	24.4	14.0
Highest Degree		
<HS	15.2	13.5
HS/GED	24.1	25.2
College, No Degree	34.1	27.9
Two-Year Degree	8.7	8.9
Bachelor's Degree	6.5	11.2
Grad work, no grad degree	5.6	5.6
Graduate degree	5.8	7.9
Employment status		
Full-Time	34.9	82.9
Part-Time	16.9	2.8
Not employed outside home	48.2	13.0
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*
Age	44.3 (10.6)	45.2 (11.0)

Note. The percentage of missing data for mothers ranged from 1.0% to 2.5% and for fathers ranged from 2.0% to 3.6%.

sources included: 9% who first heard about the need for foster parents while inquiring about adoption, 6% who listed multiple sources, 4% who learned of fostering from foster children, 1% of respondents who had themselves been foster children, and 4% who learned through other sources. Awareness source did not differ by race, exposure to persons with special needs, or exposure to foster children (see Table 4). A chi-square test could not be used to determine whether awareness source differed by residence because of low cell sizes (see Table 4 for descriptive statistics). Multi-nominal regressions could not be used to determine whether awareness source differed by fostering motives

Table 3

Types of Children with Special Needs Fostered

Type of child	% of families
Sexually abused	74%
Mentally ill or emotionally or behaviorally disturbed	59%
Developmentally disabled or mentally retarded	37%
Drug-exposed infant or newborn	28%
Physically handicapped or seriously ill	21%
Born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or other alcohol- related disorders	19%
Born with AIDS virus	1%

Note. The percentage of missing data ranged from 2.4% to 4.5% except for sexually abused children (15.5% of families)

because this procedure is not available in WesVar (see Table 5 for descriptive statistics).

Awareness Source and Foster Family Service

Linear regression was used to model continuous foster family service variables and logistic regression was used to model intention to continue fostering, a dichotomous variable. In all analyses, two-tailed tests and a .05 level of statistical significance were used. To examine the main effects of awareness source, a regression model was estimated for each dependent variable. For each dependent variable, effects coding allowed for comparisons between each awareness source (e.g., average number of children fostered by respondents who first became aware of the need for foster parents through mass media) and the overall mean (e.g., average number of children fostered in the entire sample) or the overall odds in the case of logistic regression.

To examine interaction effects between awareness source and each hypothesized moderator, instead of using effects coding to code awareness source, a dichotomous variable was coded for each awareness source. For example, the mass media dichotomous variable was coded "1" if the respondent became aware of the need for foster parents through mass media and "0" if respondent became aware of the need for foster parents through a

Table 4

Awareness Source by Race, Residence, Exposure to Foster Children and Persons with Special Needs

Awareness source	Race		Residence		Exposure to foster children		Exposure to persons with special needs	
	European-American	African-American	Rural	Non-rural	Yes	No	Yes	No
Mass media	28.3%	25.5%	25.0%	28.5%	21.4%	30.7%	27.5%	29.3%
Another foster parent	33.2%	44.9%	35.1%	36.4%	35.8%	34.0%	30.5%	36.3%
Church or other religious organization	3.7%	3.6%	2.7%	4.0%	4.6%	3.5%	3.7%	3.8%
Civic or community organization	9.7%	4.7%	11.6%	7.4%	8.5%	7.9%	7.8%	8.2%
Other method	25.1%	21.2%	25.5%	23.7%	29.8%	23.9%	30.6%	22.3%
Chi-square test	$X^2 = 3.47, p = .236$		na (low cells sizes)		$X^2 = 2.79, p = .386$		$X^2 = 4.12, p = .227$	

method other than mass media. Then, for each dependent variable four separate regression models were estimated. In each regression model, one of four dichotomous awareness source variables (e.g., another foster parent), a moderator variable (e.g., race), and the product of these two variables were entered into the regression equation.

Number of children fostered.   The distribution of number of children fostered was positively skewed. The median was 7 and the mean was 18.7 ($SD = 41.7$). Awareness source did not predict total number of children fostered (see Table 6). However, parents who were more motivated by the need to "give to children" and who reported awareness via civic organizations, fostered more children than did parents who were less motivated by this need. Residence, race, previous exposure to fostering, previous exposure to persons with special needs, and the other two fostering motives were not statistically significant moderators.

Years of fostering.   The distribution of number of years of fostering was positively skewed. The median was 5 and the mean was 6.7 ($SD = 6.5$). Awareness source was related to number of years of fostering service (see Table 6). Respondents who became aware though churches or other religious organizations fostered for more years than did the average respondent. Respondents who became aware through mass media fostered for fewer years than did the average respondent. This association existed only for foster parents who lived in urban/suburban counties. In rural counties, respondents who became aware through mass media fostered for slightly more years than the average respondent.

   The association between awareness via mass media and number of years of fostering also was moderated by previous exposure to persons with special needs. Parents who were exposed to persons with special needs and who first became aware via mass media, had fostered for fewer years than had parents who were not exposed to persons with special needs. The awareness sources of civic organizations and other foster parents did not interact with moderating variables to predict number of years fostering.

Number of types of special needs children fostered.   Out of seven different types of special-needs children, foster families fostered

Table 5

Awareness Source by Types of Motivation

Awareness Source	Wanting children		Giving to children		Satisfying family needs	
	M (SD)	Median	M (SD)	Median	M (SD)	Median
Mass media	1.1 (1.4)	0	3.9 (1.3)	4	.4 (.7)	0
Another foster parent	.9 (1.2)	1	3.8 (1.4)	4	.6 (.9)	0
Church or other religious organization	.9 (1.4)	0	3.3 (1.5)	4	.5 (.8)	0
Civic or community organization	.6 (.9)	0	4.0 (1.2)	4	.5 (.8)	0
Other method	1.6 (1.6)	1	4.0 (1.3)	4	.5 (.7)	0
All sources	1.1 (1.4)	1	3.9 (1.3)	4	.5 (.8)	0

Table 6

Awareness Sources and Fostering Service Measures

Outcome measure	Number of children fostered		Number of years fostered		Number of types of special-needs children fostered		Intention to continue fostering		
Awareness source	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	OR
Mass media	-8.00	.106	-1.63	.016	-.21	.127	.22	.287	1.24
Another foster parent	-2.65	.658	-.40	.555	.05	.717	.49	.041	1.63
Church or other religious organization	23.84	.235	2.55	.016	.27	.385	-.14	.673	.87
Civic or community organization	-4.52	.584	.85	.367	-.05	.763	-.26	.521	.77
Overall model	$F(4,13) = 1.54,$ $p = .249, R^2 = .023$		$F(4,13) = 3.23,$ $p = .048, R^2 = .023$		$F(4,13) = .61,$ $p = .666, R^2 = .006$		$F(4,13) = 2.65,$ $p = .081, R^2 = .019$		

a median of 2 types of children (M = 2.7, SD = 1.73). The largest percentage of parents had fostered children who had been sexually abused (74%), and the smallest percentage of parents had fostered children born with the AIDS virus (1%) (see Table 3). Awareness source did not predict total number of types of special-needs children fostered (see Table 6). None of the moderators interacted with awareness sources to predict number of types of special-needs children fostered.

Intention to continue fostering. Seventy-two percent of foster families reported an intention to continue fostering over the next three years. Awareness source did not predict the intention of respondents to continue fostering (see Table 6). However, parents who were more motivated by the need to "give to children" and who became aware via another foster parent, were less likely to express the intention to continue than were parents who were less motivated by this need. Residence, race, previous exposure to fostering, previous exposure to persons with special needs, and the other two fostering motives were not statistically significant moderators.

Discussion

Previous research on recruitment suggests that mass media generates more fostering inquires; whereas, word-of-mouth recruitment by other foster parents is more efficient in producing licensed foster families (Ougletree, 1957; Smith & Gutheil, 1988). However, in this study, awareness sources, in most cases, did not differentially affect more distal foster family service measures. The source of respondents' awareness of the need for foster parents did not predict number of children fostered, number of types of special-needs children fostered, or intention to continue fostering. However, respondents who became aware through religious organizations fostered for more years; respondents who became aware through mass media fostered for fewer years. Four interaction effects were found. Residence, exposure to persons with special needs, and being motivated by a need to give to children moderated the association between some awareness sources and foster family service measures. Race, prior exposure to fostering, and two other fostering motives did not moderate the association

between awareness sources and the type and length of fostering services.

Implications for Practice and Policy

In general, this study found that the method through which foster parents reported that they learned of the need for foster parents does not affect the type and length of foster family service. Once foster parents are approved and begin accepting placements, perhaps other factors such as agency services and willingness to accept special-needs children are more determinant of foster family service measures (see Cox, Orme, & Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes, Orme, & Buehler, 2001). The fact that recruitment methods do not differentially affect foster family service measures supports the notion that foster care agencies should use a variety of recruitment methods to spread awareness about the critical need for foster parents. Moore et al. (1988) reported that 37% of foster parent applicants reported they had been recruited by more than one recruitment method. Other researchers suggest that knowledge about fostering must accumulate, often for over a year, before people inquire about fostering (Glassberg, 1965; Palmer, 1981; Pasztor & Wynne, 1995). Using a variety of recruitment methods, agencies maximize the potential to spread awareness about fostering and to supplement and reinforce previous knowledge about fostering.

The results of this study suggest that agencies might make more effective use of civic and religious organizations to recruit foster parents. In this study only 9% of respondents first became aware of the need for foster parents through civic or community organizations. Much has been written about strategies to involve the community in recruitment activities (see Barbell & Sheikh, 2000; Pasztor et al., 1989; Pasztor & Wynne, 1995). More agencies need to invest resources to implement these strategies which would increase community awareness about the need for foster parents and ultimately increase interest in fostering.

The current study found that only 4% of respondents first became aware through churches or religious organizations and these respondents had fostered for more years than the average respondent. These results suggest that agencies should not only recruit in religious organizations because they are being

underutilized, but also because foster families recruited through churches might foster longer. Previous research has shown that many foster parents are religious (Abbey, 1974; Buehler, Cox, & Cuddeback, 2001; Fine & Pape, 1991; Le Prohn, 1993) and report attending worship services (Abbey, 1974; Kirby, 1997). Le Prohn (1993) found that one motive for fostering is to fulfill religious beliefs by helping a child, and Kraus (1975) suggests that people who belong to a place of worship may be more altruistic in their motives and less centered on their own needs. Cox (2000) found that foster families who belong to a place of worship were more willing to foster children who have been deprived or abused than families who did not belong to a place of worship.

Unfortunately, there are not many good examples in the recruitment literature about how to recruit in places of worship. Within the African-American community, one example is the One Church/One Child organization (GAO, 1989). This organization works with state child welfare agencies and African-American churches to increase the awareness of the need for African-American foster and adoptive parents. One Church/One Child also canvasses local church members and refers potential foster parents to state social service agencies. The findings of this study suggest that agencies should develop recruitment strategies to use religious organizations more effectively.

Although respondents who reported becoming aware through mass media had fostered for fewer years than the average respondent, this relationship was moderated by residence. Specifically, rural respondents who became aware through mass media fostered for more years; whereas, urban and suburban respondents who became aware through mass media fostered for fewer years. Kriener and Kazmerzak (1995) suggest that public service announcements on television and radio were more effective in urban counties; however, this study found no main effects of residence on awareness source. Agencies in need of foster parents in rural areas should ensure that recruitment messages delivered over mass media also are reaching rural populations.

The relationship between mass media and number of years fostered also was moderated by exposure to persons with special needs. Exposure to persons with special needs was able to moderate the negative effect of mass media on number of years fostered,

which may suggest those who have experience with persons with special needs should be targeted in recruitment campaigns. Previous research also has suggested targeting persons employed in a helping profession (e.g., nurses, teachers, social workers) because of their experiences in caring for children, especially children with special needs, and their willingness to care for such children (Cox et al., in press; GAO, 1989; Siegel & Roberts, 1989).

Parents who were more motivated by the need to "give to children" and who became aware via civic organizations, fostered more children than parents who were less motivated by this need. When recruiting in civic organizations, perhaps messages that focus on the needs of children should be emphasized such as the importance of providing homes for foster children, giving foster children love, helping foster children with special problems, and saving children from life in an institution. In regards to the moderating effects of the variables just discussed, some caution should be exercised. Due to the large number of interactions examined and the small number that were found to be significant, it is possible that one or more of these interactions could have been found by chance.

Methodological Strengths and Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The present study is based on a large, national probability sample of licensed foster families, and it provides the best estimates to date on how foster parents became aware of the need for foster parents. However, this sample has limitations that should be considered. In particular, the sample in the present study was limited to current licensed foster families. No data on awareness source was available for foster families who discontinued fostering. It might be that families who continue fostering would have fostered longer, have fostered more children, and have fostered more types of special needs children; therefore, the present study might overestimate these foster family service measures. However, because this study only measures fostering service to date (e.g., number of years fostered so far), then one might expect that former foster families would have fostered longer, have fostered more children, and have fostered more types of special needs

children, thus this study might underestimate these foster family service measures.

Cohort effects also must be considered because foster families in this study were licensed from 1944 to 1991. Therefore, this study only may suggest that foster care agency involvement with religious organizations is less prevalent today (or at the time of the survey) than in the past and that the use of mass media by agencies is more prevalent today than in the past. It may not suggest that foster families who find out about fostering through religious organizations serve longer as foster families or that foster families who find out about fostering through mass media serve for shorter periods of time.

To address these limitations, future research should collect recruitment data from foster families who inquire about fostering, and follow these families prospectively. In addition to examining relationships between recruitment methods and the foster family service measures outlined in this study, such a design would make it possible to examine the effects of recruitment methods at different points in the recruitment process and family life cycle including: initial inquiry about fostering, attendance at informational meetings, request for fostering application, application completion, licensure, initial child placement, and decision to discontinue fostering. This type of prospective study is strongly advised because previous research has shown that only 6% to 9% of inquiries result in licensed families (Friedman et al., 1980; Ougheltree, 1957; Siegel & Roberts, 1989). A prospective design also would add to the validity of recruitment data because the data would be more proximal to the time of data collection. In this study foster parents were asked how they first became aware of the need for foster parents, often 5–10 years later, so some foster parents may have inaccurately reconstructed this information from their memories.

In addition to sampling and design limitations, there also are potential limitations concerning the measurement of awareness source. Families' first awareness of the need for foster parents measures only one aspect of recruitment. In future studies other recruitment measures should be collected, such as the influences on families' decisions to foster (see Coyne, 1978). In addition, when asking about recruitment, the list of recruitment sources

should be tailored to the agency's specific recruitment activities and strategies. Information about the effectiveness of agency specific sources (e.g., billboard, television feature on fostering, newspaper advertisements) is likely to be more useful than information about the effectiveness of more general sources (e.g., mass media).

Because of the complex nature of the decision to foster, qualitative interviews of relatively new foster parents should be conducted to better understand the process(es) involved in the decision to foster, including the interplay of various recruitment methods in this decision-making process. Qualitative research might generate new ideas about what types of information or support is needed by prospective foster parents to make informed decisions about whether to foster. In addition qualitative research could guide future quantitative research on recruitment.

Conclusion

Because of a chronic shortage of foster families, finding ways to recruit and retain qualified foster parents is critically important to foster care agencies. The results of this study support the use of a variety of recruitment methods and suggest that religious and civic organizations are underutilized as avenues of recruitment. Although some linkages were found, the source of first awareness of the need for foster parents was found to be largely unrelated to foster family service measures. Thus, future recruitment studies should be prospective, focusing on the effects of recruitment methods on more proximal measures such as foster parent inquiries, applications, licensure, and initial child placement. Future research also should explore qualitatively the decision-making processes of prospective foster families who contact agencies to inquire about fostering.

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