

1-1-2012

## Heterogeneity among potential foster carers: an investigation of reasons for not foster caring

Melanie Randle

*University of Wollongong, mrandle@uow.edu.au*

Leonie Miller

*University of Wollongong, leoniem@uow.edu.au*

Sara Dolnicar

*University of Wollongong, s.dolnicar@uq.edu.au*

Joseph Ciarrochi

*University of Wollongong, joec@uow.edu.au*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/commpapers>



Part of the [Business Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Randle, Melanie; Miller, Leonie; Dolnicar, Sara; and Ciarrochi, Joseph: Heterogeneity among potential foster carers: an investigation of reasons for not foster caring 2012, 382-397.  
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/commpapers/2776>

---

# Heterogeneity among potential foster carers: an investigation of reasons for not foster caring

## Abstract

Although Australia is experiencing a shortage of foster carers, there is currently little understanding of why people do not become carers. This study explores the reasons given for not fostering through a survey of 897 non carers. Results indicate that, at the aggregate level, people do not become carers because they do not know anything about fostering, or because they are busy with their own children, work, or commitments to family and friends. However, if we account for heterogeneity, differences in these barriers are observed for subgroups within the sample. We investigate the structure of the market of potential foster carers by segmenting the market using cultural background as the segmentation base. Results indicate that the reasons for not fostering differ depending on the subgroup being examined. Theoretically, this suggests that heterogeneity exists within the foster care market, and that examining barriers to foster care only at the aggregate level neglects the importance of individual subsegment characteristics. Practically, results are important because they suggest that generic marketing campaigns aimed at the entire community have limited effect and that customised strategies are required to attract the particular types of carers most needed.

## Keywords

not, reasons, investigation, carers, foster, potential, among, caring, heterogeneity

## Disciplines

Business | Social and Behavioral Sciences

## Publication Details

Randle, M., Miller, L., Dolnicar, S. & Ciarrochi, J. (2012). Heterogeneity among potential foster carers: an investigation of reasons for not foster caring. *Australian Social Work*, 65 (3), 382-397.

Running head: HETEROGENEITY AMONG FOSTER CARERS

**Heterogeneity Among Potential Foster Carers: An Investigation of Reasons for  
Not Foster Caring**

## **Abstract**

*Australia is experiencing a shortage of foster carers, however there is currently little understanding of why people do not become carers. This study explores the reasons given for not fostering through a survey of 897 non-carers. Results indicate that – at the aggregate level – people do not become carers because they do not know anything about fostering, or because they are busy with their own children, work, or commitments to family and friends. However, if we account for heterogeneity, differences in these barriers are observed for subgroups within the sample. We investigate the structure of the market of potential foster carers by segmenting the market using cultural background as the segmentation base. Results indicate that the reasons for not fostering differ depending on the subgroup being examined. Theoretically, this suggests that heterogeneity exists within the foster care market, and that examining barriers to foster care only at the aggregate level neglects the importance of individual subsegment characteristics. Practically, results are important because they suggest that generic marketing campaigns aimed at the entire community have limited effect and that customised strategies are required to attract the particular types of carers most needed.*

**Key words:** foster care, market segmentation, heterogeneity, recruitment, volunteers

The number of children in out-of-home care in Australia has more than doubled in the past 10 years, with the largest proportion of these children in foster care (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2010). Children in out-of-home care are most likely to be male (52%), between the ages of 5 and 9 years (30%), or 10 and 14 years (30%), and have been in their placement for more than five years (AIHW, 2010). However, during the same period, the number of people willing to be foster carers has decreased (Wooldridge, 2009). There is currently little information available to foster care agencies offering insight into the reasons people do not consider foster caring. The purpose of this study is to investigate the barriers that prevent people from becoming foster carers and to provide strategies for developing marketing campaigns that overcome these barriers and attract more carers.

The study is based on a theoretical approach known as ‘market orientation’ which is defined as “the organisationwide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customer needs, dissemination of the intelligence across departments, and organisationwide responsiveness to it” (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990, p.6). Marketing activities by foster care organisations are currently limited in two ways. Firstly, organisations do not allocate any significant budget for marketing, viewing it as taking money away from the core service of foster care, and secondly, marketing activities, if undertaken at all, are not based on market intelligence. In this case, market intelligence is an understanding of those people who currently do not foster a child but who would consider doing so in future. Such an understanding is crucial for developing the most effective marketing messages and choosing the most suitable communication channels for recruiting new foster carers.

## **Literature Review**

### *Reasons for Foster Caring*

Recent studies have identified that the reasons people become foster carers are complex and multifaceted. Both Australian and international research has found that most carers take on the role first and foremost in order to benefit the child, for example, by providing them with a safe and nurturing home environment. However, it is also acknowledged by carers that they themselves benefit from fostering through, for example, a sense of personal satisfaction from the role, or enjoyment of a child's company. In their examination of all NSW residents using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data, McHugh et al. (2004) found that the primary motivations for becoming foster carers are associated with positive outcomes for the children, for example assisting a child's positive development in the areas of formal education, health and social capabilities.

Numerous US-based studies have provided insight into foster carers' motivations. Jarmon, Mathiesen, Clarke, McCulloch and Lazear (2000) reported a range of reasons for foster caring, including the inability to have children biologically, the alignment of fostering with spiritual or religious values, and the payment of financial allowances. Goughler and Trunzo (2005) examined older foster carers (with an average age of 64 years) and their foster care agencies, and reported a similarly wide range of reasons for foster caring. These included: facilitation of the expression of religious values; assistance in dealing with the absence of older children from the home; and fulfilment of deeper needs for self-actualisation.

McHugh et al. (2004) revealed some insights into the types of households in which foster carers live. They are generally comprised of an adult couple aged 35- to 45-

years old with a household income in the mid-range. The female household member is most likely not in the labour force and has no post-school qualifications (McHugh et al., 2004). However, the ABS can only provide data relating to households, not the individuals who initiate the decisions to become foster carers. In addition, this information can only assist foster care agencies to understand households that have already made the decision to become foster carers, not those where people would consider becoming carers but who have not, for whatever reason, done so previously.

### *Reasons for Not Fostering*

Other studies focus on the issue of why people start, but then discontinue, foster caring (Jarmon et al., 2000; McHugh et al., 2004; Triseliotis, Borland, & Hill, 1998). In a study of Australian foster carers, these reasons were found to include: serious behavioural challenges presented by the foster child; negative influence of the foster child on the carer's biological children; and a general lack of support from foster care agencies (McHugh et al., 2004). Similar findings have resulted from studies in the US and UK, with reasons for discontinuation including behavioural problems of the foster child, cumbersome bureaucracy, and lack of autonomy to make decisions relating to the child (Jarmon et al., 2000; Triseliotis et al., 1998).

Less attention has been given to the question of why the large majority of adults in the population have not considered becoming foster carers. This question is important if the objective is to find new foster carers who currently have little knowledge of foster care but who may be interested if presented with the correct information. Keogh and Svensson (1999) surveyed Victorian residents who had previously contacted an agency about becoming a foster carer. As this sample involved 91 people who had

already demonstrated some level of interest in becoming foster carers, the findings are somewhat limited in their generalisability. The study found that over half of the individuals who had called to enquire about foster care did not proceed due to “changes in their personal circumstances”. These circumstances were broad ranging and included changes in marital status, financial situation, work arrangements, and issues to do with their own children. Other reasons for not becoming a carer after enquiring included the agency failing to follow up with the individual after their enquiry, the agency deciding that the person would not be a suitable carer, and the lack of suitable placements available at the time of the enquiry.

In Australia, there have been a few recent attempts to investigate why people do not become carers (Randle, Miller, Dolnicar & Ciarrochi, 2010; Victorian Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, as cited in Richardson, Bromfield, & Higgins, 2005; South Australian Department of Family and Community Services, 1997). Across these studies, common reasons for not fostering include: (a) potential carers’ lack of confidence in their ability to perform the role successfully; (b) the level and length of the commitment; (c) the possibility that it would disrupt their biological family; (d) fear of having to deal with challenging behaviour; (e) perceived financial difficulties arising from caring for a child; (f) conflicting work commitments; and (g) a perceived lack of fit with their current lifestyle.

The challenge of attracting foster carers is becoming more and more difficult as a result of recent socio-economic trends. The number of non-profit organisations operating in Australia has increased substantially in recent decades, which has increased competition for financial and human resources. These human resources are often in the form of volunteer labour – or in the case of foster care, people willing to become carers. From a marketing perspective, the challenges (adapted from Randle &

Dolnicar, 2009) faced by foster care agencies can be described as: (a) identifying potential customers (those people who would be interested in foster caring); (b) designing a suitable product (a rewarding foster care experience); (c) recruiting them (have them begin fostering); and (d) developing loyalty (have them continue caring for as long as possible).

This problem is further complicated by the facts that in Australia, foster children coming from Indigenous and non-English speaking backgrounds are overrepresented in the population, and their numbers are growing (Bromfield, Higgins, Osborne, Panozzo, & Richardson, 2005; Gurak, Smith & Goldson, 1982; Mathiesen, Jarmon, & Clarke, 2001; McHugh et al., 2004; Taplin, 2005). Evidence suggests that a range of benefits are associated with placing foster children with carers of the same cultural background, such as developing a strong and positive sense of identity, developing familiarity with customs and cuisine, and less confused communications resulting from language barriers (Blatt, 2000; Burke & Paxman, 2008; Urquiza, Wu, & Borrego, 1999). Combined, these factors mean that the challenge of foster care recruitment involves not only finding carers, but also finding carers from a range of cultural backgrounds (McHugh et al., 2004).

In preparation for this project, a number of large scale data sets involving Australian families and children were examined to identify whether any insight could be gained into the current Australian foster care market and the reasons people choose not to become carers. The data sets examined include the Family Characteristics and Transitions Survey 2006-2007 conducted by the ABS; the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Australia (HILDA) Survey conducted by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research; and the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies. Not only

did none of the surveys ask questions specifically about foster care, but there were also insufficient numbers of foster families and children included in the samples to conduct any statistical analysis on their behaviour or other characteristics. Therefore, in order to shed light on the current situation regarding foster care in Australia it is necessary to conduct empirical studies to fill the current gaps in knowledge.

When considering a market (or population), the term “heterogeneity” refers to the situation where individuals within the market possess diverse characteristics. In relation to the foster care market, the identification of heterogeneity involves investigating whether subgroups within the population are influenced by different barriers to foster caring, or whether everyone has the same reasons for not fostering. The primary aim of this study is to identify whether the reasons individuals do not consider becoming foster carers (or the barriers to foster caring) differ according to cultural background. This is compared to the market-level barriers to foster care and differences between those who would and would not consider fostering in future (extended from Randle et al., 2010). Methodologically, the study contributes to the field by taking an approach uncharacteristic of studies of foster care — namely, to focus on members of the general population who have no prior experience of foster caring, rather than on carers or social workers who already have a high level of awareness and involvement in the foster care system.

## **Method**

### **Design**

The study was based on a survey design using a permission-based internet panel. The panel is recruited by an online research company (ResearchNow) through various channels including online, through newspapers, and at shopping centres. This multimethod recruitment strategy avoids the sampling bias that can occur when panel members are recruited online only. The panel is set up and maintained to be representative of the Australian population. Panel members qualify for the survey only if they are not eliminated by the screening criteria. They are provided with information regarding the study, including the topic area and the estimated completion time. If they agree to participate, panel members are provided with a link to the online self-completion survey.

Since the sample was drawn from the general population it includes individuals who have an interest in foster care, as well as those who do not. Our sample is not representative of the Australian population, but was instead structured to ensure that a range of cultural backgrounds were included. This sampling strategy was employed to account for the highly multicultural nature of the Australian population (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008), and for the fact that some minority groups are over-represented in foster care.

The groups selected for inclusion in this study were originally taken from the “ancestry” categories utilised by the ABS Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004), thus representing the largest cultural groups within the Australian population. In the developmental stages of the study it was recommended (during interviews with experts in the field) that some additional groups be included due to their specific views on volunteering activities such as foster care. These “experts” were interviewed in the exploratory stages of the project to ensure the questionnaire designed was culturally appropriate and relevant for the groups included in the study. Interviews

were conducted in New South Wales and Victoria, and included cultural community leaders, representatives from the Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council, the Illawarra Multicultural Resource Centre, and local foster care agencies. As a result of the exploratory phase, the total number of cultural backgrounds included in the sample is 14.

## **Procedures**

Fieldwork was conducted between October 2006 and March 2007. The project team included researchers from the marketing and psychology disciplines who have been conducting qualitative and quantitative research in the areas of volunteering and foster care since 2004.

Invitations to complete the questionnaire were emailed to 1,415 adult members registered on the panel, and 951 participants completed the survey (a response rate of 67 percent). Of these 951 participants, 897 were not currently, nor had ever been, foster carers. The analysis presented here is based on this subsample of 897 respondents.

Members of the panel who completed the survey were paid a small fee for their participation, in the form of points which could be redeemed for rewards through ResearchNow. Respondents are classed as volunteers since the monetary value of the points is negligible.

## **Measures**

Respondents were allocated to cultural background sampling quotas by using the ABS categories for cultural background and ancestry. Using the ABS question

procedure, respondents were asked to indicate which cultural background they most strongly associate with by using a drop down list.

Participants provided demographic details including gender and date of birth. By selecting one answer option only, participants also indicated their marital status; education level; employment status; personal income before tax; and whether they had children (details of answer options are provided in Table 1). The response formats were determined following a review of the ABS answer formats for similar questions, and pretesting of the questionnaire.

Using a yes/no answer format, respondents were asked to indicate whether they were currently, or had ever been, a foster carer. Those who had not previously been foster carers were asked to indicate why this was the case, using a list of 15 possible reasons. The list of reasons (see Table 2) was developed following a review of the available foster care literature. However, given the scarcity of published information on this topic it was also necessary to consult with practitioners in the foster care field to ensure that the list developed was comprehensive from a practical perspective. Respondents could select as many reasons as applied to them, including an ‘Other’ option which allowed them to specify their reason in a free text field (respondents were allowed to nominate as many “other” reasons as they wanted). In addition, participants indicated whether they would consider foster caring in future and responded using a yes/no answer format.

## **Participants**

The mean age of the sample ( $n = 897$ ) is 34.66 years ( $SD = 10.82$  years, range 18.60 – 68.86 years), indicating a positively skewed sample (see Table 1 for the

sample distribution for age). As a whole, the sample is significantly more female (n = 500 females) than the general population,  $\chi^2(1) = 5.33, p = .021$ .

Table 1 also provides a summary of the total sample with respect to personal income, employment status, educational level and marital status. Forty-six percent of the sample are tertiary qualified, 80 percent earn less than \$60,000 per annum, and the majority are employed full-time. In addition, just over half are in a partner relationship and 40 percent (359 respondents) have children.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

## **Data Analysis**

The sample was segmented based on whether individuals would consider becoming foster carers in future. Those respondents who indicated they would consider fostering in the future were labelled the “*Potential Foster Carers*” while those that indicated they would not consider fostering in the future were labelled the “*Non-Foster Carers*”.

Respondents who selected the “Other” reason for not being a foster carer specified the reason by typing in an open text field. The resultant data was analysed to provide insight on additional factors that might prevent individuals from considering foster caring. In total, 91 respondents selected the “Other” option, and 77 of them provided detail regarding the nature of their reason (see Table 1). The two most common reasons, “Too young” and “Single”, were treated as separate categories in subsequent analyses. “Other” responses that were consistent with existing categories (reasons a-n in Table 1) were recoded to reflect selection of the appropriate category.

Responses for each reason for not fostering were tallied for the *Potential Foster Carers* and *Non-Foster Carers* groups, as well as for each different cultural background. Chi-squared tests of independence were conducted on each reason category. Nonselection was assumed to indicate that respondents did not find the reason applicable in their case. Alpha was adjusted using the Bonferroni method so that a familywise error rate of .05 was maintained.

Finally, the five most commonly selected reasons for not foster caring were examined according to cultural background, in order to explore whether this acts as a factor in determining the relative importance of each reason. Given the large number of cultural groups included in the study, this analysis was limited to a description of the level of endorsement, namely the percentage of each cultural group that had selected each reason.

## **Results**

### **Reasons for Not Fostering**

Table 2 presents the percentage of respondents in the total sample that identified each reason as an explanation for why they had never been a foster carer. The most frequently nominated reason was “I don’t know anything about foster care” (40%), while other commitments and responsibilities – one’s own children (25%), and work and family/friends (24%) – were indicated by around one quarter of respondents. The reason “No one has ever asked me to” was selected by over a fifth of the sample (22%), which when combined with the frequent selection of “I don’t know anything about foster care”, indicates that a large proportion of the population has not received,

or had access to, information about foster caring. The next most frequently selected reasons were “Taking in a child is too big a commitment to make” (22%), and “It would be too expensive for me to have a foster child” (16%), both of which suggest concern over the potential burden and commitment of becoming a foster carer.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

### **Comparison of Potential Foster Carers and Non-Foster Carers**

Of those respondents who indicated they had no experience with foster care, 362 (40%) belonged to the *Potential Foster Carers* group, while 535 (60%) belonged to the *Non-Foster Carers* group. The *Potential Foster Carers* (219 females, 61%) was significantly more female than the *Non-Foster Carers* group (281 females, 53%),  $\chi^2(1) = 5.56, p = .018$ . Furthermore, significantly more *Potential Foster Carers* (162, 45%) had their own children than *Non-Foster Carers* (197, 37%),  $\chi^2(1) = 5.66, p = .017$ .

The distributions of the *Potential Foster Carers* and *Non-Foster Carers* groups on other demographic measures are given in Table 1. The *Potential Foster Carers* group ( $M = 33.52$  years,  $SD = 9.63$  years, range) was statistically significantly younger than the *Non-Foster Carers* group ( $M = 35.44$  years,  $SD = 11.50$  years, range),  $t(880) = 2.69, p = .007$ . Examination of the raw frequencies of the other demographic variables identified no significant differences between groups on marital status ( $\chi^2(5) = 9.46, p = .092$ ), education level ( $\chi^2(7) = 4.61, p = .708$ ), employment status ( $\chi^2(4) = 0.54, p = .970$ ) or personal income ( $\chi^2(7) = 5.59, p = .588$ ).

A comparison of the reasons for not foster caring between the *Potential Foster Carers* and *Non-Foster Carers* groups are presented in Table 2. *Non-Foster Carers* indicated significantly more frequently that they were too busy with family/friend commitments, had no interest in children, and that taking a child was too big a commitment to make. These reasons are all individual characteristics; it is therefore doubtful that external messages will be effective in converting the *Non-Foster Carers* to *Potential Foster Carers*. In contrast, the *Potential Foster Carers* group was significantly more likely to indicate that no one had ever asked them. This result suggests that foster care agencies may successfully recruit more carers from the *Potential Foster Carers* population simply by communicating more effectively with them.

### **Comparison of Cultural Background Groups**

Table 3 indicates the percentage of the total sample represented by each of the 14 cultural backgrounds sampled in the survey. This table identifies that not all groups were equally represented; for example, the North American/Canadian group was under-represented while the UK group was over-represented. Nevertheless, the majority of the remaining cultural backgrounds were represented at a similar level. As the samples sizes were small the following analyses can only provide indications of the likely trends, and should be interpreted with these limitations in mind.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

In order to assess whether the barriers to foster caring differ between cultural backgrounds, we selected the five most commonly cited reasons for not fostering which had sufficient sample sizes to perform the analysis across groups. The resultant profiles are presented in Table 3 and provide an indication of potential cultural differences in barriers to becoming foster carers. For example, the Vietnamese group was most likely to indicate that they had not been foster carers because they didn't know anything about fostering, the Macedonian and Maltese groups were more likely than the other groups to indicate that they were already too busy with their own children, the Vietnamese, Serbian and Australian groups were more likely than others to be busy with work commitments, the Chinese, Maltese and Serbian groups were more likely than the other groups to be busy with family/friend commitments, and the Dutch group were the most likely to indicate that they had never fostered because no-one ever asked them to.

## **Discussion**

This study has provided insight into the barriers that prevent different groups within Australia from becoming foster carers. The factors preventing the *Non-Foster Carers* group are seemingly all related to unchangeable personal characteristics. However, the factors preventing the *Potential Foster Carers* group from becoming carers relate to the extent and quality of communications between the foster care agency and the individual. This can be remedied through more clearly communicating information such as what is involved in fostering, the types of people who are eligible to become foster carers, and the level of support offered by foster care agencies.

The findings indicate that individuals who would consider fostering in future are younger, more likely to be female, and more likely to already have children of their own. While we know from previous studies that households containing foster carers are likely to contain a couple in a relationship (McHugh et al., 2004), the present findings suggest that it is the female in the household who is more likely to consider foster caring seriously and will likely be the person to initiate contact with the foster care agency. Furthermore, in contrast to those already foster caring – the majority of whom are between the ages of 35 and 54 years (McHugh et al., 2004) – those who would consider the role in future are younger, with an average age of 34 years. This would suggest that communications with potential carers could be targeted at women aged 30 and over, understanding that they may not make an immediate decision, but that continued communications over time may produce the desired result.

This study contributes to a more targeted approach to attracting foster carers within Australia's multicultural society. For example, the Vietnamese group was most likely to indicate that they did not know anything about fostering and that this prevented them from becoming carers. Thus, an educational campaign aimed specifically at Australia's Vietnamese population may help recruit carers from this group. In contrast, the Dutch group was most likely to indicate that they had not been foster carers because no-one had ever asked them to be. This suggests that foster care agencies need to develop strategies to actively approach Dutch communities. This could be achieved, for example, by contacting community leaders or community support groups to gain access and support to inform community members of how they can become carers.

Our discussion thus far has emphasised how marketing campaigns might overcome doubts and uncertainties about foster caring. However, it is important to acknowledge

that some barriers may represent contraindications to becoming a foster carer. For example, it may be difficult to convince people to foster if believe they are too busy with family/friend commitments, have no interest in children, or have significant health issues. Questions also arise as to the suitability of these individuals for the role of foster carer. Rather, it is proposed that marketing campaigns will be most beneficial when they target people that lack or have inaccurate information, are uncertain about whether they are the type of person who could be a foster carer, or have never been asked to provide foster care.

From a public policy perspective, results also emphasise the potential benefits to foster care agencies of employing individuals with marketing knowledge and expertise. The marketing function of these agencies should be recognised as an important part of the delivery of quality foster care services (which by necessity includes high quality carers) and budgeted for in the funding structure that governments provide to support both public and private foster care agencies.

Although data on the over-representation of Indigenous children in care are available in government reports (e.g. Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs [FaHCSIA], 2008), similar data for other over-represented cultural groups are not readily accessible. In order to prioritise these cultural groups and identify those which would benefit most from targeted marketing activity, comparable information in terms of not only proportions, but also absolute numbers, is required.

Consideration should also be given to the geographic location of particular cultural groups in efforts to match them with children who need homes. Intuitively, in many instances the areas in which there are greater numbers of foster children from a particular background will also be the geographical area which is characterised by that

population. In designing a customised marketing campaign to successfully attract carers, practitioners need to understand the areas in which these people live, work, and socialise, and the media channels that they are exposed to.

The theoretical contribution of this research is the identification of cultural heterogeneity within the market of potential foster carers. Results provide preliminary indications that the barriers which prevent individuals from becoming foster carers differ according to cultural background. More in-depth research is required to fully understand the nature and extent of these differences. This is particularly salient because there is an over-representation of minority and Indigenous groups in foster care and trends indicate that the over-representation is increasing (Taplin, 2005). Unfortunately the sample sizes for each cultural group in this study were insufficient to allow sophisticated analysis of differences. Future research could be designed to ensure sufficient numbers of each cultural group to allow for broader comparisons across many different backgrounds.

It should be noted that a limitation of this study is the possibility of a social desirability bias that resulted in an overestimation of the proportion of the population that would consider becoming a foster carer in future. Future research could take into consideration the seriousness of foster caring intentions rather than grouping together all people who indicate they would consider the role in future. Another issue for future investigation relates to the broader conceptualisation of reasons for not foster caring. For example, the reasons used in the current study could be placed into different categories: (1) internal factors relating to the respondents' circumstances (e.g., I am already too busy with my own children); (2) internal factors that make up the respondents' disposition (e.g., I have no interest in children); (3) external factors that reflect the degree of agency about the decision not to foster care (e.g., no one has

ever asked me to); or (4) external factors that arise from beliefs about the foster caring situation (e.g., it would negatively impact my own child). While the present work examined differences between groups for each individual reason, future research should consider whether there is a difference in the patterning of response by reason type between market segments, and how broader response patterns, if found, would inform the approach strategies used by foster care agencies to attract potential carers.

Finally, to extend our understanding of motivations for foster caring, future research would investigate the relationship between carer motivations and outcomes in foster care. This information would enable agencies to: (1) find out whether individuals with motivations that result in optimal placement outcomes have distinct characteristics and could therefore be targeted by marketing communications; and (2) integrate this information into improved screening and assessment practices after initial contact has been made with the agency.

## References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2004). *Australian census analytic program: Australians' ancestries 2001*. Retrieved 12 April, 2006, from [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/free.nsf/0/3382D783B76B605BCA256E91007AB88E/\\$File/20540\\_2001.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/free.nsf/0/3382D783B76B605BCA256E91007AB88E/$File/20540_2001.pdf)
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW]. (2010). *Child protection Australia 2008-09*. Canberra: AIHW.
- Blatt, S. M. (2000). *A guidebook for raising foster children*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey.
- Bromfield, L., Higgins, D., Osborne, A., Panozzo, S., & Richardson, N. (2005). *Out-of-home care in Australia: Messages from research*. National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Burke, S., & Paxman, M. (2008). *Children and young people from non-English speaking backgrounds in out-of home care*. Retrieved 28 August, 2009, from [http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/\\_assets/main/documents/research\\_cald\\_oohc\\_review.pdf](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/research_cald_oohc_review.pdf)
- Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs [FaHCSIA]. (2008). *Australia's children: Safe and well*. Retrieved 28 July, 2010, from [http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/families/progserv/Documents/child\\_protection\\_discussion\\_paper/ChildProtectionDiscussion%20PaperFINAL.pdf](http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/families/progserv/Documents/child_protection_discussion_paper/ChildProtectionDiscussion%20PaperFINAL.pdf)
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship. (2008). *Fact Sheet 4 - More than 60 years of post-war migration*. Retrieved 28 August, 2009, from <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/04fifty.htm>
- Goughler, D. H., & Trunzo, A. C. (2005). Unretired and better than ever: Older adults as foster parents for children. *Families in Society*, 86, 393-400.
- Gurak, D. T., Smith, D. A., & Goldson, M. F. (1982). *The minority foster child: A comparative study of Hispanic, black and white children*. (Monograph No. 9). Retrieved 28 August, 2009, from [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?\\_nfpb=true&\\_ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=ED228354&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=no&accno=ED228354](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED228354&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED228354)
- Jarmon, B. J., Mathiesen, S., Clarke, L., McCulloch, E., & Lazear, K. (2000). *Foster care recruitment and retention perspectives of stakeholders on the critical factors affecting recruitment and retention of foster parents*. Tallahassee, FL: State of Florida Department of Children and Families and the Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies.
- Keogh, L., & Svensson, U. (1999). Why don't they become foster carers?: A study of people who inquire about foster care. *Children Australia*, 24, 13-19.
- Kohli, A. K., & Jaworski, B. J. (1990). Market orientation: The construct, research propositions, and managerial implications. *Journal of Marketing*, 54, 1-18.
- Mathiesen, S., Jarmon, B., & Clarke, L. (2001). Searching for family: Voices of Florida's foster children. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 6, 15-33.

- McHugh, M., McNab, J., Smyth, C., Chalmers, J., Siminski, P., & Saunders, P. (2004). *The availability of foster carers: Main report*. Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales.
- Randle, M., & Dolnicar, S. (2009). Understanding the Australian environmental volunteering market – a basis for behavioural change and a sustainable future. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 17, 192-203.
- Randle, M., Miller, L., Dolnicar, S., & Ciarrochi, J. (2010). Using market segmentation to gain insight into reasons for not foster caring. In H. Yeatman (Ed.), *SInet conference 2010 ebook* (pp. 147-156). Wollongong, Australia: SInet, University of Wollongong.
- Richardson, N., Bromfield, L., & Higgins, D. (2005). *The recruitment, retention, and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander foster carers: A literature review*. National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- South Australian Department for Family and Community Services. Policy and Development Division. & South Australian Health Commission. Behavioural Epidemiology Unit. (1997). *Fostering: The future*. Adelaide, Australia: Department for Family and Community Services.
- Taplin, S. (2005). *Trends in the numbers of children and young people in out-of-home care*. Retrieved 28 August, 2009, from [http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/\\_assets/main/documents/oohc\\_trendsns.pdf](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/oohc_trendsns.pdf)
- Triseliotis, J., Borland, M., & Hill, M. (1998). Foster carers who cease to foster. *Adoption and Fostering*, 22, 54-61.
- Urquiza, A. J., Wu, J., & Borrego, J. (1999). Foster care and the special needs of minority children. In P. A. Curtis, G. Dale & J. C. Kendall (Eds.), *The foster care crisis: Translating research into policy and practice* (pp. 84-98). Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
- Wooldridge, M. (2009). *Foster care in turmoil*. Retrieved 9 October, 2009, from <http://www.acwa.asn.au/email/downloads82/turmoil.pdf>

## Tables

**Table 1:** Distributions<sup>a</sup> of Demographic Variables for Full Sample (N = 897), Non-Foster Carers (n = 535), and Potential Foster Carers (n = 362).

	Age										
	20<24	25<29	30<34	35<39	40<44	45<49	50<54	55<59	60<64	65<69	70
<i>Full</i>	3	19	17	20	13	10	7	4	4	2	1
<i>Non-foster carers</i>	2	20	16	17	14	10	7	4	5	2	1
<i>Potential foster carers</i>	4	17	19	24	13	10	7	3	3	1	1
	Personal income per annum										
	None	< \$20k	< \$20-40k	< \$40-60k	< \$60-80k	< \$80-100k	< \$100-150k	> \$150k			
<i>Full</i>	8	24	24	25	10	5	3	2			
<i>Non-foster carers</i>	8	24	27	25	10	5	3	2			
<i>Potential foster carers</i>	7	22	27	25	10	4	3	1			
	Employment status										
	Full-time	Part-time	Casual	Unemployed	Retired	F/T student	Other				
<i>Full</i>	56	20	0	14	0	10	1				
<i>Non-foster carers</i>	56	19	0	15	0	10	1				
<i>Potential foster carers</i>	57	20	0	13	0	9	1				
	Educational level										
	Some secondary school	School Cert.	HSC	TAFE	Other college	Uni (Undergrad)	Uni (Postgrad)	Other			
<i>Full</i>	7	7	15	17	8	31	15	1			
<i>Non-foster carers</i>	8	7	14	18	7	30	16	0			
<i>Potential foster carers</i>	6	7	16	17	9	31	14	1			
	Marital status										
	Single	Live-in partner	Married	Separated/ Divorced	Widowed	Other					
<i>Full</i>	39	12	44	4	0	1					
<i>Non-foster carers</i>	39	10	45	3	0	1					
<i>Potential foster carers</i>	39	15	41	5	1	0					

*Notes.* <sup>†</sup> Fifteen respondents did not supply their ages. The sample sizes for age are 882 for the total sample, 526 for the *Non-foster carers* sample, and 326 for the *Potential foster carers* sample.

<sup>a</sup> Distribution data reported for the demographic variable sub-groups are percentages.

**Table 2:** Reasons Given for Having Never Been a Foster Carer: Comparison of Non-Foster Carers with Potential Foster Carers<sup>†</sup>.

Reason <sup>a</sup>	Non-foster carers (n = 535)		Potential foster carers (n = 362)		Full sample (N = 897)	$\chi^2$	p
	f	%	f	%	%		
I don't know anything about foster caring	213	40	145	40	40	0.005	.942
I am already too busy with my own children	146	27	79	22	25	3.433	.064
I am too busy with family/friend commitments	156	29	60	17	24	18.703	< .000*
I am too busy with work commitments	138	26	81	22	24	1.367	.242
Taking in a child is too big a commitment	143	27	51	14	22	20.353	< .000*
No one has ever asked me to	76	14	125	35	22	51.298	< .000*
It would be too expensive for me to have a foster child	81	15	60	17	16	0.335	.563
My own health issues/age	80	15	34	9	13	6.019	.014
I wouldn't be the type of person they are looking for to be a foster carer	60	11	30	8	10	2.050	.152
I have no interest in children	61	11	8	2	8	25.691	< .000*
It is likely a foster child would have behavioural problems	38	7	20	6	6	0.889	.346
It would negatively impact my own children	21	4	12	3	4	0.227	.634
I am worried that if I didn't like the child I could not give it back	23	4	12	3	4	0.558	.455
Too young	8	1	16	4	3	7.092	.008
There are already enough people providing foster care	4	1	5	1	1	0.872	.350
Single	3	1	9	2	1	6.064	.014

Notes <sup>†</sup>Extended from Randle et al. (2010)

<sup>a</sup> The reasons *Too young* and *Single* were included as separate reasons after analysis based on frequency of response within the 'Other' category.

\* Significant with Bonferroni adjustment.

**Table 3: Reasons Given for Not Fostering and Interest in Fostering by Cultural Background of Respondent.**

	Aust.	ASTI	Arabic	Chin.	Dutch	UK	Germ.	Greek	Ital.	Mac.	Malt.	Nth Am.	Serbian	Viet.
Reasons for not fostering (full sample) <sup>a</sup>	Percentage endorsed for each cultural group													
<i>I don't know anything about foster caring</i>	34	40	45	53	41	29	40	35	45	41	31	18	40	56
<i>I am already too busy with my own children</i>	29	23	26	15	24	31	25	28	17	35	35	24	26	9
<i>I am too busy with work commitments</i>	32	15	23	28	14	21	22	22	28	17	31	6	33	35
<i>I am too busy with family/friend commitments</i>	25	15	23	30	12	15	23	28	28	22	35	18	35	27
<i>No one has ever asked me to</i>	20	26	20	19	39	26	22	19	18	22	18	24	16	24
Interest in fostering	Percentage of full sample for each cultural group													
<i>Non-foster carers</i>	7	3	8	10	7	13	6	7	7	8	8	1	7	8
<i>Potential foster carers</i>	7	8	7	5	8	11	9	9	8	6	8	2	6	6
<i>Percentage of full sample</i>	7	5	7	8	7	12	7	8	7	7	8	2	6	7

*Note.* Aust. = Australian; ASTI = Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander; Chin. = Chinese; Germ. = German; Ital. = Italian; Mac. = Macedonian; Malt. = Maltese; Nth Am. = North American; Viet. = Vietnamese.

<sup>a</sup> Reasons listed are the top five endorsed reasons for the full sample.