

The Childhood Foster Care Experiences of Female State Prisoners and What it Means for Reentry: Evidence from Matched Administrative Data from Illinois

Haeil Jung
Robert LaLonde
Rekha Varghese

The Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies
The University of Chicago
1155 East 60th Street
Chicago, IL 60637

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I. Introduction

Female offenders have been shown to be a very disadvantaged population. One predictor of these individuals' economic and social well-being as adults is the characteristics of their family background as a child. Children with contacts with their state's child welfare system have been shown to be especially disadvantaged both as children and as adults (Perez, O'Neil, and Gesiriech, 2004; Phillips, Burns, Wagner, and Barth 2004).

Our interest in this study is to understand the extent of contacts of female state prisoners with the child welfare system when they were children and what implications such contacts may have for reentry. To identify these contacts, we use administrative records from Illinois that match information about these women from the state Department of Corrections, the Department of Children and Family Services, and the Department of Employment Security.

In this paper we address the following four questions:

- (i) What percentage of women prisoners were in foster care as children?
- (ii) Does this percentage vary by these women's personal characteristics and by the criminal offenses that led to their incarcerations?
- (iii) Are female offenders with foster care histories have labor market outcomes that can be distinguished from those of other female offenders?
- (iv) Do the answers to the foregoing questions depend on women's foster care placements as children such as type of care (i.e., kin care, foster care boarder, institutional care etc.), on how the foster care spell was resolved, (i.e., through reunification, adoption, or aging out of the system) and on the amount of time these women in foster care?

Rather than relying on survey data to address these questions, we rely on less costly method to obtain state administrative data from Illinois. One goal of this project

has been to demonstrate the utility of these available data sources for examining the linkages between state criminal justice and child welfare systems.

In this study, we used matched individual records from three state agencies. These data, known as the Chapin Hall Integrated Database on Child and Family Programs, have been matched and maintained by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.¹ The first source of data was the admission and exit records from the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). Our sample of female prisoners consists of approximately 14,000 women admitted to Illinois state prisons between July 1, 1989 and April 30, 2001. The second source is out-of-home placements from the Illinois Department Children and Family Services (DCFS). These DCFS foster care records date back to spells in progress as of January 1, 1976. Finally, the third source were quarterly wage records from the Department of Employment Security. These data cover the period from 1995:I through 2003:II.

As we explain below, we cannot study the potential foster care history of all female prisoners, because most incarcerated women in our sample were born prior to 1975. However, we can use most of the data base to study alternatively the incidence and time in foster care during different phases of childhood for the Illinois female prison population.

We have organized this paper as follows. In the next section, we provide some general statistics on the population in foster care starting in the 1960s and continuing through the present. This information is important for understanding how much more

¹ See Goerge, Van Voorhis, and Lee, (1994) and Goerge, Robert M., Fred H. Wulczyn, and Allen W. Harden (undated) for a discussion of this administrative data base and how it is constructed.

frequent are childhood foster care experiences among the population of female state prisoners than for the population of similarly aged adults.

In section three, we describe the three matched samples of female prisoners that we construct from the matched administrative data. These matched samples are defined based on the first age that we can potentially observe foster care spells for each woman in the IDOC data. In the fourth section, we document the childhood foster care experiences of female state prisoners. We examine in section five whether prisoners' characteristics such as their educational attainment and type of offense are associated with their varying foster care experiences. In section six, we explore how the labor market outcomes of the prisoners before and after incarceration vary by their own childhood foster care history, if any. Some concluding remarks follow in section seven.

II. Incidence and Growth of Foster Care in the Population

To better understand the context of childhood foster care spells among female prisoners, it is important to compare its incidence among this population to its incidence among the general population. During each of the last 10 years, approximately 500,000 to 600,000 children are in foster care per year. About one-half of these children start new foster care spells, some for the first time, and the rest are in spells that have continued from the previous year. This number of children constitutes roughly 0.7% of the population of children 18 years and under in the United States.²

The above statistics are for children in foster care during the last decade. But how well do they describe the incidence and characteristics of the foster care population

²See <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/factsheets/fosterdlinks.cfm.cfm>. These figures are based on statistics from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). AFCARS data include all children in foster care, regardless of their eligibility for Title IV-E reimbursement.

during the 1960s through the 1980s? This information is certainly more relevant in interpreting the incidence of childhood foster care among the female prison population. As shown by Table 1, the population in foster care grew starting in the 1930s through the 1960s as a result of several policy changes, including the closing of many orphanages during the middle part of the 20th century. During the 1970s, legislation such as the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974 (amended in 1978) is associated with a further sharp increase in out-of-home placements. Policy changes during the 1990s associated with increased loss of parental rights and adoptions came too late to have any effect on the prisoners in our sample; but it appears likely to have affected their children.

III. The Samples of Matched Administrative Records

A. Birth Cohorts Analyzed in this Paper

The average age of women when they were incarcerated in state prison between 1989 and 2001 was about 31 years (see Appendix Table B). Therefore, because the state foster care records available to us start in 1976, we cannot examine the complete foster care histories of most female prisoners going back to their birth. We can follow the entire *potential* foster care history from birth through age 18 among prisoners born between 1976 and 1983.³ This cohort of female offenders consists of 994 women.

For prisoners born prior to 1976, we can follow only a portion of their potential foster care histories. To study this group systematically, we organized our matched administrative data into two additional samples. The second sample we study consists of female offenders born between 1966 and 1983. Among these women, we follow their entire *potential* foster care history starting from age 10. We refer to this group of women

³ In Illinois, as in some other states, the cases of children in foster care are not automatically closed at age 18. Some children, especially if they are enrolled in college, stay in foster care beyond age 20.

as the tween/teen sample.⁴ This sample of prisoners consists of 6,247 women. Among women prisoners in the tween/teen sample, we can estimate the percentage of female inmates who were in foster care during their teen years.

In our analysis we use the smaller sample of prisoners from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort to construct a rough estimate of the percentage of these women from the the tween/teen cohort who may have had foster care experiences prior to age 10. To estimate this percentage, we use the percentage of women in the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort who were in foster care prior to age 10, but never in foster care after age 10. This percentage turns out to be about 2.4 percent. Using the percentage of offenders in this birth cohort who spent time in foster care prior to age 10, we extrapolate a corresponding percentage for women in tween/teen sample.

The third sample we study consists of female prisoners born between 1961 and 1983. We can observe all of their potential foster care experiences starting at age 15. We refer to this group of prisoners as the late teen cohort. This sample of prisoners consists of 9,556 women. We use the approach described in the previous paragraph to estimate the percentage of these women who were in foster care at younger ages.

Despite its limitations, by studying the late teen sample, we can address two policy-related questions:

- (i) What percentage of female state prison inmates during the 1990s was in foster care during their late teen years?
- (ii) What percentage of female inmates likely “aged-out” of the foster care system as children?

⁴ This definition encompasses both fresh foster care spells (i.e., those that start after age 10) and spells in progress when the child reached age 10.

These percentages and how they have changed across successive birth cohorts will provide a strong indication of the past frequency of these phenomena and whether such women are likely to constitute an increased percentage of women in prison as more recent birth cohorts replace earlier birth cohorts in the prison population.⁵

IV. Incidence of Childhood Foster Care among Female State Prisoners

Our matched administrative records indicate that roughly 10 percent of women in state prison were themselves in foster care sometime as a child. As shown by Table 2, among prisoners from the most recent birth cohort of prisoners in our sample, women born between 1976 and 1983, about 17 percent had spent time in foster care as a child. This relatively recent birth cohort of prisoners is the only one for whom we can track all potential foster care spells from birth through age 18.

A. Estimating the Incidence of Childhood Foster Care Spells among Female Prisoners

To estimate the percentage of all female prisoners who spent time in foster care as children, we “scaled up” the information from (i) the tween/teen and (ii) the late teen samples. A straightforward approach to estimate this percentage starts with the percentage of women in the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort, who were in foster care during their tween/teen years or their late teen years, and compares this percentage to the percentage of these women who were in foster care at anytime during their childhood. To then estimate the percentage of women in the 1966 to 1983 or in the 1961 to 1983 birth cohorts who were in foster care at any time during their childhoods, we use the ratio of these two percentages to “scale up” the percentages of women in foster care in the

⁵ We cannot estimate this percentage for first time offenders because women born earlier during this time period reached age 18 many years prior to the start of our prison data in 1989. But for women born after 1970 in this sample, we can be sure that the first prison spell we observe in our data is in fact their first prison spell.

tween/teen and the late teen samples, respectively. The results of this exercise are the numbers in parentheses in Table 2. This approach works best if the composition of the prison population and the durations of childhood foster care spells have been stable over the period.

As shown by column 2 of Table 2, 8.5 percent of female prisoners born after 1966 spent time in foster care after age 10. In the first row of this column, we observe that 14.5 percent of prisoners from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort also spent time in foster care after age 10. This percentage implies that about 86 percent of the women from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort who spent time in foster care as children spent some of that time in foster care after age 10. The rationale underlying our first approach is that this percentage suggests that the 8.5 percent figure for the tween/teen cohort is likely close to the percentage of these women who were in foster care at any time during their childhoods. Accordingly, we estimate that 9.9 percent of female prisoners from the 1966 to 1983 birth cohort ever spent time in foster care.⁶ (See row 2, column 1, in Table 2A.)

Similarly, the information for the 1961 to 1983 birth cohort, indicates that 5.8 percent of Illinois state prisoners were in foster care during their late teenage years (i.e., beyond age 15). For the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort, this figure was 12.2 percent. This 12 percent figure is about three quarters (72 percent) of the percentage of these women who were in foster care at any time during their childhood. Accordingly, we use this fraction to estimate that 8.1 of female prisoners, from the 1961 to 1983 birth cohort spent time in foster care.as children. (See row 3, column 1, in Table 2A.)

⁶ We estimate this percentage by dividing the percentage of prisoners who were in foster care after age 10, 8.5 percent, by the fraction of prisoners in the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort who were in foster care after age 10, 0.86.

B. Will the Incidence of Childhood Foster Care Experience Rise among Female Prisoners?

We also see from Table 2 that the incidence of childhood foster care spells among female prisoners has likely risen among recent cohorts of prisoners. Our figures suggest that the incidence of time in foster care was the highest for the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort and much lower for the birth cohorts born during the 1960s.

The apparent rise in childhood foster care experiences among incarcerated women is consistent with the general rise in the population of foster care cases during the 1970s and 1980s. The rise also suggests that during the current decade the percentage of incarcerated women with childhood foster care spells will be rising as more recent birth cohorts constitute larger fractions of the prison population. This change occurs because women from earlier birth cohorts with lower incidences of childhood foster care experiences increasingly leave the corrections system and are replaced by offenders from more recent birth cohorts with apparently higher incidences of childhood foster care experience.

C. Is it Birth Cohort or Age at First Prison Spell that Matters?

An alternative way to interpret the evidence in Table 2 is that the more recent birth cohorts have higher incidences of childhood foster care spells not because of policy changes in the child welfare system, but because they entered prison at younger ages. Women entering prison from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort were 17 to 24 years old when they first went to prison. As discussed in the previous section the average age of a woman when she first goes to prison is about 31. So the women in this birth cohort are substantially younger than the typical new inmate. We observe below in Table 9 that

another way that women from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort are different from women from other cohorts is that they were more likely to be incarcerated for a person related offense than other incarcerated women and less likely to have been incarcerated for a drug law violation.

The evidence presented in Table 3 suggests that the age that a woman first enters prison may be more important than her birth cohort in predicting whether she was in foster care as a child. To explore this issue further we examine the incidence of the following:

- (i) Late teen foster care spells among women in different birth cohorts, by age of first entry into state prison;
- (ii) Childhood foster care spells among women in the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort, by age of first entry into state prison.

1. Younger Prisoners are More Likely to Have Been In Foster Care As Children

To address the first of the foregoing questions, we examine the incidence of late teen foster care spells by birth cohort and age of first prison spell (cf. Table 3, Panel A) and the incidence of tween/teen foster care spells by birth cohort and age of first prison spell (cf. Table 3, Panel B). Some of the cells in Tables 3A and 3B are empty because our administrative data on prison admissions begin in July 1989 we have no information about late teen foster care spells among women from the 1961 to 1965 birth cohort who entered prison between the ages of 18 and 24. We also have incomplete data on early prison admissions for this age group among women from the 1966 to 1970 birth cohort.

As shown in Tables 3A and 3B, part of the rise in the incidence of childhood foster care spells across successive birth cohorts is because women who enter prison for

the first time at younger ages are more likely to have been in foster care during their tween/teen years than women who entered prison for the first time when they were older. As shown by the first row of Panel A, the incidence of late teen foster care spells is highest among women from the most recent birth cohort. About 12 percent of women prisoners from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort were in foster care during their late teens compared to 4.2 percent of women from the 1961 to 1965 birth cohort. But, as shown by the remaining rows of the table, all women in the former cohort were 17 to 24 years old when they entered prison for the first time, whereas all women in the 1961 to 1965 cohort were over 25 when they entered prison, *and our sample period*, for the first time. Looking down the columns of Panel A reveals that women who entered prison at younger ages were more likely to have been in foster care during their late teens.

At the same time, among younger prison entrants, those from more recent birth cohorts appear to have been more likely to have been in foster care as children. For example, as shown by the third row of Table 3, Panel A, the incidence of late teen foster care spells among the 18 to 24 year old entrants is 6.5 percent for the 1966 to 1970 birth cohort, 7.8 percent for the 1971 to 1975 birth cohort and 11.3 percent for the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort.

By contrast, among older prison entrants, it is less clear that there has been a rising tendency for more recent birth cohorts to have been in foster care at higher rates. Turning to the fourth row of the table, we observe that the incidence of late teen foster care spells among 25 to 29 year old prison entrants was 5.1 percent for the 1961 to 1965 birth cohort, 4.0 percent for the 1966 to 1970 birth cohort, and 5.2 percent for the 1971 to 1975 birth cohort.

Taken together, our evidence indicates that women who were under 25 when admitted to prison for the first time are more likely than other prisoners to have been in foster care as children. This tendency may be especially strong for the most recent birth cohorts in the Illinois prison system. This conclusion also is consistent with our findings when we extend our analysis to the tween/teen subsample. As shown by columns 2 and 3 (i.e., for the 1966 to 1970 and 1971 to 1975 birth cohorts) of Table 3, Panel B, women who entered prison when they were under 25 were more likely to have been in foster care during their tween/teen years than their peers who entered prison when they were 25 or older. The incidence is roughly 75 percent larger for women who entered prison for the first time between the ages of 18 to 24 than it is for women who entered between the ages of 25 to 29.

At the same time, it also appears that more recent birth cohorts also have had a higher incidence of tween/teen foster care spells. As shown by row 3 of Table 3, Panel B, the incidence of foster care among 18 to 24 year old prison entrants is 3 to 5 percentage points higher among prisoners from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort than it is among the two earlier birth cohorts.

2. Potentially High Foster Care Incidence Among the Youngest Prisoners

Within the relatively narrow age range of 17 to 24 year old prisoners, age-at-first entry is not as strongly associated with higher rates of childhood foster care, but there may be an especially strong association with the youngest of these women.⁷ We find that

⁷ As shown by the first row and first column of Table 4, among young first time prisoners in Illinois state prisons—those entering prison for the first time between the ages of 17 and 24--about 17 percent were in foster care as children. Looking across the first row of the table, we see that this percentage is within 3 percentage points of the corresponding percentage for each of the five birth years from 1976 through 1980. We make a point of highlighting these individual birth years, because these women are born early enough for us to observe them entering prison for the first time after their teenage years.

for most of the age-of-entry groups listed in Table 4, the percent of women who had been on foster care *at any time during their childhood* was within four percentage points of the 16.9 percent figure first reported above in Table 2.

We also find that the two exceptions to this finding are the 17 and the 24 year old entrants. As shown by the second row of Table 4, 27.5 percent of the under 18 entrants were in foster care as children.⁸ Among women born in 1979 and who entered prison prior to age 18, 37.5 percent had been in foster care as children; among women born in 1980, the corresponding figure is 41.7 percent.⁹ It is important, however, that we do not overemphasize the policy importance of this finding because 17 year old female entrants are relatively rare among the female state prison population.

D. Duration and Resolution of Childhood Foster Care Spells.

To this point, we have characterized prisoners' childhood foster care experience simply by whether or not it occurred. But, foster care experiences for the general population differ markedly. Many spells last only a few days. Some spells result in placement with a relative, while other spells result in placement in a hospital or health facility.

Foster care spells also are resolved in dramatically different ways. Many children are reunified with their custodial parents, but others are adopted by a new family or they

⁸ The "p value" for the difference between the percentages of women with childhood foster care experience for 17 year olds and 18 to 24 year olds is less than 0.005.

⁹ To test whether the apparent larger percentage of foster care histories among very young entrants was statistically meaningful, we compared the percentage of first-time prison entrants who were in foster care as children among women who were (i) under 18 years or (ii) 18 years or less when admitted to prison to all other women in the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort. In the first case the difference is highly statistically significant (the p value is less than 0.005) and in the second case the difference in percentages is marginally statistically significant (the p-value is 0.08).

age out of the system at age 18.¹⁰ The durations or the resolutions of their foster care experiences might affect children's later functioning as adults or simply may be important for predicting how such women fare after making contact with the criminal justice system.

It is possible that it is more important to know (i) how long these women were in foster care, (ii) how their foster care spells were resolved, and (iii) at what age they were placed than whether or not they were ever in foster care as children. Accordingly, we first document that these measures of their foster care experiences vary considerably among incarcerated women with childhood foster care spells. We characterize female prisoners' childhood foster care experiences in three ways: (1) the length and number of their spells in foster care; (2) the resolution of their spells; and (3) their placements.

1. How Long Were the Childhood Foster Care Spells?

We first address the question of how much time (in days) these women spent in foster care as children. Our analysis reveals that there is considerable heterogeneity in time spent in foster care among female prisoners. As shown by Table 5, among prisoners with childhood foster care experience and who were born between 1976 and 1983, the median woman spent 972 days or about 2 years and 8 months in foster care. However, 25 percent of these women spent 242 or fewer days (or less than 8 months) in foster care while another 25 percent spent more than 2,159 days (or 5 years and 11 months) in foster care as children. The mean number of days in foster care exceeds the median number of days in foster care by more than one year, because the distribution of days is skewed, as some of these young women spent many years in foster care as children.

¹⁰ In Illinois it is possible for children to stay in foster care beyond their 18th birthday, if, for example, they are enrolled in an approved college or vocational training program.

To see whether the foregoing variation in time spent in foster care among women in the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort holds for a female state prison population, we calculated the number of days spent in foster care between the ages of 10 and 18 for women from the 1966 to 1983 birth cohort. As shown by the middle column of Table 5, during these 9 years of childhood, there also is wide variation in time spent in foster care among women in this sample as well. Among women with tween/teen foster care spells, 25 percent spent less than 5 months in foster care, but another 25 percent spent more than 1,492 days or 4 years in foster care.¹¹

Finally, we consider the number of days spent in foster care during these women's late teen years. Among prisoners in this group are women who "aged-out" of the child welfare system. As shown by the last column in Table 5, among women in the 1961 to 1983 birth cohort, 25 percent spent 7 or fewer months (i.e. 204 days) in foster care during their late teen years, but another 25 percent spent the last three years (i.e., 1,095 days) prior to their 18th birthday in the child welfare system.

2. How Were the Childhood Foster Care Cases Resolved?

A second way we characterize female state prisoners' childhood foster care spells is based on how their cases were resolved. Three important questions are as follows:

- (i) How often were these women reunified with their mothers?
- (ii) How often did these women's mothers lose their parental rights and how often were they adopted?
- (iii) How often do these women appear to have "aged-out" of the child welfare system?

¹¹Most of these days likely accumulated during one or two spells. As shown by Appendix Table C, approximately 60 percent of these women had only one foster care spell during this period; approximately 20 percent had two spells.

We begin with the last of the foregoing questions. Recall that Table 2 revealed that 5.8 percent of all state prisoners, born after 1961, were in foster care during their late teenage years. This percentage puts an upper bound on the percentage of the female state prison population that “aged-out” of the child welfare system as children. The actual percentage must be lower because some of these women were reunified with their mothers. As shown by the last column of Table 6, 35 percent of these late teen foster care spells were resolved when these women were reunited with their mothers or primary care givers; but 65 percent of them have some other outcome besides an adoption or subsidized guardianship, such as aging-out of the system or being classified as a runaway.¹² Although such women are of particular interest, because they spent so much of their childhood in the child warfare system, they appear to constitute only about 3 to 4 percent of the female state prison population.¹³

The other striking finding revealed in Table 6 is how unusual it was for the childhood foster care spells of female state prisoners to have ended with an adoption or a subsidized guardianship. As shown by the second and third rows of the table, less than 1 percent of these foster care spells were resolved by adoption or placement in a subsidized guardianship¹⁴. In another paper, we find that adoption or subsidized guardianships is the

¹² Subsidized guardianships differ from adoptions in several ways. When child welfare case workers determine that adoption is not an option for a child in foster care who is 12 or over, they may be eligible to be placed in subsidized guardianship. Guardians have many similar rights and responsibilities as adoptive parents and receive subsidies from the state including Medicaid care for the child. But unlike an adoption, a guardianship ends when the child turns 18. Furthermore, the birth parents retain visitation rights and other rights including the right to determine the child’s religion. See Illinois Department of Children and Family Services web site: www.state.il.us/dcfs/docs/chapter7.pdf

¹³ This 3 to 4 percent figure is derived by taking 5.8 percent, the percentage of the female state population (from the 1961 to 1983 birth cohort) that was in foster care during their late teens times 0.643, the approximate fraction of these women whose childhood foster care spells were likely resolved when they aged-out of the child welfare system.

¹⁴ Note that the possibility of adoption or placement in a subsidized guardianship does not explain why women who were in foster care prior to age 10 were not in such care after age 10. See Table 6.

most common resolution of the foster care spells of the children of state prisoners (Jung, LaLonde, Varghese 2009). As discussed above in Section II, this difference in foster care case outcomes between the mothers and their children seems likely to be related to changes in public policy that affected the incidence of adoption of children in foster care.

3. Where Were These Women Placed When in Foster Care?

Our matched IDOC-DCFS data also provide information on where women with childhood foster care spells were placed. Some spells resulted in placement with a relative, others with a foster family; still others resulted in their placement in a hospital or health facility or in a group institution. Our analysis of the matched IDOC/DCFS records indicates that these women's foster care experiences differed markedly.

These differing foster care placements likely reflect these women's conditions as children, as well as the functioning of their families, and the policy circumstances that lead to their foster care cases. In turn, these differing placements also could have resulted in differing effects that the foster care experience had on these women as children that carried over into adulthood.¹⁵ Their foster care experiences might affect later functioning as adults or this experience might simply be a predictor of how they are likely to function as adults. In either case, information about placements may be important for understanding how women with different foster care experiences fare after making contact with the criminal justice system.

Among women from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort, we find that the foster care placements of these women also were varied. As shown by the first column of Table 7,

¹⁵ However, a factor mitigating this effect is that, to the extent possible, authorities place children with the objective of improving their welfare. This consideration would tend to reduce the variation in outcomes associated with having any particular foster care placement.

we find that those prisoners with childhood foster care histories were placed in roughly equal proportions in foster care families, with relatives, and in private or public institutions. Each accounted for about one-fifth of placements. An additional 10 percent of women were placed into a hospital or health facility.

Turning to the subsample of incarcerated women from the 1966 to 1983 birth cohort, we observe that during their tween/teen years, the placements of this cohort of women were similarly varied. In particular, as shown by comparing columns 2 and 3 in Table 7, their distribution of foster care placements is similar to those of women from the 1976 to 1983 cohort who were in foster care during their tween/teen years. This evidence suggests that the distribution of foster care placements among women for whom we can observe all possible spells from birth may be representative of the childhood foster care experience of other incarcerated women. Consistent with this conjecture is the distribution of foster care placements for women who were in foster care during their late teenage years (cf. Column 4 of Table 7).

V. Demographic Characteristics and Criminal Offenses of Incarcerated Women

The state administrative data enable us to identify and characterize the childhood foster care experiences of female prisoners. The analysis in this section uses information about women's demographic characteristics available in IDOC records to examine whether prisoners with prior foster care histories are distinguishable from the rest of the prison population. Here we show that this attribute of state prisoners is not highly correlated with most other observed attributes that are more readily available to officials. These findings in turn motivate our analysis in the next section, which shows that female

prisoners' childhood foster care statuses is associated with especially poor prospects for reentry.

A. Association Between Foster Care Incidence and Demographic Characteristics

As shown by Table 8, the first column reports demographic and criminal offense information for women from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort who had at least one tween/teen (i.e., ages 10 to 18) foster care spell. The second column reports this information for all female prisoners who were in foster care between their birth and age 18. This column adds to the first column, women who were in foster between their birth and age 10, but who were never in foster care after age 10. Finally, the third column summarizes the demographic characteristics of women in the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort who never had childhood foster care spells.

Comparisons among the three columns indicate modest, but not striking, differences among the characteristics and criminal offenses of women with and without childhood foster care spells. Among the youngest women in our sample of state prisoners, childhood foster care spells are associated with: (i) Being African-American; (ii) being committed to prison from *outside* of Cook County, and (iii) having more children than their counterparts without childhood foster care experiences. Women with childhood foster care spells also are less likely to have been held for drug-law violations.¹⁶

The higher rate of African-American offenders with child foster care histories among younger prisoners is apparently not the result of higher incidence of childhood

¹⁶ The greater representation of African-Americans among women in the two foster care samples of offenders and the smaller representation of Hispanics is statistically meaningful despite the relatively small numbers of women in the two foster care samples. The difference between these two groups' representation in the child foster care sample and in the sample of women with no foster care histories is statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

foster care among inmates admitted from Cook County. This result is somewhat unexpected, because both the state's African-American population and the state's female population of African-American offenders are disproportionately from Cook County.¹⁷ Among inmates with childhood foster care histories, the percentage of women from Cook County is actually about 6 percentage points lower than it is among offenders without such histories.¹⁸

One important demographic characteristic that is similar among women with and without childhood foster care spells is educational attainment. Only about 15 percent of offenders in the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort reported having a high school degree when admitted to prison.

This evidence of low high school graduation rates among young female prisoners suggests that they will have difficulty transitioning into the labor market after being paroled. The similarity in graduation rates also suggests that women without childhood foster care experience will be as economically disadvantaged as their peers who were in foster care at some point during their childhood. In the next section of this paper, we explore this hypothesis in detail.

The foregoing findings on educational attainment appear to be related to a woman's age when she first enters prison. As shown by Table 9, when we turn to examining tween/teen foster care spells using women from the 1966 to 1983 birth cohort,

¹⁷ In this paper we use the expression "that inmates were from Cook County." This expression does not mean that these offenders were Cook County residents, but instead that they were committed to state prison from Cook County. We believe that it is usually the case that women committed to state prison from Cook County also are Cook County residents.

¹⁸ Not shown in the table is that state prisoners from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort are less likely to be from Cook County than are state prisoners from earlier birth cohorts. During the period studied here, 58.4 percent of all incarcerated women were from Cook County. This percentage is 12 percentage points greater than the corresponding percentage of women in the 1976-1983 birth cohort who were from Cook County.

we find that women who were in foster care as tweens/teens have lower high school graduation rates (i.e., 20.4 percent in column 1) than women without such foster care experience (i.e., 26.7 percent in column 5). As already observed, women in the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort have graduation rates that are on average about 15 percent (c.f., column 4).

The foregoing observation about the general skill levels of women with childhood foster care spells does not depend on how their foster care cases were resolved. As shown by columns 2 and 3 of Table 9, we find that the high school graduation rates of women who were reunified with their mother or primary caregiver were similar to the graduation rates of women who aged-out of the child welfare system. The more striking differences between these two groups of women with childhood foster care experience are in terms of their ethnicity, being from Cook County, and the likelihood of being held for person-related or property-related law violations.

B. Associations Between the Resolutions of Childhood Foster Care Spells and Prisoners' Demographic Characteristics

To better understand why female prisoners childhood foster care spells ended the way that they did, we examined the differences between the demographic characteristics of women from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort who had different resolutions of these spells. We find that women whose childhood foster care spells ended when they were *reunified* with their mothers or primary caregivers were: (i) *much less likely* to be from Cook County, Illinois; (ii) *more likely* to be African-American; (iii) *less likely* to have served time for a property-related offense; and (iv) *more likely* to be a mother when they entered prison. (See Appendix Table D.)

Among women with childhood foster care spells, *those who likely aged-out* of the system were comprised of a relatively large share of women: who served time for person-related crimes or who were African-American. Again as we observed in the previous subsection, the relatively large share of African-Americans among state prisoners who likely aged-out of foster care as children is not simply because of a higher than expected share of such women were from Cook County. Although these findings suggest potentially important differences between women whose foster care spells ended when they reunified with their mothers and women whose spells ended when they aged out of the system, these findings are based on a relatively small sample of women.¹⁹

At the same time, these women all have similarly low levels of educational attainment, suggesting that they all may have equally difficult times finding work after they parole from prison. Among women prisoners from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort, those: (i) who were reunified with their mothers or (ii) who likely aged-out of the child welfare system or (iii) who had no history in foster care as children: all had similarly low levels of schooling. Only about 15 percent of women from each of these three groups reported having received a high school degree. This low percentage suggests that these women are likely equally unskilled and should have very poor labor market histories, a point to which we return to below. Because of their low skill levels, reentry programs targeted toward these women likely will have a challenging time helping these women become self-sufficient.

VI. Foster Care and Adult Labor Market Outcomes

¹⁹ As shown by the last row of Appendix Table D, our sample of women from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort who reunified with their mothers or primary care givers after their last foster care spell is 74 and the number that either aged-out or otherwise left the system is 89.

Comparisons among female prisoners' limited demographic characteristics that are available on state prison records suggests that, on average, they are extremely unskilled and that those with childhood foster histories are only modestly more disadvantaged than their counterparts without such histories. The matched administrative data enable us to examine whether a women's childhood foster status is a reliable predictor of her labor market skills. These skills are indicated by these women's labor market outcomes, especially their pre-prison earnings, which presumably are unaffected by their prison experiences. We measure women's quarterly earnings during the quarters leading up to prison and during the quarters after prison. We look for evidence that women with childhood foster care spells perform differently in the labor market than their counterparts without such spells, both prior to and after exiting their first prison spells.

In addition to quarterly earnings, we also study two other labor market outcomes. We can decompose quarterly earnings into quarterly employment rates and earnings during quarters when women are working. These two additional labor market outcomes enable us to determine whether differences in earnings result from differences in employment rates, differences in earnings when working, or both. Our earnings when working measure is more closely associated with worker's skill level or productivity than the other two outcomes.²⁰

We consider separately labor market outcomes for the three birth cohorts of prisoners. To study late teenage foster care spells, we analyze the foregoing outcomes for

²⁰ As is the case for other states, Illinois administrative quarterly wage records do not maintain information on hourly wages, the best indicator of the value of a worker's skills in the labor market. An example of an exception is Washington State, which does maintain information on employees' quarterly hours paid for as reported by the state's employers.

women born between 1961 and 1983. To study tween/teen foster care spells, we limit our sample to women born between 1966 and 1983. Finally, to analyze the potential consequences of being in foster care at any time during childhood, we further limit our sample to women born between 1976 and 1983.

In Figure 1 we present quarterly earnings for two groups of incarcerated women relative to the quarter that they entered and exited prison. These women are those who were in foster care after age 15 (indicated by the diamonds) and women without such spells (indicated by the squares). We designate quarters in prison as 0. It is possible to have reported earnings during these quarters, because employers report earnings for these women after they are incarcerated. This could occur, for example, when a woman is employed during the same quarter that she enters or exits from prison. It also is possible to work in a regular job while in prison if women are housed in Adult Transition Centers. Finally, evidence of reported earnings while in prison may result from matching errors.

The pattern of earnings in Figure 1 reveals that for both groups of women, incarceration in prison is not associated with lower earnings or impaired labor market performance. Both women who were in foster care during their late teenage years and those who were not had substantially higher earnings after prison than before.

A. Late Teen Foster Care and Labor Market Outcomes

The pattern of earnings in Figure 1 reveals that childhood foster care spells are associated with poorer labor market outcomes, especially after these women exit from prison. First, we observe that the earnings of women without late teen foster care histories grow with time after they exit from their first prison spell. By contrast, the earnings of their peers who were in foster care at some point during their late teens slowly decline

during the quarters following their parole from prison. Women with childhood foster care spells earn less before prison, but the gap is most pronounced after prison. During any given quarter after prison these women earned about \$100 to \$400 less than other women. This finding results because women with childhood foster care histories earn less when they work.

As shown by Figure 2, both groups of women are equally likely to have been employed. This finding implies that the diverging post-prison earnings of these two groups of women must result from the diverging earnings among those women who are working.

Accordingly, the patterns in Figure 3 indicate that women who were in foster care during their late teens were less skilled or productive as adults compared with other incarcerated women. However, this disparity is especially apparent after prison, not before. Prior to prison, women who had been in foster care during their late teen years had mostly lower earnings when they worked. When these more disadvantaged women worked, they earned about \$500 per quarter less than women who were never in foster care as children. On a full-time hourly basis, this gap in earnings implies a difference of about \$1 in hourly wages. This shortfall amounts to approximately 20 percent of the earnings (when working) of women with no late teen foster care experience.

After prison this disparity grows, because women with foster care spells earnings do not grow when they are working, whereas the earnings of their counterparts without such spells grow steadily from about \$2,200 per quarter to about \$3,500 per quarter by the 20th quarter following the quarter that they paroled from prison for the first time.

The foregoing evidence indicates that women who spend time in foster care during their late teenage years have more difficulty in the labor market after their paroles than other female prisoners. We explore this finding further by asking whether this result more likely reflects the consequences of foster care itself or the tendency for children who have been in foster care to be more economically disadvantaged than other children.

To address this question we formulated a statistical model that adjusts the earnings in Figures 2 and 3 for differences in observed characteristics and in the prisoners' holding offenses. As shown by Table 10, once we control for the demographic characteristics and a woman's holding offense, the association between her childhood foster care status and her labor market outcomes are substantially diminished. (C.f., compare columns 3 and 6 in the table.) The estimates are not sufficiently precise to confidently state that a woman's childhood foster care status does not independently influence their labor market outcomes and prospects of reentry. The results in Table 10 suggests, however, that in large measure a woman's childhood foster care status is associated with a composite of demographic characteristics that are associated with poor labor market outcomes, especially when they are paroled from prison.

B. Tween/Teen Foster Care and Labor Market Outcomes

It is possible that the foregoing findings for late teen foster care spells do not result from being in foster care per se, but from being in foster care late in childhood. Foster care spells that start and end earlier during a woman's childhood may not be associated with as adverse labor market outcomes as adults. We next use our sample from

the 1966 to 1983 birth cohort to consider the same two labor market outcomes that we analyzed in subsection A.

Although the percentage of women in the tween/teen sample who had tween/teen foster care spells is about twice as large as the percentage of women in the late teen sample who had late teen foster care spells, the earnings patterns appear to be similar. As shown by Figure 4, the gap in earnings after prison is about \$100 to \$200 per quarter and growing. Prior to prison, the difference between these two groups' earnings is statistically insignificant. After prison, women with tween/teen foster care spells perform worse in the labor market than women without these experiences. Further, among women with foster care histories, prison is not associated with as large and growing post-prison earnings..

Turning to Figures 5 and 6, we find that the differences in earnings patterns documented in Figure 4 result entirely from differences in earnings growth when these women work. As shown by Figure 5, both groups have nearly the same quarterly employment rates both before and after prison.

As shown by Figure 6, within a year or two of being paroled from prison, when women with tween/teen foster care spells work, their earnings lag behind those of other female offenders without such experiences. Moreover, this earnings gap widens substantially with time since their paroles. As indicated by the figures, during the first full quarter after prison, the gap in earnings between these two groups' earnings, when they work, is only about \$100 per quarter. By the 20th quarter after these women parole from prison for the first time, this gap grew to about \$1,500 per quarter. This evidence indicates that after exiting prison, women with childhood foster care spells neither earn as

much when they work as other women nor appear to make the transition from prison as well as other former prisoners.

C. Childhood Foster Care and the Labor Market Outcomes of Young Female Prisoners

Finally, we consider the sample of female prisoners who were born between 1976 and 1983. Recall that in this sub-sample, we can track all the foster care spells during a woman's entire childhood. These women, however, are very young when admitted to prison for the first time.

As shown by Figure 7, these women's employment rates follow a similar pattern as other female prisoners. Further, the earnings of women who were in foster care at some point between birth and age 18 are consistently below those of other women. The gap is larger during the post-prison period than during the pre-prison period. But overall, the earnings gap averages about \$150 per quarter during the post-prison period, smaller than in the previous figures.

A different finding on the determinants of the earnings patterns for this birth cohort of prisoners is observed in Figure 7. There we find that quarterly employment rates are lower among women with any childhood foster care experience (cf. Figure 8). By contrast, as shown in Figure 9, there is no systematic difference between these two groups' quarterly earnings when working.

Whether these foregoing patterns in labor market outcomes, which differ from the experiences for other earlier birth cohorts of female prisoners, are associated with entering prison at a young age or from foster care experiences as a young child is a topic for future research. Nonetheless, we observe that the evidence indicates that women who are young when admitted to prison have labor market outcomes like women with

childhood foster care spells. As shown by comparing the earnings patterns in Figures 1, 4 and 7, the earnings of women from the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort who had no childhood foster care experiences track closely the earnings of women with childhood foster care spells.

D. Does Time in Foster Care Matter?

Childhood foster care spells may have varying effects on the lives of adults depending on how long these women were in foster care and how their foster care spells were resolved. Instead of comparing labor market outcomes of women who had childhood foster care experiences and those who did not, we compare these outcomes among women with different childhood foster care experiences.

Childhood foster care experiences differ both in terms of time spent in foster care as a child and how their foster care spells were resolved. As discussed above, among women with childhood foster care experiences, there is considerable variation in the amount of time spent in foster care. About one-half of the time these women were reunified with their mothers, while the other half of the time they likely “aged-out” of the system. If childhood foster care affects labor market outcomes of female state prisoners after they parole from prison for the first time, we expect to find some association between time in foster care, how the foster care spells were resolved and employment and earnings.

We find that although childhood foster care is associated with poorer labor market outcomes as an adult, time in foster care is not an especially good predictor of these outcomes. Women who spent less than 30 days in foster care as children have approximately the same, if not somewhat lower, quarterly earnings as women who spent

more than 2 years in foster care as children. Both groups' earnings are low, averaging about \$500 per quarter (not shown in any figure). It also is the case that the earnings of both groups of women are greater during their post-prison years than they were during their pre-prison years.

The similarity in earnings outcomes between women who spent little time compared to women who spent significant time in foster care as children results both from the similarity in their post-prison quarterly employment rates and their earnings during those quarters when they worked. We find that the post-prison quarterly employment rates of both groups average about 33 percent during the year after prison and decline slowly during the following year. Prior to prison, the quarterly employment rates of the less than 30 days in foster care group exceeded the earnings of the 2 year plus group by about 5 percentage points. This means that employment gains associated with prison are concentrated among those women with more childhood foster care experience as opposed to their counterparts with little such experience.

Finally, we find that the high and low time in foster care women are likely to be equally productive when they work. Average quarterly earnings among those who are working are approximately the same for both groups. When they work, they earn on average about \$1,500 per quarter, or less than the equivalent of working full time at what at the time was the federal minimum wage (e.g. \$5.15 per hour times 500 hours per quarter or \$2,575 per quarter).

E. Resolution of Late Teenage Foster Care Spells

Turning from time spent in foster care as a child to how foster care spells were resolved, we find that women who were reunified with their mothers or primary care

givers performed about as well in the labor market as adults as their counterparts who most likely “aged-out” of the child welfare system. We find that the earnings for both groups are higher during the post-prison period than they were prior to prison., Women who were reunited with their mothers appear to have been more likely to have been employed during the post-prison period, though these differences are not large. But, when they work, both groups of women earn approximately the same amount. This result suggests that among female inmates with foster care experiences, whether one aged-out or was reunified with a parent has little bearing on their labor market skills, their productivity or their prospects for reentry.

F. Discussion of Findings on Labor Market Outcomes

Another way of understanding the foregoing findings is in combination with our findings reported in the previous subsection. Whether a female prisoner had a childhood foster care spell is associated with her labor market outcomes as an adult. This association is seen during both the pre- and post-prison periods, but is especially marked during the post-prison period and grows with time since paroling from prison for the first time. However, among women with childhood foster care spells, (i) total time in foster care or (ii) how their foster care spells were resolved does not seem to be associated with their subsequent success in the job market.

Comparison of outcomes among women with differing childhood foster care experiences does not suggest that these experiences differentially affect women’s labor market outcomes. If they did, we would expect those women with more childhood foster care experience to have been associated with poorer adult labor market outcomes.

Instead, our findings indicate that simply having had a child foster care spells is a marker for adverse economic outcomes as an adult both before and, especially, after prison.

In particular, our results indicate that female prisoners who “aged-out” of the child welfare system are not at any greater risk of adverse labor market outcomes than their counterparts who had late teenage foster care spells, but were reunified with their mothers or primary caregivers. We observed that only about 2 percent of female state prisoners likely “aged-out” of child welfare as children. Hence, not only are such women relatively uncommon among the female prison population, their outcomes are similar to other women whose foster care experiences were resolved differently.

The foregoing findings on labor market outcomes also are consistent with recidivism patterns for female parolees. As shown by Figures 10 through 12, the percentage of female parolees back in prison after parole is consistently larger among women with childhood foster care experiences. In Figure 10, we observed that during the 16th quarter after the quarter that they first parole from prison, about 16 percent of women who were in foster care during their late teens were in prison as compared to about 12 percent of parolees without such experiences. In Figures 13 and 14, we observe that subsequent recidivism does not depend on time in foster care or how the foster care spells were resolved.

One potential explanation for the foregoing findings on labor market outcomes and recidivism is that a woman who had any childhood foster care experience had a long history of less productive or inadequate family support. This family attribute contributes to their being in foster care during their childhood and this outcome is associated with them having little family support after they leave prison. One way this lack of productive

family networks reveals itself is in poorer labor market outcomes, especially after prison and in particular in their ability to successfully “reenter” the labor market. We cannot address this explanation of inadequate family support directly with our data, but we raise this possibility because it appears consistent with our data. By contrast, explanations that turn to time away from one’s custodial parent or caregiver as a child do not appear consistent with our findings.

VII. Conclusions

This paper has used state administrative data to analyze the connection between childhood foster care experiences of female state prisoners, their prison and parole experiences, and their labor market outcomes. Our study uses three sources of data from the nation’s 5th largest state, Illinois: (i) data from its corrections system, (ii) from its child welfare system, and (iii) from its Department of Employment Security. This study demonstrates that state administrative data can be used to describe the experiences of female prisoners and our analysis could be replicated for other states by using administrative data that has been matched like the Chapin Hall Integrated Database on Child and Family Programs.

Our analysis of the incidence of childhood foster care spells in Illinois indicates that approximately 10 percent of female prisoners were in foster care as children. About one-half of these children were reunified with their parent prior to age 18 and about one-half likely aged out of the system or left foster care in some other way. By contrast to childhood foster care experiences today, among women prisoners born before 1984, they were rarely adopted as a result of their foster care experiences.

We also find that the childhood foster care placements of woman prisoners and the time that they spent in foster care varied, but these attributes of foster care do not appear to be strongly associated with latter criminal justice and labor market outcomes as simply having been in foster care at some point during one's childhood. Women who were in foster care as children have higher rates of recidivism following their first parole from prison, earn less than other prisoners, and have a harder time in the labor market after reentry. We find for example, that when they work in the years following their first parolees from prison, women with childhood foster care experience earn about \$1,000 less per quarter than their counterparts who never were in foster care as children. Likewise, we found that these women were consistently more likely to be back in prison during the up to eight years that we were able to follow the parolees in our samples.

Our analysis indicates that these associations may reflect the correlation between a woman's foster care status and a composite of observed and possibly unobserved demographic characteristics that also are associated with poor labor market outcomes and higher rates of recidivism. This child welfare information, which is potentially available to state corrections officials, appears to be valuable information to officials, policy makers, and those interested in facilitating and operating prisoner reentry initiatives targeting women.

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Appendix Table A

Sample Size for Analysis of Women with Childhood Foster Care Spells

Number of women in merged IDOC – DCFS data with record of childhood foster care spells	925
Number born on or after January 1, 1961	555
Number born on or after January 1, 1966	529
Number born on or after January 1, 1976	168
Number that exited state prison for the first time on or after January 1, 1995	662
Number born after January 1, 1961 and who report having at least 1 child when admitted to state prison for the first time on or after 1/1/95	277
Number born after January 1, 1966 and who report having at least 1 child when admitted to state prison for the first time on or after 1/1/95	284
Number born after January 1, 1976 and who report having at least 1 child when admitted to state prison for the first time on or after 1/1/95	91

Notes: (1) Row 1 counts all women with foster care history irrespective of birth date. (2) Rows 2 to 4 and 6 to 8 are the Late Teen, Tween/Teen and Childhood Foster Care samples. (3) The date 1/1/95 signifies the start of the first quarter that administrative earnings records are available for our study. Source: Authors' calculations from IDOC and DCFS administrative data using the University of Chicago Center for Children. Chapin Hall Integrated Database on Child and Family Programs.

Appendix Table B
Demographic Profile of Incarcerated Women, by Childhood Foster Care Status
(Incarcerated in Illinois State Prisons between July 1989 and June 2001)

	Full Sample		With FC History		No FC History	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
African-American	9,511	66.4	582	62.9	8,929	66.7**
White	3,964	27.7	293	31.7	3,671	27.4***
Hispanic	744	5.2	34	3.7	710	5.3**
High School Graduate	4,859	33.9	202	21.8	4,657	34.8***
Cook County Resident	8,368	58.4	448	48.4	7,920	59.1***
Married	1,994	13.9	87	9.4	1,907	14.2***
Mother	11,845	82.7	720	77.8	11,125	83.1***
Sub. Abuse <1>	8,602	60.1	565	61.1	8,037	60.0
Person Crimes	1,840	15.7	176	22.9	1,664	15.2***
Property Crimes	3,898	33.3	268	34.9	3,630	33.2
Drug Crimes	5,200	44.4	253	32.9	4,947	45.2***
Sex Crimes	230	2.0	30	3.9	200	1.8***
Other Crimes	541	4.6	42	5.5	499	4.6
Av. No. of kids	2.43		2.2		2.45***	
Av. Age at imprisonment	31.5		26.7		31.9***	
Number of Observations	14,321	100	925	100	13,396	100

Notes: Asterisks indicate the level of statistical significance for the difference between the percentages in the FC history sample and the No FC history sample: *, ** and *** indicate 10, 5 and 1 % level of significance, respectively. <1> This measure is self-reported when women are admitted into prison. The measure reported here refers to both drug and alcohol abuse or addictions. Source: Authors' calculations from matched IDOC and DCFS administrative data.

Appendix Table C
The Number of Childhood Foster Care Spells of Female State Prisoners

<u>Total Time in FC</u> <u>Birth Cohort</u>	Distribution of Foster Care Spells during Age Period:		
	<u>Age 0-18</u> 1976-1983	<u>10 – 18</u> 1966-1983	<u>15-18+</u> 1961-1983
	(in percentages)		
<u>Number Spells:</u>			
1 FC spell	58.9	61.3	60.0
2 FC spells	27.4	23.8	23.8
3 FC spells	8.9	9.5	9.8
4 or more FC spells	4.8	5.5	6.9

Notes: The number of spells includes right and left censored spells as well as spells that start and end during the indicated period. Source: Authors' calculations from matched IDOC and DCFS administrative data.

Appendix Table D
Demographic Profile of Female Offenders in the 1976-1983 Birth Cohort,
by Childhood Foster Care Status and Resolution of Their Foster Care Spells

	Women with FC Histories from birth to age 18)				Women with No FC History	
	<u>Outcome of FC Spell</u>					
	Reunified		Other Outcome/ Aged Out		No.	%
No.	%	No.	%			
African-American	39	52.7	56	62.9	410	49.6
White	32	43.2*	27	30.3	314	38.0
Hispanic	3	4.1	3	3.4	92	11.1
High School Graduate	9	12.2	14	15.7	130	15.7
Cook County Resident	21	28.4***	44	49.4	391	47.3
Married	5	6.8	7	7.9	45	5.5
Mother	47	63.5*	45	50.6	432	52.3
Substance Abuse<1>	42	56.8**	36	40.5	341	41.3
Person Crimes	16	21.6***	36	40.5	248	30.0
Property Crimes	37	50.0***	27	30.3	271	32.8
Drug Crimes	13	17.6	24	27.0	262	31.7
Sex Crimes	4	5.4**	0	0.0	11	1.3
Other Crimes	4	5.4	2	2.3	34	4.1
Number of children	1.28*		0.92		0.91	
Av. Age at imprisonment	20.3		20.1		20.3	
Number of Observations	74	100.0	89	100.0	826	100.0

Notes: Asterisks indicate the level of statistical significance for the difference between those who were reunited and those who aged out of the FC system: *, ** and *** indicate 10, 5 and 1 % level of significance, respectively. <1> This measure is self-reported when women are admitted into prison. The measure reported here refers to both drug and alcohol abuse or addictions. Source: Authors' calculations from matched IDOC and DCFS administrative data

Figure 1: Quarterly Earnings of Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1961 and 1983

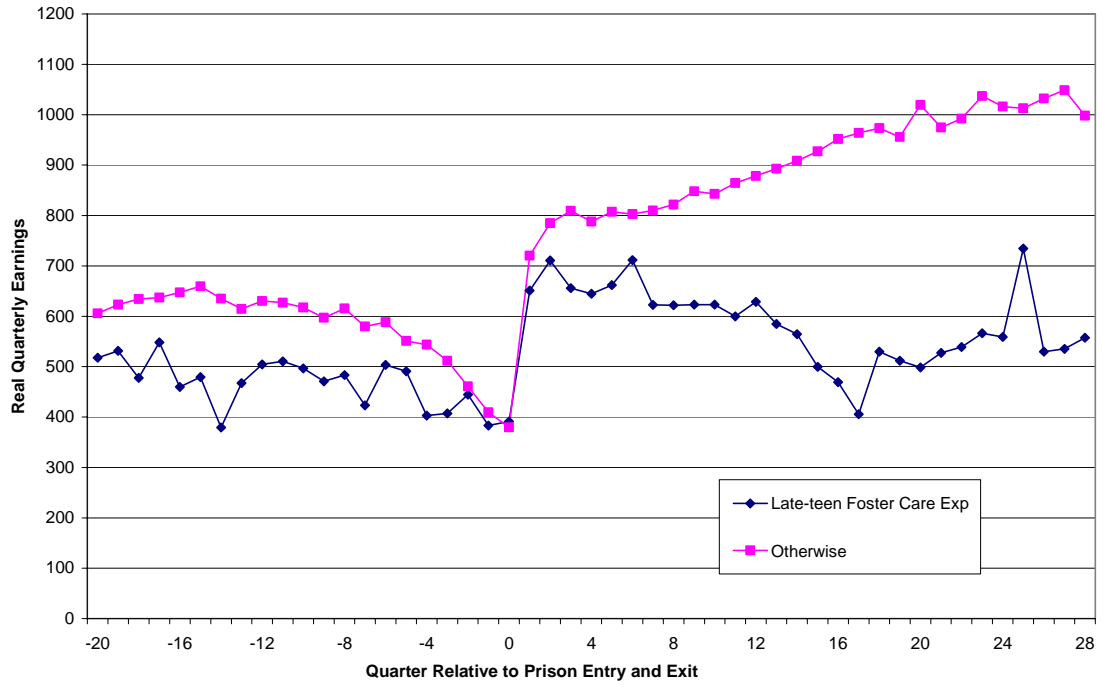


Figure 2: Employment Rates of Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1961 and 1983

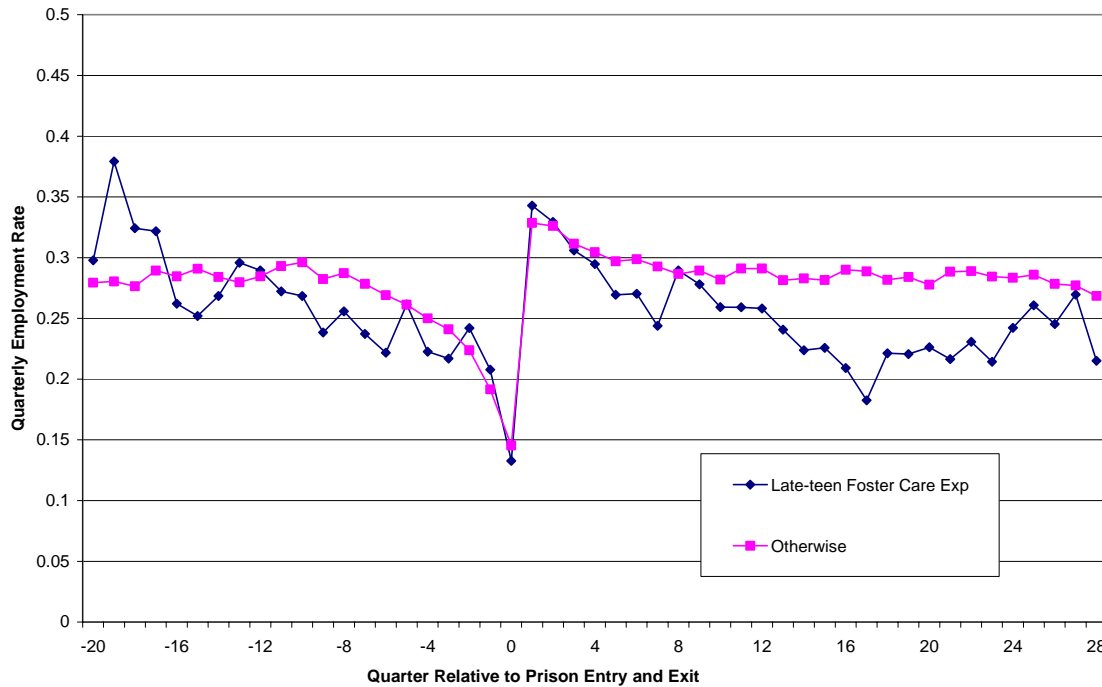


Figure 3: Quarterly Earnings When Working of Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1961 and 1983

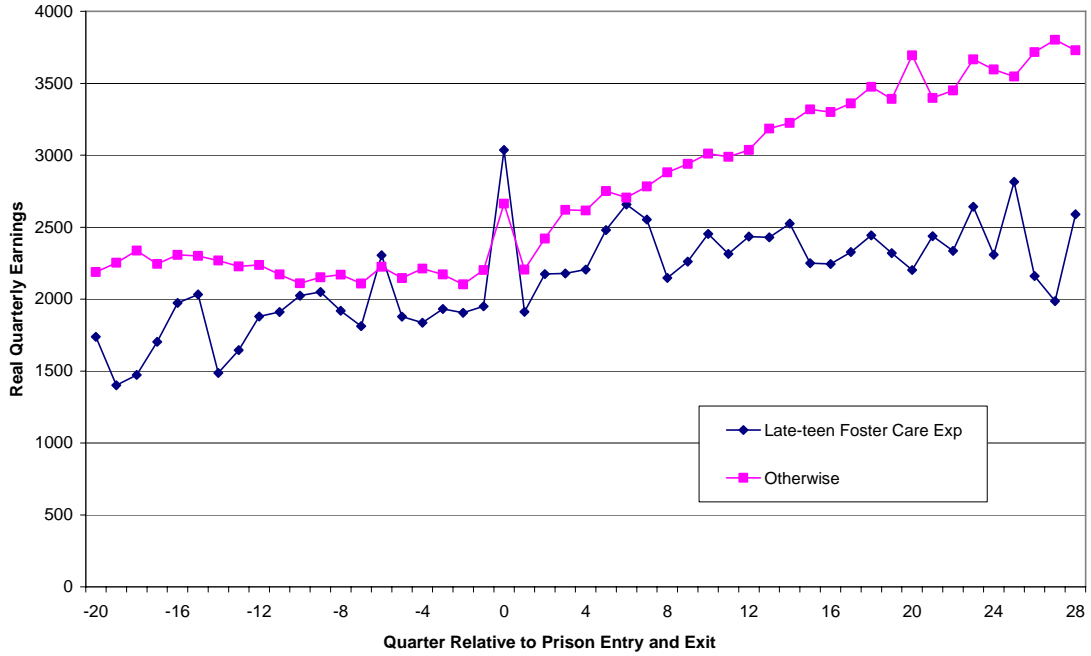


Figure 4: Quarterly Earnings of Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1966 and 1983

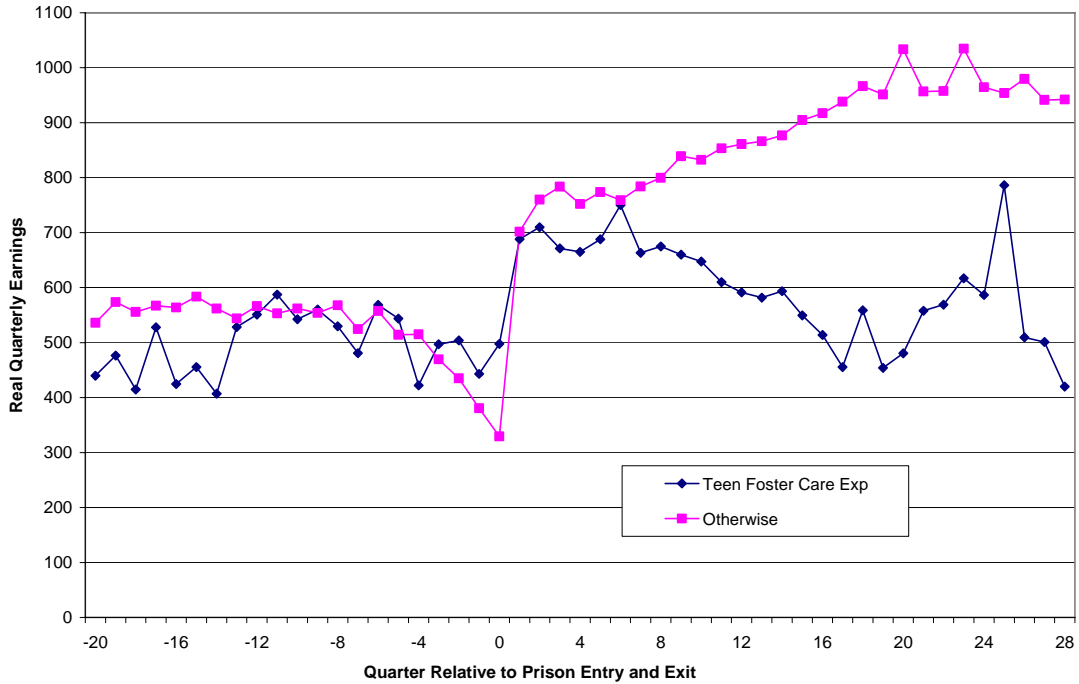


Figure 5: Employment Rates of Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1966 and 1983

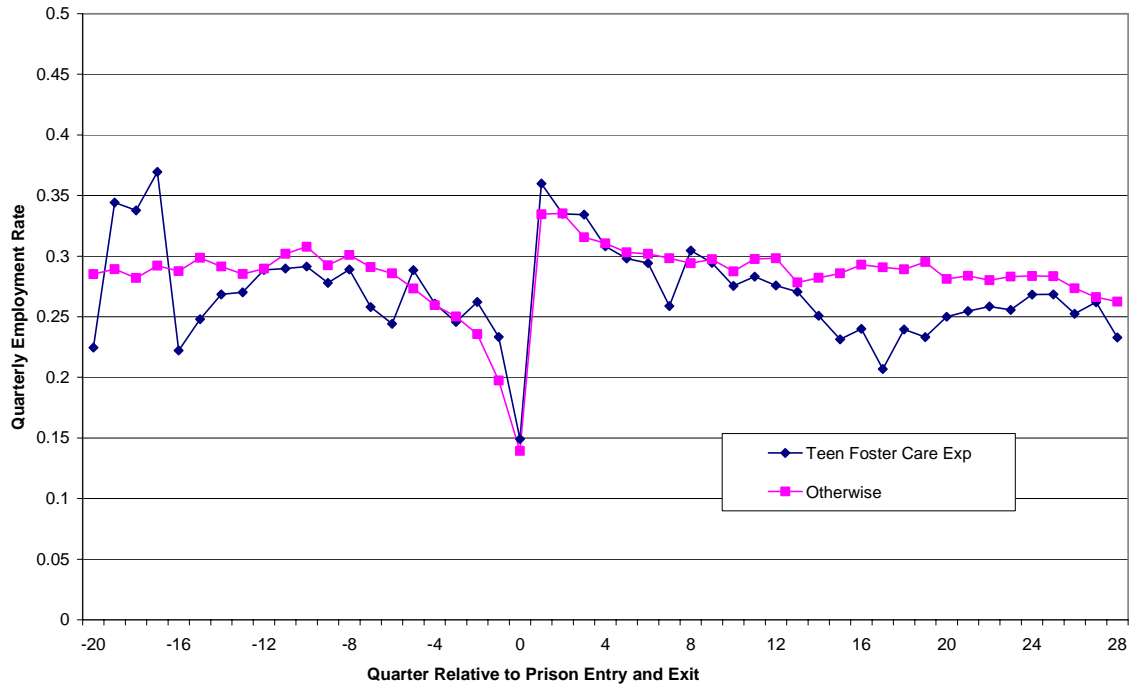


Figure 6: Quarterly Earnings When Working of Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1966 and 1983

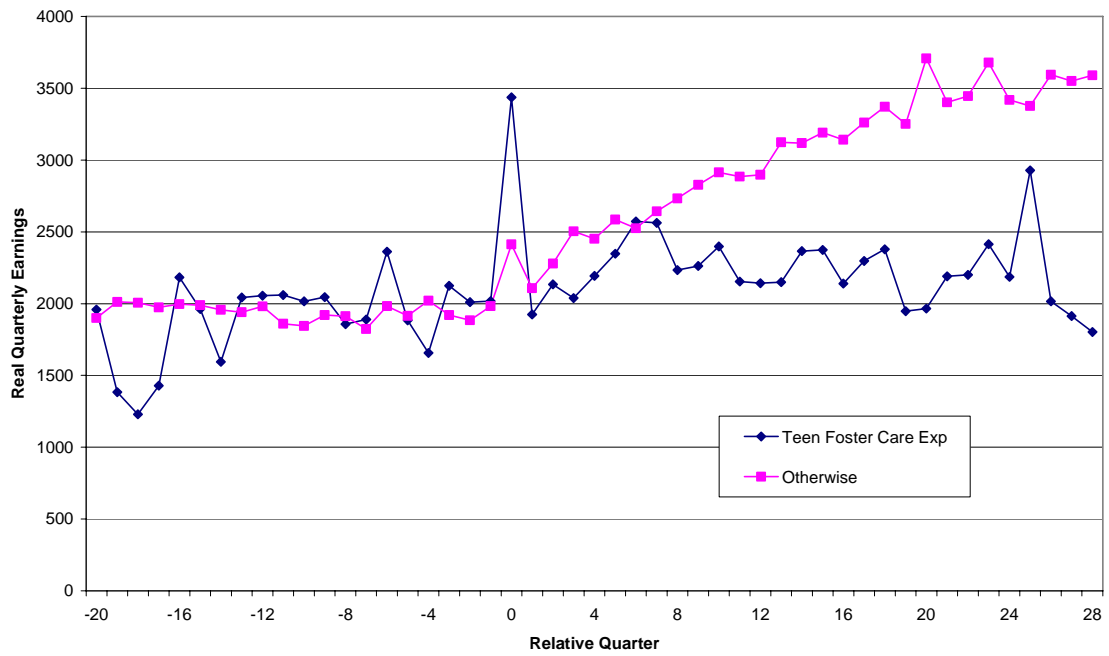


Figure 7: Quarterly Earnings of Female Ex-Prisoners Born between 1976 and 1983

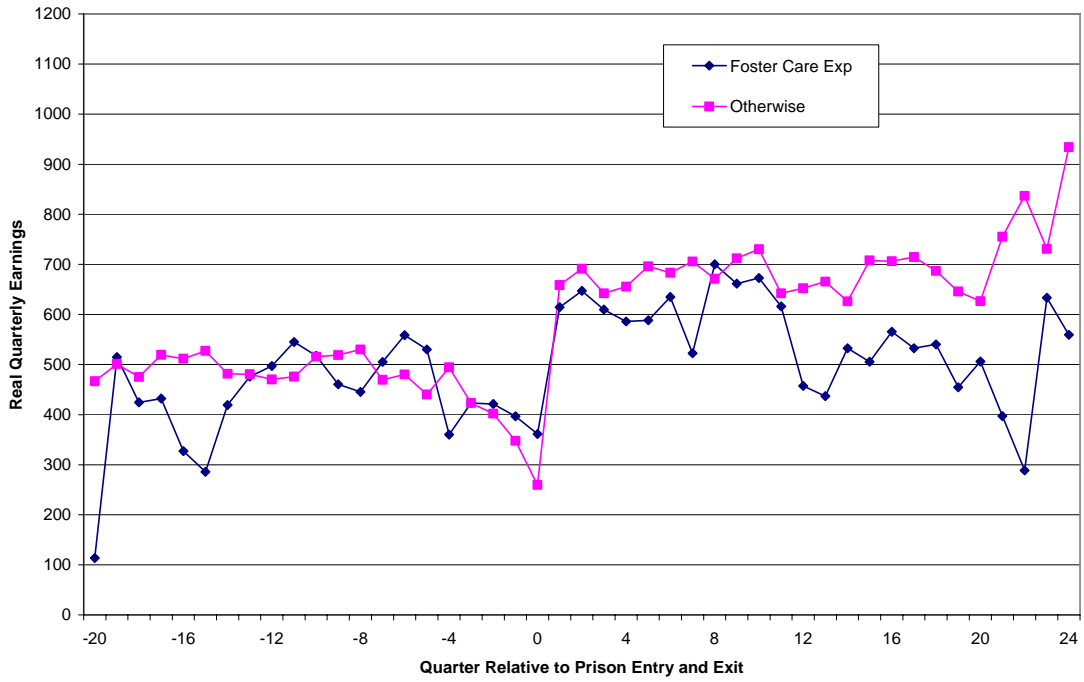


Figure 8: Employment Rates of Female Ex-Prisoners Born between 1976 and 1983

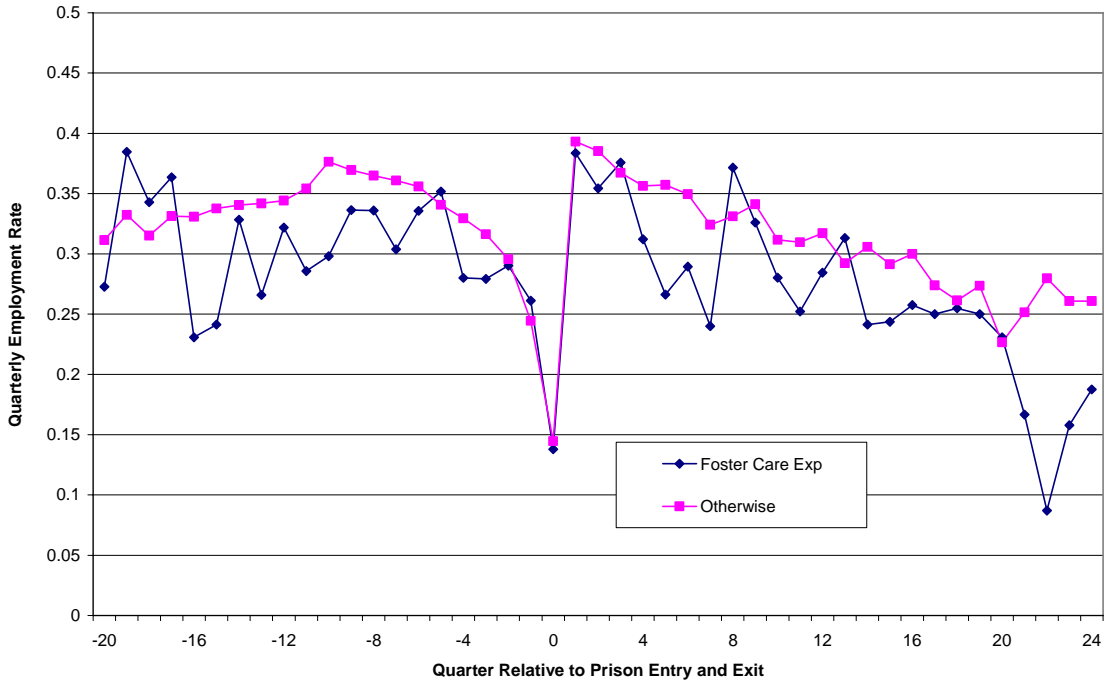


Figure 9: Quarterly Earnings When Working of Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1976 and 1983

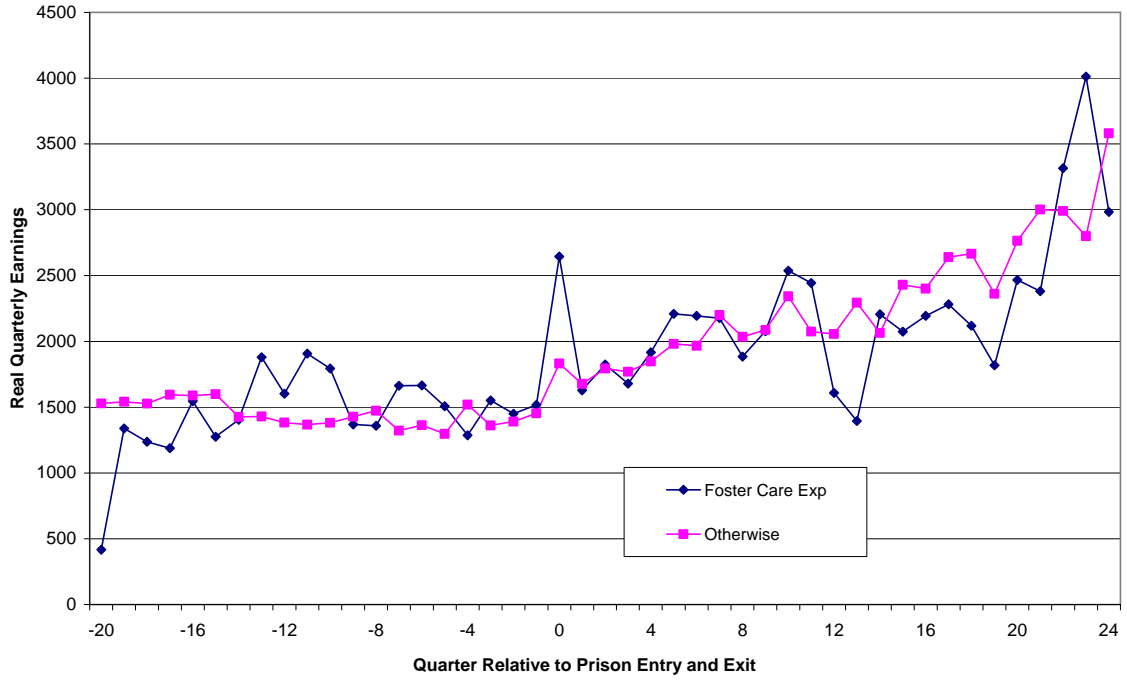


Figure 10: Fraction in Prison after Exiting First Prison Spell, for Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1961 and 1983

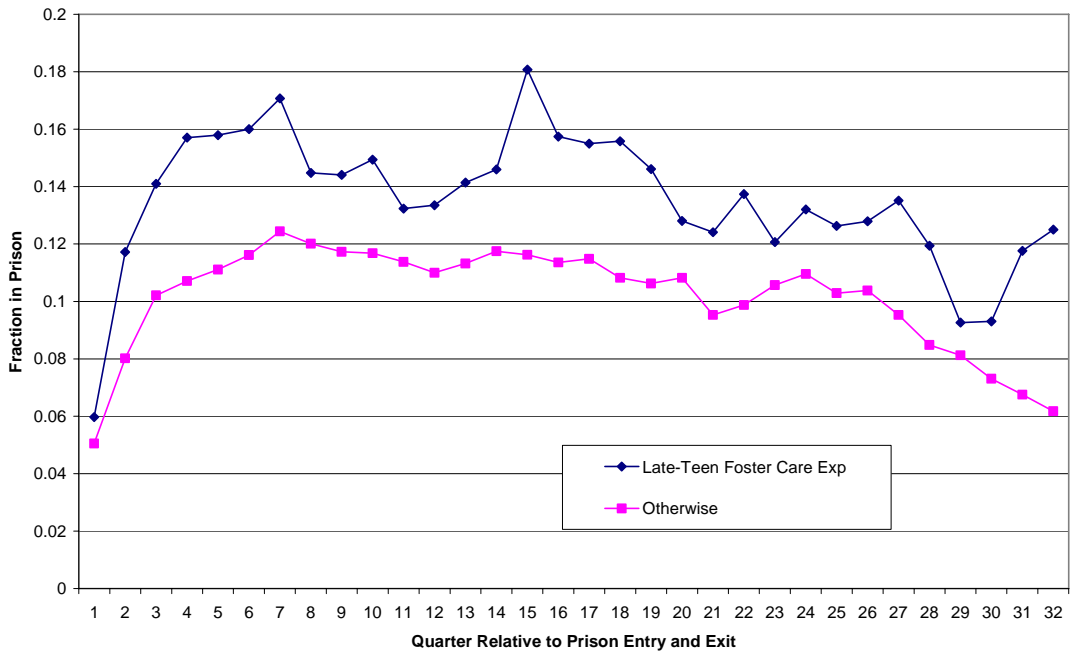


Figure 11: Fraction in Prison after Exiting First Prison Spell, for Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1966 and 1983

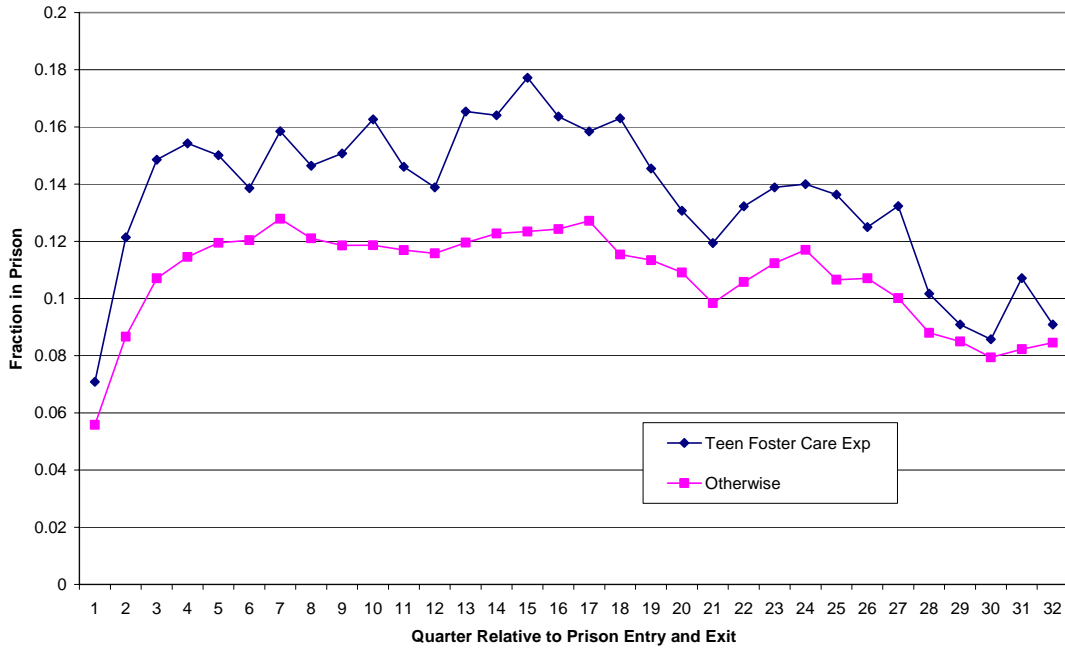


Figure 12: Fraction in Prison after Exiting First Prison Spell, for Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1976 and 1983

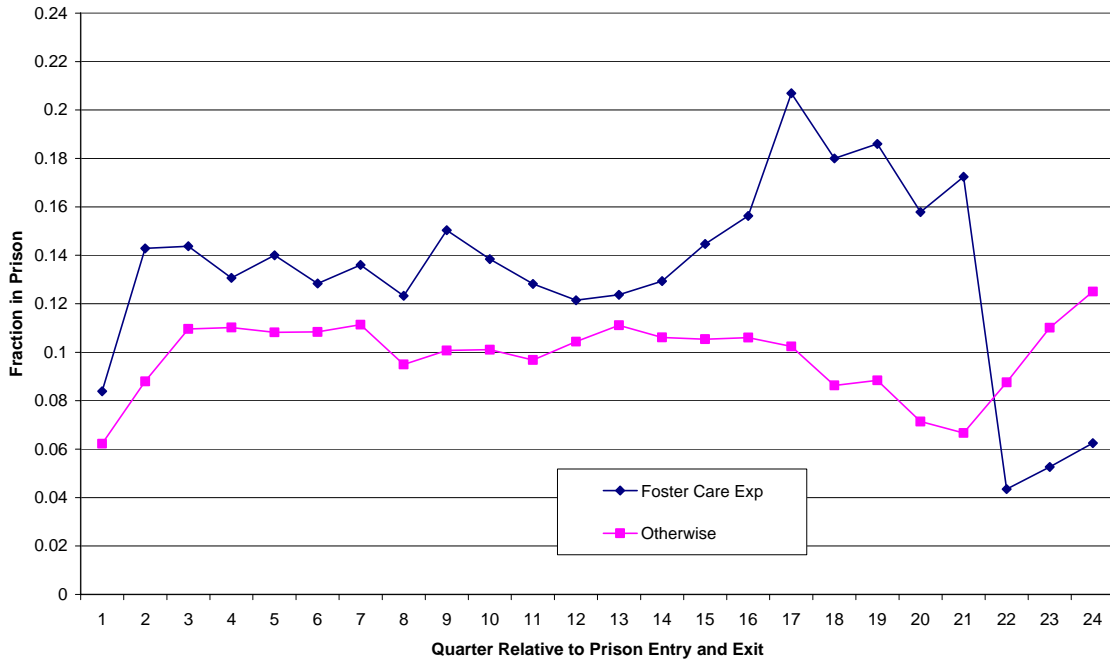


Figure 13: Fraction in Prison after Exiting First Prison Spell, for Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1961 and 1983 Who Were in Foster Care During Their Late Teen Years

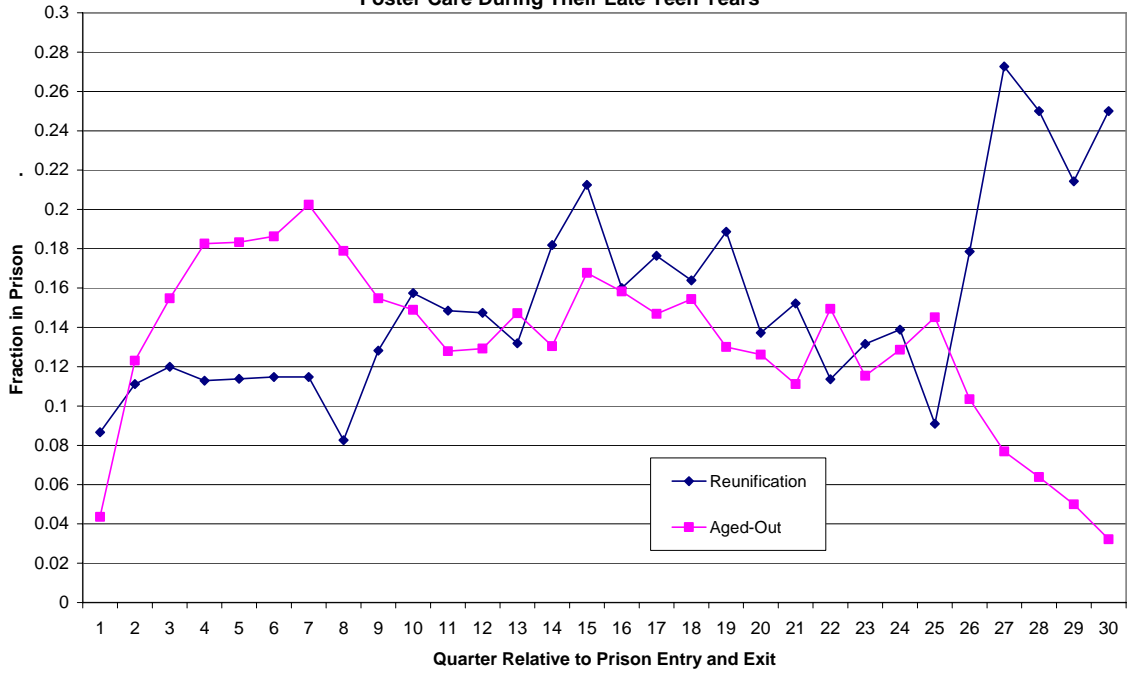


Figure 14: Fraction in Prison after Exiting First Prison Spell, for Female Ex-Prisoners Born Between 1961 and 1983 Who Were in Foster Care During Their Late Teen Years

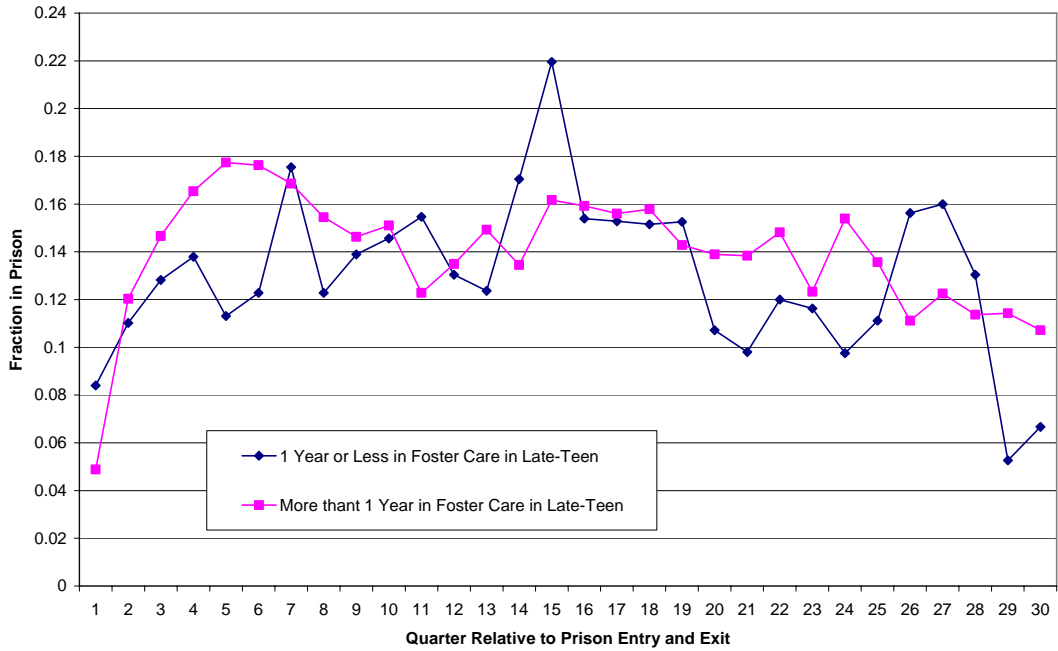


Figure 15: Female Ex-Offenders Who Were in Foster Care During Their Late Teens Have Slightly Lower employment Rates and Much Lower Earnings When They Work Compared to Observationally Similar Ex-Prisoners Who Were Not in Foster Care

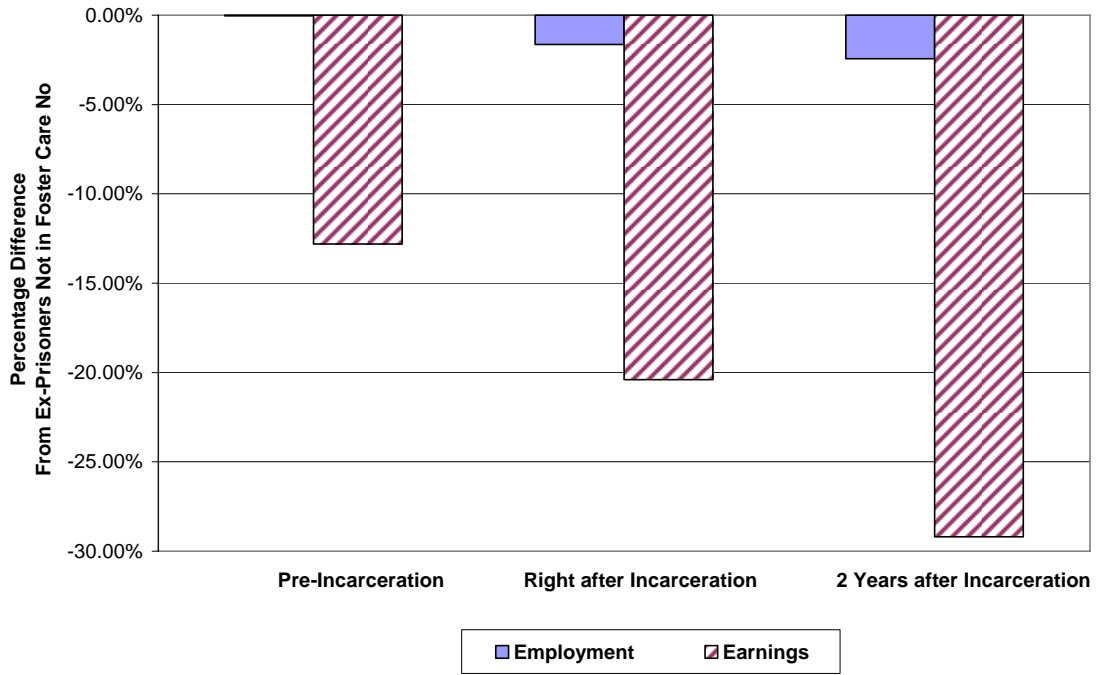


Table 1A

Estimates of Number of Children in Institutions, Foster Family Care, and Adoptive Homes, 1910 to 1960

	Institutions	Foster Family Care	Adoptive Homes
1910	101,403	61,000	
1923	132,258	61,475	3,354
1933	140,352	102,577	5,833
1950	95,073	98,082	80,000*
1960	70,892	163,000**	107,000

Notes: *-estimate for 1951;** -estimate for 1961.

Source: Bernadine Barr, (1992), "Estimates of Numbers of Children in Institutions, Foster Family Care, and Adoptive Homes, 1910-1960."

Table 1B

Percentages of Children by Placement Among Children in State Custody or Previously Placed for Adoption, 1910 to 1960

	Institutions	Foster Family Care	Adoptive Homes
1910	62.4%	37.6%	0.0%
1923	67.1	31.2	1.7
1933	56.4	41.2	2.3
1950	34.8	35.9	29.3
1960	20.8	47.8	31.4

Source: Authors calculations from figures in Table 1A.

Table 2A
Percentage of Incarcerated Women in Foster Care as Children,
by Year of Birth and Age when in FC
(in percentages)

Year of Birth	Age when in Foster Care		
	0 - 18	10 - 18	15-18
1976-1983	16.9%	14.5%	12.2%
1966-1983	(9.9)	8.5	6.6
1961-1983	(8.1)	(6.9)	5.8

Notes: Percentages indicate percentage of female state prisoners with childhood foster care experience during the indicated age category; includes spells that started during or overlapped with the indicated age category. Numbers in parentheses are estimated from the ratios the percentages of women in the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort who were in foster care as 10 to 18 year olds or who were in foster care as 15 to 18 year olds to the percentage of women who ever were in foster care as children, or 0.86 or 0.72, respectively. We divided these figures by 8.5 and 5.8, respectively, to arrive at the 9.9 and 8.1 figures in the table. To arrive at the 6.9 figure in the table, we multiplied the ratio of 14.5 and 12.2 by 5.8; alternatively, had we used the ratio of 8.5 and 6.6, the corresponding estimate would have been 7.5 percent.

Source: Authors' calculations from matched IDOC and DCFS administrative data

Table 3

Panel A					
Incidence of Late Teenage Foster Care among Female State Prisoners					
(in percentages for birth cohort born between 1961 and 1983)					
Age Admitted to Prison	Percentage of entrants in foster care as children by birth year				
	All cohorts	1961-65	1966-70	1971-75	1976-83
17 – 40	5.8%	4.2%	4.7%	6.9%	12.2%
<18	18.8	--- ⁽¹⁾	--- ⁽¹⁾	9.5	20.9
18 - 24	8.5	--- ⁽¹⁾	6.5	7.8	11.3
25 - 29	4.6	5.1	4.0	5.2	--- ⁽¹⁾
30 - 40	3.9	3.9	4.2	--- ⁽¹⁾	--- ⁽¹⁾

Panel B				
Incidence of Tween/Teen Foster Care among Female Prisoners				
(in percentages for birth cohort born between 1966 and 1983)				
Age Admitted to Prison	Percentage of entrants in foster care as teens by birth year			
	All cohorts	1966-70	1971-75	1976-83
17 – 35	8.5%	6.3%	8.9%	14.5%
<18	20.5	--- ⁽¹⁾	9.5	23.1
18 - 24	10.7	8.7	10.0	13.6
25 - 29	5.8	5.3	6.8	--- ⁽¹⁾
30 – 35	5.7	5.7	--- ⁽¹⁾	--- ⁽¹⁾

Notes: The percentages shown in the table are the percentage of Illinois state prisoners admitted to prison between 1989 and 2001 and who were born between 1961 and 1983 (Panel A) 1966 and 1983 (Panel B) and who experienced at least one late teen (Panel A) or tween/teen (Panel B) foster care spell. (1): It is not possible for a state prisoner to be in the given cell. For example a woman born between 1966 and 1970 would have turned 18 prior to 1989, the first year of our administrative data on prison admissions. A woman born between 1971 and 1975 would turn 30 in 2001, the last year of our administration data on prison admissions. Source: Authors' calculations from matched IDOC and DCFS administrative data.

Table 4

**Incidence of Childhood Foster Care among Female Prisoners
from the 1976 to 1983 Birth Cohort
(in percentages)**

Age at First Prison Spell	Percentage in Foster Care as Children by Birth Year					
	All years	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
17 – 24	16.9%	16.3%	17.2%	15.6%	18.5%	13.9%
<18	27.5	12.5	14.3	26.7	37.5	41.7
18	16.5	0	28.6	21.1	12.2	11.8
19	16.1	19.2	14.3	20.7	17.1	11.6
20	15.4	17.5	15.2	14.9	18.8	7.7
21	13.5	12.8	16.2	11.1	15.9	---
22	18.2	23.4	17.4	5.9	---	---
23	14.0	12.5	17.7	0	---	---
24	22.2	25.0	0	---	---	---

Source: Authors' calculations from matched IDOC and DCFS administrative data.

Table 5

Days in Foster Care for Female State Prisoners with Childhood Foster Care Spells

Total Time in FC Birth Cohort	Total Days in Foster Care during Age Period:		
	Age 0-18 1976-1983	10 – 18 1966-1983	15-18+ 1961-1983
Maximum Days Possible	6,574	2,922	1,096
25 th Percentile	241.5	140.0	204.0
Median	971.5	711.0	683.5
75 th Percentile	2,158.5	1,492.0	1,095.0
Mean	1,355.0	918.0	620.0
(Standard Deviation)	1,316.7	849.8	412.0
Number of Women with FC experience	168	529	555

Source: Authors' calculations from merged IDOC and DCFS administrative data.

Table 6

Resolution of Childhood Foster Care Spells for Female State Prisoners
(in percentages)

<u>Total Time in FC</u> <u>Birth Cohort</u>	Age when in Foster Care			
	<u>Age 0-18</u>	<u>10 – 18</u>		<u>15-18+</u>
	<u>1976-1983</u>	<u>1976-1983</u>	<u>1966-1983</u>	<u>1961-1983</u>
Reunified with parent	44.1%	38.2%	43.7%	35.0%
Adopted	1.2	0.7	1.0	0.5
Subsidized guardianship	0.6	0.7	0.2	0.2
Other outcome/aged-out	54.2	60.4	55.2	64.3
Number of Women with FC experience	168	144	529	555

Source: Authors' calculations from matched IDOC and DCFS administrative data.

Table 7

First Placements for Childhood Foster Care Spells of Female State Prisoners
(in percentages)

<u>Total Time in FC</u> <u>Birth Cohort</u>	Age when in Foster Care			
	<u>Age 0-18</u>	<u>10 – 18</u>		<u>15-18+</u>
	<u>1976-1983</u>	<u>1976-1983</u>	<u>1966-1983</u>	<u>1961-1983</u>
Home of a Relative	19.6%	20.1%	17.0%	16.0%
Foster Care Boarder	22.0	17.4	25.3	23.1
Hospital/Health Facility	9.5	8.3	5.5	4.9
Private Agency	3.0	2.1	2.7	2.2
DCFS Institution	8.9	10.4	8.1	6.9
Private Institution	7.7	9.0	8.5	10.7
Number of Women with FC experience	168	144	529	555

Source: Authors' calculations from matched IDOC and DCFS administrative data.

Table 8
Demographic Profile and Distribution of Criminal Offenses of Incarcerated Women
from the 1976-1983 Birth Cohort, by Childhood Foster Care History

	<u>Age when in Foster Care</u>					
	<u>10 – 18</u>		<u>0 – 18</u>		<u>Never in FC</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Demographic Characteristics:</u>						
African-American	88	61.1 ^{***}	100	59.5 ^{**}	410	49.6
White	48	33.3	59	35.1	314	38.0
Hispanic	5	3.5 ^{***}	6	3.6 ^{***}	92	11.1
High School Graduate	23	16.0	24	14.3	130	15.7
Cook County Resident	61	42.4	70	41.7	391	47.3
Married	9	6.3	12	7.1	45	5.5
Mother	82	56.9	94	56.0	432	52.3
Av. No. of kids	1.08		1.07		0.91	
Av. Age at imprisonment(yr)	20.1		20.1		20.3	
<u>Criminal Offenses:</u>						
Substance Abuse<1>	69	47.9	78	46.4	341	41.3
Person Crimes	45	31.3	54	32.1	248	30.0
Property Crimes	57	39.6	65	38.7	271	32.8
Drug Crimes	34	23.6 [*]	39	23.2 ^{**}	262	31.7
Sex Crimes	4	2.8	4	2.4	11	1.3
Other Crimes	4	2.8	6	3.6	34	4.1
Number of observations	144	100.0	168	100.0	826	100.0

Notes: Asterisks indicate the level of statistical significance for the difference between the percentages in the FC history samples and the No FC history samples: *, ** and *** indicate 10%, 5% and 1 % level of statistical significance, respectively. <1> This measure is self-reported when women are admitted into prison. The measure reported here refers to both drug and alcohol abuse or addictions. Source: Authors' calculations from matched IDOC and DCFS administrative data.

Table 9
Demographic Profile and Distribution of Criminal Offenses of Incarcerated Women
from the 1966-1983 Birth Cohort, by Tween/teen Foster Care History
(in percentages)

Birth Cohort:	In Foster Care Between 10 and 18			No tween/teen FC	
	1966 - 1983		1976-1983		1966-1983
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<u>Demographic Characteristics:</u>					
African-American	62.0%	53.3%	68.2%	61.1%	65.2%
White	31.6	40.7	24.9	33.3	27.4
Hispanic	4.7	5.2	4.5	3.5	6.7
High School Graduate	20.4	20.8	20.4	16.0	26.7
Cook County Resident	47.3	37.2	54.0	42.4	57.7
Married	7.8	8.2	7.3	6.3	10.4
Mother	74.9	76.2	74.1	56.9	76.4
Av. No. of kids	2.02	2.08	2.00	1.08	2.07
Av. Age at Imprisonment(yr)	23.7	23.8	23.6	20.1	25.1
<u>Criminal Offenses:</u>					
Substance Abuse<1>	56.3	58.9	55.0	47.9	56.0
Person Crimes	22.3	19.3	24.6	31.3	18.5
Property Crimes	36.2	41.6	32.6	39.6	32.5
Drug Crimes	32.8	29.7	34.5	23.6	43.0
Sex Crimes	4.6	5.9	3.8	2.8	1.7
Other Crimes	4.0	3.5	4.6	2.8	4.4
Number of Observations	529	231	289	144	5717

Notes: <1> This measure is self-reported when women are admitted into prison. The columns are defined as follows: (1) all female prisoners in the 1966 to 1983 birth cohort who have at least one tween/teen foster care spell as a child; (2) female offenders whose foster spell ended with reunification; (3) female offenders whose foster care spell ended when they aged out of the system; (4) all female prisoners in the 1976 to 1983 birth cohort with a tween/teen foster care spell. This column is same as column 1 of Table 8. (5) female offenders who had no tween/teen foster care spell. Source: Authors' calculations from the matched IDOC and DCFS administrative data.

Table 10

Employment and Earnings Differences among Female Prisoners, by Foster Care During Their Late Teens

	Employment ⁶			Earnings when Employed ⁷		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
In Foster Care¹	-0.031 (0.018)	0.001 (0.018)	-0.0003 (0.018)	-0.546 (0.120)	-0.256 (0.120)	-0.128 (0.126)
• post prison²	0.010 (0.019)	-0.011 (0.021)	-0.015 (0.021)	-0.329 (0.120)	-0.038 (0.118)	-0.065 (0.121)
• relative quarter³	----	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	----	-0.013 (0.008)	-0.011 (0.008)
Controls for quarter and Quarter relative to prison⁴	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Controls of demographic Characteristics⁵	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Notes: (1) “In Foster care” is an indicator variable for whether the individual was in foster care during her late teen years (ages 15 to 18).
(2) “Post-prison” is an indicator variable defined as the interaction between whether the individual was in foster care during her late teens and whether the current period is after her first prison spell.
(3) “Relative Quarter” is defined as a “triple” interaction between “in foster care,” “post-prison” and “quarter relative” to the quarter a woman entered or exited from prison. A negative coefficient indicates that the disparity between the two groups’ employment and earnings gets larger (and more negative) with time since exiting prison.
(4) The statistical model includes 34 quarterly dummy variables indicating quarters 1995:I through 2003:II and 41 relative quarter indicator variables indicating whether the current quarter is up to 8 quarters prior to or up to 33 quarters after the quarter of parole from prison.
(5) The statistical model includes controls for criminal offense category associated with first prison spell, years of schooling, race, and marital status when entered prison.
(6) The dependent variable is quarterly employment rates. The numbers in parentheses are the standard errors.
(7) The dependent variable is the natural log of quarterly earnings, given that a woman worked and earned at least \$1 during the quarter.

Source: Authors' calculations from matched IDOC, DCFS, IDES administrative records.