

**Incarcerated Mothers, Their Children's Placements into Foster Care,
and its Consequences for Reentry and for Labor Market Outcomes**

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I. Introduction

A recent study of a nationally representative sample of child welfare abuse and neglect cases found that in 1 in 8 cases overall, and in 1 in 5 cases involving African-American families, a parent had been arrested during the previous six months. In cases associated with an arrested parent, 90 percent of the time the arrested parent was the child's mother. In addition, in about two-thirds of these cases, the family had been subject to a previous abuse and neglect investigation (Phillips, Burns, Wagner, and Barth, 2004). As a result of these findings, these authors concluded that "...there also were secondary costs associated with a parental incarceration that are borne by child welfare system...." (p. 182) They recommended that a study of arrested parents "... would provide greater insight into the complex of factors affecting the likelihood of child welfare involvement in families following a parent's arrest." (p. 183)

This study examines an important part of the population of arrested mothers: those who were incarcerated in state prison. These are women who almost always have had multiple contacts with the criminal justice system, and often were their children's only custodial parent prior to their arrests. Among this population of state prisoners, we examine the connection between the incidence and timing of out-of-home (foster care) placements of the children of mothers entering prison for the first time and whether such

child welfare events are associated with less successful “reentry” after prison.¹ We address the following four questions:

- (i) What is the incidence and characteristics of out-of-home placements among women in prison?
- (ii) What is the timing of these placements relative to the timing of these women’s incarcerations?
- (iii) Is the incidence and characteristics of out-of-home placements of the children of incarcerated women associated with their transitions into the labor market after paroling from prison?
- (iv) What impact do criminal justice policies that increase the likelihood and duration of women’s incarcerations in prisons have on the child welfare system in general and on the frequency of out-of-home placements in particular?

Instead of relying on survey data, our study is based on matched administrative records from the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES). We begin with a sample of more than 19,000 women who exited from Illinois state prisons starting in the third quarter of 1989 through the second quarter of 2003. These records were then matched to the DCFS’s foster care records that extended from 1975 through the second quarter of 2002. We identify about 4,100 of these female prisoners had at least one of their children ever in foster care. But we also find that many of these children’s foster care spells did not overlap their mothers’ prison spells.

Finally, to explore the association, if any, of these women’s child welfare contacts with their reentry prospects after prison, our administrative records were then matched to

¹ The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care defines foster care as “a living arrangement for children who a child protective services worker or a court has decided cannot live safely at home. Foster care arrangements include non-relative foster homes, relative foster homes (also known as “kinship care”), group homes, institutions, and pre-adoptive homes (Pew 2004).

the state's quarterly wages records. These records report total quarterly earnings in formal jobs with Illinois employers starting in the first quarter of 1995 and extending through the second quarter of 2003.

In the remainder of this paper we first summarize with what has been found in previous empirical studies of this population. Next, in section III, we describe our data. In section IV, we analyze the incidence and timing of out-of-home placements relative to the timing of women's prison spells. In section V, we show how out-of-home placements or "substitute care" for these women's children are associated with their labor market outcomes after prison. Finally, in section VI we discuss the implications of policies that increase the number of women in prison on the child welfare system.

II. Incidence of Out-of-Home Placements among the Female Prison Population

A. Incidence of Foster Care from a Survey of Prisoners

To date there is relatively little empirical evidence on the incidence of foster care among the children of women in prison and its consequences for families and for these women's reentry after parole.² According to the 1997 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities (SISFCF), about 10 percent of mothers in state prisons reported that their children were in the care of a foster home parent, an agency, or institution.³ This survey also found that incarcerated mothers were much more likely to

²See Simmons (2000) for summary on lack of information on the children of incarcerated mothers and on incarcerated mothers' contacts with the child welfare system; See Bloom and Steinhart (1993) for a reference to a Massachusetts study.

³ Results of an earlier survey of prison inmates in 1991 reported a similar percentage for incarcerated women. Note neither the 1991 nor the 1997 surveys asked for information about the timing of these foster care placements. See Snell (1994).

report that their children were in foster care than were incarcerated fathers (2 percent) (Mumola, 2000).

The possibility that prison may have contributed to the incidence of children's foster care spells is suggested by the SISFCF survey responses where incarcerated mothers were substantially more likely than fathers to report living with their children prior to arrest. These mothers were also more likely than the fathers to have been the only parent living with their children in the month before their arrests. The survey estimates that 41 percent of the mothers in prison had been living alone with their children compared to 4 percent of the fathers. These results suggest that incarcerating a woman potentially has a greater impact on children than incarcerating a man, and their role as custodial parents could influence a woman's behavior after prison – especially her efforts to be reunified with her children.

B. The Incidence and Outcomes of Foster Care in the United States

To better understand the significance of child welfare contacts for female prisoners in Illinois, we summarize what is known about the incidence of foster care among women and children nationwide. At the end of each of the last 10 fiscal years, approximately 500,000 to 600,000 U.S. children were in foster care (HHS, 2006). About one-half of these children had started new foster care spells, some for the first time, and the rest were in spells that continued over from the previous year. Therefore, these figures

indicate that at any given time, approximately 0.7% of U.S. children 19 years and under are in foster care.⁴

Among U.S. children in foster care in recent years, approximately one-fourth were 5 years or under, another one-half were between the ages of 6 and 15 and the remaining children were between 16 and 20 years.⁵ African American children are overrepresented in the foster care population nationwide. They constitute 15 percent of the U.S. child population, but 41 percent of the foster care population.⁶ White children constitute about 40 percent of the foster care population and Hispanic children about 15 percent of the foster care population.

When U.S. children are placed in “substitute care” about one-half of them live in the homes of non-relatives. Another 30 percent reside with relatives. Finally, the remaining 20 to 25 percent of foster children reside in variety of living arrangements, including group homes or institutions or pre-adoptive homes. When their spells end, approximately 55 to 60 percent of them are reunified with their parents. Another 15 to 20 percent leave to live with their adoptive parents. The ratio of children’s foster care spells that are resolved by reunification as opposed to adoption is roughly 2 or 3 to 1. The remaining children leave foster care in other ways including “aging out” by reaching age 18 or by running away.

⁴See <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) for fiscal years 2000 or 2001. AFCARS data include all children in foster care, regardless of their eligibility for Title IV-E reimbursement. The number of people in the U.S. who were 19 years or less was 80,769,000. See the Economic Report of the President, 2004, Table B-34 p. 325. At end of fiscal year 2000 there were 547,415 children in foster care or approximately 0.7 percent of all children.

⁵ See <http://pewfostercare.org/research/docs/Demographics0903.pdf>, Figure 1.

⁶ Nationwide, Native American children also are over represented in the foster care population. These children constitute about 1 percent of the U.S. population, but comprise 2 percent of the foster care population.

C. Incidence and Outcome of Foster Care in Illinois

The same foster care records that we study for incarcerated women in this paper have been analyzed extensively by Wulczyn et. al. (2000). Their study provides information about the incidence, duration, and the outcomes of all foster care spells in Illinois between 1983 and 1998. This period nearly coincides with period covered by our matched administrative data base. They report that during this 16 year period 144,885 Illinois children spent time in “substitute care;” for the period from 1990 through 1998, the figure was 109,226 children. These figures both constitute unduplicated counts of the number of children that spent time in foster care. Approximately, 60 percent of these foster children were African-Americans. Such children have been heavily overrepresented in the state’s foster care population as statewide 20 percent of Illinois children are African-American. (See Wulczyn et. al., 2000, Figure 3.6.)

In Illinois, the foster care caseload grew sharply starting in 1988 (17,761 children at year end) through 1994 (46,105 children at year end) it remained relatively steady during the mid-1990s, and declined in both 1997 and 1998.⁷ This sharp rise in case loads resulted largely from a sharp rise in entry rates of 0 to 4 year old children. Between 1988 and 1994 the entry rate of pre-school children into foster doubled from 4 to 8 per 1,000, before falling sharply after 1994. By contrast, the entry rate of school-aged children rose to about 2 per 1,000 before falling back modestly after 1994.

⁷ Recent statistics indicate that Illinois’ foster care caseload has fallen back to 1988 levels. In 2005, there were about 18,000 who spend time in foster care; one-half of these children were from Cook County (DCFS, 2007).

Wulczyn et. al. (2000) also report that the duration of foster care spells are substantially longer in Illinois than in other U.S. states, including California and New York. During the period covering the years 1988 to 1998, 25 percent first foster care spells lasted 10 months or less; 50 percent lasted 39 months or less; 75 percent lasted 74 months or less. (See Wulczyn et. al., 2000, Figure 4.1.) The median duration of a completed foster care spell was 1,162 days. The duration of foster care spells approximately doubled between 1988 and the mid-1990s.

Among foster care spells in Illinois that began between 1988 and 1995 and ended prior to December 31, 1998, 47 percent resulted in the child being reunified with her mother; 20.2 percent in the child being adopted; and 2.4 percent in the child being placed with a relative in a subsidized guardianship.⁸ As was the case for foster care spells nationwide, when these spells are resolved, the ratio of those ending with reunification as opposed to adoption also is more than 2 to 1.

D. Incidence of Arrest and Incarceration among Mothers of Foster Children

The previous study that is most similar to ours was conducted by the Vera Institute. That study examined matched foster care, arrest and incarceration records for women in New York City in 1991 and 1996. Those researchers constructed the sample used in their analysis differently than the way we constructed the sample used in our analysis. Like the study cited above by Phillips et. al. (2004), the Vera Institute study starts with sample of women who have had contacts with the child welfare system. But instead of a sample of women involved with abuse and neglect allegations, the Vera

⁸ Nearly all adoptions were of children 10 years old or younger. See Wulczyn et. al. 2000, Figure 5.3.

Institute researchers started with samples of all mothers whose children had entered foster care in either 1991 or 1996. Then they matched these administrative foster care records to records on arrests, jail and prison incarcerations. Accordingly, they could calculate that about 10 to 12 percent of foster care children during those years had mothers who were incarcerated (in either jail or prison) during at least part of their foster care spell.

By contrast in our study, we start with a sample of women who were incarcerated in state prison over a 12 year period and then match these records to the state of Illinois foster care records that extend back for over 25 years. Accordingly, as we show below, we calculate that about 17 percent of women prisoners had their children in foster care while they were in prison; a larger percentage of these prisoners had children in foster care at some point prior to the end of our sample period in 2002. Therefore, the Vera Institute study is based on a population of mothers with children in foster care, whereas our study is based on a population of mothers incarcerated in prison.

Despite these differences in design, the Vera Institute study reaches two conclusions that constitute points of reference for our study. First, women whose children are in the foster care system are likely also to have had some contacts with the criminal justice system. The study finds more than one-third of all foster care mothers were arrested at some point during their “lifetimes.” About one-fifth of these foster care mothers were ever incarcerated. The majority of all arrests—many women were arrested more than once--were for misdemeanors and did not lead to any incarceration. Second, only for a small percentage of children in foster care does their mothers arrest appear to

be associated with their placements into foster care. Instead, foster care placements were more likely to precede their mother's arrests or incarcerations.

III. Matched Prison and Child Welfare Administrative Data

As discussed above the starting point for our study is a sample of incarcerated mothers. The Illinois Department of Corrections provided us with women's admission and exit records for each fiscal year starting in July 1, 1989 (the start of the fiscal year in Illinois) and continuing until June 30, 2003. These files contain information on each woman's criminal offense, whether she reported a substance abuse problem at the time of her admission to prison, and the entry and exit dates of each prison spell. These files also include demographic information on inmates' race, birth date, schooling attainment, the county from which they were sentenced to prison, marital status, reported number of children ever born and social security numbers.

In the appendix we describe how these prison data were matched to administrative data from DCFS and IDES. The DCFS's child welfare data include information on the timing of all children's entry and exit dates into foster care, their placements, and whether and how their foster care spells were resolved by the end of the sample period. These foster records cover the years from 1975 through 2002. As a result we can easily identify whether incarcerated mothers had children in foster care long before entering prison.

The IDES's quarterly wage records contain, for each calendar quarter, the total wage and salary earnings that these women received from Illinois employers in jobs covered by the state unemployment insurance system. These are formal jobs in which the

employer contributes to the employees' social security "fund." The quarterly wage records cover the period from January 1, 1995 (1995:I) through June 30, 2003 (2003:II).

In this study, we analyze two groups of women prisoners. First, when we characterize the incidence of foster care spells among prisoners' children we begin with the sample of all women prisoners and eliminate those women who do not report having any children when they entered prison. We then calculate the number of women who have at least one child in the DCFS records and characterize the timing and resolution of their foster care spells.

Second, when we examine how the incidence and resolution of these children's foster care spells are associated with their mothers' demographic characteristics, holding offense, and labor market outcomes, we limit our attention to women who exited IDOC facilities for the first time between 1995:I and 2001:II. This limitation is necessary because the state's quarterly wage records are unavailable prior to January 1, 1995. However, an advantage of this limitation is that we are fairly certain that our sample follows women after their first prison spells.

In our analysis, we follow all female parolees for at least one year and some for up to eight years after exiting prison. We measure women's quarterly employment rates and earnings relative to the entry and exit quarters of their first prison spells. So if we report in our figures below an employment rate of 0.30 during quarter -4 this means that during the 4th quarter prior to the quarter that these women entered prison for the first time, on average 30 percent of them were employed and earned at least \$1 in a wage or salaried job. By using state administrative IDES records, we can follow these women's

employment histories in formal jobs for many years both before and after they enter and exit prison for the first time.

IV. Incidence and Timing of Foster Care Placements

A. Overview of the Incidence and Resolution of Foster Care Spells

The merged administrative records indicate that about 26 percent of women incarcerated in Illinois state prisons between 1989:I and 2002:II had at least one of their children in the foster care at some point between 1975 and 2002:II. But 15 percent of incarcerated women reported at the time they were admitted to prison that they had no children. Therefore, about 30 percent of incarcerated mothers in Illinois had at least one of their children ever in foster care. This percentage implies that compared to the female population, female prisoners are much more likely to have had contacts with the child welfare system.

Significantly, we find that these contacts with the child welfare system often occur when these women are not in prison. We find that about 65 percent of these women had at least one of their children's foster care spells end prior to having been admitted to prison for the first time. In only about 37 percent of foster care spells that were resolved prior to prison was the affected child reunified with his or her mother. Other spells were resolved when the child was either adopted or placed into a subsidized guardianship.⁹ In

⁹ One way a foster care case could be resolved in Illinois is with a subsidized guardianship. In these instances a foster child 12 years or older is placed most likely with relative of the child. The guardian continues to receive subsidies until the child is 18 years old. At that point the legal relationship ends. Unlike an adoption, when a child is placed into a subsidized guardianship, the biological mother's parental rights are not necessarily terminated.

other cases the foster care ended because the child “aged out” of the system or was a classified as a “runaway.”¹⁰

Although the vast majority of women in prison are mothers, most do not have any children in foster care while they are in prison. Indeed, the merged Illinois administrative records indicate that most mothers in prison have never had any contact with the child welfare system. For about 70 percent of the mothers incarcerated during the 14 year period covered by our sample, we find no evidence that their children had ever been in the child welfare system. As shown by Table 1, we reach the same conclusion when we limit our sample to the 8 years covered both by the DCFS and IDES data. In addition, as we observed in the previous paragraph, among those mothers whose children had been in foster care, in a significant percentage of these spells (about 56 percent in the 8 year sample) were resolved prior to prison.

The Illinois evidence indicates that the incidence of child welfare contacts is relatively high among the population of female prisoners. We find that at any point in time about 17 percent of incarcerated mothers had at least one child in foster care. This percentage is about 20 times higher than it is for the female population of child bearing age. Further, we find an additional 3 percent of mothers had already lost their parental rights to one or more children prior to entering prison for the first time.

One striking difference between children’s foster care spells that overlap with their mother’s prison spells and foster care spells that are resolved prior to a mother’s

¹⁰ DCFS also has programs that assist a foster care child’s transition to independence starting at age 15. In addition, children in Illinois can receive support and services from DCFS through age 21 and beyond if they are enrolled in college, vocational training, or an employment program.

prison term is that the overlapping foster care spells are very unlikely to be resolved with the mother being reunited with her child. As shown by Table 2, in approximately 13 percent of these overlapping foster care spells, the child was reunited with his mother. In nearly 60 percent of these foster care spells, the child is adopted or placed into a subsidized guardianship. In another paper, we address the question of whether prison “causes” this apparent strong statistical association between loss of parental rights and simultaneous contacts between the corrections and child welfare systems. Instead, we examine below whether incentives to be formally reunified with their children appear to influence these women’s outcomes in the labor market after they are paroled from prison.

B. The Timing of the Start of Foster Care Spells.

Above we observed that many of the foster care spells of the children of incarcerated mothers were resolved prior to prison. But what about mothers whose prison stays overlapped with their children’s foster care spells? Is prison associated with the start of such spells?

We find that prison is not associated with the start of these overlapping foster care spells. As shown by Table 4, only about 6 percent of the overlapping spells started within 90 days of the mothers’ entry into prison. About 25 percent of these overlapping spells (c.f. the first four rows of Table 4) started within one year of the start of the mothers’ prison stay. At the other extreme, about one-third of these overlapping foster care spells began more than 3 years prior to the mothers’ entry into prison for the first time. Therefore, the Illinois data indicates that when the children of incarcerated mothers are in

foster care, these spells usually began well before prison and were unlikely precipitated by the state's decision to incarcerate their mothers.

Another way to understand XXX the timing of children's foster care spells that overlap their mothers' prison spells is to ask how many days these foster care spells had been in progress when their mothers went to prison. As shown by the last row of Table 4, these spells had been in progress for an average of 1,033 days when these children's mothers went to prison; the median length of the "ongoing" foster care spells was 816 days. As shown by Table 5, these durations are roughly similar among women of different schooling levels, county of residence, holding offenses, and whether the child also had a sibling in foster care. The only exception was for the children of white mothers and children of mothers who had worked during the year prior to prison. Their foster care spells were more likely to have begun during the year prior to their mother's first prison stay.

One reason that these overlapping foster care spells are unlikely to be resolved by mothers being reunited with their children is that a majority of these children had already been in foster care for two or more years prior to the start of their mothers' incarcerations. The duration of these foster care spells (in Table 4) are consistent with the mean and median durations of all completed foster care spells in Illinois as reported by Wulczyn et. al. (2000). The difference between these overlapping foster care spells and all completed foster care spells in the state is that the former spells were still incomplete and in progress at the start of a mother's prison spell. Given that the chance that a child reunifies with his mother is known to decline with time in foster care, it is not surprising

that these overlapping spells tend to be resolved with mothers' losing their parental rights to their child.

C. Mothers' Demographic Characteristics

The female prison population is an economically disadvantaged population of mothers. Approximately one-half of female prisoners were African-American high school dropouts, about one-third were high school graduates, 20 percent were non-Hispanic whites, roughly one-fourth were under 25 when incarcerated in prison for the first time. Prior to prison their quarterly employment rates were 25 to 30 percent. When they worked they earned on average about \$2,500 per quarter. These are the approximate earnings expected of a full-time minimum wage worker.

Among the female prison population, those whose children had ever been in foster care were more likely than other prisoners to be African-American, and high school dropouts. These women also were more likely to have received welfare and less likely to have been married. However, their first incarceration spell was on average shorter than it was for other women.

D. The Children of Incarcerated Mothers

The incidence of foster care is especially high among women with many children. The most important predictor of whether a prisoner reported that she had ever had child in foster care was the number of children she reported having when she was admitted to prison. Among women reporting that they had four or more children, 44 percent had

children in foster care prior to 2002:II. By contrast, the corresponding figure for all other prisoners was about 20 percent.

In other work, we have observed that women with many children constituted the fastest growing segment of the female prison population in Illinois (George and LaLonde, 2002). By fiscal year 2000, women with four or more children constituted 25 percent of women in Illinois prisons. Accordingly, below when we examine the association between contacts with the child welfare system and labor market outcomes after parole, we account for the number of children, as well as other observed attributes of these mothers.

Our matched administrative data enable us to estimate the number of children who had mothers that spent time in Illinois prisons during the time period covered by our sample and the fraction of these children who spent time (i) in foster care or (ii) in foster care while their mothers were in prison. Because mothers whose children spent time in foster care had more children on average than other incarcerated mothers, the incidence of child welfare contacts among the children of incarcerated mothers is larger than the incidence of child welfare contacts among the women themselves.

During period from 1989:III through 2001:II, we estimate that there were nearly 35,000 children in Illinois whose mothers spent time in prison.¹¹ Our matched administrative data indicates that about 11,600 of these children spent at least some time in foster care prior to 2002:III. Therefore, at least one-third of the children of incarcerated mothers also spent time in the foster care system during their childhoods.

¹¹ We arrive at this figure by multiplying the number of women incarcerated at least once in Illinois prisons, between 1989:II and 2001:II, 14,321, times the average number of children reported by these women at the time they entered prison or 2.43 for a total of about 34,800 children.

We estimate that about one-half of such children were in foster care when their mothers were in prison. Because our sample period ended in 2002, the possibility remains that this fraction has grown in recent years as the younger children age toward adulthood.¹²

Recall that the Vera Institute study found that somewhat more than one-third of New York city children in foster care had mothers who had been arrested during the lifetimes and 20 percent of them had mothers that had been incarcerated in either in jail or prison. Taken together both our Illinois study and the Vera Institute's New York City study document the considerable overlap between the female corrections and child welfare populations.

V. The Association between Labor Market Outcomes After Prison and Children's Foster Care Status

One goal of prison reentry initiatives is to integrate returning prisoners into the labor force. High levels of employment after prison would be viewed as an indicator that these initiatives were successful and that these women were in the process of making the transition from prison to self-sufficiency. Although little is known about labor force transitions after prison for women, even less is understood about how these transitions are affected when children are involved, especially if these children are in foster care when their mothers are paroled from prison.

In theory, linkages with the child welfare system could foster or impede reentry. There is no compelling rationale for believing women with child foster care spells would

¹² The number of children even born to those women also could grow if they later give birth to children after leaving prison. However, we expect the fertility rate among women after prison to be relatively low as their average age when they enter prison for the first time is 31.5 years.

do better or worse in the labor market than their counterparts whose children never spent time in the child welfare system. Having a child in foster care and losing parental rights may indicate a level of life skills associated with very poor labor market outcomes. In this case, prison authorities and operators of reentry programs could use children's foster care spells as indicator of their mothers' likely labor market success. Alternatively, having a child in foster care while in prison may provide a woman with an incentive to work in a wage and salaried job after her parole so as to facilitate being reunified with her children. Under these circumstances, employment outcomes for women whose children were in foster care while they were in prison may be better than those of other incarcerated mothers.

We use our longitudinal earnings data to distinguish among the foregoing hypotheses. To do so, we examine the temporal patterns of quarterly employment rates, earnings, and the earnings when women are working for the following groups of mothers who paroled from Illinois prisons during or after the first quarter of 1995.

- (i) those who never had a child in foster care during the period between 1975 and 2002:II;
- (ii) those who had a child in foster care, but regained custody of the child prior to entering prison for the first time;
- (iii) those who had a child in foster care and lost her parental rights prior to entering prison for the first time;
- (iv) those who had a child in foster care, this foster care spell overlapped her first prison spell and who regained custody of the child during the sample period.
- (v) and those who had a child in foster care, this foster care spell overlapped her first prison spell and who *never* regained custody of the child during the sample period.

In table 6, we summarize the distribution of female prisoners among these five groups of mothers.¹³ As indicated above, most women who go to prison have children, but those children are not in the child welfare system while they are in prison. In keeping with this finding, 74 percent of female parolees did not have children in foster care during the sample period. One reason for this finding is that some of these women did not have children when admitted to prison.

The next largest group of women prisoners consists of those whose children's first foster care spells overlap their prison spells and who never regained custody of these children during the sample period. These women constitute approximately 16 percent of our sample. Finally, the other two groups of interest here—those women whose children's foster care spells started and ended prior to their first prison spell—are approximately equally divided between women who regained custody and women who did not regain custody of their children during the sample period. Among women's oldest children, those whose foster care spells overlapped their mothers prison spells, but later reunited with their mothers, comprise only about 6 percent of all foster care spells. This foster care experience for women prisoners is relatively unusual.

A. Labor Market Outcomes of Incarcerated Women

We begin our analysis by comparing the quarterly earnings histories of mothers whose children never had any contact with the child welfare system and those *whose children were in foster care while they were in prison*. The pattern of earnings and

¹³ Because the sample for our analysis of the connection between labor market outcomes and child welfare contacts is limited to mothers who parole from their first prison spell after January 1, 1995, the percentages given in Table 6 differ from elsewhere in this paper.

employment during the pre-prison period we have documented elsewhere for the population of female parolees in Illinois (LaLonde and Cho, 2005). As shown by Figure 1, the quarterly earnings of these women are relatively low during both the pre- and post-prison period. During the 8th quarter prior to prison these women earned on average \$600 per quarter. This amount is the equivalent of working for about 10 hours per week at the federal minimum wage, which at that time was \$5.15 per hour.

The Illinois data indicate that women who paroled from prison had poor employment histories prior to prison, but improved employment histories after prison. The low earnings of incarcerated mothers reflect their status as economically disadvantaged persons. This status does not depend as much on their child welfare contacts, although women without them appear to be more employable. Significantly, both groups' earnings are on average greater after prison than they were before prison. As we have observed in earlier research, prison does not appear to adversely affect these women's already poor employment prospects (Cho and LaLonde, 2005). This conclusion does not appear to depend on a mother's contacts, if any, with the child welfare system.

B. Labor Market Outcomes and Child Welfare Contacts

We now turn to examine how women's employment histories are associated with their linkages to the child welfare system while in prison. We find that the quarterly earnings of women who have no foster care records during the sample period consistently exceed those women whose children's foster care spells overlap with their prison spells. As shown by Figure 1, the gap between these two group's quarterly earnings both three years

before and three years after prison is about \$300 per quarter. Further, this gap in earnings tends to widen somewhat in the post-prison compared to the pre-prison period.

There are two reasons why female prisoners with children in foster care have lower earnings: First, they are less likely to be employed during any given quarter. Second, and more importantly, they earn less when they work. As shown by Figure 2, we observe that quarterly employment rates of prisoners with children in the child welfare system were consistently below those of their counter parts whose children never appear in the state's foster care records. During the post-prison period, the gap between these two groups' quarterly employment rates is about 2 percentage points. This gap is lower after prison than before prison.

Whatever improvement in the relative employment prospects suggested by the quarterly employment data in Figure 2 is overshadowed by the growing gap in quarterly earnings among these two groups of women *when they were working*. As shown by Figure 3, when those women without child foster care histories work, they earned about \$3,000 per quarter at the end of the first year after exiting prison. By contrast, the earnings of mothers whose children were in foster care while they were in prison earned about \$500 per quarter less when they were working.

Incarcerated women with children in foster care are generally less employable than other incarcerated women, but we also find that after prison the gap between them and their counterparts who had no child welfare contacts gets wider. Incarcerated mothers who never had children in foster care appear to be more successful reentrants. They have

earnings that grow more rapidly after prison than the earnings of women whose children were in foster care while they were in prison.

This difference in post-prison earnings growth contrasts with the pre-prison period during which the earnings gap between these two groups of mothers was smaller. Nonetheless, the pre-prison earnings histories of these mothers reinforce our earlier contention that women who never have a child foster care spell were more employable to start with than their counterparts who had children in foster care while in prison. Further, those mothers without child welfare contacts also appear to adjust better after they parole from prison.

C. Women Whose Children's Foster Care Spells Ended Prior to Prison

In the next three figures, we compare incarcerated mothers with no foster care records for their children to women who have such records, but whose spells were resolved prior to going to prison. Among this later group of women we distinguish between women who were reunified with their children and those who lost parental rights to at least one of their children. As shown by Figure 4, women who lost parental rights to one of their children prior to going to prison had the lowest quarter earnings after prison. The post-prison quarterly earnings of women who were reunified with their children prior to prison were consistently greater than the earnings of their counterparts who lost parental rights to at least one child. But neither of these two groups of women earned as much as women whose children were never in foster care.

The foregoing pre-prison earnings histories suggest that women who were reunified with their children prior to prison were more employable from the start than were their counterparts who lost parental rights to at least one child before going to prison. The earnings of mothers who were reunited with their children prior to entering prison are similar to women who during the sample period never had any child welfare histories for their children. The pre-prison earnings of mothers who lost parental rights prior to prison were about \$300 per quarter, or about one-half of those of their counterparts who were reunified with their children prior to entering prison.

The foregoing evidence indicates that losing parental rights to a child prior to prison is a good predictor of labor market outcomes both before and after prison. Indeed, the especially poor labor market performance of such women might be a factor that explains why they never were reunified with their children.

The next two figures indicate that the reason for the foregoing differences in average quarterly earnings is that mothers who are reunited with their children prior to entering prison are more likely than other mothers to be employed during any given quarter (c.f. Figure 5). We find that they are more likely to be employed than even mothers whose children never appear in the state's foster care records. By contrast, as shown by Figure 6, when mothers who were reunified with their children are working, their earnings are relatively low. Indeed, they earn about the same if not a little less than mothers who lost parental rights to at least one child prior to entering prison. Those mothers, who regained their parental rights, were more likely to be employed, but they tended to earn less when they worked and experienced little earnings growth after prison.

D. The Timing of Prison, Child Welfare Contacts and Labor Market Outcomes

Our findings indicate that having one's children in the child welfare system prior to prison is an indicator of future poor labor market outcomes. Nonetheless, prison does not likely cause these outcomes to be worse. Among mothers in the corrections system, those that the state has removed at least one of their children from their custody are less employable than other women. We next explored whether it made a difference whether such foster care spells were resolved prior to a mother's first prison stay or during or after these mothers were incarcerated in prison. Although a mother who lost parental rights prior to prison appears to have modestly improved labor market outcomes, the differences are small enough that we find it more instructive to ignore the timing of the spell and instead to organize children's foster care spells by whether the mother was reunified with her child. The connection, if any, between female prisoners labor market outcomes and whether they have lost their parental rights does not depend on whether their children's foster care spells overlap with their time in prison.

As shown by Figures 7 through 9, mothers who are reunified with their children have labor market outcomes that are similar to mothers who never had any contact with the child welfare system. By contrast, mother's who lose parental rights have lower earnings both before and after they go to prison. As suggested above, this group also does not experience any earnings growth after prison in contrast to other paroled mothers.

Women who were reunified with their children are more likely to be employed than their counterparts who lost parental rights. This finding holds before and after prison. This finding is not surprising if child welfare authorities use employability as

determinant to resolve these cases. But it is important to recognize that our data indicate that women who were reunified with their child had consistently higher employment rates. They did not simply higher employment rates around the time they were reunified with their children (c.f. Figures 5 and 8).

E. Are Poor Labor Market Outcomes Associated with Her Other Attributes?

The evidence we present in Figures 1 through 9 indicates that an incarcerated mother's status of having her children in foster care is an indicator of low levels of general skills and employability. The evidence is less supportive of the idea that this status "causes" poor labor market outcomes and therefore impedes these women's reentry prospects. Here we explore these points further by asking: Does having a child in foster care indicate especially poor labor market performance or does it reflect other observed attributes such as being a high school dropout or having served time for a drug offense? Does knowing the foster care status of a prisoner's children provide any independent information about the likely labor market success of these women once they are paroled?

To address these questions, we regression-adjusted our three labor market outcomes (quarterly earnings, quarterly employment rates, and log quarterly earnings, among the employed) for other observed attributes of the women. (See the appendix for a discussion of how we regression-adjust these outcomes.) The attributes available on IDOC's records are age, years of schooling, marital status, race/ethnicity, number of children, holding offense (e.g. person, property, drug or other violations), and time served. We test whether after holding constant these attributes, there remain differences

among labor market outcomes of these women, given the foster care status of their children. We compare these outcomes for the foster care groupings defined in Table 6.

The regression adjusted employment and earnings outcomes still indicate that incarcerated mothers whose children spent time in foster care perform worse in the labor market than other incarcerated women. The difference between such women and mothers whose children have never been in foster care is that these women earn less when they are working. As shown by Figures 10 through 12, during those quarters when mothers with child welfare contacts are employed, they earn between 10 and 35 percent less prior to prison and 20 to 25 percent less two years after prison *compared with observationally similar mothers* whose children never were in foster care.¹⁴

As shown by Figure 10, these percentages appear to be lower after prison compared to before prison although these changes could have arisen by chance. It is clearer that incarcerated mothers, whose children's foster care spells overlap their prison spells, consistently earned about 20 to 25 percent less than incarcerated women whose children are never in foster care. Evidence that these percentages reflect general skills or "life skills" is found when we observe (in Appendix Figure A) that these percentages are even larger when we do not adjust for these women's demographic characteristics and offenses. Mothers whose attributes are known to be associated with lower earnings also are more likely than other incarcerated mothers to have their children in foster care while in prison.

¹⁴ The phrase "observationally similar" means that we compare women whose schooling, race/ethnicity, age, marital status, county of residence, offense category, and time served are similar. Figure A in the Appendix presents the adjusted and unadjusted estimated regression coefficients associated with Figures 7 through 9.

By contrast, as shown by Figure 11, these earnings gaps, among females paroles are working widen between the pre- and post-prison periods for mothers who were reunified with their children prior to prison. This widening occurs even though such mothers were more likely to be employed during any given quarter than other mothers in our sample. We doubt, however, that this widening results because of the challenges associated with reforming their families after prison. Women whose children were never in foster care face similar challenges.

Finally, in Figure 12, we observe that two years after paroling from prison, mothers, whose children were either adopted or placed into a subsidized guardianship prior to the start of their prison spells, earned about 20 to 25 percent less than *observationally similar mothers whose children never were in foster care*. This earnings gap is about the same as it was for mothers whose children were in foster care while they were in prison.

As we observed above in Table 2, such women also usually lose their rights to their children. This evidence suggests losing parental rights, although more common among women involved with the criminal justice system, probably does not result from these contacts. Rather having had a child in foster care and losing rights to that child is an indicator of poor life skills and predicts poor reentry outcomes no matter what the timing of such foster care spells.

Taken together, our results indicate that the following: First, having a child ever in foster care is an indication of poorer labor market outcomes both prior to entering and after exiting from prison. Second, knowing whether the mother is ever reunified with her

child is associated with improved labor market outcomes, but such women do not perform as well as women who never had children in the child welfare system. Third, these differences among incarcerated women hold both during the pre- and post-prison periods.

V. Discussion

In this paper, we have documented that merging different state administrative databases yields valuable information about the female prison population and their children. In Illinois, we find incarcerated mothers whose children have been in foster care are even more economically disadvantaged than other incarcerated women. This finding holds especially among mothers who ultimately were not reunited with their children. No matter whether their children's foster care spells were resolved prior to their first prison spell or coincide with their time in prison, their labor market outcomes and their chances for self sufficiency appear especially poor.

However are these findings the result of their contacts with the child welfare system? Or do they arise because these women have attributes and behaviors that make them likely to cross paths with both child welfare and the criminal justice systems? Our analysis indicates that the latter explanation is the most likely for the following reasons:

- (i) Children of incarcerated mothers are rarely placed in foster care, because of their mothers' entry into prison.
- (ii) About one-third of the children of incarcerated mothers have spent time in foster care, but these spells usually start long before their mothers' first prison

spell and many of these foster care spells end prior to their mothers' first prison stay.

- (iii) The labor market outcomes of incarcerated mothers whose children spend time in foster care are worse than other incarcerated women both before and after prison.
- (iv) Among mothers whose children spent time in foster care, the ones who appear to be the most employable are those who were reunited with their children; their outcomes are the most similar to mothers whose children have never had contacts with the child welfare system.
- (v) Mothers whose children are in foster care while they are incarcerated would appear to have a significant incentive to perform well after their paroles in order to facilitate being reunited with their children; but in fact they perform more poorly in the job market than other *observationally similar* ex-prisoners.

We conclude that the child welfare contacts of incarcerated mothers are valuable indicators that policy makers and program operators can use to predict poor reentry outcomes. We find that these mothers are especially economically disadvantaged compared to other incarcerated women. As a result, we expect that such women will require more services upon reentry to successfully integrate them.

The post-prison difficulty that such women likely face are probably not associated with trying to reestablish their families after prison. Women who do the worst in the job market after prison are those who have lost parental rights to one or

more of their children. Their counterparts who were reunified with their children prior to prison do better after parole than even observationally similar mothers whose children never spent time in foster care do better still. Accordingly, one way to understand these results is that child welfare authorities appear to recognize and act on attributes of these women that apparently are associated with both being less able parents and with being less able workers.

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Appendix

Matching the IDOC and Chapin Hall Integrated Administrative Databases.

To match individual records from the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and the Chapin Hall Integrated Database (IDB), the Chapin Hall Center for Children used probabilistic record matching. This method assumes that researchers can not match individuals' records for a single shared variable (or field) in two data sets with complete confidence. So for example, even it was possible to match former inmates' social security numbers in different data sets some matches would inevitably be in error. Instead, Chapin Hall based its matches on a statistical model that estimates the probability that two records in two different databases are for the same person using matches between as many variables as possible. For this study, these variables included all known last names, first names, birthdates, race/ethnicity indicators, and last known residence. See Goerge Van Voorhis, John and Lee (1994).

The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) admission and exit records contain information on the category of each female inmate's criminal offense, whether an inmate reports a substance abuse problem at the time of admission to prison, and the entry and exit dates of each prison spell. These files also include demographic information on inmates' race, birth date, years of schooling, the county from which they were sentenced to prison, marital status, and number of children.

The individual records in the IDB file come from essentially two sources: the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) and Illinois Department of Children and Family (DCFS) services. The DHS records provide information on Food Stamp, AFDC/TANF, and Medicaid spells covering the period from 1990 through 2001. The DCFS records contain information on child welfare contacts, including these women's foster care spells of either the women themselves or their children, dating back to 1975.

The foster care administrative data from the IDB are from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services' Child and Youth Centered Information System (CYCIS). The system tracks information on the timing and placement in non-relative foster boarding homes, placement in kinship foster homes, and placement in "congregate care" facilities. CYCIS also includes information the timing and exit destination from substitute care (e.g., reunification, adoption, guardianship, death, independence, runaway, detention). The first foster care spells in the data base started in 1975. In this study we have records through the end of 2002.

The match rate between the IDOC file and the IDB was approximately 82 percent. Match rates outside of Cook County were higher; match rates in Cook County were 78 percent. The sample we use in this study consists of 6,991 women who do not have an IDOC prison spell between 1990 and 1995, and who do have such a spell between January 1, 1995 and December 31, 2000. Consequently, we consider our sample to consist of first-inmates with social and/or child welfare histories.

Matching the Merged IDOC and IDB data base with IDES Administrative Data

The earnings data that we use in this study starts with IDOC file of women formerly incarcerated in state prison in Illinois between 1989:II and 2003:II. This file was matched by the Chapin Hall Center for Children to the quarterly wage records maintained by the IDES. The common identifier in this match was the women's social security

number. On the IDOC file this number is reported by women when they were admitted to prison. On the IDES file this number is reported by Illinois employers each quarter. Because machine readable quarterly wage records were available from IDES only since the first quarter of 1995, our analysis of the earnings of women with and without child welfare contacts is limited to those women who report being mother and who paroled from state prison after this date.

The earnings information that we use in our study are earnings in jobs in Illinois that are covered by the state Unemployment Insurance (UI) system. Employers of such workers pay a tax on each worker's wages to the state in order to cover the cost of providing their former employees with unemployment insurance benefits in the event of a qualifying layoff. In such jobs the employer also would pay premiums for Workers Compensation insurance and contribute to the employees' Social Security. We do not have information on earnings from informal sources or from jobs not covered by the UI system, such as from self-employment, or in formal jobs in out-of-state establishments.

The Statistical Model For Section V

Our statistical model that we use to (regression) adjust for differences among incarcerated mother's characteristics and the timing of their spells of incarceration is adopted from Cho and LaLonde (2005). We estimate models of the following form:

$$(1) \quad Y_{it} = \mathbf{X}_{it}'\mathbf{B} + \delta(\tau; \mathbf{Z}_i) f_i(t; \mathbf{Z}_i) + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{it}.$$

In (1), we define Y_{it} as employment outcomes during calendar quarter t . We consider three employment outcomes: (i) total quarterly earnings reported by all employers in Illinois; (ii) a dummy variable indicating whether a woman had any UI-covered earnings during the (calendar) quarter t ; and (iii) total quarterly earnings during quarters when women were employed. The difference between outcomes (i) and (iii) is that in the latter case we exclude women during quarters when their earnings in UI-covered jobs equal 0.

The variable \mathbf{X}_{it} denotes a vector of observed characteristics described above in the text. The only time-varying variable in \mathbf{X}_{it} are a woman's age. But we also include indicator variables for whether the women have ever had a child in foster care and the timing and resolution of these foster care spells.

The term γ_t denotes time-effects that account for the effect of changing statewide economic conditions and policies on the employment prospects of female inmates. In our empirical work we control for these effects by including a vector of 34 dummy variables indicating the time period of the current calendar quarter. The first quarter is 1995:I and the last quarter is 2003:II These dummy variables also control for seasonal effects in the data. Formerly incarcerated women were least likely to be employed during the first (winter) quarter.

The term ε_{it} denotes unobserved characteristics. When we allow for an individual "fixed effect," we define the term ε_{it} as follows: $\varepsilon_{it} = b_i + v_{it}$. Otherwise, we assume that the time-varying component of the error is independently distributed. Our standard error estimates are "robust standard errors" that take account that the unobservable characteristics in our model are not identically distributed across individuals and time periods.

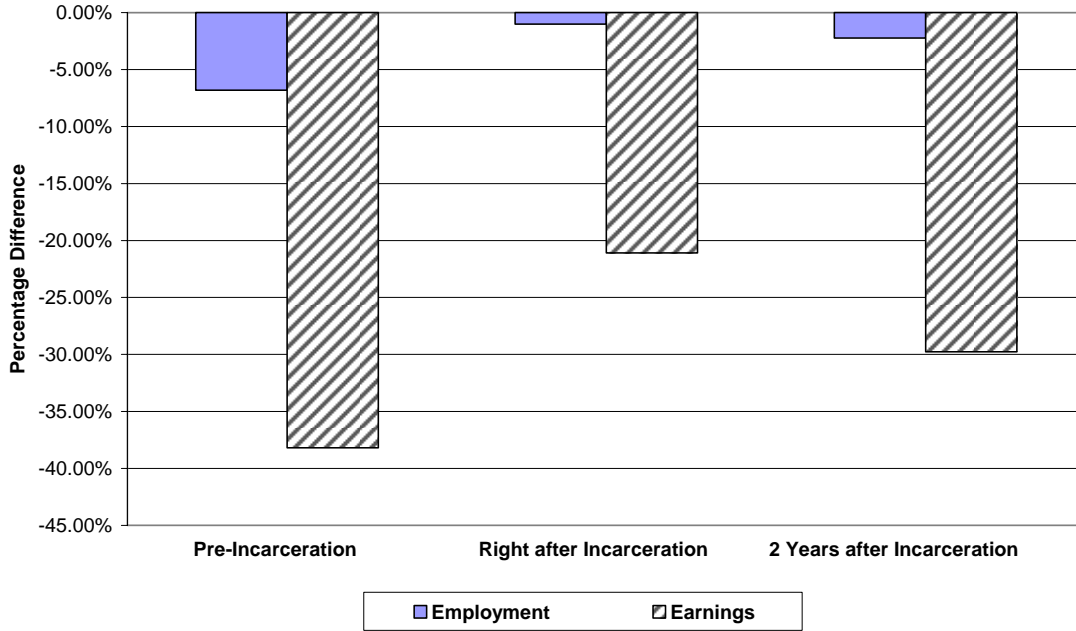
In (1), the term $\delta(\tau; \mathbf{Z}_i)$ denotes the effect of prison on employment and the term $f_i(t, \tau; \mathbf{Z}_i)$ denotes the relative quarter prior to, during, or since prison at time t . We define the term τ as the relative quarter or number of quarters between the current quarter and the quarter that a woman enters or exits prison. We allow the effect of prison, $\delta(\tau; S_i, \mathbf{Z}_i)$, to vary according to the number of quarters between the current quarter and the entry and exit quarters from prison. We assume, however, that these prison effects are time invariant. This restriction means that we assume that the effect of prison on earnings among early cohorts of parolees is the same as the effect of prison for later cohorts of parolees.

In our empirical work above, we explicitly examine the relationship between prison and employment rates during the period prior to entering prison. After some analysis of the data, we found that our post-prison results are sensitive to whether we control for prison-effects up to 8 quarters *prior to* the quarter that a woman enters prison. Knowing whether the current quarter was 8 or more quarters prior to the start of a prison spell does not predict post-prison employment rates. In terms of the notation above, we set $\delta(-9; \mathbf{Z}_i) = \delta(-10; \mathbf{Z}_i) = \dots = 0$. This restriction is sufficient to identify the prison effects that we report in the paper.

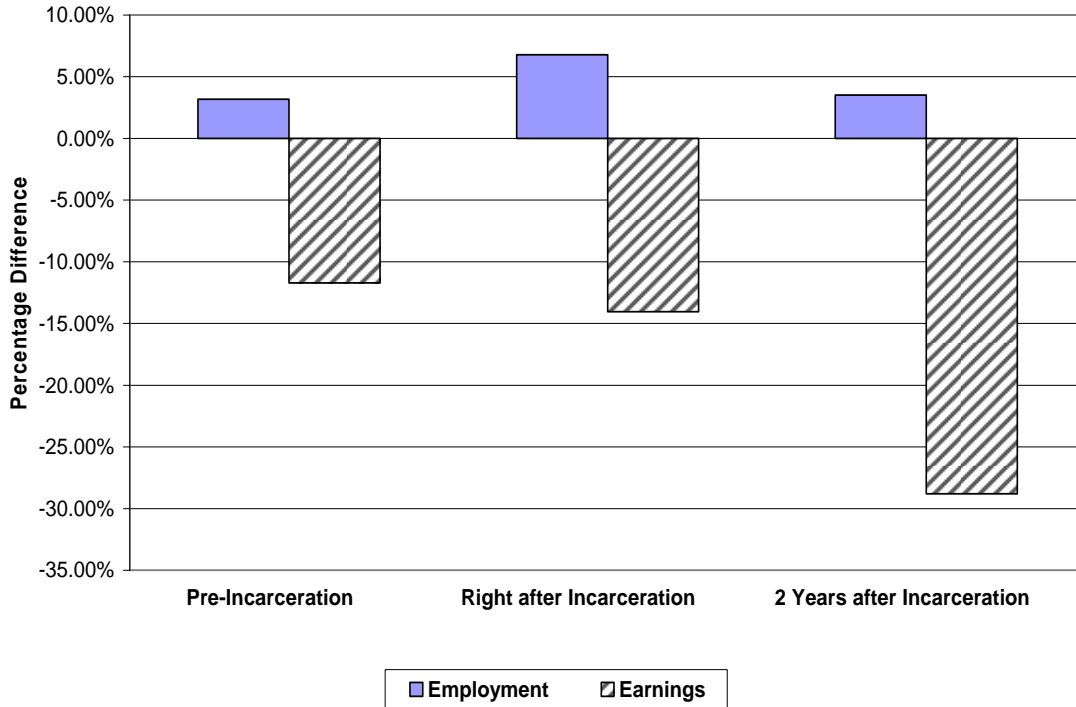
We specified the effect of prison on employment rates by allowing separate effects of prison in each of 8 pre-prison quarters and the quarters women are in prison, and each of the post-prison quarters. We also allow prison to have separate employment effects during the quarters that women enter and exit prison; and to have the same effect during each post-prison quarter.

The terms \mathbf{Z}_i in $\delta(\tau; \mathbf{Z}_i)$ denote a vector of characteristics to allow for heterogeneity in the effects of prison across individuals. In this analysis the vector \mathbf{Z}_i denotes the foster care status of the incarcerated mother's children. In our empirical work, we add to our specification of the prison effects an interaction term, which is the product of an indicator variable indicating whether the current period is after the quarter that a woman exits from prison and her children's foster care status. The coefficient associated with this interaction term is an estimate of the "effect" of prison on women with a given foster care status relative to women whose children were never in foster care (See Table A).

Appendix Table A: Unadjusted Differences Between the Employment Rates and Earnings When Working of Incarcerated Mothers Whose Children Were in Foster Care While in Prison and Mothers Whose Children Were Never in Foster Care



Appendix Table B: Unadjusted Differences Between the Employment Rates and Earnings When Working of Incarcerated Mothers Who Were Reunited with Their Children Prior to Prison and Mothers Whose Children Never Were in Foster Care



Appendix Table A
Number of Female Prisoners with Children in Foster Care and
the Timing of These Foster Care Spells

	<u>Number of Women</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Total Female Prisoners Exiting 1996:I to 2000:II	12,898	----
Report No Children	2,135	16.6%
Total Female Prisoners with Children	10,763	----
With At Least 1 child Ever in Foster Care (FC)	2,905	27.0%
With Foster Care Spells that End Prior to First Prison Spell:		
Ends with Reunification	1,003	9.3%
Only FC Spell Ever	307	2.9%
Ends with No Reunification	1,067	9.9%
Only FC Spell Ever	370	3.4%
With Foster Care Spells that Overlay with First Prison Spell:		
Ends with Reunification	202	1.9%
Only FC Spell Ever	53	0.5%
Ends with No Reunification	1,154	10.7%
Only FC Spell Ever	353	3.2%
Ends Because of Sample Frame	601	5.6%
With Foster Care Spells that Begin After First Prison Spell Ends:		
Only FC Spell Ever	196	1.8%

Appendix Table B
Resolution and Placement of Foster Care Spells of the Children of Incarcerated Mothers, By Demographic Characteristic and Criminal Offense Category
(Percentage of Foster Care Spells in Column Category)

	Resolution			Placement	
	Reunification	Adoption	Aged Out	Boarding	Home of Relative
Black	28.5%	34.8%	14.9%	16.5%	41.5%
White	46.2	27.8	13.5	40.7	24.4
Hispanic	28.1	37.7	14.3	16.9	38.5
Married	40.2	26.3	14.7	28.0	35.3
High School Grad.	34.6	30.7	14.0	21.4	39.2
Cook County Res.	22.2	38.2	15.3	8.7	44.2
Substance Abuse	31.0	34.9	14.6	19.6	39.5
Person Crimes	30.5	33.1	13.8	20.7	36.3
Property Crimes	34.9	31.5	13.9	24.1	37.3
Drug Crimes	24.9	40.1	12.8	14.0	43.2
Sex Crimes	32.3	32.6	17.7	25.6	23.1
Siblings in FC	31.0	34.5	14.2	20.5	39.2
Total	31.8	33.6	14.6	21.0	38.2

Source: Authors calculations based on Chapin Hall IDB data base. See Appendix.

Appendix Table C
Regression Adjusted Differences in Labor Market Outcomes,
by Foster Care Status of Incarcerated Women's Children.

Foster Care Spell Status Relative to Prison	Labor Market Outcomes:			
	Employment Rate	Earnings if Working		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i><u>Begins and Ends Prior to Prison-Reunification:</u></i>				
Difference	0.036* (0.017)	0.018 (0.016)	-0.090 (0.100)	-0.049 (0.107)
Post-Prison Effect	0.041* (0.020)	0.043* (0.020)	-0.119 (0.106)	-0.100 (0.107)
Post-Prison Tend	-0.004* (0.001)	-0.004* (0.001)	-0.012* (0.006)	-0.008 (0.006)
<i><u>Begins and Ends Prior to Prison-: Another Resolution:</u></i>				
Difference	-0.074* (0.010)	-0.036* (0.010)	-0.399* (0.085)	-0.373* (0.083)
Post-Prison Effect	-0.006 (0.013)	-0.006 (0.013)	0.163 (0.094)	0.212* (0.091)
Post-Prison Tend	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.008 (0.006)	-0.007 (0.006)
<i><u>Overlaps with Prison:</u></i>				
Difference	-0.057* (0.010)	-0.016 (0.009)	-0.353* (0.076)	-0.240* (0.075)
Post-Prison Effect	0.039* (0.012)	0.036* (0.012)	0.117 (0.077)	0.130 (0.083)
Post-Prison Tend	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.009* (0.004)	-0.009* (0.004)
Include Controls Variables:	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: Estimates measured relative to women whose children never appear in the state's child welfare records during the sample period. Regressions without controls include adjustments for calendar quarter and time relative to the entry and exit quarters from prison. Controls are for age and time prior to or since prison, years of schooling, marital status, number of children, holding offense category, and time served. Quarterly earnings include individuals who have no reported earnings during the quarter. Earnings if working is measured in natural logs and include only women with at least \$1 in reported earnings during the quarter. The robust standard errors are in parentheses. An "*" indicates that the estimate is statistically significantly different from 0 at the 0.05 level of statistical significance. Source: Authors calculations based on Chapin Hall IDB data base. See Appendix.

Figure 1: The Real Quarterly Earnings of Incarcerated Mothers, by the Foster Care Status of Their Children

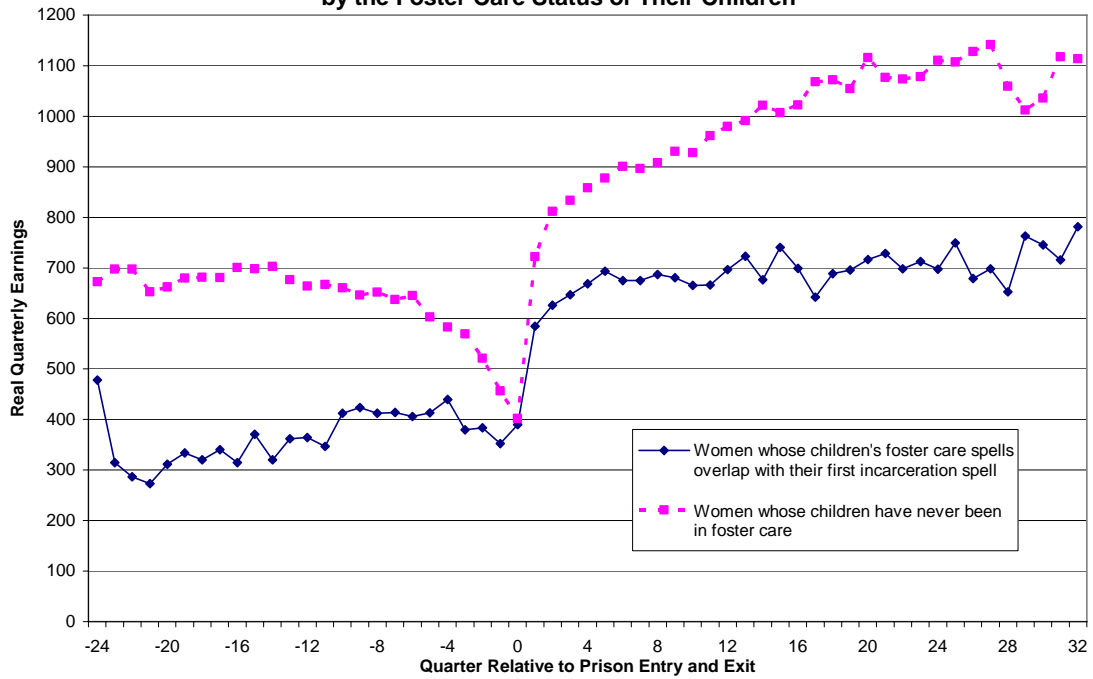


Figure 2: The Quarterly Employment of Incarcerated Mothers, by the Foster Care Status of Their Children

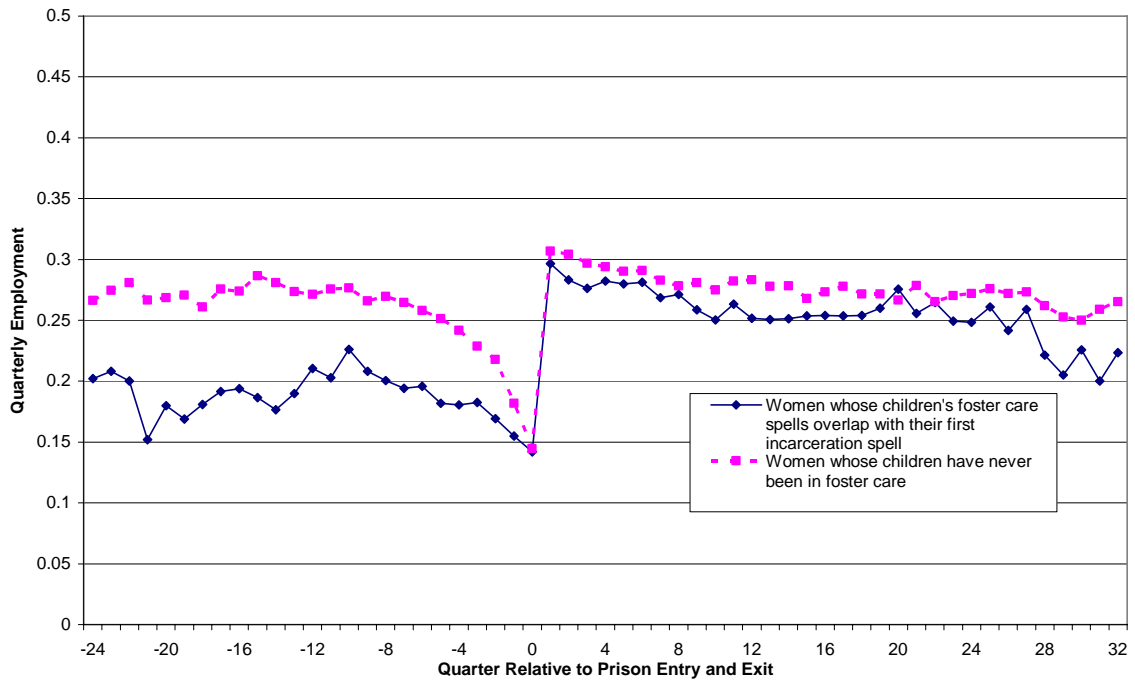


Figure 3: The Real Quarterly Earnings When Working of Incarcerated Mothers, by the Foster Care Status of Their Children

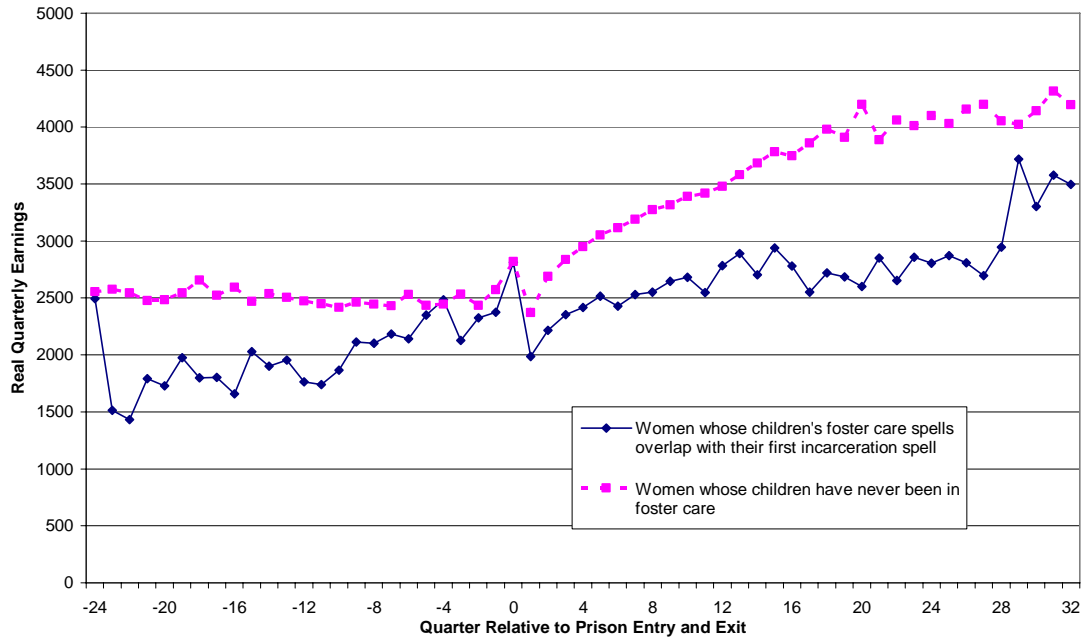


Figure 4: The Real Quarterly Earnings of Incarcerated Mothers, by the Pre-Prison Foster Care Status of Their Children

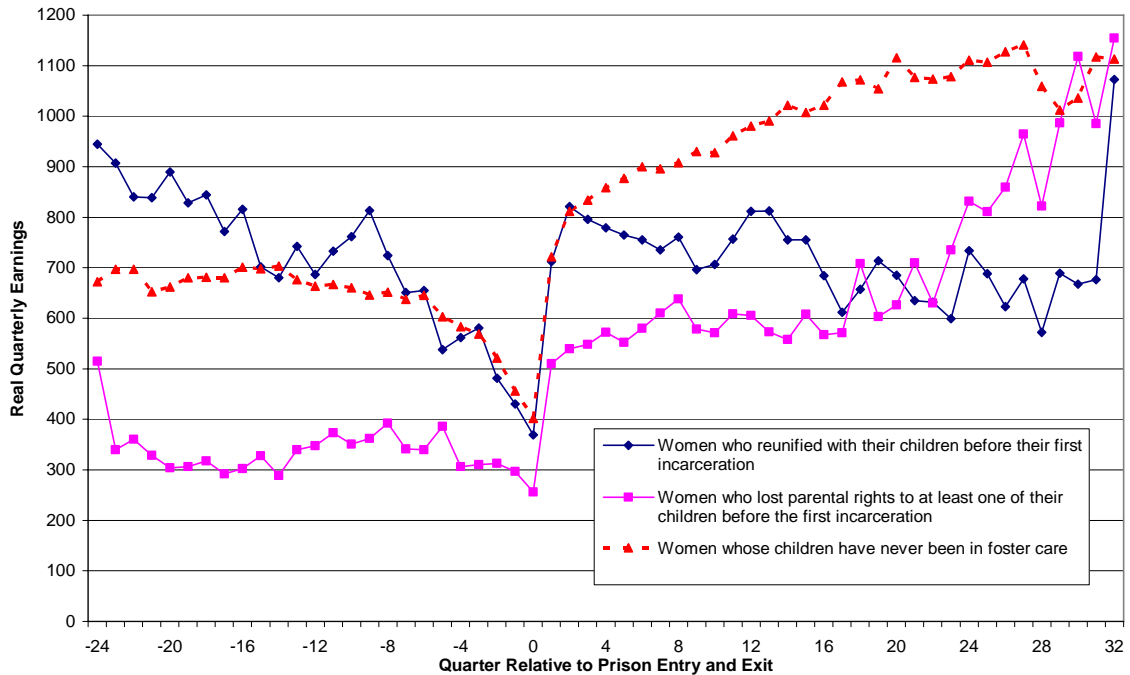


Figure 5: The Quarterly Employment of Incarcerated Mothers, by the Pre-Prison Foster Care Status of Their Children

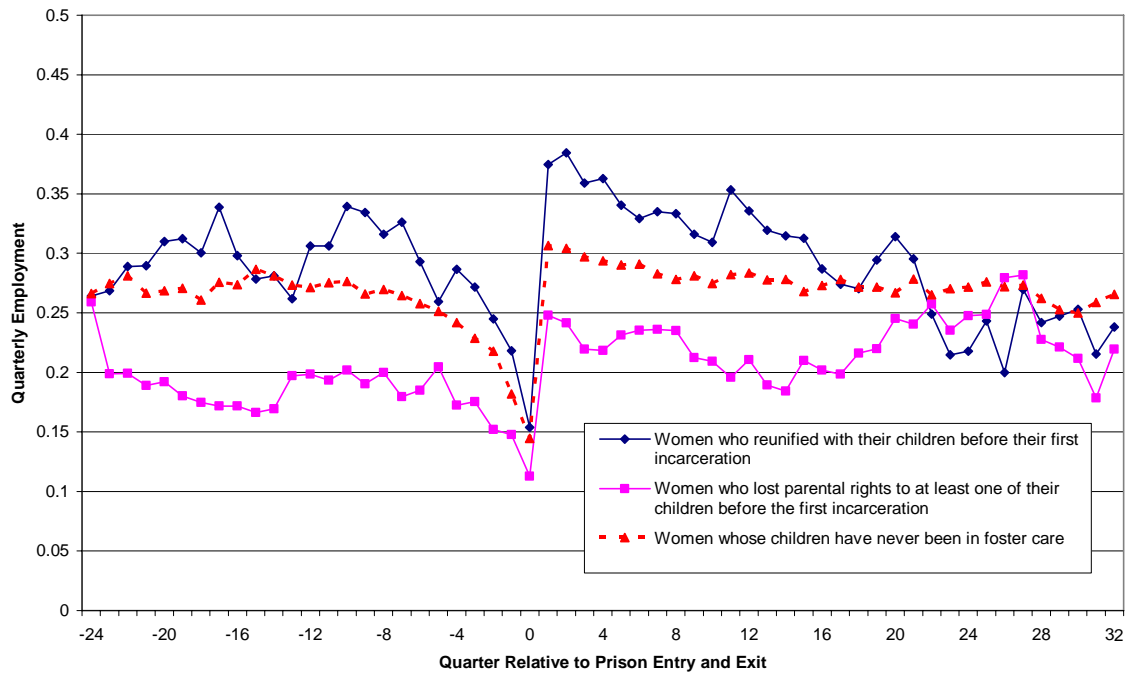


Figure 6: The Real Quarterly Earnings When Working of Incarcerated Mothers, by the Pre-Prison Foster Care Status of Their Children

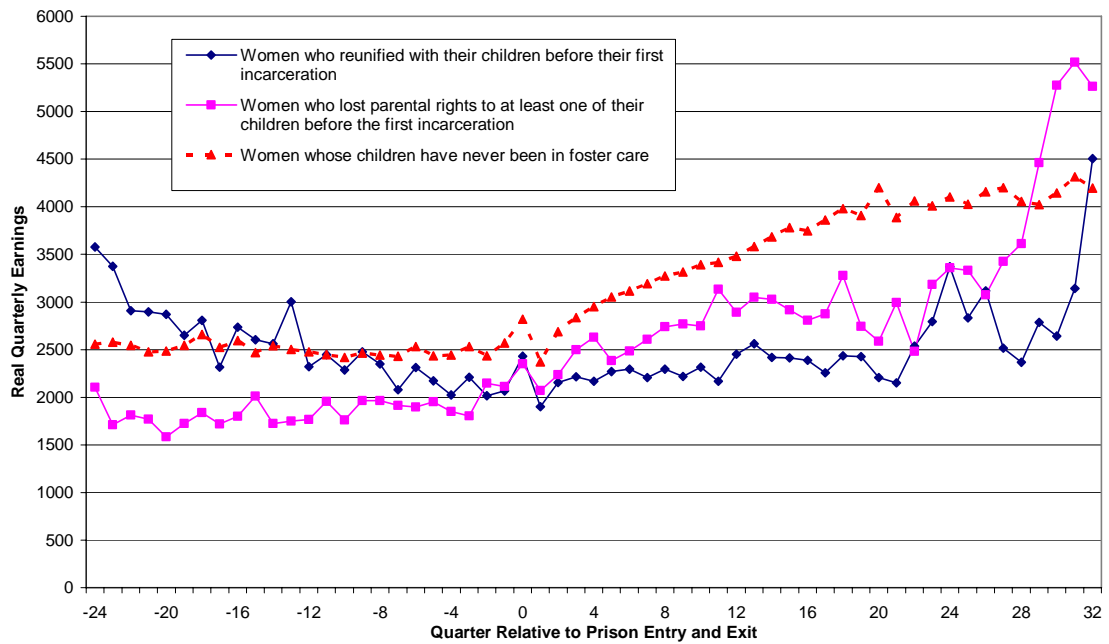


Figure 7: The Real Quarterly Earnings of Incarcerated Mothers, by the Different Foster Care Experience of Their Children

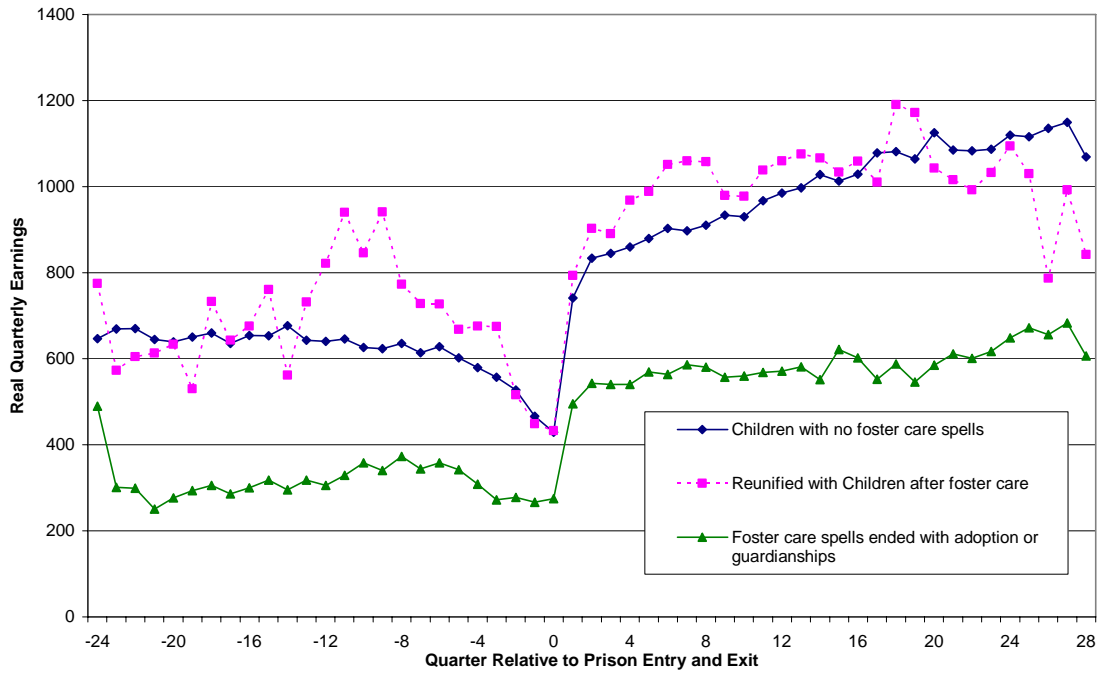


Figure 8: The Quarterly Employment of Incarcerated Mothers, by the Different Foster Care Experience of Their Children

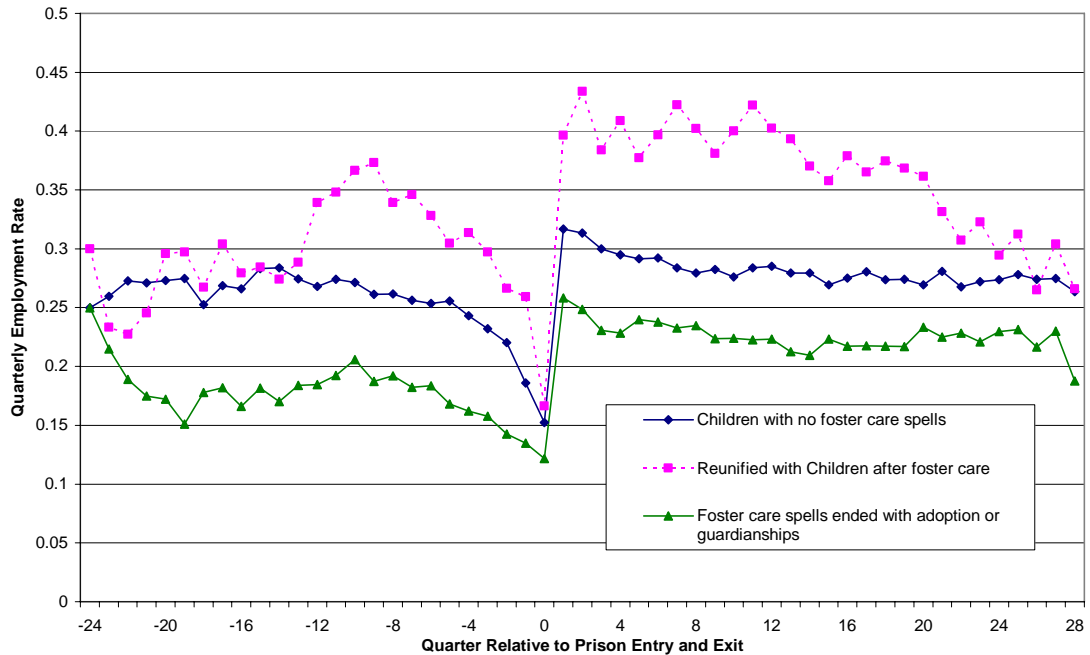


Figure 9: The Real Quarterly Earnings Conditional on Working of Incarcerated Mothers, by the Different Foster Care Experience of Their Children

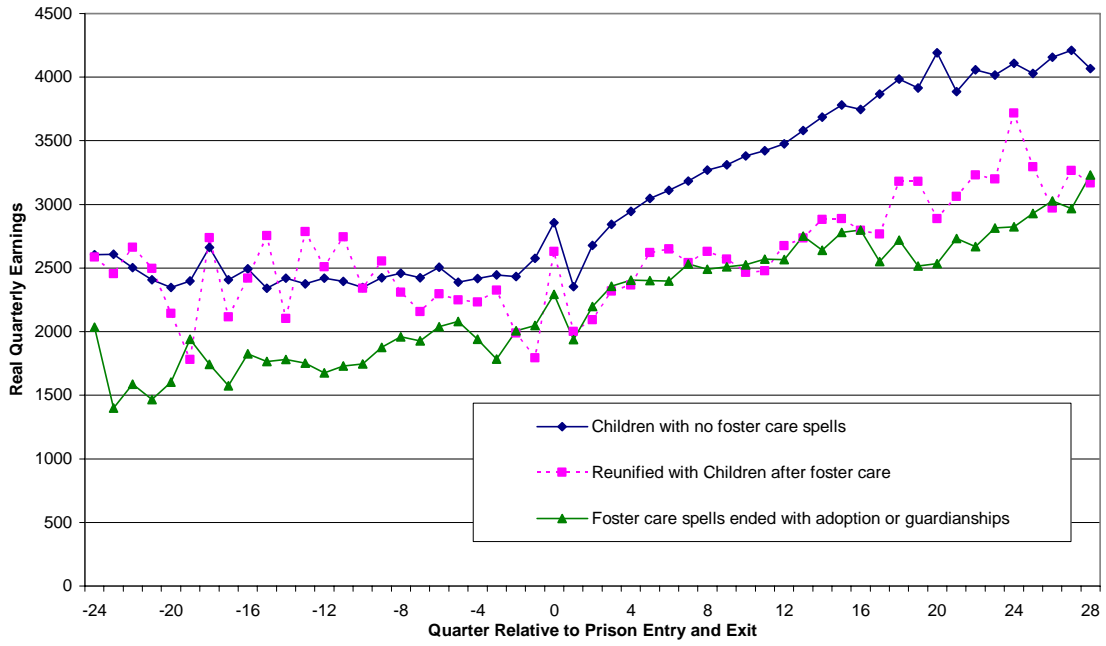


Figure 10: Employment and Earnings Differences between Females Whose Kids in Foster Care While in Prison and Females Whose Kids never were in Foster Care(Regression Adjusted)

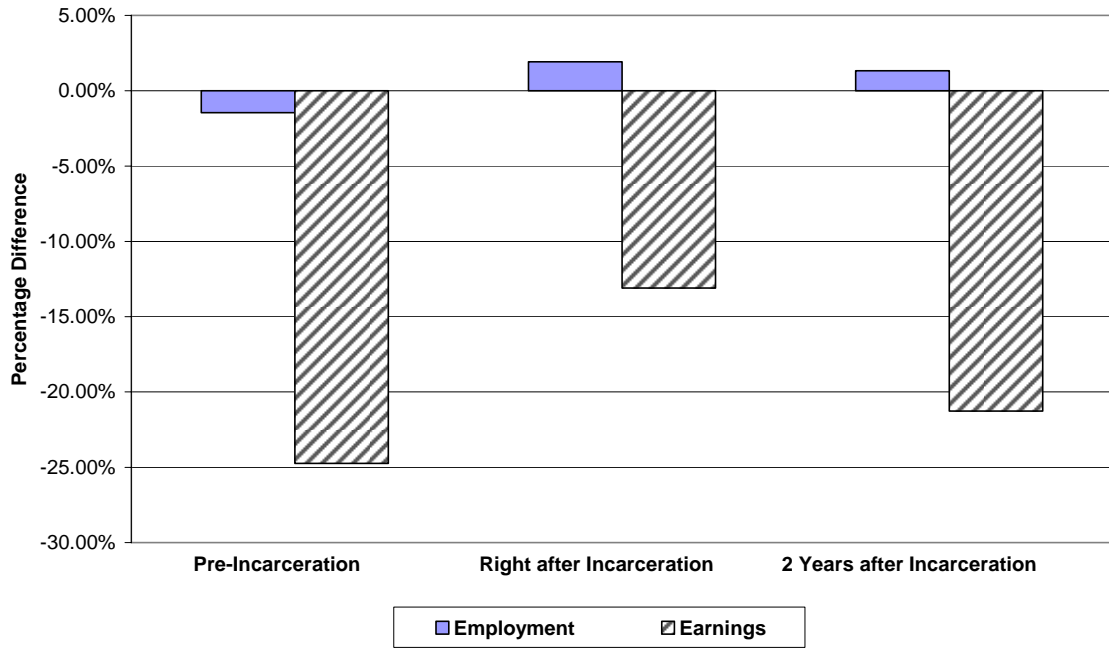


Figure 11: Employment and Earnings Differences between Mothers Who were Reunited with Their Kids in Foster Care Prior to Prison and Mothers Whose Kids never were in Foster Care (Regression Adjusted)

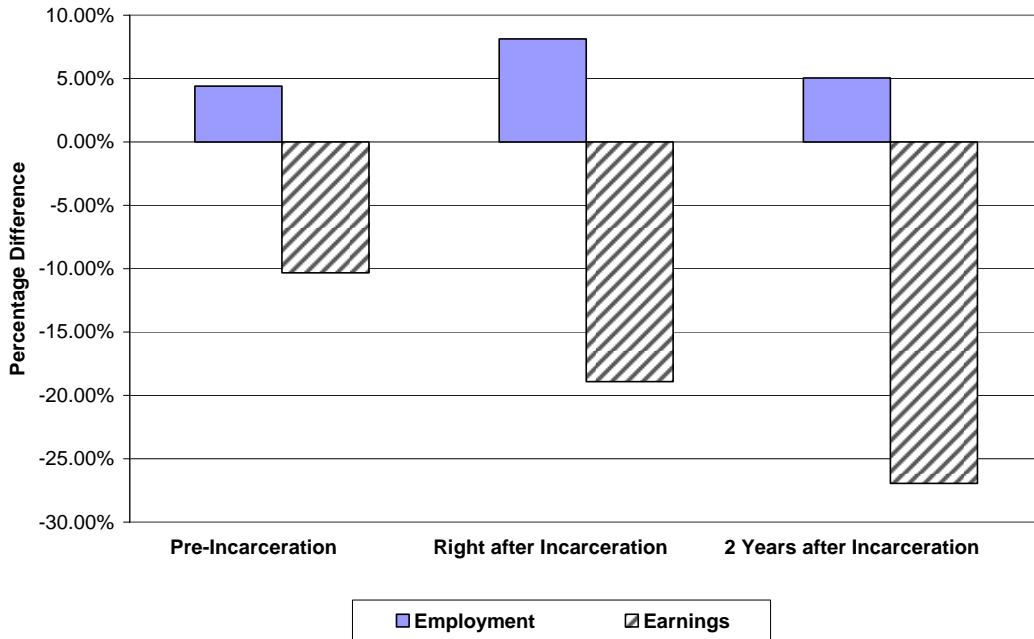


Figure 12: Employment and Earnings Differences between Mothers Who Lost Parental Rights to at Least One of Their Children Prior to Prison and Mothers Whose Kids Never were in Foster Care (Regression Adjusted)

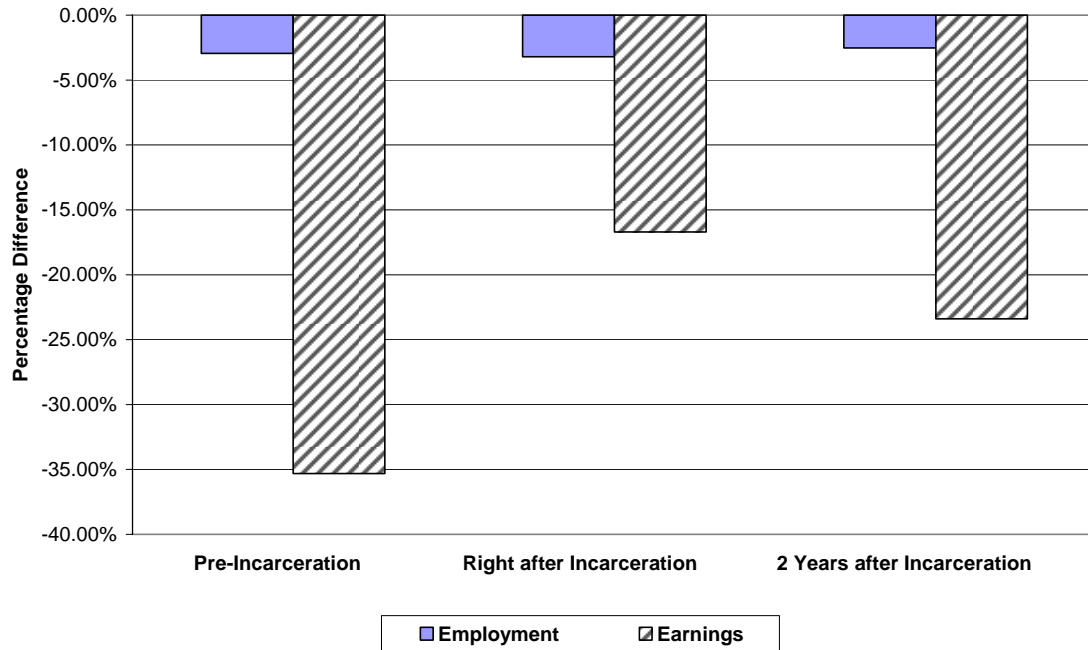


Table 1
Intersections between Foster Care Spells and Mother's Incarcerations
(Women incarcerated between 1/1/1995 and 6/30/2002)

	Number of Women	Percentage of Women
Total women incarcerated	11,050	100.0%
Women who report being mothers when admitted		
To state prison	9,251	83.7%
Women with children in foster care between 1975		
And 2001:IV	2,737	24.8%
Incarcerated Mothers with Children in Foster Care		
While they are in prison	1,521	13.8%
<u>Timing of Children's Foster Care Spells:</u>		
Incarcerated Mothers with Children in Foster Care	2,737	100% *
One or more children in FC prior to 1 st prison spell:		
Spell ends before prison.....	1,531	55.9%
Spell ends during or after prison		
but before a 2 nd prison spell	477	17.4%
Spell ends during or after prison		
No 2 nd prison spell.....	847	30.9%
Spell ends during or after a 2 nd prison spell	532	19.4%
One or more children in FC after 1 st prison spell		
<u>and prior to 2nd prison spell</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>3.3%</u>

Notes: Sample limited to women incarcerated between 1995:I and 2000:II who were not incarcerated any time between 1989:III and 1994:IV and who were under 60 years of age on June 30, 2002. An -* indicates that the percentages in the column may add up to more than 100% as a mother may have more than one prison spell after 1995:I or more than one child and the spells may occur at different times relative to the mother's incarceration(s). Source: Authors' calculations using the matched IDOC-DCFS-IDES administrative file.

Table 2
Resolution of Foster Care Spells of the Children of Incarcerated Mothers

A. Foster Care Spells That Occur while Child's Mother is Not Incarcerated:

	Foster Care Spell Starts:		
	Before 1 st Prison Spell Ends Prior to 1 ^s Prison Spell (1)	After 1 st Prison Spell Ends prior to 2 nd Prison Spell (2)	No 2 nd Prison Spell (3)
Reunited With Mother	51.1%	36.4%	25.3%
Adopted	27.8%	23.5%	17.7%
Subsidized Guardianship	3.4%	3.1%	1.9%
Still in Care	0.0%	24.1%	47.4%
Other Outcome/Over 18	17.7%	13.0%	7.6%

B. Foster Care Spells That Occur while Child's Mother is Incarcerated:

	Foster Care Spell Starts		
	Before 1 st Prison Spell Ends During or After the 1 st Prison Spell (1)	After 1 st Prison Spell Ends During or After the 2 nd Prison Spell (2)	After 1 st Prison Spell Ends During or After a 2 nd Prison Spell (3)
Reunited With Mother	12.8%	3.0%	12.2%
Adopted	49.5%	46.4%	27.8%
Subsidized Guardianship	10.5%	10.2%	4.3%
Still in Care	17.6%	33.2%	51.7%
Other Outcome/Over 18	9.7%	7.2%	4.0%

Notes: See Table 1.

Table 3
Foster Care Placements of Incarcerated Mother's Children

A. Foster Care Spells That Occur while Child's Mother is Not Incarcerated:

	Foster Care Spell Starts:		
	Before 1 st Prison Spell	After 1 st Prison Spell	
	Ends Prior to 1 ^s Prison Spell	Ends prior to 2 nd Prison Spell	No 2 nd Prison Spell
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Boarding	26.4%	21.0%	14.5%
Private Agency	4.9%	6.2%	11.2%
Hospital/Health Facility	9.9%	19.1%	18.7%
Home of Relative	34.0%	32.1%	35.6%
Institution DCFS	6.7%	9.3%	3.2%
Institution Private	4.8%	6.8%	6.7%

B. Foster Care Spells That Occur while Child's Mother is Incarcerated:

	Foster Care Spell Starts		
	Before 1 st Prison Spell	After 1 st Prison Spell	
	Ends During or After the 1 st Prison Spell	Ends During or After the 2 nd Prison Spell	Ends During or After a 2 nd Prison Spell
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Boarding	14.0%	12.0%	12.7%
Private Agency	4.7%	3.9%	12.7%
Hospital/Health Facility	11.1%	11.4%	23.6%
Home of Relative	47.4%	46.5%	28.0%
Institution DCFS	7.2%	9.2%	5.1%
Institution Private	4.3%	5.2%	9.9%

Notes: See Table 1.

Table 4
Timing of the Start of Children's Foster Care Spells
that Overlap With Their Mothers' Incarcerations

Foster Care Spell Began:	FC Spells		Childs' FC Spell Length		
	No.	Percent	Prior to Prison Entry	Mean	Median
1 - 90 days before 1 st prison entry	235	6.0	49.1	52	
91 - 180 days before 1 st prison entry	232	6.0	135.3	134.5	
181 - 270 days before 1 st prison entry	260	6.7	226.0	230	
271 - 365 days before 1 st prison entry	239	6.1	313.7	312	
366 - 730 days before 1 st prison entry	831	21.3	555.2	556	
731 - 1,095 days before 1 st prison entry	661	17.0	915.7	917	
1,096 or more days before 1 st prison entry	1,437	36.9	1,936.3	1,701	
Total	3,895	100.0	1,033.5	816	

Notes: See Table 1. Length of foster care spells is in days. As shown in Table 1, there were 1,521 incarcerated mothers whose children spent time in foster care while they were in prison. But there were 3,895 children with such foster care spells, because some children have the same mother. Source: Authors calculations based on Chapin Hall IDB data base. See Appendix.

Table 5
Timing of the Start of Children’s Foster Care Spells
that Coincide With Their Mothers’ Incarcerations, By the Demographic
Characteristic of the Mother
(Percentage of Children in Indicated Category)

Mother’s Characteristic	Foster Care Spell Began Before (in Days):						
	1-90	90-180	180-270	270-365	365-730	730-1,095	1,095+
Black	5.4	5.3	6.0	5.7	20.3	17.4	39.9
White	10.0	10.4	12.0	7.8	23.9	14.6	21.3
Hispanic	8.4	6.8	5.3	10.0	31.1	14.7	23.7
Married	5.1	7.3	7.6	7.6	21.0	19.0	32.4
H.S. Graduate	5.6	6.0	8.1	6.9	22.7	14.7	36.0
Cook County	4.6	4.6	5.1	6.3	20.4	17.0	42.0
Substance Abuse	5.4	6.0	6.5	5.4	21.2	16.8	38.8
Person Crimes	6.6	9.1	9.5	8.8	26.4	9.1	30.5
Property Crimes	6.7	5.6	7.0	6.3	22.5	19.5	32.5
Drug Crimes	5.5	4.9	6.0	4.9	19.6	18.0	41.0
Sex Crimes	7.7	8.8	1.1	14.3	18.7	11.0	38.5
Siblings in FC	5.8	5.8	6.4	6.1	21.1	17.0	37.6
Employed in Year Before Prison with Being Paid >=\$1,000	9.3	8.6	10.2	8.0	18.1	17.8	28.2

Notes: See Tables 1 and 4.

Table 6
Foster Care and Prison Spells of Mothers and Their Children
(Percentage of Incarcerated Mothers in Category)

1) No Children Ever In Foster Care: 74.2%

2) At least One Child Foster Care Spell Begins and Ends Prior to First Prison Spell:

Ends With Reunification with Mother: 6.3%

Ends With Another Outcome, Including Adoption: 11.2%

3) Children's Foster Care Spells Overlap with Prison Spell:

Ends With Reunification or another Outcome: 16.4%

Notes: Sample limited to women who report having children when admitted to prison and either women who never have had children in foster care or their children's foster care spells begin prior to the day that they exited from their first prison spell. It is possible for a woman to be classified in both category 2 and 3 for both the same child or for different children. Source: Authors calculations based on Chapin Hall IDB data base. See Appendix.