

A Comparison of Foster Care Reentry After Adoption in Two Large U.S. States

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Research Question

What are the pre-adoption characteristics associated with post-adoption reentry into foster care for children adopted through public child welfare agencies in Illinois and New Jersey?

Background

Illinois Policy Context

- Post-adoption and post-guardianship supports since the early 1990s
- Legislative support to study post-permanency services in 2005
 - Majority of families (85%) doing well
 - 15% of families needed additional services

New Jersey Policy Context

- Pre-and post-adoption supports for over 30 years
- Class action lawsuit settled in 2003 (Charlie and Nadine H. v. Corzine)
 - Disbanded Adoption Resource Centers and reorganized foster parent recruitment, training, and management
 - Expanded support and services to non-relative and relative foster parents
 - 2006 re-negotiation of settlement focused on permanency

Table 1. National data comparing rates of child involvement in Illinois and New Jersey.

Federal Fiscal Year:	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Illinois					
Children entered substitute care during the year ⁺	4,342	4,617	4,647	4,893	4,929
Rate per 10K ⁺⁺⁺	14.0	15.1	15.4	16.4	16.7
Children in substitute care on 9/30 ⁺	17,189	16,772	16,894	17,049	16,654
Rate per 10K ⁺⁺⁺	55.6	54.9	55.9	57.0	56.3
Median length of stay in care (in months) ⁺	27.7	27.1	26.2	25.2	24.4
IV-E Subsidized Adoption Assistance ⁺⁺	23,907	22,145	20,725	19,520	18,783
Rate per 10K ⁺⁺⁺	77.3	72.4	68.6	65.3	63.5
New Jersey					
Children entered substitute care during the year ⁺	4,534	5,252	5,361	5,056	4,594
Rate per 10K ⁺⁺⁺	22.1	25.8	26.5	25.1	23.0
Children in substitute care on 9/30 ⁺	6,440	6,847	6,946	7,138	6,874
Rate per 10K ⁺⁺⁺	31.4	33.7	34.4	35.5	34.4
Median length of stay in care (in months) ⁺	13.4	12.1	12.6	12.8	14.2
IV-E Subsidized Adoption Assistance ⁺⁺	7,566	7,966	8,319	8,676	8,858
Rate per 10K ⁺⁺⁺	36.9	39.2	41.1	43.1	44.3

Methods

Data

- All children adopted through foster care between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2010, data pulled November 2015.
- Illinois-Illinois Integrated Database provided by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and maintained by Chapin Hall
- New Jersey-New Jersey Spirit data provided by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families and maintained by the Child Welfare and Well-Being Research Unit at the Rutgers University School of Social Work

Variables

The outcome variable is re-entry into foster care. Control Variables were selected based on comparable information available in both States. These are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 Child demographic and placement characteristics.

Variable	Both States (N = 38,429)		Illinois (N = 26,199)		New Jersey (N = 12,230)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Outcome Variable						
Re-entered foster care	2,032	5%	1,500	6%	532	4%
Control Variables						
African-American	25,297	66%	17,552	67%	7,745	63%
Male	19,505	51%	13,229	50%	6,276	51%
Placed in institutional or group home (IGH) while in foster care	6,211	16%	5,464	21%	747	6%
Placement with kin in adoptive home	12,840	33%	10,913	42%	1,927	16%
Three or more years in care	26,233	68%	18,964	72%	7,269	59%
Age 3 or older at adoption	31,234	81%	22,210	85%	9,024	74%
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Number of placements in foster care	2.15	2.29	1.86	2.27	2.77	2.20

Data Analysis

- Survival analysis
 - Time of adoption (measured in days) until outcome of interest
 - Outcome: re-entry into foster care, age 17.5, or the date of the last observation as the censor date
 - Takes into account cases where the event of interest does not occur by the end of the observation period
- Multivariate Cox regression models to estimate hazards of foster care reentry for children from both
- Chi-square tests of the proportional hazards assumption using Schoenfeld residuals
- Log-log (survival) plots examined for all categorical variables

Results

Table 3 Length of time children were tracked post-adoption.

	Both States		Illinois		New Jersey	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Years tracked	8.8	3.3	9.0	3.3	8.5	3.1
Tracking ended because:						
Youth reached age of majority	17,226	45%	13,379	51%	3,847	31%
Censored on Nov. 1, 2015	19,171	50%	11,320	43%	7,851	64%
Reentered foster care	2,032	5%	1,500	6%	532	4%

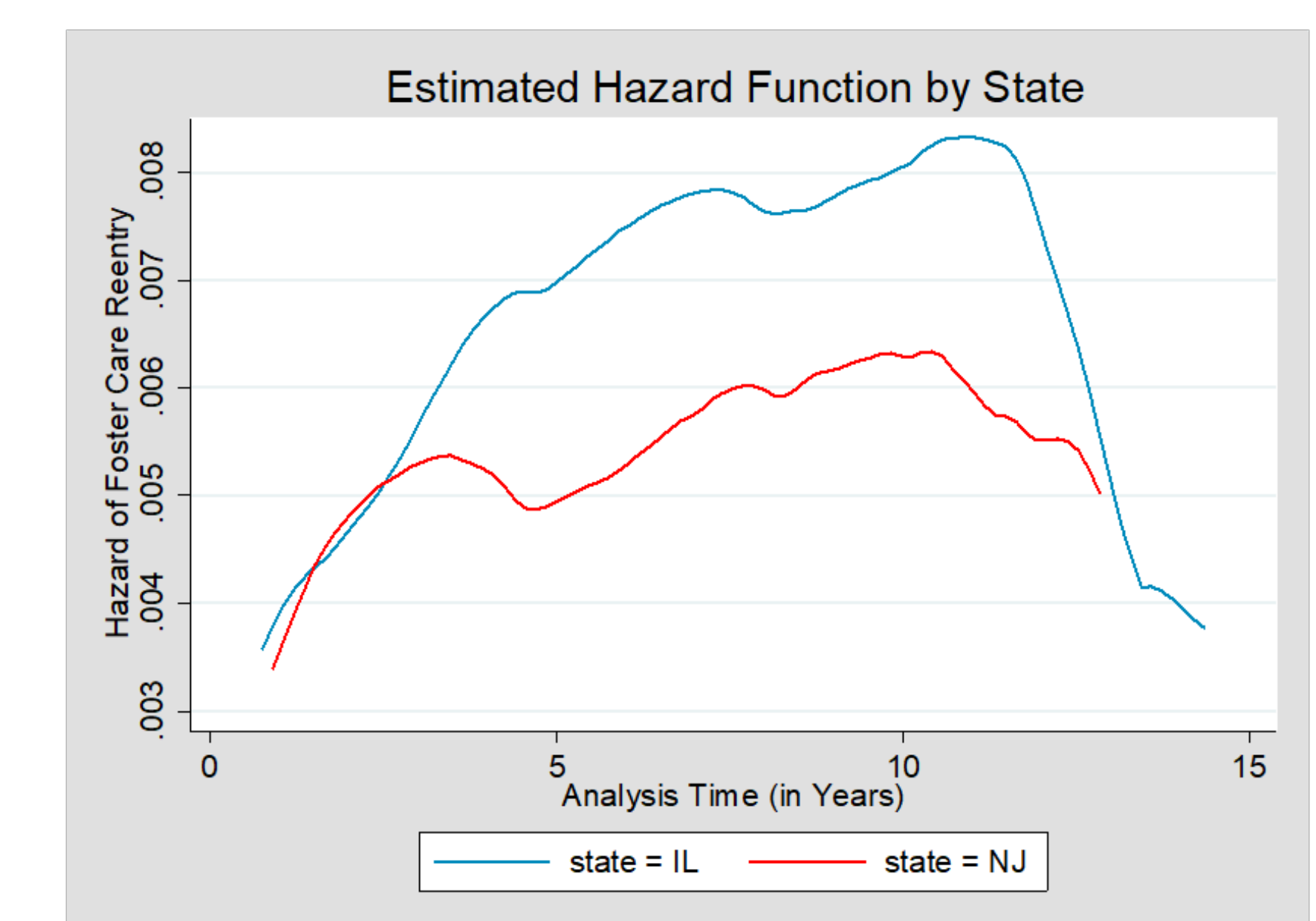


Figure 1 Estimated Hazard Functions by State

Table 4 Multivariate model results

Variable	Model 1: Both States (N = 38,429)		Model 2: Illinois (N = 26,199)		Model 3: New Jersey (N = 12,230)	
	HR	95% CI	HR	95% CI	HR	95% CI
New Jersey (Illinois)	0.75	0.67 0.83				
African-American (Non-African-American)	1.30	1.18 1.44	1.39	1.23 1.56	1.12	0.93 1.35
Female (Male)	1.00	0.92 1.10	0.98	0.89 1.09	1.07	0.90 1.27
IGH care (Non-IGH care)	0.91	0.81 1.02	0.90	0.79 1.02	1.00	0.72 1.39
Kinship adoption (Non-kinship adoption)	0.99	0.89 1.09	0.97	0.87 1.08	0.99	0.74 1.34
Three or more years in foster care (Less than 3 years in foster care)	1.00	0.87 1.14	0.93	0.79 1.09	1.19	0.90 1.57
Adopted at age 3 or older (Adopted at younger than 3)	2.28	1.88 2.76	2.59	2.04 3.28	1.76	1.25 2.48
Number of foster care placements	1.15	1.13 1.17	1.15	1.13 1.18	1.16	1.12 1.19

Notes: Reference categories for categorical variables shown in parentheses.

Hazard ratios in bold indicate an association between variable of interest and the outcome of interest (reentry).

Conclusion

- Age at adoption was the strongest predictor of reentry into foster care.
- African-American children at increased risk in Illinois, not significant in New Jersey.
- Long-term foster care, gender, institutional or group care, and adoption by relatives were not significant.
- Re-entry into foster care: 4% in New Jersey and 6% in Illinois; 20% lower risk in New Jersey than Illinois when adjusting for common risk characteristics.