



# “The big...iceberg under that water”:

Formerly imprisoned women’s experiences of re-entry

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# Outline for presentation

- Statement of the problem
- Situating the research
- Theoretical framework
- Methods/Participants
- Findings
- Conclusion/Thoughts for future work
- Questions/Comments



# Statement of the problem

- What are the impacts of mental health and addiction on the movement towards a crime-free lifestyle?
- What are the desistance experiences of women?
- How is employment impacted for women with mental health concerns and criminal record?

# Situating the research

*Stella's Circle*

Hope Lives Here

- My role as a researcher/practitioner

# Situating the research

- Context of female prisoners in Newfoundland and Labrador



- Desistance and link to employment
- Re-entry needs for female prisoners

Theoretical framework



# Women and re-entry



- Gendered re-entry
  - Motherhood
  - Housing
- Mental Health concerns
- Trauma
- Social capital deficit



# Study design

- Interviews with two groups:
  - Formerly incarcerated women
  - Service providers
- Recruitment and sample



# Participants: Who are they?

Formerly incarcerated women (17)  
Service providers (16)



# Initial Findings:

“That's only one tip of the iceberg, but there's a big friggin iceberg under that water you got to deal with. Yeah, and it's not easy. Okay, like if I wasn't so determined as I was when I got out of jail, I probably be back in there...”

Gloria (between 40-45)



# What do women say they need?

- Meaningful work (either paid or volunteer)
- They want to “give back”
- More services (existing services are good, but want more. Weekends and evenings)
- Gender specific services
- Peer Support: a buddy system
- Community
- Housing



# Employment

“I will be finished school....in May. And then I want to go on to do hair.... I’ll be able to say I’m on my own two feet 100% and.... I would like to move into a house and have my boys come in.”

Sylvie (between 30-35)

“I try to keep busy everyday and I like volunteer work, but because of my prison thing, I can’t.”

Mary (between 70-75)

# Barriers to employment

- Practical
- Stigma
- Gendered roles



# Practical

“Everything is amped up for people in prison. Okay, the poverty is amped up, the trauma is amped up. The addiction is amped up. Everything is just amplified....and much more difficult.”

Hannah (Service provider)


# Stigma



“ I met with her and built that therapeutic relationship, then one day she was like I have to tell you something. I was like, what are you gonna tell me? She's like, I have a criminal record. I was like, oh...., now I know why you can't get a job! Why aren't you telling me this like months ago?”

Lynn, service provider





# Stigma and criminal record

“I don’t know....the employment thing. Its probably got a lot to do with me because I am nervous about people knowing. Its not hard to Google.”

- Beth, (between 40-45)

## Gendered roles

“So I see women who have criminal histories more marginalized. And, I think, really ghettoized then into even sex work and not to say that there's anything wrong with sex work and some women want to do that. But I know some I've worked with some who get into that because it's just like well, that's what I could get”

-Alison, service provider



# A need for gendered services

“ .... I have to go up there (a local non-profit) and I'm frightened to death. I should have been three weeks ago. Yeah, but I'm going. Yeah, I just got to make myself some go. Yes. Im afraid of who going to see up there.”

-Katie

# Future direction for my research

- Implications for my social work practise
- Further investigation of intersection of MI and criminal record
- Further investigation of multiple stigmatized identity and impacts on employment



Questions/feedback