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## Voices Beyond Bars: A Qualitative Study Examining Occupational Participation for Formerly Incarcerated Women

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# Voices Beyond Bars: A Qualitative Study Examining Occupational Participation for Formerly Incarcerated Women

Brianna Correia, OTS, Mary Smith, PhD, OTR/L, & Cynthia Simons, RPS, MHPS

## BACKGROUND

- ❖ 600,000 individuals are released annually from state and federal prisons, about 67% are rearrested and 50% are reincarcerated within three years. (*Incarceration & reentry*, n.d.)
- ❖ Occupational Therapy (OT) has an ill-defined role in the criminal legal system (Muñoz et al., 2016).
- ❖ Employment: criminal history lowers chance of continuing application process by 50% (Marek, 2018)
- ❖ Health: Formerly incarcerated individuals (FIIs) are 31% more likely to not receive necessary medical care (Khatri et al., 2022).
- ❖ Housing: Many FIIs remain houseless in lengthy and frequent bouts two years after release (Remster, 2019).
- ❖ Family: ~75% of women identify as the primary caregiver prior to incarceration (Smyth, 2012); Support from loved ones is critical for FII to increase participation, increase health benefits, and reduce recidivism rates (Jaegers, Skinner, et al., 2020; Patel et al., 2021).
- ❖ Increase in women's incarceration rates over the past decade (Sawyer, 2018).
- ❖ Need for further research on FIW (Colbert et al., 2013; Norris et al., 2022; Ripper, 2023; Western & Smith, 2018).

## PROBLEM

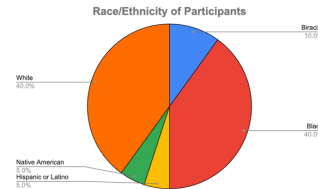
What are the systemic, societal, and personal barriers and facilitators to occupational participation and engagement that formerly incarcerated women experience in Texas?

## PURPOSE

This project aims to advocate for formerly incarcerated women (FIW) living in Texas by interviewing and collaborating with them to create an advocacy booklet highlighting their lived experiences.

## METHODS

- ❖ USAHS IRB approval
- ❖ Recruitment: selected process with convenience and snowball sampling methods (Dillaway et al., 2017a)
- ❖ Screening: inclusion/exclusion criteria via telephone
- ❖ Interviews
  - ❖ 35 interested participants (20 total participants)
  - ❖ Semi-structured interview: housing, employment, family, healthcare, and change.
  - ❖ Interviews via Zoom, 10-87 minutes (avg: 37 minutes)
- ❖ Framework: Participatory Occupational Justice Framework (Whiteford et al., 2018)
- ❖ Product: Advocacy booklet that combines existing literature with the findings from this study



## DATA ANALYSIS

- ❖ Transcript Verification
- ❖ Open Coding (Sybing, 2024)
- ❖ Axial and Selective Coding (Siegle, 2023)
- ❖ Thematic Analysis (Dillaway et al., 2017b)

## RESULTS

What are the systemic, societal, and personal barriers and facilitators to occupational participation and engagement that FIW face in Texas?



PERSONAL	SOCIETAL	SYSTEMIC
"... I have the mindset and the mentality to keep going, no matter what." – Participant 15	"I come from good people. I just do. But if I didn't, where would I be?" – Participant 2	"... when you first get out, I mean, you're almost set up to fail by the system." – Participant 14

## ADVOCACY BOOKLET



## DISSEMINATION

- ❖ Data analysis.
- ❖ Publish research.
- ❖ Present at conferences.
- ❖ Advocacy booklet.

## REFERENCES

