‘At Home’ in Prison? Women and the Homelessness–Incarceration Nexus

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**Summary:** Research in Ireland and internationally has documented a strong association between homelessness and incarceration. Nonetheless, the dynamics of this relationship are poorly understood. Although research suggests that the experience of incarceration among the homeless may have gender-specific dimensions, women have been largely ignored in the literature, which has tended to focus on the male experience. This paper examines the incarceration experiences of a sub-sample of women who are participants in a larger biographical study of women’s homelessness in Ireland. It charts their paths to incarceration and explores women’s perspectives on prison as well as their experiences post-release. Rather than a discrete life event, incarceration emerged as an extension of an institutional circuit that served to exacerbate their marginalisation and diminish their prospects of securing stable housing.

**Keywords:** Women, homelessness, prison, incarceration, institutionalisation, pathways, Ireland, biographical interviewing, ethnography.