



## Fostering Family Relationships and Women's Employment

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### Abstract

Although people in prison share some commonalities, they also face distinct issues based on who they are and where they are incarcerated. In this article, I offer suggestions regarding re-entry programs and policies for women. I frame these policies through a broader lens of intersectionality and the importance of context. People are embedded in interlocking systems of power, and experiences and positionality are shaped along multiple dimensions. Additionally, to understand criminal justice responses, we must understand the local social, political and economic contexts, as these programs may not translate across jurisdictions if local considerations are not taken into account. Just as crime and criminal justice policies are embedded in larger social worlds, so too are re-entry programs. Three policy areas are considered within this larger framework: drug courts, family reunification and employment.

### Keywords

Re-entry; family; employment; social context; female incarceration.

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## Introduction

Women are increasingly influenced by incarceration, and their pathways to incarceration often reflect high levels of disadvantage and victimisation. Their experiences are shaped by their structural positions, which are in turn shaped by gender, race, class, sexuality and other characteristics that form a 'matrix of power' (Crenshaw 1991). In addition, women are embedded in specific social contexts and have relevant personal and societal histories that shape their own experiences, opportunities and barriers. As such, women's pathways into and out of incarceration are shaped by their positionality, and it is important to consider their needs and how these may vary across groups and contexts.

In this article, I first discuss theoretical dimensions—intersectionality, how culture and context shape crime and responses to crime, and pathways to women's offending—that should inform any policy responses. I then highlight three policy responses and their relationship to women's re-entry: drug courts, strategies to support family relationships and women's employment. Drug courts are one example of a policy that was developed in the United States (US) and that has been applied in other countries. As incarcerated women are often there due to addiction and involvement in the drug trade—and due to the fact that their problems are likely to be considered through the lens of addiction (McKim 2017)—drug courts are a 'gender-neutral' policy that is highly relevant to women. Similarly, women's families and work lives are key dimensions that are disrupted by incarceration, and they might be supported through re-entry policies and programs. This article's goal is to explore the feasibility and appropriateness of applying programs or policies across various contexts, as well as factors to consider in doing so.

## Intersectionality

Theories of intersectionality emphasise the importance of analysing the interconnected identities of individuals and the importance of understanding how others perceive and respond to these identities (Potter 2015). Intersectionality as a concept originated in black feminist theory and critical race theory. Black feminist theory centralised the lived experiences of black women in the analysis and recognised that black women are typically oppressed, both within the black community and in society due to their subordinate race, ethnicity, sex and gender statuses (Crenshaw 1991; Potter 2015). This perspective can be extended to include all women of colour (Burgess-Proctor 2006). Intersectionality emphasises that all people have intersecting socially constructed identities that are ordered into social strata and that are organised within a 'matrix of power' (Crenshaw 1991) or a 'matrix of domination' (Collins 2000). In addition to race and gender, factors like sexuality, class and nationality are additional dimensions in this matrix, all of which are interlocking and mutually constitutive, and shape one's social location (Burgess-Proctor 2006). Crenshaw emphasised the importance of an intersectional lens for understanding the experiences of mass incarceration and how this has influenced women (black women, in particular). She wrote, 'The failure to be sensitive to the overlapping vulnerabilities of race and gender ... is a failure to fully investigate the unique structural and institutional intersections that contribute to the risk and consequence of punishment for women of color' (Crenshaw 2013: 23).

Women who engage in offending are often considered 'doubly deviant' and are regarded as violating both gender and legal norms (Heimer and de Coster 1999; Owen 1998; Sterk 1999). Black women face an additional layer of stigma. Kimberlé Crenshaw argued that black women are 'subject to the twin dimensions of hypervisibility and substantive erasure' (Crenshaw 2013: 31). They are part of the stereotypical, at-risk black family that is headed by a single mother, while they are absent from much programming that is directed at 'saving' black boys and families. There is also a growing awareness of and attention to the problems of the *criminalblackman* stereotype (Russell-Brown 1998), with less attention being paid to understanding how racial and gendered stereotypes shape the experiences of black women. This framing blames black women for being inadequate mothers, wives and girlfriends, thereby contributing to the criminal involvement and

incarceration of black men, and ignores black women's own disproportionate rates of incarceration. Race and class statuses influence women's roles within their families and communities, which also shapes their perceived need to offend and the consequences of that in their lives. Additionally, the effects of structural disadvantage, like poverty and limited education, on criminal offending is particularly true for black women (Hill and Crawford 1990).

## Context

The framework of intersectionality sensitises us to the need to consider a person's multiple dimensions, as well as those of a society, so we can understand their histories and the context in which they are embedded. These are neither uniform, nor can they be assumed. In a policy context, this means that in addition to recognising needs that might be unique or different for women, policymakers should also carefully consider the broader context in which policies are enacted. For example, there are both global and local trends in punishment and incarceration. In developing policies and practices related to incarceration and re-entry, it is important to recognise the larger and interconnected context of criminal justice policies, incarceration and re-entry. Patterns of incarceration in other countries are partly shaped by the US imposing a drug war on the governments of other countries, particularly in Latin America (Boutron and Constant 2013; Müller 2012; Reynolds 2008). Reynolds (2008) attributes US foreign policy for the war on drugs to the emergence of the prison industrial complex as a global economic strategy. Other similarities exist between the US and other countries, including neoliberal policies, public demands for security, and policy responses such as broken windows or order maintenance policing (Müller 2012).

Although the US possesses a global influence, there are key local and national histories and dimensions that also shape incarceration and re-entry policies and circumstances. For example, histories of colonialism, apartheid and conflict shape the experiences of people who are accused of crimes and who enter and exit prison (Baldry 2013; Irwin and Umemoto 2016; Kerr and Moore 2013; Mahtani 2013; Miller and Carbone-Lopez 2013; Super 2016). A legacy of conflict and war can shape the structure of a nation's prisons—which influences approaches to all prisoners, not just political ones (Boutron and Constant 2013; Kerr and Moore 2013; Mahtani 2013). For example, Boutron and Constant (2013) situated contemporary incarceration policies in Peru that combined US foreign policy and Peruvian history—including women's participation in the drug economy and the political dimensions that are shaped by Peru's history of revolution. They argued that 'the feminization of poverty and transnational criminality must be analyzed in relation to continuing attempts to domesticate women's bodies, attempts that play out quite differently when race, class, sexuality, colonial history, and political ideology are taken into account' (Boutron and Constant 2013: 178). Boutron and Constant (2013) carefully documented key factors in Peruvian history and how they shaped the country's approach to women's imprisonment. Similarly, Mahtani (2013) documented the role of Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war, which escalated levels of domestic violence, rape, limited education and poverty. Given the social stigma of female prisoners and former prisoners in Sierra Leone, incarcerated women are largely invisible in terms of social policy and are often shunned by their families.

In a broader sense, the uses of violence—including in the home—are shaped by cultural and historical forces, which will continue to shape family and community functioning (Auyero and Berti 2015; Mahtani 2013; Oliver and Hairston 2008). Auyero and Berti (2015) developed the idea of concatenated violence, or the many ways in which different forms of aggression and violence are linked. They argued that the concepts of street violence, domestic violence and vigilante justice are all influenced by one another and by larger social forces. All forms of violence in *Arquitecto Tucci*, a poor area outside of Buenos Aires, are grounded in the historical, political and economic development of that specific place. This includes a dictatorship, financial deregulation, deindustrialisation and the presence of a large street market. These contingencies may be distinct in different places, but they highlight the importance of understanding social and

political underpinnings not only for understanding the interconnections of different forms of violence, but also for understanding the different responses to that violence. Vigilante justice is common in some contexts, such as post-apartheid South Africa, and operates alongside formal criminal justice system responses (Super 2016). South Africa has one of the highest incarceration rates in Africa, but it also relies on 'community justice' that dispenses penalties such as beatings (sometimes killings) and banishment. In brief, we must regard formal criminal justice responses as being embedded in larger systems and cultures.

As can be evidenced by worldwide patterns in incarceration rates, the incarceration of women is an issue present in numerous countries and jurisdictions. When proposing any policies to address women's incarceration and prisoner re-entry, it is important to understand the context in which these policies are being implemented. This includes comprehending the factors that shape incarceration, the economy and the types and levels of available resources, among other relevant dimensions. It is also important to comprehend gender as it relates to other forms of discrimination and power, including race, ethnicity, caste, class and sexuality (Crenshaw 2013; Potter 2015). Women from cultures possessing higher levels of stigma in regard to incarcerated women may face further challenges, such as a lack of familial support (Mahtani 2013). In other contexts, at least some incarcerated women may demonstrate a 'redeemability' (Miller and Carbone-Lopez 2013). For example, despite the stigma attached to sex work in Sri Lanka, a prison superintendent considered marriage the most successful method for reforming some of the women in his facility (Miller and Carbone-Lopez 2013). Marriage would offer these women a path to respectability that was not otherwise available to them due to their involvement in the sex trade, their incarceration histories and their class status.

### **Pathways to and patterns in women's incarceration**

Incarcerated women comprise approximately 2–9 per cent of prison populations worldwide, with approximately one-third of them being incarcerated in the US (Myers et al. 2017; Walmsley 2017). Although women remain a minority of prison populations, the rate of female incarceration has increased much faster than that of male incarceration in recent years. Since 2000, the number of women and girls in prison worldwide has increased by 53 per cent, compared to 20 per cent for men. Overall, the highest levels of women's incarceration are found in the Americas and the lowest in Africa. The highest rates of female incarceration are found in the US, Thailand and El Salvador.<sup>1</sup> Since 2000, the sharpest increases in these rates have been observed in Guatemala, El Salvador, Brazil, Cambodia and Indonesia<sup>2</sup> (Walmsley 2017). This pattern continues even when prison populations are declining overall. For example, although the overall prison population in the US has decreased by seven per cent since its high in 2009, the number of women in prison has remained steady or has slightly increased in that timeframe (Carson 2018).

The pathways perspective argues that gender matters significantly in the shaping of criminal involvement, and that women's criminal activity is often a response to abuse, victimisation, poverty and substance abuse (Bloom, Owen and Covington 2004; Chesney-Lind 1997; Mahtani 2013; Owen 1998; Richie 2001). Incarcerated women are often poor, have limited education and work experience and have a history of abuse, trauma and victimisation (Myers et al. 2017; Richie 2001). Heimer (2000) partly attributed these trends to the feminisation of poverty and to the increasing percentage of the poor population in the US who resides in female-headed households. This is also true cross-nationally; prisons often house the poor and other marginalised groups (Boutron and Constant 2013; Mahtani 2013; Müller 2012; Myers et al. 2017; Western 2006). In some cases, becoming involved with the criminal justice system is a direct result of childhood victimisation, as in the case of a runaway who flees an abusive home environment (Chesney-Lind 1997). In other cases, the connection may be more indirect. Given their high rates of abuse by family members, adult relationships with families of origin may be particularly fraught for women with histories of offending and incarceration (Harlow 1999; Makarios 2007).

Poverty and disadvantage are often connected to women's offending and incarceration histories. Women are less likely than men to have been employed at the time of incarceration, and have limited work histories (Cho and LaLonde 2008). Women's economic marginalisation can also lead to crimes of survival (Chesney-Lind 1997; Mahtani 2013; Miller and Carbone-Lopez 2013; Richie 2001). Women are more likely than men to be convicted of drug-related offences and to have histories of drug addiction and mental illness (Carson 2018). Drug use and drug trafficking clearly affect incarceration in the Americas (Boutron and Constant 2013). Approximately 20 per cent of the prison population in Latin America is charged with drug-related offences (Drugs Security and Democracy Program 2018). This is true for more than 60 per cent of the female prison population in Argentina, Brazil and Costa Rica. Additionally, poverty and a lack of employment opportunities can drive women into sex work, which may result in charges for prostitution, vagrancy or loitering (Mahtani 2013; Miller and Carbone-Lopez 2013). Formerly incarcerated women may be further marginalised from their families and economic opportunities, and so they are forced into similar survival strategies.

The dynamics shaping incarceration also influence women's re-entry experiences. Patterns of discrimination are evident, with African American, afrodescendent and indigenous men and women being disproportionately represented in prison populations (Boutron and Constant 2013; Carson 2018; Working Group on Women, Drug Policies, and Incarceration 2016). For example, in Peru, a sizeable proportion of the female prison population includes descendants of native populations who experienced considerable discrimination due to their Andean origins; this led to informal jobs that exposed them to criminal networks and punishment (Boutron and Constant 2013). Similar patterns are observed among Aboriginal populations in Australia (Baldry 2013) and Canada (Hannah-Moffat and Maurutto 2010; Maurutto and Hannah-Moffat 2016). In Canada, this has also led to the creation of specialised Gladue courts for aboriginal people, in which the court receives information on aboriginal defendants' behaviour within collective histories of oppression (Maurutto and Hannah-Moffat 2016).

Gender and gender roles also vary across nations and cultures, which shapes the responses to women as offenders, prisoners and former prisoners (Carlton and Segrave 2013; Garcia-Hallett 2016). For example, Garcia-Hallett (2016) detailed how social and cultural differences influence the re-entry experiences of African American, West Indian and Hispanic women in New York. Although they had some shared experiences and perspectives, Garcia-Hallett highlighted certain ethnic clashes, a 'foreigner' experience and cultural distinctions in familial acceptance and assistance. In her sample, West Indian women were more likely to be employed than African American or Hispanic women—a pattern that is evident more broadly in New York City. Her participants also noted a particular tension between African American women, who have a reputation for laziness, and West Indian women, who have a reputation for being workaholics. This was specifically noted by the West Indian women, who tended to focus more on ethnic differences than on racial differences. Additionally, West Indian and Hispanic women were more likely to emphasise their 'foreignness'—which, for them, included both foreign-born and native-born identities with ties to another country—as justification for economically motivated crimes. Garcia-Hallett emphasised the importance of researchers moving beyond a 'black-white dichotomy' when considering the influence of race and ethnicity. The relevant races and ethnic groups vary across contexts, but this provides a framework through which to examine the nuances of social positionality.

As the examples above illustrate, the experiences of women in prison—including how they got there and how they are defined by their families and broader society—will vary across contexts and across groups of women. To support the development of relevant policies, I emphasise the importance and value of research into female incarceration, prisoner re-entry and related issues, along with the importance of monitoring and evaluating programs and policies. Although patterns and commonalities exist both across and within countries, there are also key differences.

Research can help ground and assess these commonalities and differences. In the next section, I will discuss several common policies that might be useful to incarcerated women.

### **Drug Courts and Governing Through Addiction**

One factor driving the mass incarceration of women is the war on drugs and the criminalisation of addiction. This is true across many jurisdictions and contexts (McKim 2017; Müller 2012; Reynolds 2008). Women may also be particularly likely to have their problems framed as addiction and to have that logic frame their punishment (Haney 2010; McCorkel 2013; McKim 2017). Because women are perceived as being less likely to commit violence and being more psychologically troubled than men, they are often the preferred candidates for diversion in drug treatment (McKim 2017). Given the widespread connections between the drug trade and incarceration across jurisdictions, one popular policy has been that of drug courts; these are specialty courts that provide court oversight in the name of facilitating recovery from addiction. Because of its popularity in several jurisdictions and because of the connections between addiction and incarceration for women across jurisdictions, drug courts are a useful example for illustrating the importance of context in assessing the applicability of policies and programs across place.

Drug courts are one example of how the lines between punishment and welfare provision and between therapeutic and legal responses can be blurred (Paik 2011; Tiger 2013). The stated goal is to help people who are addicted to drugs, but drug courts are also used to justify a heightened oversight of defendants in the name of recovery (Tiger 2013). Some evidence suggests that those who fail to complete drug treatment programs are more likely to be arrested in the ensuing years, even when compared to those who needed treatment but who did not participate (Huebner and Cobbina 2007). Drug courts were one of the major sources of funding and referrals for the Women's Treatment Services (WTS), one of two residential treatment centres for women that McKim (2017) studied. Addiction at the WTS was defined as a 'having a profoundly disordered and dependent self' (McKim 2017: p. 3). This contrasted with McKim's other treatment centre—funded primarily through private insurance—which defined addiction as substance abuse. The connection to drug courts (and parole) signified a much broader and more coercive involvement in the women's lives. Economic circumstances, not the severity of their addictions, was the driving factor in determining the facility to which the women were sent. Nationally in the US, people who were sent to drug treatment centres through the criminal justice system may have had less severe substance use issues than those who attended private treatment centres, and some court-mandated clients had histories of drug dealing, not of drug use (McKim 2017). WTS and similar programs are used to manage both crime and poverty. Given the dynamics of women's incarceration, women may be particularly vulnerable to these blurred lines that are the focus of drug courts.

Several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have adopted drug court models that are based on US drug courts and have faced similar challenges. One issue is that, although perhaps well intentioned, a court-related drug treatment model signifies that health care services are mediated through the criminal justice system (Drugs Security and Democracy Program 2018). In most cases, participation in drug court requires a guilty plea. This means that the defendant will experience the social, political and economic consequences of a criminal conviction. In addition, a 'failure' in drug court can result in incarceration. This perpetuates the criminalisation of drug use and addiction. There are ethical complications to providing services and support through the criminal justice system and to adding a punitive dimension and capability to the provision of health care and support services (McKim 2017; Stuart 2016). These tensions are particularly problematic when drug treatment and other health care services are scarce outside a criminal justice system context.

Beyond potential problems that are inherent to specialty courts, caution should be employed when adopting US models in different regions that have different legal systems and networks of resources. For example, the lack of treatment options in many Latin American and Caribbean countries has led to a reliance on private providers and has resulted in numerous cases of abuse and human rights violations (Drugs Security and Democracy Program 2018). Models that work in one context may not be directly applicable in another, and care should be taken to understand the values, needs and constraints of the local context and how these may shape incarceration, re-entry and key family and community dynamics.

### **Restorative Justice Approaches to Family Reunification**

Incarceration and its difficulties can cause many other problems in the home and for children (Wakefield and Wildeman 2014). Incarceration itself is a major source of stress in relationships and often results in the end of marriages and romantic partnerships (Apel 2016; Hairston and Oliver 2006). Conflict with intimate partners and former partners is central to many (former) prisoners' descriptions of family life; this includes conflict over fidelity, relationships with children, economic expectations and running the household (Comfort 2008; Hairston and Oliver 2006). Reuniting after prison is then extremely difficult, and domestic violence incidents might be more common during this transition (Oliver and Hairston 2008).

Developing or strengthening relationships with children is a core concern for both men and women. Many parents leave prison motivated to reconnect with their children, though many also experience road blocks when trying to navigate the child welfare systems, the relationships with their children's other parents or guardians and their children's distrust (Harding, Morenoff and Wyse 2019a; Leverentz 2018). Relationships with children can be significant turning points that foster pro-social ties and that discourage reoffending. Having children does not necessarily lead to desistance from offending (Adams et al. 2016; Huebner, DeJong and Cobbina 2010), but it is central to women's narratives of desistance (Enos 2001; Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph 2002). Engaging in routine activities related to parenthood might also foster reduced probation or parole violations, at least in low-crime neighbourhood contexts (Adams et al. 2016). Additionally, children want and would benefit from strengthened relationships with their (formerly) incarcerated parent. While it may occasionally be in the interests of the child to have limited or no contact with their parent(s), this is often not desirable for the child nor the parent. Custodial relationships may be a goal in some cases, while non-custodial relationships between parents and children are the goal in others. This also often necessitates a working relationship with the child's other parent, even if the parents are not a family unit. Yet, over time, parents set these goals aside when they were unable to navigate the bureaucracy and other barriers to connect with their children.

While many men and women want to develop or improve relationships with their children, motherhood is often a central identity for women. Women are also more likely than men to be custodial parents at the time of their incarceration, so women's incarceration may lead to greater disruptions in children's lives (Hagan and Coleman 2001). Women experience significant role strain when in prison, particularly when serving longer sentences and when they have not been living with their children prior to their incarceration (Berry and Eigenberg 2003). Berry and Eigenberg (2003) concluded that women will experience less role strain if they are allowed to engage in mothering activities while in prison. Some prisons, like Boronia in Western Australia, are 'family friendly' institutions intended to reduce the cumulative disadvantages to both children and mothers (Myers et al. 2017). However, similar to drug courts, the centrality of women's identities as mothers can also be used to coerce incarcerated women in ways that similarly blur punishment and social supports (Haney 2010).

Due to the importance of motherhood to many women, the high rates of motherhood among incarcerated women and the negative influences of parental incarceration on children, one

component of supporting women's re-entry should include case management or advocates who can help the returning prisoner navigate social services and child welfare institutions and re-establish their relationships with their children. There are two important dimensions of case management and advocacy. First, it should help people navigate the complex bureaucracies of social services. Second, case workers or advocates should function independently from the courts, including community supervision. Without this distinction, punishment is likely to take precedence over care and support (Haney 2010; McKim 2017; Phelps 2013; Tiger 2013). As is evident from the discussion of drug courts, the blurring of lines between social welfare and punishment will allow punishment to be prioritised, which undermines its supportive functions. To prioritise the service aspect of case management or advocacy, it must remain separate from the threat of punishment.

Incarcerated women also often experienced violence and abuse in their families of origin, with romantic partners and as children (Chesney-Lind 1997; Leverentz 2014; Richie 2001). In some cases, these same family members are helping to care for the women's children while they are incarcerated, and the women highly value their role within their family of origin (Cobbina, Huebner and Berg 2012; Collins 2000; Leverentz 2014). Severing ties with these family members is often neither practical nor desirable. In contexts in which family ties are attenuated by incarceration (Mahtani 2013; Miller and Carbone-Lopez 2013), case managers can attempt to mediate these tensions. These multifaceted dynamics highlight the value of holistic family counselling in helping family members redefine their roles and relationships and process past harms. This could potentially include parents, siblings, children, children's parents or guardians and others identified by the person returning from prison. Together, these policies would strengthen the UN's sustainable goals of sustainable communities, good health and wellbeing, as well as peace, justice and strong institutions. Working with both men and women who exit prison, primarily those with children, would promote strong families and thereby also support gender equity.

### **Women's Employment Support**

Motherhood is a key identity for many women. Developing financial independence, establishing a career and performing generativity through work are also key goals for many women (Leverentz 2014; Opsal 2012). Each of these goals are in turn related to desistance, or to stopping offending. Research findings are mixed regarding the effect of employment on women's future offending (Rodermond et al. 2015). For example, Giordano et al. (2002) did not find that employment stability mattered, either in the quantitative findings or in women's narratives about what would influence their desistance. Some research found that employment has a greater effect on men than on women (Cobbina et al. 2012), while some women consider employment to be key to their pathways out of crime (Bui and Morash 2010; Opsal 2012).

In examining the effects of women's employment on the act of offending, it is also necessary to consider the nature of employment and employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated people and how these intersect. Many jobs that are available to people who hold criminal records are low paid and involve unstable work. While some women can sustain a new sense of self for an extended time, this often fails when they experience significant employment instability (Opsal 2012). Women's job opportunities are often concentrated at the bottom of the hierarchy in terms of both power and pay (Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Singh and Hoge 2010). This is also the case in employment opportunities, in which women with criminal records may be considered 'doubly deviant'. Incarcerated women worldwide are often poor and have limited work histories; this is a harsh reality that often leads to incarceration (Boutron and Constant 2013; Mahtani 2013). Research is limited in terms of the effects of a criminal record on women's employment prospects (Cho and LaLonde 2008; Ortiz 2014), and more work is needed to understand how gender, race and other characteristics shape this (Pager 2007). Garcia-Hallett's (2016) work also highlighted the intersectional nature of employment opportunities and stereotypes. However,

existing evidence suggests the need for, and benefits of, supporting formerly incarcerated women's employment opportunities.

Expanding employment opportunities for women with criminal records would foster desistance and their financial independence. These approaches should focus not only on women's employability and signalling (Maruna 2012; Miller 2014), but also on the development of new jobs and employers who will work with people holding criminal records. In brief, programming should not be limited to teaching women how to demonstrate that they are employable and redeemed (Gurusami 2017; Halushka 2016; Miller 2014). Gurusami (2017) argued that formerly incarcerated women are subjected to rehabilitation labour, in which the state seeks to transform the women from criminals to workers. However, to be successful, these women must achieve specific types of employment that are conventional, reliable and redemptive. These types of jobs often clash with the realities of the women's lives, leaving the women to be defined as failures if they fail to accomplish narrowly defined definitions of good or acceptable work.

Although some development of job skills may be necessary for those with limited work histories, a major focus should be on working with employers to provide opportunities. Supports should also be established to facilitate formerly incarcerated women's participation in the labour market. Structural barriers include a lack of transportation, a lack of reliable and affordable day care and discrimination because of race, gender and criminal record (Richie 2001). For most women, employment and motherhood are not easily separated. For many women to work full-time, they will need affordable and quality day care for their children. Many researchers have documented the impossible circumstances that many recently incarcerated people, and women in particular, face (Baldry 2013; Gurusami 2017; Leverentz 2014; Richie 2001). Providing childcare (including financial support to family members when they provide care) will remove one significant barrier for women's employment.

As a final recommendation, an important method for reducing the effects of incarceration on women, families and communities is to reduce reliance on incarceration altogether. Incarceration is incredibly costly, both directly and indirectly, and it is linked only loosely with crime rates and public safety (Harding et al. 2019b; Stemen 2017). Reducing the use of prisons does not directly address some of the challenges that are often correlated with incarceration, such as low education, a lack of employment, poverty and addiction. However, incarceration does little to help and utilises resources that could be redirected to addressing these underlying issues. For example, rather than providing employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated women, policymakers could focus more on reducing both women's poverty and the criminalisation of poverty and addiction.

## **Conclusion**

Through the lens of intersectionality and by highlighting the importance of context, we may consider some key questions that should be asked when developing policies or when applying policies and programs from one jurisdiction to another. Policy recommendations should be considered and developed within local contexts. Gender roles, employment and economic conditions, as well as other programmatic supports, will shape how family and employment programming develops within individual contexts (Gurusami 2017; Mahtani 2013; Potter 2015). Local racial dynamics, colonial histories and histories of war will all shape approaches to imprisonment, prison populations and re-entry experiences (Auyero and Berti 2015; Baldry 2013; Boutron and Constant 2013; Kerr and Moore 2013; Miller and Carbone-Lopez 2013; Super 2016). Although the blurring of welfare and punishment can always lead to a prioritisation of punishment, the effects can be significantly pronounced in contexts involving fewer social and health care supports (Drugs Security and Democracy Program 2018; McKim 2017). Research in specific locales can produce rich and nuanced explanations for how and why women's incarceration and related policies have played out as they have. From this, we can learn not only

about that context, but about the questions we may ask in other contexts. As is evident, criminal justice policies and responses are not isolated from other social, political and economic factors; rather, they are deeply social issues (Garland 2001). As such, re-entry policies should be similarly treated as being deeply embedded in social life.

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<sup>1</sup> The highest rates of female incarceration can be found in the US (65.7 per 100,000), Thailand (60.7) and El Salvador (58.4). Women comprise 8.4 per cent of the prison population and have a rate of 31.4 per 100,000 in the Americas (highest), and they comprise 3.4 per cent of prison population and a rate of 3.2 per 100,000 in Africa (lowest) (Walmsley 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Increases in incarceration rates since 2000: Guatemala (5X), El Salvador (10X), Brazil (4.5X), Cambodia (6X) and Indonesia (6 X) (Walmsley 2017).

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