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Onstage and Off: The Shifting Relevance of Gender in Women's Prisons

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1   Introduction

Prison studies are not unconnected with broader theoretical debates on categories of identity and social life such as gender, ethnicity/race, class and the intersections between these categories. Gender, however, has informed prison research in a peculiar way. The very descriptive reference to gender, to begin with, or the lack of it, is not itself gender-neutral and appears to depend on the gender of those imprisoned. A random glance through publications in prison studies will likely show that an explicit mention of gender finds its way to the title only if a penal institution or carceral research site imprisons women. This institution will appear designated as a 'women's prison'. Single-word 'prisons', without gender specifications, are male by default, unless they are the objects of a specific comparison with their female counterpart.

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This dual pattern of identification of prisons for men and prisons for women is far from being a simple effect of disproportion in numbers of men and women prisoners, or of relative carceral demography, in which women are invariably in the minority. Rather, it is a discrepancy that matches the asymmetry characterizing the history of prison research itself, which in turn is not altogether immune to long-standing gender issues of symbolic domination and inequality. Research on men's imprisonment has framed the debate in a universal mode, oblivious to gender. It is true that this research has more recently come to acknowledge the gender dimension, especially by focusing on the ideologies of masculinity that shape prison culture (Newton 1994; Sabo et al. 2001). Research on women's prisons, however, was built on the very basis of gender and has tended to be more gender-bound as a whole.

Besides having informed a reflexive agenda addressing issues of representation, such as the conundrums of representing women as victims and/or agents (Fili 2013), the angle of gender has presided over most research issues. Among the most pervasive is the gendered nature of prison regimes, whether they are portrayed as based on normative femininity and domesticity, or as more gender-neutral (Bosworth 1999; Carlen 1983; Kruttschnitt and Gartner 2005; Miller and Carbone-Lopez 2013; McCorkell 2003). Another prominent topic is the gendered character of prison cultures, socialities and 'pains of imprisonment', presented as predicated on gender roles and identities, and contrasted with their male equivalents (Giallombardo 1966; Heffernan 1972; Walker and Worrall 2000; Ward and Kassebaum 1965; Zaitzow and Thomas 2003). Overall, the characterization of the former has been endowed with a distinctly comparative tone, perhaps owing to the fact that configurations found within men's prisons were taken as the compass and reference model for analysing women's.

One example can be found in the depiction of prison cultures—a pervading topic in the study of prisoners' social world. Where women prisoners were concerned, either this sub-culture was deemed non-existent or considered an inverted version of the male one. In the first case, descriptions were in the negative mode: the *absence* of cohesion and solidarity among women prisoners (that is, by reference to the forms it took in men's institutions), the *absence* of groups, the *absence*

of an 'inmate code' and the *absence* of a local repertoire of social roles, which in turn was also *absent* from a less complex prison slang (e.g. Ward 1982; Tittle 1969; Kruttschnitt 1981; Williams and Fish 1974). In the second case, characterizations were made by contrast. Women's prison culture was supposedly based on pseudo-families and/or homoaffective dyads (e.g., Selling 1931; Heffernan 1972; Foster 1975; Giallombardo 1966; Ward and Kassebaum 1965; Statler 1986). Both phenomena have been described mostly as an emotional response to the deprivation of affection, ignoring other kinds of social and identity dimensions. This emphasized the contrast between the nature of women aggregates and the structure of male prisoners' sociality, which was viewed mostly from a socio-economic angle.

As I have shown elsewhere (Cunha 1994), this long-standing tendency to establish symmetrical contrasts between female and male experiences of punitive confinement may have contributed to over-simplifying and distorting far more complex realities. However, favouring different descriptive models to account for men and women's carceral configurations—one more 'psychological', the other more 'sociological'—was not entirely new. To a certain extent, it recreated within prison studies the trajectory of perspectives on male and female criminality, respectively. While in mid-twentieth century the social, economic and cultural dimensions of crime were increasingly high-lighted, this did not occur evenly in theoretical perspectives on both genders. Approaches to female criminality would still remain excluded from this inflection for a long time (Smart 1977; Heidensohn 1985; Dobash et al. 1986).

Nowadays, this more 'gendercentric' agenda is nevertheless increasingly diversified for theoretical and empirical reasons alike. These involve recognition of the diversity of women prisoners' experiences and identities and attention to a wider variety of aspects of carceral life, but also changes inside and outside prison walls (e.g. Boutron and Constant 2013; Greer 2000; Mandaraka-Sheppard 1986; Owen 1998; Rowe 2011). Drawing on fieldwork in a Portuguese carceral setting in different decades, I propose to contribute an additional aspect to this debate by focusing on contextual shifts in the actual (current?) saliency of gender as

91   a category of identity and social life in women's prisons. These shifts have
92   occurred without major changes in prison regimes, even if these have
93   become formally less gendered.[1]

2   A Changing Prison Landscape

95   Portugal is no exception to the worldwide imbalance between men's and
96   women's incarceration rates. Women have consistently been the minority
97   among the population behind bars. Currently (and also until the 1990s)
98   they represent less than 6% of the prison population. However, after the
99   democratic revolution in 1974, which decriminalized one of the main
100 causes of women's imprisonment during the dictatorship (prostitution),
101 this proportion rose steeply during the second half of the 1990s up to
102 nearly 10% by the end of the century—one of the highest percentages in
103 the European Union.

104   In fact, during the 1990s the percentage of Portugal's population
105 behind bars (men and women) registered an unprecedented increase, and
106 Portugal attained one the highest imprisonment rates per 100,000
107 inhabitants (145) in the European Union.[2] One of the aspects of this
108 substantial change in the prison population was its massive provenance
109 from the same low-income-stigmatized urban areas. As a result, co-pris-
110 oners were often neighbours, relatives or previous acquaintances, an
111 aspect that altered the social world of prisons (cf. Cunha 2008, 2014).
112 This was both a consequence of selective drug control (intensive law
113 enforcement targeting specific areas) and of the workings of the Portuguese
114 retail drug economy (Cunha 2005).

115   Although this change took place in both male and female prisons, it
116 has been more concentrated—and therefore more conspicuous—in the
117 latter. Its prominence in women's institutions stems partly from the rela-
118 tive homogeneity of their population. In the 1990s, the variety of offenses
119 leading to women's imprisonment was sharply reduced. Although the
120 population of male prisoners was also fairly homogeneous (property
121 offenses and drug-related crimes accounted together for the majority of
122 convictions), its internal distribution was more balanced than that of its
123 female counterpart, which was concentrated overwhelmingly on drug

trafficking.[3] Drug-related offenses already stood out as an important cause of women's imprisonment in the 1980s, along with property offenses (Cunha 1994). But it has mainly been since the 1990s that they became a top cause of women's incarceration (Cunha 2002; Cunha and Granja 2014; Matos 2008; Matos et al. 2017).

Imprisoned women were involved mostly in small-scale drug trafficking, whether as international drug couriers, or in domestic retail drug dealing (see below). Two scenarios have been reported in the relevant literature in Portugal: (i) young women whose participation in drug trafficking is associated with drug use and/or abusive male partners (Matos 2008); (ii) primarily adult but also young women from economically depressed milieus for whom drug trafficking is an income-generating strategy often engaged in to support their households. These women operate autonomously as free-lancers or in non-hierarchical partnerships with neighbours or family members. This is mostly the case in domestic drug trafficking, which reveals some particular aspects in Portugal (cf. Cunha 2005).

Be that as it may, women are proportionally more convicted to prison sentences for drug-related offenses than men. The centrality of drug offenses in women's convictions is also what has best explained the faster rise of female incarceration rates: these are the crimes with the highest conviction rates and are among the most harshly sentenced. This means that the rise in women's incarceration rates owed little to possible changes in the way courts deal with this gender.

I conducted field research in the main Portuguese women's prison (*Estabelecimento Prisional de Tires*, *Tires* hereafter) in two periods that, in retrospect, emerge as defining moments in a changing carceral sociology (the late eighties and the late nineties, cf. Cunha 1994, 2002, 2008).[4] These two decades revealed in their most pronounced form different patterns that can now be found combined or reproduced in other prison settings, albeit more mitigated in some respects. This is the case, for example, with the prison of Santa Cruz do Bispo *(Estabelecimento Prisional de Santa Cruz do Bispo)*, which was the object of a recent controlled comparison with Tires (Cunha and Granja 2014).[5] I will, therefore, focus on these different configurations as they emerged in a clearly defined fashion in these two periods in *Tires*.[6]

3   Gendered Regimes

The 'therapeutic' approach that shaped the history of women's penitentiary regimes during the first half of the twentieth century (Carlen and Tombs 2006; Heidensohn 1985)[7] never fully occurred in Portugal. Instead of a strong medical and psychiatric influence in the definition and implementation of these regimes, in Portugal the main concern at that time was to carry out a systematic programme for the 'moral regeneration' of delinquents (Cunha 1994). Against the backdrop of religious exhortation, discipline and ascetic austerity, the adopted treatment model was based on two ingredients, both drawing heavily on dominant gender ideologies: domesticity and motherhood. In Portugal as elsewhere, delinquent women were considered 'double deviants', that is, both as members of society and as members of their gender. Rehabilitation therefore meant putting them back on track for the female roles and spheres from which they had supposedly strayed.

This perspective was in perfect harmony with the state ideology of the *Estado Novo* dictatorial regime in Portugal (1933–1974) (Cunha 1994). Its symbolic conflation of 'home' and 'nation' presented women as the nation's ultimate moral base and emphasized the need for their dedicated performance as wives and mothers as the only route for women's social existence and participation in the collective destiny (see Beleza dos Santos 1947; Salazar 1977). This state ideology was at odds with social realities, in that it could only be fulfilled—or afforded—by the elites. With the exception of these groups, women in Portugal—and more so among the poor—have always resorted to work and wage labour as a survival strategy, without this being considered a transgression of a gender cultural script within their social milieus (Cole 1991; Pujadas 1994).

The above ingredients would nevertheless linger, albeit more tenuously, in prison institutions long after the democratic revolution of 1974 and still permeate prison life today. The first ingredient in this foundational treatment model was the inculcation of domestic habits (Cunha 1994, 2013). *Tires* was a clear illustration of this model. The penitentiary treatment program was built around domestic skills. This was expressed both in the spatial configuration of the institutional wards itself, as in the range of activities offered to prisoners. If laundry, cleaning and kitchen

services were oversized, it was only because they were meant to respond   195
not just to *Tires* prison's internal needs, but also to supply male prison   196
facilities nearby. The whole rationale and organization of the domestic   197
sphere was thus transferred to the carceral institution on a large scale.   198
Most activities, whether for maintenance or production, were an exten-   199
sion of the domestic order.   200

The predominance of so-called feminine activities would last for   201
decades. Gradually, however, it would cease to be presented as a method   202
or a program for regeneration, designed and pursued with that explicit   203
purpose. It became a mere effect of the status quo and disengagement   204
from the outside world, which is not uncommon in these institutions   205
(Goffman 1999 [1961]). It also reflected the occupational skills of   206
inmates themselves, which were scant and for the most part limited to   207
domestic training. Even in today's most 'modern' prison, *Santa Cruz*, the   208
range of activities available is, with a few exceptions, mostly centred on   209
the domestic sphere (Cunha and Granja 2014). In any case, the geogra-   210
phy of gender would continue to sharply determine the prison regime.   211

A second ingredient in the moral regeneration which was shaped by   212
social notions of gender consisted of the attempt to instill feelings of   213
maternal responsibility in inmates and cultivate mothering skills.   214
Although permission to keep infant children in prison took the children's   215
interests into account, it was primarily justified by the program's aim to   216
educate the mothers. Aiming at the 'social promotion of the delinquent   217
woman', it was determined that 'offspring, in the case of infants, should   218
remain with the mothers so as to maintain and promote their sense of   219
natural responsibilities' (Pinto 1969, p. 56). Prison regulations also   220
explicitly stipulated that prisoners should be taught to attend to their   221
infant children inside the institution and that children should spend time   222
with their mothers on a daily basis (Correia 1981, p. 279).   223

Official regulations and institutional rules have remained stable over   224
time in their general principles: namely, the age limit for children allowed   225
to live in the institution with their mothers (up to three years old, excep-   226
tionally five)[8]; the provision of a day nursery within the prison com-   227
pound, but physically separated from prison blocks, where children   228
remain during mothers' working hours, and where they are cared for by   229
trained personnel; a prison wing that houses prisoners with children   230

together. These conditions are common to most major women's prisons in the country. Although stable in these aspects, explicitly gendered moral considerations have since long been expunged from official decrees, and their focus has shifted from the moral regeneration of prisoners (via leading them into proper motherhood) to accommodating the interest of the child.

Considerations involving the mother role did not disappear from prison daily life however. They remained infused in informal institutional practices and interactions (cf. Cunha 1994; Cunha and Granja 2014). Prisoners continued to be aware that their inmate and mother conditions were somehow merged, and some went as far as to suspect that their performance as mothers was assessed in the same way as their behaviour as prisoners—that is, with the potential to influence parole board deliberations. In any case, they sense all too well that the in-prison relationship with their offspring, and the language of *care* itself, are inescapably encompassed in the coercive management of the 'total institution' (Cunha 1994; Goffman 1999 [1961]).

4   Doing and Undoing Gender

In the previous section it was suggested that women's penitentiary treatment in Portugal was dictated mainly by gender ideologies, insofar as it was aimed at returning delinquents to the 'feminine' roles they had supposedly deviated from. Thus, the institution insisted on motherhood as part of the penitentiary's program of moral regeneration. Yet, contrary to this gendered image of the stranded woman, inmates have for the most part tended to express *conformity*—not 'deviance'—to conventional definitions of their gender. In *Tires* during the 1980s, this conformity was even clearly inscribed in prisoners' sociality itself, which was centred on in-prison mother–child relationships or marital-like couples, and was otherwise highly atomized: inmates generally did not act nor see themselves as a group, and actually developed a refined rhetoric of mutual denigration.[9]

Although the importance of these dyadic relationships was expressed by inmates in the language of affection and emotions, the support they provided had an identitarian aspect that confirmed them first of all as relational beings, more specifically in the relational roles which were normative markers of their gender ('mother', 'wife'/'romantic partner'). Gender identity occupied the front stage of the prison scene, both by the way it was performed through this sociality and how it was repeatedly asserted in 'prison talk', which focused mainly on children and partners, namely, on how the separation from them was paramount among the 'pains of imprisonment'. In the case of women with children in prison, mothers' narratives express a highly idealized maternal self-image and focus on a recurrent theme: the way their children's presence fulfills them, helps them cope and softens their prison experience (Cunha 1994, p. 156; Cunha and Granja 2014; Serra and Pires 2004, p. 420).

Indeed, the gendered regime of the prison was amplified both by women's discursive construction of gender and by prisoners' management of their stigmatized social identities (Cunha 1994). Motherhood was an important aspect in this respect. As also noted by Palomar (2007, p. 372), the prison environment does allow for experiencing motherhood in new ways, creating new subjectivities through which mothers in turn re-signify previous experiences of maternity: sheltered from the pressures of everyday survival, poverty and violence, with time available to dedicate to their children (who now also receive specialized medical and psychological attention); constantly near their children and exposed to expert educational and pedagogical input and programs, they may experience a bond with their children with unprecedented intensity and endow it with a meaning that takes centre stage in their lives thereon. It is hardly surprising that in such a context motherhood becomes hyperbolized in narratives of personal identity, including the way it is perceived in retrospect or projected in the future.

Women's prisons like *Tires* invite and promote an exaltation of motherhood not only because they have persistently emphasized reproduction and domesticity or because the idea of 'inmate fathers' is still as alien to prison organizations as the one of "inmate mothers" (and their 'special needs') is central to women's.[10] They also do so because their environment

focuses on motherhood and the mother–child bond in a way that is highly idealized and disconnected from the actual experiences and harsh realities of these women's lives. Prisons thereby participate in the essentializing of motherhood, both as a naturalized aspect of gender and as an ideal hardly within the reach of the populations it incarcerates. It is behind bars that mothers find the time, the structure or the resources necessary to measure up to such an ideal.

Not surprisingly, however, it is also behind bars that this ideal contributes to deepening feelings of self-blame, inadequacy and dysfunctionality in performing the mother role.[11] Although motherhood is repeatedly invoked as a motive and justification for their offence (*I did it for my children; I had to feed my kids*)—thus as a gendered 'technique of neutralization' (to extend a term coined by Sykes and Matza [1957])—prisoners blame themselves, and are blamed by prison personnel, not only for having offended, but also for failing to live up to motherly responsibilities (Cunha 1994, p. 71).

Besides being a source of meaning that reshapes, recreates or reinvents a personal identity, motherhood in prison has conveyed, however, another identity effect as an anchor of a 'non-deviant' social identity. As I have detailed elsewhere (1994), in the eighties, the adherence to conventional gender roles also emerged as a way to shelter social identity from the stigma attached to imprisonment, that is, as a viable route to negotiate and exorcize stigma. In other words, the narrative importance of the 'good mother' was also instrumental in rejecting a "deviant" identity and invoked as a synonym of a 'good citizen'.

Ten years later, mothering and motherhood were less emphasized in identity management and in the prison social scene. Firstly, categories of identity and social forms were made more complex by hyper-incarceration and by the co-imprisonment of relatives. Since the nineties, in-prison family forms have become more varied. The sociography of relatedness, as well as the 'ethics of care' once identified with women *qua* mothers, have no longer been limited to mother–child dyads anymore, but have involved wider circles of relationships (Cunha 2002, 2013). Co-imprisoned family members and other prisoners participate collectively in the in-prison care of children, for example, sharing food, affection and assistance.

Furthermore, since co-imprisoned mothers and daughters were often   333
both adults, and the ethics of care involved more than two generations   334
simultaneously (see Cunha 2002, 2013), care is now enmeshed in a wider   335
and more (even if not altogether) gender-neutral ethics of respect, reci-   336
procity and moral obligation between family members.[12] Daughters, as   337
well as sons, are supposed to respect and support their parents within and   338
from beyond prison walls. It is disrespectful not to be loyal, deferential,   339
or not to reciprocate the care they received from their parents when they   340
were children.   341

In addition, prison stigma ceased to be a crucial issue. Prison merely   342
compounds the structural and symbolic marginalization that now affects   343
imprisoned populations collectively and much more profoundly than   344
before. Stigma is no longer negotiable—either through gender confor-   345
mity or otherwise (Cunha 2008).   346

Finally, the prominence of gender identity in the prison scene would   347
give way to a new sense of collective identity, based on the prisoners' shar-   348
ing of a common provenance from the same destitute urban areas, on   349
kin, friendship and neighbourhood ties, and on a shared position at the   350
lowest level of the class structure. Class-based collective solidarities gained   351
strength in the prison scenario and became an important facet of prison-   352
ers' social identity. There was now an unprecedented rhetoric of 'com-   353
munity', constantly reasserted in prison talk, reiterating the perception   354
that *we're all in the same boat*, and sustaining wider forms of solidarity and   355
resistance. The notion of a shared destiny was now emphasized over other   356
identities—gender and race/ethnicity alike (Cunha 2010). In the face of   357
these collective categories of agency and identity, within which prisoners   358
came to react to their common marginalization, other levels of identity   359
such as gender became more discreet in prison life.   360

5   Final Remarks   361

Although prisons for men and for women are both gendered institutions,   362
perspectives on these two kinds of settings have been unevenly gendered,   363
and research on women's prisons has tended to be more gender-bound in   364
general. This gendercentrism has partly been justified by the historical   365

centrality of gender systems prioritizing reproduction and domesticity over other aspects of life in the definition of prison regimes for women. These aspects can be amplified by women prisoners' own discursive construction of gender and strategically emphasized in the management of stigmatized identities in the prison social scene. However, the very saliency of gender as a category of identity and social life can be highly contextual, even in confinement situations where there is more continuity than change in gendered prison regimes over time. Firstly, as we have seen, prisons reflect broader structural shifts that have a variable impact on forms of marginality and are not without influence on shaping different forms of stigmatization. Secondly, social identities are situational. For all the intersections—rightly indicated by intersectionalist perspectives—of gender, ethnicity/race, class and other facets of an altogether plural identity, these facets can nevertheless be more or less relevant in different social situations. Even taking into account the power structures that shape multiple aspects of identity, in some circumstances one facet can appear overshadowed or subdued in favour of other contextual variants of that identity.

The two ethnographic inquiries conducted in a women's Portuguese prison in different decades showed that while in the eighties gender identity occupied the front stage of the prison scene, ten years later the prominence of gender would give way to a new sense of collective identity and forms of relatedness, associated with hyper-incarceration and the co-imprisonment of relatives, friends and neighbours. In the face of this powerful collective identity with which prisoners came to react to their common deeper social marginalization, other levels of identity such as gender were played down and became less visible in the prison social scene. Gender still matters, evidently, and gender inequality has not become less relevant in shaping these women's lives. Nevertheless, these two inquiries led me to be cautious about treating gender as a fixed dimension of the prisoners' moral and social world, and showed the importance of historicizing gender in prison studies in more than one way.

In my own research, the focus on gender has followed the movement of my imprisoned interlocutors, and receded from the foreground to the background of the analysis. As an analytical angle it remained important

to situate women's participation in the drug economy, the repression of which triggered a rise in imprisonment rates, and to investigate the reasons these rates rose faster for women than for men. Otherwise, I considered a women's prison like *Tires* mainly as a vantage point to better capture important processes linking prisons to a range of economically depressed urban neighbourhoods, as well as the resulting sociological mutations that emerged in prison life by the end of the century. These mutations affected both male and female prison settings, but were more clearly visible in women's (cf. Cunha 2002, 2008).

Taken together, the two inquiries informing this chapter can contribute to a reflection on how a more or less important focus on gender should be decided less on the basis of general agendas (theoretical or political), than on the basis of gender's contextual importance, specifically assessed. In other words, the emphasis on gender should itself be treated as an empirical question, that is, according to the relative relevance of gender as a category of identity, and depending on its variable potential to organize social relations.

Notes

1. The tensions between what is formally defined in the legal requirements (which promote gender equality) and everyday social practices are particularly visible in parenting in prison, for example. Prison regulations have also incorporated the principles of neutrality and formal equality between women and men. Currently, the law regulating children's stay in prison is gender neutral; that is, both imprisoned mothers and fathers are allowed to keep their offspring with them inside prison facilities (Law 115/2009). However, the implementation of this principle is unequal. Logistics and practical dispositions render most men's prisons hardly suitable for children to reside with their imprisoned fathers. For example, there are no day-care centres in male institutions, nor adequate cells that are physically separated from other prison blocks (cf. Law 51/2011). Furthermore, although the need to meet female prisoners' 'special needs' regarding motherhood is mentioned in state guidelines about parenting in prison, there is no equivalent reference regarding fathering (Law 115/2009).

2. Estatísticas da Justiça, Ministério da Justiça (1987–2000).

3. As an example analysed in Cunha's study (2002) documenting these shifts during the 1990s, in 1997 46% of incarcerated men were imprisoned for property offenses and 34% for drug-related crimes, against 16% and 69%, respectively, in the female case (*Estatísticas da Justiça, Ministério da Justiça, 1997*).

4. Fieldwork was conducted in two- and one-year periods (1987–1989 and 1997, respectively). It benefitted from unrestricted access to all prison facilities. Besides 70 in-depth interviews, this allowed for the observation and participation in most prison activities and daily life, as well as for engaging in informal individual and group conversations with prisoners on a regular basis and under varied circumstances. In both periods a trusting relationship with prisoners was established, although not at the same pace or by the same processes (see Cunha 2002). In both periods women were selected by combining a snowball progression that followed 'natural' networks and a systematic sampling that diversified inmates along lines of penal and social profile, as well as length and experience of confinement (Cunha 1994, 2002).

5. *Tires* was created in 1954 on the outskirts of Lisbon and continues to be the main female penal institution in the country; *Santa Cruz* opened in 2005 near the northern city of Oporto, and was intended for a similar kind of penal population.

6. The prison population of *Tires*, which in 1997 reached 823 inmates, had developed a striking social and penal homogeneity in the span of only a decade. In 1997, a total of 76% of the women there were imprisoned for drug trafficking, compared to the 37% registered 10 years earlier, and property offenders represented no more than 13%. The majority of those convicted (69%) were serving sentences of more than five years. Prisoners increasingly came from the segments of the working class most deprived of economic and educational capital: from 1987 to 1997 the proportion of women who held jobs in the bottom tier of the service economy rose from 4% to 33%, and the proportion of those who had never attended school or gone beyond the fourth grade rose from 47% to 59%. A significant proportion of prisoners had relatives imprisoned in the same institution or in other prison facilities. According to a conservative estimate based on data registered in social-educational files, between one-half and two-thirds of the inmates in *Tires* had family members inside the same institution (sisters, cousins, aunts, nieces, mothers, grandmothers). This estimate does not include male partners and kin serving their own sentences in other facilities.

7. Based on neo-Lombrosian perspectives addressing female criminality, during the first half of the 20th century prison policies in some European countries and in the United States adopted a therapeutic treatment based on medical and psychiatric intervention. Although this trend has lessened over the years, according to Carlen and Tombs (2006) there is a revival of these approaches in policies that address women's socio-economic problems by repositioning them as 'cognitive' problems.

8. For recent general regulations see the General Regulation for Portuguese Prisons, Law 51/2011.

9. Among other examples of mutual disqualification, one prisoner could justify her offence as a fortuitous result of unique circumstances, while essentializing those of her companions as matters of a criminal nature (cf. Cunha 1994, 2008, for development of this point).

10. For the way prisons and the judicial system fail to include fathers in sharing the burdens of parenthood see Palomar (2007) and Machado and Granja (2013).

11. This ideal further excludes fathers and exonerates them from their own emotional, socio-economic and moral responsibilities.

12. Mothers, grandmothers, mothers-in-law, aunts, cousins, sisters and sisters-in-law now find themselves doing time together, in a circle of kin that often amounts to more than a dozen people, sometimes encompassing four generations (when a great-grandson is born in prison to a prisoner whose daughter and granddaughter are also imprisoned).

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