

THE ENVIRONMENT IN PRISON: THE CARE PROVIDED TO THE WOMEN PRISONERS AND INTRAMURAL RELATIONS

EL AMBIENTE EN PRISIÓN: LA ATENCIÓN RECIBIDA POR LAS RECLUSAS Y LAS RELACIONES INTRAMUROS^{1, 2}

O AMBIENTE A PRISÃO: O ATENDIMENTO PRESTADO ÀS MULHERES PRESAS E AS RELAÇÕES INTRAMUROS

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ABSTRACT: The daily life of prison deserves studies that investigate the diversity of interactions that take place within its walls. These interactions largely determine the climate that governs the centers and the possibilities offered by the prison of the treatment of inmates of both sexes.

In our research on women prisoners and reintegration processes, we have noticed some peculiarities that may be useful in treatment. This is a national research, with a stratified sample of 599 inmates in second and third degree of compliance (we have obtained 538 valid questionnaires and 61 interviews) and 36 professionals. The information was collected in 2011 using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews of inmates, along with a questionnaire for professionals of prisons.

The analysis of the information gathered has caused us to observe the influence of the organization of prison personnel, their relationship with

women prisoners, along with the relationships formed in prison, in the existing environment in prisons and the re-education process itself of prisons. It likewise shows how and in what ways the stay in prison can be a positive factor, enhancing the social, personal and emotional conditions that will facilitate the reintegration of prisoners and their return to life in freedom.

KEY WORDS: Prison; female; human relations; community education; professionals from prison; prison welfare.

RESUMEN: La vida cotidiana de los centros penitenciarios es merecedora de estudios que indaguen sobre la diversidad de interacciones que se producen dentro de los muros de prisión. Esas interacciones determinarán en gran medida cuál es el clima que rige los centros y las posibilidades que nos ofrece el medio

penitenciario en cuanto al tratamiento de los reclusos y reclusas.

En nuestra investigación sobre mujeres reclusas y los procesos de reinserción, hemos advertido algunas particularidades que pueden ser de utilidad en su tratamiento. Se trata de una investigación de ámbito nacional, con una muestra estratificada de 599 reclusas en segundo y tercer grado de cumplimiento (se han obtenido 538 cuestionarios válidos y 61 entrevistas) y de 36 profesionales. La información fue recogida durante el año 2011 mediante un cuestionario y entrevistas semiestructuradas a reclusas, junto a un cuestionario a profesionales del medio penitenciario.

El análisis de la información recogida nos ha hecho constatar cómo incide la organización del personal penitenciario, su relación con las reclusas, junto a las relaciones creadas dentro de prisión, en el ambiente existente en los centros penitenciarios y en el proceso reeducador propio de instituciones penitenciarias. Se muestra así mismo cómo y en qué aspectos la estancia en prisión puede ser un factor positivo, potenciador de las condiciones sociales, personales y emocionales que facilitarán la reinserción de las reclusas y su retorno a la vida en libertad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Prisión; sexo femenino; relaciones humanas; educación social; profesionales del medio penitenciario; asistencia al detenido.

RESUMO: O cotidiano da prisão merece estudos que investigam a diversidade de interações que ocor-

rem dentro dos muros da prisão. Estas interações determinam em grande parte o que os centros climáticos que regem e as possibilidades oferecidas pela prisão sobre o tratamento de prisioneiros de ambos os sexos.

Em nossa pesquisa sobre mulheres presas e processos de reintegração, temos notado algumas peculiaridades que podem ser úteis no tratamento. Esta é uma pesquisa nacional, com uma amostra estratificada de 599 detentos em segundo e terceiro grau de cumprimento (obtivemos 538 questionários válidos e 61 entrevistas) e 36 profissionais. As informações foram coletadas em 2011 através de um questionário e os presos entrevistas semiestructuradas, juntamente com um questionário para prisões profissionais.

A análise da informação recolhida nos fez observar como isso afeta a organização de prisão, a sua relação com mulheres presas, juntamente com as relações formadas na prisão, no ambiente existente em prisões e reeducação próprio processo de prisões. Do mesmo modo, mostra como e de que maneira a estadia na prisão pode ser um fator positivo, aumentando a. Social, pessoal e emocional que irá facilitar a reintegração de prisioneiros e seu retorno à vida em liberdade.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Prisão; sexo feminino; relações humanas; educação comunitária; profissionais de prisão; protecção a reclusos.

Introduction

Prison as an institution –and in its conception as a retention space of individuals- has continued evolving to convert its central objective into the rehabilitation and reeducation of the individuals that reside within its walls. But, despite the positivity of this plan, there are those who consider that the method of organization in prisons still responds to what Goffman (1972) calls “complete and closed institutions”, marked by subject control and the deconstruction of self, role, and personal capacity. These personal capacities being useful to them in their everyday life outside prison. The particularity of the context to which we refer supposes an important reference for making the transformation of the processes that are produced in prison possible, since as Clemente (1997a, p.324) already pointed out, “prison is more than the sum of occupational activities that are realized within its walls [...] the prison itself molds and integrates the activities that are produced inside it”. In this way, the knowledge of the prison environment and the relationships that are established inside will have a key role when it comes time to assess to what point the transformation of the prison has been produced, their conceptualization as a total institution to their rehabilitating and reeducating role.

As for the structural particularities of the system itself, we have to add the present dysfunctions in the penitentiary reality and other conditioning factors such as inmate overpopulation, lack of personnel and the consequences that come from these issues (Aranda & Rivera, 2012). This adds difficulties to the objectives and the rehabilitation proposals, that should assume an inspirational and transversal start to life in the prison and should prioritize themselves in order to evade a greater alienation of the inmates, organizing the prison life in similarity to life outside, through the promotion of inmate rights and their exterior relationships (De la Cuesta & Blanco, 2001).

Furthermore, Del Rey (2004) assesses that the labor of treatment carried out inside the prison doesn't adequately take advantage of two basic strategies that should be kept in mind in a prison intervention model: constructing a suitable environment that facilitates treatment and implicate all personnel that in one way or another works with the inmates. In the construction of this suitable environment in the center, the interpersonal relationships assume a central element. We should keep in mind that, in analyzing them, we are dealing with relationships marked by the context and the particular social microclimate of a closed institution and therefore, are characterized by different conditions and factors than those that determine interactions in the life outside prison (Clemente, 1997b). The relationships that are produced daily inside the penitentiary centers are configured by the social status created in that context and of the roles that are practiced inside it. Accordingly, clearly differentiated relationships are produced between prison staff, the staff and inmates, and between inmates, to which we should add the differences of sex as well.

The investigation carried out, and basis of this article, takes on these questions in a specific way, in the framework of the processes of female inmate reintegration and the elaboration of some guidelines for specific socio-educational interventions in agreement with the characteristics of this collective. In order to do so, it is crucial that we identify the problems and needs of the women in prison and, among them, those that emerge from the particular environment that reigns in the penitentiary centers, the organizational structure and control that marks the daily life and the penitentiary routines, as relevant elements of our study.

1. Daily life and prison life

In observing the reality of Spanish prisons we understand that they follow different processes of socialization than what is common; the inmates adapt to life under the rules and principles that mark a great difference with life outside the walls of the prison. The sociability in the prisons configures unique social relationships, where "social promotion" is based on aspects that are insignificant in the outside world (Viegas, 2009).

In order to understand this issue, some details of the penitentiary routine are necessary. The schedule and calendar of activities for the ordinary³ regimen is approved by the Management Board of the center. This schedule guarantees eight hours of rest at night, a minimum of two hours for personal matters and sufficient time to tend to the cultural and therapeutic activities and to contact with the outside world (Reglamento Penitenciario, 1996; art.77). The inmates take part in the organization of this schedule (art.55). In the open⁴ regimen (art. 85) each inmate follows distinct guidelines to external outings and different modalities of life according to the Treatment Board regulations for each case. However, a schedule and rules are set to follow during the stay in the center. In this aspect, special consideration is taken with the inmates in the Dependent Mothers Units, in function with their family needs (art. 179).

The characteristics of the inmates' daily life coincide, according to Goffman (1972), with the institutional principal of the confinement of people in order to keep them under surveillance. In agreement with this principal, the intimacy and the opportunity for a change of scenery for distinct daily tasks –sleep, diversion, and work- are limited in an important way, just as the participation in the programs established in the center is obligatory. Also, within this idea, regarding the situation of female inmates, the National Report on women, integration and prison by the SURT Foundation (Association of Women for Labor Integration), (Cruells & Igeda, 2005) emphasizes that this situation deprives the inmates of vital capacities, provokes the lack of

autonomy, initiative, responsibility and the capacity of decision. This makes their progress in prison depend on their capacity to adapt to the rules of the penitentiary institution -obedience, good conduct and activity participation-, a greater submission and acceptance of the rules being more beneficial for them and their penitentiary situation.

In relation to this process of adaptation we must make a mention of the "prisonization" phenomenon, a term coined by Clemmer (1958), with which he hoped to describe the repercussion of the prison subculture on the people that are in the prison (inmates and prison workers). The consequences of this process involve all people who make their life inside the prison and could explain the similar behaviors among the guards and inmates. The effects of the process of imprisonment under regulations and precepts for co-existence, which are imposed on them in their work, influence the guards (González Salas, 2001). Among the consequences that befall the social identity of inmates in penitentiary centers, Trillo (2008) mentions the loss of connections with the outside, adaptation to the environment and the creation of new interpersonal connections.

As well as the general characteristics that surround the reclusion of people, we have to mention a series of different specific and caustic aspects that converge in prison.

Gender, as a key element to our study, requires specific references. To be a woman in a place created for men, and in numerical inferiority to them, has different kinds of repercussions and, in respect to treatment, it translates to a lack of models designated to them and, frequently, the inability to classify them -by age or penal situation- in order to offer the women differentiated resources. Consequently, the only female inmates that always have a personal space for their internment are the women who have children younger than three (Igareda, 2007). In the same way, there are less resources designated to women than to the men, this is because arranging for educational, labor and treatment resources specifically for women has a higher cost. Furthermore, the socio-educational, formative or female specific treatment programs are limited regarding themes. The programs are generally tied to the domestic world, the ethics of private space, and include a very narrow perspective of gender (Aguilera, 2011; Cruells & Igareda, 2005; Pérez Rodríguez, 2010). It is also characteristic that these are the worst paid programs and have been previously rejected by the male prisons (Almeda, 2002). Aguilera (2011), for his part sustains the idea that the control and surveillance measures applied to the female inmates are of an indiscriminant manner in the male prisons, without being adjusted to the real danger that the female population represents. In addition, the separation of men and women in the centers provoke an unequal enjoyment of the common spaces by the two groups, the women having more restricted access to spaces such as libraries, sports centers, infirmaries, etc.

Another one of these aspects that we cannot omit is that of the drug use and dependence of the inmates, which is also strongly conditioned for the penitentiary context. Moreno (1999) studied the variable of the *motivation for drug use* and concluded that the motives for consuming drugs are different in prison than in the situation of liberty. The motives for which they consume in prison are based on the routine and monotony that exist in the prison, as in the condition of reclusion. Therefore, it is thought that a modification of the conditions of this kind of daily life, in a certain sense, would provoke the reduction of motives for consuming drugs in prison.

Finally, among the standards that define the predominant environment in prison, according to Ruíz Pérez (2006), the number of inmates is determinant, a greater density being associated with more negative levels in the climate of relationships, since this fact frequently limits the access to those scarce resources in prison, such as the access to some workshops, jobs, programs... Following data of García-Guerrero and Marco (2012), in 2011 the total penitentiary occupation in our country was positioned around 135%. This overcrowding -harboring a greater number of inmates than what the center is prepared to hold- according to the International Center of Penitentiary Studies (2005), produces consequences such as the deterioration of the inmates' mental health and the creation of an environment more inclined to danger, for the penitentiary personnel as well as the inmates.

2. Penitentiary personnel and operation organization chart

Diverse authors (Ayuso, 2001; Redondo, 2004; Redondo, Pozuelo & Ruíz, 2007) have noticed that in the Penitentiary Centers they face the challenge of combining contradictory objectives: the management of order and security and the goal of the treatment. On occasions, both enter in conflict due to the fact that the achievement of the treatment objectives collides with an environment where human activities, even the most basic ones, are regulated and controlled (Ayuso, 2001). Due to this duality there exists professional figures of the penitentiary regimen itself and those who are of the penitentiary treatment, a coordination between both being necessary (Redondo et al., 2007).

When we refer to the attention that the inmates receive, we are referring to the totality of the action exercised over them by the penitentiary medium, but with special consideration to the direct action that is implemented over the inmates through the aspect of the treatment. For this reason, we think that it is important to clarify the internal organs that converge in a Penitentiary Center. According to the current Penitentiary Regulations of 1996, Title XI, Chapter 2, the collegiate organs that organize the functioning of the centers are the Management Board, the Treatment Board –that has at its disposition the Technical Team or Teams necessary-, the Disciplinary Commission and the Economic-Administrative Board.

Among these professional organs, the one that interests us the most in relation to the theme of this article is the Technical Team, that would come forming and organizing themselves in function of the specifications and needs of the center, being able to be formed by up to eleven figures: a Lawyer, a Psychologist, a Pedagogue, a Sociologist, a Medic, an Assistant Medical Technician/Qualified Registered Nurse, a Workshop Manager or Teacher, an Educator, a Social Worker, a Sociocultural or Athletic Instructor, and/or a Department Manager. Direct contact with the inmates is among their commitments. They are the collective dedicated to action, with the Treatment Board principally occupied by decision making and the establishment of action guidelines.

Inter-professional and interdisciplinary work, with such an ample and diverse group of professionals intervening in prison is certainly complex. As Domínguez (1997) confirms, the multi-professional character, especially of the Treatment Teams, could bring conflict –group prejudices, stereotypes, distinct theoretical models, different training, distinct professional categories and possibilities to promote, planning and relationship difficulties, etc. - between corporative groups, together with the fear of the loss of autonomy, resources and authority. To which we must add the differences and the possible distancing of the surveillance and treatment groups. All this makes the personnel of the penitentiary medium face a difficult challenge in the effective coordination of their interventions, and if this coordination is not adequately realized, it suffers the risk of disillusionment or fatigue in the development of the task. Therefore, Ayuso (2001) suggests the importance of studying the public employees in the penitentiary environment, considering that professionals whom directly deal with inmates, with the added characteristic of them being public employees, have the greatest percentage of psychiatric sick leaves in all the Spanish Public Administration.

In relation to that, we should mention again the phenomenon of “prisonization” and its effect on the guards. González Salas (2001) pointed out how the surveillance guards suffer the consequences of an imposed internalization process, regulation and a way of coexistence, far away from those that offer them their social environment in liberty. To this, we add that the prison employees perform a notably difficult task that can demand a continued emotional implication and is not exempt from tensions and disputes. In such a peculiar context, the study of phenomenon such as work “burnout” and the breach of expectations that both parties (employee and employer) put into the work relationship, is inescapable (Topa & Morales, 2005). The *burnout* syndrome is very present in the field of penitentiary environment professionals, being the object of various studies in the last few years; and principally considering three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, personal realization and depersonalization. The elevated emotional exhaustion of the surveillance guards described in the study carried out by Hernández, Fernández, Ramos and Contador (2006) is related to their labor of confrontation with the inmates and the high levels of emotional tension that it produces. On the other

hand, they feel reinforced by the character of their simple, monotonous and non-motivational tasks and by an elevated index of depersonalization.

All this reflects, as indicated in a recent study carried out by Valderrama Bares (2012), on inmates' perceptions of treatment. In this study, the need of the Treatment Board members maintaining more contact with the inmates can be seen, this being an important premise in the educative labor during the internment process. As we will see further on, there is a need of extending the Technical Teams' components of the penitentiary centers.

3. The relations of prison inmates

As Cubilla (2011) supports, daily life is reformulated based on the relationships that each social space gives them. Consequently, in order to approach the daily reality that the inmates live, it will be necessary to go in depth into the awareness of these relations.

"In every social space, in every scenario, man recognizes in his character how to be social as a co-constructor of axiological competencies, that is to say, in his capacity of cooperation in the construction and reconstruction of social values in the diverse scenarios where this develops, in the course of his life, infinite relationships with others." (p.1).

The relations of incarcerated people should be taken on distinguishing two scenarios: those of external relations (with family, the judicial system...) and those of internal relations (with other inmates, family inside the prison, the professionals of the penitentiary institution...). Although, the development of some relations balanced in both scenarios by part of the inmates are indispensable for the well-being and life conditions in prison (García de Cortázar & Gutiérrez Brito, 2012), until now they have promoted the connections to the exterior more, with an obvious presence of the studies on maternity in prison in the case of the female inmates, leaving the interactions that are produced inside the prison as a secondary aspect and of minor interest for exploration, this will constitute as the central part of the work that we produce here.

When we talk about relationships between inmates we are departing from the relations mainly drawn out by the system (García de Cortázar & Gutiérrez Brito, 2012) and marked by space/time criteria -center functioning and life guidelines- and gender- division by sex in the center spaces. Clemente (1997a) notes that the adaptation in a setting as characteristic and distanced from life outside prison as that of prison provokes attitudes of control and/or submission in the interpersonal relationships, either for the necessity of aggressively asserting oneself against the institution or in order to defend oneself from it. The inmates tend to group themselves up in order to have greater strength, now that they feel that the institution does not have the capacity to give them security, and in this way they generate inter-penitentiary power relationships (Trillo, 2008). These power relationships between the inmates come marked by three criteria: the type of crime committed -a special value given to crimes such as robbery, fraud or burglary, which require a certain sophistication-, the criminal and prison experience- a greater prestige for those who have completed more time in prison- and the conduct in prison, according to the system of prevailing values in the prison (Clemente, 1997a).

In respect to the prison culture and the inmate code, Ruíz Pérez (2009) mentions that if we are talking about men or women there is a necessity of differentiating between their characteristics. In the case of the female inmates, a tendency to construct the group according to the traditional family structure that prevails in the free society is established, with a central figure that takes on the maternal role -as "mother" or "grandmother"- and is recognized as the leader. Ruíz Pérez and some of his students have observed, in their prison stays, that the cohesion between the female inmates has an important socio-emotional and support component.

On the other hand, a habitual phenomenon in the prototypical profile of the female interns, derived from their need of affection after the frequent abandonment of the family they come from, is the search for a partner inside the prison that reduces their feeling of emotional solitude (Carcedo, López & Orgaz, 2006).

4. Methodology

The investigation of which the information we reflect in this work comes from has as a central research theme the situation of women in prison, and their processes of reinsertion. In concrete, the central object of the study of women in the Spanish penitentiary environment and their relationship with the socio-educational processes of reintegration to social life is outlined.

This has to do with an investigation of a national scope, with a stratified sample of 599 female inmates in the second and third grade of sentence completion, interns or in the open medium, (15% of the female inmate population in the moment of field work), and of 36 professionals. The average age of the participants is 36, the majority of them being between 25 and 49 years of age. The nationality of the female inmates interviewed is 69% Spanish, 31% of the remaining women being foreigners, among which it is fit to distinguish a collective of women from Latin America (21,6%).

The information was gathered in 2011 by means of three instruments: a questionnaire with closed and open items, a total of 538 valid questionnaires (with a 95,5% level of confidence and a sample error of 3,9); a semi-structured interview with a total of 61 testimonies collected, and a questionnaire on 43 socio-educational programs in prison, for their completion we counted on the participation of 36 professionals in the penitentiary environment. A total of 42 centers all over Spain were visited. The participation was voluntary, after having explained the objective of the study that was being carried out and establish a consent form for the correct treatment of the data and their confidentiality after the investigation. The information was treated with the statistical program IBM SPSS (versions 15 and 20) and the qualitative data was analyzed from the significant categories emerged and their triangulation.

In continuation, the results of the elements of the investigation related to the central theme of this work are provided: the environment in prison, the attention received by the inmates and inside relations. Concretely, results are provided distinguishing from nine items from the female inmate questionnaire, five items from the female inmate interview and three items from the questionnaire of professionals⁵.

5. Analysis and interpretation of results

As we referred to before, in order to be able to adequately interpret the prison dynamic, it is necessary to go in depth in the knowledge of the interpersonal relationships relative to the members of the penitentiary community, and more concretely of the in-prison relations, a theme that has been very sparingly taken on in research. Therefore, we centered ourselves in the inquiry of how the daily relations of the people that live inside prison are configured, while still being conscientious of the importance that memories, sensations and characteristics of the family and external social structures have.

Among the factors to analyze for this purpose, the evaluation that inmates give to the tasks realized by the distinct professionals is established, their relations with them, the nature of their contact with prison-mates and with the rest of the institutional figures as well as the volunteers that form part of the life in prison. In the same way, data has been collected on the perception that the professionals have of how their work is accepted by the inmates.

A first result of the investigation shows us how the segmentation of the penitentiary personnel work makes it valued by the inmates in very distinctive ways. The casuistry is diverse, since there are inmates that require the attention of certain professionals and others who do not, or those that have had greater contact or a more direct or intimate contact with some more than others in function with their circumstances.

The greater assessment of some professional figures than others has been associated, in our study, with the frequency with which they meet these professionals as well as with the quality of the relationship maintained. Testimonies of this type emerge as very enlightening:

“Well, it’s just that I don’t really talk much... I don’t know the director and with the guards I don’t talk much, just the necessary amount.” (EX E312)

“Psychologists don’t come here much. The educators are the ones that come here most. I never had a problem with them.” (NA E203)

In this way, the surveillance guards, teachers, educators and monitors possess better evaluations - not only because they have been evaluated more by the women, but also in a more positive way- than the psychologists, lawyers, social workers, or the executive charges of the prison, according to the data showed in Table 1. On the other hand, the limited contact that the inmates have with some concrete group of professionals has influenced their decision to not evaluate these figures.

Table 1. Evaluation of the relationships with professionals (in percent of responses over the total valid responses in each case)

	N (valid responses)*	% of representation in total sample **	Relationship not evaluated***	Bad	Normal	Good	Very Good
With guards (men)	514	95,5%	12,7%	1,9%	15,4%	56,4%	13,6%
With guards (women)	520	96,7%	6,5%	3,3%	18,1	54,2%	17,9%
Social workers (men)	479	89%	35,5%	1,7%	9,6%	40,3%	12,9%
Social workers (women)	508	94,4%	12%	2,8%	15,7%	51,8%	17,7%
Educators (men)	501	93,1%	16,4%	1,4%	10,4%	52,3%	19,5%
Educators (women)	477	88,7%	27,1%	2,9%	10,5%	43,6%	15,9%
Psychologists (men)	472	87,7%	43,2%	1,7%	8,9%	34,1%	12,1%
Psychologists (women)	477	88,7%	26,4%	1,9%	11,1%	43,4%	17,2%
Lawyers (men)	466	86,6%	47,6%	3,2%	12,7%	29%	7,5%
Lawyers (women)	465	86,4%	48,6%	3%	10,1%	30,1%	8,2%
Monitors (men)	457	84,9%	42,6%	0,4%	5,5%	36,5%	14,9%
Monitors (women)	460	85,5%	35,7%	0,4%	6,5%	38,9%	18,5%
Childhood educators (men)	125	23,2%	83,3%	-	1,2%	11,4%	4,1%
Childhood educators (women)	423	78,6%	79,9%	-	2,6%	12,1%	5,4%
Assistant managers (men)	456	84,8%	58,3%	1,1%	6,1%	27,4%	7%
Assistant managers (women)	464	86,2%	56,5%	2,2%	7,1%	26,1%	8,2%
Directors (men)	459	85,3%	60,8%	1,7%	5,9%	24,8%	6,8%
Directors (women)	458	85,1%	62,9%	1,5%	4,8%	22,1%	8,7%
Masters (men)	469	87,2%	42,4%	0,2%	3,8%	32,4%	21,2%
Masters (women)	473	87,9%	34,9%	0,6%	4,7%	34,7%	25,2%
Volunteers (men)	457	84,9%	36,3%	-	3,1%	32,8%	27,8%
Volunteers (women)	464	86,2%	28,9%	0,2%	3%	35,3%	32,5%

* Number of valid responses in each item

** Total Sample=538

*** Not valued because no relationship exists or if it does, they don’t evaluate it

Another relevant datum obtained is that which refers to the relationships the inmates maintain of a distinguished form with the prison staff. In 70% of the cases these relationships are valued as good and very good, without a significant difference existing in function of gender. We should clarify that when they were

asked for the motives that drive these positive relationships with the penitentiary personnel, there is ambiguity present, and in an important percentage of cases the good attitudes toward the personnel seek the achievement of their own interests (45% of female inmates interviewed), while the rejection of this attitude is less habitual (29%).

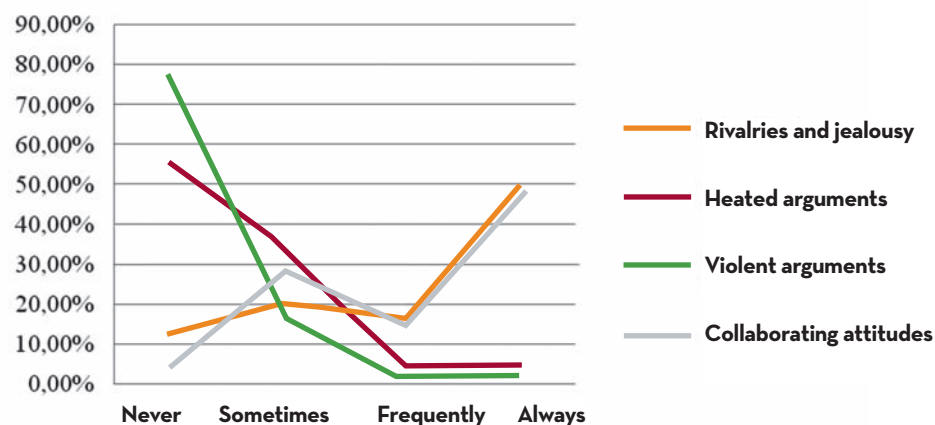
Equally, the women of our study state that they have not had problems with the penitentiary personnel in an 80% of cases, and only 17% express that they have on some occasion had problems with the personnel. Almost 10% of the female inmates do not exhibit good relationships with the staff but do not admit to having had a concrete problem with them. The interviews, on the other hand, give more specific information, since they are questioned about the typology of these problems; among them stand out physical or verbal aggressions, the incompleteness of agreements and the care that they have solicited and not received.

In general, the inmates describe positive relationships with the people that deal with them and live with them in the prison. They are especially good when referring to the male prison-mates, with 53,1% of the responses in this sense. They maintain a relationship, generally long distance, with the men through letters and with limited physical contact, and are not exempt of a certain idealization. A possible explanation for this, comes from the female inmate interviews, and has to do with an idealization of the masculine figure and considering their need of affection, inside the context of confinement and loneliness to which they are subjected, and to the particular situation of abandonment by part of the most representative figures in their life, especially that of their partners outside the prison. Although we should mention that there is a high number of women that say they are not able to evaluate these relationships with the men in prison, because they do not exist (20,1%) or because they do not want to evaluate them (18,3%) due to the segregation and lack of interaction that exists in the daily life between the two sexes.

The relationships between female prison-mates are also very positively evaluated (80,5%). In the female inmate questionnaire the perception that the women have in respect to questions dealing with these relations is taken on. The proportion of female inmates that refer to feelings of rivalry, envy or competition between female prison-mates is 85,3%; those who recognize the existence of heated arguments reaches 43,9%, with an aspect of these arguments, because of problems or conflicts, making them “come to blows” in a 22,7% of the cases. But, at the same time, a 93% of these same women explain that in the module they are helpful with their prison-mates and when they need it, they help them, this being always or on more or less frequent occasions.

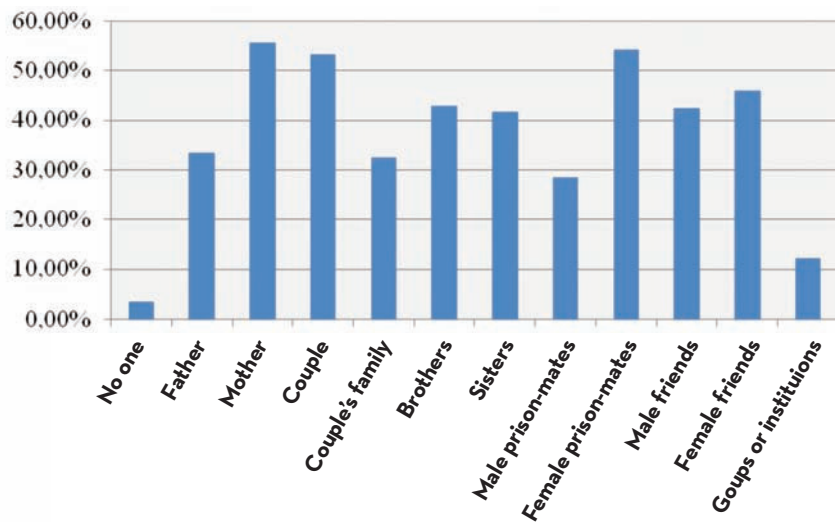
With this, the generalized belief that the rivalries between women prevail over the caring type of relationships is demystified, seeing that the female inmates evaluate, in general terms, having good and very good relations among themselves, despite the situations of conflict, of which they are not exempt in prison life.

Figure 1. Comparative of the replies on the relationship with prison-mates (% over valid replies)



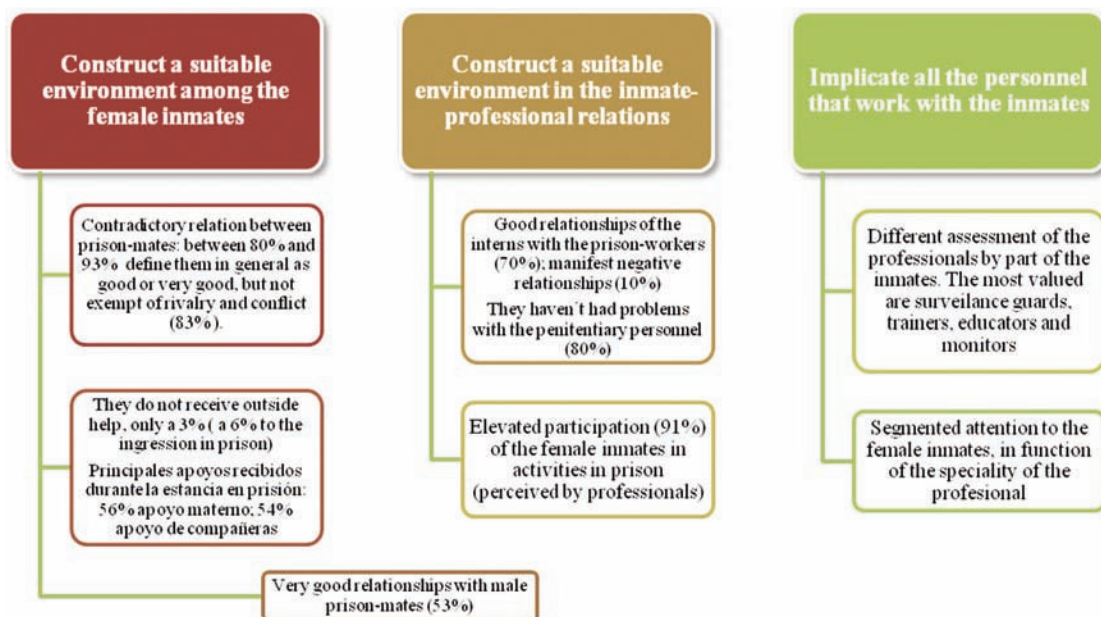
Furthermore, one can observe how the women that feel that they have not had a strong or real support before entering the prison, state that their interpersonal relations have increased and improved after their ingress to the prison. Moreover, before entering in prison a 6,7% of the female inmates declared that they did not have the support of anyone, while during their stay in prison this percent is reduced to a 3,3%. It is also interesting to confirm how even though the support of a Mother (55,6%) continues to be the principal support of the female inmates, the figure of the female prison-mates appears occupying a second place of support and help in the face of difficulties, recognized by 54,1% of the women.

Figure 2. Support received during sentence completion (% in function of the sample total)



The prison appears as a point of inflection in this socio-familiar support. The testimonies collected in the interviews are very clarifying on, for example, the actual situation in which they find themselves in their family relationships, with testimonies similar to that of this inmate:

Figure 3. Basic strategies in the in-prison intervention (adapted from Del Rey 2004)



“With my mother, the relationship has gotten better. I told her all my problems and she knew how to understand me. I don't know. I feel like I have a support in her. The truth is that, yes, I have recuperated my relationship with her.” (EX E409)

Lastly, they have also pointed out the treatment professionals that coordinate programs on the characteristics and questions of the functioning of these programs. The responses to one of the questions, about the implication of the women in treatment programs, support the idea that there exists a high level of participation (90,7% of the professionals say that they are very or sufficiently participative) and that the inmates regularly attend until the end of the activities (88,3%), 37,2% of these professional being given to think that there are an insufficient number of vacancies in their activities.

6. Discussion and conclusions: the reality inside and the possibility of taking advantage of the relationships produced therein

The panorama described throws light on a part of the penitentiary reality little studied until now, although it is partially mentioned in some studies (Ayuso, 2001; Clemente, 1997a, 1997b; Cruells & Igareda, 2005; Del Rey, 2004; García de Cortázar & Gutiérrez Brito, 2012; Moreno, 1999; Ruiz Pérez, 2006, 2009; Trillo, 2008; Viegas, 2009; among others) and this permits us to advance in the clarification of the dynamic and look that the life inside the penitentiary centers acquire.

The multi-professional character present in the penitentiary world and the possible problems derived from it -difficulties in the coordinated use of limited resources, distinct positions according to the discipline and training of each professional or organizational difficulties (Domínguez, 1997)-, provoke with more frequency than desired, divided attention to the female inmates, attending to their vital needs in a fragmented and non-global way, and obeying the standards that the academic and labor world have made convenient: separating the attention to the inmates in function of the varying job disciplines and work. The interdisciplinary and coordinated intervention is, from the perception of the female inmates, minor, or at least, not very visible for them. In addition, the personnel organization itself in distinct government organs and action provoke, as Valderama Bares (2012) describes well, a lack of direct treatment between the female inmates and the directors and the Treatment Board, who are those that make the decisions on the situation and term of the inmates. These directors being, in our study, the professionals that receive the lowest and most negative evaluations. These factors have an important effect on the course of the rehabilitation process, but they are the only ones. There are other relevant elements in the definition of the penitentiary routine.

In this sense, the socialization inside prison is of a special importance, which is distinctly defined from that which is produced in the environment of freedom, and reveals itself in diverse situations. On one hand, it is visible in the correct attitude of the inmates and in the maintenance of some good relationships with the personnel, in order to obtain penitentiary benefits or a better treatment from the staff. The interests that move the inmates towards this are related to the coverage of basic needs such as food, rest, sleep or personal hygiene, as Viegas (2009) has defined, something that generates an important dependency on the other, and between them unavoidably of the staff. While it is conceived as intelligent behavior the adaptation and acceptance of the rules established for the improvement of their situation in prison, at the same time it produces a situation of personal deprivation in the inmates, when they have ceased to exercise vital capacities such as initiative, responsibility and autonomy (Cruells & Igareda, 2005).

Despite the positivity of the data that we obtain on the relationships between female inmates and the personnel of the prison, we cannot omit the episodes described by some of the women as verbal and physical aggressions and, above all, their deception and complaint of not seeing their expectations in prison staff fulfilled. Most authors state the severity of the work in the penitentiary environment (Hernández et al., 2006; Topa & Morales, 2005) and this opens a door for us toward the possible jobs that are related to the emotional exhaustion and the failure of realization that the workers bear with the perceptions of the female inmates.

On the other hand, the relationships that the male and female prison-mates maintain also allow the type of sociability constructed inside the prison to be seen. The female inmates, in their situation, cannot establish new intimate contacts unless they are with people that coexist with them in the prison. This circumstance has a special relevance, since what comes connected to the female inmates' loss of an exterior social network and especially the distancing of a couple. This fosters the needs of affection and is with whom they should plan, in many cases, their reintegration (Cruells & Igareda, 2005). When speaking of positive relations with the male inmates, as when they refer to not having a relation with them, the spatial segregation that exists in prison (García de Cortázar & Gutiérrez Brito, 2012) that marks the relationships between men and women, and gives specific connotations to the ties that are created between them becomes very clear: frequent couple creations (Carcedo et al., 2006) without fully knowing the other nor the possibility of normalized contact.

A third type of relationship that should be pointed out is the cause of the coexistence among the female inmates. This coexistence is described by the women as positive, having a family-like structure (Ruíz Pérez, 2009) and exercising a great support among them. The relationships in prison are marked by power, caused by a situation of dominance or submission, similar to a family, with a reproduction of a mother figure as the head of the group of female inmates, just as Clemente (1997a) and Trillo (2008) stated.

In a generalized way, the reality described shows us that in prison there is a positive environment, based on the declarations of the women with whom we worked. However, we cannot focus on only one part of the testimony. The responses of the female inmates could be distorted or be segmented information, without a doubt the information is subject to their perception of the penitentiary reality. And, furthermore, we must establish which connection is really beneficial for the women and which is not, with a special consideration for sentimental contacts or for inter-penitentiary couples, formed in great measure, how we commented previously, by the lack of affection and support and the loss of their social network.

Being cautious in the interpretation of the obtained information, we can draw on the conclusion that, in general terms, the interpersonal, intimate or professional-user type of relationships, are healthy, marked by a feeling of comprehension and support, something that is especially emphasized in the relations among female prison-mates. If this relaxed environment is in reality how the women that have participated in this study show it to be, it offers us a framework in which these positive connections can be taken advantage of for the treatment and improvement of the conditions in their future reintegration. For this reason, we believe it convenient and well indicated in the work of the treatment teams, to delve into the analysis of the social networks that each inmate possesses inside the prison, so that they can reinforce those which have a positive effect on the women and their acquisition of potential capacities facing the return to life outside prison.

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Notes

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³ Ordinary regimen is that which is applied to second grade and non-classified convicts, and detainees and prisoners (Reglamento Penitenciario, 1996).

⁴ An open center harbors third grade classified convicts (Reglamento Penitenciario, 1996)

⁵ Items 50, 51.3, 51.4, 51.5, 51.7, 51.8, 51.10, 55.1.a and 55.1.b and 55 of the questionnaire to the female inmates. Items 166, 167, 186 and 188 of the female inmate interview. Items 29, 30 and 31 of the questionnaire to the professionals.

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