

Locked up in the tropics



Marit de Beer

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*A research on coping strategies among female prisoners of the
State Prison of Bahia, Brazil*

Marit de Beer
Student number: 3308715
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Supervisor: K. Koonings
Second reader: M. van Gijssel



Preface

This thesis was written in completion of my master course ‘Latin American and Caribbean Studies’ at Utrecht University. Brazil had been a country of my interest for quite a while yet and this was only fuelled by lectures on the *favelas* (ghettos) in Rio, (drug) violence and their complex organization. I was excited to make a switch from Spanish to Portuguese, but the similarities between the languages was a source of concern for me. One of the decisive factors in the choice for this big South American country has been its importance in the world economy and a convincing ‘speech’ from my supervisor Kees Koonings.

Brazil has surprised me in many ways I had never expected. It is always hard to sketch an image beforehand, but my research setting, the Conjunto Penal Feminino (CPF) was a lot more complex than I had assumed. Finding my way in, which I thought was going to be the toughest part, was actually quite easy. Being part of a total institution, by contrast, proved to be the most difficult thing. Coming from a Western European country and thus a different culture, and language, it took me some time to adjust. But the toughest adjustment I had to make was finding my way around in an approved manner. This has not been a smooth process and even resulted in my dismissal on my last day at the location.

Still, I would like to thank the superintendent of the CPF for the opportunity to do research there and all of my informants for working with me. Though incredibly interesting, it has been pretty difficult for me too at times. Therefore, I would like to thank my supervisor Kees Koonings for his inspiration, his positive spirit and his support. My great thanks also go to my Brazilian neighbour Jesuina for her help in the first stage of my research. I owe much of my initial achievements to her. Last but not least, I want to thank my family and friends for their attention and help during the research, and writing process.

Marit de Beer

Utrecht, August 2010

Abstract

The social position of many Bahian women is characterized by poverty, inequality, discrimination and marginalization. This 'second class citizenship' is the reason these women are more likely to commit a crime, as well as being sentenced to prison for it. In prison, their inferior social position is reconfirmed by harsh living conditions, the absence of facilities, weak legal assistance and ongoing discrimination by prison staff, family, and other citizens. My research showed that very low self-esteem among the female inmates has become the resulting leading thread which determines their capacity to cope with the stresses of prison life. How the prisoners of the Conjunto Penal Feminino in Salvador (Bahia, Brazil) dealt with their problems depended, on the one hand, on the changeability of the stressor and is, on the other hand, influenced by their personal life experiences. Good rehabilitation programs appeared to be absent at the Conjunto Penal Feminino da Bahia, where education and work have actually proven to be very important factors in lifting the prisoners' self-esteem and creating future possibilities for them. This is increasing the risk of reoffending and, again, confirms the women's status as 'incomplete' citizen. This way, a vicious circle is set into motion that is difficult to interrupt. Institutional coping strategies is what can, and should be improved by the Conjunto Penal Feminino da Bahia.



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Introduction

Relevance of the study and problem statement

At the entrance of the 'Conjunto Penal Feminino' (CPF) there was a poster saying: "Humanization of the imprisoned: sports, leisure and humanity in the prisons of Salvador". A security officer stated all of this talk about citizenship is just propaganda. It turned out, rehabilitation was as much a part of this prison as citizenship was a right for certain groups within the wider Brazilian society. My research focussed on the situation of female prisoners in this facility in the city of Salvador, state capital of Bahia in North-eastern Brazil. Many Brazilian women, for example, and especially poor, black women find themselves in a situation that is characterized by marginalization, giving them a tag saying 'second class citizen'. They encounter socio-economic, ethnic and gender related struggles, making them vulnerable in both private, as well as public spheres. One major link in this process is the Brazilian police. Though instructed to defend public safety, practice reflects the prejudice attitude against society's inferiors in police actions. This manifests itself in, among other things, the possibility for people with recourses to buy their escape from punishment. For excluded women, the familiar struggle proceeds once they are in prison, supplemented with boredom, insufficient care, insecurity regarding their trials, and in some cases, their personal safety. Their subordinate position is in this situation emphasized by the control security guards have over the prisoners and their lack of support.

Pre-prison problems and newly encountered problems can cause a lot of stress in the minds of the prisoners. Reed (2009:327) states that emotions involved in personal experiences can become 'recreated' in prison settings and this can have a profound effect on the woman's mental health situation. The reconfirmation of their second class citizenship inside the CPF hampers the prisoner's ability to deal with the different types of problems. Their ability to deal with these stressors influences the prisoners' future expectancies. In my research I have used the concept of coping strategies as defined by Lazarus & Folkman (cited in Frazier & Burnett 1991:633) to understand how and with what result female prisoners face their situation. The question I tried to answer is:

"How do female inmates of the Bahia State Prison (O Conjunto Penal Feminino) cope with problems encountered inside prison as well as those experienced in their pre-prison lives?"

The public interest lies in the fact that in Brazil, the amount of women that is being sentenced to prison, rises quicker than the amount of men. Like convicted Northern American women, most convictions of Brazilian women are drug-related (Reed 2009:324; Vigilante 1999:410). Though some drugs related offenses stem from a desperate attempt to make some money, the major cause can be found in the social status of women

Research design and methodology

This research concerns a qualitative field study. I have taken on a case approach in an attempt to collect as many life histories as possible. This required the use of informal contact with the prisoners. My main research method was participate observation. The first half of my research period I participated in the computer science class and the class of gender and race, both organized by an NGO. Besides, I talk to prisoners through the gate of the courtyard or their cell door, whenever security would allow me. Furthermore, I did semi-open interviews with every sector of the prison staff and talked to the superintendent. The research setting would not enable me to use any recording equipment, so all quotes are therefore reconstructed as truthful as possible¹. Out of the estimated 107 prisoners, I have officially interviewed six of them. There has been one that I have not officially interviewed, but that I have talked to many times and very intensively. Furthermore, contact with approximately fifteen prisoners has been less intense, but also of vital significance. Information from my six main informants was used as comparing material to the literature and used as foundation for the chapters. Conclusions were also drawn mainly on the basis of their experiences. More sporadic contact with other informants was used to affirm stories from my main informants, as well as to create a complete answer to my research questions.

I think my position was generally quite a difficult one. Informal contact was not as intense as I had hoped beforehand, because of a lack of work and shielding from prisoners for my own safety. I also got the feeling they were deliberately hiding certain things from me, like procedures, daily routines. Finally, the rules were never properly explained to me and I therefore found myself in unnecessary trouble, which made me a little nervous to move around.

¹ Portuguese translations of all quotes can be found in the annexes.

Outline of the thesis

This thesis is build up as follows. The first chapter describes the pre-prison lives of the prisoners and their struggles in the fields of class, gender, ethnicity, poverty, exclusion, stigmatization, family life, personal loss, violence and (drug) abuse. These lives influenced the women's passage into the world of crime. Therefore, I thereafter discuss their arrest, trial and conviction. The second chapter describes daily life at the CPF. It provides details about the prison complex, as well as its location, regimes, staff, inmate population, facilities, daily problems, the different types of relationships within the prison community, the separation from family and friends, the presence of stigmatization and the prisoner's visions on their own futures. Finally, in chapter three, I describe the way the prisoners' history, together with their crime and prison life determined their coping strategies and how serious a problem it can be if they fail. In my conclusion I will present the answers to both my sub questions, as well as my research question, accompanied by valid argumentation.

For privacy reasons not available

Picture 1. My CPF visitors identification

1. The women of the ‘Conjunto Penal Feminino’

1.1 Societal difficulties in a nutshell

Vitória was raised by her grandparents since she was very young. Her birthmother is not a true mother to her. Vitória’s grandmother has had ten children, six of these were still alive and one of the deaths was a drugs related assassination. Vitória’s house was situated in a *favela* (slum), had two bedrooms for seven people, one tiny living room with one sofa, a kitchen and a bathroom. In front of their house was a big two way street and their garage, providing them with a constant view of cars under construction. According to Angela (Vitória’s cousin), a lot of traffickers passed by their house every day. When it rained, there were at least five buckets in the living room, catching leaking water. People sitting on the couch needed to cover their legs with plastic, in order not to get wet. Every time, family members complained about the food, especially Vitória’s grandfather. He literally said “the beans are tasteless, did you hear me woman!?”. He also kept commanding all the girls to serve him more, give him a drink, etc. Besides, I noticed that Vitória’s grandfather had a very loud way of speaking and heard him swearing a lot. He has also been in jail, served nine years for murder.

One incident that occurred when I was at Vitória’s house was that Angela’s sister ordered us all to go inside immediately when a trafficker with a bad reputation passed by. About ten minutes later we heard someone had been shot dead. When this news came, Angela started crying and said “you see!?” She said she could not take it anymore, said she felt sorry the guy he had to die like this. The girls said it was a criminal revenge. Vitória said she felt bad for him too and even more for his family, because he had to have a mother, brothers and sisters. By the time the police had arrived, Alemão (Vitória’s cousin with green eyes) came in, drunk and with his shorts covered in blood. He was talking very loudly, came very close to my ear, had my arm in a tight grip and said “I adore killing”. We all went for a walk, but at this moment I realised how horribly uncomfortable it has to be to live in so much insecurity and in ‘war’ with your family members all the time. For this family, it is everyday reality and for them there is no way of escaping it....

As this example illustrates, many women in Salvador wrestle with problems like poverty, single parenthood, drug/alcohol abuse and (gender) violence, but also racism, discrimination and stigmatization. In order to understand the female prisoners of Salvador, what crimes they

committed and why, how they feel about being imprisoned, how they envision their own future and the way they deal with all of this, we have to be aware of where they came from. We have to know their frame of reference. Therefore, this first chapter is meant to portray what it means to be a woman in Brazil and what the society of Salvador is like. It also provides details about the past of the female prisoners of the *Conjunto Penal Feminino* (CPF). This chapter is split up into two parts. The first part analyses the pre-prison lives of the women including themes like class, race, gender, violence and abuse, exclusion and stigmatization. All of these issues together can largely determine a woman's path and influence her coping strategies, when trying to deal with life's obstacles, as we will see later in the thesis. The second part of this chapter discusses the role of the Brazilian police before going to prison, as well as the juridical process of the women that eventually resulted in their serving prison time in the CPF.

1.2 Theoretical framework

Bacelar (cited in Hautzinger 2007:27) argues that Bahia is 'ethnically African'. Salvador can be described in the following terms: chronic poverty, racial discrimination and social marginalization (Hautzinger 2007:10). Black and white ethnicities are being constructed by emphasizing the differences (Green 1993:52). By stressing differences between black and white and distancing blackness from western culture, blacks acquire a lower status and thereby their maltreatment can be justified and their location within the social order is decreased. According to Sansone (2003), black spaces are created in every field of life. Furthermore, he states that Bahians celebrate their own culture, as a source of empowerment, by practicing it. They dance samba and drink a beer, in stead of fighting racism. According to Koonings (2003:209), the poor are disproportionately represented by black people and parts of society are systematically being excluded on the basis of class and colour. Stealing is often believed to be in their 'race', in their blood. They are born, 'natural' thieves. (McCallum 1998:283; Scheper-Hughes 1992:224-225). The situation is most severe for black women. According to Hahner (2002:4), they remain on the bottom of society.

This subordinate position has everything to do with the unequal power relations between men and women. Where men and boys are more often found in the streets and public urban spaces, girls are taught to stay in or around the house (Hautzinger 2007:141-142). Another

contributing factor is female illiteracy. Though it has gradually improved during the previous century, many more women (urban as well as rural) are still illiterate, in comparison to men. Most women therefore remain working at far lower wages like domestic servants, or street vending. Men continue to occupy the better jobs, because when it comes to access to employment, women are in a disadvantageous position (Hahner 2002:6,9).

This ‘male-dominated structure of society’ is where much of the violence against women in Brazil is rooted. It is a multifaceted phenomenon containing social, cultural, economic, psychological and criminal elements. “So many men still think they own their female partners” (MacDowell Santos 2005:114). Domestic violence was widely considered a ‘social’ rather than a ‘criminal’ problem and police officers more often chose family reconciliation in stead of protecting the victim (Ibid:2-3,20). Since August 7, 2006, domestic violence is considered a crime, thanks to the *Lei Maria da Penha* that has made it possible to prosecute perpetrators of domestic violence.²



Picture 2. Maria da Penha (she is the one on the right, with the microphones)³

Still, the dominant conception of sexual harassment is not one of a crime in the society of Salvador (MacDowell Santos 2005:143). Many Brazilian women still feel guilty about being beaten up, thinking they deserve to be treated that way (MacDowell Santos 2005:4,21). In addition, because of the general acceptance, the chance that someone will intervene is small.

² Flyer: Secretaria Especial de Política para as Mulheres. *Lei Maria da Penha; Coíbe a violência doméstica e familiar contra a mulher*. Brasília (2008)

³

http://www.spm.salvador.ba.gov.br/index.php?option=com_zoom&Itemid=73&page=view&catid=21&key=6&hit=1

Hautzinger (2007:147) states there is a saying about this that goes “*Em briga de marido e mulher, não mete a colher*” (in a fight between husband and wife, don’t dip your spoon), while family members and intimate partners are often primary perpetrators of sexual violence (Reed 2009:326). De Oliveira Almeida (2006:23) states that women that commit murder, most frequently kill their partner. Another cause of male violence is the fact men are not the only ones providing anymore and so they lose part of their male authority. Violence is then just another way of performing this dominance and of securing their ‘manliness’ (Hautzinger 2007:23,25,33). Reed (2009:324) states that women in the northeast of Brazil suffer a lot of violence in comparison to the rest of the country.

In addition, Hautzinger (2007:9,23) states that about 37.5% of the households in Bahia are headed by women, but female headed households in Salvador are hardly ‘empowered’, or supported, when the mother is forced to leave the house for work, or jail. Finally, for many poor civil communities in Brazil, drug trafficking can be a way of survival (Reed 2009:323-324). Substance abuse has a higher prevalence in many developing countries than in developed countries and has been associated with violence and legal offences (Rossi Menezes & Ratto 2004:212).

Research shows that most of the female convicts in Brazil are between 18 and 24 years of age, that only 9,8 % of the total prison population has complete elementary education and 3.2% is illiterate (Hein de Campos & Feix 2008:86). De Oliveira Almeida (2006:24) argues that the majority of criminals come from an inferior social position, characterized by oppression, low educational level and the absence of work. Reed (2009:323-324) states that mainly U.S. data showed that incarcerated women reported 40-94% higher rates of victimization from sexual, or physical violence than non-incarcerated women.

In short, black, poor Brazilian women are often in a vulnerable position characterized by low education levels, discrimination, domestic and public violence, exclusion and stigmatization. They have little, if any resources to escape this and this puts them at risk of committing a crime.

1.3 Stories from the female prisoners of the CPF

Life stories of my informants at the CPF reflect this pattern extracted from the literature. Viviane, psychologist at the CPF, stated that until 5-6 years ago, most prisoners of the CPF were about 30 years old. This was quite a stable fact, but then things started to change and this

age decreased till 20 to 25 years old. The reasons for this, she stated, is that most of them lack good education and come from broken families. As we can state from the prisoners' stories, their families often miss a central figure. In many cases there was no father and they often got pregnant at a very early age. During my research, the majority of the female prisoners were in their half- to late twenties. Most women stated one of the two parents had abandoned them and they had no idea where they were, or they had already passed away. Several grew up with grandparents, or left home because of physical abuse, often by stepfathers. Many of the women married at a young age, as early as 16 years old. But loving relationships were not common. Beatrice for example, said her marriage was not what she had hoped. Basically all women had been through separation and several had met new partners. Often their partners were men who were either inside or outside of prison. The majority of the prisoners had more than one child, often from more than one partner. Dona Christina had as many as 16 children and she got pregnant for the first time when she was twelve.

Most of the prisoners had to go through the loss of loved ones. Beatrice's husband had died and many girls had already lost their father, mother, or both. Olivia (Spanish woman) said she had lost her son and had never been the same. Latifah and Sara said they had a miscarriage. Vitória said that a girl next door was murdered in front of her own house and in front of Vitória's eyes. Vitória said she was dealing drugs (*pedra*, or crack) in someone else's neighbourhood. Helena said four out of her ten brothers and sisters had been assassinated because of involvement in the drugs trade.

According to Beatrice, most of the prisoners could not read or write. In my group of informants, only one girl said she was illiterate and the rest had no complete education. They were having noticeable difficulty spelling words and multiplying. Vitória went back to high school after being released from prison. My informants were either at home with their children, or working in the informal sector as a domestic worker, a street vender, braiding hair, or working as a nail artist. They said they earned little money and some were having difficulty providing for their children. Alícia, however, said she never lacked anything, because her mother was a 'warrior' and Beatrice stated she had a stable existence too. In addition, Antonia from the 'Superintendência de Políticas para as Mulheres' (SPM) stated that women often do the same jobs as men, for less money and that employers hire more men than women. Several acquaintances stated one makes more money in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo doing the same thing as in Salvador.

My own research showed that a number of prisoners at the CPF were not from Bahia, they come from states like São Paulo, Goiás and Minas Gerais. Besides, the majority were what I

would call *morena* (brown-skinned). Helena, who would be *morena* to me, called herself ‘light skinned’ though. She said she makes negative comments to other prisoners that are darker skinned.



Picture 3. A group of women at the presentation of the computer science certificates.⁴

Guilherme (an acquaintance) said that in the eyes of the general population of Salvador, every black man is a thief and every black woman a whore. I too noticed that both inside and outside prison, people make a black skin often sound like an extra ‘ugliness’. Prisoners stated that black women have a lot more to endure than white women. ‘Gender and race’ teacher Isabel asked them to write down things they had heard individuals say about black and white people. Table 1 describes their response.

Table 1: ‘Black and White spaces’

Black	<i>Preto</i>	White	<i>Branco</i>
Thief	<i>Ladrão</i>	Swimming pool	<i>Piscina</i>
Extravagant	<i>Extravagante</i>	Rich	<i>Rico</i>
Shed	<i>Barraco</i>	Clean	<i>Limpo</i>
Poor	<i>Pobre</i>	Fancy places	<i>Chicque (lugares)</i>
Pig (lack of hygiene)	<i>Porco</i>	Prejudiced	<i>Preconceituoso</i>
‘Poor’ places	<i>Lugares ‘pobres’</i>	Tip top education	<i>Educações de ponta</i>
Prison	<i>Cadeia</i>	Exclusive cells	<i>Sela exclusiva</i>
Eat a lot	<i>Come muito</i>	No cooking skills	<i>Não sabe cozinhar</i>
Samba	<i>Samba</i>	Can not dance samba	<i>Não sabe sambar</i>
‘Hard’ hair	<i>Cabelo ‘duro’</i>	‘Smooth’ hair	<i>Cabelo ‘liso’</i>

Source: field observation during a ‘gender and race’ class

⁴ Courtesy of Paula from ‘Mais Social’

It was striking to see the negative expressions tied to 'blackness', on the one hand, and the celebration of their own culture, on the other by emphasizing black people's samba and cooking skills, creating their own cultural foundation. Strangely enough, only one or two prisoners stated they had ever felt discriminated for being darker skinned. According to Antonia (SPM), black people in Salvador are still seen as slaves without a soul. She said many just do not recognize discrimination as such, because racism in Salvador is very subjective. People take rights and privileges away, treat and talk to darker people differently from lighter skinned ones, but they do not admit they are racist.

My informant at the DEAM (Delegacia Especial de Atendimento à Mulher) stated that between the start of January 2010 and the end of March of the same year, 2206 declarations of violence against women from the metropolitan region of Salvador had come in. All of the cases concerned gender violence. Antonia (among many other inhabitants of Salvador) called Bahian men *machistas* and said they envision women as their possession. My friend, Gloria, stated several times that "many women in Salvador are being murdered out of jealousy". 'Gender and race', teacher Isabel told the prisoners that violence against women is something that is present in every layer of society and in every social class. She called phrases like "in a fight between husband and wife, don't dip your spoon" by Hautzinger (2007) old-fashioned, but said they are still so much alive in the community of Salvador. Many girls still grow up thinking that violence is part of 'loving'. According to some prisoners, it did look like some women like to be beaten.

Iris, social assistant at the CPF, stated that many woman that enter there are victims of (male) abuse. According to her, women do not report violence because of a lack of self-esteem and shame. Olivia stated her husband drank a lot and maltreated her and her children. Julieta and Beatrice's stepfathers were hitting them, so they explained. Furthermore, Beatrice said her own husband was very jealous and Leila said she left her second partner because he was violent and started using crack. Both also stated to have been raped. Beatrice claimed it was her stepfather and Leila said she was abducted by an armed man when she was 17 years old, four months pregnant and street vending. They also stated it had been and still was, a very traumatizing experience.



Picture 4. Flyer: “Racism, violence against women and homophobia? Report it.”

One striking and very determining factor in Salvador, was the presence of crack-cocaine. There were billboards on the side of the road and on busses saying: “Crack: 80% of homicides, principal cause of violence in Bahia”. Pelourinho, the historic centre of Salvador, is a place that is widely known for its presence of crack-junkies (even children) and thieves.



Picture 5. Road signs warning for crack use

Ex-prisoner Vitória said she was addicted to crack cocaine by the time she was sixteen. She said she tried crack, because she was fighting with her mother and stepfather a lot, and was hanging around the wrong people. According to acquaintance Guilherme, people become very aggressive and paranoid when they use crack. With Vitória, everything luckily turned

out right. At time of this research, she was 19 years old and had been clean for the last two years. Vitória's cousin Angela said her brother (Alemão) really stressed her mother out, because he get's especially aggressive when he drinks. Alícia said one uncle died as a result of *cachaça* abuse.

1.4 Crime and conviction

1.4.1 Women and crime

As we have seen in the first part of this chapter, many women at the CPF came from a situation that was characterized by marginalization and inequality. Their history was often one of poverty, unstable family relations and violence. The same factors we see influencing their transition into the world of crime and their arrest, and even their trial and conviction.

Studies indicate that drug trafficking is the most frequently committed crime (30%) among women in Brazilian prisons (Hein de Campos & Feix 2008:86). Initially, people believed that criminals were produced by a type of gene, a biological factor causing criminal behaviour. Because of a very passive lifestyle, the female biological factor was not stimulated and therefore not developed. So, the inferior position of the female was the explanation of an absence of criminal behaviour in women. Freud (cited in De Oliveira Almeida 2006:20) explained it as a 'complex of manliness', so a rebellious woman was actually behaving against her own nature. According to one female security guard, women often have to put on a mask to hide emotions like anger or aggression, that are not considered to be feminine. As a result of this, women in prison complain a lot more than men about head- and tummy aches. Over the years she said to have learned when it really concerns a head ache, or just "soul pain", "when they need affection".

The criminal world readily uses the social image of a woman to attract her and make her victim. She is used, for example, to be the *mula* (donkey) that transports the drugs, or the weapon to the crime scene, because they are often not examined on the (*ôni*)bus. In other words, criminals abuse the confidence of society in its women to facilitate the accomplishment of crimes. Many women end up in the world of crime because of the socio-cultural structure of society (De Oliveira Almeida 2006:23). Beatrice said she was in prison because she trusted someone. A girlfriend had invited her to come to Salvador. All of a sudden the Federal Police showed up. They had received an anonymous tip and because they

were all in the car where the drugs were found, they were all responsible. Beatrice was sentenced for five years and four months.

In addition, according to Lemgruber (cited in De Oliveira Almeida 2006:21), female crimes have become more masculine and especially more violent as the result of an attempt of women to equal themselves to their male partners of society. Women (especially black women) nowadays still find themselves in an inferior social position. In the moment of committing a crime, women commonly do feel powerful. They value themselves by containing emotions of strength and power, characteristics that are viewed as 'masculine' (De Oliveira Almeida 2006:25). Despite this, criminality is still envisioned as something 'masculine' and therefore not attuned with 'female social behaviour', as is expected from a woman. Helena said she was in jail because she wanted to do all the things that men do. Laura received 20 year and had to serve 8 (she had had 7 already) for killing a Polícia Federal in São Paulo. She said he called her a prostitute and slapped her in the face without knowing anything about her and she did not even have a criminal record. After a while she could not take it anymore and killed him. Estefani received a penalty of thirteen years, also for killing a man. She said he threatened to kill her, so she killed him first.

There is also a strong connection to the expanded female participation on the jobs market. So the more a woman actively participates in society, the more she will come into contact with social conflicts and criminal factors (De Oliveira Almeida 2006:21). Raquel, for example, used to work in a *centro comercial* where she had her own spot. She said someone gave her a package to take into her custody that turned out to contain cocaine. Because it was in a place that was registered under her name, she was responsible and had to spend 1,5 year in jail. Sara said she embezzled money and received a penalty of one year and two months. She said the orders came from somebody else, a name she was afraid to reveal, because that would put her in a lot of danger.

According to psychologist Viviane and security officer Adilson, around 80% of the women are in there for drugs, but are not always the dealer. They often end up in prison because of 'affectionate relationships'. The woman has a boyfriend that deals, but she is the only one in the house when the police enters, so she is responsible and goes to jail. In other cases the man is in jail, uses drugs and is in debt, so he orders his wife to bring him drugs. She then get's caught with the drugs and is sentenced to jail too. Adilson stated that the other 20 % commits crimes to be able to support themselves. Belen and her twin sister said men ordered them to smuggle drugs and Leila went to bring her partner in prison some marihuana on December 27, 2009 when she got arrested. Olivia was a 'number 33' (trafficking) too. A crisis

hit Spain and she decided to take up cocaine trafficking. Helena went to jail for the first time because her husband had drugs, got busted and mentioned her name, she said. Her second conviction was due to her own drugs. She received 10 years, of which she did three in Belo Horizonte (where she was from and where she was arrested) and the other seven she had to do in Salvador.

After Vitória had become addicted to crack, she started selling too in order to sustain her own habit. One of her customers was a prostitute that she was helping as well by providing shelter for her. When this woman started stealing from her, Vitória said she warned her two times. The third time it happened, Vitória said she poured alcohol over her and set her on fire, but she survived and Vitória served one year for attempted murder. Julieta said she went to live on the street at the age of 14. Quickly thereafter, an institution took her into shelter, but she left again when she was 17. She then rented a room with a girl and her boyfriend, that were beating her, Julieta said and in the end she attempted to kill them. This is how she ended up in jail for the first time at the age of 21. When she got out, she went back to living by herself and worked (construction and hospitality), but the money was very little so she took up armed robbery. That is how she ended up in jail two more times. The last time she received a 10 year sentence. Alcía was arrested at the end of 2004 in the neighbourhood of Brotas. She received twelve years for homicide. She said she killed out of jealousy, stabbing the woman to death that stole her husband.

1.4.2 The Brazilian police

Two police forces, important to explain in the context of this research, are the Military and Civil police. The Civil Police is spread over different stations and is occupied with registering and investigating crimes. Especially the Military Police has appeared to play a major role in the lives of the prisoners of the CPF. This is a uniformed police force, responsible for the prevention of crime, patrolling streets and maintaining public order. Though on paper, the Brazilian law appears to be one of the best in the world, in practice, citizenship is not granted for everyone. Social characteristics like race and gender, are used to determine citizen rights and to privilege one person over another (Husain 2007:25,35,74-75). Brazilians that do not qualify have to fight extra hard against their 'second class citizenship'. A popular saying goes: "Brazilian prisons are only for the three 'P's' - *pobres, pardos, e putas*" (the poor, blacks and whores) (Branford 1993:12). Above all, women from non-white ethnic groups in Brazil are often ignored. So, the Brazilian police has been working in benefit of the state and its elite for

a long time. In an attempt to fight crime, boundaries between police officers and criminals dissolved, impunity is of the order of the day and is suffered mainly by the 'second class citizens' (MacDowell Santos 2005:83-84; Holston 2009:21-22,26; Husain 2007:163; Taylor 2006:273). In other words, the criminal law is an instrument created by one class to be used on an inferior class, using prison as their main instrument. This way, crime is not truly suppressed, but rather steered. Criminals are turned into professionals, increasing the risk of organized delinquency and regression (Juarez Cirino Santos 2005:5,8).

In continuation, according to the trainee public defender of the CPF, drug users can not be arrested according to the law, only traffickers. But he stated that the law does not mention the amount that determines the line between user and trafficker. So it all depends on the judge. According to this trainee, there are many tough judges. Besides, both him, as well as psychologist Gilberto stated that many police officers are corrupt and often lie. They twist the story and easily add a kilo of cocaine or marihuana to turn you into a dealer. Taking it one step further, the practice of torture is constitutionally forbidden. It is a crime and considered a cruelty. The government is therefore obliged to withdraw inefficient, corrupt, or torturer and/or killer police officers from Military and Civil Police Corporations. Practice shows that torture and maltreatment by members of the military force and police, or staff of penitentiary institutions continues (Hein de Campos & Feix 2008:90; de Sena Soares Filho 2008:33; Ghiringhelli de Azevedo 2005:218). Prisoner Estefani, for example, stated she hated the police and said she would kill them one by one if she had the chance. She claimed to have been tortured by the police. She said they beat her, gave her electric shocks, put a bag over her head and let her sit in a chair naked, with her hands cuffed behind her back. It was a very humiliating experience, she said. She stated the police beat people where you can not see it, so it stays hidden. She also stated that they torture people so they talk, so they will confess something they did not do, like other cases the police has failed to solve. After being raped at 17, Leila wanted to press charges and asked the police officer to take her home. She said nobody ever took her complaint seriously and when she asked the police officer to take her home, she stated the police officer said he did not want to waist any gasoline on her. He said that it was late and that if she wanted to get home, she had to walk. That is how she got to hate the police, she said.

Estefani, Laura and Beatrice stated that beating by policemen does not have anything to do with gender but with the type of crime. For drugs, they might just hit you in the face two times. Now, with murder, the beating is more severe, especially because they want to make

you pay for other crimes they have no luck solving. The presence of a criminal record is also a aggravating circumstance when it comes to beating, they claimed. Besides, Laura said that back in time, women were more reserved, but now, because of all the violence and because they feel a need to protect themselves, they have the same attitude as men. Therefore policemen treat women just as badly as men. According to Sara, 20% of the police are good and 80% are bad. She stated the bad ones are aggressive, can not communicate and swear at you. Especially the Military Police is bad and very racist, they do not like black people, she said. Sara said she was treated very well by the police because she is white and did not have a criminal record yet. Another reason for the good treatment, she said, was that she is very communicative. Furthermore, she claimed she knew her rights and insisted that those were being respected. Many women are illiterate and do not know their rights, she said. Helena called the Bahian police 'brutal'. She stated they hit people and said she had seen women with broken legs because of police beating. Alícia stated that bad police officers take part in the drug trade. Raquel said the police are liars and that they said she had done things that she had not. Laura too stated she only killed her victim, but said the police made it robbery with murder as a result. Finally, psychologist Gilberto said that Julieta got scared when she heard there was police downstairs. To me, this is a clear sign of the police's reputation, which is, obviously, not a very good one.

1.4.3 The police station

Between arrest and prison, the suspect stays at a police station. Husain (2007:171) was very negative about the quality of the conventional police stations in Rio de Janeiro. She states they were run-down, outdated and lacking good technology. They often had no adequate water-, or electricity facilities and phones failed to work. Santoro Tomlin (1995:132) states this negligence in maintaining adequate facilities is a form of abuse of inmate's rights. One of the Salvador police stations called 'Delegacia Especializada de Repressão aos Crimes contra a Criança e a Adolescente' (Special Police Station to Combat Crimes Against Children and Adolescents) seemed to be no better. My informant said this particular one had 38 women held captive where there was room for only 16. The reason was a lack of prison vacancies. In addition, at this police station there was no maximum stay, it all depended on the speed of the trial. My informant also said there were women in there that had already spend over a year at that police station. This generally concerns what they call 'heavy crimes': drug trafficking, followed by homicide. The ones that can not afford a lawyer are awarded a public defender.

Furthermore, the women were allowed to leave their cell and stay at the courtyard twice a week for two, maximum three hours. The courtyard was small and therefore, they divided the women into groups. They could receive visitors twice a week, only in the afternoon. The police station provided nutrition, but anything else (soap, sanitary napkins, sweets) had to come from visitors. According to my informants, no one stayed without, because it was like a community in there, they all helped each other out. Vitória said the police station she stayed at was overcrowded too. She stated some cells had 14 people in them and another one that had four beds was occupied by ten people. Besides, she said it was very dirty, there were big rats walking around and everything was moist. Beatrice said that at the police station, they were being frightened by all sorts of horrible stories about the CPF. Now it is time to move onto their trials and convictions.

1.4.4 Trial and conviction

Many women get arrested for dealing in their own neighbourhood, others for intending to enter prison while in the possession of drugs. Then again, women are often forced to enter the drug trade by partners, family members, or others that are close to them. A minority is involved in the international drug trade.⁵ Table 2 shows the numbers used to indicate the different crimes for which women at the CPF were convicted. In the statistics of 24-02-2010, there were 61 cases (out of 106) of drug trafficking (n° 33) at the CPF, thus the majority.

Table 2: Crime classification at the CPF

155	<i>Furto simple</i> (pickpocket, take things without victim knowing)
155, 2°,3°,4°	<i>Furto qualificado</i> (robbery with a hidden weapon)
157	<i>Roubo simple</i> (ordering someone to had over stuff)
157, 2°	<i>Roubo qualificado</i> (ordering someone to had over stuff + usage of weapon)
157, 3°	<i>Latrocínio</i> (robbery followed by murder)
121	<i>Homicídio simple</i> (murder, not premeditated)
121, 2°	<i>Homicídio qualificado</i> (premeditated murder)
33-35	<i>Tráfico de drogas</i> (drug trafficking)
171	<i>Estelionato (cadrilha: group of thieves)</i>
129	<i>Leções corporais</i> (physical assault)

Source: fieldwork data

⁵ Flyer: Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres: Enfrentamento à Violência Contra a Mulher 2007:28

After committing one of those crimes, the perpetrators obviously have to stand trial. Coordinator of education Ivete stated some women might wait for five years to hear what their sentence is, because they do not have money for a good lawyer, all they have is the public defender. She explained that when it turns out their penalty is less than the time they waited for their trial, it is a pity for the victim, but they do not receive any type of compensation. Guilherme (an acquaintance) literally said “the law system of Brazil is as slow as a turtle’s steps”. Stories from prisoners confirmed this. Estefani said the juridical process in Brazil consists of three parts. She stated that the first step in her trial took place eight months after she was arrested. She stated she was finally convicted after spending one year and three months in prison. Laura said she went to Salvador after killing the officer where she was arrested. Firstly, they took her back to São Paulo, to thereupon bring her back to Salvador. She said she wanted to return to São Paulo, but because the process was so slow, she had to stay in Salvador. Alícia claimed she waited 3,5 years for her verdict, assisted only by a public defender.

Beatrice entered prison in January 2009 and said she waited eleven months for her trial, without knowing what was going to happen to her life. Vitória said she was held at the police station for five months (according to her, the law states that one has to be transferred from the police station to a prison after four months). She stated she was lucky to have a lawyer, because “a public defender does not solve anything”. The public defender (trainee) at the CPF said “the women have the right to a public defender, but this does not function”. He stated there was only one public defender working at the CPF, while most women at the CPF did not have money to pay for a lawyer. There were not enough defenders, considering the amount of work. He said there were external defenders assisting them with cases, but they were all very busy. With money you can get anything done here, the law system is very corrupt, he stated. Julieta’s girlfriend Ana, for example, was one of the few that had a lawyer. Within three weeks she was home. But not all lawyer-stories were this rose coloured. Helena feared hers was a thief. She said he had accepted the money her mother brought her to pay him, but never came back. Leila also did not have a way to get into contact with her lawyer either and by June 2010, she did not know her verdict yet. She was waiting and clearly bothered by this. Latifah too complained about people telling her they would sort things out for her and nothing happened. There seemed to be some document missing, where she was under the impression that everything was present. She stated her informant from the Malaysian consulate had little English knowledge and that he did not really understand the Brazilian juridical system. All of this was eating her away, made her feel bad, she said. In the end of the research she was still in

the CPF, while her time was officially over and she was still not sure about when she could go home and what the reason was for this delay.

1.5 Conclusion

Looking back at the lives of the prisoners I conclude that most prisoners came from larger families, often missing a father, or sometimes a mother figure. It was not uncommon to be raised by grandparents, or to have a violent family history. In addition, complete education was rare and most prisoners had a job, but often in the informal sector and received little compensation. Good partnership was also rare. Many prisoners were either separated, widow, or their husband was in jail too. The majority of the prisoners had children and pregnancy at a young age was no exception. In most cases, the prisoners were from lower socio-economic classes, many had difficulty getting by and nearly all of the women had been through the loss of family members, friends, or acquaintances. A history of mental, as well as physical and even sexual violence was not exceptional among the prisoners of the CPF. Violence against women is a cultural phenomenon and is often perpetrated by the partner or another male family member. Still, most women did not seem to feel discriminated based on their gender, or ethnicity, nor recognized violence as such. Cultural embedding is to blame for this. Drugs did not seem to play a major role in the pre-prison lives of most women. Though the strong presence of crack in Salvador, the amount of Salvadoran citizens consuming large quantities of alcohol and stories of alcoholics in the prisoners' families did suggest the opposite.

The Brazilian police reflect society's social classifications. Black women especially, struggle to fight their 'second class citizenship' and domination by the superior class, and have a higher risk of ending up in jail. Their social position is making them attractive bait for the criminal circuit because of their social image in society. Therefore, most female crimes concern drug trafficking, repeatedly as a consequence of an affectionate relationship. Women also commit crimes in an attempt to equal themselves to men, or as a result of higher female participation in the job market. A proportion of the police officers occasionally go beyond their jurisdiction and old-fashioned torture practices still seemed to exist. Bad police officers were known to be liars, corrupt, drug dealers, and drug addicts and can even be violent. Police stations that I visited showed several shortcomings, like overcrowding, bad sanitation and lacked basic products. Besides, women were often kept there for a longer period of time than was legally permitted and many problems during their trials were the result of an outsized

amount of work, slowness, and prejudice of the juridical system. A public defender proved to be of little help. As we will see in chapter two, the prisoners' situation in the CPF differed little from before and existing struggles persisted, or even aggravated.

2. Prison life in the CPF

“Don’t go there by yourself!!” was everyone’s advise. Transportation to the prison was not safe for me they said, especially with my *cara de gringa* (foreign face). I was so lucky to have a neighbour with the right contacts to arrange my entrance into the prison system and now, transport is going to be the problem?? Phrases like “Raped women in Salvador do not go to the hospital, they go the cemetery” and “Chances are good, that if you take a bus there by yourself, you will arrive without clothes”, made me worry I would never be able to arrive at my research location. It turned out, avoiding having to walk through the neighbourhood where the ‘Conjunto Penal Feminino’ (CPF) was located, was a good idea, because it was obviously a poor and dangerous one. But although the feared bus ride was long, tiring and generally quite hot, it felt everything but dangerous. One comforting factor was having mostly the same bus drivers and money collectors. Chatting to them and to the ladies selling candy and drinks at the bus stops gave me a feeling of safety too, because I figured chances were smaller something bad would happen if all of these people knew me and knew where I was going. The driver would drop everyone off right in front of the building. Arriving there, I would just take two steps and I would be on the terrain of the complex. Good thing about having blond hair and blue eyes, when everyone around you is dark, is that people recognize you after the first time, saving me a lot of trouble.



Picture 6. Front gate of the ‘Complexo Penitenciário do Estado’

The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader an inside view on the ins and out of the 'Conjunto Penal Feminino', and how this is effecting its residents. First of all we will take a look at the complex, it's location, regimes, staff and inmate population, and what a day generally looked like. Thereafter, light will be thrown on the available, or lacking facilities. Then the daily problems are discussed, focussing on themes like space, food and water, hygiene, health care and activities. The last paragraph will clarify social aspects of being a prisoner at the CPF, looking at what it means to live in an institution, what the relationships among the prisoners themselves and with the prison staff looked like, what it was like to them to be separated from family and friends and what kind of stigmatization they were sensing. Furthermore, I will describe the visiting days, what the prisoners' situation was doing to their state of mind and their self-esteem, followed by the presence of drugs and violence, and this chapter is finished by explaining how the prisoners envisioned their own future.

2.1 O Conjunto Penal Feminino

'O Conjunto Penal feminino de Salvador' (CPF) is part of the penitentiary complex of the State of Bahia. It is subordinate to the Secretary of Justice and Human Rights. The penitentiary of Lemos de Brito (PLB), or male section (including a maximum security department), the 'presídio de Salvador', the 'Centro de Observação Penal' (COP, or observation centre) and the 'Central Médica Penitenciária' (medical centre), and a department for youngsters, all make part of this complex (De Oliveira Almeida 2006:36). The female wing, the CPF was located in the neighbourhood of *Estrada da Mata Escura* and had room for 160 detainees.⁶ The local newspaper *Mais* (25-03-2010:21) stated the CPF was funded twenty years ago and had never been through some sort of structural renovation.⁷ Between 2002 and 2007, the number of women in Brazilian prisons has doubled from 3% of the total prison population to 6% (Hein de Campos & Feix 2008:86). Between February and June 2010, the CPF had on average ca. 107 prisoners. Superintendent Adriana said there were women in there with HIV, tuberculosis, skin diseases and women that are 'nuts'. All of the female detained of the CPF wore yellow shorts and a yellow t-shirt when they are 'off duty' and blue shorts and t-shirt when they were working (cleaning). They all wore flip-flops and many had neatly polished nails. Nobody inside this prison wore a weapon, except for the

⁶ http://www.sjcdh.ba.gov.br/sap/unidades_prisionais.htm#PENITENCIÁRIA_FEMININA

Military Police, superintendent Adriana stated. In the first stage of my research, none of the inmates were wearing handcuffs, but around the start of my last month, it changed and all prisoners were obliged to wear them.

The entrance to the CPF were two large iron doors. Behind those doors, a desk was situated, always occupied by a couple of security officers, checking everything and everyone coming in and going out. Straight ahead there was a pair of stairs leading to the administration on the first floor. Between the desk and the stairs, there was a small passage to the right, leading to the three 'safe' cells. At the time of research, they contained five people in total, according to superintendent Adriana. People that were in there were only allowed out to work, but not to attend any activity, nor allowed on the courtyard, for safety reasons. On the left side of the security's desk, there was a passage into the central square with on the left side the canteen and on the right hand the only hospital within the walls of the State Penitentiary Complex (central medical post). Walking all the way straight, past the canteen and the hospital, one reached a gate. This gate provided the entrance to the courtyard, always closely watched by security. Once this gate was passed and before reaching the courtyard, there was another gate on the left hand side with behind it a class room, the library, an unoccupied space where the factory used to be and a nursery (at the time of research it was still under construction). On the right hand side there was a large room, where several activities took place like capoeira and the church mass. At the end of this hallway was the gate to the courtyard.

Behind this courtyard were eight galleries located, each containing eight cells (De Oliveira Almeida 2006:40)⁸. Psychologist Viviane said every cell had a shower and a toilet. Only the inmates with the financial resources had radio or television, according to Vitor (juridical department of the CPF). Psychologist Gilberto said every cell was build for two people, but most of them contained 2-5 women. Staff member Flavia said isolation did not exist at the CPF, but outside the courtyard (on the opposite side of the cell blocks) there were two 'punishment' cells. Women in punishment were not allowed to talk to anyone, including me, nor leave their cell for whatever reason. If the punishment cells were full, they stayed in their own cell, but the same rules applied. To me, the building looked old, dark, slummy and dirty. It often stank in several places. In the hall it smelled of sewage and outside, in the hall, the library, the class room and administration, it frequently stank of cat poop. Playing capoeira

⁷ Local news paper *A TARDE* (26-03-2010, pg 4)

⁸ An overview of a cellblock can be found in the annexes.

would turn your foot soles black and occasionally the corner of the room smelled like cat urine. Pretty much every morning you could find cat droppings on the foot paths and in the garden, and they would still be there at the end of the day. Some cats were obviously ill. It might not sound like it, but every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, the administration was cleaned by an inmate. There were prisoners cleaning the courtyard and the garden as well. They worked six days a week, except for Sunday.

Security consisted of both males and females, White and Black (and everything in between). The coordinator of security said every shift of security officers should have fifteen security officers, but the CPF only disposed of eight. Superintendent Adriana said one of the reasons for this understaffing is the little amount of vacancies the government offered. The government offered training to be a security guard, but there were prisons that were ten times as big as the CPF. After their vacancies were filled up, the amount of officers that was left for the CPF was always very small. Security officers worked for 24 hours and had the three following days off. Adriana said they got paid very little and therefore, many officers left quickly for better and higher income jobs. Officer João was an example of an officer that was appreciated by the prisoners, but that was planning on moving up the latter. Besides, the coordinator of security said not even all eight always made it to their shift. Because of a lack of affinity with the job, some did not show up because of sickness, a sick child, (university) classes, because they were on vacation, or they just came in late.

Overcrowding, as a result of the accelerated growth of the prison population, had a negative affect on the conditions in the CPF. There was a lack of uniforms, mattresses and sanitary products. Besides, the water pipes from the bathroom often contained clogs, which stopped the water from passing and therefore caused leakages (De Oliveira Almeida 2006:36). One of the consequences of the bad conditions was Adriana's order to remove all of the stoves because there was a fire risk, caused by weak electricity wiring. The prisoners said they were able to cook their own food, until that moment.

Vitor, from the juridical department of the CPF, said that every new prisoner was being kept in a 'safe' cell. There, she stayed for two to three days to be checked on any health, mental, or behavioural problems. Vitor stated this should be three months, but that never happened. According to the law, a 'processed' (she knows she has to serve, but not for how long yet) enters prison in closed regime. The type of crime then determines the regime the person enters thereafter. The regimes are as follows.

- 1) Closed: one hour of sun a day

2) Semi-open: they can spend their day on the courtyard between 08.00 am and 05.00 pm and after a certain percentage of their penalty, they can leave on parole.

3) Open: they are allowed to leave every day to go to work and only return to sleep.

In practice, every one of them was in semi-open regime at the CPF, he said. De Oliveira Almeida (2006:38) states that in 2005, as a result of the overpopulation, the prisoners of the CPF of different regimes were forced to occupy the same space.

One day, a transfer took place, switching seven of 'our' prisoners to a prison in the inland of Bahia. One female security officer explained that the prisoners leaving the CPF were women breaking a lot of rules, misbehaving badly. She said they transferred them to another place to see if they would behave better there under different discipline. The day of the transfer, I saw at least ten Military Police officers. According to this same security officer, that day's transfer went by reasonably quiet. To me, it looked turbulent, because I heard prisoners screaming, etc.

I already mentioned the possibility of parole. After serving a certain part of their sentence and behaving well, prisoners are being evaluated by a psychologist, Viviane said. This screening has two areas. The social one, where they examine their general (good) behaviour and if they have family outside of the prison. In the psychological one, they check their psychological and emotional state. The psychologist also talks to security, but it is a judge that eventually decides whether the prisoner is ready to leave prison on occasions like Eastern, or Christmas. It was obvious that parole was very much desired by many prisoners.

2.2 Facilities

The medical staff of the CPF consisted of one doctor, one nurse (also coordinator of the nurse department) that did the more practical things, one nurse trainee, two nurse technicians (they did the more administrative work, like registration of medication), one dentist, one dentist's assistant, one dental coordinator and a dietician⁹. The dentist worked at the CPF three days a week (Monday, Thursday and Friday). His work mainly consisted of cleaning and giving fluor treatment. He said the general state of the prisoners' teeth was improving while he was there. The medical post of the CPF was located on the left side of the gate leading to the courtyard. On the weekends there were only nurses at the central medical post (available to the whole penitentiary complex), but not at the little one within the female wing. Furthermore, there was

⁹ An overview of the basic administrative structure can be found in the annexes.

one psychiatrist, two psychologists, two social workers, one social worker trainee, a public defender and one defender trainee. Psychologist Viviane said that social service is the first to see a new inmate. They do an intake, asking her about her family history, how many years she has been to school and they check her emotional status. If the psychologists of the CPF cannot solve the problem, Viviane said they can send the prisoner to the HCT (Hospital Custodia e Tratamento). This is a mental hospital that only receives prisoners, both male and female. After spending some time at social service, the inmate sees a doctor that does a general medical exam.

In addition, there was an occasional collective education about subjects like std's, or tuberculosis. Apparently the latter one exists a lot more inside than outside prisons. Viviane also said guards sometimes notice strange behaviour in a prisoner and when they do, they take them to one of the psychologists. Besides, the medical staff was under the impression that most of the problems were emotional. According to them, after talking to the prisoner, the problem often appeared to be a head ache, or a depression. The staff was quite unanimous in their opinion on the medical attention the prisoners received. The dentist stated "it is wonderful for them", everything is present here, everything is free and the government pays for it all. Dietician Matheus stated the prisoners are lucky that there is so much care available inside the CPF, because many prisons do not provide this. Superintendent Adriana said the government spends about three times the minimum salary per prisoner. Everything is for free and they still complain, she said. According to the nurses, there were only few problems in relation to the amount of inmates, attributable to the fact that there was a doctor and a nurses present every day. And if it was something else and they could not solve it, they sent the prisoner to another place. The dentist and dentist coordinator stated that the equipment could be better, but it was sufficient to do their work, they stated.

2.3 Daily life, daily problems

2.3.1 *Space*

According to the regulations, the detained have from 08.00 am till 05.00 pm to move freely on the courtyard. A lack of security sometimes caused the courtyard to stay closed all day (and all of the inmates had to stay in their cells), or to allow them on the court yard in shifts. This came down to an 1.5-2.5 hours a day. If they had an appointment, this had to take place during these hours too.

2.3.2 Food and water

According to nutritionist Matheus, the women received about 1500-2000 Kcal and did not complain about the quantity of the food, only the quality. Flavour and variety of the food could be better. Contrary to what staff members stated, the prisoner's food did not appear to be the same as the staff's meals, nor did it look like a balanced diet. The inmates received a proportioned meal and Beatrice stated they could generally not ask for more. I observed how they all received a plastic container with a small amount of rice (about four spoons) and some meat (maybe two spoons). For half of the inmates, there was one crate containing about eight bananas. They were black, most of them missing half of the skin and there was an enormous amount of fruit flies circulating around them. The staff's lunch did contain bright yellow bananas that same day. According to security officer João, the problem was a lack of financial resources, a result of corruption. He said the kitchen sometimes did not receive money from the state in 3-6 months and the inmates are the first ones to suffer from any deficiency.

Marcela (assistant manager) stated that prisoners many times simply refuse medical attention or consuming the prison food. She, as well as superintendent Adriana did not seem to be well, or completely informed, most likely because of a lack of contact with the prisoners. These prisoners complained the coffee tasted like water, everything was raw, food did not have any flavour and that it was always the same. Some women do not eat the prison food and Alícia called it *porcaria* (filth). Before, they would prepare their own food (e.g. *feijão*), but lost this opportunity after the removal of the stoves. Some stated to have lost a lot of weight, said they were feeling weak and were not able to participate in activities, like capoeira, because they were short of energy as a result of a lack of food. Others feared gaining weight because they could not get enough exercise. Many complained that the food caused internal infections (administrative staff too complained the food was producing a lot of intestinal gasses) and that hardly any products entered prison because of tight restrictions. Adriana said the restrictions were to avoid the production of *cachaça* by prisoners. Matheus said prisoners do not have refrigerators in their cells. If they get sick of a product they brought in and did not take good care of, they can sue the prison. He said this had already happened in São Paulo and they wanted to prevent this at the CPF. According to the inmates, the girls in punishment did not receive breakfast, nor lunch. Laura said she really liked to bake cakes and pies. She had taken many courses and was selling cakes inside prison as well. After they had taken away the stoves, she could not do this anymore and was left without any means of passing the time, nor money, she said. Laura, Estefani and Beatrice believed that the prison

put something in the coffee to keep them calm, because the prison coffee made them sleepy. Despite the removal of the stoves, they were still able to make coffee and preferred drinking this. They put together two rocks, burned anything that was plastic (bottles, or cups) and called it *café federal* (federal coffee).

When there was an argument among the inmates it is usually caused by a lack of products or medical attention. In January they had each received four rolls of toilet paper, two bars of soap and one tube of toothpaste. Towards the end of March, the prisoners stated that nothing had been supplemented yet. When they ran out of toilet paper, they sometimes went straight from the toilet to the shower, Beatrice stated. Water was generally present between 08.00 and 08.30 am, and between 04.00 and 5.00 pm, she said. She also said that there were tabs they could not close and sometimes two to three days passed without the availability of a drop of water. One time there was no water for four to five day because something had burst, the system simply did not hold out. While this lasted, Sara said she did not even have water to drink, nor to take her medication. Leila complained they had to hold their faeces because the toilets would not flush. Personally, I have spend many days at the CPF when there was no water for a half to a full day. In addition, the prisoners stated that toilet paper and sanitary napkins did not get in and they sometimes needed to tear up clothes or other materials to put it in their panties as sanitary napkins. Vitória said she was lucky, because she never lacked anything in there. Her grandmother brought her money and food, and she made money herself by selling food in prison.

2.3.3 *Hygiene*

Local newspaper *Mais* was quite sceptical about the quality of the complex, writing the following things about the CPF. “Here it is full of rats. The sewage is open, and when it rains, an insupportable smell remains”. The electricity in most cells have ‘quick fixes’ because the wiring is old and rotten, and there are barely precautionary measures.¹⁰ The Public Ministry of Bahia stated that prison conditions were not dignified for detained and that the situation was most severe at the female penitentiary complex. Furthermore, the article claimed that structural problems, like mould, mud and deficient electricity installations were responsible for the fact that the inmates were not able to occupy their cells with dignity.¹¹

¹⁰ Local news paper *Mais* (25-03-2010, pg 21)

¹¹ Local news paper *Mais* (25-03-2010, pg 20)

Health care within the Brazilian prison system leaves much to be desired and unhealthy conditions are affecting incarcerated women. Overcrowding, insufficient ventilation and hygiene, inappropriate sanitation, dirt and the presence of rats and cockroaches are responsible for many contagious illnesses like tuberculosis (Hein de Campos & Feix 2008:104,106). I found that every inmate washed her own clothes and took care of her own cell. Beatrice said some inmates did not clean, they had gotten so used to their situation that they kept putting certain jobs off. Others complained their cellmates would eat and throw garbage on the floor. Many inmates complained about the amount of vermin (spiders, flies and cockroaches) on the courtyard and in their cells. Cats with diseases were all over the place and there was a rat sometimes, they said. The women complained the cats scratched themselves, leaving behind a lot of skin that got caught in the prisoner's clothes when they sat down. One time I sat on a chair at the administration and Adriana said "no don't sit on that one, that is where the cats sleep!" But prisoners sat there too, waiting for their appointment with someone of the administration.

Leila said she feared picking up an illness from them, like asthma. Sara complained about her white flip-flops getting very dirty and stated there was a goat in front of her cell. The gardener confirmed there were even two. Where 'safe' cells appeared to be cleaner than 'normal' ones, punishment cells had the reputation of being even dirtier. The prisoners said the walls were crumbling down, that they were fuller than normal cells, that there was no light, no water, electricity wire was hanging out in to the open and that they had to fix it not to receive a shock. After spending time in a punishment cell, Lenuta (a Romanian prisoner) said "I thought I was going to die in there". Besides, the prisoners complained they were not receiving detergent to clean the courtyard toilets. They said guests also used them and they were so very dirty sometimes that people used the courtyard itself as a toilet.

2.3.4 Health care

The General Health System (in Portuguese abbreviated SUS) is responsible for providing healthcare to all the Brazilian citizens, including those in prison (Hein de Campos & Feix 2008:104). Prisoners were generally unsatisfied about the medical care because doctors did not always have the time when they needed to see one and aspirins appeared to be the only medication that was there. Where Alícia said "the doctor is the best", Helena said "what doctor?" Helena claimed she lost her twin because of bad care in prison. Beatrice said they promise to take you to another place to do some sort of exam if they cannot do in prison, but

many times it never took place, because of a lack of transportation. Security officer Odete stated the escort was sometimes unable to leave because the amount of cars was too little for the amount of prisoners to be transported. Beatrice also said they gave her a sleep-inducing drug for her stomach ache, with as result that she was out all weekend against her will.

In U.S. correctional facilities, the amount of people with AIDS is fourteen times higher than in the U.S. population (Vigilante e.a 1999:410). The incidence of HIV-positive female convicts in Brazil is high too, but despite this, the system lacks the equipment to do specific exams, or to analyze these and many women in prison do not receive enough medication (Hein de Campos & Feix 2008:107). At the moment of research, there were five women with HIV at the CPF, none with AIDS. One nurse stated that these women did not receive any medication, just more medical attention. Their immune system was followed to see if it dropped, because this can worsen other illnesses. AIDS patients would receive medication.

Another law is supposed to insure female inmates of good conditions to maintain the relationship with their children. Prisons are obliged to dispose of a nursery, a day-care centre and a breast-feeding room. Unfortunately, research shows that Brazilian prisons often do not have adequate facilities (Hein de Campos & Feix 2008:103; Johnson & Zlotnick 2008:371). During my research, there was no nursery or the like present at the CPF, but there was a nursery down the street from the CPF, called 'Centro Nova Semente'. This one only housed children of prisoners. The children received food five times a day, they slept there, did their home work in the morning and went to school in the afternoon, or they spent their day in day care (which was part of this crèche).

Besides the lack of medical facilities and the first necessities of life, prisoners complained there were phones, but that they did not always work. Days could pass they said, without the prisoners being able to contact their family, not even on birthdays. Furthermore, there was no internet available to the prisoners and they said they were frustrated because there was nowhere to fix their clothes. Latifah (Malaysian woman) said her top was too big, but because she could not remake it, the strings of her top kept falling down, showing her brassiere and making her feel embarrassed. One day, Julieta was frustrated by a hole in her pants in her crutch without anywhere to fix it. Prisoners also complained about not having any money, about having only two sets of (ugly) clothes and because they miss their family. It made them sad not to be able to see them, help them, or check up on them. Knowing they caused sufferance to their family by being sent to prison, was another source of grief. Finally, another woman's mattress was paper-thin (about 5 cm), it was torn, had a hole and the slipcover was

very dirty and too small for the mattress. After shaking it out, the air was full of dust and fluff. Others said they feared falling out of bed, because the beds were so small.

2.3.5 Activities

School and literacy programs were offered by the prison itself. A private capoeira group was contracted by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights to teach at the CPF. Finally, a computer science course was offered by an NGO called 'Mais Social' and Isabel of the SPM visited prison every week to give a course on 'gender and race'. Every six hours of class were equal to one day of work and every three days of work (or 18 school hours) could diminish their penalty with one day. Prisoners generally enjoyed the courses and learning new stuff, and stated they could use their knowledge after being released. Alícia and Vitória stated that the CPF was a miserable place, but for the ones that really want to learn, it was possible. Though Alícia graded the courses 'excellent', much of what both women learned (like behaving and speaking well), had come from fellow prisoners, they said.

Attention has to be drawn to the fact that in general, the prisoners were often very loud, walked in and out of classes and they yelled from their seat to people outside the class room. Little was done to teach them not to do this. Sometimes the courses would be cancelled because of a lack of water to clean a class room, because of technical problems (missing batteries for a remote control, failing computers) and teachers would occasionally not show up because of sickness, or rain. Besides, the courses would sometimes end before the official date, because a teacher would stop showing up for example. In addition, many activities (capoeira, computer science, gender and race) were chronically delayed, as much as 20 minutes to half an hour. Mostly because of a lack of security to take the prisoners to the classroom. It is difficult to make up for this lost time. Take computer science for example, there was a bus reserved (with all of the equipment) for a certain amount of time. After this period the bus moves on to a different place. When an activity was cancelled, many times they failed to inform the prisoners on this. Finally, communication between the CPF and the NGOs arranging classes in prison did not always go very smoothly either. Isabel showed up for nothing once and Vitória said she did not receive a certificate form every course, because sometimes the NGO would fail to hand over the certificates to the prison.

Furthermore, the attendance was often disappointingly small. School teacher Layla complained that many did not show up. According to the teachers, taking classes should be compulsory, because by doing this, they would expend their chances in the futures. Besides, a

lack of space left the women without the opportunity to practice sports. There was a service of the church and a one hour visit from a Candomblé priest every week. Many times there were volunteers walking around with a bible, at the service of every inmate that needed them.

According to De Oliveira Almeida (2006:51), religion is another tool in order to achieve rehabilitation in the way that it can attribute to the development of new values.

In continuation, prisoners invariably complained about boredom. Many of these women said it drove them crazy doing nothing all day and that they cried a lot. The day of the distribution of the computer science and 'gender and race' certificates, the SPM and 'Mais Social' invited a female percussion band. These activities were unusual and rarely an initiative of the CPF, but rather of the NGOs, or a teacher. Psychologist Viviane stated that before, there were factories present inside the CPF where women were making paper bags, orthopaedic products and the CPF paid 75% of the minimum wage. Staff member Pedro said a new factory was going to be build. Helena said "I need to work", to be distracted from the state she was in. Work was important to the prisoners for the following reasons: it is a source of distraction from their problems and it makes them less receptive to fights in the evenings. Viviane stated it is also an important part of the rehabilitation programme in the sense that they learn to respect each other, to cooperate, to work together, to learn norms and values, and to work and live structured like in society. Sara said she really missed having a job and that a job will decrease the rebelliousness of the inmates, will diminish fights and will work distracting for them.

Therefore, I find it difficult to understand that some courses took place at the same time, forcing prisoners not only to choose (where they might have liked to take both), but also leaving them with a lot of unoccupied time. For the same reason, I find it strange that the inmates were not allowed to go to class when they were in punishment. According to Viviane, women simply need a lot of stuff and Isabel said money can increase the women's self-esteem because it enables them to by a small gesture, like a birthday gift for their children. Beatrice said she felt lucky that she had a job (as the librarian), because not many people there had any type of occupation. Staff member Ivete said that out of 106 inmates, only 28 wanted to work, or behaved well enough to be allowed to work. Beatrice said classes and work was also little because the diminution of the penalty it provided, was little. Raquel said the only advantage working had was that she could leave her cell for a while.

2.4 Social relations in prison

2.4.1 *Life in an institution*

“That is the institutional life”, psychologist Viviane said. When a new prisoner comes into the CPF for the first time, she spends a period adapting to her new situation, Viviane said. They cannot wear their normal clothes, everything is different, “it is a huge shock”. People in total institutions are isolated from the outside world, placing them in a hierarchy and creating the possibility to knead them and shape them as if they were an object (De Oliveira Almeida 2006:26). According to Hein de Campos & Feix (2008:86), black women in Brazil are already in a vulnerable position and this is only expected to aggravate while they are in prison. Brown & Ireland (2006:656) state that prisoners appear to be especially susceptible to severe psychological distress in the early stage of incarceration. Disturbing situations that prisoners

run into are isolation, boredom, harassment, intimidation and victimization from physical, and sexual assault. Prisoners often feel like they have no control over their situation, they cannot escape these factors that are stressing them out, and very often lack emotional and social support. Psychologist Viviane said that many of the women get in to a depression, suffer from insomnia and anxiety. They are often irritated quickly, especially when they have to go to their cells and their cell door is being locked. 5.00 pm is therefore a very difficult time for them. They often feel hatred towards the guards and become very rebellious, aggressive, scream, and yell at the guards. Helena said that “prisons are build for men”.

2.4.2 *Mutual relationships among prisoners*

De Oliveira Almeida (2006:26-27) states that time is controlled by rigid schedules that organize their activities. The discipline is achieved by an intense and constant surveillance. This surveillance becomes part of the inmates who start surveying themselves in order to protect themselves. Psychologist Viviane stated that sometimes, the prisoners can be restless. When they are, they generally have more problems with the other women. The prisoners stated they were not happy about living with people with blood diseases, elderly people and pregnant women. Viviane said many women come from the street and are not used to take other people into account. I noticed that the prisoners were annoyed by other inmates making a lot of noise, or smoking. They seemed to be edge and could squabble over the smallest

things. Beatrice stated she is a very anxious person. When she entered she was shocked, scared to death by the look of angry, aggressive and nervous women. She feared she was going to end up just like them. Besides, several prisoners felt like they were being discriminated by other prisoners, based on ethnicity/skin colour, nationality, or because they came from a different state. Non-Bahians, or lighter skinned prisoners felt viewed as less Brazilian and were even called *gringa* (foreigner). Beatrice felt discriminated for being from a different state and for being light skinned. Olivia stated that as a foreigner, you have money in the eyes of some Brazilian prisoners. Latifah said Brazilian prisoners discriminated her, except for when they needed something from here. When she went up to the administration to talk about her process, than they knew exactly where to find her, she said. Latifah stated they called her *vagabunda* (tramp) and said she felt misunderstood as a Muslim. They associate Islam with terrorism and stated prisoners said: “Oh look at that Muslim woman smoking”. Another prisoner said she stopped attending the Candomblé mass to avoid discrimination.

2.4.3 Prisoners and their relation to the staff

Bernstein (1986:235) states there are two types of restriction in an institution. One of them is the *positional restriction*, which has to do with the subordinated position the inmates have in relation to the prison staff. The second restriction is the *personal restriction*. The prisoners might feel like a ‘by-product’ in stead of a full, valuable member, due to denial of privacy, loss of control over possessions and not being able to arrange one’s own time, the way they might like to (Bernstein 1986:235). Security officers at the CPF were a very important link in the lives of the prisoners. Security officer João stated he is a law obeying citizen and that the law does not say he can beat prisoners or treat them inhumanly. He thinks prisoners should be punished for what they have done, but in a human way. A piece by the Public Ministry of Bahia, differentiated legal from extra legal punishment. The legal punishment is the long period of time one is sentenced to prison. The extra legal punishment includes humiliation of the prisoner and her family, physical torture, homicide by annihilation groups, or a ‘prison colleague’ (de Sena Soares Filho 2008:28). CPF prisoners stated that ‘bad’ security officers humiliate prisoners, make life even harder for them than it already is by yelling at them, ignoring their requests, making a mess out of their cells and ruining their possessions.

The majority of the inmates said they felt like they were being treated like animals, not humans. Leila said “we are imprisoned, but we are human”. Another one said “how should we

feel like a human, when everyone else here treat us like animals?” To describe their situation, the prisoners used terms like ‘suffering humiliations’, a ‘dog’s life’ and a ‘sub humanly’ situation. A quote from one of the girls was: “I want my rights, I am suffering in prison”. They wished the place was cleaner, that there were no cats, that they had a good lawyer, that the food was better, that they could work and go back to the old superintendent, because she would let more things into the prison. They said they wanted to be respected as a person and as a woman. Leila said some employees were prejudiced, did not value them enough because they were ‘just’ prisoners and therefore did not care if they got what they needed. Besides, they also felt like the right to know what was going on and why was undermined. Adriana said that they had to read incoming letters to know if the prisoners were not planning something bad like an invasion, or to check if there was not a whole lot of money entering through the mail. But the administrative staff read (love) letters to prisoners and even laughed and passed them around. This goes beyond the purpose of the check and is an invasion of one’s privacy.

Furthermore, they stated the chances of a good treatment are better when the inmate is lighter skinned, does not have a criminal record, is communicative and knows her rights. Many women are illiterate and do not know their rights, Sara stated. Security officers can be racist, she said too. Several prisoners said that security can make their lives harder by prohibiting stuff, taking things away from them, chasing them to catch them doing something wrong, or by giving them a condescending treatment. They said security does this by making them take of their jewellery when they leave with an escort, or swear at them. According to Sara, especially the Military Police is bad, they are very prejudiced when it comes to prisoners. She said one police officer of the escort that took her to the hospital stated he needed an injection to be able to live with inmates, like they were some sort of disease. Prisoners said security can be ignorant, that they lack communication skills and often yell at them. Estefani, Laura, Beatrice and Vitória said that when they are punished for something, they risk *corta da visita* (shortage of visitors), as long as one month, or they will extend your jail time. The prisoners stated that women in punishment cells stayed there for at least 10 days. Computer science teacher Paula said she thought it was one day and when she said this to one of the female guards, this woman reacted by saying “one day? That is no punishment! Nobody learns from one day!”

According to Beatrice (among others), security tries to stop articles from coming into prison. She also said there was a girl in punishment that was menstruating and they would not let sanitary napkins in there, nor let her wash herself. Furthermore, Beatrice claimed that

direction and security provoke bad behaviour. Other women stated that security throws out their food sometimes, turns their cells upside down and sometimes removes or replaces stuff so it falls and breaks. Another prisoner said “the *lei Maria da Penha* does not exist in prison”. She said some people told her prison is better than the police station, but she said she experienced it as a lot better than the CPF. Sara said if they complain about a security officer, they will get back at you. She said she thinks they treat them bad too because they are embittered by their job. I feel like many staff members talk in quite a negative tone about the prisoners. Some girls told Paula that Adriana tells the inmates not to talk about bad things, or they are being punished.

In November 2009, this new superintendent, Adriana, arrived. Sara was the only prisoner speaking positively, with nothing but praise about Adriana and the sub manager. But most inmates had a less positive statement. Latifah said that with Adriana, things went from bad to worse. Helena said “every day is worse” and Latifah said there are two cells out of use. They are just sitting there she said, under the guise of renovation while other cells have 3 or 4 people in them. Latifah, as well as others, said that Adriana is moving prisoners from one cell to another, against their own will. Before, punishment would mean 3-4 days in punishment and hardly anyone was in there. With Adriana it means 10 days, Latifah stated. She also mentioned that the security used to sit on chairs on the courtyard, now they only patrol on the enclosure walls. Little by little, Adriana creates more rules and takes all nice things away from them, they said. Leila said here it is “promises, promises, but nothing ever happens”. Latifah said that the inmates used to be like family with the staff in the episode of the previous superintendent. Now, they are enemies. Many inmates complained that Adriana never comes down to talk to them, or hug them. Latifah stated she liked the other one better than Adriana because she did not look at them like prisoners. Many thought of Adriana as selfish, Latifah called her ‘this motherfucker’ and others named her ‘brutal’ and ‘inhuman’. Adriana herself said she did not enter the courtyard because she has a police background and the prisoners do not like the police.

In June there is a festival in Bahia, called São João and according to Latifah, the previous superintendent used to organize the same festivals and other parties (like national holidays) for them. This would include cakes, drinks and music and she would let the prisoners listen to music on the courtyard on Saturdays and Sundays, so they could dance. I personally observed that there were no extra activities for the prisoners on the international women’s day. For the staff on the other hand, there was a big special lunch and a gift game organized. In continuation, Latifah said the previous superintendent would let them sew nice figures on

their clothes or change the model and that they were allowed to put up posters on the wall. Adriana would not, she said. Latifah stated that she had a picture of her dead mother in her cell, but that Adriana took that away without saying why. Vitória said she experienced superintendent Adriana too and said she was *ruim* (ugly/evil), out of ignorance. Vitória said she found Adriana very rude to them, always raised her voice whenever she spoke to her, or her fellow prisoners. Adriana said that she knows the inmates find her *ruim*, but that she did not mind. She said she behaves responsible and they can think about her what they would like. Beatrice, by contrast, said that “the direction thinks they are in control, but the ones giving the orders are here” and she pointed to the courtyard. Other prisoners said they wanted to talk to people outside, preferable a judge, about their conditions. They asked me to help them too several times. One literally said “help us, for the love of God, please!”. Another interesting fact coming from a public defender in training, is that once a suspect is convicted, they lose their right to vote while they serve their time. That is why these women are not an interesting group for politicians.

2.4.4 Separation from family, friends

Being separated from family and children can be described as the main causal factor for depression (Keaveny & Zauszniewski 1999:75-76). Many families depend on the incarcerated women in their survival and they feel really bad they cannot be there with them to help. Psychologist Viviane stated the majority of the prisoners is a mother, they miss their children and sometimes do not know how their child is doing, or where it is. This insecurity regarding her child can destroy a woman's inner emotions and make her emotionally instable. According to Viviane, the most common emotional disorders at CPF are depression and instability between depression and restlessness. In my experience, children were generally living with family, but leaving them behind affected the prisoners strongly. Alícia said the toughest moment in the CPF was when she had to give away her six months old baby girl that was born in prison. “The world ended”, she said. Helena said she had no contact with any of her children. Prisoners said they wanted to talk to their families more often and return to their families to take care of them. Sara said her mother suffered a lot by the fact that she was in prison. The fact that she had to look at her through bars and had to leave her behind every time she left and went home. Olivia said she slid back into a depression every now and then, usually because of separation from her family. Then, foreigners are ‘fortunate’ they can receive one ten-minute phone call every week on Thursday morning. They were not allowed

to make phone calls. The down side is the sometimes bad connection with the other country and Olivia said she often had to battle to use the phone. Brazilian women did not have the right to receive any phone calls. There was a public phone at their disposal on the court yard and one at the entrance of it. They could make phone calls at their own expense. Many inmates did not have the money for this though. In case of an emergency, an inmates got a two minute phone call to their family.

2.4.5 Visitors

There are laws that ensure prisoners of a visit from a spouse, companion, friend, or relative on certain days. The correctional facilities are in no way allowed to limit the rights to these visits, but practice shows that a lot of the prisons do restrict women in various ways, thereby violating their rights (Hein de Campos & Feix 2008:100-102).

At the CPF, visiting days were Wednesday and Saturday, starting at 9.00 am and finishing at 3.00 pm. There was a special visiting room for children up until twelve years old. They were not allowed to enter the courtyard. Children of twelve years and over, and adults did visit their relatives on the courtyard. Visitors were allowed to bring three bags of products and R\$50,00 per visitor, two times a week. Inmates were only allowed to receive visits from family, as many as two adults and three minors. People that did not have any family were allowed to receive a friend. There were certain dress codes imposed on the visitors and they had to be in the possession of a permit to enter prison. Applying for one took eight days and they checked if the visitor did not have a criminal record. People with a criminal record, or people that did not have this permit did not enter. In addition, every visitor had to strip. They checked all of their clothes (mainly for drugs and cell phones), their hair (people with a lot of hair, especially afro hair, can hide stuff in there) and every bodily entrance was being opened and checked (mouth, vagina and anus). Gil (administrative assistant) said that any request for an intimate visit will be granted.

Female inmates at CPF were allowed to receive one intimate visit a month, from 9.00 am till 04.00 pm. There were four kitchenettes (including sanitary facilities, a bed made of cement with a mattress, a toilet and washbasin), located next to the courtyard. If they wanted food, television, or music, the prisoner needed to bring those things from her cell. The partner was not allowed to bring anything into the intimate visit. The intimate visitor needed the same permit, but the inmate could also oblige the visitor to take medical tests. If the test showed that one of the two has HIV, they were forced to tell the other and talk to the person under the

watchful eye of social service. When a woman visited her husband at the 'Complexo Penitenciário Lemos de Brito' (PLB), she would receive the same screening as any guest that came into the CPF. Women that wanted an intimate visit were obliged to take birth control. It was not allowed to become pregnant while being at CPF. Therefore, they received an injection on the last day of their period, but some women cheated and did get pregnant.

Many prisoners did not receive visitors because their families lived too far away, they had no money to pay for the trip, or they could not take time off work. Most said they would still not receive them if they could. It came across as if they were ashamed of themselves, on the one hand and to spare their family the humiliation of the entrance check, on the other. Beatrice said she did not like to receive visitors because when she did, all of those without stayed with desire. Vitória's cousin, Angela, said visiting Vitória was very humiliating, because she had to go completely naked and when she said that she was a virgin (at 19 years old), they laughed at her. According to Angela, the CPF would let them wait until 10.00 to see their relative and they would only have 2-2.5 hours with Vitória. Besides, anything they wanted to bring in was chopped up to check, she complained. Alícia said visits were well organised and that she got to spend a lot of time with her visitors. Leila stated that she had been in the CPF for four months already and she still did not have an intimate visit. Nobody furthermore gave her an explanation why it was delaying so much. She said it hurt her and said "I do not have a heart of steel". A harsh consequence of the absence of visitors is that it generally also caused a lack of products, like phone cards, with as a result that prisoners could not contact their lawyer, or their family.

2.4.6 *Self-esteem and depression*

Literature has showed that a large number of female prisoners uses anti-depressive drugs (Hein de Campos & Feix 2008:108). A female security officer at the CPF said that in popular speech these medicines are called *remedio de doido* (crazy people's medicine). Psychologist Gilberto said that about 40% takes these. They are prescribed by a psychiatrist, but intake is not supervised and prisoners do not know when they should. They might take them irregularly, or several (2-3) at the same time. They even save them up in order to sell them. When they take too many at once, it can result in violence. But what is creating this urge for medication? The prisoners state there is nothing there, they have nothing to do, the cells are in bad shape and the place needs renovation. They also felt used and exploited. Prisoners said the administrative staff knows where to find them if they need them, but when they, the

prisoners, are in need, there is no time. Goffman (De Oliveira Almeida 2006:29) states that in prison, privacy is absent, because ones cell can be invaded at any time. People have no autonomy, are not the ones making the decisions about their own lives, which can make an inmate feel infantile. The prisoners of the CPF stated to have the feeling of being left in the dark. They said they missed assistance from the administration and security, they did not know what the progress of their trial was, if the remission of their penalty was taken into consideration, when they could get out, or when they would have the opportunity to talk to their family. Alícia said people around her left and she sometimes felt like she would never be free again. All of this was making them feel abandoned, eating their hearts away, getting them depressed and *choroza* (weepy). According to 'gender and race' teacher Isabel, it was psychological, their mental state was even causing fever (chill).

All of these specificities created strong psychological tensions that can cause depression, anxiety, insomnia and agitation (De Oliveira Almeida 2006:30). Great amounts of weight loss and captivity symptoms can be signs of a depressive disorder and need to be carefully monitored (Engdahl e.a. 1990:65). In the CPF, Alícia said she always had a headache caused by stress. Many more women did not feel good about themselves. They experience physical changes they did not experience before going to prison. Olivia's severe depression cost her 18-20 kilos. She did not want to eat, drink and could not sleep. Besides, she had several health problems, but what was worrying her most was her declining vision. Latifah also said she went from 99 to 76 kilos and said she was never sick in Malaysia. She stated to have obtained hepatitis B and a skin problem in prison. She also stated to be a lot less patient in the CPF and making her wear short sleeves, showing a lot of her affected skin, made her feel embarrassed.

2.4.7 Drugs

A large group of prisoners at the CPF smoked. Beatrice's motivation to smoke was because it works relaxing. Leila admitted to smoking cigarettes and marihuana. Crack she called 'the devil'. Tobacco and marihuana appeared to be used by the prisoners mainly in an attempt to be relieved from existing problems. The presence of hard drugs, on the other hand, has been difficult to determine. According to the inmates there was a lot of drugs at the CPF. Beatrice said there were 4-5 inmates selling drugs in there. Adriana stated Helena sent people to bring her drugs that she sold inside prison. Helena herself, said she did not use drugs. According to Adilson (security officer), most drugs comes from the male departments. Some female prisoners of the CPF visit their men at the PLB, or they go as a prostitute and come back with

cocaine in their anal system. At the CPF they have no equipment to detect drugs, which makes this job very difficult. Apparently, the courtyard contained many good places to hide these drugs and cell phones. Vitória even said they used the cats to hide these products. According to Alícia, the presence of drugs had decreased since Adriana's presence. Because of her stronger disciplines, people feared punishment.

Hein de Campos & Feix (2008:108) state that in the last couple of years, there has been a strong increase in the use of crack by female inmates. According to them, this is a younger population that is more disturbed and that has greater difficulties within their social relations. That many of these women were insecure and troubled was very obvious during one 'gender and race' class. We played the 'mirror game' and every one had to look inside a box with a mirror on the bottom and tell the rest what they saw. Julieta looked a couple of times and only said "me" (Eu). After sitting down she said "I could not see myself". Teacher Isabel explained that Julieta was lost, could not find herself. Raquel said "I see a hurt and wounded person".

Beatrice said drugs makes the users relaxed, but only for a little while. After it has worn off, they can become aggressive, nervous, violent, or start crying. Hunter (1994:220) argues that 62% of inmates of an American Federal Prison were regular drug users themselves at the time of arrest, but only a small percentage (11%) was receiving treatment in prison and many of these treatment programs even turned out to be ineffective. Rossi Menezes & Ratto (2004:216) state that in developing countries, like Brazil, the government fails to support addicted and mentally ill people. A nurse of the CPF said that when a woman comes into the CPF addicted, the medical staff generally does nothing, except for when they have a medical problem resulting from their addiction. Addicted prisoners often show behavioural difficulties caused by the detoxification symptoms. In this case, security officers sometimes take action.

2.4.8 Violence

"Violence is an integral part of prison life" says Blitz, e.a. (2008:385). This violence sometimes results in homicide, but generally means inmate-on-inmate physical attacking (Ibid:385). Sara said she had been attacked with boiling hot coffee by a fellow prisoner, because she had discovered the other woman was doing drugs. Beatrice stated that, after their arrest, her 'friend' forced her to say that the cocaine was hers. Beatrice said she refused and ten days later her mother called to tell her that her son had been assassinated, stabbed seven times. By the time his body was discovered he had already been dead for a week and was in

the process of decomposition, she said. Beatrice could barely believe that he was dead, because she had not seen him yet. She said a fellow prisoner at the CPF ordered for his death and Beatrice claimed to know who. Within this context, Beatrice stated that pictures could form a risk for the people in them, because this facilitates identification of them by other people that might try to hurt them.

In addition, Adriana said it is not smart to bring in any (birthday) gifts, because there is a big chance they might be stolen by other inmates. Anything received from the administration should not be told to any other inmates either. They might think the receiver 'plays with the police', meaning that she exchanges information about other prisoners in return for gifts. It would put her in (life) danger, assistant manager Marcela said. There were gossips circulating that the prisoners who were cleaning the administration exchanged information with the direction. Finally, prisoners of the CPF say the 'bad' security officers even used physical violence sometimes. They claimed to be scared to complain about guards, or to point one out that made a mistake (even when requested by the administration), out of fear the guard would get back at them.

2.4.9 Future expectations

People with a criminal record repeatedly go back and forth between prison and society, but remain within the prison system for many years, "like they are condemned to stay in prison eternally" (Hein de Campos & Feix 2008:107). Santoro Tomlin (1995:135) states Brazil has to maintain focussing on rehabilitation and the quality of life in prison, because they do not sentence for more than 30 years in prison for any crime, nor do they impose the death penalty and thus, most of the inmates will return to society at one point. Beatrice said that because all women that committed different crimes are together they obtain 'wrong' knowledge from each other. Some do not use this information, because it is not what they want for themselves. But many of these women have nothing to lose and they will use it, she stated. Security officer Adilson said many of these women do not even have a place to stay or a job to earn money. In a situation like this, traffickers are generally the first ones to come by and so they keep coming back to prison. Beatrice said it is either "prison or death". Many prisoners of the CPF feared they would have difficulty finding a job because no one would want to hire them because of their criminal record. The assumed employers might think they will steal from them, or something. Ex-prisoner Vitória mentioned that the state provides

rehabilitation, but it is very slow and there are very few vacancies. Social worker Yara said that many return to stealing from stores after release, mainly because of a drug addiction.

The prisoners also stated that generally, the people of Salvador are very prejudiced about (ex) prisoners. Vitor, from the judiciary department literally said: “here we have the living dead, that society does not accept”. The government does not want to spend money on ‘society’s trash’. According to nutritionist Matheus the state is not very generous when it comes to prisoners. They have a very bad image. The absence of an emergency plan (whenever there is a fire or the like) is a clear illustration of this. Furthermore, many people told me to be very careful inside the CPF, because most women would want something from me. Two women that I spoke to said that the prisoners of the CPF are criminals, that it was their own choice and they therefore did not deserve to be treated well, nor live comfortably, but had to suffer. Diego (host father) did not think the inmates had the right to be informed about occurrences. He said “Why do they have to know? They are there all day without anything to do, anywhere to go”. I also noticed I had gotten prejudiced from listening to these stories, only within a couple of weeks. I was therefore surprised to see many pretty, friendly prisoners. Sara said she found it very humiliating to enter a public place like a hospital in prison clothes and handcuffed. People all stare at you then, she said. Helena said she felt discriminated for having committed a crime, both inside and outside prison. They say “look at that female trafficker”. Sometimes women are even abandoned when they go to prison. Belen, Alícia and Julieta stated several family members had abandoned them out of shame they were in prison. Others had decided not to tell their family they were in prison.

Prisoners stated that people look at ex-prisoners as ‘the woman that was in jail’, regardless of what you were in for. They stated the public uses terms like ‘marginal’ and ‘pollution of society’ for ex-prisoners. According to Raquel, her family would be the only ones that would not be prejudiced. She feared the police would be following her and that people would be violent towards her. Latifah was scared to enter the Brazilian society, because all she saw on television was murder and a lot of ex-prisoners get killed too, she said. She also said she did not have a future in Malaysia “because of this thing here”. She still had a little hope left to be a singer in the future and wished for blessings from friends “for me to be who I am”. Sara said she would have her jobs in the family business back and stated nothing was impossible, even for them. Others would go back to braiding hair, manicuring, or street vending, but they all said these professions generally earn little money. Sara wanted to burn everything she used in prison to leave this part behind and start fresh. Some stated they had helped themselves by

going back to school, to have a better position in the job market and had improved their behaviour. Leila and Alícia said they wanted to be united with their husbands, because they would need each other to survive.

When I was visiting ex-prisoner Vitória, she was going to school. She said she did not feel like society was prejudiced against ex-prisoners. She said “my name is clean” and “I am not mixing with the wrong people anymore, nor using drugs or robbing people”. But practice showed a different truth. Vitória said she was never allowed to leave home much, because every time she was a little late her grandmother would be thinking she was doing ‘wrong stuff’. Telling this and other things, Vitória raised her voice, obviously upset that she was clean, but they all kept looking at her like a junky. Finally, Vitória got into a fight with her grandmother, lost control and hit her. After the incident, her grandmother stated “for me, she does not exist anymore”. So, Vitória had bettered her life, but still had issues and difficulty dealing with her past and present.

2.5 Conclusion

A lot needs to be improved before the building of the CPF is suitable to be used as accommodation. At the time of research, a lot was in a bad shape and, partly as a result of this, not all of the human rights were being respected. Living with so many other women creates a lot of tensions and even dangers for the prisoners. Furthermore, though inmates might exaggerate things sometimes, it can be said with reasonable certainty that the quantity as well as the quality of the food can, and should be improved. A lot can also be improved about the organization of education and other activities. Visits at the CPF came across as organized, but the entrance check was a massive invasion on one’s privacy and was partly to blame for the fact that only few inmates received visitors. Others simply did not have family, or they stayed away out of shame, or because they lived too far away. The ones receiving visitors were generally satisfied, but the organization did seem a little negligent in granting all of the requests. When it came to treatment by security officers, it depended largely on the person. In short, ‘bad’ security officers and other inmates could make life very uncomfortable. In addition, it looked as if cigarettes and drugs were present and taken mostly in order to relax. Some prisoners stated that the amount of drugs had decreased over time. Besides, there were a lot of preconceptions concerning prisoners and therefore punishment did not seem to end after being discharged from prison. In other words, female prisoners are sketched negatively and to many people, they deserve to suffer. Unfortunately, because of continuing

high levels of stress, physical and mental problems, a bad living standard, discrimination, a lack of rehabilitation and a prejudiced look on ex-prisoners by society, prisoners appeared to deteriorate at the CPF and they were even at risk of becoming an organized criminal. What this did to the women's emotional state and how they dealt with this is discussed in the next chapter on coping strategies.

3. Coping strategies

As we have seen, all women entering prison have their own scale of experiences and problems. Many come from broken families, have a history of violence and enjoyed little education. Many of the women had children at a young age and if they had a job it was generally in the informal section, providing them with little money to survive. Discrimination based on ethnicity and gender is all around in Salvador, but difficult to recognize, because it is very subjective. Alcohol and drugs are quite common in the city of Salvador and within some of the prisoner's families. Pretty much all of the prisoners had suffered the loss of loved ones.

Incarceration then, brings along a whole new range of stressors for women including social isolation, sadness over the effects of substance use disorder and incarceration on their relationships with their children, boredom, harassment, intimidation, and victimization from physical and sexual assault. Prisoners often feel like they have no control over their situation, they can not escape these factors that are stressing them out, and very often lack emotional and social support (Brown & Ireland 2006:656; Johnson & Zlotnick 2008:375). According to McKay e.a. (cited in Mohino e.a. 2004:42), prisoners are believed to experience higher amounts of stress, due to a loss of contact with the outside world. Keaveny & Zauszniewski (1999:87) state that imprisoned women often experience feelings of loss, uselessness and powerlessness. But how do the prisoners deal with this? Especially, knowing they often also lack the social skills and verbal communication to express their feelings (Finlay & Jones 2000:569). What is coping actually and how do the women at the CPF use it to deal with their pre-prison problems and the ones they encountered inside prison? The first section of this chapter will give a definition of coping, directly followed by types of coping, as determined in the literature. Examples of prisoners will illustrate the different strategies and the last part of this chapter contains information on the way the prisoners' life histories influence their coping abilities inside prison.

One definition of 'coping', as defined by Lazarus & Folkman (cited in Frazier & Burnett 1991:633) is "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person". Coping is not an instinctive reaction, but a conscious action, asking for alternatively use of cognitive, social and behavioural skills. When someone is confronted with a stressful situation, this person has two options. The first one is called *problem-focused coping*, or *approach coping*. This implies acting directly on the situation. In other words, it is an attempt

to solve the problem. The other one is called *emotion-focused coping*, or *avoidance coping*. This entails controlling the emotions which the event has evoked (Mohino e.a. 2004:41-42). Problem-focused coping is believed to be more effective when the source of the problem is changeable and emotion-focused coping is more affective when the situation is difficult, or impossible to change (Ibid:48). In research by Frazier & Burnett (1991:633) on coping strategies used by rape victims, two sub-categories for both approach and avoidance coping were identified. Approach coping can be subdivided into ‘explanation’ and ‘dramatization’. Explanation means that someone tries to make up a reason why something happened (e.g. cognitive: trying to rethink the situation, looking up information). Dramatization stands for a constant urge to talk about the incident (e.g. nervous/anxious, snapping at people). Avoidance coping can be subdivided into ‘minimization’, meaning the person decreases the aspects of the event, and ‘suppression’, which means that someone abandons an event from his or her memory (e.g. by using drugs).

The approach and avoidance classifications, I want to apply to three categories to structure this chapter, namely individual, collective and institutional coping. Individual approach coping can stand for assertive women that take responsibility for their own actions, women that search for information and help in case they need it, and women that are motivated to study and work, in order to improve their life circumstances. Individual avoidance coping can signify that women deny what happened to them, or literally avoid areas, people, or difficult situations. Doing drugs to forget can be one avoidance strategy as well. Collective approach coping can mean that women look up each other for support or to achieve a collective goal (e.g. expressing discontent). Collective avoidance coping can mean that women negatively influence others, to do drugs for example, or avoid other women. Institutional approach coping can consist of providing projects in relation to education, work, personal development and hobbies. Institutional avoidance is the case when an institution lacks these facilities, or negatively influences the women’s coping.

3.1 Individual coping strategies

3.1.1 *Individual approach coping*

Numerous prisoners of the CPF decided to approach life’s obstacles, in stead of burying their heads in the sand. Olivia, for example, said that being in prison had given her a lot of time to

think and that when she came home, she wanted to fight even more for a better life. What was bad she wanted to improve and what was already good, she wanted to make even better. Latifah said she prayed for strength. “I want to see tomorrow”, she said. She stated she wanted to see her family and really needed both her family and friends to be able to start anew for herself, and for somebody else. Because Raquel was in isolation, she could not attend the holy mass, but before she used to go every week. She said God was important to her because it gave her faith that everything was going to be alright, that there is a solution. Whenever she felt sad, she came to talk to the psychologist. When Leila felt bad she attended the mass too, “speaking to God is always good”, she said. The South-African girl wanted to spend as much time studying and participating in activities to avoid being bored in her cell, sleep all the time and put on weight. To relax, Olivia liked to read, the bible and books by Paulo Coelho. She liked his books a lot because they contain a lot of beautiful things like faith. She also liked to walk up and down the courtyard. She still loved to work and learn she said, despite her back pains, because these activities bring distraction and relaxation.

Sara said reading the bible especially helped, in particular psalm 40, that says you have to have patience. But Sara said she could not even get any new books, or magazines from the library, because she was in ‘safety’. She said she prayed to God a lot, to resolve things for her. She stated she really needed to speak to a church volunteer every now and then whenever her head was spinning. She made a movement with her hand like something was bashing inside her head. Many prisoners said they would not know how to make it through without their family’s support, said they would go crazy. Beatrice said knowing that her family and friends were waiting was very important to her. Knowing they believed her and having a place to go after release gave her strength to behave and stay well inside prison, she said. According to her, many inmates had no one to return to. They came from the streets, were abandoned when they went to jail, or have a husband that was also in jail.

Teacher Layla said that generally, many prisoners do not show up for class, saying they have a head ache, or taken medication, because she could not sleep. To me, this looks like the prisoners are desperately trying to exercise some control over their own lives. These voluntary activities appear to be one of the few situations this is actually possible. Referring back to Frazier & Burnett’s (1991) dramatization, the prisoners especially used this to express their feelings of dissatisfaction about the prison situation. Not one day went by without at least one woman complaining about the lack of basic products, the prison complex and its facilities, lack of work and other activities, or to complain about the superintendent and the administration.

Furthermore, Frazier and Burnett (1991:637) state that finding positive meaning was a used coping strategy among the rape victims of their research. I saw the same thing happening at the CPF. Beatrice stated to believe everything happens for a reason. She felt she was in there to learn and change. During computer science she wrote the following thing:

“Wanting... and not always power, but to have dreams. There lies the only thing that gives us peace, because we know that no matter how long we have to wait, they can come true if we have the courage to continue. Every day, I seek to understand better what is happening to me. Not blaming the people around me for everything that I have been through, because every single day I have tried to understand the motives to be her and believing that nothing is by chance. I succeed, because I am a winner”.

Beatrice thought that God put her there for a reason, to get to know all of these different women. She also said to have learned to be patient. Furthermore, despite her son's death, Beatrice did not want to use violence against violence. That was not the path she wanted for herself. She said everyone has a choice and she wanted to learn how to deal with her own problems. Using violence was not going to bring her son back. To be able to deal with problems, it is important to talk, she said. But in the CPF she could not talk to anyone. She said she cried a lot, argued with God inside her head so nobody could hear it and wrote many things down. The South-African girl said she liked capoeira but was finding it difficult. That was no problem to her, she said, because she liked to develop herself. She wanted to show the people at home what Brazil is like and show them she had at least learned a different language and culture there. She want to get out of the CPF, a better person, she stated.

As we have seen in chapter three, there has been evidence that drugs is being used by the female prisoners. Drug use can create difficulties for the prisoner inside prison and decrease the prisoner's possibilities after release back into society. Reed (2009:326), who did a research on incarcerated women in Recife, Brazil discovered that depression was a lot more common among female inmates using drugs than among non-users. In prison, Vitória said she realized that “drugs means either death or prison”. The girls at CPF convinced Vitória it was going to be her death and that she had to stop doing drugs if she wanted to live. Her family was also very supportive. They were the reason she wanted to stay clean and do well. She stated she did not want to hurt her grandmother any more then she had already done. But she said that the only one making her stay clean, was herself. She was lucky to have supportive

family and friends (inside and outside prison), because she did not go to a clinic, nor received any medication, or professional help inside prison.

These are all reasonably accepted methods, but there are less common methods too. Superintendent Adriana told me that one of the prisoners is her informant inside prison. The two talked about other inmates, drugs and lesbian relationships inside prison. Adriana also showed her a few pieces of paper with love letters, names and phone numbers on them. When I asked Adriana if this 'job' was not putting the woman in danger, she said no, she is what they call *cabeça cara* ('expensive head'). Adriana stated the prisoner's husband had a lot of money and a large network, so the first one to harm his wife would be in big trouble. Sykes (1958:xix) defines this informant as a 'rat', or 'squealer'. This individual is "pursuing his own interests at the expense of his fellow prisoners" (Ibid:89).

3.1.2 Individual avoidance coping

Goffman (cited in De Oliveira Almeida 2006:29) states that in the outside world, people have privacy, personal possessions and can keep themselves distanced from unknown things and contagious things, like illnesses. In prison, this is not so easy. According to Beatrice, prisoners are very prejudiced when it comes to diseases. She said the girls train their hearing to spy on others while they are visiting a doctor. This is how the other ones find out if one is sick. Beatrice stated there was a girl with gonorrhoea one time and that everyone was so scared to sit on a chair after her. She said there was one with AIDS before too and everyone was avoiding her. They would not lend her anything and they were scared to touch her out of fear they would catch the disease.

Diseases are only one reason to avoid contact with fellow prisoners, but there can be many more. Alícia stated that Adriana punishes "the whole world". She stated to have lost her 'normal' and her intimate visit because a class mate stole something from the class room. The thief did not want to admit, so the whole class was punished, Alícia said. To avoid this in the future, she wanted to stop going to school. Helena said too she did not participate in anything to avoid problems. She said that the prisoners always get the blame for anything that goes wrong, even if a member of the staff is to blame. She said she eats, drinks, sleeps and attends the mass. That was all she did. Estefani, Laura and Beatrice stated not to like to go to the courtyard, because there were always a lot of fights. They preferred getting a book from the library, take it to their cell and read there in peace. Latifah said she struggled with her hot temper. She said she got angry very quickly and this had been difficult for her inside this

prison. But she too had become sick of getting into trouble and counted to ten, tried to stay calm, ignored trouble and used her head to behave well. Leila said she is a very calm person. Never argued with anyone in the CPF, she always behaved according to the rules. That was her way to stay out of the punishment cell, where she had not spend one second so far.

When Helena first sat down for the interview, she said she did not want to talk about her past, because it was all way too sad. Olivia cried a lot when she was depressed and said she “felt a lot of desire to die”. Sara sometimes too wished she was dead. Alícia normally shared her cell, but when she needed it she could spend the day there alone. She let herself be lock her up in there whenever she felt bad. She liked to clean, listen to music and sleep. Leila locked herself up in her cell too, to be alone and think. Raquel liked to read to relax and if she was not reading she was sleeping, she said. One Monday she said that she slept most of the weekend and read a book by the Dalai Lama. Beatrice said that most of the women in the CPF take sleeping pills. They can get them from the doctor and Beatrice said the intake is not being inspected. Sometimes they take them and if they do not need them, they safe them up. Another moment if they want to, they can take four at once so they sleep all day, Beatrice said. Some prisoners used cigarettes and Marihuana as a coping strategies, because they have the tendency to calm people down. There was no evidence that prisoners use hard drugs as a coping strategy, though stories from prisoners about their colleagues, make assume the contrary.

In order to control herself Latifah ‘minimized’, or ‘smoothened’ what had happened to her. She said she never expected something like that from the guy who trapped her into the drugs. He was a friend of her husband before he died and he never used drugs, only smoked and drank a lot, she said. Latifah said she used to feel hatred against this man that framed her at first, but not anymore. She decided that he will get his punishment from God. She said she was also glad she got caught in Brazil and not in Japan, China or Malaysia. In these countries they still implement the death penalty and she would have been dead now. She also did not want to go back home full of hatred risking to kill the men then, ending up in prison there and receive the death penalty after all.

Bernstein’s (1986:235) so called personal restrictions can make the prisoners feel like they are wasting their time. Goffman (1963:41) states people in total institutions experience a loss of self-determination. He claims they can try to restore this by ‘playing it cool’, or acting very indifferent. Two girls at the CPF were excellent examples of this type of coping. Latifah said the strong Asian regimes make it easier for her to cope here, she is used to these strict rules.

Besides, she said she knew exactly who she was. I think she was trying to say that her strong personality was helping her to stand firm and survive. According to the South African girl, off course she did not choose to be there, she really felt sorry that she was there while the world cup was going on in here country, but stated that the place was not so bad when you stay out of trouble. To do this, you should not talk too much, she said. A little thing the prisoners can take all wrong and blow it up. In addition, Beatrice tried to put her own situation into perspective by comparing it to someone else's.

3.2 Collective coping strategies

3.2.1 Collective approach coping

One outcome of research on coping strategies among rape victims, carried out by Frazier & Burnett (1991:637), was that these victims rate their social supporters very high, which means they highly value what they do for them. Having a social network has the tendency to decrease depressive symptoms and works beneficially on an individual's psychological well-being. If this social support network is absent, it negatively influences women's psychological well-being (Keaveny & Zauszniewski 1999:78-79). Having a shoulder to cry on is not just of great importance while they are in prison (from fellow prisoners or people outside), but support from family and friends is also crucial when strived for a successful passage into society. To prevent them from reoffending, to stay clean from drugs, or avoid a state of homelessness (and sex work related to this), they will continue to need support from others (Johnson & Zlotnick 2008:372). Some of the prisoners receive a monthly allowance from the government. To keep this they have to go to an appointment with the bank every two months. If they miss an appointment, they lose it and it is very hard to get it back, but an escort can not be guaranteed, as we have seen. Security officer Adilson, said: "once a trafficker, always a trafficker". He said there exists an ex-thief, but there "exists no such thing as an ex-trafficker", because ex-prisoners do not receive any guidance.

Unfortunately, existing social networks are generally insufficient among imprisoned women and they will need to build a social support network while they are behind bars (Johnson & Zlotnick 2008:372). As we have seen in chapter two, many women have been abandoned by their family for being in prison. The following examples are of some prisoners who seem to have accomplished building a social network inside prison. The South-African girl shared a cell with Lenuta from Romanian and regretted Lenuta was leaving soon because

they could speak English together, eat, smoke and listen to music. Many inmates came and talked to Beatrice if they had problems. She said this made her feel good because it showed that they had trust in her and it worked distracting from her own problems. Beatrice said Latifah used to teach her English through song texts. Besides, Beatrice did not want to be transferred to a prison in Goiás, where she would have been closer to her family, because she had gotten used to the CPF and the characters of the other prisoners. In Goiás, she has no idea what she would find. Alícia said she had one friend that meant a lot to her. They respected each other, looked after each other and called each other to order. Many inmates and even staff thought they were lesbians. Prisoners furthermore tried to achieve things together. Beatrice stated prisoners would break down the place, rattle the fence and throw stuff if they disagreed with new rules. Besides, in order to get security to take them to see somebody, they had sometimes set a mattress on fire, Beatrice said.

Lesbian relationships were a collective approach coping mechanism too. Psychologist Viviane said that she did not believe that the majority of the women at the CPF was lesbian. Some of them come in as lesbians and they fit the complete profile, she said. Julieta, for example, had three girlfriends at the time of research. One of her girlfriends was her cell mate, Ana, who was still married. But according to Julieta, she had had lesbian relationships before entering prison. Julieta stated Ana was her friend too, she trusted her and said time flew when she was with Ana. When she did not have anyone, it sometimes felt the day just did not seem to end, Julieta said. For Raquel and Beatrice lesbian relationships were new when they came in and they were shocked. But they stated to respect the fact that everybody has a sexual preference and said lesbians were not being discriminated, neither by inmates, nor the staff.

For others, lesbian relationships are a “passing thing”, Viviane stated. They feel lonely, miss affection and have no one that visits them. These women are looking for attention, so they start something with a cell mate. When they leave prison, these women go back to living a hetero life. Francisca and Carolina had had a relationship for one year and seven months at the time. They said they wanted to live together after being released from prison. Francisca had had lesbian relations before, but for Carolina this was her first (in an older picture, she looked more feminine, had longer hair). Their relationship was important to them and they said they wanted to enjoy it as much as possible while they could. A female security officer at the entrance told me that Francisca cried so much the day she had to leave (because she was being transported to another prison more inland). Estefani looked like a stereotypical dyke. She even said “call me Estefan, that is what everyone does”. Staff member Ivete also said that everyone called her Estefan and *ele* (him). Ivete said Estefani had changed identity in there.

She said that when Estefani came in, she was a pretty ‘girly girl’, had long hair and even a boyfriend. Belen said she did not want to be with a man ever again, she said she liked women now. She said she stopped liking men because women treat you differently. Belen said there was one woman in the CPF that she liked, but she would not tell anyone her name.

3.2.2 *Collective avoidance coping*

An obstacle in communicating with women in prison is the closed character of it. Where the walls have eyes and gossip is all around, this can be harmful (Johnson & Zlotnick 2008:375). Ex-prisoner Vitória mentioned there was no leader, it was ‘survival of the fittest’. You could not show your weakness and there was a lot of humiliation performed by fellow prisoners, she said. School teacher Fernanda too stated that the women there have no leader and that it makes them more dangerous. When they have a leader (and they used to have one), they are usually more calm. She also said it is easier to teach when there is a leader present among the prisoners. In stead of focussing on 20, you can focus on only one, because her wish is the others’ command. They will listen to her. Computer science teacher Paula also said that the prisoners can not show fear, because when you take up a weak position, the others will hurt you. Social worker Hilda said there were many manipulative inmates. She gave the example of one Malaysian (now ex) prisoner that was very manipulative and very depressed for a while. She dragged the others along with her and used her bad health to get the other three on her side and work them in her favour. Finally, Beatrice said there is a lot of jealousy, also in relation to lesbian couples. According to Alícia there is a lot of sham (*falsidade*) and gossip (*fofoca*).

Many stated not to have any friends in the CPF. To avoid fights and jealousy, they just tried to find the happy medium, smiled and said *bom dia* (good morning) and *tchiao* (bye). Raquel said she had no friends, just colleagues. She felt she could not trust any of the women. “What friends???”, Julieta said. “My only friend is God and my family”. Helena said it is every man for himself and God above all of them. She said she trusted two women before, but stated that they had only disappointed her. Leila said “ I have comrades”. The difference between a friend and a comrade, she said, is that she did not open up to the comrades she had in prison, she did not cry with them. When you have visitors and money, you are someone, you are worthy. But if you do not have these things you are insignificant, Leila said.

3.3 Institutional coping strategies

3.3.1 Institutional approach coping

Hein de Campos & Feix (2008:87) argue that attention has been drawn to discrimination against women in Brazilian prisons because they are denied certain rights. The *Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres* is one of the government agencies that is concerned with this fact. The *Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres* (2007:28,32-33) also states that discrimination against women is most visible in the penitentiary system. As we have seen in chapter two, their rights to the access of the juridical system, health care and sexual/reproductive rights, are often taken away from them. Psychologist Gilberto stated that every new inmate gets an intake questionnaire, where they check if they have all the documents they need (they often miss documents), they check their social conditions, if they receive any governmental help (a monthly allowance), if they need medical, psychological, or psychiatric attention. If they have all the information they need, they create a personal plan, called *PAI* (Plano de Assistencia Individualizado). Psychologist Viviane said she is very devoted to her job and does everything within her reach to help the prisoners. Viviane stated she would help them by arranging phone calls for them, if they encounter trouble during their trial, get them a public defender, talks to a judge, etc. But of course it is also important for them to treat her well if they want to qualify for parole for example. In twelve years, she has not had one problem with the inmates and said “I do not have a single fear”.

Prisoners were generally quite positive about the quality of the help social service provides, when provided. It did not appear to be a performance of the *PAI*, therefore consultation seemed to sporadically. It appeared social service attended the prisoners that indicated to the security they needed help, starting with the most urgent ones. Prisoners stated social service formed a central figure and helped them with many different problems. But they stated it can be difficult to get attendance from social assistance, and some stated social service never did as they promised.

As briefly mentioned in chapter two, the CPF exchanges prisoners with prisons elsewhere in Bahia. This is done to see if the discipline there suits them better and to create a more tranquil environment at the CPF. This can be stated an institutional coping strategy. In addition, the staff’s opinion about superintendent Adriana was, contrary tot that of the prisoners, very positive. According to psychologist Viviane, everything was a lot more structured in comparison to how it was before Adriana’s arrival. Adriana sets many more

limits for the prisoners, she stated. Before her arrival, prisoners were just walking around, sitting on the floor everywhere, they were more confused, very loud in the hallways, smoking in the halls and so on. Besides, they were not brought to their consultations and so they would enter several different offices before arriving to the right room. All of this created a lot of upheaval and kept professionals waiting until their client felt like showing up. Another staff member, Gil, said the place was going through a reorganization and found this a positive thing, because they could not proceed the way it was going.

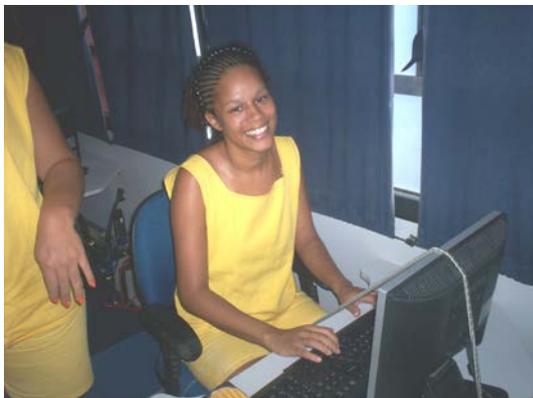
Because of the reorganization, professionals can do their job a lot better, Viviane stated. The previous superintendent was centralizing all of the work. According to Viviane, she pulled everything towards herself. She said that if the prisoners needed a doctor, the previous superintendent would do the consult, if they needed a psychologist, she would do it, if they needed a defender, she would be the defender. Viviane said that this made all of the professionals feel very disrespected. According to her, Adriana does the administration and lets all of the other professionals do what they studied for. Viviane said that it was the government that fired the other one and hired Adriana. Social worker Manuelle also claimed she did not like working at the CPF when the old superintendent was still present. It was a chaos, she said. Security officer João said that with the previous superintendent the current determination of what is allowed and what is not, did not exist. Before, prison staff was allowed to give the inmates certain things (Latifah stated that the coordinator of the school, Flavia, used to give them toilet paper for example). This had been forbidden by Adriana. It involved a risk of the presence of drugs, or cell phones and other inmates might feel left out and get jealous, João said.

Besides, superintendent Adriana did consultations too with every prisoner. By means of a checklist she asked the prisoners if they were having some kind of troubles, or discontent¹². Furthermore, there are two main NGOs putting in effort for the female inmates of the CPF. There is the SPM that deploys one woman to teach 'gender and race' (*gênero e raça*) at the CPF. 'Gender and race' was designed for 40 prisoners (four groups of ten students) that were selected based on their educational level (only women that could read and write could participate) and their behaviour. The selected women that enrolled on a voluntary basis were obliged to show up in class (once a week), missing two classes, meant no certificate. The classroom was at the administration, and was also being used by psychologists for consultations. It was quite small room to fit ten people. The room contained a large round

¹² A copy of the checklist can be found in the annexes.

wooden table, a couple of chairs, a television and a DVD player. The start of the class was usually filled with talking to the prisoners, many times they had to get something off their chests. After that, Isabel would discuss themes like discrimination, based on gender, poverty, or skin colour. She explained that this lesson was to make the prisoners aware of their rights and make them recognize all different types of violence, not just physical violence. In addition, every year during carnival (summer) for the last four years, the SPM has launched campaigns against violence against women. 24 Hours a day, they are on the road to distribute material (flyers) and to talk to women.

The second organization is called 'Mais Social'. This is a non profit NGO that aims at social integration through social assistance. Their focus is on decreasing social inequality and making people aware of their citizenship. *O Buzu Digital* (computer science) was created in July 2006 and consisted of a mini van, changed into a class room with eleven computers. This programme is the result of a partnership between 'Mais Social', the City Counsel of Salvador, the Secretary of Infrastructure and Transport, and helped by the Public Ministry. The van stayed in one community for 35 days and at the end of the course the students received a certificate.



Picture 7. Thais participating in computer science¹³



Picture 8. Estefani and her computer science certificate¹⁴

Besides these classes organized by NGOs, there were church volunteers (women) visiting the prisoners and helping them by listening to them, and giving them blessings. According to

¹³ Courtesy of Paula from 'Mais Social'

¹⁴ Courtesy of Paula from 'Mais Social'

Alícia, only the church came by and helped prisoners by donating them soap, sanitary napkins, etc. Finally, there was an organization called 'Pastoral da criança'. This project was an initiative of the Catholic church and was part of a larger project called 'Laços de Amor'. Women executing this project guided pregnant prisoners from the time of conception, or the time they came in, until their child was six years old. They taught them how to breastfeed and how to take care of their child. These women came to prison every week and once every month the prisoner received an evaluation card with everything that she had learned so far.

Hein de Campos & Feix (2008:97) state that prisoners who do study describe it as a separate institution where they feel respected. Admiration coming from family and especially from children, can be a big driving force, stimulating them to go to school. Study activities can be a source of inspiration for their own children in the sense that it can stimulate them to do well in their classes and provide them with a source of autonomy in relation to males in their circles of family and friends. The prisoners in the CPF tried to navigate their own lives away from economic hardship, situations of violence and (familiar) submission. Studying could help them in their contact with the outside world (they would be better able to write cards for example) and to understand their juridical position. And all of this is important, as stated by Engdahl e.a. (1990:66), because maltreatment while being imprisoned can be linked to maladjustment later on. The prisoners of the CPF stated they chose to take the course because they had never touched a computer before, or because they had taken classes in the past but had forgotten much of it. Some prisoners knew only a little bit, they said and wanted to improve their skills. One prisoner said she wanted to learn how to use a computer, because her daughter knew and she did not. She said she could not help her if she had any questions and said her daughter laughed at her because of this.

Johnson & Zlotnick (2008:375) state that in treatment, individual attention, as well as large quantities of empathy, autonomy and (genuine) positive regard had a motivating influence on the prisoners from their research population. This is where institutional coping comes in. I think the effectiveness of many things depended largely on the input of the individuals. One time when the courtyard could not open because of understaffing, security officer João went up to the administration to ask permission to open the courtyard, a favour for the prisoners, he said. Security officer Alex said he was taking a course in sociology and visiting every congress on women in prison, organized by the Secretary of Justice and Human Rights. The public defender for example said he liked his job, because he liked to help people in need. 'Gender and race' teacher Isabel put in 200% effort, always using interesting

documentation and all kinds of petty facts. Paula is another one giving her whole heart and so much devotion to the job.

Besides explaining Windows, Paula brought something else with her every day to stimulate personal development in the prisoners and to create a sparkle of hope for their futures. One time she brought a book with the 'ten rules to be happy' and read a poem the prisoners could identify with. Furthermore, Paula just had so much empathy in these female prisoners. Besides being nice, she was also quite a strict teacher, but it was obvious the prisoners all loved her. One woman said she had dreamed about Paula several times and they called her and her colleague 'unforgettable people', 'special' and *muito legais* (very 'cool'). The prisoners said Paula and her colleague made the course more interesting, gave them more willingness to learn and stated they learned things they never knew they would. They said they largely benefitted by the course and it showed them they can go beyond their own imagination. Looking at this, I think these teachers provide this important doses of individual attention, that can be so beneficial to the prisoners. Unfortunately, the CPF has put institutional avoidance coping on the map too.

3.3.2 *Institutional avoidance coping*

Institutional avoidance coping can be understood in two ways. One way of looking at it is that the CPF failed to provide institutional coping strategies for the prisoners. Johnson & Zlotnick (2008:376), for example, state there are all kind of unpredictable, little controllable factors obstructing the treatment of imprisoned women with depressive disorders. The prisoners said the procedure of *PAI* was not always carried out. Psychologist Gilberto stated that the reason for this difficulty to give all of the inmates enough attention, was that social service had only one office to do consultations. Besides, some days were very turbulent and when the inmates are aggressive and rebellious nobody is allowed to come near them. In continuation, the police sometimes paid unexpected visits to the cell blocks to screen cells in search of weapons, drugs, cell phones and other prohibited stuff. Nobody knows when this is going to happen, except for the police and the superintendent. Therefore, any planned consultation is cancelled and rescheduled to a later point in time. One more thing that takes up a lot of time is that every prisoner cleaning the administrative department needs to be accompanied by a member of the staff. Another example comes from psychologist Viviane, that one day said she had not been attending for a couple of days, because of a lack of security to bring the prisoners to her.

But I also believe institutional avoidance coping flows from a lack of recognition. I believe staff undervalued the prisoners and therefore would not do any more than necessary. Teacher Fernanda stated that the staff just spent the eight hours that they had to spend in the CPF and went home. Staff members could use their spare time in favour of the prisoners. More prisoners could enjoy consultation from social service and other staff if they would spend their time more productively, and less by sitting around chatting, or watching television.

Furthermore, psychologist Viviane stated the factories inside the CPF had disappeared because of an unknown disagreement with the government. The site of the CPF stated that there was a *Padaria-Escola*, or the baking school for the residents of the CPF. It said that the government wanted to offer the prisoners a professional alternative and a monthly salary of 75% of the minimum wage, besides contributing to the remission of their penalty.¹⁵ Coordinator of education, Ivete, stated that at the moment of research, both a bakery and a beauty salon were present at the CPF. They had been officially inaugurated and had all of the equipment. But Ivete said they were not in use, because they probably lacked the professionals to teach and the material. When Alícia read in the local newspaper *Mais* that the inmates worked at the bakery¹⁶, she got furious. Vitor (juridical department of the CPF) said that the lack of work opportunity for the prisoner is a political question. He stated that Brazil has a capitalistic system and politicians want to spend as little money as possible and earn as much as possible. Paula said nothing has to function, you just have to be able to show that it is present.

According to Beatrice there were two women of the Secretary of Justice and Human Rights in prison one day, but they did not enter the courtyard (nor the cells) to check. “The direction only shows what she wants to show”, Beatrice said. Helena told me to write down everything I was hearing correctly, because most things are pretence for the outside world. She said the direction creates all sorts of things, makes it look very pretty, but nothing works. Staff member Flavia called one of the teachers at home one day to tell her that she did not have to come, because all of her students were in punishment. Personally, it looks unfair and not very beneficial to the prisoner’s rehabilitation program, and thus society, to keep women from going to class, or their appointment with social service if they are in punishment. School teacher Fernanda said prisoners show up in class one week and the next day do not. Like parents oblige their children to study, these women should be too. They should be forced to

¹⁵ <http://www.comunicacao.ba.gov.br/noticias/2009/12/18/conjunto-penal-feminino-tera-padaria-escola>

¹⁶ Local news paper *Mais* (25-03-2010)

pick either a study, or another activity, because “an unoccupied mind is where the devil houses”, Fernanda said.

I think the CPF misses out on an opportunity to teach the prisoners structure, norms and values. Besides, the rebellious ones stay rebellious and this makes the situation more complicated to handle by the prison staff. I asked Flavia if it was not possible to have classes, on Wednesday for the prisoners that did not receive visitors. Flavia just said “you can not”. When I asked Fernanda if she talked to someone about her difficulties, she said that she would like to, because she thinks she knows more about what is going on than a member of the administration. Fernanda said the superintendent does not know as much as she does, because she works where it all happens. But it is wiser to keep quiet, she said. All you can do is observe, listen and not speak, she stated.

3.4 How their life-history influences their coping abilities

Prison is not the solution, because it does not rehabilitate. The phenomenon of criminality is of social nature.¹⁷ To work on their problems, Hunter (1994:220) states that prisoners need to be able to look at them objectively. Many inmates naturally do not do this. They view themselves as passive victims of their environment and of the incidents in their lives. At the CPF, the large impact of their pre-prison lives on their coping strategies inside prison was very much noticeable too. Olivia had the feeling that her state of imprisonment had only worsened her existing problems, because from her residence she could not do anything, but think about it. Hein de Campos & Feix (2008:97) state that many times, women come across uninterested in any educational offer they get. This stems from a lack of emotional conditions, resulting from a tensed situation inside prison and from worrying about their family, especially their children. School teacher Fernanda said women are not very eager to learn and work, because they are stressed, they think too much. ‘Gender and race’ teacher, Isabel, thinks there is so little zest for the class because prisoners do not want to sit and listen. They just want to work and earn money, but do not understand why it is important to study. Besides, here in Brazil, women do not have a culture of sitting down and chatting, she said. These women are used to work, clean, cook, wash clothes and talk meanwhile. She said that in the organization process of projects at the CPF, they should keep these facts in mind. If these women sit down and have to just listen, their concentration level is very low. It is low,

¹⁷ Local news paper *A TARDE* (26-03-2010, pg 4)

because it is not in their culture, but also because of their past. Their life experiences distract them. If they are busy, their concentration level is much higher.

According to Beatrice, the reason there is so little zest for school is because the women “have lost the desire to live”. De Oliveira Almeida (2006:51) states that the female prisoners at the CPF “like it better to work on their looks than to learn, their biggest interest lies in their personal care, feeling pretty, lifting their self-esteem”, especially in taking care of their hair and nails. In computer science the girls were given the order to write down what they had already done for themselves in there. One girl had written she had painted her nails, braided other girls’ hair, and made herself up. Andrea wrote she had asked God to strengthen her and “I have to try to learn to love myself in order to be able to do something for myself”. I think this quote mirrors the major problem, the thread through many aspects of life and popping up in whatever these women do was their low self-esteem and self confidence. This was noticeable in prison, but will continue to influence their (love) relationships and their working life, as well as their life as a woman. Though assistance is necessary, they are the only ones that can change this, in order to never return to the couple of square meters that has been ‘home’ for them during these precious years of their lives.

3.5 Conclusion

Individual approach and avoidance coping strategies are used in a mixed way, depending on the changeability of the cause. Furthermore, though friendships were rare, in case they were present, they turned out to be very supporting to the women involved. Besides, there were ‘true’ and ‘temporary’ lesbians. Straight women have lesbian relationships while they are in jail in search for affection and as a type of survival strategy. I believe that the macho society makes women want to be with a woman too, because they feel more respected and treated better by them. In addition, it looked to me like superintendent Adriana had great ideas about security, but did not know how to handle the human part of the institution. Besides, there were several NGOs taking care of the prisoners. Their contribution, as well as that of staff members to the coping strategies of the prisoners was less (if in any way) determined by protocols, or the regime and mainly by personal effort. Finally, existing problems had an aggravating influence on the prisoner’s situation. Class, race and gender based experiences in their pre-prison lives had minimized the prisoners’ self-esteem and created mistrust, and their prison experience only deepened these wounds and further obstructed their possible improvement.

4. Conclusion

Low self-esteem, as a result of their socio-economic position, has turned out to be the connecting thread between all themes within this research. The most important concepts of this research have been ‘second class citizenship’, the Brazilian police, prison related problems and rehabilitation. After analyzing these concepts, I have tried to outline the coping strategies used by the female prisoners of the State Prison of Bahia to deal with life’s difficulties. My research question has been the following.

“How do female inmates of the Bahia State Prison (O Conjunto Penal Feminino) cope with problems encountered inside prison as well as those experienced in their pre-prison lives?”

Their position as ‘second class citizen’ has manifested itself in the marginal pre-prison living conditions of the female prisoners. Like described by Koonings (2003) and Hautzinger (2007), in many aspects of life, the prisoners had not been granted a ‘full’ citizen, and were therefore denied many of their rights. Some things can be traced back in Brazil’s history, like female illiteracy, or discrimination based on gender and ethnicity. The cultural embedding of these things, has appeared to have made them very subjective and therefore difficult to recognize. The women had no frame of reference, it was ‘normal’ to them. Because of these gender roles and little education, women stand at the bottom of society. Many have their first child at a young age, they have few possibilities to build a future and are left with the typical ‘female’ jobs. These are often low paid jobs in the informal sector. Besides, the male/female hierarchy, stemming from historical times, places men in a superior position in comparison to society’s female population. This position furthermore justifies domestic violence, which has proved to be a common factor in the histories of the prisoners.

Practice, as well as literature like MacDowell Santos’ (2005), showed that old fashioned statements and expressions are still very much alive in the contemporary society. Women are believed to enjoy ‘slapping’ from partners and are in modern days still viewed as men’s possessions. Besides, changing gender roles clash with ‘old fashioned’ thoughts and cause a lot of ‘new’ violence. Therefore, new laws like the *Lei Maria da Penha* have created some changes in the minds of people, but results are limited and violence against women often remains unpunished. Violence is continuously seen as an integral part of a love relationship and the man’s legitimacy still keeps people from interfering and women from pressing charges.

Their socio-economic status was what (in)directly got most of these women in prison. Some were dealing drugs to support their families, but the majority claimed, like De Oliveira Almeida (2006) said, to be in jail because the criminal circuit abused their social status. So though the majority of the women were in prison for drugs, they were not necessarily the dealer. They can be dragged along by someone they had an affectionate relationship with. Another motivation for committing a crime can be an attempt to equal themselves to men.

Like Husain (2007) described, the Brazilian police is supposed to be a protecting organ, serving citizens and granting their safety. In stead, various police officers have turned out to be criminals themselves and many prisoners stated they had been violated and even tortured by the police. Practice, as well as literature by MacDowell Santos (2005) proved that mainly second class citizens end up in jail, people with the right resources can buy their escape from prison. Many police stations, furthermore, appeared to be unsuitable to keep people and suspects were being held under harsh conditions. This denial of their rights continues in prison where most of the women have no money to pay for a lawyer, so they are awarded a public defender. This generally means little solution and caused them to wait for a very long time to be convicted, sometimes up to over three years. This insecurity is a stress factor on top of the already tough characteristics of a total institution, as described by Goffman (1963).

Prisoners are robbed from their freedom, are the subordinate group that is controlled by another one and they loose a part of their identity by being stripped from their own clothes, among other things. The two biggest problems seemed to be the separation from their family and boredom, but prisoners also complained they were treated like animals, that health care was insufficient, that the food was unacceptable and that social service was repeatedly failing in their duty. Besides, some women were abandoned by family and/or friends because of their conviction. Their degrading situation and the way prisoners were stigmatized in the eyes of society, was a confirmation of their second class citizenship. This was maybe even transformed into a 'third class citizenship', since they now had a criminal record in addition. This further decreased status was a big worry for many prisoners. They feared they would not be able to find a job once they were going to be free, feared more discrimination, financial problems and more police harassment.

Dealing with all of these difficulties, prisoners used individual and collective, as well as approach and avoidance coping, as mainly determined by Frazier and Burnett (1991) in a mixed way. As described by Mohino e.a. (2004) approach coping was used, mainly in situations where the cause was modifiable, consisting of studying, improving their behaviour, etc. Prisoners preferred to use avoidance coping in unchangeable situations, literally avoiding

areas, people or by stopping certain activities involving other people. Though the CPF provided some institutional coping in the form of few courses (some in collaboration with NGOs), they were generally insufficient and consultations with social service, and the superintendent left much to be desired. The building was not suitable to be used as residence, a humiliating check was performed on every visitor, there was a huge shortage of security officers and the prisoners stated that some of the guards were treating them badly.

The most serious shortage in the institutional coping strategies was the absence of good rehabilitation programs. There was no work and very little education, that is supposed to be providing them with better future perspectives. Besides, where courses were beneficial to the prisoners, individuals (often from NGOs) were mostly to thank for it, other than the prison organization. The consequence of this, like Engdahl (1990:66) states, is maladjustment later on. Prisoners can learn from each other and this concerns mainly harmful information. So, once out of prison, and if unemployed with little social support, the women will use the information they acquired in prison. This can turn them into professional criminals, increasing the chance they will reoffend. I conclude that ignorant prison staff comes final in a row of three: society, then the Brazilian police and finally the CPF, pointing out to these prisoners they are a born underdog and showing them this will never change. Institutional coping is where a big job and responsibility lies for the CPF in providing appropriate care and activities for the prisoners. This will not only be beneficial to the prisoners, but to the whole society. That way, rehabilitation will finally be a fact and imprisoning criminals an effective method in the war against crime.

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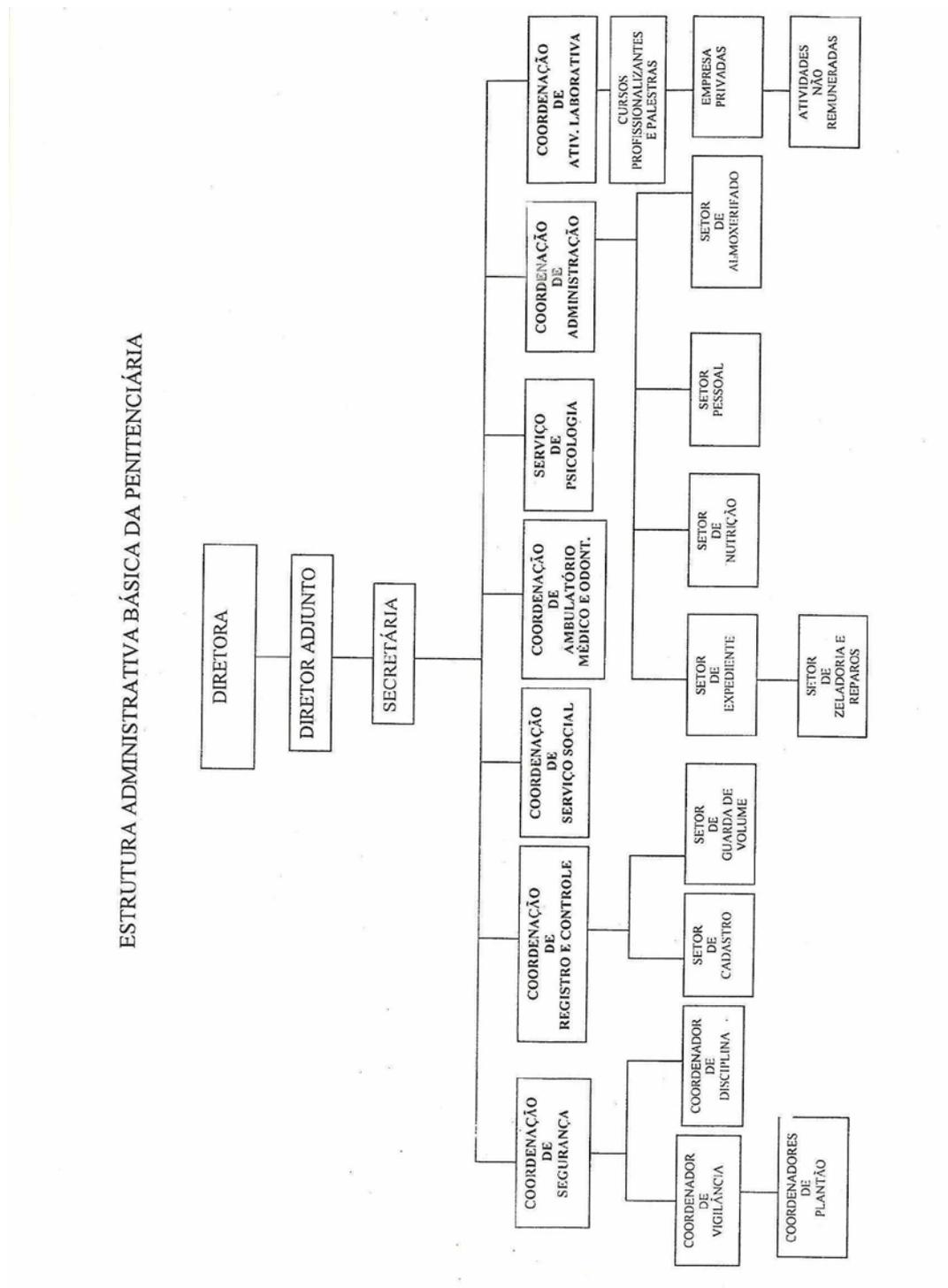
6. Annexes

6.1 Translations

1. “Humanização das Penas: esporte, lazer, e humanidades nos presídios de Salvador”
2. “O feijão está sem sal, ouviu mulher!?”
3. “Eu adoro matar”
4. “Crack: 80% dos homicídios, principal causa da violência na Bahia”
5. “Dor da alma”
6. “Quando precisam carinho”
7. “A justisa do Brasil é lenta como os passos de uma tartaruga”
8. “Uma defensora publica não solta nada”
9. “As mulheres tem direito a uma defensora publica, mas no funciona”
10. “É uma maravilha para elas”
11. “Aqui está cheia de ratos. O esgoto está aberto e quando chove fica um fedor insuportável”
12. “A doutora é ótima”
13. “Eu preciso trabalhar”
14. “Assi é a vida institucional”
15. “É um choque enorme”
16. ”Cadeia é feita para o homem”
17. “A gente tá presa, mas a gente é humana”
18. “Eu quero meus direitos, estou sofrendo na cadeia”
19. “Cada dia é pior”
20. “Promesas, promesas e nada acontece”
21. “Eles acham que eles mandam, mas que mandam é aqui”
22. “Ajuda as gente, pelo amor de Deus, por favour!”
23. “O mundo acabou”
24. “Eu não tenho coração de ferro”
25. “Não consegui mi ver”
26. “Vejo uma pessoa magoada e ferida”
27. “Não consegui mi ver”
28. “Vejo uma pessoa magoada e ferida”
29. “Cadeia ou caixão”
30. “Aqui tem os mortos vivos que a sociedade não aceita”
31. “Olhie esta mulher traficante”

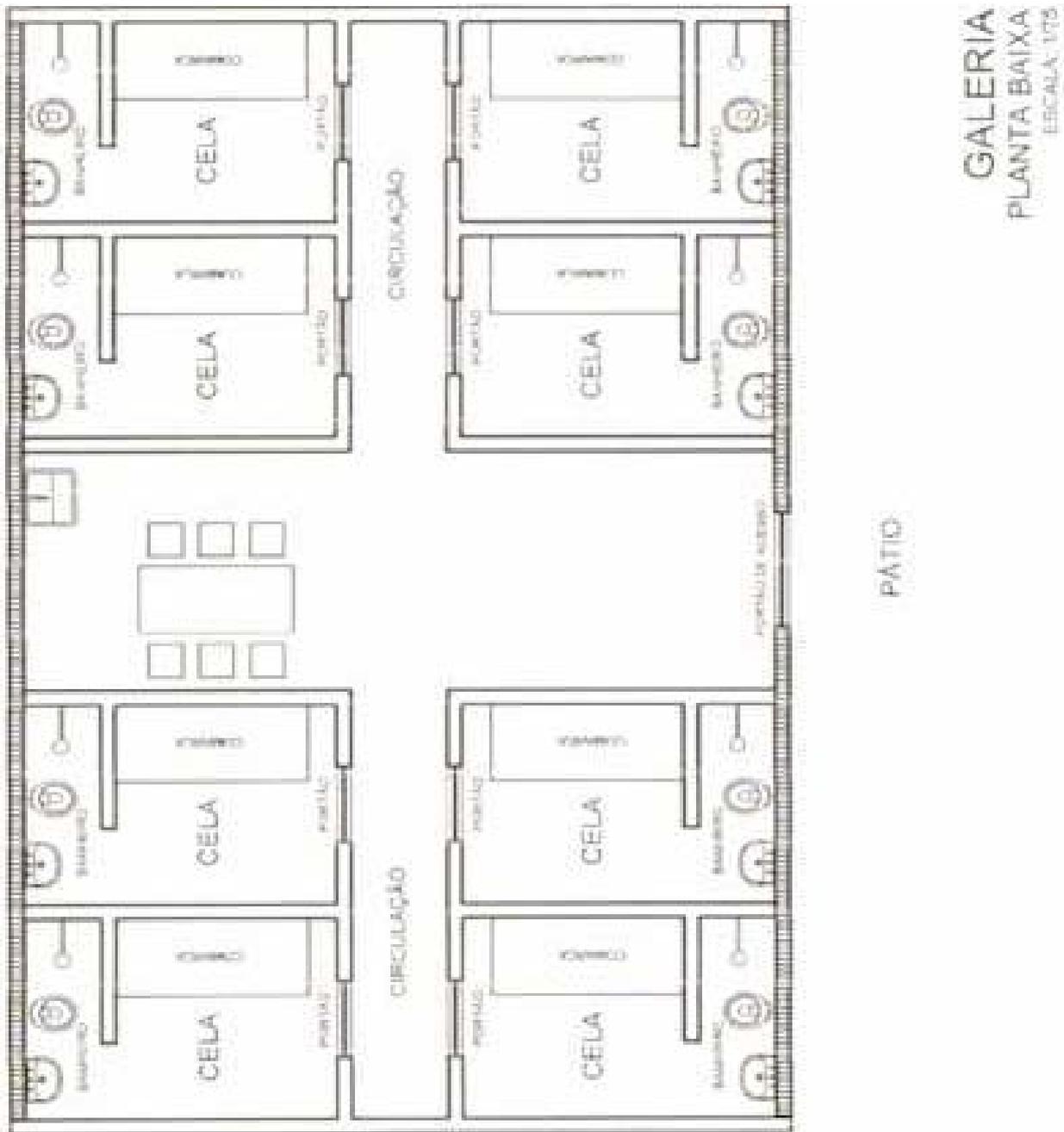
32. “Meu nome tá limpo”
33. “Não estou mais me misturando com gente errada, não estou mais usando drogas, nor roubando”
34. “Para mim, ela ja não existe”
35. “Falar com Deus sempre é bom”
36. “Querer nem sempre e poder, mas temos sonhos, e aqui é a única coisa que nos deixa em paz, porque sabemos que por mais que possa demorar, eles poderão ser realizado se nos tivermos coragem de prosseguir. Tenho a cada dia buscando entender mais o que me acontece, não culpando o próximo por tudo que tenho passado. Pois tenho a cada dia tentado entender os motivos de estar aqui e buscando viver um dia de cada vez. E acreditar que nada é por acaso. Eu consigo pois sou vencedora.”
37. “Drogas: morte ou cadeia”
38. “Tudo o mundo”
39. “Tengo muchas ganas de morir”
40. “Uma vez traficante, sempre traficante”
41. “Existe ex-ladrão, mais não existe ex-traficante”
42. “Uma coisa passageira”
43. “Meu único amigo é Deus e minha familia”
44. “Eu tenho camaradas”
45. “Não tenho medo nenhum”
46. “A mente vazia é oficina do diabo”
47. “Não pode”
48. “Perderam o entusiasmo da vida”
49. “Elas gostam mais de se arrumar do que de aprender, o maior interesse é o cuidado pessoal para ficar bonita, levanta a auto-estima delas”
50. “Tenho que aprender a amar a mim mesma para poder fazer alguma coisa por mim”

6.2 Administrative structure of the 'Conjunto Penal Femenino'



Source: De Oliveira Almeida 2006:47

6.3 Overview of the cell galleries



Source: De Oliveira Almeida 2006:41

6.4 Consultation sheet of the superintendent



SECRETARIA DA JUSTIÇA CIDADANIA E DIREITOS HUMANOS
SUPERINTENDÊNCIA DE ASSUNTOS PENAIS - SAP
CONJUNTO PENAL FEMININO

22

AUDIÊNCIA COM A DIRETORIA DIA: ___/___/2010.

NOME DA INTERNA: _____

MATRICULA PENAL: _____

QUEIXAS:

PROCESSO: () SIM () NÃO

LIGAÇÃO FAMÍLIA: () SIM () NÃO

PROBLEMAS COM FILHOS: () SIM () NÃO

PROBLEMA COM VISITA ÍNTIMA: () SIM () NÃO

PROBLEMAS COM AMEAÇAS, DROGAS, CELULARES: () SIM () NÃO

PROBLEMA COM O TELEFONE PÚBLICO: () SIM () NÃO

PROBLEMA COM A COMIDA: () SIM () NÃO

PROBLEMA COM A CELA: () SIM () NÃO

PROBLEMA COM ÁGUA E LUZ: () SIM () NÃO

PROBLEMA COM ANIMAIS E INSETOS: () SIM () NÃO

SUGESTÃO DE TRABALHO: _____

ADVOGADO: () SIM () NÃO

NOME DO ADVOGADO: _____

ESTRADA DA MATA ESCURA, S/N - COMPLEXO PENITENCIÁRIO
TEL.: 306-0737 (GERAL) - TEL/FAX: 306-0738
C.E.P.: 41.225-000 SSA/BA.

