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LEISURE AND/OR WORK: THE CONFLUENCE OF TIMES OBSERVED IN A PRISON UNIT

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the confluence between leisure and work time in a prison unit based on field research conducted at the Professor Jason Soares Albergaria Penitentiary, located in the municipality of São Joaquim de Bicas/MG. The objective of the study was to describe and analyze the leisure opportunities for trans women in a context of deprivation of liberty, how the activities are carried out and organized, and how the spaces are appropriated by them. The study is based on the combination of bibliographic and field research, carried out in the prison unit, with the commitment of direct observation, opportunities in which it was possible to understand the spaces and visualize the social interactions that occur there. Next, Focused groups were carried out seeking in conversations to extract from the participants the meanings that they attribute to the task, its demands in that area, impacts and shortcomings. It was observed that certain activities are sometimes perceived as leisure time, and sometimes claimed as work time. In a prison unit, the dichotomous logic between leisure and work time is broken, phenomena that intersect in the same time and space.

KEYWORDS: Leisure. Work. Obligation. Time.

LAZER E/OU TRABALHO:A CONFLUÊNCIA DOS TEMPOS OBSERVADOS EM UMA UNIDADE PRISIONAL

RESUMO: Este artigo discute a confluência entre os tempos de lazer e trabalho em uma unidade prisional a partir de uma pesquisa de campo realizada na Penitenciária Professor Jason Soares Albergaria, situada no município de São Joaquim de Bicas/MG.

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Leisure and/or Work Felipe Fonseca Oliveira Rogues and Hélder Ferreira Isayama

O objetivo do trabalho foi descrever e analisar as possibilidades de lazer por mulheres trans em contexto de privação de liberdade, como são realizadas e organizadas as atividades e como os espaços são apropriados por elas. O estudo baseou-se na combinação entre pesquisas bibliográfica e de campo, realizada na unidade prisional, com emprego da observação direta, oportunidade em que foi possível conhecer os espaços e visualizar as interações sociais que nela ocorriam. Em seguida, realizou-se grupos focais buscando nas conversas extrair das participantes os sentidos que atribuem ao lazer, suas demandas nessa área, impactos e carências. Observou-se que certas atividades, ora são percebidas como tempo de lazer, ora reivindicadas como tempo de trabalho. Em uma unidade prisional, rompe-se com uma lógica dicotômica entre os tempos entre lazer e trabalho, fenômenos que se entrecruzam no mesmo tempo e espaço.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Lazer. Trabalho. Obrigação. Tempo.

Introduction

The state of Minas Gerais, in a pioneering project in Brazil, created the country's first prison wing dedicated to the LGBT+ population. Established in 2009 at the São Joaquim de Bicas II prison, located in the city of the same name in the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte, this wing was created in response to the widespread violence experienced by individuals with minority gender identities or sexual orientations in regular male prison units.

The creation of this special wing was an initiative of the Centro de Referência de Gays, Lésbicas, Bissexuais, Travestis, Transexuais e Transgêneros de Minas Gerais (Reference Center for Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transvestites, Transsexuals, and Transgender People of Minas Gerais), in partnership with the Coordenadoria Especial de Políticas de Diversidade Sexual de Minas Gerais (Special Coordination for Sexual Diversity Policies of Minas Gerais - CODS), both linked to the Secretaria de Estado de Desenvolvimento Social (State Department for Social Development – SEDESE). During technical visits to prisons in Minas Gerais, these public agencies collected frequent reports of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse—common forms of violence that

marked the experiences of LGBT+ individuals in these spaces of confinement (Guedes; Oliveira; Oliveira, 2015).

In 2013, the Secretaria de Segurança Pública de Minas Gerais (Public Security Department of Minas Gerais) transferred the LGBT+ wing from São Joaquim de Bicas II to the São Joaquim de Bicas I Penitentiary, officially named Professor Jason Soares Albergaria but commonly referred to simply as Jason. The Department also established a second LGBT+ wing in the state, inaugurated at the Presídio de Vespasiano in the city of the same name. However, this second wing was closed in 2019, and the individuals housed there were transferred to the Jason Penitentiary.

In 2021, following a wave of five suicides and three attempts, the Public Security Department of Minas Gerais decided to dedicate the entire Jason Penitentiary—comprising four pavilions—exclusively to the LGBT+ population, transferring all cisgender and heterosexual individuals to other prison units. Thus, Jason became the first prison in Brazil dedicated solely to self-declared LGBT+ individuals.

This research examines the space of the Professor Jason Soares Albergaria Penitentiary, which houses members of the LGBT+ community who are incarcerated and have experienced social stigma due to their gender identities or sexual orientations. Specifically, this facility accommodates trans women and cisgender non-heterosexual men. It does not house trans men or eisgender non-heterosexual women, as they are directed to female prison units. This study focuses specifically on Pavilion 1, which is primarily designated for trans women. Our purpose was to understand the leisure interactions that take place within this space, emphasizing the experiences of trans women in confinement—a social group with distinct characteristics and vulnerabilities.

Before proceeding, it is important to provide some brief terminological clarifications for readers unfamiliar with the recurring terms used in this study. The term "trans" is used as an umbrella term for transgender individuals³, encompassing both transsexuals and transvestites⁴.. Trans people are those who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth by others. As they grow and gain the freedom to express themselves, they identify with a gender different from the one assigned or reject being classified within a specific gender category (such as non-binary individuals). A trans woman is someone who was assigned male at birth (based solely on anatomical aspects) but later identifies as a woman and asserts this identity in public spaces.

We emphasize that the focus group investigated in this study consists of incarcerated women who share a common characteristic: self-identifying with a gender different from the one assigned to them at birth, regardless of their sexual orientations. Just like cisgender individuals, trans people can have diverse sexual orientations—they may be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or asexual.

This article, in particular, seeks to discuss the observed overlap within the prison unit between time allocated for mandatory activities and leisure, with certain actions, in an apparent paradox, assuming both roles. Is it leisure time or work? Could it be both? These moments are claimed to have a dual nature by those who experience them in the prison context.

³ "Terminology used to describe people who transition between genders. These are individuals whose gender identity transcends conventional definitions of sexuality (ABGLT, 2010). According to Letícia Lanz (2015), it does not make sense to write "transvestites, transsexuals, and transgender people' or to use 'TTT' in the LGBTI+ acronym, since transvestites and transsexuals are, by definition, transgender. One should either write "transvestites and transsexuals or simply transgender people, or, preferably, trans people"(Reis, 2018, p. 30).

⁴ Some differentiate transsexuals from transvestites based on the choice to undergo gender-affirming surgery. However, this criterion appears arbitrary, as the decision to identify as a transvestite or transsexual belongs to the individual, considering that gender identities are self-determined.

Methodological Paths

In the methodological approach, we combined bibliographic and field research, conducting a descriptive and interpretive study of the data collected. The field research was carried out at the Prof. Jason Soares Albergaria Penitentiary, located in São Joaquim de Bicas/MG, a municipality situated in the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte. This is the only prison unit in the country dedicated exclusively to housing LGBT+ individuals in deprivation of liberty.

To gain a better understanding of the leisure experiences of transgender women in deprivation of liberty at the mentioned prison unit, we approached their reality through regular visits to the environment where they are segregated. During the visits to the penitentiary, we employed two investigative methods. In the first months, we used the method of observation. The visits focused on Pavilion 1, which houses the largest number of transgender women, an area predominantly dedicated to them, and the target population for investigating leisure experiences.

The observations were recorded in a field diary. The handwritten notes were authorized by the prison administration. We documented the characteristics of the place, details of the spaces, and reports heard through interactions, without the intention of making literal transcriptions of conversations, as we prioritized fluid conversations and interrupted the dialogues as little as possible to make the notes.

In addition to the observation method, the second investigative instrument adopted in the research was the Focus Group. This method aimed to capture the theme and, additionally, to observe the interactions characteristic of the group process. The Jason Penitentiary houses approximately 70 transgender women, with an estimated 50 allocated in Pavilion 1. We set up two focus groups to mediate discussions on leisure, each with eight transgender women volunteers.

The focus groups took place in the Beauty Salon of Pavilion 1, a space that met the necessary requirements. The suggestion for this location came from the transgender women themselves, as they feel comfortable in this environment. The conversations conducted in the focus groups were recorded in audio. In the transcriptions, we omitted the real names of the participants whenever they were mentioned in the recordings. This serves to protect their right to anonymity. They are identified in this work only by a fictitious name chosen by the researchers.

Once the field research was completed, the collected information was analyzed systematically (both the data obtained through observation and the data from the focus groups). In this final step, we used thematic content analysis as the technique to process the collected information. "It operates by breaking down the text into units, into categories according to analogous regroupings" (Bardin, 2016, p. 201), and its purpose is "to discover the core meanings that make up a communication whose presence or frequency signifies something for the intended analytical objective" (Minayo, 2001, p. 210).

Categorization was carried out taking into account the spaces occupied in the prison environment, the activities performed or desired in those spaces, and the needs related to leisure. The categorized analysis associated data collected through direct observation and dialogues gathered in the focus groups, with interpretive examinations and theoretical considerations. The combination of techniques—direct observation and focus groups—allowed us to gather different information about the same subject.

Leisure and Work: an Open Debate

Leisure and work are often perceived as opposing ideas, occurring at different times. Work would be the routine accomplishment of a task in the capitalist production process, performed during obligatory time. Leisure, in turn, of a subordinate nature, would occupy the time not taken by work, dedicated to pleasurable experiences that generate personal satisfaction for the individual, encompassing selfless practices. In this conception, Padilha (2003) explains, "if work tires, leisure rests; if work alienates, leisure de-alienates; if work takes away man's creative capacity, leisure gives it back" (p. 257), phenomena at opposite poles or that interact in constant duality.

> From this conception, mandatory activities, especially those involving work, seem to be something harmful that generate stress and boredom in individuals. Leisure enters as a compensatory activity, as if it were a reward to be enjoyed right after completing all the mandatory activities (Almeida, 2021, p. 218).

For Polato (2003), leisure has an intrinsic relationship with the production process, and this relationship is marked by conflicting and, above all, antagonistic conceptions. The contradictory nature of capitalist social relations can "be made explicit in the context of the relationships between society and leisure, or between these and the productive process" (p. 140). Leisure as a form of human relation produced in the clash of groups or social classes, a space for the recovery of physical and mental conditions, for the development of emotional, aesthetic, and playful conditions, which replenishes the energy lost during the workday.

> Thus, the consideration and treatment of the relationships between leisure and the economic-social structure, the production process, technological transformations, the division of labor process, as well as the production and reproduction of the labor force, are essential for the correct understanding of leisure and the role it, hegemonically, has received as a time/space of control to meet the demands of capital (Polato, 2003, p. 140).

However, there would be no truly free time in the mode of production. Leisure, generated within the capitalist society, assumes a mechanism of social control in that it serves work, with work mediating the time for leisure and influencing how it is experienced. Along these lines, Cunha (1987) argues that:

> non-productive time (residual, complementary) also acquires a productive value or function for society. Why? Because it recovers our strength (allows us to rest or have fun) and provides us with the conditions to consume (eat, travel, buy). In more academic terms, non-productive time still retains a socially productive value because it restores the minimum conditions for the return of the living labor force and frees individuals for consumption. Now, since consumption is one of the inevitable moments of the economic cycle (produce, distribute, exchange, consume), non-productive time becomes indispensable to production. It is its purpose and starting point. All at the same time (p. 13).

For Magnani (1988; 1994), the opposition between leisure and work developed in trends of the organized labor movement, when they demand time for energy replenishment and articulate a culture independent of bourgeois values, should not be denied. However, "one should try to go beyond the traditional view in which leisure falls into the common pit of factors that ensure the reproduction of the labor force. It is not a matter of denying the validity of such a statement, but rather of recognizing that, at the level of generality in which it stands, it does not explain what occurs in the realm of concrete lived experience" (Magnani, 1988, p. 37).

> The issue of leisure, therefore, arises within the universe of work and in opposition to it: the dichotomy is, in fact, between work time versus free or liberated time, and leisure is generally understood as the set of activities that fill this time.

> If this is the frame of reference that allows us to understand, in its origins, the role of leisure, it is now possible to observe some changes in how it is viewed. First, leisure is no longer thought of only in reference to the world of work and, primarily, is not seen as an appendage to it (Magnani, 1994, p. 1-2).

According to Magnani (1994), leisure does not acquire full meaning by reference to the values of the labor universe; the phenomenon has a deeper component that affirms the establishment of social bonds. The author argues that leisure should not be thought of exclusively from an instrumental side, as a means of replenishing energy expended for labor activities. Observing the leisure of workers in peripheral areas, he criticizes readings that point to leisure as a safety valve or forms of alienation, perspectives that fail to capture its complexity in different areas of life. Going beyond the factors that ensure the reproduction of the labor force, entertainment modes in the periphery would represent "a way of accessing a better understanding of the values, ways of thinking, and lifestyles of workers" (p. 38), they have their own meanings for those who practice them.

Magnani (1994) proposes that leisure be investigated in the context in which it occurs, arguing that it is misleading to try to reduce the richness and multiplicity of forms of entertainment to a common denominator without taking into account the meanings that the users themselves, through their discourses and practices, give to the various alternatives for occupying time.

> Even in a society like Brazil's, marked by profound socioeconomic contrasts, with a large impoverished population, leisure is increasingly no longer thought of as a privilege for a few or as something accessory, but rather as a right for all and a constitutive part of culturally differentiated ways of life (p. 5).

Avoiding a necessary duality, Stebbins (2014) also brings the two phenomena closer by arguing that leisure and work are not separate concepts or mutually antagonistic spheres of modern life. Both can have rewards in both the personal and social spheres and are, in essence, experiences often lived in the same way. The author brings leisure and work together by pointing out that certain occupations can even assume a dual function, labor occupations so attractive that they can be considered leisure by those who engage in them. "Although not recognized by a large part of contemporary academic circles, the similarity between work and leisure in certain activities dates back at least to the era when humanity began decorating their work

tools" (p. 43). Stebbins (2014) argues that there is, still, a "common field" in the area of life where leisure and work can directly influence one another, with both spheres providing primary rewards of personal enrichment and self-realization.

Stebbins (2014) thinks of activities that meet certain characteristics. The qualities listed by the author for a work to also be considered leisure are: 1) The activity must be meaningful, requiring skill, knowledge, experience, or a combination of two or three of these; 2) The experience must be diversified; 3) It must offer a meaningful opportunity for creative or innovative work, thus valuing the personality of the individuals; 4) There must be control over the quantity and arrangement of time dedicated to the activity in such a way that it prevents the activity from becoming a burden; 5) The activity must take place in a physical and social environment that encourages the individual to continue constantly and without significant restrictions on actions.

We do not intend to delve into these qualities, as they are designed for activities practiced outside of prison, which are unsuitable for life behind bars. What is not of primary concern here is to discuss the best criteria for defining a list of dual-character activities that bridge work and leisure, but rather to highlight that this theoretical reflection should not approach these phenomena from an antagonistic perspective, always executed at distinct times.

In fact, if we understand leisure as an experience that can only be realized in the time freed from work, the practice would only occur, consequently, in those few prison units where people deprived of liberty are offered the opportunity to engage in an internal labor activity. This would limit the scope of leisure in Brazilian prisons, as the number of people performing a routine labor activity within a Brazilian prison unit is low. It is not that people in deprivation of liberty refuse to work; on the contrary, almost all of them demand this opportunity, either to reduce part of their sentence imposed by the Judiciary Branch, or to earn some financial income necessary to purchase basic items inside the prison. Working is not always an option available to the incarcerated individual.

The Relationship between Leisure and Work in Activities Experienced in the **Penitentiary**

The territorial limitation to which incarcerated individuals are subjected does not, in itself, present an obstacle to experiencing leisure. The deprivation of liberty makes certain activities unfeasible, but it does not prevent all forms of leisure. There are leisure options that require little space (reading, games, arts, dances, sports), and in this sense, the limitation of freedom is not a sufficient argument to dismiss the idea of leisure in prison units. Those serving a prison sentence should not lose the ability to voluntarily choose, from the range of options available in the given space, those activities that bring them pleasure.

Almeida (2003; 2005), from a Habermasian reading, argues that leisure in contrast to work does not account for the entire social experience and the experiences of incarceration. For him, "leisure is a historical product and, as such, cannot be determined as part of only one social sphere, for example, work; at the same time, leisure (in the broad sense) is not determined by class, but rather the possibilities for leisure are" (Almeida, 2003, p. 152). The author further argues that leisure is determined by the patterns of coexistence peculiar to each social group, reflecting its internal bonds, rules, and values, and is present in the relationships between peers

mediated by language. "Leisure in prison exists, it cannot be denied. To consider the non-existence of leisure in incarceration is to agree that the prisoner is outside social relations, and that incarceration does not belong to the contemporary grouping, being isolated from society" (Almeida, 2005, p. 13). Any concept of leisure is insufficient if it renders invisible the practice experienced by certain groups (children, the elderly, incarcerated people), and it fails if it takes one part (the workers) as if it were the whole (society).

From what we observed at the Professor Jason Soares Albergaria Penitentiary, we noticed that the times defined for obligations and leisure are not so clearly marked to easily distinguish where an obligation ends and where leisure begins. An activity, which at first glance might be seen as leisure, when encouraged by sentence remission, promotes its routine execution and may take on the characteristics of an obligation. On the other hand, when trying to escape the cell environment, a space of imposed idleness, there are those who see work as having the benefits of leisure, offering a chance for sociability with others, a moment to unwind, and even an opportunity for personal development.

The time of certain activities seems to break with the dichotomous logic of leisure versus work, potentially being both at once. This happens especially with those activities that generate sentence remission or that people deprived of liberty demand the implementation of this benefit. These activities provide, on the one hand, a time of wellbeing, enjoyment of life, and, on the other hand, are carried out following mandatory rules.

The same practice can be pursued as an unpretentious pastime and also claimed as a professional skill, executed in the interest of reducing a prison sentence. Such activities, in the confined prison space, are carried out in times that follow their own logic, meaning that in a penitentiary, leisure is not experienced precisely during rest time, as opposed to work. These are occupational activities, desired to escape the idleness generated and imposed by confinement. The greatest psychological strain within a prison unit comes from not having anything to do; the strain is in not having access to routine activities that allow one to escape monotony.

One must ask to what extent it makes sense to try to differentiate leisure from other activities carried out in the context of a prison unit. We've noticed that the trans women incarcerated at the Jason Penitentiary demand activities in general, whether classified as leisure or educational or labor-related practices. They are not particularly concerned with the definition these activities will receive; they are interested in having actions that can occupy their minds, entertain them, provide distraction, equip them for professional positions, and, no less importantly, generate sentence remission. This is what they lack and demand.

There is also a practical aspect in not making this demarcation of time. The Criminal Enforcement Law (LEP) explicitly guarantees sentence remission for educational and work-related activities but does not offer such benefits for activities classified as leisure. Therefore, asserting that a practice is exclusively leisure creates an obstacle to generating a penal benefit. By not extending the sentence remission incentive explicitly to leisure activities, the legislator has undervalued them in the social reintegration process.

The National Justice Council, through Recommendation No. 044, dated November 26, 2013 (CNJ, 2013), sought to address the omission in the law and guided the courts to consider educational activities as of cultural, sports, and professional **nature.** It interpreted the rule provided in LEP in an expansive manner, allowing sentence remission for activities that are not strictly performed in a classroom setting. This recommendation was more recently replaced by Resolution No. 391, dated May 10, 2021 (CNJ, 2021), which maintained non-school educational practices in the list of activities eligible for sentence remission. As a result, activities that involve physical or intellectual effort can be incentivized with reductions in the prison sentence, including leisure activities, which are encompassed within the cultural, sports, and professional umbrella.

Activities that lead to sentence remission give individuals the strength to continue resisting the prison environment, providing meaning to their days and offering a perspective for quicker freedom. Wishing for such a benefit, engaging in an activity with interest, is, in the prison context, understandable and does not inherently rule out the idea of leisure. Given their coercive situation, they cannot afford to demand completely disinterested leisure, for mere enjoyment or to pass the time. In fact, all leisure, even outside of prison, in the capitalist system, holds some form of interest, as "any and all processes of formation are made with the objective of obtaining some return, whether financial or simply in terms of status or social differentiation" (Almeida, 2021, p. 37).

Therefore, we distance ourselves from conceptions that view obligations and leisure as phenomena in strictly defined times, as such categories do not apply well in the context of a prison unit, and perhaps face interpretative limits outside of prison. Although the phenomena have their own density, their respective times are in interaction within the prison unit. The routine execution of an activity – for those who perform it – can correspond to both obligation and leisure time. It can assume or has the potential to assume both functions in the available time. Since these activities involve greater physical or intellectual effort in their routine execution, they demand sentence remission to be carried out.

Reading books, drawing, and participating in manual workshops (crafting, sewing, writing) are activities that exhibit this confluence, sometimes seen as educational activities, sometimes as leisure or work. For people in prison, these are all three things, and they do not need to assume just one meaning. In this paper, we have selected some experiences observed within the prison unit where the confluence of leisure and work times is more pronounced.

Reading

The Criminal Enforcement Act allows part of the period of the custodial sentence to be reduced by reading activities. A person deprived of liberty has the chance to reduce four days of their sentence for each work read, assessed by submitting a review. The law limits this benefit to twelve works per year, that is, a maximum of forty-eight days of remission per reading every twelve months. Once the limit of twelve reviewed works is reached, the person may have access to other books, but the law clarifies that they cannot be counted for the purposes of reducing the sentence.

CNJ, which regulated remission by reading through Recommendation No. 044, of November 26, 2013(CNJ, 2013), prohibits any and all forms of censorship of literary, religious, philosophical or scientific works (article 5, item II), with the provision implying the right of free literary choice by the imprisoned person. This is reinforced in §4 of the aforementioned article by ensuring access to the diversity of authors and textual genres. It expressly ensures, in art. 8, section I, "universal access to books for the purpose of redemption, whether through permission to attend libraries, or through a strategy of circulating the collection or catalogs of books for request". It also establishes the need for the prison unit to promote projects to encourage reading (art. 6th) and strategies for diversifying its collection (art. 8th, II). This resolution, in our opinion, has not been strictly observed in the Jason penitentiary. This is what I concluded from conversations held with inmates in pavilion 1 during my in-person visits (Field Notebook, April 05, 2022).

When asked, one of the trans women in pavilion 1 reported during an observation visit that, as a child, she did not play much with other children and spent her days reading, taking refuge in books. I really liked it and still have this habit. Reading in prison became, in addition to a hobby, a necessary way to reduce her prison sentence with remission. She regretted, however, the fact that the prison administration did not provide a choice of works, often making it necessary to read authors or titles that did not arouse interest.

During data collection, a trans woman asked for a donation book. She said she would like to read George Orwell's 1984, having already read and enjoyed Animal Farm, by the same author. On a subsequent visit to the unit (Field Notebook, May 27, 2022), we delivered the desired book, agreeing with her to donate it to the penitentiary library after reading it – so that other people, if they wish, can also eventually access it. It is important to emphasize, however, that the choice of literary works has not been a right usually granted to people deprived of liberty. The complaint about not being able to choose the work to be read was a recurring point in other dialogues during my observation visits. People deprived of liberty, in general, told me that, although there is a library in the unit, they do not have access to it.

In the past, there was a list with a variety of book options that circulated around the pavilions and each person chose a title to read that interested them. They don't know how to explain why there is no longer a possibility of choice and people need to read what arrives in their respective cells. If there were a range of literary options, said one of the trans women interviewed in pavilion 1, such an activity could be seen as leisure by many interested parties, but today, as there are no available alternatives, and they sometimes have to read subjects that they are not interested in, they end up considering the activity more of an obligation. "I would see reading as leisure if I had the option, today it is work", reinforced one of the inmates, a position endorsed by the others(Field Notebook, April 21, 2022).

In conversation with the unit's pedagogue, she recognized this difficulty for people deprived of liberty to access the book collection. She said that, in some prison units, there are manual book carts that travel between the pavilions, which, if made available in the Jason penitentiary, would allow people to choose a specific title. They do not yet have this transportation resource, but they stated that they are interested in obtaining it.

When carrying out the first focus group, criticisms of this lack of freedom in choosing literary titles also appeared in the participants' dialogues:

> Camila: I think there would be one more book missing. Thus, one more book would bring more pleasure, (...) we lack books of our choice because the administration that chooses and gives us is not a book that we would like to read (First Focus Group).

> **Bruna:** The review is very important, in the past there was a list of books that we could choose to review, which we could know or already know the book, there is the possibility, right, that we live, it is hard to leave here, just for leisure, we are very needy here inside, right (First Focus Group).

It makes no sense to have a collection of books and distribute them without taking into account the literary genre preferred by the interested person, their fluency with a certain level of language and their educational level. The idea behind the law, when allowing the remission of a prison sentence through reading, is to bring people closer to this practice, to internalize the habit, to encourage reflection and to stimulate abstraction. It aims, among other purposes, to broaden horizons and perspectives, to be a channel for obtaining knowledge, and to stimulate playfulness and creativity. It is meant to be an enjoyable practice, otherwise it will not achieve all of these objectives. Pleasure and playfulness presuppose the ability to understand the text and, for Bramante (1998), a library's function is to disseminate culture and only fulfills this purpose when it promotes "knowledge with flavor" as leisure.

Ferreira e Dias (2002), in turn, emphasize that "reading is capable of changing the individual and their relationships with the world, favoring the possibility of collective transformations" (p. 48). To this end, it is important to have an institutional reading project that presupposes an understanding of the importance of written language in this transformational process. It makes no sense to present a ton of dense language to someone who is beginning their literacy process. One should not release a book into the hands of an individual without first preparing him or her to make this literary journey. In fact, an inadequate book, in addition to not contributing to the learning process, can have harmful consequences, that is, instead of empowering, it can raise barriers to education and generate feelings of frustration.

To the extent that reading is a condition for a person to spend less time in prison, there is a coercion present in carrying out this activity, an obligatory nature in view of the desire for freedom that human beings cultivate; remission is a legal benefit and, at the same time, there is a constraint on carrying out the activity in order to achieve freedom more quickly. Without being able to eliminate this obligatory nature, the

Government should, at the very least, give people greater autonomy in choosing works to read, could stimulate their desire for the activity, highlighting its leisure aspect.

During the observation visit, some people told me that when the book is boring, deals with a topic that is not of interest to the reader, they write the review by selecting spaced fragments of the work or relying on the internal synopsis. This was the solution found by some people to avoid reading the book and comply with the textual formality required to benefit from remission. The same people, however, argued that, when they receive a copy of a pleasurable read, with interesting content, they do not adopt this method to write the review and use the available time to actually read the work in full (Field Notebook, April 21, 2022).

To this end, it is necessary to avoid the emphasis placed on obligation, highlighting and exploring its leisure potential, as a source of relaxation, fun and pleasure.

> Libraries can and should also be considered as specialized leisure facilities, linked to the satisfaction of intellectual and artistic interests, in the genres of practice, enjoyment and knowledge. This in any social situation. (...) Making the library more dynamic so that, in addition to its traditional functions, it can also incorporate specialized leisure facilities, means no longer considering it merely as a space for storing books, often with the air of a sanctuary, but rather as a cultural center that reflects and has repercussions on the community in which it is located. In this regard, it is essential that the playful component is taken into consideration in the way activities are developed (Marcellino, 2012, p. 91).

Reading as a leisure activity is only viable if the individuality, tastes and interests of each person, their life trajectories and backgrounds are respected, and above all, the educational gaps and shortcomings faced by the target audience are recognized. In other words, reading, even if it has the positive effect of reducing sentences, will only be leisure when the greatest impetus for doing it is personal satisfaction. Nowadays, however, the practice of reading in Jason penitentiary is reduced to an obligatory

activity and has, in what should be a secondary objective, the reduction of the sentence as its central axis.

Although there is already an understanding in society regarding the importance of instilling the habit of reading in people, including those temporarily deprived of liberty, this recognized importance of the activity has not been accompanied by a substantial improvement in Brazilian prison units with the adequate provision of material and human resources to fulfill the purpose of increasing accessibility and enjoyment of literary works (cultural goods). This is revealed in the numbers, just see that only 1% of people imprisoned in the country use reading as a means of reducing their sentence, as warned by the Diagnosis of non-formal education practices in the Brazilian prison system (CNJ, 2021). This document draws attention to the need for central monitoring in the states to ensure compliance with the CNJ regulations to make this right viable. In Jason penitentiary, in particular, although it already guarantees the benefit of remission, changes need to be adopted so that reading for leisure becomes a reality.

The Beauty Salon

The Beauty Salon is the environment that trans women deprived of liberty most like to visit at Jason Penitentiary. They are proud of this space, the result of old demands from colleagues who were already serving their sentences. Despite being a simple place, it is treated with care by the visitors, the cosmetics, the few that there were, are organized. The staff takes care of cleaning and preserving the objects available there

The space is located on the second floor of Pavilion 1, designated exclusively for those serving sentences in that wing. It is approximately the size of two interconnected cells, around 20 square meters. It is barred like any other cell, has a bathroom, and the interior walls are painted lilac. As for furniture, the space has an old hair-washing chair; a mirror measuring approximately 1.5 m², chairs, two sinks, shelves and cabinets. Regarding work materials, there is a hair dryer, combs, brushes, scissors, some other miscellaneous items, there are not many chemicals available.

The salon is frequented by both trans women and cis men serving time in that wing. As the space is small and is only released by the prison administration once a week, always on Fridays, its use is rotated. Every week, a group of approximately ten people is selected to participate in the activity. Trans women deprived of liberty who act as hairdressers organize the list of names, pass it on to the prison officers, who, in the morning, between 8 and 9 am, move the interested people to the Beauty Salon, removing them from the space at the end of the day, around 4 pm, when they return to their respective cells.

The Beauty Salon maintained in pavilion 1 of the Jason penitentiary, especially for those trans women without bodily interventions and without access to their own cosmetics, is important as a space that makes it possible to change the image, making it visually correspond to the appearance that is culturally given to the feminine when that is what is desired, an identity that they claim in society. When they put on lipstick, put on makeup, or fix their hair, they feel more comfortable with their look. The beauty salon, therefore, is a channel for them to express themselves, to be who they are. Leisure that touches them intimately, achieves their dignity. The environment, at the same time, provides entertainment, they feel pleasure in frequenting it as a space for sociability, and it acts as a mechanism for personal strengthening, which guarantees them greater satisfaction with their bodies.

The Beauty Salon fulfills important social functions, especially in restoring selfesteem. One of the hairdressers reported that when trans women arrive at the unit, they are emotionally shaken, not only by the prison itself, but by the life baggage they carry. Some arrive looking unkempt, including due to their homeless situation. When they enter pavilion 1, their ward colleagues refer them to the Beauty Salon, where they receive a treatment to improve their appearance. Furthermore, the space is also for conversation, for confiding, for letting off steam about life's hardships; according to the hairdresser, sharing problems helps to cope with them.

Trans women, without an active voice in society, silenced and disempowered, imprisoned there, find, in the Beauty Salon, others who face the same social problem and, among them, it is possible to say that there is a network of solidarity. No one stands around waiting for service and, unlike a traditional salon, everyone helps each other there. A woman who gets her hair straightened is, at the same time, painting the nails of another woman, who, in turn, will then help cut the hair of a cis colleague and so on. They constantly exchange tips on beauty resources and how to take care of their hair and body. People get involved, talk to each other; the atmosphere is friendly, relaxed, but they carry out their tasks seriously. While some are in action, doing or receiving beauty treatments, others wait their turn dancing choreographies in sync to the sound of sung songs.

The Beauty Salon is especially important for those people who do not have emotional ties outside of prison. Those who do not receive assistance (food and hygiene kits usually provided by families) end up having limited access to cosmetics. Access to items is granted by exchanging a meal of the day (breakfast, lunch or dinner), bartering with other people deprived of liberty, or waiting your turn in the rotation to appear in the hall. In this space, donated cosmetics are shared, they are not individual, and partially meet the needs of the neediest people.

> Júlia: We have to agree that what is here [in the salon] is all donated; just having what we have is very good, but if it could be improved it would be even better. I don't speak for myself because I believe I won't be here for a long time... so, I have my makeup so I don't really care, but there are girls who do... there are girls who need to be here because there is no assistance. So, what we are talking about, what we are proposing here, is for the improvement of those who will come, because we are leaving. This is a place where we have to fight because the homosexual community is a needy community, the need is met on the streets, in drug trafficking, in prostitution, in 155, in 157, you understand? It's because they need it (First Focus Group).

> Tânia: Regarding the leisure equipment we have, in the salon we have a hairdryer and a straightener, shampoos are not professional, they are normal, there is no nail polish, the families of prisoners get donations here (According to Focus Group).

Considering that aesthetics, taking care of one's appearance, helps them to publicly express their identities, the Beauty Salon gives trans women self-esteem, a feeling of greater peace of mind about their appearance. This was verbalized by them:

> Júlia: Well, here, unlike other prisons, we can fix our hair, maintain our hair, because I think the most important thing for trans people is aesthetics. Even though we are women, regardless of whether we have long, short or bald hair, it doesn't make us less of a woman, here at least we have the benefit of being able to go to the salon. There are many people here who cannot afford shampoo or conditioner, so the girls dedicate themselves to raising their selfesteem. We can't mention sunbathing because it's a prisoner's right, you know, but what I see as a privilege is this, as a benefit is this, our salon here, maintained by donations, besides the school where we reduce our sentence to prepare ourselves to leave here with something (...) Here in the salon it is also a leisure activity, but it is not possible to meet all the demand. So, these are the leisure activities we have, but there could be more. Everything here is very selective (First Focus Group).

> **Bruna**: The salon also brings us well-being, self-esteem every day, it has this benefit of leaving us the way we deserve, the way we want to be here, the way we want to be seen, right (First Focus Group).

This connection between leisure and aesthetics, carried out at various times by trans women, is not a phenomenon specific to the prison universe. It is worth mentioning that it also occurs outside of prison, as pointed out by Ferreira (2018). The Leisure and/or Work Felipe Fonseca Oliveira Rogues and Hélder Ferreira Isayama

author investigated the beauty salon and places it as a meeting point, a space for sociability, frequented by a network of neighbors, with various social uses, including leisure. The connection between aesthetics and leisure is also present in the gym space. According to Valim and Volp (1998), aerobic exercise enthusiasts are motivated to practice for the purpose of weight control, aesthetic expression and social interaction, motivated by music and the satisfaction of performing the activity. This is also the understanding of Pereira (2002), who points out that there is a concern for aesthetics when performing aerobic activities in the gym, without the activity losing its leisure character.

Trans women deprived of their liberty consider the Beauty Salon as a leisure space where they can take care of their appearance. We emphasize, however, that they also claim it as a workspace given the effort involved in the tasks performed. They spend the day taking care of each other's appearance.

Amanda: I have been fighting since I came here for the redemption of the salon because I leave the cell from 8 am to 4 pm. I arrive at the cell tired, she worked with me and already knows how much I work. So, management thinks it's just a distraction, but it's not, I take this seriously myself. None of them leave here untidy, I don't let them. So, I think we should fight for more than just once a week to achieve remission. So, I'm taking this seriously here (First Focus Group).

The space does not offer regular courses, even though there are professionals with experience in the area among the trans women who attend. This way they could be stimulated with remission and be used by the unit. It is also worth noting that the space is underutilized, as it is only available for use on Fridays and is idle on the other days of the week. There, leisure and professional activities, especially those related to aesthetics, could be developed. This proposal to be better utilized, with a consequent expansion of the offer of remission in the prison unit, was made by them:

Olívia: Here we also have a lot of needs, like I am a manicurist, I have skills with hair, I am also an artisan, I do handicrafts, and this is another thing that I

licere, Belo Horizonte, v.27, n.3, set/2024. DOI: https://doi.org/10.35699/2447-6218.2024.54931 24

also wanted to highlight because we feel a lack of redemption. Because for some it is available and for others it is not, that is inequality, right? It is like an exception for people. Before one knows, others know. They know how to make baskets, stands, jewelry boxes, little houses, so that others also have the opportunity (Second Focus Group).

Helena: Today we can also reinforce this so that we have more colleagues. those of us who are experienced in the salon area, we can move on to a small group, which will also be a learning experience, to be able to encourage, because in fact we are not going to stay here forever, it is for those who are just arriving. We don't want others to exclude what we have built, so we try to pass this on to everyone. So we can cultivate the space. Even though we don't want to be there, it is mandatory to be there in order to pay, so, since we are there, let's not waste the time we have and, for that, we depend on the prison unit, the management, coordinators, support, and also the government, right (Second Focus Group).

In conversation with trans women in pavilion 1, they reported that they long for the opportunity to leave their cells and do something outside of the norm. They spend most of their time, if not the entire day, in their cell, and leaving it represents a sigh of relief, a moment to clear their heads. They associated activities outside the cell as leisure.

> **Júlia:** But here, leisure is the following: for me and for most people, I think that coming here [beauty salon], just leaving the cell is already leisure, because, like, staying there in that square is the same as before (First Focus Group).

> Mariana: In this prison unit, any activity you do while you are not in your cell can be classified as leisure. Leaving the cell is benevolent for us, it is quite benevolent. This conversation circle, for example, is our leisure time (Second Focus Group).

In these statements, it is interesting to note that leisure takes on the character of a place (the space outside the cell). When you are confined, changing your environment in itself represents leisure. Leaving the cell is a sporadic event, which makes it attractive and desired. It represents leisure due to the situation to which they are subjected, that is, in the absence of options in the cell, anything outside of it will do.

The Workshops

At Jason, they are able to change their environment and leave their cell only in specific situations: when they are taken to the yard for sunbathing, which happens only twice a week; during social visits, held every two weeks, with only a few actually receiving visits from family members; when they attend school or the beauty salon; or when they are selected to participate in a workshop—a term used to refer to various planned activities within the penitentiary. These are sporadic situations; most of the time, they spend their days confined within a small space.

Participation in the beauty salon or other projects is generally highly sought after. Beyond the interest in the activities themselves, engaging in something that breaks the routine allows them to leave their cells for a few hours, which, in itself, helps clear their minds and makes the day more bearable. However, as one of the trans women pointed out, these projects are not sufficient to prepare them for the job market, as they are not designed with that purpose in mind. The activities are led by volunteers—wellintentioned individuals for whom she expressed only gratitude and praise—but she believes it would be important to have programs of longer duration that would provide a certificate of participation at the end. Such a document could be useful in the future when seeking employment. Even those who choose to participate in an activity purely for leisure would still like to receive a professional training certificate at the end, she stated. Throughout the conversation, it was evident that there was a constant concern with gaining qualifications to secure a source of income—whether in formal or informal employment—after being released from prison.

One of the trans women said: "we need purposeful leisure that adds value to our lives." This statement reminded me of the concept of serious leisure proposed by Stebbins (2008), as they seek structured, meaningful, and fulfilling activities—ones that combine experience, knowledge acquisition, and skill development. Without delving into the complexity of the author's concept, Stebbins defines serious leisure as activities that require a high level of commitment, centered on "the acquisition and expression of a combination of special skills, knowledge, and experience" (p. 5). (p. 5). He incorporates into this definition the notions of dedication and seriousness (Oliveira; Doll, 2014).

In its more traditional conceptions, leisure is associated with relaxation, fun, and an escape from the working world. However, in the prison system, people often seek the opposite. They want to break free from imposed idleness and engage in daily activities that challenge them—even leisure activities that prepare them for the job market. They look for leisure that, beyond personal enjoyment, can provide them with autonomy.

Aware of the challenges they will face in finding employment after their release—whether due to the stigma of having a criminal record or because of their gender identity—they seek vocational courses that would allow them to generate income as self-employed workers. They request training in crafts, tattooing, painting, beauty, and other fields. The desire for more opportunities and the expansion of vocational training programs emerged repeatedly in their statements, as illustrated in the transcripts below.

> **Mariana:** A crochet class, a guitar class, music, singing lessons—basically, there needs to be more investment in this population, right? There is a lack of attention from our public representatives when it comes to policies for us. (Second Focus Group)

> Olívia: For me, since they call this a standard pavilion, a resocialization pavilion, I think they should offer something for us to learn, so we can leave here with professional training. (Second Focus Group).

Expanding the availability of courses within the unit could even be achieved by utilizing the life experiences of incarcerated individuals themselves. Currently, the knowledge they carry is not being applied, as there is no program in place to encourage the sharing of knowledge among them. We spoke with women who are professional hairdressers and manicurists, women skilled in crafts, one who claimed to be fluent in English after having lived abroad for many years, and others who know how to play musical instruments. In short, there are people there who could receive sentence reduction by serving as instructors, being encouraged to train others and pass on their skills. This would give meaning to their otherwise idle days and reduce the dependency on volunteers, who are unable to meet the existing demand.

The prison unit lacks strategies to expand the availability of activities, and in this regard, utilizing the knowledge of incarcerated individuals themselves seems like an interesting solution to address the shortage of professional instructors within the public service. The recreational and professional courses offered by volunteers are insufficient. It is unlikely that the reality of incarcerated individuals at Jason—particularly trans women—will change through isolated and uncoordinated initiatives led solely by volunteers, who work there without pay or any other form of incentive.

Although volunteer work is an indispensable form of assistance and plays an important role in social reintegration, the transient nature of volunteers means that the state must implement other strategies to ensure systematic and permanent activities. A prison cannot rely solely on goodwill and altruistic actions; the state must take responsibility for this mission, as those deprived of their freedom are under its care.

> If the State assumes the right to deprive someone of their freedom, for whatever reason, it must also assume the obligation to ensure that this person is treated with dignity and humanity. The fact that citizens outside of prison struggle to live with dignity should never be used as an excuse for the state to fail in treating those under its care with dignity (Coyle, 2002, p. 54).

At Jason Penitentiary, we did not observe any direct state-led initiatives aimed at offering vocational courses or recreational activities. Nor did we see indirect state involvement through partnerships or funding agreements with third parties. The absence of the state is made explicit in the words of a participant from the first focus group, highlighting the crucial role played by civil society organizations:

> Fernanda: When something is available, it's because an NGO brought it, because someone took the initiative to make it happen. No one inside here is just handed opportunities on a silver platter. We have to demand what is best for us, and when people come in here, they see how stagnant things are, how bad it is to be in the system just as an object, you know? We want to be tools that can be used, but we don't have the means. We don't have courses, we don't have a way to demand or even say what we need or want to do. So, really, when we see this kind of opportunity, we have to speak up, right? And when something is available, we make sure to learn about it, so that this leisure time is well used—and more than just leisure, we need courses that can be useful, that can provide us with a chance for change, an improvement not just for ourselves, but for our professional futures as well. (First Focus Group)

In general, they demand activities and courses with both recreational and professional aspects—ones that stimulate playfulness, bring enjoyment, and at the same time, equip them with skills for performing a task. This would make daily life in prison more dynamic. Actions that would bring both well-being and a sense of hope for a better future. The State has been failing in this responsibility, and we cite Braga's (2014) warning: "The more prison differs from free life, the harder it is to adapt after incarceration. The reintegration of a person into society should be a concern for everyone since all prisoners—provided they survive the hardships of prison life—will eventually be released." (p. 76).

Final Considerations

Leisure is a benefit right, it requires public investment, and the State has not fulfilled its role in this area in favor of people deprived of liberty. The State has shifted the entire responsibility to third parties driven by philanthropy. However, actions aimed at social reintegration need to be coordinated through a central framework, designed as a whole, and offered consistently throughout the year—something we did not observe during our visits. Activities within the prison must align with the expectations of the target audience, consisting of individuals interested in initiatives that bring both enjoyment and professional and educational training.

In the penitentiary context, where other equally essential needs compete for attention, leisure is often deprioritized as something non-urgent. However, this notion must be overcome, as a *fundamental human right* should never be treated as secondary. Ensuring access to leisure requires first recognizing it as a basic right—not as a privilege exclusive to free individuals or as a mere commodity. Instead, efforts should be made to establish it as a universal right, one that is accessible to marginalized social groups. Leisure should be available to all, helping to dismantle a social structure rooted in demeaning inequality, serving as a tool for human development, fostering satisfaction and self-esteem, strengthening a sense of belonging, and providing a channel for free expression. It should not be a privilege reserved for those with jobs, but rather a facilitator for obtaining employment—an element that, alongside other initiatives, helps reintegrate individuals into society. As a multifaceted phenomenon, leisure is not merely an opposition to labor; in prisons, it is sought as a meaningful experience, one that interacts with obligations, sometimes sharing the same spaces and overlapping with the same moments.

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