



# Photographing prisoners: The unworthy, unpleasant and unchanging criminal body

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## Abstract

The use of photography in representing the *criminal body* has long been a focus of interest in the social sciences, especially so when exploring the historical evolution of criminal identification practices. By contributing to the emerging field of visual criminology, this article explores current practices around photography of prisoners in the everyday contexts of the prison space. Drawing on a qualitative study conducted with prisoners, prison guards and probation officers in three Portuguese prisons, we analyse how different social actors construct the *criminal body*. This construction is explored through the meanings attributed to prisoners' photographic portraits used for their identification. In particular, we discuss how their photographic documentation acts as a classification device and a visual representation of the *criminal*. We argue that this representation, by portraying elements of unworthiness, unpleasantness and immutability, plays a significant role in the parole board's decisions and produce an embodied sense of identity and perpetuation of stigma.

## Keywords

Body, criminality, parole, photography, prison

## Introduction

You can't look good in the photo. This is a prison... we can't look good. (Cesário, commenting on the photograph that identifies him as prisoner no. 37)

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Attributions of meanings to the *criminal body* have an underlying modern vocation for naturalism and biological reductionism (Pavlich, 2009; Rose, 2000; Walby and Carrier, 2010). Such body is portrayed as distinguishable from the law-abiding citizen and, in this context, the body of an individual who commits crime emerges as the non-normative body *par excellence*, the body that transgresses the rules of law and social order. The photograph plays a role in documenting and constructing this body through the representation of the *deviant other*. This is illustrated by Sekula (1986: 7, emphases in original) when he says that the photograph ‘came to establish and delimit the terrain of the *other*, to define both the generalized look – the typology – and the *contingent instance* of deviance and social pathology’.

The use of photographic portraits for the identification of the *criminal body* has long been a focus of interest in the social sciences, especially so when exploring the historical evolution of criminal identification practices and in reference to studies that considered criminality as being physically manifested on the body. Indeed, from its invention in the early 19th century, photography has been a vital element in the construction of the criminal subject (Carrabine, 2014; Cole, 2001; Finn, 2009, 2017; Jackson, 2009; Sekula, 1986; Tagg, 1988). However, to date, there is a lack of empirical studies that have approached the consequences of such practices in the everyday contexts of the actors of the criminal justice system.

In this article, we present findings from empirical work conducted in three Portuguese prisons where we discuss the role of prisoners’ photographic portraits as observable *bodily economies* (Walby and Carrier, 2010). Walby and Carrier (2010) use this concept to explore the *continuities* of criminological discourses around the visible pathologic elements of corporeality. These authors consider the construction of the ‘criminal man’ over time and perceive the *bodily economies* as ‘cultural artifacts visualized, captured, constructed, and analyzed by criminologists’ (Walby and Carrier, 2010: 262). This concept is then a valuable analytical tool to understand the ‘solidification [...] of criminological pathologizations of the *bios*’ (2010: 275) through the capturing of corporeality, for example, by taking photographs.

In this article, we analyse how different social actors construct the *criminal body* by exploring the meanings attributed to the prisoners’ photographic portraits. We examine how such portraits mediate the relationship between the actors of the criminal justice system in practice, namely prisoners, prison guards and probation officers. In particular, we discuss how the photographic documentation of prisoners acts as a classification device and a visual representation of the *criminal*. As Jonathan Finn (2009: 10) states: ‘visual representations of the criminal body emerge from continual negotiations among humans, technology, and the social networks through which they interact’. We argue that this representation, by portraying elements of unworthiness, unpleasantness and immutability, plays a significant role in the parole board’s decisions and produces an embodied sense of identity and perpetuation of stigma. This work critically contributes to the intersection of criminology and the visual (Carney, 2017; Carrabine, 2012, 2014; Finn, 2009, 2017), as it allows an understanding of ‘the ways in which the camera is used in the act of making the criminal visible’ (Finn, 2017: 122).

## Methodology

In this article, we draw on data from a wider qualitative study that explores the impacts of identification technologies (such as photographs, fingerprints, anthropometric measurements and DNA profiles) on the co-construction of the body and identity of the criminal. If the prison was the laboratory par excellence in the development and use of fingerprints and anthropometric identification for prisoners, nowadays these elements have almost disappeared in Portuguese prisons and only the photographic portrait remains. While walking through different areas of the prisons, including the library, the cafeteria, the infirmary, the school, the common room, the prisoners' cells and other spaces,<sup>1</sup> it was often possible to observe boards on the walls where the prisoners' photographs taken upon their arrival are exposed. These photographs are also uploaded into the prison services database and then attached to the prisoners' identification records and individual identity cards. Such presence of the photographic portrait in the prison space highlights the need to address the visual and its importance to meaning making. For this reason, in this article we focus our attention on photographs and the meanings attributed to them in the prison space.

In this article we explore the meanings attributed to the prisoners' photographic portraits not only from the perspective of prison staff – prison guards and probation officers – but also from the meanings constructed by individuals categorized as criminals, more specifically, people serving a prison sentence. This empirical study draws on semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and direct observation conducted in three male prisons of different sizes, geographical locations and security levels between June 2013 and June 2014. Using an interpretive and constructionist approach, our analysis stems from fieldwork developed by the first author in the prison context within the Portuguese criminal justice system.

Interviews were conducted with 26 prisoners, 10 prison guards and eight probation officers.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these more structured instruments for empirical data collection, informal conversations were held with various social actors who operate in the prison space, and the social interactions that occur there were observed (namely the situations in which the prisoners are photographed).

The data were systematically coded following principles of analytic induction (Charmaz, 2006). Initially, we developed categories such as photographic portraits and criminality/physique. We then subjected the data to multiple readings in order to develop the initial categories into more abstract, focused codes. During this analytical process, memo writing was used to support the interpretation and analysis of the data (Charmaz, 2006).

The data collected in this study are contingent on specific circumstances and a specific judicial system; however, the questions and thoughts that can be raised based on this local material are relevant in a wider context. As Jackson (2009: 12) states, the poignant prisoner identification photographs used in his book *Pictures from a Drawer*

are from a drawer in a particular prison in a particular place, but they could as well have come from a similar drawer in a similar prison [...] [as] there are things in and about [these images] of far wider moment.

## Photography and the Construction of the *Criminal Body*

Bringing the camera close to the prisoner's face so that 'his features are clear', a photographic portrait of the prisoner, similar to the photographs used in passports and citizen identity cards, is taken.<sup>3</sup> This portrait is then uploaded into the computer system and is used in the various paper identification records that circulate through several prison services and in the prisoner's individual identity card.

The inmate Jacinto (convicted for theft and other crimes with a sentence of four years) discusses these procedures and 'how everyone does that [photographic portrait], so they [prison staff] can have it in the database and in the prisoner's cards'. As argued by Sekula (1986: 25, emphasis in original), in prison practice, photography aims precisely 'to preserve a sufficient record of a personality to be able to *identify* the present description with one which may be presented at some future time'. The face, as the part of the body that allows us to distinguish ourselves, our singularities and to be recognized by others/ourselves, is particularly relevant in this context where the photographic portrait is used for purposes of identification.

Considering Pavlich's (2009: 185, emphasis in original) discussion around criminal identification as '*a creative process rather than one of discovery*', we must reflect on the process of *creation* of criminal identities through the use of methods such as photographs. As Pavlich (2009: 185) mentions, criminal identification 'is constitutively involved in deploying the very identities it purports to discover; the "known criminal" is both the starting and ending point of', in this case, the photography. As we will see, prisoners' photographic portraits play a role in this process by representing the *criminal body* as *unworthy, unpleasant and unchanging*.

### *Portraying the unworthy: Photography and parole decisions*

These photographic portraits have impacts on how the prisoners perceive themselves and how prison staff attribute meanings to the prisoner. The embodied self is reconstituted, and the photograph participates in the construction of prisoner's identity, and through it, others attribute meanings to the prisoner's face. As we will now explore, the parole decision-making process is a noteworthy example that illustrates how the meanings attributed to the photograph portray the *criminal body* as unworthy.

When the parole board is considering the release of offenders from prison, each panel is usually comprised of different criminal justice actors. In the Portuguese penal system, we would have the participation of the probation officer, the judge, the chief of the prison guards and a member of the board of directors of the prison. The parole board members would then evaluate the prisoners' personality, progress and behaviour while incarcerated. There are different factors that influence this evaluation, such as offenders' criminal history, mental health, institutional misconduct and participation in programmes appropriate to the offence (Connor, 2016; Hannah-Moffat and Yule, 2011; Ministry of Justice, 2010; Mooney and Daffern, 2014).

Most research on parole decision making highlights the use of discretionary judgments during a process that mainly relies on evidence of progress and positive demonstrations of change (Connor, 2016; Hannah-Moffat and Yule, 2011; Ministry of Justice,

2010). There are various types of information that are included in the case file in order to evaluate whether an early release can be granted; such as the criminal record, programme reports, misconduct and disciplinary reports, adequate release plans and other professional reports (such as psychological or psychiatric assessments). Such correctional and risk assessment logics are paramount and during the parole board sitting these documents are available so board members 'rely on the authority of file information' (Hannah-Moffat and Yule, 2011: 166).

The prisoners' identification records, which contain the respective photograph, are also used when discussing each case. During this study, it was revealed that there is usually a demonstration of unpleasantness by the parole board members that is associated with viewing the photographic portrait ('ugh, that's awful') in the prisoners' records. This photographic portrait, as we will explore further in the next section, does not provide a positive visual representation of change. This reaction allows us to question how these portraits impact on the parole board's assessment and the decisions made regarding the prisoners' release and future life.

We argue that the meanings attributed to the prisoner's photographic portrait have implications when deciding whether that offender will be released.<sup>4</sup> In the words of the probation officer Renata (18 years of service), the prisoner's physical appearance shown in the photographic portrait 'helps in thinking he is worthless'; that is, in not believing that the prisoner can stop being a *criminal*. This process of attributing sense to photographs relates to a very explicit repressive logic of photography (Sekula, 1986: 10–11). The belief that the surface of the body, and especially the face, conveys distinctive signs that reveal the true, inner character of the person makes the photographs of criminals a mode of instrumental realism and a way of embodying the unworthy (Sekula, 1986: 10).

Photography has had the same function from the beginning of its creation to the present that is grounded in the idea that it may be viewed as a medium for authentically recording truth or artifice (Carrabine, 2014).<sup>5</sup> As we will explore, photographs are always ontologically fallible and partial and their uses in the prison represent tentative efforts to capture private selves, tackle emotions and stand up for an approach that is open to the complex, or fragmented, meanings condensed in each and every image (Carrabine, 2014: 140).

### *The unpleasant and unchanging criminal body*

When exploring how the *unworthy* body is constructed through the meanings prison staff and prisoners attribute to the use of photographic portraits, there are two very significant elements that associate such portraits with a visual representation of the criminal: the perception of an *unpleasant* and *unchanging* body.

The photographic portrait is perceived as a representation of an 'abnormal' and ugly body, seen as unpleasant and repulsive. Such abnormality is inscribed on this body so the *marks of criminality* are visible (Rose, 2000: 8). The focus on 'ugliness' as a symbol of deviance reveals a way of inflicting individual responsibility and relates to a physiognomic code of interpretation of the prisoner's portrait. The construction of the criminal subject cannot be dissociated from the construction of a law-abiding body, with ugliness being associated with the perturbing force of crime and social stability with beauty

(Sekula, 1986: 22). Indeed, the guards and officers often used expressions such as ‘mean face’ or ‘peculiar aspect’ when commenting on photographic portraits of individuals convicted of crimes. This extract from the field notes illustrates the use of such expressions:

The guard did not always remember [the prisoners] I asked to call [for the interview]. ‘I need to check their face [in a derogatory way] if I do not know’ [...] I asked him [the guard] what is the purpose of the boards [with the prisoners’ photographs] on the walls at the entrance. He explained those were the prisoners that worked outside the prison [...] and asked me back ‘they look mean, don’t they?’ Later on, Clara and Filipa, both working as probation officers in the same prison, were looking at the photographs of a prisoner in the computer system while commenting on how he looked *evil*. (Field note)

The repulsive and distorted physical aspect represented in the photographic portrait<sup>6</sup> is perceived by the prisoners as a deliberate act on the part of the prison guards, thus conveying associations with the idea of physiognomy studies that ‘facial attractiveness was an indicator of virtue, while ugliness denoted vice’ (Carrabine, 2014: 139). As mentioned by Carney (2017: 281), ‘the photograph circulates as an ordering force of figuration and disfigurement’ and ‘to disfigure is, in one way or another, to attack the body, to deform it, to change its shape and its image’ (2017: 285). The unpleasant photographic portrait has impacts on prisoners’ feelings, as they perceive the portrait to be constructed in a way so they look ugly. The inmate Flávio (convicted for homicide with a sentence of 20 years and no previous criminal record) describes below how the photographs taken by the guards transform them into ‘ugly beings’ and represent them with a physical aspect with which they do not identify or recognize themselves:

The person takes the photograph, and the guards distort it in every way, they give you a pointy face that looks like a monster. *How so?* They distort the photograph. *Distort?* Exactly. It happens that I don’t have here a photograph to show you, it is in my cell. But you can see on my [prisoner identification] card what they do. They take a photograph, and then they distort it all, they make the face look pointy and pull [the features] [...] They make a person look like an animal, a monster. Therefore, it is already not beautiful, but the person still becomes more... *The photographs are distorted, in your opinion?* Not in my opinion, they really do that. [They do it] to humiliate the person, I believe. You look at the photograph and think, ‘Looks like an animal, looks like a monster.’ Looking at that is traumatic.

The prisoners feel they are shaped to look like animals and ugly creatures through the use of prison photographs and their portraits of ‘abnormal’ bodies. We argue that these embodied lived experiences have an impact on their stigmatized identities as prisoners and on the construction of their self through processes of incorporation and exclusion (Goffman, 1963). The prisoners’ photographs form the basis for a shared prisoner identity. In the words of Katja Franko Aas (2004: 386): ‘categorical thinking is based on the binary either/or logic that puts people or objects into categories, while obscuring the ambiguities’. Following this *categorical thinking*, the photographs de-contextualize prisoners’ personal positions and narratives in order to standardize their stigmatized identities based on their belonging to a specific social category (Aas, 2004; Goffman, 1963; Rowe, 2011): the (un)worthy, the (un)pleasant and the (un)changing. This forms a

categorical view of *criminals*, prisoners and offenders. Again, in the words of Cesário, used as the epigraph to this article:

You can't look good in the photo. This is a prison... we can't look good. We can't repeat and get the second photo if we want. It is 'stand against the wall', *click* and that is it. This is a prison.

The last element of the association of photographic portraits with a visual representation of the criminal is the immutability of this body. The prisoners' portraits are taken when they arrive but they are not updated during their time in prison. Regarding this practice of not updating the photographs, the prisoners noted how they are no longer recognized nor recognize themselves in the photograph initially taken because their appearance has changed over the years. Luis (convicted for robbery with a sentence of 13 years and with previous criminal record) explores this when he explains how he does not recognize himself in the portrait that was taken when he first got into prison. The same happens when the prison guards look at that portrait:

I can tell you that the photo they have of me – that's not me. And it is really different, very different. One of these days... – I work in the school, I give support and look after the management of it – and in the school, you have the photos and numbers of all the students and everyone that passes by. One of these days they were commenting that and my boss even called me and said 'come here, see if you know this guy here' and I looked [at the photo] and said 'that's me maybe 12 years ago', 'but it does not look like you or anything', and I 'nop, but you know how it is... people get older, they change and create new habits, new hairstyles or this or that and that makes a difference, as you can see', 'you need to update this man, I don't recognize this guy, so ugly' [laughs] always playing around.

Both probation officers, Renata and Mariana, explore the portrayal of this immutability when discussing the use of their information system to document and evaluate prisoners' progress in the prison context. They highlight the positive changes prisoners go through during imprisonment and how that is not represented in the photographic portrait. In their words:

These photographic portraits are not updated, right? We all know that they come from the streets, a lot of times homeless or drug addicts, those are the ones that will positively change their physical appearance and it would be important to update [their portraits]. (Officer Renata)

I confess that in terms of photography I really do not... I do not value it for a simple reason. Because it has a lot to do with their [prisoners'] appearance when arriving from the street. Sometimes after a period of great human degradation that the person lives as homeless, where there is a neglect in terms of how the person looks like and self-care... that very often shows how they arrive at the prison. And then, once they start to regulate their conduct, their physical appearance also changes and, after a month or two, we see the person and we look at the photo when the person arrived and they do not match. (Officer Mariana)

During the interviews, the probation officers argue that the prison guards should be made aware of the importance of updating such photographs so that positive change is materialized. When discussing these issues with the guards, they acknowledge that

prisoners' physical appearance usually changes drastically. However, since guards and prisoners interact on a daily basis, it is much more difficult for them to notice such changes during their professional routine. Just like the guard Mateus says: 'We are with them [prisoners] every day. Those that notice such differences [on their physical appearance] are those that do not have such a close contact with the individuals.' Nonetheless, guards still recognize that prisoners' portraits are not updated and, consequently, do not acknowledge how physical appearance changes during incarceration. In the words of the guards Valter and Néelson:

Sometimes they enter [in the prison] looking like vagabonds... and that is the most frequent situation. Entering with a vagabond look, long hair, very thin and then, after a while, we look at them and almost do not recognize them... Better nutrition, short hair, trimmed beard... (Guard Valter)

Most of the prisoners, maybe 90% – I could even show examples and call a random prisoner here – let's say, one that arrived three years ago, and show the photo so you could see how he looks like now... It is such a difference. It is not the same person. I think the photo... it should be taken at x and x time, update the file [...] long beard, long hair, from the streets really, we can't smell because the portrait does not allow it [laughs] otherwise you would notice the difference [laughs]. (Guard Néelson)

Most of the prisoners also report how bad they look in the photograph either because they are 'all bruised' due to physical assaults or their features are altered due to drugs. Their physical appearance changes while serving their sentence. The prison space relates to the body, and the sentence time is inscribed on the imprisoned body (Moran, 2012; Wahidin and Tate, 2005). Nevertheless, it is the photographic record 'in which they are all marked', which endures as a way of locking the past, as a criminal biography, and as a perpetuation of stigma through the materialization of ugliness as a sign of criminality. The inmates Luis and Jaime address this 'mark' perpetuated by the photographic records that are seen on a daily basis on the walls of the prison and in the prisoner's identity card:<sup>7</sup>

When I entered the prison, they took my photograph with a long beard [...] They take photographs as we enter here, right? Some of us try to change this, but there is nothing we can do. They take the photograph as we are; even all bruised, as we came from the police... [...] This is almost like a form of humiliation, do you know what I mean? *A form of humiliation? Taking the photograph?* Exactly. Don't you think? I do [...] Being all bruised in a photograph that is in a database, a card in which, every day, one is seen to circulate in the prison... it is nonsense. Don't you think? (Inmate Luis)

The photo I have here on my prisoner's card is the photo taken when I got in for the first time, where I am all bruised. That's the photo from the first time I got arrested, now for the second time the photo is exactly the same. (Inmate Jaime)

The narratives of prisoners reveal how the photographs taken for their identification in the prison are viewed as 'deepening' the stigma of delinquency in their bodies and selves (Prainsack and Kitzberger, 2009: 69). These photographic portraits are central to the construction, expression and experience of the 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes,



1958), namely, the deprivation of autonomy and self-control. Through a process of objectification of the body that reduces the prisoners to their physicality and, consequently, reduces their human agency (Aas, 2004), the photographs assume the role of institutionalized memories of their delinquency.

Pedro (convicted for rape, theft, robbery and other crimes with a sentence of 18 years and with previous criminal record) explores how his photographic portrait remained the same during his imprisonment and how he would like to see that portrait updated (just like the photograph in his citizen card<sup>8</sup> that portrays his changing appearance). However, the body portrayed in the photograph used during his imprisonment remains immutable:

The photo I have there [prison's file] could be updated. Now I am a hard man and you have a kid there [in the photo]. They could take that one of the kid away and put one from now [smile]. The photo they have of me is like... 10 years old [laughs]. Not that long ago I went to... get the citizen card and took some photos, new ones, and I asked the lady for a copy and everything – it is a photocopy but well – ‘it is to put in my cell as a memory so and so’. And here they could also... they could take another photo and update what they have, but no. Here it's always the same. They never change it. I can get in and get out now and get in five or six years again, they go to the file and they will throw the photo from 2003 at me [laughs].

The photographic portrait of the prisoner standing against the wall will result in a utilitarian portrait that is part of the system of control (Jackson, 2009: 11). The participants explore such role of the portrait and that is exemplified by the words of Gaspar (convicted for drug trafficking, theft, robbery and other crimes to seven years and without previous criminal record) when he differentiates the photographic portrait, its role and uses according to where it was taken: inside or outside criminal justice institutions:

It is a weird situation, isn't it? When we are outside and take a photo... I used to live near this historical place with medieval walls and I would stay there taking photos... and now the guard takes photos of me and it is strange. It feels weird, you already know that photo is related to a criminal record.

These photographic portraits have the function of ‘[folding] a person into the controlled space of a dossier [...] [that] contains the past and the future’ (Jackson, 2009: 21). This bureaucratic dossier becomes a *mirror of ourselves* and ‘[turns] the infinitude of facts and emotions and connections that make each of us the ever-changing unique creatures we are into manageable things’ (2009: 21). The prisoners' perceptions of the photographs highlight a complex process of emotional work (Chamberlen, 2015: 10) in which they articulate and frame their emotions by enacting them on their photographs. The inmate Nuno exemplifies this when he says ‘there is no need to smile or anything. It is even better to have a serious [facial] expression, right? The person is not happy to be in prison, right?’

### *Beyond the prison walls: Portraying the (mutable) criminal body*

Despite the changes physical appearance goes through during imprisonment, the photographic portraits perpetuate the image of an *unchanging criminal body*. Nonetheless,

when the same body is subject to photographic identification procedures outside the prison, this body is portrayed as *mutable*. This *mutable criminal body* is constantly subject to photographic identification procedures, in particular, when in contact with the police during criminal investigations.

Most of the prisoners interviewed make a clear distinction for how photographic procedures occur in prison and policing contexts. Nuno (convicted for homicide with a sentence of 20 years and with previous criminal record), for instance, describes how police inspectors keep taking his photographs to update his changing physical appearance in their database while he was being investigated as a suspect:

I remember that I told them [police inspectors] that I already have photos and they [said] ‘we know that but we need to update them’, I don’t know but they always take more photos because we can look different, right?

The prisoners also explain that police photographic procedures are usually more exhaustive so the details of such physical changes are captured and stored. For that reason, photographs are usually taken of specific parts of their body and, in particular, their face. For instance, scars, tattoos, beard, hair colour and length, are some of the physical features that usually change over time and are photographed in detail. Jaime (convicted with a sentence of 24 years, and with previous criminal record) exemplifies such detail when he describes the moment police officers took photographs of his tattoos and a scar on his face:

second time they got me, I had another tattoo and they took a photo of it. All the details, right? They also took [a photo] of my scar – I opened my lip and got a scar and they also got that one.

Pedro also illustrates how his photographs were taken during criminal investigation in order to update photographs taken in the past by the police that did not portray his changing body and physical appearance:

Some years passed by, right? And I was 18 years [last time I had photos taken] and had certain facial features... young guy, right? I still feel young, despite I am 30, but they had to take [new photos] anyway because they said my facial features changed a bit and then they never saw me with a beard [...] They had me as a little kid, that face looking very... And they had to update it and this last time they took more photos. The officer ‘ah tattoos and all’ and took photos of them. Last time they got me I also had a different hair colour... [...] They only wanted to update the years that went by, the years I was in prison and now, suppose I go back to the streets and commit more crimes... If people see the 18-year-old photos certainly ‘it is not this one’... And they wanted something more... more up-to-date. (Inmate Pedro)

The differences in the practices within and outside prisons mean that the photograph is a site for advancing our understandings of the link between the ‘pains of imprisonment’ and prisoners’ identities (Chamberlen, 2015; Rowe, 2011; Sykes, 1958). In other words, the ‘pains of imprisonment’ (Sykes, 1958) are very much inscribed in and expressed through the feelings of the prisoners when talking about their photographs and their temporality. These discourses reveal how prisoners understand incarceration through their photos and how the process of being photographed has a significant effect on the sense of their own identities and *stigma* (Goffman, 1963).

Prisoners consider that the manipulation of the photograph is a representation of the subordination to the prison and the dispossession of agency, whereas prison staff consider the photograph to be a means of establishing discipline, control and social order. The focus on faces in the photographs allows us to look at both identity formation and power relations. The photograph of the prisoner is a target of meaning attributions through which the photograph is being set in direct correlation with social and power relations (Carney, 2017). Such relations projected in the uses and meanings attributed to the prisoners' photographs convey the social and cultural environment of prisons and the respective social hierarchy.

As means for identification and representation of the *criminal body*, photographs cannot be viewed as passive or inanimate. As *bodily economies* (Walby and Carrier, 2010) participating as *indicators of criminality*, the meanings attributed to the photographic portrait of prisoners co-constitute the *criminal body*. Such portrait and the meanings attributed to it are a relational object that is not given or stable but that is enacted in practices (Carney, 2017). From an embodied perspective, the photograph of a prisoner is a materialization of cultural norms co-produced to give meanings to the *criminal body*. In the words of Chamberlen (2015: 11): 'the body is a material entity and a cultural construction. To the extent that bodies reflect social norms, they offer a unique perspective on oppressive structures and environments such as the prison.'

## Conclusion

Photographs can be seen as visual evidence of the difference between the criminal and the non-criminal and as reinforcing an element of otherness (Carrabine, 2012, 2014; Sekula, 1981, 1986). They can be used to tell *stories* about *social worlds* (Jackson, 2009). We explored how these *stories* are materialized by the prisoner's photographic portrait by understanding the role of such portraits as observable *bodily economies* (Walby and Carrier, 2010) when making the *criminal body* visible.

In order to explore the contemporary use of photography, we discussed how individuals with very different social positionings in the everyday life of prisons (prisoners, prison guards and probation officers) construct the *criminal body* through the use of these portraits. We demonstrated how these portraits act as a classification device by developing a conceptual analysis of how the *criminal body* is portrayed: as *unpleasant* and *unchanging*. We argue that the meanings attributed to these portraits have impacts on offender rehabilitation and reintegration by visually portraying the *unworthy*. The construction of such *criminal body* cannot be dissociated from the construction of a law-abiding body (Sekula, 1981, 1986). For this reason, when considering the different factors that influence parole decision making, the role of the prisoner's portrait must be highlighted, as it does not provide the positive demonstration of change that is sought when making such decisions.

The *criminal body* is a stigmatized body and, through a process of objectification, the prisoners are reduced to their physicality. The meanings attributed to these photographic portraits have impacts on their stigmatized identities as prisoners (Goffman, 1963). There is an understanding of incarceration through such visual representations, as they are central to the experience of the 'pains of imprisonment' and its link to prisoners' identity construction (Chamberlen, 2015; Rowe, 2011; Sykes, 1958). The

embodied self is reconstituted, and the photograph participates in the prisoner's identity construction, and through it, others attribute meanings to the prisoner's appearance. The ways in which the *criminal body* becomes intelligible render different power relations visible, as the prisoner's portrait expresses the social and cultural environment of the prison space and its social hierarchy.

This analysis contributes to the literature on the visual within criminology and, in particular, on how the photograph is used to 'figure' and 'disfigure' (Carney, 2017) the *criminal body* (Carrabine, 2012, 2014; Finn, 2009, 2017). Further work is needed in order to continue exploring the meanings attributed to the physical appearance and the aesthetics concerned with disorder, criminality and deviance. One challenge will be to determine how, in the near future, new and old forms of reading the *criminal body* can be combined. New forms of identification and criminal suspicion (for instance, the collection and storage of biometric or genetic information in large computerized databases) may not replace the old methods but instead reinforce each other in shifting the focus of control towards potential offenders and re-offenders. Further work focused on the use of such technologies and the role of the body as a source of identification but also of prediction of criminality is indispensable. For now, it remains an open question how the imbrication of old and new forms of identifying and making legible and transparent the *criminal body* will change conceptions of human identity.

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### **Notes**

1. The offices of prison staff and the head office of the prison guard contained general boards with the photographs of all of the prisoners. Other prison spaces displayed boards with photographs of the prisoners who circulate in that prison sector. For example, the school board displayed the photographs of the prisoners who study there, and the same applies to the workspaces and other prison wings.

2. Since the scope of the study goes beyond the use of photography for criminal identification purposes, not all the participants discussed such use during the interviews (particularly in the case of probation officers).
3. There was an opportunity to witness and directly observe situations in which a prison guard photographed the prisoners upon their arrival at one of the prisons. In these situations, the guard gives the reception staff the numbers of the prisoners who recently entered the establishment. These prisoners are called, and the prison guard orders them to 'lean against the wall' one by one and to 'look' at him. Just like Pedro mentions: 'they take a photo and say "just lean against the wall and do not move!" and that's it'.
4. This follows the idea advanced by Bull and McAlpine (1998) that the stereotypes of the facial appearance of criminals might have consequences in court when determining guilt or innocence.
5. This is illustrated in *The Expression of the Emotions*, where Darwin (1965) explores how inner feelings and emotional states are manifested physically through the use of photographic evidence (for instance, the facial expression of muscles when laughing or crying).
6. In the narratives of prison guards who were directly involved in the photographic identification procedures (because they usually take the photograph or upload it into the computer system), this 'peculiar aspect' is associated with the distortion of the photographs caused by the software used and the fact that the guards 'are not professional photographers'. As the guard Nelson (24 years of service) states: '[I try to] use the maximum space possible in the camera to fit the prisoner inside [within the angle of the lens] [...] [then I hear complaints]: "His head looks big in the registration system!", but it does not! The computer system, when adjusting the photograph to the program, distorts it a bit.'
7. The participants often compare the prisoner's identity card to their own national citizen identity card. In the words of Emílio, prisoners need such cards to 'walk around the prison, to have access to this and that. It is our identification here. I think I might even have mine with me [looks for it in the pockets and shows it]. Look at my photo, you can't even see it, it's worn from being here.' The participants highlight the use of prisoners' identity cards and their instrumental value, since these cards are needed in the everyday contexts of the prison space. For instance, the inmate Pedro explains how they need such card with their photographic portrait 'to go to the cafeteria, to go to the phone booth'.
8. The Portuguese ID card needs to be renewed every five years.

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