

## THE ORIGINS OF PRISON SUBCULTURE

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**Abstract.** “Criminal subculture” is an antisocial, instigating phenomenon that not only differs from, but also opposes the general culture, the dominant values. It is obvious that this subculture is the result of criminal and antisocial activity, which survives and is preserved in the criminal environment from generation to generation, it is one of the most serious obstacles to the implementation of the goals of punishment in penitentiary institutions, with its specific value orientations, norms and rules of behavior, and informal stable bonds of offenders. The nature of the prison subculture is conditioned by the specifics of the type of punishment of imprisonment: the forced isolation of people, their inclusion in same-sex groups, and strict regulation of behavior in all spheres of life. The criminal subculture undermines the legal and moral foundations of society, significantly hinders the activities of law enforcement agencies, and keeps society in an atmosphere of fear and terror.

Knowledge of the specifics of the criminal world and the standards of behavior of convicts can help neutralize or reduce the influence of prison subculture, which will allow the administration of penitentiary institutions to clearly, timely, and objectively analyze the pre-criminal situations prevailing in places of imprisonment, monitor them, and take measures to prevent them. One of the necessary conditions for neutralizing or limiting the negative impact of the criminal subculture is the introduction of more humane institutions in the penal legislation. The transition from punitive, restrictive and non-personal means of influence of the penal system to more humane methods towards offenders implies the development of re-socialization programs with serious substantive changes.

**Keywords:** *Criminal subculture, prison subculture, forced isolation, distorted system of value orientations, prison environment, lack of trust, antisocial organism, "rats", "gorillas", "jackals", "merchants", "fish", "prostitutes", "gangsters", "overlords", "goats", "devils", "roosters", "depraved", "thief in law", "criminal laws", "criminal ideology", "criminal life", "criminal society", "cash box of the criminal world", metalanguage of the*

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ORCID - 0000-0002-7936-002X,  
This topic is very comprehensive and quite exotic, which is why the author does not initiate to cover it entirely.



*criminal world: slang, tattoo, card gambling, "criminal authority", prison hierarchy, main determinant of penitentiary crime, pre-criminal situation.*

### **Access to Subculture.**

Subculture is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon. It operates in all social systems and serves as a necessary condition for vital activity. The theory of subculture states that a person is formed in a group of peers, whose members have a stable subcultural system that differs from the value orientations characteristic of a given society. In such a case, a person is mainly formed in accordance with the norms established around him, not fully perceiving the universal values of culture. Each class, social group or any other community of people is endowed with its own value orientation, which is also present in the criminal world.

A subculture, being a part of the general culture, is a set of customs, traditions, and values of a particular social group. "Criminal subculture" is an antisocial, instigating phenomenon that not only differs from, but also opposes, the general culture and the values that dominate it. It is obvious that this subculture is the result of criminal and antisocial activity that exists and is maintained in a criminal environment from generation to generation. Therefore, it is assumed that in modern criminology, the criminal subculture is theoretically an intermediate phenomenon between theoretical developments on crime, the personality of the criminal, and the causes of criminal behavior.

One of the elements of the criminal subculture is the prison subculture, having formed in places of imprisonment it is maintained thanks to people with a reputation in the criminal environment.<sup>1</sup> One of the most serious obstacles to the implementation of the goals of punishment in penitentiary institutions is the prison subculture, with its specific value orientations, norms and rules of behavior, and informal stable connections of offenders.

The "laws" of small groups, including family ones, are a program of joint life, which is entirely based on the logic of the system's operation. Any closed social group seeks to develop its own laws of social life: convicts have created a special "constitution" of prison life. Prison subculture includes behavioral stereotypes, norms, traditions, rituals, customs, jargon and moral norms, gestures, which fundamentally have a different orientation than that the penitentiary legislation and internal regulations implied.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Efimov E. S. Modern prison.. Life, tradition and folklore. M., 2004, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Platek M. «Prison Subculture in Poland», International Journal of Sociology of Law, November 1990, Vol. 18, N 4, p. 459

**The Reasons for the Emergence of Prison Subculture.** The term "prison subculture" began to be used most often in official and scientific circles in the 1970s, when crime threatened the state security. However, throughout its existence, it has been the subject of discussion in criminological, penal, and legal psychology works.<sup>3</sup>

The issue under discussion has been addressed by numerous native and foreign criminologists. D. Klemmer, V. Miller, K. Schrett, V. Fox and others in their criminological works substantiate the need to study different types of crime respectively from the positions of unique subcultures.<sup>4</sup> However, the issue was not interpreted identically.

In our opinion, not identical interpretations of subcultures in scientific research are due to the lack of in-depth comparative analysis. Simultaneously conducted modern and previous years' studies make it possible to uncover the constituent elements of this phenomenon.

In criminology, many hypotheses have been put forward about the causes of the emergence of the prison subculture. Some experts explain the emergence of the subculture by the sexual isolation of individuals, the separation of active and passive homosexuals, morally justifying the exploitation of passives by actives. So, it can be concluded that sexual isolation creates an antisocial subculture where sexual contacts between different sexes are limited.

Another group of criminologists criticizes this opinion, considering it limited and unsubstantiated.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, sexual isolation does not always lead to the emergence of a subculture (for example, service in the armed forces).

The reasons for the formation of a subculture are conditioned by the psychology and mental state of the person in place of imprisonment. The convict is in a frustrated state, which becomes the cause of his vulnerability, tension, and aggression. Realizing that taking aggressive actions towards his main "enemies" - representatives of the administration or prison "authorities" - is dangerous, the person restrains himself, as a result of which the accumulated negative emotions turn into hidden aggression. In such situations, the slightest reason can lead to conflict situations.

According to another group of criminologists, the reason for the emergence of the convicts' subculture is not so much the psychological state of the person, but

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<sup>3</sup> Howard J. *The Theatre of Judicial Science, or Reading for Judges and All Amateurs of Jurisprudence*. M., 1971. pp. 94-103:

<sup>4</sup> Fox V. *Introduction to Criminology*. M., 1980. P. 143:

<sup>5</sup> Podguretsky A. *Essay on the Sociology of Law*. M., 1974, p. 206:

the change in the nature of his life activity in places of imprisonment.<sup>6</sup>

The nature of the prison subculture is determined by the peculiarities of the type of punishment of imprisonment: forced isolation of people, their inclusion in same-sex groups, strict regulation of behavior in all spheres of life. They deprive or limit the ability to satisfy the basic needs of a person, and make life monotonous and uninteresting. The study of the history of prison subculture indicates that customs are adapted to the changing microenvironment, that is, they are manageable, they can be influenced, although this is a very complex and laborious process.<sup>7</sup>

V. N. Kudryavtsev notes: "The morals of the criminal environment are the subculture of that environment, which, unfortunately, is part of the general culture of the population. The norms and laws of the criminal world, on the one hand, protect the criminal environment, and on the other hand, perverting the youth, distort the public consciousness."<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the reason for the emergence of prison subculture is the desire to adapt to the new living conditions of imprisonment, and is the desire to satisfy primary social needs.

The above mentioned are of an objective nature and are considered to be the external factors for the emergence of subculture.

There are also internal, socio-psychological factors that influence subculture. Society condemns and isolates convicts, contrasting them with law-abiding citizens. Convicts stand out as a separate unit of society, contrasting "them" with "those" living in freedom. They develop norms to protect "their" values and interests, to strengthen "their" cohesion. The mentioned system of norms has a clearly expressed group type (do not deceive your own people, do not steal from your own people). And for those who violate the norms, social labeling is envisaged such as special tattoos, nicknames, and social isolation - the transfer to a group of demoralized people, etc.

Subculture is a distorted system of value orientations in places of imprisonment. It is a system of moral and psychological values regulating the informal life of convicts, which distorts the connection between the individual and society, and stimulates the crime growth. The structure of this phenomenon includes the knowledge, skills, criminal abilities, customs, and the "philosophy" of the criminal world, which excludes and denies guilt and responsibility for a criminal act, justifies a lifestyle defined by criminal ideas, and justifies illegal behavior.

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<sup>6</sup> Khokhryakov G. F. Social environment and personality. M., 1982, pp. 12-17, Khlyst B., Criminology. Main problems. M., 1980, p. 205:

<sup>7</sup> <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/tyuremnaya-subkultura-ponyatie-harakteristika-osobennosti>

<sup>8</sup> Kudryavtsev V. N. The Problem of Motivation in Criminology. M., 1986. pp. 5-7

**Prison Society and Trust.** Prison society is small in terms of social organization. Here, the dilemma of the convict's trust is of great importance. Trust in prison is either universal or, as a rule, completely absent.

Transparency of intentions in one, separated sphere of activity is not enough to create trusting relationships. Professor A.N. Oleinik considers the hypothesis according to which there is a deep contradiction regarding trust in the "small" society of prison.

On one hand, a "small" society facilitates the establishment of relationships based on trust, and on the other hand, the trust in such a society can only exist universally, with excellence, which significantly increases the attitude towards the person who is trusted, before whom one "opens one's soul", whom one knows and believes.<sup>9</sup>

Numerous studies assert the atmosphere of distrust in the prison environment. The prison world is incompatible with relationships based on friendship, mutual understanding and solidarity. Here, as a rule, there are no friends, at best, they are like-minded people or temporary "companions sharing the same fate".<sup>10</sup>

The lack of trust does not mean that prisoners consider it unnecessary or not needed. On the contrary, they see it as the structural basis of social life. According to prisoners, trust is one of the prerequisites for building a prison society.

Uneducated, disrespectful attitudes and behavior are commonplace for a small community. And their absence is contextual and implied "solidarity" for the participants in the relationship, an important condition for building trust between them.<sup>11</sup>

If uneducated, disrespectful behavior undermines trust even between close people, then it is obvious how it can affect the relationships of people isolated in one place against their will. In order to monitor the daily behavior of convicts in the penitentiary system, a group of informants is created, who are engaged in "informing/snitching" Such conditions force convicts to distrust each other.

**Subculture and Antisocial Norms.** It is impossible to imagine the subculture of convicts without the norms that ensure the internal integrity of that subculture as an antisocial organism. The aforementioned norms, penetrating the consciousness of convicts, especially young convicts, and being vividly reflected in their behavior, ensure the viability of antisocial groups.

The illegal lifestyle of convicts (traditions, customs, tattoos, card gambling,

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<sup>9</sup> Oleynik A.N., Prison subculture in Russia: from Everyday Life to State Power, INFRA-M Publishing House, M., 2001, pp. 151-152.

<sup>10</sup> Marchetti A.M., «Pauvrete's en prison», Ramonville Saint-Agne:Eres, 1997, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup> Giddens A., «The Constitution of Society», p. 75.

alcoholism and drug addiction) also contributes to their mutual criminalization. Antisocial traditions and customs that strictly regulate the illegal behavior of convicts prevail in prison life, any deviation from which can lead to serious negative consequences for the individual.

Criminal traditions and customs of convicts reflect the lifestyle of convicts serving a sentence in the form of imprisonment, regulate their relationships. The basic principles of the behavior of convicts have not been changed for decades. However, by the time, they undergo certain, often significant changes: new principles and customs are formed in accordance with the situation prevailing in the criminal world at a given period.

The laws of the criminal world provide a strict classification of convicts into “their own” and “strangers”, as well as clarification of the role and status of each convict. The reason for such stratification is the desire of the most dangerous criminals, especially habitual criminals, to gain privileges during the service of their sentence by violating the rights of others (convicts). This inevitably leads to conflict situations, the manifestation of aggressive behavior by convicts with a negative orientation. It is assumed that the preservation of criminal traditions, customs and laws can only be ensured by violent means, by coercion.<sup>12</sup>

The traditions and customs of convicts are as diverse as their environment. The first group is the so-called “law-commandments”. On the one hand, they are based on the inviolable laws of the general criminal subculture, on the other hand, they reflect the peculiarities of the conditions of serving sentences in penal institutions. According to their functional significance, they can have both a negative and a positive orientation.

Thus, the main principle of convict behavior has been maintained among convicts for decades: “Do not do what can harm us, because each of us will suffer.” Hence: “do not steal from your own people,” “do not betray,” “do not seek the help of representatives of the administration to resolve a conflict situation,” “do not carry a knife or any similar item, because everyone has the right to personal immunity,” “do not argue while drunk,” “do not ask unnecessary questions and talk little,”<sup>13</sup> etc.

The mentioned laws are for everyone: they regulate the relations between convicts, regardless their status, and any violation can lead to serious negative consequences.

The next commandment is as follows: “preserve your dignity”, “do not become homosexual” (but, at the same time, it is allowed to “use” passive homosexuals or

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.strana-oz.ru/2023/2/tyuremnaya-subkultura>

<sup>13</sup> <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/tyuremnaya-subkultura-ponyatie-harakteristika-osobennosti>

those who have been forcibly made to be such ones), “be able to defend yourself”. If rumors spread that a convict is cooperating with the penitentiary administration or, for example, has not paid the debt of card gambling, then, according to the prison “laws-commandments”, he is obliged to defend himself: “Prove that this is not so, beat or kill the one who slanders you, otherwise everything they say about you is true”.<sup>14</sup>

Physically strong and strong-willed individuals, as a rule, adapt better to the living conditions of imprisonment. They create and maintain the mentioned norms.

At the same time, old laws are still preserved and are in force in places of imprisonment, which oblige convicts to observe the rules of personal hygiene, not to harm sick and elderly convicts.<sup>15</sup>

The mentioned norms, customs and traditions are supranational: they exist in the penitentiary systems of many other countries.

The next group of traditions and customs concerns exclusively the “authorities” of the criminal world. These laws are formed during the so-called “gatherings”, “congresses” convened by the leaders of the criminal world, and their implementation is guaranteed not only by the influence of “criminal authorities”, but also by the use of violence.

There are several groups of “laws”. The first group regulates relations with society, law enforcement agencies, and the penitentiary administration: “Do not cooperate with law enforcement agencies”, “Use every mistake of the police, penitentiary administration, court, and prosecutor’s office to your advantage”, “Slander the penitentiary representatives who harm you”, etc. The listed ones are the main and the most stable “laws”, which form intolerance and a hostile attitude towards law enforcement agencies and the entire law-abiding society in general.

The second group of “laws” regulates the relationships between convicts. Thus, it provides the classification of convicts into authorities, leaders, activists, and demoralized.

### **Subcultural Classification of Prisoners.**

In his study of prison society, Graham Sykes notes that there are more than a dozen informal classification groups in the US prison hierarchy.<sup>16</sup> The convicts who are busy reporting information to the administration make up a group named “rats”. Next is the “gorillas” group. These convicts tend to use physical force and violence

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<sup>14</sup> <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/tyuremnaya-subkultura-ponyatie-harakteristika-osobennosti>

<sup>15</sup> Abramkin V. F. Chizhov Yu. V. How to survive in a Soviet prison. M., p. 86, 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Sykes G. «The Society of Captives. A Study of a Maximum Security Prison», Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 87-105.

in every situation. A group of “jackals” is distinguished, who, unlike “gorillas”, use physical force and violence only against the weak. Another is the “merchants”, who are constantly busy seeking their own interests, even in opposition to the common interests of the convicts. Next is the group of “fish”, newcomers, those who are not yet familiar with the rules of the “other life”. Passive homosexuals also form an independent classification group - “prostitutes”. This group includes both those who have been forcibly converted into passive homosexuals, and those who did not hide their sexual orientation before they were in prison.

The name of the next group is literally translated from Armenian as “ball busters”. They express their strong dislike to the administration at every opportunity, seeking clashes with them. Representatives of this group are considered to be bearers of values that absolutely deny official norms, have open contempt for these norms. The other is the group of “gangsters” - ideologically mature convicts who are in conflict with both the administration and other convicts. Members of this group use “gorillas” and “jackals” to implement their intentions. “Men” enjoy general respect, whose character is distinguished by self-confidence, courage, and unwillingness to completely submit to anyone.<sup>17</sup>

The informal classification of convicts in the Soviet and post-Soviet penitentiary system is assessed with certain peculiarities. Based on the results of numerous studies conducted in this system, it is possible to distinguish several different groups of the classification presented below.<sup>18</sup>

“Overlords” are the main carriers of the prison subculture. They maintain their loyalty to informal values and norms even when they may suffer or be severely punished for it. “Men”: strive to maintain their autonomy and independence from both the administration and the “Overlords”. “A real “man” is second in rank after the “Overlord” ...<sup>19</sup> “Outcasts”: are extra-class individuals. They have no “citizenship” rights in the prison world, are outside the social life of the prison, and are forced to limit their daily contacts to the circle of people like themselves, other “outcasts”. “Goats” or “woodpeckers” openly cooperate with the administration; report any information of interest to them.

For their services, which are viewed as betrayal by other convicts, they receive support from the administration. “Stingy/people who are unwilling to pay” These are also people rejected by prison society. This group includes those who refuse to pay their debts. Debt is considered a sacred value in prison, and failure to repay a

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<sup>17</sup> See Sykes G. «The Society of Captives. A Study of a Maximum Security Prison», Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 87-105.

<sup>18</sup> Oleinik A.N., The same work, M., 2001, pp. 99-103.

<sup>19</sup> Gurov A. "Red Mafia", M., 1995, pp. 91-94.



debt leads to unpredictable consequences, up to and including expulsion from the "respected" prison society. "Devils": These are convicts who do not follow the rules of personal hygiene. This group is mainly made up of those who do not have a permanent place of residence.

"Rats": they bear this stigma as punishment for petty thefts committed in prison. "Roosters", "depraved": people who have been forcibly converted to passive homosexuality as punishment for crimes that are unacceptable from the point of view of prison morality and ethics: rape, violence against minors, treason with serious consequences, etc.

Convicts who have repeatedly stolen from other convicts also join the ranks of these individuals. The stigma of passive homosexuality seems to be a "red light" for prison society. These convicts are deprived of the right to communication of any kind and quality. Those who communicate with them can also be considered "contagious people" with all the consequences that arise from this.<sup>20</sup>

**Elements of Prison Subculture.** It is considered legitimate that any human activity, including antisocial ones, has its heroes, whose names go down in history, whom generations try to imitate. The same thing happens in the criminal world: at different times, criminal elements have formed their ideology in places of imprisonment. Since the 30s of the 20th century, the "thief in law" has served the role of the "perfect" criminal. In this person, convicts saw a man who had suffered various deprivations in his life, had gone through many trials and, therefore, was experienced and reliable, a "person with a soul of crystal purity," a person who steadfastly followed "criminal laws" and dedicated himself and his life to "criminal ideology." Young people serving sentences are brought up on the example of such people. In places of imprisonment, youth assimilate the laws of "criminal life". They are attracted by the seeming independence of that world.

The members of the group must be honest, fair to each other, must not lie, and are obliged to help convicts who are "disadvantaged" (in a cell, in a hospital), which is why there is a custom of "raising money" among the convicts. "Everyone is obliged to help their own people in any matter," which imposes them to pursue those who have harmed the "gang." Even if the harm has not been caused to you, but to one of your own people, you are obliged to help them to revenge.

According to their significance, the norms of the prison subculture are procedural, which regulate conflict relations between convicts, ceremonial, which regulate, for example, the entry of a newcomer into the "criminal community" - the so-called "registration", procedural, which provide ways to resolve disputes that arise, etc.

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<sup>20</sup> A.N. Oleinik, The mentioned publication, M., 2001, pp. 99-103.

The described traditions and customs have shaped and maintained the "authorities" of the criminal world for decades: they have hardly changed over time.

Another important element of the criminal subculture is the "cash box of the criminal world." Not with fair methods, it was originally created for an honest purpose, namely to assist financially the convicts in prison, as well as their family members.

However, in recent decades, the "cash register of the criminal world" has undergone serious changes in purpose and function.

The current activities of the criminal world can be called a criminal business, which does not at all correspond to the essence of the traditional, "classical" criminal world.

It should be noted that thanks to the "criminal world cash box", so-called "aid" is transferred to places of detention in the form of illegal deliveries, which often also contain drugs or other prohibited items. To protect the "criminal world cash box", trusted individuals among the authorities of the criminal world are appointed, who have a wide range of authority.

For example, they can decide to sentence people to death for violating so-called "financial discipline." Similar mechanisms also operate in penal institutions, of course in a more disguised manner. One of the unique elements of the prison subculture is the metalanguage of the criminal world - jargon, which is a legitimate phenomenon expressing the peculiarity of that subculture, the organization and consolidation of the criminal environment. Jargon or professional terminology is an integral element of any field; therefore the existence of criminal jargon is conditioned by the existence of crime.

The prison language, formed in a confined space, is an integral part of the convicts' daily life, therefore, willy-nilly, each convict learns and uses it in his daily communications. Under the gradual influence of a unique vocabulary, a negative rearrangement of value orientations occurs. The convict, losing his natural way of speaking and language, increasingly deviates from moral norms and more deeply perceives the negative phenomena and customs of the criminal environment, thereby contributing to the stabilization of subcultural relationships in places of imprisonment. In places of imprisonment, the prison language is an integral and independently existing part of the prison subculture. Knowledge of this language will expand the capabilities of penitentiary system employees while implementing operational and preventive measures. Tattoos are an essential element of the convict subculture. From the point of view of criminology, it is important to classify tattoos according to their semantic meaning, since in places of

imprisonment they are tattooed not for aesthetic reasons, but have a symbolic significance and certain meaning.

Knowing and deciphering the semantic meaning of various tattoos helps to characterize a person without conducting a proper interrogation (for example, from certain tattoos, one can determine a person's status in the criminal hierarchy, as well as make predictions about their behavior in prison).

The semantic description of tattoos somewhat reveals the reasons for their mass usage among convicts, although there is no unified opinion on this issue in the scientific literature.

Thus, the famous scientist G. Tarde refuses to see any meaning in tattoos. In his opinion, from the point of rationality, in conditions of strict isolation from society, there can be two reasons for tattooing: imitation and boredom.<sup>21</sup>

Of course there is some truth in it. Indeed, if we carefully study the environment of juvenile and young convicts,<sup>22</sup> we will be convinced of this. Long-term isolation from society, a monotonous life, and the desire to gain authority in the environment push young convicts to follow the customs of "prison life."

Therefore, in places of imprisonment tattoos perform a number of functions, including cognitive (they allow determining the status of the convict), signaling (they label the person, reinforce his status as a "depraved" or "criminal authority") and testifying to the person's value orientations.

Card gambling is an integral part of the life of prisoners. M. N. Gernet, S. V. Maximov and D. S. Likhachev in their works describe the customs and laws related to card gambling that have survived to this day in detail.<sup>23</sup> It can very often have a fatal meaning for a person. The outcome of the game can determine the status of a person in the prison hierarchy, his material situation, life and dignity.

Both one's own and the others' money, clothes, food etc. are the forms of the bet. In the 40s-50s of the last century, it was common to bet on a person's life. This happened mainly when a person lost all his property during an unsuccessful game, but still wanted to continue it. The person offered or accepted the condition that in case of losing to kill a specific person. In a card gambling, the loser very often undertakes to commit a certain crime or take on someone else's guilt, as well as repay the debt by encroaching on the sexual freedom of a relative, etc.

Failure to repay a debt incurred as a result of gambling is considered a significant violation of criminal traditions and customs, it is the greatest disgrace for the convict: the latter is subjected to humiliating violence, and then joins the

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<sup>21</sup> Tarde G. *Laws of Imitation*. SPB, 1982, pp. 50-52.

<sup>22</sup> Anisimov V. M. *Russia in the Mirror of Criminal Traditions of Prison*. SPB, 2003, p. 90.

<sup>23</sup> the same p. 92.

ranks of the "depraved."

Card gambling is one of the main causes of conflict situations in penitentiary institutions. It involves the use of physical, sexual, and psychological violence against the convict. We believe that combating and preventing it will contribute to the improvement of the atmosphere in that environment.

In fact, prison language, tattoos, and card gambling are independent elements of prison subculture. Their preservation and improvement are conditioned by the value orientations of the convicts, as well as the specific conditions of the functioning of penitentiary institutions.

### **Subcultural Observations and Suggestions.**

Generalizing the abovementioned, we can affirm that the criminal subculture undermines the legal and moral foundations of society, significantly hinders the activities of law enforcement agencies, and keeps society in an atmosphere of fear and terror.

In places of imprisonment, there is a degradation of the personality, stigmatization of the criminal. Through the use of violence, convicts turn each other into a socially, psychologically, sexually unique group.

It can be stated that the creation of their own social system is the response of convicts to imprisonment<sup>24</sup>

V. Shalamov writes: "The criminal underworld is a world where the motives are bestial, even worse than bestial, because any beast would be horrified by the actions that representatives of the criminal world easily commit."<sup>25</sup>

The prison subculture contradicts the moral and psychological values of society: it is based on selfish, inhumane motives, the desire to get rich quickly, permissiveness, and cruelty towards both "outsiders" and the weaker members of society.

It gives a significant place to sexual violence, the consequences of which haunt the victim throughout his further life. In other words, the prison subculture gives rise to violence, and in places of imprisonment, primarily sexual violence. Therefore, it is the main determinant of penitentiary crime.

Knowledge of the specifics of the criminal world and the standards of behavior of convicts can help neutralize or reduce the influence of prison subculture, which will allow the administration of penitentiary institutions to clearly, timely, and objectively analyze the pre-criminal situations prevailing in places of

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<sup>24</sup> Schneider G. *Criminology*. M., 1994, p. 123.

<sup>25</sup> [http://royallib.com/read/shalamov\\_varlam/ocherki\\_prestupnogo\\_mira.html#20480](http://royallib.com/read/shalamov_varlam/ocherki_prestupnogo_mira.html#20480)

imprisonment, monitor them, and take measures to prevent them.

The following psychological adjustments, aimed at employees of the penitentiary system, can contribute to reducing intergroup tension among convicts and deepening cooperation:

1. During re-socialization activities, avoid comparisons and public discussion of members of informal groups as much as possible.
2. Forming self-organized associations or any other formal groups, it is necessary to take into account the socio-demographic, moral-psychological and other characteristics of convicts.
3. When organizing the work of convicts, pay attention to their group belonging.
4. Involve prisoners with different statuses in the prison hierarchy in joint discussions (e.g., participation in work, application of incentives and penalties, changing the conditions of serving the sentence, etc.).
5. To possible extent, create similar conditions for convicts with different statuses within the prison subordination system.

One of the necessary conditions for neutralizing or limiting the negative impact of the criminal subculture is the introduction of more humane institutions into penal legislation. We believe that to achieve this goal, it is necessary to: 1) reasonable mitigation of the conditions of serving the sentence and the elimination of groundless and unjustified prohibitions and restrictions, as the latter arouse a mood of protest among convicts, a strong desire to disobey the regulations, and force them to seek justice in informal structures operating in places of imprisonment, in the laws of the criminal world, 2) expansion of measures aimed at maintaining and expanding the prisoner's connections with the outside world, 3) supporting groups of prisoners who demonstrate positive behavior in order to serve their common interests in the future, 4) Improving re-socialization efforts at both the general and individual levels, using various psychological, psychotherapeutic, and legal techniques, 5) strengthening the respectful attitude of representatives of the administration towards convicts. The same attitude should be formed among convicts towards representatives of the administration, which is possible only if the latter try to solve the personal problems of convicts, provide them with real assistance, and protect them from harassment by other convicts. At the same time, it is necessary to form a new culture of communication among convicts.

For the prevention of intergroup conflicts, it is advisable to:

1. Identify the groups of the highest level of the subculture, their list, who are the source of informal influence.

2. Identify the participants in the conflict, their psychological characteristics in time, publicly present the consequences, the guilty and responsibility.
3. Prevent any type of disinformation that is presented in the interest of the antisocial class.
4. To use organizational, psychological or other means to neutralize tension without violating the dignity and rights of the person.
5. Provide psychological assistance, especially to those in the quarantine department, to alleviate negative emotional states, unfounded anxiety, and guide them towards a conscious choice in a positive environment.<sup>26</sup>

And finally, the conditions for organizing positive intergroup relations of convicts are the use of non-traditional forms of re-socialization, changing the forms of management by the administration. The transition from punitive, restrictive, and impersonal measures of the penal system to more humane methods towards offenders implies the development of resocialization programs with serious substantive changes.

### **Conflict of Interests**

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

### **Ethical Standards**

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

### **Reference list**

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