UNPACKING PRISON CULTURE: THE ROLE OF STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

by

Sydney Ingel
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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at George Mason University

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ABSTRACT

UNPACKING PRISON CULTURE: THE ROLE OF STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

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Prison staff, especially non-custodial staff, remain an under-researched, yet important component of carceral life. These staff often play crucial roles in day-to-day prison activities/practices working as counselors, educators, and work supervisors. Using interview (N=140) and survey (N=289) data collected from staff in six Pennsylvania prisons, this study examines the depth and quality of staff relationships (with each other and with residents) and the effects of those relationships on staff perceptions of prison culture. Additionally, this paper examines how demographic variables (e.g., institution, staff position, race, and age) potentially contribute to the existence of staff subcultures within prisons. Ultimately, this study provides insight into the organizational culture of prisons through staff relationships with others within the penal environment.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture is "an interactional amalgamation of beliefs, values, artifacts, behaviors, demographics, symbols, meanings, patterns, language, rituals, myths, and ceremonies" (Rudes & Magnuson, 2019). Each correctional institution has its own unique organizational culture (Liebling, 2007), but, complicating matters, many different cultures may exist within an organization (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Linstead & Grafton-Small, 1992; Rudes & Magnuson, 2019). At minimum, there are two organizational cultures within prisons: the culture residents[1] perceive/experience and the culture staff perceive/experience. That is just the minimum amount of cultures possible within prisons, though, as staff may have additional subcultures based on demographic characteristics (e.g., race, age, job classification) (Rudes & Magnuson, 2019). This paper focuses on prison culture(s) from the perceptions/shared experiences of staff. However, not only do prison staff have their own cultural perceptions, they also help create the culture. Life within correctional institutions is "shaped intimately, and daily, by the system's employees" (Cullen, Lutze, Link, & Wolfe, 1989, p. 33). This is in addition to other factors such as: (1) the physical structure of the facility; (2) federal, state, and institutional policies; (3) a regimented schedule, and (4) actions/behaviors by residents.

[1] Due to the growing importance of using person-first language, I use the term "residents" to describe individuals who are currently incarcerated rather than "inmates" or "prisoners." However, when other scholars or research participants use the terms "inmates and "prisoners," those terms are used as an in vivo representation of the language used.

According to Liebling, Hulley, and Crewe (2011), a prison's culture is "primarily relational." This means that prison staff's relationships with their coworkers (e.g., team dynamics and support networks) and with residents contribute to the prison's culture (Gilbert, 1997; Liebling et al., 2011; Rudes & Magnuson, 2019).

Culture is a vague and amorphous concept, so it is critical for scholars to develop a more comprehensive understanding of culture and the factors that shape it. Notably, prison culture is often scapegoated whenever something goes wrong, such as poor implementation of new prison programs, high staff turnover, and poor mental health outcomes for staff (Rudes & Magnuson, 2019). If culture is the root of all problems in prisons, this requires practical solutions to address the culture issue and/or the deeply rooted frameworks and mechanisms of culture. However, it becomes difficult to fix the culture if there is no clear understanding of what factors might contribute to the problematic culture in the first place. This thesis explores—through qualitative and quantitative means—how relationships impact prison culture via the existence of staff subcultures.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Staff-Staff Relationships

Staff/coworker relationships are vital to organizations who depend on their workers to "interact and form connections to accomplish the work of the organization (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Staff relationships with other prison workers are important at the individual and organizational levels (Chibaru & Harrison, 2008). For organizations, trust is important because it acts as a "social lubricant" (Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, & Jiang, 2012) and encourages a healthy work environment (Wong & Cummings, 2009). According to Social Exchange Theory (SET), when trust is present in an organization, it leads to "high-quality reciprocal relationships" which results in positive outcomes for employees, supervisors, and management (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In the absence of trust, the organization may experience negative outcomes (Lambert et al., 2012). Several studies confirm the effect trust has on employee outcomes in correctional facilities (Lambert & Hogan, 2009; Lambert, Jiang, & Hogan, 2008; Lambert et al., 2012; Liou, 1995). For example, trust between supervisors and management is negatively related to job stress, such that, staff who trust their supervisors and management have less job stress than those who do not (Lambert, et al., 2008; Liou, 1995). For staff, having trust in supervisors and management may also increase job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and decrease burnout (Lambert et al., 2008; Lambert et al., 2012). When staff lack trust in their supervisors and management it often hampers their ability to effectively to do their job(s) (Lambert et al., 2012).

Developing positive relationships with other prison staff can provide individuals with a network of social support (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004). Social support helps prison staff cope with the strains of working in a prison and provides a resource for receiving guidance and encouragement from other staff (Lambert & Hogan, 2010; Lambert, Minor, Wells, & Hogan, 2016). Feelings of isolation occur when prison staff lack social support (Lambert et al., 2016). In prisons, staff support networks comprise of peers/coworkers, supervisors, and prison management. Coworkers or peers may act as a resource for staff to help them deal with work issues (Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan, 2010). Good relationships with coworkers create a cooperative environment based on teamwork rather than competition, which leads to a "safer, securer, more humane, and more professional work environment" (Paoline, Lambert, & Hogan, 2006, p. 198). However, a report by the U.S. Department of Justice (2000) found that coworkers are a large source of stress among correctional officers due to: (1) burned out colleagues venting their frustrations; (2) competition for choice assignments; (3) apprehension that if something happens they will not have backup from other staff, and (4) witnessing inappropriate staff behavior toward residents. Likewise, a lack of social support, particularly from supervisors and management, is regularly problematic and stressful for prison staff (Cheek & Miller, 1983; Lambert et al., 2016). Supervisors are a valuable resource for staff for guidance in resolving job demands (Brough & Williams, 2007). Receiving social support from supervisors and management gives prison staff the impression they are valued and respected (Lambert et al., 2010; Lambert, Worley, & Worley, 2018).

Like trust, when social support is present from coworkers, supervisors, and management, prison staff tend to experience more positive outcomes. Working in a prison is stressful, but social support from other individuals in the prison (i.e., coworkers, supervisors, and management) is linked with decreased feelings of job stress (Cullen, Link, Wolfe, & Frank, 1985; Lambert et al., 2016; Lambert & Hogan, 2010; Misis, Kim, Cheeseman, Hogan, & Lambert, 2013; Paoline et al., 2006). Furthermore, increased levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment associate with social support from coworkers, supervisors, and management (Brough & Williams, 2007; Cullen et al., 1985; Lambert et al., 2016; Paoline et al., 2006).

In its original imagining, collective efficacy taps into the cohesion (or social support) and trust among neighborhoods which is then leveraged as a resource to solve problems with disorder (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). This concept applies within correctional facilities, which are "intricate social organizations comprised of varying social ties" (Worley, Worley, & Hsu, 2018, p. 342). As noted above, trust and social support exist in prisons and are important aspects of staff relationships. A study by Worley et al. (2018) indicates that these collective efficacy components are often leveraged as a source of informal control within correctional institutions. Correctional staff who "mutually trust and support one another" are valuable in exercising informal control over staff who might engage in what are known as "boundary violations" (Worley et al., 2018, p. 342). Boundary violations occur when correctional staff violate the rules and regulations governing their professional relationship with residents (Lambert, et al., 2018; Marquart, Barnhill, & Balshaw-Biddle, 2001). These boundary violations range in

severity and in form (Marquart et al., 2001), such as, bringing residents contraband, engaging in sexual relationships with residents, excessively punishing a resident, letting a resident get away with conduct violations, or yelling and cussing at inmates. Collective efficacy in correctional institutions may prevent staff from committing boundary violations with residents (Worley et al., 2018). When there is low mutual trust and support among staff, and thus low collective efficacy, staff may be unable to come together to "maintain proper norms of behavior" (Worley et al., 2018, p. 336). Consequently, even though boundary violations are formally prohibited, they may go unchecked because other staff lack the collective efficacy to stop them (Worley et al., 2018). Poor relationships between staff members may then lead to bad or inappropriate staff-resident relationships.

Staff-Resident Relationships

Unlike the relatively new focus on staff-staff relationships, staff relationships with residents are a long-standing part of correctional research (Hemmens & Marquart, 2000). Early researchers, like Donald Clemmer (1940) and Gresham Sykes (1958), assumed that prison staff and residents distrusted each other, resulting in a dichotomized prison setting (Hemmens & Marquart, 2000). Later research, found that "correctional officers who are involved in daily interactions with inmates can establish a rapport with and an understanding of inmates" (Hemmens & Marquart, 2000, p. 299). Correctional staff relationships with residents are integral to prison life (Liebling, 2011; Dirkzwager & Kruttschnitt, 2012). The attitudes and behaviors displayed by staff may be major determinants of the prison experience for residents (Dirkzwager & Kruttschnitt, 2012).

Molleman & van Ginneken (2015) found in a Dutch prison, the quality of staff relationships with residents was the most important predictor of the quality of prison life. According to results from this study, a strong positive relationship existed between quality of staff-resident relationships and residents' quality of prison life, such that, better staff-resident relationships associated with better quality of prison life for residents (Molleman & van Ginnekan, 2015).

Prison staff, particularly correctional officers (COs), have to carefully balance building relationships with residents with their professional roles (Ricciardelli & Perry, 2016). For example, COs are security staff in charge of controlling and disciplining residents, so they cannot allow their relationships with residents to come at the expense of their authority or institutional safety (Ricciardelli & Perry, 2016). Relational components like trust, respect, communication, and fairness characterize "good" or "right" staff-resident relationships that are fundamental to the success of prison work (Liebling, Price, & Elliott, 1999; Ricciardelli & Perry, 2016). Using effective communication (e.g., "relational but secure" style) facilitates trust and respect between residents and staff (Ricciardelli & Perry, 2016). A "relational but secure" communication style involves prison staff being honest, consistent, patient, nonjudgmental, and listening to residents (Ricciardelli & Perry, 2016). This type of communication style is crucial because it helps prison staff de-escalate situations and resolve conflict without resorting to physical means (Ricciardelli & Perry, 2016). Reduced opportunities for communication (e.g., having a cellmate) and use of derogatory language undermine staff-resident relationships (Molleman & van Ginneken, 2015; Ricciardelli & Perry, 2016).

In the day-to-day operations of a prison, staff-resident relationships are valuable for both staff and residents (Liebling, 2011). Positive staff-resident relationships benefit staff because they are able to establish "credit" with residents, which COs can then draw on to resolve conflicts and keep the peace (Liebling et al., 1999). Additionally, when staff treat residents in a procedurally just manner (i.e., fair and respectful), there are fewer instances of resident misconduct (Reisig & Mesko, 2009). Establishing positive relationships with residents thus allows staff to be more effective in their work and increase institutional safety. For residents, positive relationships with staff increase their well-being and sense of safety, while reducing psychological distress (Biggam & Power, 1997; Liebling, Durie, Stiles, & Trait, 2005; Liebling, 2011).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH GAPS

In general, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to prison staff, their relationships, and prison culture. Prison staff, especially non-custodial staff, remain an under-researched, yet important component of carceral life. These staff often play crucial roles in day-to-day prison activities/practices working as counselors, educators, and work supervisors. Stemming from this, researchers do not understand the vertical or horizontal nature of staff relationships with other staff. Vertically, we do not know much about the relationships between line-staff, supervisors, and upper management. Horizontally, we do not know how coworkers interact with each other or how well workers from different job categories work together. Most of the research on prison staff relationships focuses on staff relationships with residents rather than with other staff. Due to these gaps, the qualitative portion of this thesis will be fairly descriptive and investigate the perceived quality of relationships that various prison staff have. Additionally, later sections explore what relational components (e.g., respect, trust, communication) matter most to staff relationships with other staff and with residents. Examining relational components important to staff-resident relationships will provide an update for the study done by Liebling, Price, and Elliott (1999).

Regarding prison culture, and culture more generally, there are numerous gaps in the literature that the quantitative portion of this thesis addresses. First, little, if any, research explores prison culture from the perspective of non-custodial staff. Second, there are no studies testing whether organizational relationships actually contribute to an

organization's culture. More specifically, there are no studies testing whether staff

relationships (with each other and with residents) contribute to a prison's culture. Third,

organizations may have multiple subcultures, which has not always been parsed out well

in previous studies on organizational culture (Rudes & Magnuson, 2019). For example, in

prisons, there are not just resident and staff subcultures; staff may also have additional

subcultures based on demographic characteristics (e.g., race, age, job classification)

(Rudes & Magnuson, 2019). To address these gaps, I will include the previously

mentioned variables into a regression model predicting prison culture. My research

questions are: *(1) Do staff relationships (with each other and with residents) help predict*

culture? (2) Do institutions within the same correctional system have different cultures?

and (3) Does culture vary by staff demographic characteristics (e.g., race, age, job

classification)?

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS

Data Site and Data Collection

This study uses a mixed method design. A large research team collected survey and interview data via 350 hours of fieldwork between 2014 and 2015 in six Pennsylvania prisons. These prisons had varying security levels and two out of the six prisons housed female residents. The research team made field visits to each prison where they administered surveys and conducted interviews with a random sample of staff chosen from an institutionally provided list of current staff working within every general population housing unit at each prison.

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC) provided staff demographic data which included staff names, positions, employment locations, and years of service. The research team excluded anyone who had been working for less than a year at their current prison (because the broader study was about organizational culture/climate and staff needed to be in their positions for a while to properly assess this) and excluded staff who were Clerk Typists or part of the medical staff. Clerk Typists and medical staff were excluded because they do not regularly spend time with residents and medical staff are often contracted with outside vendors. Of the remaining eligible staff, the list was filtered by prison and then by position title (e.g., "Corrections Officer I, "Unit Manager," "Corrections Counselor II"). Researchers used a disproportionate stratified sampling approach whereby 30% of the personnel working in each position within each prison were randomly selected to complete the organizational survey. This sampling

approach has several benefits, including: (1) allowing staff from all positions to participate; (2) providing somewhat equal representation of staff from each prison, and (3) preventing over- or under-sampling of staff populations. Additionally, a sample of 10% (of the prison staff who agreed to participate in the survey) within each position also participated in a one-on-one interview with a member of the research team. Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 45 minutes. In total, research staff surveyed 368 and interviewed 140 staff members and the demographics of this sample are presented in Table 1 (below). The sample is primarily non-custodial staff with COs only comprising 13% of the total staff interviewed and surveyed. Although I am primarily interested in non-custodial staff, COs are an important part of prison and including allows for comparison between the perspectives of non-custodial and custodial staff.

Table 1. Sample Demographics				
	Interviewed (N=140)	% Interviewed	Surveyed (N=368)	% Surveyed
Average Age	46		46	
Race				
White	133	95%	347	94%
Black	5	4%	12	3%
Unknown	2	1%	9	2%
Job				
Treatment	37	26%	104	28%
Psychology	9	6%	19	5%
Maintenance	26	19%	73	20%
Resident Services	12	9%	41	11%
Industry	1	<1%	2	<1%
Food Services	14	10%	25	7%
Executive	8	6%	16	4%

Education	14	10%	37	10%
CO	18	13%	48	13%
Unknown	0	0%	3	<1%
Institution				
SCI1*	28	20%	62	17%
SCI2	22	16%	53	14%
SCI3	17	12%	44	12%
SCI4	21	15%	76	21%
SCI5*	37	26%	86	23%
SCI6	15	11%	47	13%

*Note: SCI1 and SCI5 are the two institutions that house female residents. Staff from women's prisons account for 46% of the interviewed sample and 40% of the surveyed sample.

Qualitative Interview Methods

The research team conducted semi-structured (thematically focused) interviews with 140 staff members from varying positions across the six Pennsylvania prisons. The interviews were conducted with as much privacy and confidentiality as possible, with researchers taking handwritten notes during the interviews as recording devices are not allowed within these institutional settings. The research team typed more detailed field notes as soon as possible after leaving the study site, a common practice for writing ethnographic fieldnotes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

To code and analyze the interview notes, I used Atlas.ti, a qualitative data management software. Data analysis began with detailed line-by-line coding. Once specific themes emerged, I completed more thematic and patterned coding of the interview notes. For this paper, staff interviews were coded for: (1) perceptions of relationships with other staff members and (2) perceptions of relationships with residents. I then used Atlas.ti to query the coded data looking for themes related to relationships.

Additionally, the Code Co-Occurrence Table function in Atlas.ti was used which shows two things: (1) the number of times two codes co-occur within the documents and (2) the c-coefficient of those two codes. A c-coefficient is similar to a correlation coefficient and reflects the strength of the relationship between codes, based on the frequency of co-occurrence. Like a correlation coefficient, a c-coefficient has values between 0 and 1, with values closer to 1 representing a strong relationship between two codes.

Quantitative Survey Methods

Survey Instrument

Dr. Brandy Blasko designed the organizational survey given to staff with the aim of investigating prison culture and climate. She used previously vetted survey instruments (e.g., Prison Environment Inventory (Wright, 1985), Prison Social Climate Survey (Saylor, 1991), English Measurement of Quality of Prison Life (MQPL; Liebling & Arnold, 2004), and Working Alliance Inventory (WAI; Horvath & Greenburg, 1989)) to help inform the pool of items on the organizational survey. Four wardens from similar large state correctional systems, California, Louisiana, New York, and Minnesota, then reviewed the organizational survey and provided feedback to further refine it for clarity and ease of administration. The final survey instrument staff received was 27 pages long and took staff approximately 30 minutes to complete. The questions on the survey pertaining to staff relationships and prison culture used a Likert scale response format, but the range of responses ranged from four points to seven points depending on the question.

Variables

The dependent variable is prison culture. This was measured by scaling two items (i.e., "*The environment in this prison needs improvement*" and "*The culture in this prison needs improvement*") together (α=.92). I scaled these two items together to create one variable because the high Cronbach's Alpha rating gave me confidence these two items were measuring the same underlying concept, prison culture. Additionally, scaling these two items together increased the potential variation and the new range for this variable is 2 to 10, with higher scores reflecting more positive views of the prison's culture.

To represent staff-staff relationships in the regression model, staff perceptions of collective efficacy were used as the independent variable. Collective efficacy is measured by scaling five items (e.g., "*Staff around here are willing to help each other*" and "*Staff in this prison can be trusted*") together (α=.87). The final range for this item is 5 to 20. Three of the items were recoded so that higher scores represent greater collective efficacy and lower scores represent less collective efficacy.

Multiple variables were used to measure staff-resident relationships. First, the perceived quality of staff-inmate relationships was directly assessed with the item, "*The staff-prisoner relationships at my facility could use improvement.*" This item used a Likert scale which was reverse coded, so higher scores reflect more positive views. Second, the perceived quality of staff-resident relationships were indirectly assessed using the following measures: respect for residents (i.e., "*As a whole I respect the inmates in this prison*"), treatment of residents (i.e., "*I treat the inmates in this prison like human beings*"), mutual trust between staff and residents (i.e., "*Most of the inmates and I*

trust each other"), resident trust of staff (i.e., "*The inmates at this prison trust me*"), staff-resident communication (i.e., #1: "*I listen to most inmates and consider their views*," #2: "*I listen to the concerns of inmates*," and #3: "*I listen to inmates if they need someone to talk to*"), importance of resident trust (i.e., "*It is not important that the inmates at this prison trust me*"), and the quality of staff-resident relationships (i.e., "*The staff-prisoner relationships at my facility could use improvement*"). These variables were included in the model based on my findings from the qualitative interviews which indicated their importance in determining the quality of staff-resident relationships.

All these staff-resident relationship variables were dichotomized with scores of 1 reflecting more positive perception or the presence of a quality. For scales ranging from 1 to 4, scores of 3 and 4 were translated to 1 and scores of 1 and 2 were translated to 0. Similarly, for scales ranging from 1 to 5, scores of 4 and 5 were translated to 1 and scores of 1, 2, and 3 were translated to 0. The item, "*I listen to inmates if they need someone to talk to*," was on a 7-point Likert scale, so scores of 5, 6, and 7 were translated to 1 and scores of 1, 2, 3, and 4 were translated to 0. The decision to dichotomize the staff-resident relationship variables was due to the multiple Likert scale types used with differing point levels. For example, the option "strongly agree" on the Likert scale could either be rated as a 4, 5, or 7 depending on the question. Consequently, to avoid confusion, I dichotomized the variables so they were all on the same scale. Additionally, I would like to note, the three measures of staff-resident communication were not scaled together as the Cronbach's Alpha was only 0.567 which is not high enough to meet internal validity standards.

Demographic variables were also added to the model. Age is a continuous variable, but race (e.g., black and white), institution (six prisons are represented), and job type (e.g., psychology, CO, executive) are categorical variables that were entered as dummy variables into the regression model. The reference categories for these categorical variables were: black, SCI4, and psychology staff.

Analytic Strategy

To understand if/how staff relational factors impact prison culture, a multiple regression model was used. This multiple regression model investigates how well job category, institution, staff relationships, and staff-resident relationships predict staff's perceptions of prison culture. Diagnostic tests ensure there are no violations of the linearity, normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity assumptions of the multiple regression model. Once it was established these assumptions were met, variables were added to the regression model in stages. This strategy determined how well the variables collectively predicted prison culture perceptions and allowed me to see which variable(s) had the largest influence.

CHAPTER FIVE: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Staff relationships with other staff members and with residents was one of the major interview themes. Of all the staff members interviewed, 71% mentioned their relationships with other staff. Relationships with other staff include relationships with peers, subordinates, supervisors, executives/management, and staff from other departments. In contrast, only about half that number (36%) talked about their relationships with residents. Though researchers tried to ask all staff members about their relationships with other staff and residents, researchers may have run out of time in the interview or staff may not have answered a question, thus resulting in less than 100% of staff who touched on these topics. Similarly, trust, respect, and communication (or lack thereof) were relationship sub-themes in the interview protocol mentioned by 83%, 72%, and 62% of staff respectively. While other themes emerged related to relationships, whether a staff member had a positive or negative relationship with another staff member and/or a resident primarily largely depends on the presence or absence of these three relational components.

Staff-Staff Relationships

Of the staff members interviewed, almost half (49%) discuss relationships with coworkers that are classified as "positive." For instance, one employee in the psychology department said, "I think the line-staff are friendly, most people get along well." In contrast, 37% of staff report "negative" relationships, using an extremity of language not seen when they talk about positive staff relationships. For example, a CO said, "The

inmates are not a threat in my opinion, you're far more likely to be stabbed by a staff member." Similarly, Parker, one of the treatment staff, believes that the staff here are "probably the worst" and "the administration allows unprofessional behavior at every turn." It is also worth noting that several staff members allude to divisions between treatment staff and security staff including CO Brian, who notes, "It is a constant war of treatment vs. security." They also describe divisions between line staff and management, such as Emily, an educational member who states, "There's definitely a rift between the higher managers and the [line] staff."

Table 2 highlights, with the exception of a few categories, there are few demographic differences between staff with positive relationships and those with negative relationships. The exceptions are concentrated in job category and institution. For job category, treatment staff and educational staff reported more negative than positive relationships. In contrast, maintenance staff frequently reported more positive, than negative, relationships. Institution-wise, staff at SCI1 more often described negative relationships than positive ones, with staff at SCI4 reporting the reverse.

Table 2. Staff-Staff Relationship Demographics		
	Positive Staff-Staff Relationships (N=68)	Negative Staff-Staff Relationships (N=52)
Age		
20s	3%	4%
30s	15%	19%
40s	41%	33%
50s	37%	38%
60s	3%	6%
Race		

White	96%	96%
Black	3%	4%
Job		
CO	16%	13%
Treatment	19%	31%
Resident Services	12%	8%
Psych	10%	15%
Executive	7%	0%
Maintenance	19%	8%
Food Services	9%	8%
Education	7%	17%
Industry	0%	0%
Institution		
SCI1	13%	23%
SCI2	21%	15%
SCI3	9%	8%
SCI4	25%	10%
SCI5	25%	29%
SCI6	7%	15%

Communication

About 37% of staff mention communication. In this data, the relational

component is most closely related with positive relationships with a c-coefficient of 0.37.

When staff perceive good communication between peers, departments, supervisors, and

executives/management, they judge those relationships more positively. For example,

John in maintenance said, "I try to listen to the point of view of my line guys, I feel like

that helps develop good rapport. I like to explain the 'why' to my 'no' because they work

better. If I give them solid reasoning and direction, I feel like they accept my decisions

every time." Similarly, one CO said the Superintendent of their institution, "interacts with

staff and the Deputy all the time. It's nice that he openly talks with all staff. It feels like

he has his pulse on everything and it makes it easy to trust what he does." These two staff

members explicitly linked good communication with positive relationships or good rapport.

Similarly, poor communication relates to negative staff relationships (c-coefficient=0.24), with 17% of staff complaining about the poor communication between shifts, departments, and between line-staff and supervisors. Dwayne in the psychology department feels there is "not a lot of communication between departments." Likewise, CO Nate said, "We don't email, talk, or use any method to pass on information, especially between shifts. I think this is crucial to keep the next shift informed and safe. And, also share information with treatment staff and they share with us. They might have information to keep us safe, too. There's a serious divide between security and non-security staff." Communication is essential to relationship building, so without it, positive relationships do not develop which then hinders the ability of the organization to successfully achieve its goals.

Collective Efficacy

Trust and support (the components of collective efficacy) are other common themes that appear frequently (49% and 33% respectively) in prison staff's interviews. Trust has a c-coefficient of 0.31 with positive relationships, so when staff mention trusting coworkers, supervisor, management, etc., they also tend to say they have positive relationships with those people. As one of the treatment staff said, "…generally staff do trust each other and trust management…trust exists." This sentiment is echoed by James in the psychology department, "I easily would say that I trust 90% of the coworkers in my department. In terms of the entire facility, I'd say I have a good relationship with

them overall and trust them…I do think that trust belongs or is here in prison." According to these two staff members, trust among coworkers does exist, even in places like prison. As for support, it is moderately related to positive staff-staff relationships with a c-coefficient of 0.29. Individuals feel supported by all levels of staff. For example, Carla in maintenance feels "supported by my peers, absolutely" and Derrick, a treatment specialist, said, "I think my direct supervisor and other managers support me." A decent portion of staff are able to trust and receive support from their peers, supervisors, and management.

However, not all staff experience the same level of trust and support. About 25% of staff do not trust other coworkers, peers, supervisors, or management at their carceral institution. One resident services staff member said they "don't fully trust anyone here." Another staff member in maintenance said, "Honestly, between you and me, I would trust some inmates before I trust some of the staff." Lack of trust is closely related to negative staff relationships with a c-coefficient of 0.26. When trust is not present, staff members tend to have worse relationships with their coworkers and may have a harder time utilizing collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is a tool that can be mobilized to help staff solve problems and accomplish their work, so in its absence, individuals are left on their own to solve problems.

Respect

Only 32% of staff say they respect other prison employees, but it appears to be a component of positive relationships with a c-coefficient of 0.30. For example, one female resident services worker reported that she "feels respected across the staff and from

above." However, other staff members qualify their statements about respect and imply it is not universal. Chris, a resident services worker, said respect only "exists to a certain degree here." Mark, in the treatment department, came right out and said, "I think there's some respect between staff, maybe more within our own job classification." This is backed up by a worker in the Psychology department: "The uniform staff don't care or value or respect what we do." Respect is not rare in these prisons, but it is not prevalent either and seems to be constrained to a person's department or job classification. Perhaps directly working with someone—as people of the same job classification do—allows for respect to develop more easily than with individuals of different job classifications with whom they have more limited contact.

Staff-Resident Relationships

Staff mentioned positive relationships with residents in about 22% of interviews. In one representative statement, CO Ross said he feels "staff and inmates have a decent relationship toward each other," which illustrates what type of comment is classified as a "positive" staff-staff relationship. Another example is Dan in food services who said, "In terms of the inmates, I try to encourage and motivate them to learn. I listen to them and take their ideas to try. This affects their morale. I think the inmates see me as a fair person who is in a helper role and I have a very good rapport with them." Notably, of all the relationships that staff members talk about in their interviews, negative relationships between staff and residents is brought up the least (10%). These relationships were the hardest to classify and often were co-coded as examples of staff treating residents poorly.

One of the only examples of a negative relationship with residents that was not co-coded with poor treatment of residents was this comment by a treatment staff member, Anne:

> In terms of relationships, [in my position], I do interact with them pretty regularly and some of the women just to be honest rub me the wrong way…I try to treat them like humans. I know it's not our job to punish them too…coming to prison is the punishment, but when they say stuff to me like can I get to who's in charge I really just want to say you should do what you're told. As a unit manager I meet with them and I feel like telling them it's not my job to connect with you. Staff would come to me and tell me things the inmates said about me and I take it personally.

For the most part when staff mention negative relationships with residents or poor treatment of residents, they were commenting on the way other staff interact with residents, not themselves. For instance, maintenance worker Ethan claimed, "Some of the staff in here though are horrendous. They treat the inmates terribly." Other staff told stories of: (1) racism, such as Shane a treatment worker, who notes, "You do have to remember that there is a lot of racism and prejudice here…Many of the inmates believe the staff are racists and this causes some tension."; (2) sexual abuse, such as Brady in the educational department, who said, "Asked my workers once about sexual abuse and they said that about 30% of the staff are abusive to the women…"; (3) excessive grievances against staff, such as treatment worker Devin, who revealed, "My understanding is there are more grievances against the staff here at this institution than any other institution in the state.", and (4) yelling/cursing at residents, such as Roslyn in the treatment

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department, who stated, "…sometimes the correctional officers…when they may not be in a good mood, will yell in the inmate's face."

Since staff members often commented on the negative relationships other staff had with residents, it is difficult to make comparisons based on demographic categories like age, race, and job category because the person is not speaking about him/her self. However, it still makes sense to examine negative relationships with residents by institution, since the interviewees are talking about other staff who work in the same institution as them. According to Table 3, staff were more likely to report negative than positive relationships with residents at SCI1 and SCI5. Conversely, staff at SCI2 reported more positive relationships with residents compared to negative ones.

Table 3. Staff-Resident Relationship Demographics		
	Good Staff-Resident Relationships (N=31)	Bad Staff-Resident Relationships (N=14)
Age		
20s	3%	7%
30s	16%	7%
40s	32%	29%
50s	39%	50%
60s	10%	7%
Race		
White	97%	93%
Black	3%	0%
Job		
CO	6%	7%
Treatment	19%	43%
Resident Services	13%	14%
Psych	3%	7%
Executive	0%	0%
Maintenance	26%	14%
Food Services	19%	7%

Education	10%	7%
Industry	3%	0%
Institution		
SCI1	13%	29%
SCI2	10%	0%
SCI3	16%	14%
SCI4	23%	14%
SCI5	32%	43%
SCI6	6%	0%

Communication

Communication (c-coefficient=0.24) is a relational component closely associated with positive staff-resident relationships. Multiple staff members feel communicating with residents is important; it helps create more positive relationships. Thus, communication is closely associated with positive staff-resident relationships (c-coefficient=0.24). An example of this is Mike, in food services, who said, "I also interact a lot with the inmates who work with me…I always tell the inmates that my door is open if they have certain issues that they want to discuss with me. I get along with pretty much all of the inmates." Face-to-face interactions are important to communication, but one of the education staff even believes that it is important to respond to residents' writings because it "helps build rapport and respect." When staff regularly try to communicate with residents, they tend to view those residents more positively and have better relationships with them.

Trust & Respect

Unlike staff-staff relationships, trust is not closely associated with positive staff-resident relationships. The discrepancy is explained by CO Gabriel who said, "It's not

really trust with inmates, but about respect." Despite the conditions under which staff work and residents live, respect still exists. Bill, who does maintenance, said, "I feel as though I have a good rapport with the inmates and staff at this prison. I have many inmates who work for me that come from all walks of life and we respect one another. I feel like the inmates have a mutual respect for me." Although respect is seen as an important component of staff-resident relationships, it appears more important (from the staff perspective) for staff to feel respected by the residents than for them to respect the residents. More than a third of staff (38%) mention feeling respected by residents, like food services worker Mack, who notes, "Yes the inmates are very respectful to me." Resident respect toward staff has a c-coefficient of 0.22 with positive relationships compared to staff respect toward residents (c-coefficient=0.14).

Additionally, some unique patterns emerged regarding lack of trust and lack of respect. Prison staff were four times more likely to say they do not trust residents compared to staff who said residents do not trust them. Staff were much more likely to say something like, "I've stopped trusting inmates because they are so manipulative," or, "I have no confidence in the inmates—you put your trust in them and they will let you down." Similarly, staff were four times more likely to say they do not respect residents compared to staff who say residents do not respect them. This was particularly apparent in the women's prisons, since 63% of the staff who said they do not respect residents worked at the two institutions that house women. A treatment worker, Sara, said, "I don't think that most of the staff respect the inmates. They can be particularly degrading." This is echoed by a maintenance worker who stated, "There is no respect from staff to inmates

whatsoever. The verbiage is disgusting…" William, a prison executive, actually links this disrespect toward residents, particularly female residents, to sexism. He said, "I do occasionally need to pull an officer aside and verbally reprimand them for not respecting inmates and particularly for talking down to them…sexism has a lot to do with this as certain male staff will consistently talk down to female inmates." Taken together, these two patterns of distrust and disrespect suggest that prison staff are much less likely to trust and/or respect residents than the reverse.

CHAPTER SIX: ORGANIZATIONAL SURVEY RESULTS

To investigate how job category, institution, staff relationships, and staff-resident relationships influence perceptions of prison culture among staff I used a multiple linear regression model. Assumptions were tested by running diagnostic tests for linearity, normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity. The diagnostic tests indicated no violations of linearity (see Figure 1 in Appendix A), normality (see Figure 2 in Appendix A), or heteroscedasticity (see Figure 3 in Appendix A). Table 6 (see Appendix A) reveals some slight concerns for multicollinearity regarding job categories. However, none of the tolerance scores fell below 0.2 and none of the VIFs were close to 10, so multicollinearity assumptions were ultimately not violated.

Variables were added to the regression model in stages and the R^2 value, change in R^2, and F-value for each stage are reported in Table 4. In stage 1, the control variables—age and race—were added to the model. Institutional variables were added in stage 2, job category variables were added in stage 3, collective efficacy in stage 4, then staff-resident relationship in stage 5, and finally the relational component variables (e.g., trust, respect, and communication) were added in stage 6. Due to missing data on these variables, 79 cases were excluded from analysis resulting in a final sample of 289 staff members. The final model is statistically significant when compared to the baseline model ($F(25,264)=15.478$, $p<.000$). The R^2 value in this model is .594, suggesting that collectively, these variables explain approximately 60% of the variance in perceptions of prison culture. Each stage of the model resulted in a significant R^2 change except the

relational variables added in stage 6. Institution, job category, collective efficacy, and staff-resident relationship significantly explain about 22%, 8%, 16%, and 13% (respectively) of the variance in prison culture perceptions.

Table 4. Regression Model Stages			
Model	R_2	R_2 Change	F
1	.006	--	.900
2	.222***	.216***	11.503
3	.299***	.077***	7.808
4	.458***	.158***	14.413
5	.586***	.128***	22.610
6	.594***	.009	15.478
*p<.05			
**p<.01			
***p<.000			

Table 5 displays the results from the final multiple linear regression model, including the unstandardized regression coefficients (*b*), standardized regression coefficients (*β*), and the t-value (*t*) for each variable. Quality of staff-resident relationship (*β*=.400) and collective efficacy (*β*=.349) significantly predicted prison culture perceptions and were the two strongest predictors. As the quality of staff-resident relationships and collective efficacy increase, perceptions of prison culture also increase. Most institutional and job category variables were also significant predictors of perceptions of prison culture. Looking at the institutions, SCI1, SCI2, and SCI5 all had significantly lower perceptions of prison culture than staff at SCI4. As for job category, psychology staff had significantly more negative perceptions of prison culture than COs,

treatment staff, prison executives, food services staff, maintenance workers, and

educational staff. Lastly, age, race, and relational components of staff-resident

relationships did not significantly predict prison culture perceptions.

Table 5. Regression Model Variables			
Variables	*b*	*β*	*t*
Intercept	-.727	--	-.503
Age	-.008	-.035	-.833
†White	.305	.027	.643
††SCI1	-1.233***	-.210	-4.172
††SCI2	-1.210***	-.207	-3.978
††SCI3	-.337	-.052	-1.050
††SCI5	-.729**	-.149	-2.579
††SCI6	-.279	-.047	-.938
†††CO	1.194**	.204	2.930
†††Treatment	1.020**	.221	2.731
†††Resident Services	.875	.109	1.877
†††Executive	2.157***	.198	3.894
†††Food Services	1.174*	.149	2.566
†††Maintenance	1.506***	.288	3.776
†††Education	.967*	.148	2.255
†††Industry	.559	.022	.519
Collective Efficacy	.260***	.349	7.704
Staff-Resident Relationship	1.944***	.400	8.703
Staff Respect Residents	.050	.010	.214
Resident Treatment	1.171	.047	1.113
Residents Trust Staff	.124	.028	.613
Importance of Resident Trust	-.239	-.055	-1.316
Mutual Trust	.020	.005	.108
Communication #1	.206	.031	.662
Communication #2	-.170	-.021	-.459
Communication #3	-.256	-.052	-1.185
*p<.05			
**p<.01			
***p<.000			
†Dummy Coded; Reference Group=Black			
††Dummy Coded; Reference Group=SCI4			
†††Dummy Coded; Reference Group=Psychology Staff			

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

According to both the qualitative and quantitative data presented in this paper, staff relationships in prisons matter. The quality of staff relationships with other workers and with residents affects the inner workings of carceral institutions via culture. These relationships were investigated during interviews with staff members which revealed the following findings. Staff mentioned positive relationships with other staff and residents far more than they did negative relationships. Collective efficacy components (i.e., trust and support) appeared important to staff relationships with other staff. However, while almost 50% of staff reported they trust other workers, a significant amount (25%) remained untrusting of other staff. Only about one-third of staff respect other workers and it is conditional upon job category. Regarding staff-resident relationships, trust was not as important as respect, revealing different relational components matter to different types of relationships. Additionally, when staff discussed negative relationships with residents, they almost exclusively referred to the negative relationships other staff had with residents. Staff rarely discussed about any potential negative relationships they had with residents. Staff may have been more reluctant to admit their own poor treatment of residents compared to describing the actions and relationships of other staff. Lastly, analysis uncovered a pattern of negative attitudes toward female residents. Perceptions of staff disrespect toward residents were heavily concentrated in the two female institutions (63%) despite staff from female institutions only making up 46% of the interviewed sample.

Regarding culture, a multiple linear regression model investigated how well job category, institution, staff relationships, and staff-resident relationships predict perceptions of prison culture among staff. These relationship and demographic factors collectively predicted approximately 60% of the variance in perceptions of prison culture. The remaining unexplained variance could be explained by other contributors of organizational culture, such as decision-making or role ambiguity (Rudes & Magnuson, 2018). Organizational culture is complex and many factors go into explaining it, so it is unsurprising there is unexplained variance in cultural perceptions.

Most job category and institutional variables were significant predictors in the regression model, however, age and race did not seem to impact perceptions of prison culture. Perhaps this is because prison staff are relatively homogenous, with an almost exclusively white population with age concentrated in the 30s to 50s. This leaves little variance in race or in potential generational gaps. In addition to job category and institution, collective efficacy and quality of staff-resident relationships were also significant predictors of prison culture perceptions, such that, as collective efficacy and staff-resident relationship quality increase, perceptions of the prison culture also increased. In contrast, staff-resident relational components did not significantly add to the model. Perhaps this is because the quality of staff-resident relationships variable already explained most of the variance, or it could be because these relational components were inadequate representations of staff-resident relationships. The qualitative data indicated positive staff-resident relationships were related to residents respecting staff, but no such survey variable existed.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, the findings in this paper offer support for the ideas that correctional institutions each have their own unique culture (Liebling, 2007) and many different cultures may exist within one institution (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Linstead & Grafton-Small, 1992; Rudes & Magnuson, 2019). This is evidenced by the significance of the job category and institutional variables in the regression model. Institution-wise, three of the prisons—SCI1, SCI2, and SCI5—were significantly different from the reference group (i.e. SCI4), suggesting staff at some prisons had more positive views of the culture compared to staff at other prisons. Similarly, six of the job categories had significantly different views of prison culture than the reference group (i.e. psychology staff). These findings would not have been possible without the maximum variation sampling strategy and mixed methods design employed by the research team, which fall in line with the recommendations Rudes and Magnuson (2018) give for effectively studying culture. They argued that the multitude of cultures present in an organization cannot be accurately studied without employing a strategy that elicits rich data from a variety of organizational workers with different experiences (Rudes & Magnuson, 2018). The strategic sampling of participants across institutions and job categories allows discovery of the variations in culture along those variables. This implication is important for organizational scholars more broadly, as well as, prison researchers more specifically.

There are many different conceptions of organizational culture and different ideas about what contributes to culture. The quantitative data presented here lends support to the organizational theories which posit that relationships and staff dynamics are two of

the contributors to perceptions of culture, at least within carceral institutions (Gilbert, 1997; Liebling et al., 2011; Rudes & Magnuson, 2019). Collective efficacy was one such staff dynamic found to be important to staff perceptions of culture. Collective efficacy was originally conceptualized as a leverageable tool for neighborhoods to solve disorder problems. In this paper, I extend the applications of collective efficacy to a different population. The staff of an organization can be viewed as a micro community who are able to leverage collective efficacy to solve organizational problems (as seen in Worley et al, 2018). This is especially important for organizations like prisons which are understaffed, have limited resources, and for whom disorder presents a major problem that is contrary to their goals. In such an environment, collective efficacy becomes a valuable tool for staff who need to trust each other and support each other in order to ensure their productivity and safety.

Policy Implications

Prison work is a dangerous and high-stress job, so operating in an institution with a negative culture or cultures may compound the adverse outcomes already associated with prison staff, like high turnover and burnout. The findings in this paper suggest that relationships significantly contribute to culture, so the better the relationships— characterized by collective efficacy, respect, and/or communication—the better the culture, which could in turn lead to better outcomes for staff and residents. Positive relationships with other staff have been linked with outcomes like less job stress (Cullen, Link, Wolfe, & Frank, 1985; Lambert et al., 2008; Lambert et al., 2016; Lambert & Hogan, 2010; Liou, 1995; Misis, Kim, Cheeseman, Hogan, & Lambert, 2013; Paoline et

al., 2006), less isolation (Lambert et al., 2016), and increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Brough & Williams, 2007; Cullen et al., 1985; Lambert et al., 2008; Lambert et al., 2012; Lambert et al., 2016; Paoline et al., 2006). Furthermore, as noted previously, collective efficacy becomes a resource staff can leverage to minimize the boundary violations staff commit with residents (Worley et al., 2018). Fewer boundary violations could then lead to more positive staff-resident relationships—characterized by effective communication and less disrespect.

To achieve more positive relationships and increased levels of collective efficacy (and thus attain better outcomes for staff and residents), practitioners might want to implement interventions aimed at increasing communication, collaboration, and cooperation between the different prison job categories. Other organizations, specifically other criminal justice organizations, encounter similar negative relationships between people working in different jobs. For example, one California probation agency implemented a Probation Partnerships at Work (PPAW) program designed to increase communication and cooperation between probation staff treatment staff (Debus-Sherrill, Breno, Taxman, & Ingel, 2019). Despite working in the same building and working with the same client pool, these two groups of staff did not get along and rarely communicated (Debus-Sherrill, 2019). After implementation of PPAW, which included joint trainings and improved communication systems, both probation staff and treatment staff reported better relationships and a more comfortable working environment (Debus-Sherrill, 2019). Similar interventions could be designed for the various prison staff. The PADOC could: (1) implement cross-department trainings; (2) hire an outside firm to train employees how

to effectively communicate with other staff and residents, without being disrespectful, and (3) require all departmental supervisors to meet weekly or biweekly to discuss any organizational challenges/issues.

Lastly, to address the disrespect staff show female residents, I would recommend PADOC hire gender-based criminologists to create trainings that teach staff how to deal with female residents. It is increasingly recognized that females have different causes of crime than males and have different needs when they are released from prison. Consequently, it would make sense that female residents have specific needs and issues not applicable to males that require different handling by prison staff. Some staff at the female institutions have previously worked in PADOC's male institutions, so these staff members may be treating the female residents as they did the male residents. To correct this, both current staff and new staff would be required to complete this training.

Limitations

Both the qualitative and quantitative data used in this thesis have limitations. For the qualitative portion, the data was not rich enough to be able to make comparisons about different types of staff relationships. For example, staff would talk about their relationships generally, but often did not specify if they were talking about their direct coworkers, supervisors/management, or staff from other job categories. This made it impossible to analyze how relationships with different staff groupings might have differed. The interview protocol simply did not contain those types of questions and interviewers did not probe further.

For the quantitative data, one limitation is the survey given to staff was extremely long. The survey was more than 25 pages, which may explain the missing data that caused a reduced sample for analysis. Survey fatigue is real and staff may have started skipping questions because there were so many and each question had multiple parts (Porter, 2004). Another limitation with the survey is it did not adequately capture all the concepts necessary for the present analysis. For example, collective efficacy was the only measure that assessed staff relationships with other staff. There was no direct measure of staff-staff relationships like there was for staff-resident relationships and there were no measures of staff-staff communication or respect. Even though there were more measures addressing staff-resident relationships, a key variable was missing. According to the qualitative data, the perception of residents respecting staff was an important aspect of staff-resident relationships, but none of the survey items assessed this. This could help explain why none of the staff-resident relational components significantly contributed to the regression model. Lastly, by using a non-continuous dependent variable, I violated the assumptions of OLS regression. However, OLS regression is robust enough to deal with this issue when the dependent variable has more than five categories, so this should not have caused any significant problems.

Additionally, both the qualitative and quantitative data experienced over- and under-sampling challenges. If sampled equitably, each prison would represent about 16 to 17% of the sample, but that was not the case. SCI5 was the most oversampled prison, while SCI3 and SCI6 were consistently under-sampled. This is challenging because it indicates there could be something qualitatively different about these prisons causing

staff to complete surveys and interviews at disparate rates. Furthermore, the over-sampling of SCI5—a prison for female residents—and the under-sampling of SCI3 and SCI6—prisons for male residents—resulted in an over-representation of staff working in prisons with female residents.

Directions for Future Research

Future research could address some of the shortcoming of the data used in this paper. Future qualitative research in this area could specifically ask staff to describe and compare their relationships with their direct coworkers, supervisors, management, and staff from other job categories. Analyzing the different types of relationships in organizations—and prisons more precisely—would be a logical next step in extending the current study which just looked at staff relationships in a general sense. Future quantitative research could replicate this study, but with additional variables to better conceptualize both staff-staff and staff-resident relationships. Additionally, future research could investigate how similar or different staff culture is from resident culture by surveying both populations and comparing the results. Finally, future researchers could conduct a study investigating prison staff attitudes toward female residents and the effects those attitudes have on the quality of care female residents receive.
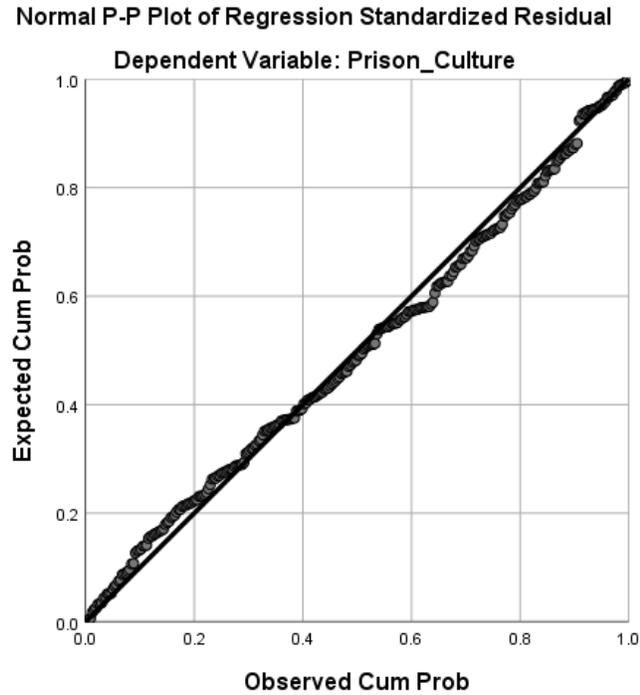
Figure 1. Probability Plot of Standardized Residuals. This probability plot of

standardized residuals is used to test the linearity assumption. As evidenced by this plot, a

linear relationship exists among the dependent and independent variables in this data set,

meeting the linearity assumption of the multiple linear regression.
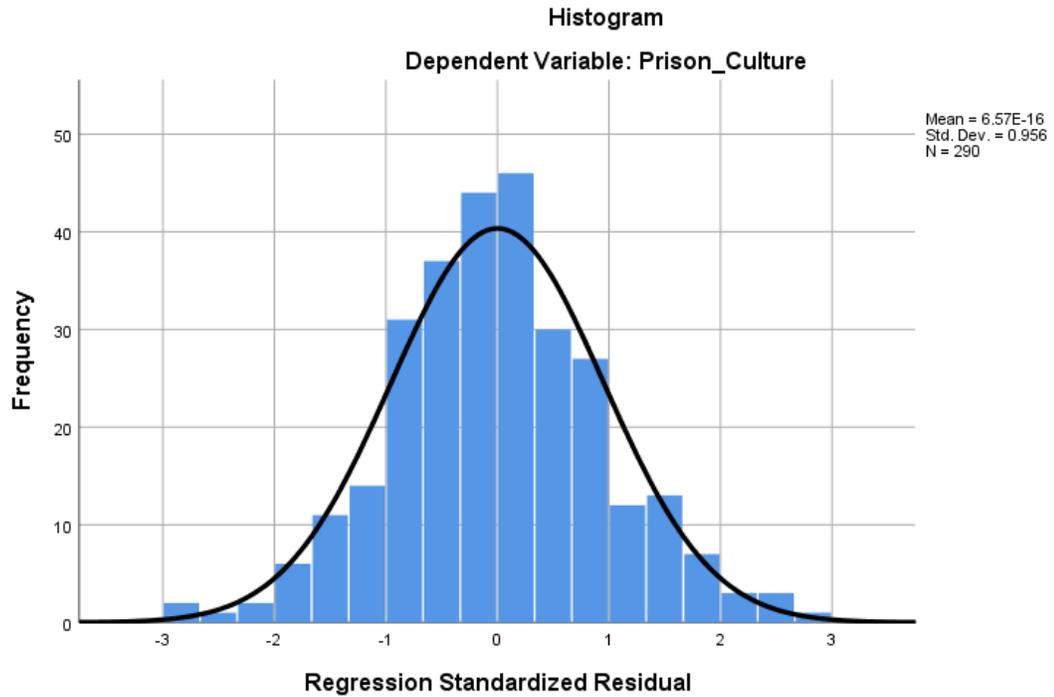
Figure 2. Histogram of Standardized Residuals. This histogram of standardized residuals

is used to test the normality assumption. Since these residuals largely conform to the

normal distribution, the normality assumption is not violated for this analysis.
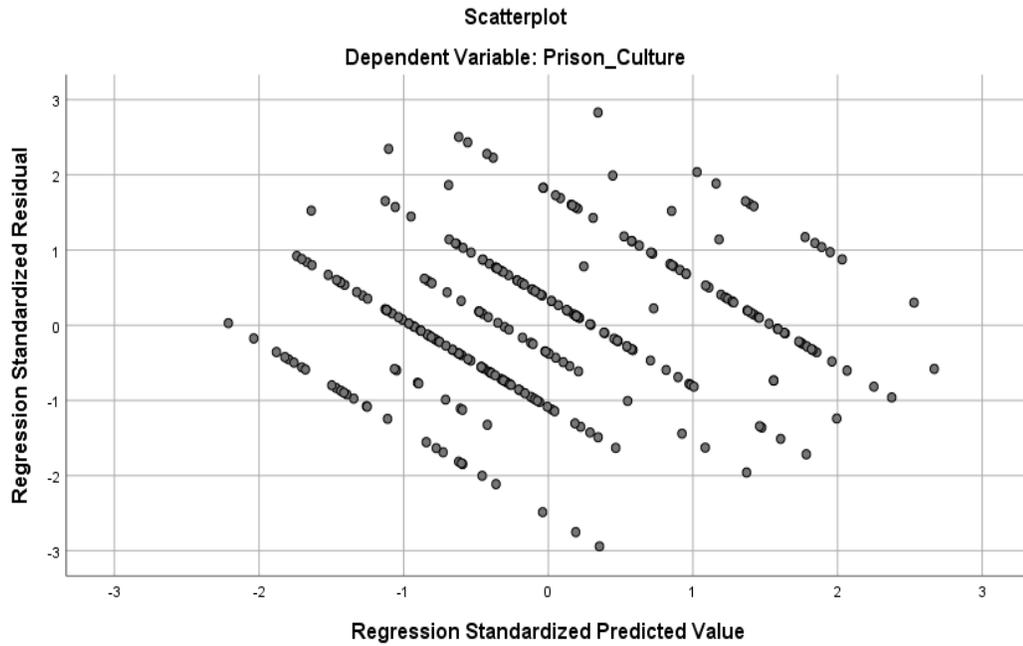
Figure 3. Scatterplot of Standardized Predicted Values and Residuals. This scatterplot of standardized predicted values and residuals is used to test for heteroskedasticity. This scatterplot demonstrates that no violations of homoscedasticity are present in the model.

Table 6. Multicollinearity Diagnostics

Variable	Tolerance	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)
Age	.862	1.160
Race: White	.888	1.126
SCI1	.604	1.657
SCI2	.570	1.756
SCI3	.623	1.604
SCI5	.459	2.178
SCI6	.606	1.650
Job: CO	.318	3.150
Job: Treatment	.234	4.280
Job: Resident Services	.456	2.193
Job: Executive	.594	1.683
Job: Food Services	.454	2.204
Job: Maintenance	.265	3.774
Job: Education	.359	2.788
Job: Industry	.838	1.194
Staff Collective Efficacy	.747	1.339
Staff-Resident Relationship	.729	1.372
Staff Respect Residents	.733	1.365
Resident Treatment	.878	1.139
Residents Trust Staff	.755	1.324
Importance of Resident Trust	.883	1.133
Mutual Trust	.772	1.296
Communication #1	.722	1.386
Communication #2	.725	1.380
Communication #3	.796	1.257

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