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Criminology & Criminal Justice
12(1) 3–23
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DOI: 10.1177/1748895811423088
crj.sagepub.com

Respect in prisons: Prisoners' experiences of respect in public and private sector prisons

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Abstract

Interpretations of 'respect' in prison have tended to be narrow, focusing on courteous and considerate staff–prisoner relationships. In a recent study, we found that respect was defined by prisoners not just in terms of interpersonal relationships but also 'getting things done' (what might be called 'organizational respect'). We expected prisoners in the study, which compared quality of life in public and private sector prisons, to rate private prisons well in terms of respect, due to previous research findings and the history and self-declared values of the companies who run them. The findings from the study revealed a more complex picture. There was mixed support for previous claims that the private sector offers a more courteous prison environment than the public sector, and, among the matched prisons in our study, the public sector establishments were better than the private sector prisons at 'getting things done': a distinct component of respect in prison, according to prisoners. These differences influenced prisoners' evaluations of the 'respectfulness' of their treatment in each sector.

Keywords

prison, private–public sector comparisons, respect

In theory, prison staff in England and Wales are obliged to demonstrate respect for prisoners:

> Staff must carry out their duties loyally, conscientiously, honestly and with integrity. They must take responsibility and be accountable for their actions. Staff must be courteous, reasonable and

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> fair in their dealings with all prisoners, colleagues and members of the public. They must treat people with decency and respect. (Prison Service, 2007)

Respect is a form of positive consideration or 'recognition' (Sennett, 2003: 54); it acknowledges the autonomy of the other and places limits on what others might do 'in their interests'. Kant argued that respect for others – treating them as ends rather than means – was a universal guide to moral conduct. To be respected as a person is to be recognized as a fellow being to be reasoned with and not to be subject to manipulation or force (Quinton, 1991: 42). Sennett (2003: 53) argues that status, 'where a person stands in a social hierarchy', and prestige, 'the emotions which status arouses in others', explain respect in part, but they fail to capture 'mutuality' – a key aspect of respect. Recognition (acknowledging the needs of individuals for self-respect and self-esteem, including those who are unequal) and honour account for this acknowledgement of mutual need (see Honneth, 1995). The concept of dignity is also relevant, both in the sense of 'dignity of the body' (respecting the pain of another, for example) and 'dignity of work'.

Individuals communicate respect through their 'character' or the way in which they express themselves, for example through body language and eye contact. Although the allocation of respect can depend on specific social conditions in which institutions define who is worthy, Sennett (2003: 260) argues that respect is an 'expressive practice', which is separate from the inequalities that are embedded in society. This is particularly relevant in the context of prisons, where relations between staff and prisoners are inherently unequal, and power can be brutal and 'toxic' (see, for example, Sim, 2008; Welch, 2005). Some prisons are characterized by prisoner degradation and 'casual cruelty' (Medlicott, 2001), and another article could be written on the varied and many forms of disrespect that exist in, or are embedded in, the prison (see, for example, Irwin, 1985; Wacquant, 2002; and for a review of convict criminology's contribution to this subject, see Leyva and Bickel, 2010). Yet prisoners often talk about respectful treatment and place great emphasis on the difference between prisons that are more rather than less respectful. We therefore consider it important to develop a nuanced understanding, via the accounts of prisoners, of the relevant 'asymmetric' matter of how, and under what conditions, respect is experienced in prison. This article considers what respect in prison means in practice when it *is* found and how prisons differ in their approach to respect. It also explores whether there are systematic differences between the public and the private sector in the 'delivery' and meaning of respect, a term that has been particularly relevant to the introduction and cultural priorities of private sector prisons.

Respect in Prisons

The Prison Service has committed itself, at the level of official discourse, to 'treating prisoners with decency and with respect' (Prison Service, 2000: 25, and above). Joe Pilling (1992: 6), a former Director General of the Prison Service, defined respect as 'basic human dignity and worth':

> Respecting prisoners means addressing them courteously, by the name they prefer; asking not ordering; listening to what they are saying; being sensitive to their feelings about being locked up … It is the key to healthy relationships. It is the key to good control.

The Prison Service's Professional Standards Statement provides a similar definition, associating respect and decency with courtesy, reasonableness and fairness (Prison Service, 2007). An internet search of the values of private companies who run prisons in England and Wales reveals references to respect by two out of the three companies involved at present (Kaylx, 2010[1]; Serco, 2010),[2] although there are no further explanations of what this term means in practice. Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate of Prisons (HMCIP) evaluates prisons against four key criteria, one of which is respect: the treatment of prisoners 'with respect for their human dignity'. In practice, this is interpreted in terms of the quality of *conditions* (for example the physical environment, access to amenities, and the quality of food and health services) and the quality of *staff–prisoner relationships*. These are defined somewhat narrowly, in terms of courtesy, the use of first (or preferred) names, and the effectiveness of the personal officer scheme (see HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2009a, 2009b, 2010).

Most scholarly interpretations of respect in prisons are similarly narrow, describing it in terms of courteous and considerate staff–prisoner relationships. In an article that specifically considers the meaning of respect in prisons, Butler and Drake (2007) argue that there are two aspects of respect, which are often confused. Respect-as-consideration recognizes human rights and a lack of degradation, while respect-as-esteem is linked to status:

> the structure and functions of the institutions, and policies, within our society influence who is respected by conveying messages about the relative worth of citizens through access to political rights, civil liberties, resources, and norms governing public interaction between citizens. (Butler and Drake, 2007: 118)

Traditionally, respect-as-esteem is bestowed upon those who demonstrate independence and an ability to take care of themselves and their loved ones (Sennett, 2003). The potential for prisoners to be respected in this manner is inherently limited, particularly in prisons where staff believe that prisoners surrendered their right to respect when they committed a crime (Butler and Drake, 2007). In such situations, the links between these two forms of respect become clear: being spoken to in a rude or inconsiderate manner by a member of staff conveys a message to prisoners about their status – that they are 'sub-human and not worthy of respect' (Butler and Drake, 2007: 121). As Tyler and Blader (2000: 90) likewise comment, 'Interpersonal treatment is important because it communicates a message to the person about their status in relation to the group.'

Butler and Drake (2007: 125) argue that respect-as-consideration is more achievable in prisons than respect-as-esteem, and that it is the 'minimal level of respect required for a decent and humane prison'. In a practical sense, respect-as-consideration requires 'officers to treat inmates with courtesy by being considerate and polite and avoiding insulting and degrading treatment' (Butler and Drake, 2007: 117); here there are parallels with official characterizations of respect, which are more circumscribed than

those discussed in relation to criminal justice more broadly (where competence, and procedural fairness are given greater emphasis, see, for example, Tyler, 2010), as we discuss below.

Little empirical exploration of prisoners' interpretations of respect in prison has occurred to date. Yet respect has almost always been one of the first values to emerge in discussions with prisoners about 'what matters' in prison. In a study of 'the moral performance of prisons' (Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004: 210), based on extensive dialogue with prisoners and the use of Appreciative Inquiry,[3] the authors argued that respect was 'more than civility': 'Civil is how you treat everyone. Respect is more than that. This prison is good at being civil to prisoners, but not so far as treating them with respect' (Prisoner, Holme House, cited in Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004: 210). Even using this 'appreciative' method, prisoners often found it easier to describe 'disrespect' than respect. Respect could refer to forms of fear and wariness (see Bourgois, 1995; Crewe, 2009; Liebling and Price, 2001: 101) as well as admiration. It was distinguishable from 'being nice' or 'kind regard' (Liebling assisted by Arnold, 2004: 210), but to specify what this meant was beyond the scope of most of the conversations held with prisoners on the matter. Generally, respect was discussed in terms of being treated autonomously, without prejudice, and being individually recognized, as these three quotations from Liebling, assisted by Arnold (2004: 209) illustrate:

> They talk to me like a human being, not 'do this! Do that!'. They have a chat; it is nice just to talk. (Prisoner, Wandsworth)

> One officer says 'hello' or 'good morning', asks if you are OK and never just walks past you; it's the way he asks, you know he means it and he's interested. (Prisoner, Belmarsh)

> The Governor on this wing has treated me with respect … although the answer was not what I wanted, I did speak to her and she showed me respect. She spoke to me as a normal person, not a thug. She listened and considered what I had to say and went out of her way to explain everything so I understood. (Prisoner, Risley)

Around 35 per cent of prisoners in this exploratory study agreed that they were treated with respect, while between 47 per cent and 72 per cent agreed that staff addressed them in a respectful manner. This seems to confirm Butler and Drake's (2007) view that it may be easier, or more common, for staff to demonstrate respect-as-consideration (i.e. courtesy) than respect-as-esteem. Further analysis revealed that respect was significantly positively correlated with all other dimensions in the survey, and was most highly correlated with humanity, relationships, trust, fairness and support (Liebling assisted by Arnold, 2004). This indicated close links between respect and being treated as a human being, having positive relationships with staff, feeling supported and being granted equitable status, recognition and dignity (Sennett, 2003). Interestingly, HMP Doncaster, the only private prison in the study, scored significantly higher than four comparable public sector prisons on the 'respect' dimension, suggesting that staff were better at talking to prisoners in a respectful manner and addressing them in a way that they preferred.

This finding was consistent with similar assertions made elsewhere in the early years of private sector imprisonment (see House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts,

2003; James et al., 1997), and the assumption that private prisons are more 'respectful' than public sector prisons forms part of the backdrop for the research on which this article draws. Although not the primary rationale for the introduction of private prisons to England and Wales – which was political and practical (see James et al., 1997) – the need to improve staff–prisoner relationships and levels of respect in prisons offered the private sector a potential advantage over the public sector: 'Part of the purpose of privatization in the UK was to change the working practices and cultural habits of prison staff in traditionally resistant, older prisons' (Arnold et al., 2007: 481). The private sector could distinguish itself by offering more respectful regimes run by newly appointed prison staff, who were free of the 'baggage' carried by many public sector staff. These newly recruited officers would be more receptive than their traditional public sector counterparts to training that prioritized the respectful and humane treatment of prisoners. In a study of Wolds, the first private prison to open in England and Wales, James et al. (1997: 68) commented that:

> For the senior management, therefore, Wolds offered the prospect of starting afresh with new staff, based on a new way of perceiving and treating prisoners – as individuals to be respected and treated humanely who, given the opportunity, could respond positively to such treatment.

Following the opening of Wolds and a number of other private prisons, a report by the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts in 2003 reported the success of private prisons in this regard:

> An important innovation by the private sector has been in promoting a more constructive staff/prisoner relationship. Staff in PFI[4] prisons are encouraged to treat prisoners in a more positive manner, for example through the use of first names and mentoring schemes. When surveyed by the NAO, prisoners in PFI establishments felt that they were treated better and shown greater respect than prisoners in public prisons. The Prison Service and the contractors considered that PFI prisons had been able to develop such a culture because managers were opening a new prison with staff that could be trained to deal positively with prisoners. (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2003: 7)

The report called for the private sector's 'good practice' to be shared with its public sector counterpart in order to improve prisoners' perceptions of respect in public sector prisons.

A recent comparative study of public and private sector prisons has persuaded us that prisoners have a broad concept of respect, shaped by the shifting circumstances of imprisonment, and that there is no private sector monopoly on respectful treatment, whether this is defined narrowly or more broadly. In the remainder of this article, we report on prisoners' experiences of respect, which emerged during a major study of values, practices and outcomes in private and public sector corrections.[5] We argue that while respect is demonstrated in interpersonal relationships (through courtesy and consideration), it has a further component which relates to staff 'getting things done' for prisoners and to what we tentatively call, in this article, 'organizational respect'. This aspect of respect is barely discussed in existing literature, and requires further exploration, but is significant in determining the quality of life in prison, and is a key differentiator between poor performing and high performing prisons.

Table 1. Details of the seven prisons in the study

	Main study				Additional prisons		
	HMP Forest Bank	HMP Bullingdon	HMP Dovegate	HMP Garth	HMP Rye Hill	HMP Lowdham Grange	HMP Altcourse
Sector/company	Private, Kalyx	Public	Private, Serco	Public	Private, G4S	Private, Serco	Private, G4S
Function	Local prison	Community prison[a]	Category B training prison	Category B training prison	Category B training prison	Category B training prison	Local prison
Operational capacity	1124	994	860	847	664	690	1324
Year of opening	2000	1992	2001	1988	2001	1998	1997
Fieldwork period	Sept–Oct 2007	April–May 2008	Nov 2007–Jan08	Sept–Nov 2008	Sept 2008	January 2009	April 2009

Note: [a]Although HMP Bullingdon described itself as a Community Prison operating 'as an adult male Cat C training prison with a Cat B local function' (http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk), it was, in effect, a local prison taking prisoners from the nearby courts while also holding general category C prisoners. In Prison Service performance comparisons, it is normally grouped with local prisons.

Respect as Demonstrated in (Public and Private) Prisons

The study reported here compared the moral quality of life for prisoners and staff in five private and two public prisons in England and Wales, using surveys, interviews and observation. Details of the prisons involved in the study are provided in Table 1. In the main part of the study, four prisons were 'matched' to allow comparisons to be made between the private and the public sectors. The selection process required that certain prisons be excluded from the outset, including prisons holding women or juveniles, high security prisons and establishments that were not relatively modern. Following consultation with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), prisons were paired according to their age, size and function. They represent 'a best case fit' (Liebling et al., 2011) rather than a perfect match. Three additional prisons were included in the study at a later stage, for a number of reasons: the research team was invited to HMP Rye Hill to survey the prison as part of a formal performance review process, while HMP Lowdham Grange and HMP Altcourse were incorporated because prisoners in the other prisons in the research described them in a consistently positive way (see Liebling et al., 2011). We were keen to explore what we thought might be the best-performing private establishments in the prison system, to see how they compared to the other establishments in terms of their cultures and relationships.

In the four prisons involved in the main part of the study, Staff Quality of Life (SQL) surveys were administered to staff, generally during full staff meetings, while Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) surveys were administered to prisoners

in focus groups. Interviews were undertaken with staff and prisoners alongside extended periods of observation (researchers spent between six to eight weeks in each prison, with at least two researchers there throughout each fieldwork period). In the three additional prisons, SQL and MQPL surveys were administered, together with a limited amount of observation and a small number of interviews with staff and prisoners over the period of around one week. In total, in the seven prisons, 957 staff completed the SQL and 1145 prisoners completed the MQPL, while interviews were conducted with 133 staff and 114 prisoners.[6]

The prisoner survey began with demographic questions relating to age, sentence length and vulnerabilities (such as experience of substance misuse, self-harm and suicide). These were followed by 147 statements, which prisoners were asked to agree or disagree with on a five point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The majority of statements were drawn from surveys used in previous studies of the quality of prison life (see Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004; Liebling et al., 2005), while a number of supplementary items were also included, informed by pilot work in the first prison and findings from recent research projects (see Crewe, 2009; Drake, 2007; McLean and Liebling, 2008). These additional items aimed to capture aspects of prison life that previous versions of the survey had not fully measured, such as policing and security, the use of authority and the 'depth' and 'weight' of contemporary imprisonment (see Liebling et al., 2011, for methods; and Crewe et al., under review, for results).

In interviews, prisoners were asked to comment on various aspects of their prison experiences. The questions most relevant to this article include those that focused on the quality of staff–prisoner relationships (posed to staff and prisoners), the extent to which prisoners felt they were treated with respect (posed to prisoners only) and general questions about, for example, the strengths and weaknesses of private and public prisons. Fieldwork notes documented interactions between staff and prisoners, as observed by the researchers. The results presented below are based on the extensive research conducted in the seven prisons: the qualitative data are primarily drawn from the two pairs of matched private and public prisons, where the majority of interviews were conducted. The quantitative data are taken from all seven prisons. The analysis represents a 'ground–up' approach, with most of the ideas and arguments emerging directly from the findings.

Results: Understandings of 'Respect'

Prisoners located their understandings of respect in two aspects of prison life: interpersonal relationships and 'getting things done'. Respectful interpersonal relationships incorporated those aspects of respect that have been described in previous research (Butler and Drake, 2007). They were demonstrated by staff speaking politely, with courtesy, and in a non-aggressive manner: 'I think they respect you because they speak to you straight down the line … it is normally pleasant the way they do come across to you, it is pleasant, it's like they're not coming across as aggressive' (Prisoner, private prison).

The degree to which interactions were courteous indicated to prisoners how staff judged them morally. Being spoken to in a careless or disparaging manner conveyed powerful messages to prisoners about their relative worth and status:

> I feel as though they [officers] look at us, we're in prison, we're scum, do you know what I mean …? They try to treat you like shit basically … they've got no respect for you. (Prisoner, private prison)

> I would probably say 65 per cent of the staff get a huge power trip when they put the uniform on, and they feel that they can speak to prisoners: 'at the end of the day they have broken the law, they are criminals and I will speak to them how I like' … they feel that they can talk to people and belittle them and talk to them not necessarily the way you need to be talked to. (Prisoner, public prison)

For most prisoners, and as Pilling (1992) suggested, being referred to by a first name or having their surname prefixed by 'Mr' communicated recognition and esteem:

> *Does it make a difference [when you are called by your first name]?*
> I think it does. It's more personal and it tends to sort of instil the belief in you that they actually know who you are. You are not just a name or a number if you like. (Prisoner, public prison)
> I feel respected here because they call me 'Mr Jones', they address me like that here which in a lot of prisons they don't.
> *So why does that make a difference?*
> You don't feel as if you are being treated, even though you are in prison … you don't need to be trodden on as well and treated like rubbish … in some prisons they like to keep you down and there are not first name terms, it is either 'Bloggs this' or 'Bloggs that'. (Prisoner, public prison)

For some, the use of first name terms had a profound effect in conveying some degree of humanity:

> Like I got called Ian before by an officer. 'You all right Ian?' and I said 'yeah' and you know that's the first time I'd been called Ian for years.
> *Really?*
> By an officer, yeah. I said it made me feel a bit more human. It's usually 'Smith', shouting down the landings 'Smith'.
> *So did it make a difference being called by your first name?*
> Yeah, I was crying, it really shocked me. (Prisoner, public prison)

Respect involved individual recognition and familiarity as well as courtesy and consideration:

> *Can you think of examples when you have been treated particularly respectfully?*
> Just generally, the day-to-day basis … they come in your pad quiet and that, they say 'good morning' to you. When they go home at night they say goodnight to you. They always ask you about stuff, when you come back off your visits and that. They want to you know if you've had a good visit, and stuff like that. They are just generally interested in what we are and stuff. (Prisoner, private prison)
> *Do you feel you are treated with respect here?*
> I don't … I feel that I'm respected for my attitude, but I don't feel that … you know, there's no officer that really knows me. (Prisoner, public prison)

These quotations also indicate the importance of care and concern for the individual. As Tait (2008: 5) notes, caring interactions are demonstrated in mundane ways: 'daily civilities, like saying "good morning", casual conversation about family, sport, or the local area, and physically integrating with prisoners (playing pool, chatting on the wing)'. However, prisoners were clear that respect was about more than staff 'acting friendly' and being personally approachable. As the following quotation illustrates, to define respect in terms of courtesy was to overlook the 'bigger picture':

> *How do you feel about them using your surname when they talk to you?*
> I'm not really, I'm not bothered. A lot of people are bothered that they don't call them by their first name but I mean there's worser things in the prison than being called your first or second name. I'd rather them sort my food out than call me my second name. Do you know what I mean? … There's a bigger picture than just my name really. (Prisoner, private prison)

A broader notion of respect involved a willingness and ability among staff to assist and support prisoners in relation to their daily needs and requests – what we are beginning to think of as 'organizational respect' or effectiveness. This concept incorporates some of the 'dialogic' aspects of legitimacy recently introduced by Bottoms and Tankebe (submitted) in their conceptual analysis, in which dimensions like fairness and respect work *interactively*. In other words, prisoners' *respect for the organization* is as significant as its respect for them. In prisoners' terms, this component of respect, as experienced, was described as 'sorting things out' or 'getting things done':

> *Do you feel like you are treated with respect here?*
> Yeah.
> *In what way? Can you give me an example?*
> Just that if you ask for something to be done it'll get done. (Prisoner, public prison)
> You ask them [officers] to do something they do it. They ask you to do something you'll do it. It's just mutual respect isn't it. (Prisoner, public prison)

In the prison system of England and Wales, for example, prisoners have to submit applications ('apps') to staff for a range of things, such as applying for jobs, checking prison bank accounts and obtaining property that has been sent in by friends and relatives outside prison. The speed and competence with which these applications are processed and answered vary considerably between prisons. The recognition of these needs, through the effective and expeditious processing of prisoners' queries and requests, demonstrates respect. It is consistent with Sennett's (2003: 52) reference to respect as 'taking the needs of others seriously'. Prisoners repeatedly drew attention to its importance:

> Some prisons it can be a really long process like I'll put an application in and then that goes to so and so and then that goes to so and so and by the time you've been given the call it's a week later and … the problem's already gone worse or finished or whatever, it's too late for you to actually change it. With here, they're more hands on, they will cut the red tape, which they're not meant to, but they will have respect for you to try and deal with your problem. (Prisoner, public prison)

> *When don't you feel you are treated with respect?*
> You know, they tell you to put an app in, so you put an app in and then you either don't get a response or you get one that's just not any good at all. With my situation at the minute I need this sorting out, you know, so it is a matter of urgency really, priority, and I just keep getting fobbed off. (Prisoner, public prison)

For prisoners, a successful outcome did not need to be a favourable response, that is, permission to do something. Often, what prisoners wanted was a response that was fair and unambiguous, one that removed them from a state of uncertainty. In this study, prisoners recognized that there were particular requests that staff were unlikely to be able to fulfil. In such circumstances, they preferred to be told 'no' than to be 'fobbed off' or told yes only for their request not to materialize. For prisoners, this type of respect was demonstrated by staff listening to them, taking their concerns seriously, and responding honestly and without undue delay. Prisoners sometimes described this aspect of respect in terms of being spoken to 'on a level' or 'straight down the line', that is, being responded to as an adult and with sincerity. In this sense, 'process' was more important than 'outcomes' (as the procedural justice literature has argued). But in other respects, where prisoners had reasonable expectations that staff might be able to help them with queries and practices relevant to their sentence (such as the availability of courses and how to access them), failures to deal appropriately with prisoners' needs communicated a lack of care or empathy, and could have considerable implications for prisoners' futures. Here, then, prisoners were defining respect in a deeper and more textured way than much of the literature has so far suggested. As the main purpose of this study was to compare quality of life in public and private sector prisons, we consider the extent to which these components of respect were experienced by prisoners in private and public sector prisons below.

Respect in Private and Public Sector Prisons

As noted above, since a number of official and scholarly studies had noted higher levels of respect towards prisoners in private sector prisons than in their public sector counterparts (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 1999; House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2003; James et al., 1997; Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004), we expected this area to be a private sector 'strength'. There was some evidence from our interviews that this was the case, when a narrow interpretation of respect was applied. As one prisoner serving time in a public sector prison explained:

> I've stayed in private prisons now and again yeah, I've noticed that their attitude is a lot more relaxed … there's a lot more communication, there's a lot more politeness, a lot more respect, a lot more choice … choice to do with walking round the prison, not having to be told to do this and that, lot more respect, people call you by your first name, you know. (Prisoner, public prison)

Prisoners in the private sector prisons in our study were more likely to report that officers routinely referred to them as 'Mr' or by their preferred name. Those who had spent time in public sector prisons often contrasted it with their current experience:

> What I like about the private system … you do get some of your identity back when you come here … when a person comes up to you and you know they're genuine and they call you Mr or by your first name, the immediate respect you have for that individual, speaking to you in that way, grows massively than it does with anyone in HMP [i.e. the public sector], where you are a number and a second name, and they take early retirement before they call you by your first name, that's an HMP. (Prisoner, private prison)

The public sector prisons in our study were relatively progressive, in the sense that prisoners were referred to by their first names or as 'Mr' more often than in many other public sector establishments. However, this practice was less habitual than in private prisons. Often, it was dependent on prisoners submitting to staff authority, or 'earning' the right to be addressed courteously, either through building a relationship with staff over a long time period or through sustained compliance:

> *What do you call [staff] and what do they call you?*
> Well, we've built up a respect for one another, whereby we can call them by their first names or their last names. (Prisoner, public prison)

Prisoners in the public sector prisons often complained that staff spoke to them disrespectfully because of their low regard for them. Officers were often morally censorious about prisoners, defining them as 'criminals' who forfeited certain rights to respectful treatment when they were sentenced by the courts. In the private sector, we heard similar complaints about staff talking to prisoners in ways that were patronizing or antagonistic. However, prisoners generally attributed this not to the lack of moral status that officers afforded them, but to staff naivety and inexperience. In the private sector, then, interpersonal disrespect was more often an outcome of staff lacking confidence and experience in using their authority. In the public sector, it was a form of over-confidence among staff about their power and moral status (see Crewe et al., 2011).

Staff confidence and experience were germane in another respect. In the two pairs of matched prisons in the main part of our study, prisoners in the public sector were far more positive than those in the private sector about 'getting things done'. As one prisoner in a private prison noted, 'That's the thing about private prisons; if you ask for something it just doesn't get done'. In the words of another prisoner, 'They make promises they can't keep – they say "leave it with me", and nothing happens.' Prisoners often attributed the effectiveness of public sector staff in this regard to their experience and 'professionalism'. By contrast, staff in private prisons were repeatedly described as friendly, enthusiastic and keen to help, but unable to respond efficiently or effectively to requests. For example:

> *So do you think it's the staff levels that mean [private] prisons don't get as much done?*
> Quite possibly yes, and unprofessionalism. They don't really know what they need to do … There's people who used to work [in the private sector] as an officer, unlocking and … they haven't got a clue. (Prisoner, public prison)

The inability of staff to deal with prisoners' problems could generate considerable frustration, as could staff passing on responsibility to other staff or placating prisoners to make their lives easier. The following quotation was typical of a distinction that prisoners drew between the two sectors:

Table 2. Items included in the Respect/Courtesy dimension

Respect/Courtesy items
I feel I am treated with respect by staff in this prison
This prison is poor at treating prisoners with respect
Most staff address and talk to me in a respectful manner
Relationships between staff and prisoners in this prison are good
Staff speak to you on a level in this prison
Staff are argumentative towards prisoners in this prison
Personally I get on well with the officers on my wing
This prison encourages me to respect other people

> In HMP, you get your [senior officers] and your [principal officers] who are on each wing. You go to them with a problem and they sort it out … Here you go to them with a problem and it's like 'yeah yeah' they fob you off and give you all the flannel. (Prisoner, private prison).[7]

Prisoners generally respected staff who were 'straight' with them, even if this meant receiving unfavourable outcomes, as long as these outcomes were justifiable. Not knowing 'where you stand', or being treated 'like a kid', was considerably more frustrating: 'cos, you know, in jail, when you lie to someone and it doesn't happen, those are the little pressures behind the ears' (Prisoner, private prison). As suggested here, there were dangers in staff in private prisons offering a shallow form of respect, entailing courtesy without effectiveness. We will return to this point below. For now, we turn to an exploratory quantitative analysis of respect, based on the qualitative enquiry outlined above.

Quantitative measures of respect

Our initial quantitative analysis of respect was conducted using a dimension called 'Respect/Courtesy', which emerged from a factor analysis of the entire MQPL survey immediately following the completion of the fieldwork in the seven prisons. This dimension comprised eight statements (or 'items'), as shown in Table 2.

We defined 'Respect/Courtesy' as 'positive, respectful and courteous attitudes towards prisoners by staff'. This definition, and the items that constituted it, reflected the way that respect had traditionally been defined in the prisons literature and in official statements.

In order to test the wider definition that emerged during further analysis of our qualitative data, we conducted a retrospective exploration of the prisoner survey data, placing items that appeared to be relevant to respect, defined both in terms of interpersonal relationships and 'getting things done', into a factor analysis.[8] Two main factors emerged, 'interpersonal respect' and 'organizational respect'. These are shown in Tables 3 and 4, along with the factor reliabilities and the correlation between each item.

Table 3. Factor 1 Interpersonal respect (α = .934)

Item	Corr.
I feel I am treated with respect by staff in this prison	.794
Overall, I am treated fairly by staff in this prison	.755
This prison is poor at treating prisoners with respect	.738
I trust the officers in this prison	.723
Staff in this prison often display honesty and integrity	.722
Relationships between staff and prisoners in this prison are good	.694
My legal rights as a prisoner are respected in this prison	.692
Staff speak to you on a level in this prison	.687
Most staff address and talk to me in a respectful manner	.676
My needs are being addressed in this prison	.663
Staff are argumentative towards prisoners in this prison	.659
The regime in this prison is fair	.640
Personally I get on well with the officers on my wing	.570
Control and restraint procedures are used fairly in this prison	.552
If you do something wrong in this prison, staff only use punishments if they have tried other options first	.547

Table 4. Factor 2 Organizational respect (α = .878)

Item	Corr.
I have to be careful about everything I do in this prison, or it can be used against me	.653
This prison is poor at giving prisoners reasons for decisions	.651
Decisions are made about me in this prison that I cannot understand	.542
Decisions are made about me in this prison that I cannot influence	.528
To get things done in prison, you have to ask and ask and ask	.484
In this prison things only happen for you if your face fits	.479
You never know where you stand in this prison	.471
I feel stuck in this system	.370
In general I think the disciplinary system here is unfair	.340
To progress in this prison, I have to meet impossible expectations	.284

Broadly speaking, Factor 1 reflected many of the interpersonal aspects of respect described by prisoners, as outlined above. It also included references to honesty, trust and fairness (which had featured in some of our other survey dimensions, such as ‘relationships’ and ‘fairness’). The second factor represented the second component of respect – what we might tentatively call ‘organizational respect’. Some of its items are consistent with prisoners’ descriptions of respect as ‘getting things done’. Others relate to the fairness, effectiveness, transparency, clarity and responsiveness of the organisation, or are outcomes of staff behaviour. For example, prisoners may feel ‘stuck in the

Table 5. Mean scores for each cluster on Factor 1 and Factor 2 from the exploratory analysis of respect

Cluster	Cluster A	Cluster B	Cluster C	Cluster D
Public/private prison	Private DG and RH	Private FB	Public BN and GA	Private LG and ALT
Factor 1: Interpersonal respect	2.81	3.07***A	3.14***A	3.33***A, B, **C
Factor 2: Organizational respect	2.26	2.53***A	2.59***A	2.72***A, *B

system', or unable to understand or influence the decisions that are made about them, *as a result* of staff failing to 'get things done' for them.

It is interesting to compare the scores for the private and public prisons in our study on these factors. Based on the initial analysis of all of the prisoner survey results, the prisons were clustered into four groups, each one representing a different level of overall 'quality', as measured by the 21 original dimensions in the survey. Cluster A ('poor') comprises Dovegate and Rye Hill, private sector prisons whose results were consistently poorer than the other establishments. Cluster B ('average') contains Forest Bank, a private sector prison whose scores were generally higher than Cluster A but lower than those in Clusters C and D. Cluster C ('good') comprises Bullingdon and Garth, the two public sector prisons in the study, which tended to score higher than the (private) prisons in Clusters A and B, but lower than those in Cluster D. Cluster D ('very good') consists of Lowdham Grange and Altcourse, both private sector prisons, which scored consistently higher than the other prisons in the prisoner survey. Table 5 shows the mean scores for each cluster in relation to our post-hoc factors, 'interpersonal respect' and 'organizational respect' (note that a higher score is always better, as negative statements are recoded positively during analysis – see Liebling et al., 2011). The significant differences between the scores are shown where relevant (based on an analysis of variance). The asterisks indicate the level of significance, while the initials beside them represent the clusters that the current score is *significantly higher* than.[9]

These data provide mixed support for previous claims that the private sector offers a more courteous and considerate prison environment than the public sector. The high performing private prisons (Cluster D) significantly outscored all other clusters on factor 1, 'interpersonal respect'. However, private prisons also featured at the lower end of the spectrum for this factor: Cluster A – the less good private sector prisons – scored significantly lower than all of the other clusters in this area. In other words, the degree to which a prisoner's interpersonal treatment was respectful depended more on the particular private prison that he was in than the sector in which he was imprisoned.

These results also show up some significant strengths and weaknesses in public 'versus' private sector prisons respectively. The public sector prisons in the study (Cluster C) scored significantly higher on 'interpersonal respect' than the poorer performing private sector prisons (Cluster A). However, they scored significantly lower than the high performing private prisons (Cluster D). Specifically, the scores in the public sector prisons

were significantly lower than the private prisons in Cluster D on seven of the 15 items that made up this dimension:

- 'This prison is poor at treating prisoners with respect.'
- 'Relationships between staff and prisoners are good.'
- 'Staff speak to you on a level in this prison.'
- 'Staff are argumentative towards prisoners in this prison.'
- 'Staff in this prison often display honesty and integrity.'
- 'The regime in this prison is fair.'
- 'My needs are being addressed in this prison.'

There were fewer differences between the public sector prisons (Cluster C) and the high performing private prisons (Cluster D) on items which related to the way that staff communicated with prisoners, their levels of fairness and the extent to which prisoners trusted staff.

In terms of factor 2, 'organizational respect', a similar pattern emerged. Private prisons scored both lowest (Cluster A, 2.26) and highest (Cluster D, 2.72) on this factor. As with factor 1, the public sector prisons (Cluster C) scored significantly higher than the poorer private sector prisons (Cluster A). While they also scored below the high-performing private prisons (Cluster D), the difference in mean scores was not statistically significant. This is consistent with our qualitative findings, in that prisoners reported public sector prisons as being relatively well organized compared to their matched comparators, with staff who were generally knowledgeable and reliable. It is interesting to note, though, that the better private sector prisons also appeared strong in these areas, providing levels of 'organizational respect' that were at least as high as those in the public sector. Only a small number of interviews were conducted in these prisons (Lowdham Grange and Altcourse), making it difficult for us at this stage to explain why there were such differences between the better and less good private prisons in this regard, but different levels of experience and knowledgeability on the part of private sector officers certainly played a part.

Discussion

In the prisons literature, respect is most commonly defined in terms of courteous and considerate relationships (Butler and Drake, 2007; Tyler, 2010). In this study, prisoners' interpretations of respect were located in two aspects of prison life: interpersonal relationships with staff and the meeting of prisoners' needs, or 'getting things done'. Both reflect the notion of respect as 'taking the needs of others seriously' (Sennett, 2003: 52) and each highlights the importance to prisoners of 'recognition' and 'status'. To feel respected, prisoners need their emotional and interpersonal needs to be recognized by staff. They also need to feel that staff take their practical needs seriously. This means staff being able and willing to process their requests effectively, honestly and fairly.

It is unsurprising that Sennett's notions of status and recognition emerge as highly pertinent to prisoners, given that they interact with staff from an inherently powerless and unequal position. Although, in the prisons literature, respect has not been defined in

terms of meeting prisoners' needs, the dependence of prisoners on staff is well known. In their classic studies of institutional life, both Goffman (1961) and Mathiesen (1965) noted that prisoners were reliant on staff for a range of acts and privileges which impacted significantly on their quality of life. More recently, Sparks and colleagues (1996: 161–162) have observed that:

> Even on a brief acquaintance with life in long-term prisons one cannot fail to notice the importance which both prisoners and staff place upon the regular provision of goods and services and on aspects of life which the outside observer might regard as mundane or even trivial. … From their dependent position, prisoners therefore expect smoothness in administrative processes, efficient communication and delivery of services in areas which are important to them.

In the same way that wing staff control access to goods and services, they are also the gatekeepers to forms of information and personnel that can affect the speed with which prisoners progress through the prison system, particularly those serving indeterminate sentences. In the contemporary penal context, the requirement that prisoners take responsibility for reducing their own risk – primarily, by attending offending behaviour programmes – may, in fact, make prisoners all the more dependent on staff to help them access and retrieve information about relevant courses and interventions. In order to manage their progression, prisoners need clear information about their sentence conditions, well-informed contributions to their 'personal files' and other such assistance. The competence and commitment of staff are therefore crucial not just in determining the daily conditions under which prisoners live, but also the amount of time they spend in prison (Crewe, 2009). In this sense, a concept we might call 'organizational respect' has become an increasingly important dimension of the prisoner experience, one that is often overlooked in official conceptions of what respect means. We concur with Butler and Drake's (2007) claim that respect-as-consideration is more achievable in prisons than respect-as-esteem, but we would add that both are easier to achieve than the broad form of respect that we have highlighted in this article. It is interesting to note, for example, that the scores for the four prison clusters in our study for 'interpersonal respect' are consistently higher than those for 'organizational respect'. The latter are all beneath the 'neutral' score of 3,[10] while the former are all close to or above it. Indeed, while between 63 per cent and 75 per cent of prisoners in all seven prisons agreed (or strongly agreed) with the statement 'Most staff address and talk to me in a respectful manner' (an item in 'interpersonal respect'), only between 6 per cent and 24 per cent of prisoners *disagreed* (or strongly disagreed) that 'To get things done in this prison you have to ask and ask and ask' (56–85 per cent agreed that this was the case).

A prison that avoids or minimizes *disrespect* needs to meet the dual criteria that we have outlined in this article. Establishments that provide 'interpersonal' but not 'organizational respect' may be experienced as illegitimate (see Sparks et al., 1996). By being courteous but organizationally ineffective, they offer a 'thin' form of respect, which prisoners experience as shallow and highly frustrating. Where officers are friendly but lacking in competence, prisoners come to consider them 'two-faced' or

dishonest. Some private sector prisons have focused excessively on this narrow form of respect, at the expense of a more substantial version. Our research indicated that the inability of staff in some private prisons to 'get things done' undermined the legitimacy of staff in the eyes of prisoners. One way that this was expressed was in complaints that private sector staff were barely qualified or competent – 'half this lot used to work in Tescos' (Prisoner, private sector) – or that they were not considered 'proper officers':

> As far as a lot of the inmates in here are concerned, they actually see these lot not as prison officers. … They're just glorified security guards, they're here to lock the door and open the door, it's as simple as that. (Prisoner, private sector)

Many public sector prisons have the opposite problem, in that they are organizationally relatively effective, but lacking in important aspects of respect, such as care and humanity (see Crewe et al., under review). Very few prisons fulfil both conditions – what might be considered 'respect plus'.

The relevance of respect for legitimacy in prisons has recently been discussed by Tom Tyler (2010), most of whose work has explored the concept in relation to policing and other areas of criminal justice. Tyler (2010: 127) defines legitimacy as 'the widespread belief among members of the public that the police, the courts, and the legal system are authorities entitled to make decisions and who should be deferred to concerning matters of criminal justice'. He asserts that 'procedural justice' is key to achieving such legitimacy. Tyler considers respect to be one of four key factors that can generate procedural justice in prisons, alongside 'voice' (providing opportunities for prisoners to explain their point of view), 'neutrality' (consistent and fair rule application) and 'trust in authority' (prisoners' perceiving that officers are behaving sincerely, based on what is right rather than personal well-being).

Tyler associates respectful relationships with courtesy, the recognition of human rights and the absence of degrading or stigmatizing practices. Based on our analysis, this definition is limited, although there are overlaps between Tyler's wider notion of procedural justice and our notion of 'respect plus'. For example, 'neutrality' and 'trust in authority' are closely related to prisoners' discussions of fairness and their expectation that staff respond to their requests with honesty and sincerity. Our definition of respect, as outlined by prisoners, may represent a grounded understanding of what Tyler calls 'procedural justice'. The differences between prisoners' definitions and those offered in Tyler's work may reflect differences between interactions in the contexts of prisons and policing. As Liebling and Price (2001: 129–130) note:

> There are important distinctions to be made between policing and prison officer work. First, prison officers are more continually in contact with their charges. Officers in local prisons have observed that they often see offenders 'from cradle to grave', even when they each move between establishments. … Thirdly, the formal legal power held by a prison officer over a prisoner is probably greater than that held by a police officer. Prisoners are no longer free citizens, and there are many powerful rules available to the prison officer.

Further distinctions may be added here. First, the self-contained nature of the prison, which enables information about staff treatment and decision making to circulate rapidly within an institution, means that prisoners are more likely than free citizens to know how others have been treated in similar circumstances (Sparks and Bottoms, 1995). Second, some prisoners are well informed about their rights, making them highly sensitive to matters of fairness. Third, the distinction drawn in much of the legitimacy literature between processes and outcomes is less clear in prisons. The dependence of prisoners on staff for a range of information means that a successful 'outcome' can simply mean receiving an answer to one's question, as well as gaining a response that is favourable. The process *is* an outcome of sorts, and while – as in police interactions – it matters a great deal that this process is interpersonally respectful, it matters too that it is *completed*. This is relevant to certain kinds of interactions between citizens and police – for example, when the former contact the latter about a problem – but less so in relation to the direct but fleeting contact that is the focus of much of the police legitimacy research.

Conclusion

Being clear and precise about what prisoners mean by respect is crucial if prison staff are to deliver respect in a way that is meaningful to those in their care. Accurate and relevant measures of respect are necessary to monitor what is a basic requirement for a 'decent and humane prison' (Butler and Drake, 2007: 125; also see Owers, 2003, in Harding, 2007). Respectful treatment can contribute to prisoners' sense of self and well-being (Butler and Drake, 2007; Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004), while failures in decency, treatment and service delivery may impact directly on levels of institutional order (Home Office, 1991; Sparks et al., 1996). We believe that the normative argument for increasing regime legitimacy should be sufficiently compelling, but there are also instrumental benefits in terms of maintaining control, encouraging compliance and improving prisoner well-being.

Respect in prison, as negotiated between prisoners and prison staff, is possible despite the inherent inequalities in power. This article provides a 'ground–up' analysis of respect, attempting to operationalize it using a form of post-hoc analysis, and identifying important differences between levels of respect and disrespect in different establishments. This kind of retrospective analysis can only go so far. Our research is exploratory and the measures are far from perfect. Neither of the factors that we derived from our survey data provide a complete fit with our qualitative conceptualizations of respect. Both represent exploratory measures of what are latent or underlying constructs (variables that cannot be measured directly; Field, 2005: 736). These are hard to isolate using pre-constructed items. Respect is not a 'sharp' construct with clear boundaries; it has blurred edges which merge into other key concepts such as honesty, fairness, trust and care. Nonetheless, this article represents a good enough starting point for conceptualizing and evaluating respect in prison, in a way that is relevant to prisoners and proposing dimension items which can differentiate between prisons. More focused work is needed to refine these measures and explore more systematically the way respect 'works' in prison.

Notes

1. In November 2010, Kaylx was renamed 'Sodhexo Justice Services'.
2. G4S – the third company – does not mention respect, but refers to caring for prisoners (G4S, 2010), a related concept.
3. The verb '*to appreciate*' can mean 'to estimate the value of', 'to estimate *rightly*', or 'esteem adequately' (Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004: 141). As a research method, Appreciative Inquiry is participatory, respectful and empowering. It has a special relevance to the measurement and cultivation of *values*. It is creative and mainly qualitative, concerned with theory generation and with the development of sensitizing concepts, and it is concerned with 'lived experience', narrative, and meaning. It is also distinct in important ways, being less concerned with the predictive validity of theories generated from data, and more concerned with individual and organizational growth. It includes an explicit use of *generative questions*: these are few in number, they generate emotion as well as experience, they are based exclusively on narrative and on real memories of specific experiences. They involve a deliberate focus on 'peak' experiences. This main component of the original research was largely *inductive* but led to the development of a structured and meaningful quality of life questionnaire used in subsequent research and referred to in the remainder of this article (see further Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004: ch. 3).
4. PFI prisons are run under the 'Private Finance Initiative' whereby private companies bid to finance, design, construct and often manage a prison (James et al 1997: 160–161).
5. ESRC award RES-062-23-0212.
6. In one of the three additional prisons, a team from NOMS Audit and Corporate Assurance conducted the surveys, although a researcher from this study attended the groups.
7. Some private sector custody officers blamed their inability to help on uncooperative, ineffective or under-supported colleagues in other departments within the prison.
8. Items were taken from 10 dimensions in the original analysis.
9. Significance levels: $*p \leq .01$; $**p \leq .05$; and $***p \leq .001$.
10. The 'neutral score' of 3 means that, on average, prisoners neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements within the dimension.

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