

# Prisons and the Problem of Trust

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# Transforming Social Science (ESRC)

July 2013 - May 2015

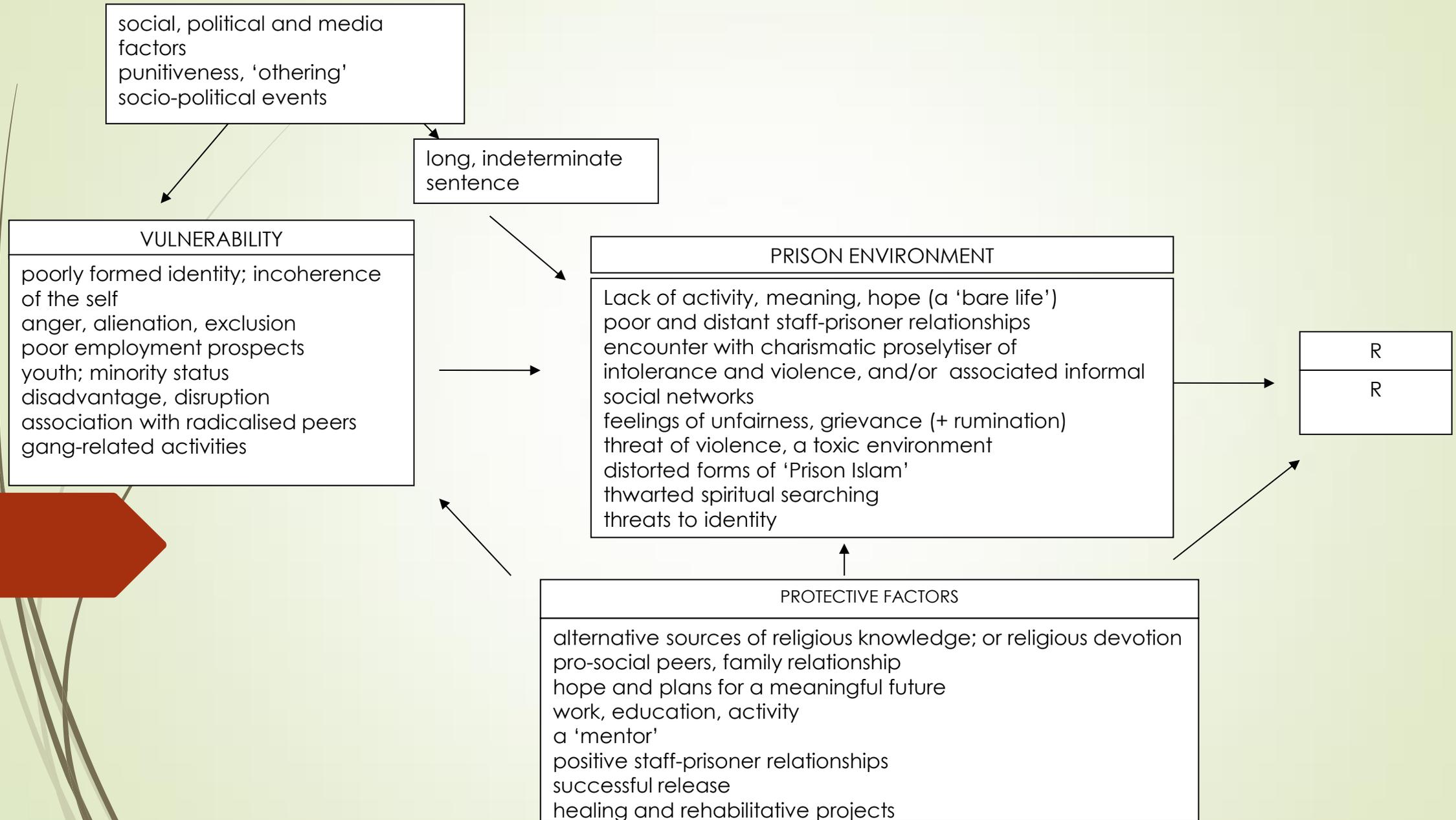
**Locating trust in a climate of fear: religion, moral status, prisoner leadership, and risk in maximum security prisons**

Alison Liebling, Ruth Armstrong,  
Ryan Williams, Richard Bramwell

## 3 studies (1998-2015).

1. Whitemoor study 1998-9: *An exploration of staff-prisoner relationships at HMP Whitemoor*. Professional confidence. (Liebling and Price 2001). Take 'guarded trust' for granted?
- Whitemoor study 2009-10. A repeat. *An Exploration of Staff-Prisoner Relationships at HMP Whitemoor: Twelve Years On*. 'Paralysed by distrust' (Liebling, Arnold and Straub 2011). 'Unfinished business'.
1. ESRC Transforming Social Science award: *Locating trust in a climate of fear: religion, moral status, prisoner leadership, and risk in maximum security prisons*. Liebling, Armstrong, Bramwell and Williams July 2013-March 2015, in progress). Differences between 3 (4) establishments. Testing a theory (trust + political charge).

# A SEQUENCED AND PROGRESSIVE (CUMULATIVE) LIFE COURSE MODEL OF (PRISON) RADICALISATION



**An exploration of  
staff – prisoner relationships at  
HMP Whitemoor: 12 Years On**

**Revised Final Report**

**Alison Lieblich, Helen Arnold and Christina Straub**

**Cambridge Institute of Criminology  
Prisons Research Centre  
November 2011**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/217381/staff-prisoner-relations-whitemoor.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/217381/staff-prisoner-relations-whitemoor.pdf)

# Whitemoor II - key findings: the 'struggle for recognition' (Honneth 1995)?

1. 'I-Thou' to 'I-It' relations : prisoners as 'experienced objects' rather than 'experiencing subjects'.
2. Changing SMT (the new penology in action?).
3. A 'failing state'? An absence of management presence, officer alienation and retreat, a lack of purpose, safety, fairness, or opportunities for growth and meaning.
4. New and unexplored moral and religious challenges.
5. High levels of fear and distance.

# Outcomes

- A *decline* in: recognition ('expertise'), the quality of staff-prisoner relationships (from 'glue'/'oil' to 'a risk'), prisoner-prisoner relationships, staff professionalism/confidence, trust, safety, legitimacy, meaning, hope, activity, Authentic talk.
- Feelings of illegitimacy and frustration/anger
- The appeal of religious identities as power (as well as meaning)
- The 'remaking of Black manhood' in prison (Hamm 2013) and responses to this.
- Increased risk? Of violence and a climate in which extremism is more likely.

# Onora O'Neill (2009): Trusting intelligently?

The central problem in thinking about trust is that it can be misplaced: the trustworthy may be mistrusted, and the untrustworthy may be trusted. Both sorts of mismatch lead to practical anxiety as well as intellectual complexity. When we refuse to trust the trustworthy we incur needless worry and cost in trying to check them out and hold them to account, while those who find their trustworthiness wrongly questioned may feel undermined, even insulted — and ultimately less inclined to be trustworthy ...the central practical aim in placing and refusing trust is to do so well, that is to *align the placing of trust with trustworthiness*. The central practical question is how we can *place trust intelligently*, despite the inevitable incompleteness of evidence that others' words are true of the world, or that their acts will live up to their words (O'Neill, O. *Perverting Trust*, Ashby Lecture, May 15th 2009: 1).



# Hypotheses

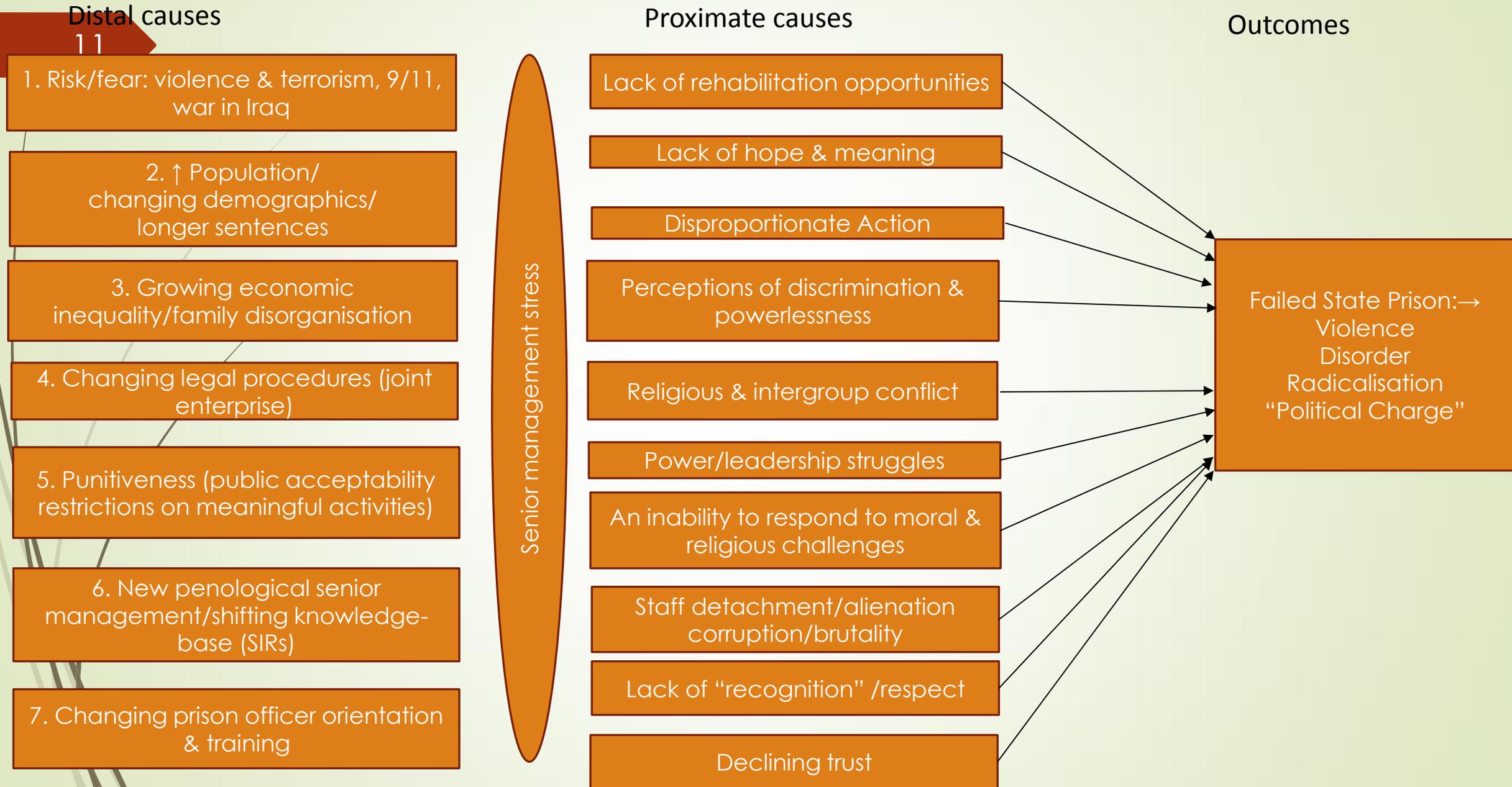
- 1. Some intelligent trust generates constructive faith exploration/identities or 'spiritual capital'; and lowers risk.
- 2. 'Failed state prisons', paralysed by distrust, generate more 'political charge' and (therefore) more dangerous faith identities.
- 3. Different types of prisoners are esteemed, or rise to the top of the prisoner hierarchy, carrying influence, in these different kinds of climates.

Theory informed by  
Mark S. Hamm (2013) *The Spectacular Few*

Radicalization occurs only under specific conditions of confinement: 'Failed state' (mismanaged, understaffed) prisons generate more 'political charge' (anger and alienation).

One key characteristic of the failed state is its 'failure to live up to its moral obligation to provide transgressors with the opportunity to pursue their reformation' (Hamm 2009: 678).

**Figure 1:** Towards a 'Failed State' Theory of Prison Effects (Liebling, in press)





# Political charge

- My time in prison has made me angry.
- The prison authorities are guiltier than I am for wrongdoing.
- I feel more like fighting back in this prison.
- I dislike this prison's treatment of people like me.
- I feel shame for what I have done to get here.
- The level of suspicion in this prison is too high.
- I have become more tolerant of (other) faith groups in this prison.
- The problems we are facing in this prison need action now.
- I have seen things happen to other prisoners in here that are simply wrong.
- I accept that there is a reason for me being here

# Methods:

## 2 (3) contrasting High Security Prisons

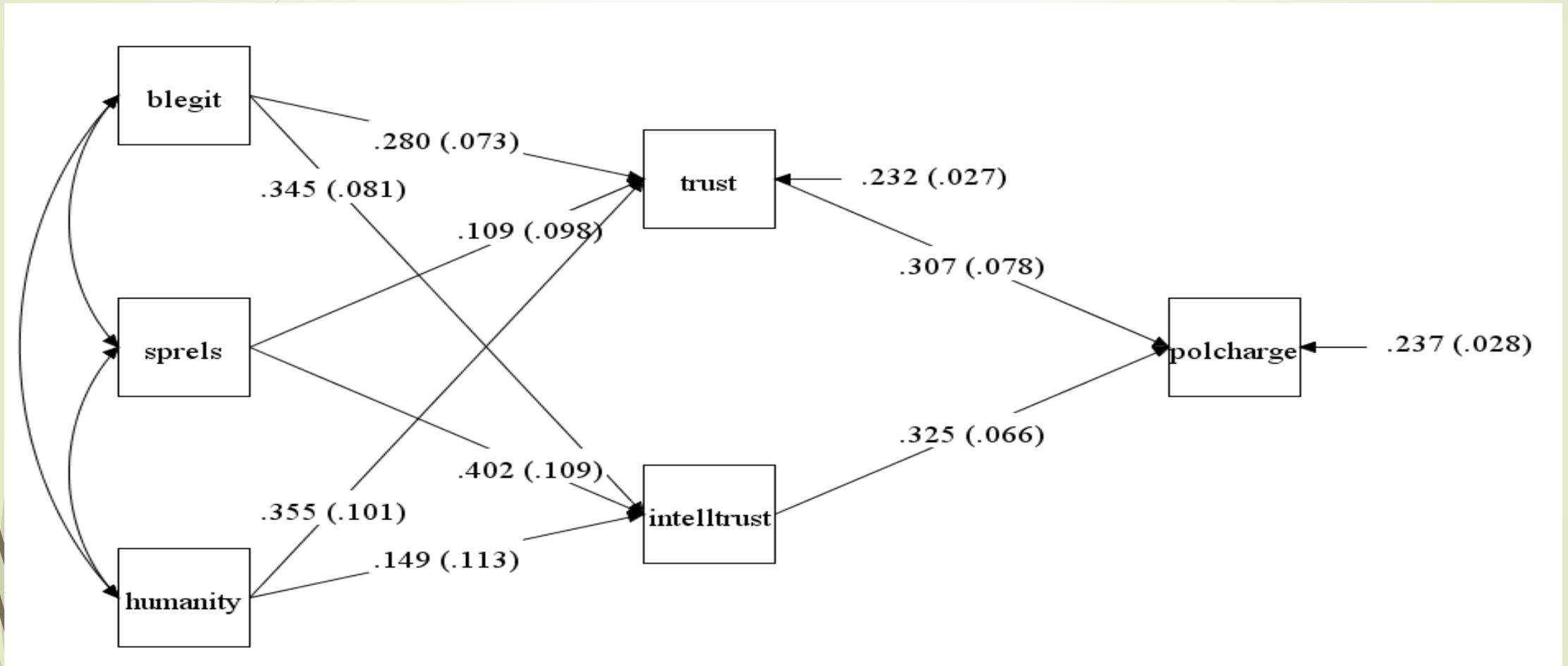
- 'Slow entry..'
- Dialogue
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Observation/Shadowing
- Long interviews
- Trust diagram (people/places)
- ▶ Participation
- Relevant previous studies (e.g. Sparks et al 1996)
- ▶ Social Field Generator
- ▶ MQPL (revised – trust, intelligent trust, hope and political charge)
- ▶ The team: (expertise in prison sociology and measurement, theology, networks, hip-hop/black culture, trust-religion-risk relationships, social psychology)

	Full Sutton 2014 N=167	Long Lartin 2014 N=174	Mean difference	t test (2-tailed) P value	Frankland 2014 N=165
<b>Harmony Dimensions</b>					
Entry into Custody	2.69	2.76	0.07	0.3318	2.94
Respect/courtesy	2.86	3.08*	0.22	0.0126	3.19
Staff-prisoner relationships	2.71	2.85	0.14	0.1597	3.06
Humanity	2.61	2.77†	0.16	0.0750	2.92
Decency	2.57	2.73*	0.16	0.0458	2.83
Care for the vulnerable	2.91	2.95	0.04	0.6005	3.14
Help and assistance	2.86	2.95	0.09	0.2557	3.00
<b>Professionalism Dimensions</b>					
Staff professionalism	2.84	2.93	0.09	0.3224	3.14
Bureaucratic legitimacy	2.00	2.14†	0.14	0.0692	2.34
Fairness	2.42	2.45	0.03	0.7478	2.69
Organisation and consistency	2.71	2.62	0.09	0.2955	2.84
<b>Security Dimensions</b>					
Policing and security	3.25	3.12*	0.13	0.0220	3.45
Prisoner safety	3.24	3.23	0.01	0.9119	3.26
Prisoner adaptation	3.58	3.59	0.01	0.8881	3.65
Drugs and exploitation	3.00	2.82†	0.18	0.0609	3.01
<b>Conditions and Family Contact Dimensions</b>					
Conditions	3.75	3.59†	0.16	0.0510	3.85
Family contact	2.88	3.19**	0.31	0.0045	3.10
<b>Wellbeing and Development Dimensions</b>					
Personal development	2.59	2.74	0.15	0.1058	2.85
Personal autonomy	2.64	2.63	0.01	0.9431	2.81
Wellbeing	2.45	2.49	0.04	0.6613	2.75
Distress	3.56	3.35*	0.21	0.0374	3.48
<b>New Dimensions</b>					
Hope	3.07	3.02	0.05	0.6614	2.94
Trust	2.65	2.66	0.01	0.9167	2.85
Feeling intelligently trusted	2.57	2.70	0.13	0.1325	2.91
Political charge	2.61	2.72†	0.11	0.0785	2.94
Quality of life score (1-10) mean	4.70	5.06	0.36	0.1539	5.44

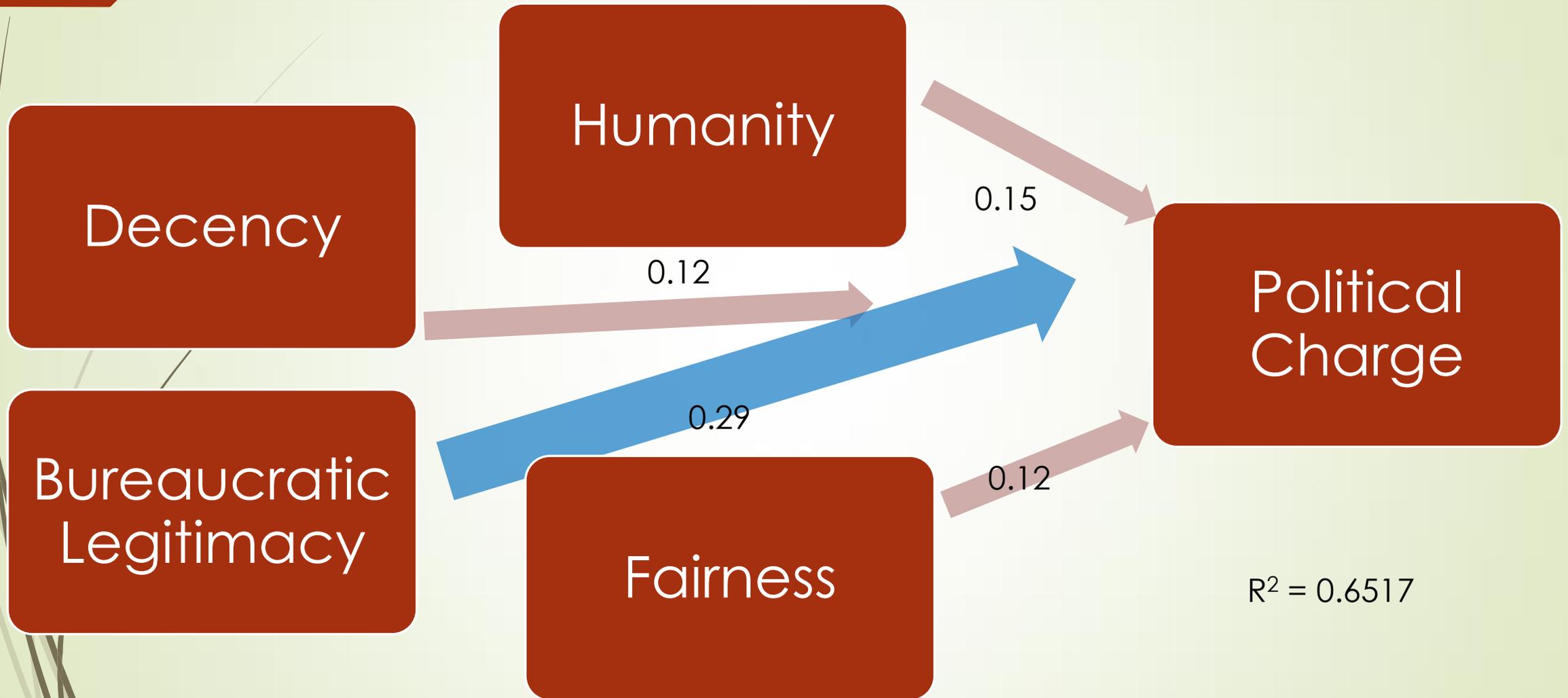
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# HMP Frankland Political Charge Path Analysis



# Explaining the Variance in Political Charge



# Intelligent Trust

Item	Full Sutton 2014 Mean	Long Lartin 2014 Mean	Frankland 2014 Mean
The right people are trusted for the right reasons in this prison.	<b>2.79</b>	<b>2.76</b>	<b>2.91</b>
I feel recognized as the person I am in this prison.	<b>2.58</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>3.02</b>
I have opportunities to show I am trustworthy in this prison.	<b>2.70</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>3.19</b>
This prison is good at placing trust in prisoners.	<b>2.21</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>2.49</b>
I feel I am trusted quite a lot in this prison.		<b>2.68</b>	
<b>Dimension mean</b>	<b>2.57</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>2.91</b>
<b><math>\alpha =</math></b>	<b>.74</b>	<b>.83</b>	<b>.78</b>

# Political charge

	<b>Full Sutton 2014 Mean</b>	<b>Long Lartin 2014 Mean</b>	<b>Frankland 2014 Mean</b>
All	<b>2.61</b>	<b>2.72</b>	<b>2.95</b>
White	<b>2.70</b>	<b>2.67</b>	<b>3.00</b>
BME	<b>2.46</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>2.67</b>
Muslim	<b>2.49</b>	<b>2.52</b>	<b>2.63</b>
Threshold/Tipping point?	<b>2.50</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>2.50</b>

## HIGHEST AND LOWEST POLITICAL CHARGE

	High Political Charge	Low Political Charge	Significant
<b>Muslim (23)</b>	1.78 (16)	3.43 (7)	p=0.08
<b>Non-Muslim (117)</b>	1.87 (60)	3.72 (57)	
<b>Black (24)</b>	1.82 (18)	3.61 (6)	p<.05
<b>Non Black (118)</b>	1.86 (59)	3.69 (59)	
<b>BME</b>	1.80 (28)	3.52 (11)	p<.05
<b>Non BME</b>	1.88 (49)	3.72 (54)	

	N=20	N=15	N=14	N=21	N=20	N=24	N=24	N=8	N=5	N=8	N=164
	A	B	C	D	F	G	J	Seg	PIPE	Westgate	TOTAL
Entry into custody	2.76	2.77	2.67	2.94	2.89	3.03	3.03	2.60	3.60	3.28	2.92
Respect/courtesy	3.38	3.13	3.00	2.97	3.01	3.28	3.19	2.90	4.03	3.55	3.18
Staff-prisoner relationships	3.14	3.19	2.88	2.92	2.59	3.13	3.02	2.76	4.10	3.65	3.04
Humanity	3.06	2.86	2.69	2.67	2.58	3.08	2.90	2.79	3.91	3.45	2.91
Decency	2.82	2.88	2.67	2.76	2.55	2.82	2.76	2.80	3.96	3.23	2.81
Care for the vulnerable	3.21	3.49	3.00	3.09	2.75	2.97	3.06	3.11	3.88	3.75	3.13
Help and assistance	3.08	3.13	2.87	3.00	2.70	3.01	2.85	2.76	3.80	3.48	2.99
Staff professionalism	3.27	3.18	2.79	3.14	2.76	3.19	3.00	3.00	3.87	3.64	3.11
Bureaucratic legitimacy	2.43	2.31	2.04	2.48	1.94	2.31	2.40	2.25	2.64	2.81	2.32
Fairness	2.91	2.72	2.27	2.73	2.12	2.73	2.67	2.65	3.60	3.17	2.67
Organisation and consistency	2.84	2.87	2.58	2.93	2.38	2.96	2.86	2.93	3.63	3.23	2.84
Policing and security	3.46	3.34	3.55	3.33	3.39	3.44	3.55	3.52	3.67	3.51	3.45
Prisoner safety	3.49	3.27	3.16	3.20	3.12	3.28	3.30	3.06	3.80	3.00	3.25
Prisoner adaptation	4.12	3.47	3.57	3.59	3.60	3.61	3.53	3.48	4.27	3.58	3.65
Drugs and exploitation	2.85	2.64	2.94	2.75	3.15	3.18	3.38	3.01	3.48	2.83	3.01
Conditions	3.90	3.93	3.66	3.67	3.72	4.05	3.75	3.68	4.60	4.19	3.86
Family contact	2.75	3.09	2.74	3.22	3.18	3.06	3.26	2.88	3.67	3.42	3.10
Personal development	2.99	2.87	2.43	2.94	2.46	2.81	2.78	2.08	4.15	3.65	2.83
Personal autonomy	2.94	2.92	2.27	2.88	2.52	2.75	2.92	2.64	3.50	3.13	2.80
Wellbeing	2.99	2.52	2.45	2.80	2.37	2.90	2.85	2.64	3.30	2.97	2.75
Distress	3.58	3.09	3.14	3.60	3.65	3.65	3.69	2.83	4.00	3.13	3.48
Hope	3.11	3.07	2.41	3.04	2.51	2.94	2.95	2.58	3.80	3.53	2.93
Trust	3.00	2.72	2.49	2.73	2.63	2.93	2.85	2.46	3.57	3.32	2.83
Feeling intelligently trusted	2.99	2.98	2.41	2.90	2.30	3.13	2.97	2.68	3.55	3.53	2.89
Political charge	3.23	2.94	2.66	3.00	2.47	3.00	2.94	2.82	3.62	3.26	2.94
Prison social life	3.30	3.20	3.07	3.23	3.04	3.06	3.30	2.91	3.84	3.08	3.17
Changing lives	3.08	3.14	2.74	3.18	2.73	2.94	3.02	2.49	3.63	3.31	3.00
<b>Quality of life score (1-10) mean</b>	<b>5.76</b>	<b>6.21</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>4.89</b>	<b>4.30</b>	<b>5.96</b>	<b>5.81</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>6.20</b>	<b>6.88</b>	<b>5.42</b>

# HMP FULL SUTTON Dimension means by wing

	N=19	N=22	N=19	N=19	N=23	N=23	N=9	N=2	N=7	N=143
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Healthcare	Seg	Total
Entry into custody	2.90	2.64	3.19	2.60	2.73	2.65	2.87	2.80	2.67	2.77
Respect/courtesy	2.87	3.01	3.35	2.94	2.58	3.05	3.35	3.13	3.07	2.99
Staff-prisoner relationships	2.75	2.92	3.22	2.63	2.38	2.76	3.03	2.79	2.69	2.78
Humanity	2.82	2.70	3.15	2.59	2.44	2.75	2.93	2.94	2.60	2.74
Decency	2.79	2.73	3.16	2.65	2.46	2.70	2.76	2.20	2.73	2.73
Care for the vulnerable	2.95	3.02	3.32	3.21	2.88	2.87	3.18	3.10	2.93	3.03
Help and assistance	2.91	3.02	3.41	3.12	2.61	2.80	3.22	3.33	2.97	2.99
Staff professionalism	2.88	2.87	3.19	2.84	2.65	2.95	3.24	2.89	2.86	2.91
Bureaucratic legitimacy	2.12	2.15	2.54	2.36	2.01	2.28	2.16	2.79	2.22	2.24
Fairness	2.55	2.63	2.89	2.55	2.35	2.57	2.65	2.42	2.47	2.58
Organisation and consistency	2.72	2.82	3.31	2.85	2.67	2.72	2.74	2.67	2.62	2.82
Policing and security	3.52	3.47	3.62	3.54	3.57	3.75	3.31	3.67	3.65	3.56
Prisoner safety	3.05	3.18	3.76	3.18	3.25	3.21	3.18	3.32	2.85	3.24
Prisoner adaptation	3.42	2.63	4.26	3.77	3.51	3.35	3.26	3.83	3.39	3.61
Drugs and exploitation	3.10	2.98	3.39	3.09	3.26	3.35	2.62	3.50	2.65	3.14
Conditions	3.55	3.84	4.20	3.71	3.69	3.79	3.94	4.00	3.42	3.79
Family contact	2.70	2.94	3.22	3.09	2.81	2.65	2.96	2.17	2.11	2.85
Personal development	2.63	2.72	3.13	2.89	3.44	2.68	2.89	2.83	2.35	2.73
Personal autonomy	2.86	2.67	3.28	2.68	2.74	2.72	2.90	2.88	2.79	2.82
Wellbeing	2.60	2.55	3.13	2.51	2.39	2.74	2.44	2.75	2.38	2.63
Distress	3.68	3.33	3.66	3.62	3.70	3.54	3.41	3.33	3.02	3.54
<b>Quality of life score (1-10) mean</b>	4.53	5.40	6.69	4.78	4.14	5.05	5.13	3.00	6.00	5.05

# Empirical-theoretical model

- Significant differences in levels of political charge (anger and alienation among prisoners) are explained by differences in the nature and quality of staff-prisoner relationships, degrees of intelligent trust, and the perceived legitimacy of the regime, including access to meaningful/ progression-oriented activities. Prisoners in these establishments feel more 'individually known'.
- *Recognition* (of individuality, if not culture) + *opportunities to demonstrate trustworthiness*, matter.
- Climates with little or no political charge are characterised by a higher quality of life among staff, especially recognition/efficacy and relationships with senior managers/the Governor, rather than by a distinct vision of prisoners (according to self-reports)?
- Explanations for these differences include the 'performance model' adopted by Governors/senior managers, the concept of order understood by staff, and their *work* with prisoners (what they do rather than what they say).

# Conclusions

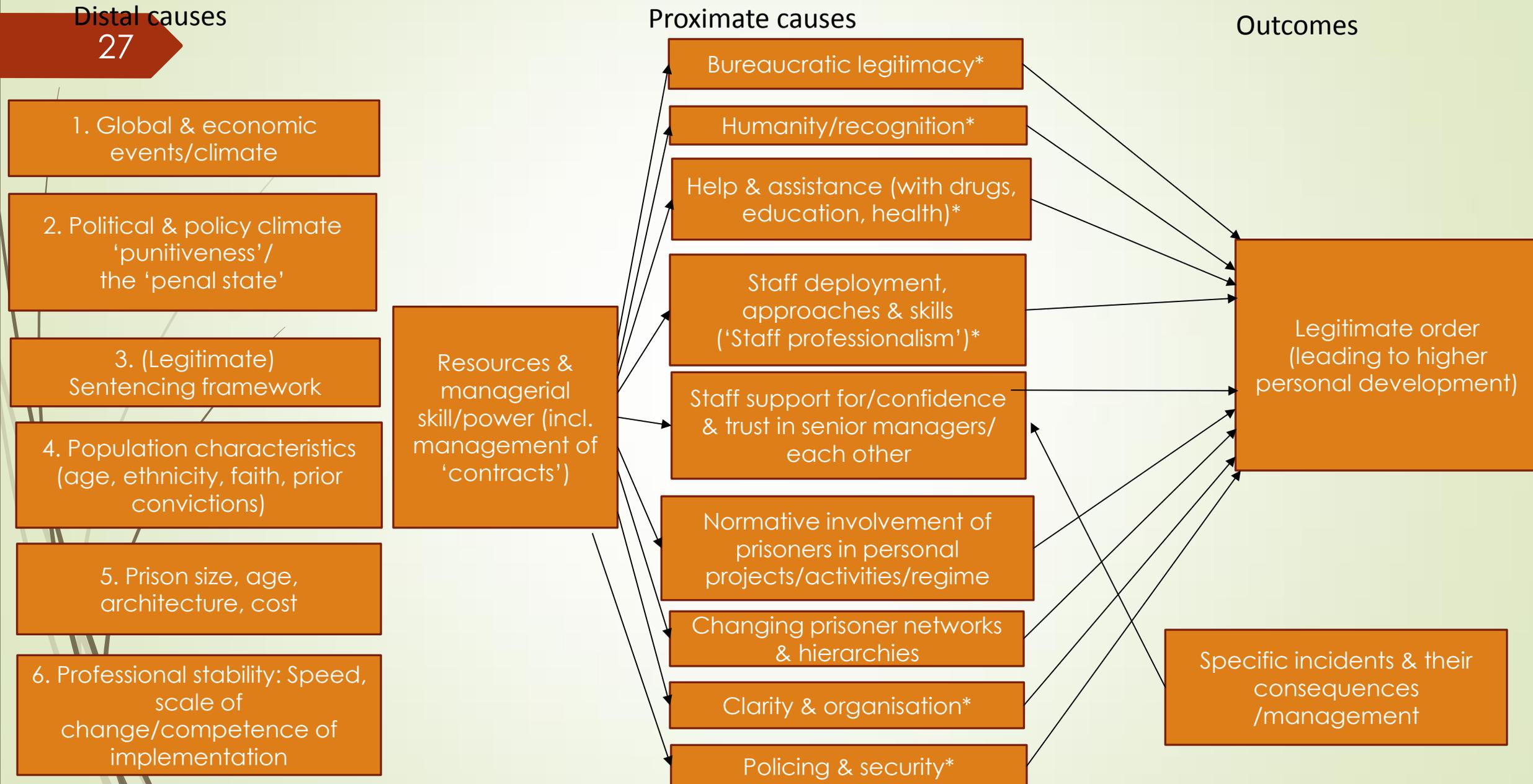
- Political charge is a useful concept/dimension: not deterministic
- Some conflict between 'the new penology' and 'intelligent trust'?
- Some conflict between the 'old penology' and the performance framework?
- Significant differences in quality of life between high security prisons (and levels of progress), linked to 'Thou relations': handling of risk, ethnicity and religion.
- Enabling environments/PIPEs promising
- Considerable challenges in the legitimate management of a changing prisoner population (some of whom are in conflict): tackling discrimination AND extremism?
- Much hard work remains (completing/analysing qual data)



# Thank you!

- ▶ Liebling, A (in press) 'Appreciative inquiry, generative theory, and the 'failed state' prison', in J. Miller and W. Palacios, (eds) *Advances in Criminological Theory*.
- ▶ Liebling, A (2013) 'Legitimacy under pressure' in high security prisons, in J Tankebe and A Liebling (eds) *Legitimacy and Criminal Justice: An International Exploration* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.206-226
- ▶ Liebling, A. (2014) 'Moral and Philosophical Problems of Long-Term Imprisonment', *Studies in Christian Ethics*, vol. 27 no. 3 258-269
- ▶ Liebling, A and Arnold, H (2012) 'Social relationships between prisoners in a maximum security prison: violence, faith, and the declining nature of trust', *Journal of Criminal Justice* 40(5): 413-424.
- ▶ Liebling, A., Arnold, H and Straub, C (2012) *An Exploration of Staff-Prisoner Relationships at HMP Whitemoor: Twelve Years On*, London: National Offender Management Service.
- ▶ Liebling, A. (2011) 'Moral performance, inhuman and degrading treatment, and prison pain', *Punishment and Society* 13(5): 530-550.
- ▶ Liebling, A and Straub, C (2012) 'Identity challenges and the risks of radicalisation in high security prisons', *Prison Service Journal* 203: 15-22

Figure 2: A Grounded Generative Theory of Legitimate Penal Order





# Changing lives

- What education staff do with prisoners in this prison changes/improves lives. 41% 2
- What psychologists do with prisoners in this prison changes/improves lives. 20% 6
- What chaplaincy staff do with prisoners in this prison changes/improves lives. 32% 3
- What workshop instructors do with prisoners in this prison changes/improves lives. 30% 4
- What gym staff do with prisoners in this prison changes/improves lives. 47% 1
- What prison officers do with prisoners in this prison changes/improves lives. 26% 5