

*CDPPS Workshop:  
The evolution of high-risk prison regimes –  
ensuring safety while respecting human rights and rehabilitation needs  
Sofia, Bulgaria June 2024*

Changing forms of order in high security prisons in England and Wales:  
finding the threshold between 'bearable' and 'meaningful' regimes

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# HMP Full Sutton inmates 'held prison guard hostage': 'Muslims are fighting back'

- ▶ Three prisoners demanded the release of radical cleric Abu Qatada while threatening to kill a prison guard they had taken hostage, a court has heard.
- ▶ The incident took place four days after soldier Lee Rigby's murder. The prisoners deny false imprisonment, making threats to kill, and causing grievous bodily harm.
- ▶ The prosecutor said it had taken place at a time when relationships between staff at the maximum security jail and some Muslim inmates had become "strained" in the wake of the killing of Fusilier Rigby. Two days before the incident K and two other inmates had walked out of Friday prayers after the imam offered condolences to the Rigby family. K told a prison guard "Muslims are fighting back" and "And that's why people are getting killed". He said the fight would continue until Sharia law was established in every country.

# 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 <sup>1</sup> | B    | C    | D    | E    | F    | G    | Health care | 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 | 2.44 | 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  |

# Prisoner, Full Sutton

‘The attack that happened ... that is hothead guys yeah, there’s no doubt about that, but sometimes they just need a trigger, and the trigger was actually, the prison institution pulled the trigger’.

# The lights go off: A 'heartbreaking' study

[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)



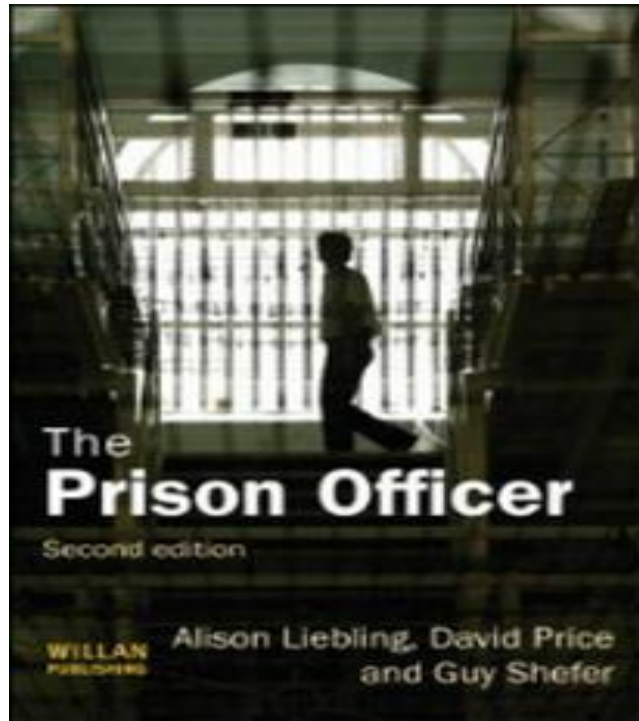
## **An exploration of staff – prisoner relationships at HMP Whitemoor: 12 Years On**

**Revised Final Report**

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

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

# The Prison Officer and 'Whitemoor 1' (1998-9)



# Two basic prison forms: *I-Thou* (prisoners as experiencing subjects) or *I-It* (prisoners as experienced objects)?

## ▶ Whitemoor 1 (1998): *I-Thou*

|                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Staff-prisoner rels | '60-65%' ('good') |
| Humanity            | ?                 |
| Well-being          | ?                 |

## ▶ Whitemoor 2 (2010): *I-It*

|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| Staff-prisoner rels | 2.60 |
| Humanity            | 2.55 |
| Well-being          | 2.39 |

## ▶ Frankland (2015): *I-Thou*

|                     |         |
|---------------------|---------|
| Staff-prisoner rels | 3.19*** |
| Humanity            | 3.06*** |
| Well-being          | 2.75*** |

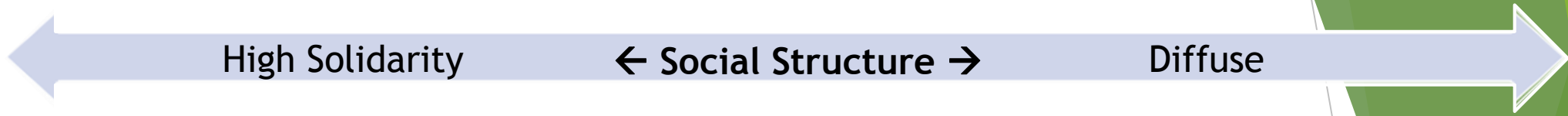
## ▶ Full Sutton (2015): *I-It*

|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| Staff-prisoner rels | 2.71 |
| Humanity            | 2.61 |
| Well-being          | 2.45 |

## Political charge and intelligent trust: item and mean dimension scores

| <i>Political charge: anger and indignation; reactivity</i>                 | Full S      |
|--|-------------|
| FrankL   |             |
| My time in prison has made me angry<br>3.10*                               | 2.77        |
| The prison authorities are guiltier than I am for wrongdoing<br>2.94       | 2.77        |
| I feel more like fighting back than giving in, in this prison<br>3.13*     | 2.81        |
| I dislike this prison's treatment of people like me<br>2.73*               | 2.47        |
| I feel shame for what I have done to get here<br>2.63*                     | 2.54        |
| The level of suspicion in this prison is too high<br>2.51*                 | 2.21        |
| I have become more tolerant of (other) faith groups in this prison<br>3.35 | 3.33        |
| The problems we are facing in this prison need action now<br>2.05          | 1.99        |
| <b>Dimension mean score</b>  | <b>2.61</b> |





(I)  
'Power-Seeking'

- Competitive environment
- Clear prisoner leadership
- Rigid, narrow Identities
- Distant, 'oppositional', or 'unprofessional' staff

(II)  
'Harmonious society'

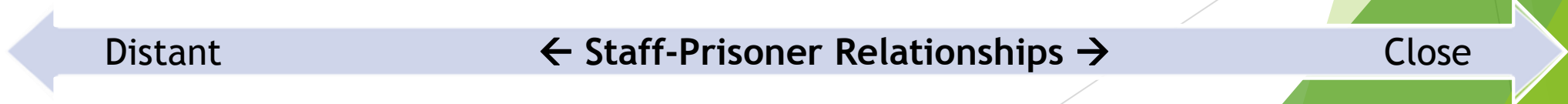
- Cooperative environment
- Clear leadership
- Communal identities, intergroup collaboration and negotiation
- Distant, 'oppositional', 'unprofessional' staff

(III)  
'The Good Life'

- Diffuse, smaller groupings of prisoners
- Diffuse leadership
- Fluid identities
- Staff-prisoner relationships effective at problem-solving

(IV)  
'Rehabilitative Culture'

- Diffuse, smaller groupings of prisoners
- Indistinct leadership
- Fluid identities
- Close staff-prisoner relationships characterized by a shared project/goals



| <p>Full Sutton<br/> 'you feel like a statistic'<br/> (governing-at-a-distance)</p>  | <p>Frankland<br/> 'you feel like a person'</p>  |
|---|---|
| <p>New penology (target, risk-driven)<br/> Heavy/distant<br/> Security as an end/'pursuit' (Zedner 2009)<br/> Rigid (rule of rules)<br/> I-It ('experienced objects': as dangerous)<br/> Certainty/perfectionism<br/> Limited engagement (mixed)?<br/> Cynical (angry/'payback'?)<br/> Low trust<br/> Chaplaincy in conflict</p> <p>Like Sparks et al's Albany:<br/> 'Control, safety and supervision'<br/> <i>Unlike</i> Albany:<br/> Developed networks and power struggles</p> | <p>Old penology (care, welfare)<br/> Lighter/present<br/> Security as a means to personal development<br/> Flexible, individualised (inefficient)<br/> I-Thou ('experiencing subjects')<br/> Room for doubt (but professional confidence)<br/> High engagement (longer narratives)<br/> Tragic<br/> Some trust ('staff safety not an issue here')<br/> Integrated chaplaincy</p> <p>Like Long Lartin: (in Sparks et al 1996):<br/> 'Choice, responsibility and self-respect'<br/> <i>Unlike</i> Long Lartin:<br/> Co-operation/inter-faith mixing/curiosity</p> |

# Two basic prison forms: *I-Thou* (prisoners as experiencing subjects) or *I-It* (prisoners as experienced objects)?

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## ▶ Whitemoor 2 (2010): *I-It*

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| Staff-prisoner rels | 2.60 |
| Humanity            | 2.55 |
| Well-being          | 2.39 |

## ▶ Frankland (2015): *I-Thou*

|                     |         |
|---------------------|---------|
| Staff-prisoner rels | 3.19*** |
| Humanity            | 3.06*** |
| Well-being          | 2.75*** |

## ▶ Full Sutton (2015): *I-It*

|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| Staff-prisoner rels | 2.71 |
| Humanity            | 2.61 |
| Well-being          | 2.45 |

Aristotle's Prison:  
A Search for Humanity and Justice  
(Liebling in progress)

Low moral quality

High moral quality



Suicide

Anger

Violence

Survival

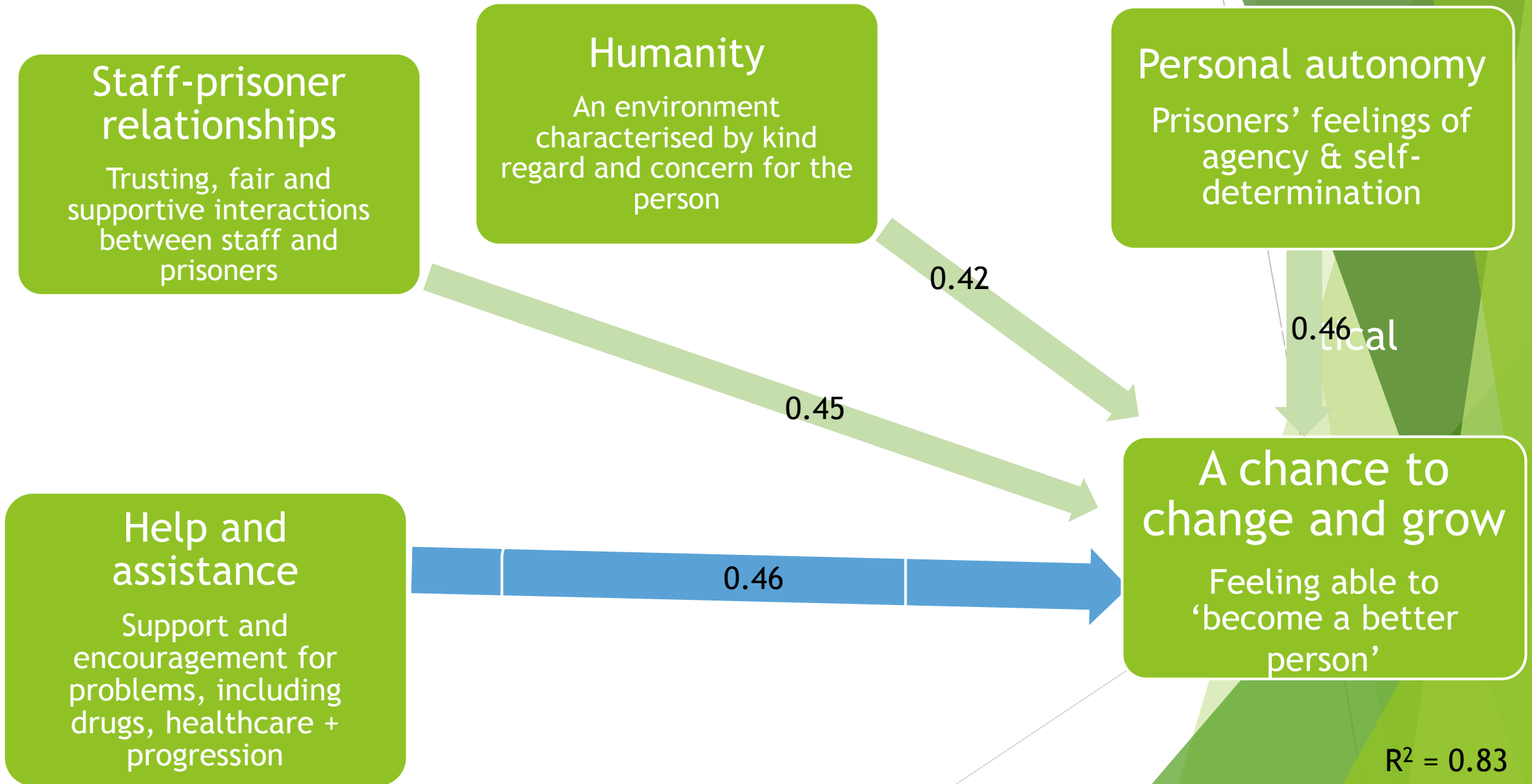
Personal growth

# A chance to change and grow in prison

|  | Full Sutton | Frankland     |
|--|-------------|---------------|
| My time here seems like a chance to change.                  | 2.86 (34%)  | 3.21 (47%)*** |
| I feel able to grow and develop as a human being in here.    | 2.63 (30%)  | 2.98 (41%)**  |
| I am finding ways of becoming a better person in this prison | 3.09 (43%)  | 3.38 (58%)*   |

\* p<05, \*\* p<01, \*\*\* p<005

# New Dimension: A Chance to Change and Grow



Within every thin self, there is a thick self, yearning for elaboration, largeness, freedom (Walzer 1994: 100).

# Rates of Violence in a Minimally Safe Moral Quality Threshold Prison

|  | Safe<br>Threshold | Mean Incidence Rates Per 1,000 Prisoners Per Year |                                 |                        |                              |           |
|--|-------------------|---|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|
|  |                   | Serious<br>Prisoner<br>on<br>Prisoner<br>Assaults | Serious<br>Assaults on<br>Staff | Self-Harm<br>Incidents | Self-<br>Inflicted<br>Deaths | Homicides |
| <b><i>Harmony Dimensions</i></b>                       |                   |   |                                 |                        |                              |           |
| Entry into Custody                                     | 3.15              | 8.59  | 1.17                            | 13.63                  | 0.28                         | 0.00      |
| Respect/courtesy                                       | 3.65              | 5.98  | 0.00                            | 8.33                   | 0.38                         | 0.00      |
| Staff-prisoner relationships                           | 3.55              | 5.13  | 0.00                            | 9.85                   | 0.30                         | 0.00      |
| Humanity   | 3.35              | 5.01  | 0.25                            | 10.15                  | 0.25                         | 0.00      |
| Decency  | 3.45              | 3.37  | 0.00                            | 6.22                   | 0.12                         | 0.00      |
| Care for the vulnerable                                | 3.55              | 11.31   | 0.00                            | 18.84                  | 0.59                         | 0.00      |
| Help and assistance                                    | 3.65              | 14.42   | 0.00                            | 14.42                  | 0.00                         | 0.00      |
| <b><i>Professionalism Dimensions</i></b>               |                   |   |                                 |                        |                              |           |
| Staff professionalism                                  | 3.15              | 13.62   | 2.20                            | 20.96                  | 0.61                         | 0.01      |
| Bureaucratic legitimacy                                | 3.05              | 3.74  | 0.00                            | 6.17                   | 0.21                         | 0.00      |
| Fairness   | 3.30              | 3.23  | 0.00                            | 3.27                   | 0.35                         | 0.00      |
| Organisation and consistency                           | 3.20              | 4.49  | 0.00                            | 9.23                   | 0.34                         | 0.00      |
| <b><i>Security Dimensions</i></b>                      |                   |   |                                 |                        |                              |           |
| Policing and security                                  | 3.45              | 5.47  | 0.14                            | 11.09                  | 0.37                         | 0.00      |
| Prisoner safety  | 3.75              | 4.43  | 0.26                            | 10.8                   | 0.11                         | 0.00      |
| Prisoner adaptation                                    | 3.85              | 3.74  | 0.11                            | 7.82                   | 0.10                         | 0.00      |
| Drugs and exploitation                                 | 3.55              | 3.35  | 0.00                            | 8.63                   | 0.32                         | 0.00      |
| <b><i>Conditions and Family Contact Dimensions</i></b> |                   |   |                                 |                        |                              |           |
| Conditions   | 3.75              | 12.10   | 2.66                            | 21.52                  | 0.32                         | 0.03      |
| Family contact   | 3.05              | 20.81   | 5.42                            | 27.09                  | 0.78                         | 0.04      |
| <b><i>Wellbeing and Development Dimensions</i></b>     |                   |   |                                 |                        |                              |           |
| Personal development                                   | 3.40              | 3.71  | 0.00                            | 6.81                   | 0.34                         | 0.00      |
| Personal autonomy                                      | 3.60              | 3.56  | 0.00                            | 5.47                   | 0.00                         | 0.00      |
| Wellbeing  | 3.30              | 3.53  | 0.00                            | 4.92                   | 0.15                         | 0.00      |
| Distress   | 3.75              | 6.39  | 0.97                            | 8.44                   | 0.17                         | 0.00      |



# Rates of Violence in a Low Moral Quality Threshold Prison

|  | <b>Lower Threshold</b> | <b>Mean Incidence Rates Per 1,000 Prisoners Per Year</b> |                                  |                            |                              |                  |
|--|------------------------|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
|  |                        | <b>Serious Prisoner on Prisoner Assaults</b>             | <b>Serious Assaults on Staff</b> | <b>Self-Harm Incidents</b> | <b>Self-Inflicted Deaths</b> | <b>Homicides</b> |
| <b><i>Harmony Dimensions</i></b>                       |                        |  |                                  |                            |                              |                  |
| Entry into Custody                                     | 2.55                   | 30.00  | 11.56                            | 38.72                      | 1.94                         | 0.05             |
| Respect/courtesy                                       | 2.65                   | 51.78  | 36.77                            | 18.15                      | 0.94                         | 0.09             |
| Staff-prisoner relationships                           | 3.05                   | 27.36  | 10.57                            | 30.51                      | 1.12                         | 0.05             |
| Humanity   | 2.80                   | 33.11  | 10.76                            | 43.12                      | 1.72                         | 0.08             |
| Decency  | 2.40                   | 35.59  | 17.53                            | 36.60                      | 1.60                         | 0.08             |
| Care for the vulnerable                                | 2.85                   | 33.11  | 10.76                            | 43.12                      | 1.72                         | 0.08             |
| Help and assistance                                    | 2.75                   | 34.99  | 15.38                            | 39.52                      | 1.54                         | 0.16             |
| <b><i>Professionalism Dimensions</i></b>               |                        |  |                                  |                            |                              |                  |
| Staff professionalism                                  | 2.95                   | 28.61  | 11.64                            | 33.87                      | 1.06                         | 0.08             |
| Bureaucratic legitimacy                                | 2.25                   | 20.69  | 11.61                            | 20.11                      | 1.01                         | 0.00             |
| Fairness   | 2.65                   | 27.99  | 11.25                            | 31.69                      | 1.14                         | 0.06             |
| Organisation and consistency                           | 2.55                   | 31.95  | 11.54                            | 34.78                      | 1.23                         | 0.07             |
| <b><i>Security Dimensions</i></b>                      |                        |  |                                  |                            |                              |                  |
| Policing and security                                  | 3.00                   | 36.90  | 12.43                            | 40.04                      | 1.30                         | 0.07             |
| Prisoner safety  | 3.15                   | 36.95  | 14.28                            | 40.19                      | 1.30                         | 0.08             |
| Prisoner adaptation                                    | 3.25                   | 33.83  | 10.63                            | 38.42                      | 1.71                         | 0.09             |
| Drugs and exploitation                                 | 2.85                   | 29.17  | 8.89                             | 34.49                      | 1.15                         | 0.06             |
| <b><i>Conditions and Family Contact Dimensions</i></b> |                        |  |                                  |                            |                              |                  |
| Conditions   | 3.05                   | 37.36  | 17.85                            | 37.91                      | 1.74                         | 0.08             |
| Family contact   | 2.75                   | 38.44  | 23.59                            | 32.26                      | 0.88                         | 0.05             |
| <b><i>Wellbeing and Development Dimensions</i></b>     |                        |  |                                  |                            |                              |                  |
| Personal development                                   | 2.75                   | 28.72  | 11.88                            | 34.12                      | 1.35                         | 0.08             |
| Personal autonomy                                      | 3.00                   | 25.81  | 9.4                              | 30.66                      | 1.18                         | 0.05             |
| Wellbeing  | 2.30                   | 31.97  | 12.35                            | 33.13                      | 1.91                         | 0.08             |
| Distress   | 3.00                   | 32.56  | 9.86                             | 45.17                      | 1.45                         | 0.09             |

# What is a 'good enough' prison? An empirical analysis of key thresholds using prison moral quality data<sup>1</sup>

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1–29

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[journals.sagepub.com/home/euc](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/euc)**Katherine M. Auty**  and **Alison Liebling**

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## Abstract

Performance thresholds and minimum standards in prison have preoccupied policy makers and practitioners alike for some time. These standards are based on widely accepted statements of principle, but benchmarks are rarely set or explored empirically. Nor has there been any attempt to describe or define higher-end thresholds; the point at which outcomes become positive, or stated principles are achieved. In this study, we provide an empirical demonstration of how quality of life thresholds may be determined using data from 518 Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) surveys conducted in prisons in England and Wales (2009–2020) and examine their relationship to five violence outcomes: serious prisoner on prisoner assaults, serious assaults on staff, self-harm incidents requiring hospital treatment, self-inflicted deaths, and homicides. The results suggested that thresholds exist for most of the MQPL dimensions. A set of lower 'unsafe' and higher 'minimally safe' thresholds were produced. We found that the scores of prisons below the lower threshold had a very strong relationship with each of our five serious forms of violence in prison. Similarly, prisons that did not manage to cross the 'minimally safe' threshold also had strong relationships with incidents of violence in their prison but were at slightly lower risk of those incidents occurring. Striking differences in mean incidents rates were found when comparing prisons below the lower threshold to prisons above the 'minimally safe' threshold. Our findings suggest that to operate a safe enough (and therefore legitimate) prison, a combination of harmony, security and professionalism dimensions above a certain threshold should be achieved.

## Keywords

Moral climate, prison culture, prison rules, quality of life, thresholds

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# Further Reading

- ▶ Auty, K., & Liebling, A. (2020). Exploring the Relationship between Prison Social Climate and Reoffending. *Justice Quarterly*, 37 (2), 358-381.
- ▶ Auty, K., Liebling, A. (2024) 'What is a 'good enough' prison? An empirical analysis of key thresholds using prison moral quality data', *European Journal of Criminology*, DOI: 10.1177/14773708241227693
- ▶ Williams, R. and Liebling, A. (2022) 'Do prisons cause radicalisation? Order, leadership, political charge and violence in two maximum security prisons', *British Journal of Criminology* 63(1): 97-114
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- ▶ Liebling, A. and Williams, R. (2020) 'More Mind Games: How 'The Action' and 'The Odds' have Changed in Prison', *British Journal of Criminology* 60(6): 1648-1666
- ▶ 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.

# Public podcasts

- ▶ Liebling (2024) The Future Mind: A conversation with Alison Liebling on a lifetime in prisons research, with Alex Gómez-Marin, The Pari Centre  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIUoqL\\_sGw0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIUoqL_sGw0)
- ▶ Liebling (2021) <https://lockedupliving.podbean.com/e/alison-liebling-reflects-on-how-the-quality-of-prison-life-can-be-seen-and-how-it-changes-over-time/>
- ▶ Liebling (2020) <https://www.justicefocus.org/podcast> No. 21: Prof. Alison Liebling - Appreciative Inquiry and the moral performance of prisons. Justice Focus • [By Omar Phoenix Khan](#) • Oct 14, 2020
- ▶ Liebling (2018) <http://socialsciencebites.libsyn.com/alison-liebling-on-successful-prisons>
- ▶ Liebling (2014) Trusting Inmates  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b080t0ph>
- ▶ See also Iain McGilchrist: e.g.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkmYzbwrufg>