



*They're out to get me: Disidentification
And the emergence of pARAnoIA*

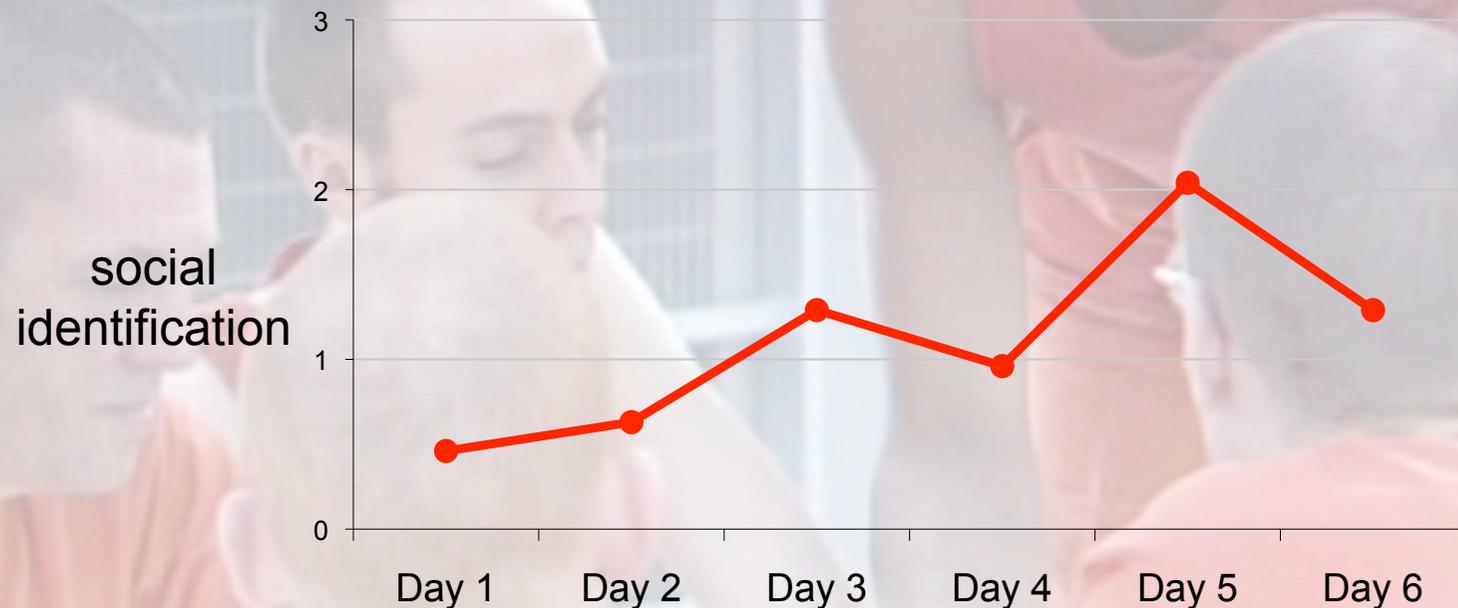
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the BBC Prison Study

- The *BBC Prison Study* was one of the first studies to highlight close links between social identity and health (Haslam & Reicher, 2006; Reicher & Haslam, 2006; [see www.bbcprisonstudy.org](http://www.bbcprisonstudy.org))
- An intensive examination of group dynamics studying the behaviour of normal healthy volunteers over a 10-day period after they had been randomly assigned to be **Prisoners** or **Guards** in a simulated prison.
- Study was designed to test predictions concerning
 - (a) the conditions under which people would define themselves in terms of social identity
 - (b) the consequences of this for social, organizational and clinical functioning

increasing prisoner identity

- As predicted, planned experimental interventions led to an increase in the **Prisoners'** social identity over time:



- Moreover, as their sense of shared social identity increased, Prisoners became empowered and resisted the Guards' authority.
- On Day 6, culminated in prison breakout, and overthrow of Guards' regime.

declining prisoner identity

- In the face of Prisoners' increasing power, Guards became apprehensive about their group membership — leading to a steady *decline* in their sense of shared social identity:



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implications for mental health



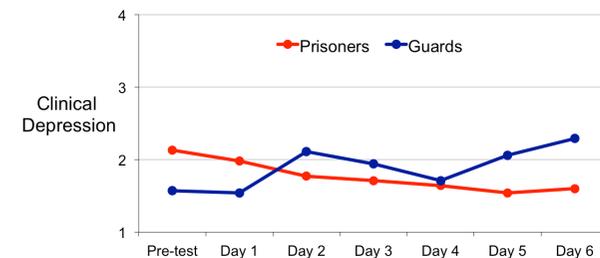
- Previously, we have reported that an increasing sense of social identity among prisoners led to reduction in depression.
- But declining social identity among guards led to increased depression.

(Reicher & Haslam, 2006)

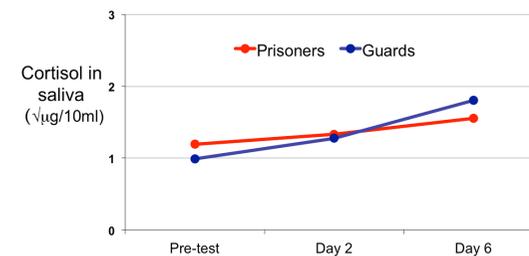
- Likewise, as social identity increased, prisoners became less stressed.
 - While, as social identity declined, guards became more stressed and burnt out
- (Haslam & Reicher, 2006)

- What about paranoia?

British Journal of
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implications for mental health



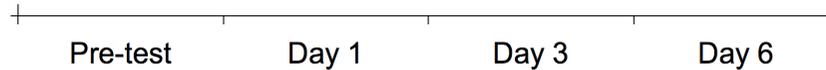
- What about paranoia?
- Grounds for believing there is a link between lack of shared social identity and paranoia emerges from review by McIntyre, Elahi and Bentall (2016) which shows that migrants — especially those who are marginalized within a new culture — are much more likely to be diagnosed with paranoid psychosis.
- Other work also observes close correlation between lack of social identification and paranoia (Wakefield & Sani, 2016).

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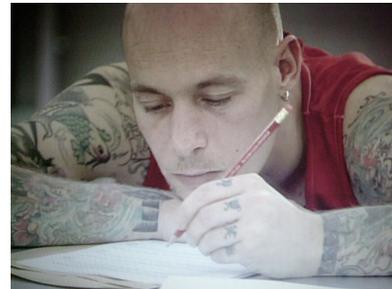
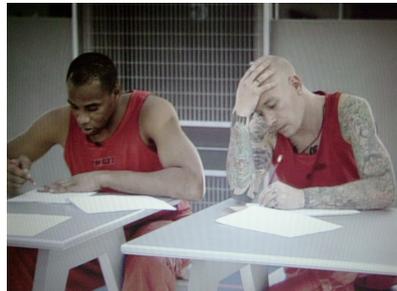
self-report data

- 5-item measure of paranoia (1 = not at all, 7 = very frequently):
 - Do you ever feel that other people can't be trusted?
 - Do you often feel you are being watched and talked about by others?
 - Do you often have urges or thoughts over which you don't feel in control?
 - Do you often feel you might be being punished for things you haven't done?
 - Do you find you need to check things over and over again?

- Administered



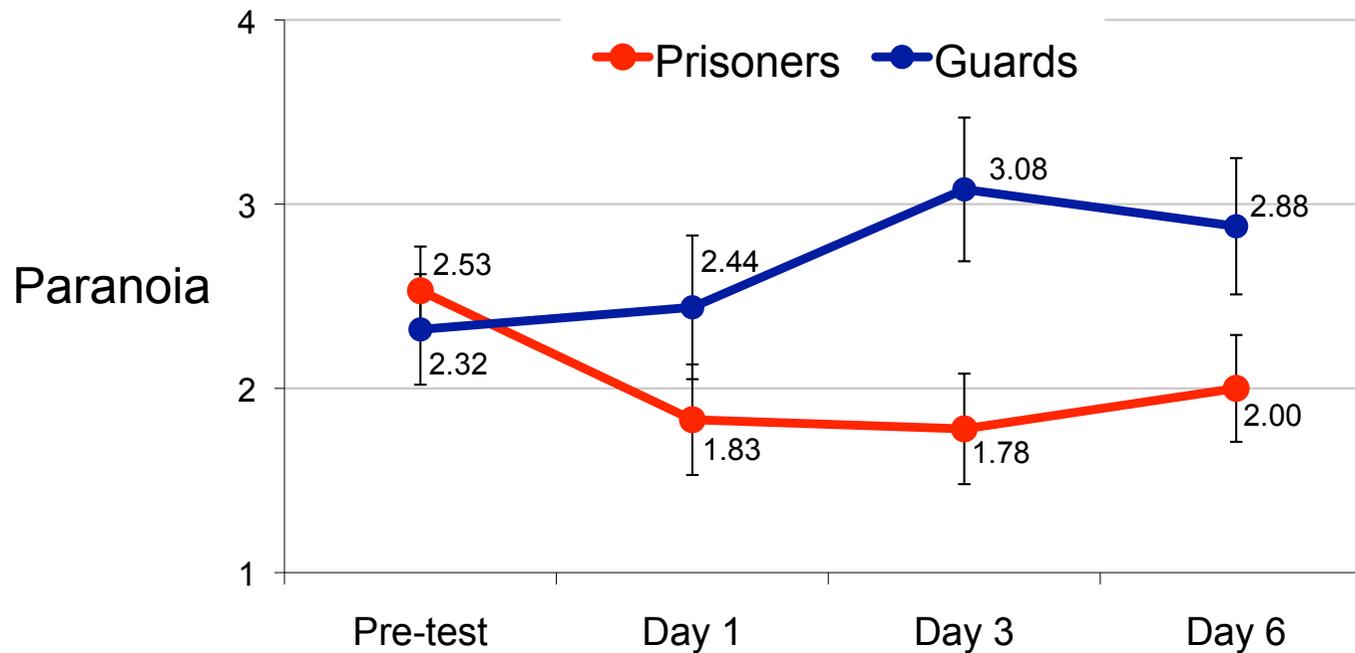
- Pretest ($N=302$, $\alpha = .76$; $N=13$, $\alpha = .30$)
- Day 1 ($N=13$, $\alpha = .77$)
- Day 3 ($N=13$, $\alpha = .78$)
- Day 6 ($N=13$, $\alpha = .74$)



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self-report data

- Mirroring findings on measures of depression and stress
as their social identity increased, prisoners became less paranoid
as their social identity declined, guards became more paranoid



mixed-effects
modelling in R:
interaction $p = .04$

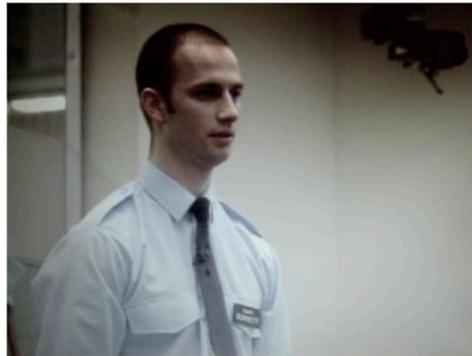
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behavioural data

- In the guards' mess

[TQ_g is chewing on a pen cap and appears very disturbed]

TQ_g: They're going to lock us, lock us in somewhere.



IB_g: Who's going to lock us in?

[TQ_g appears not to notice IB_g.]

TQ_g: That's it, isn't it? That's what they're going to do.

IB_g: Who, the guys? We've got keys.

TQ_g: What?

IB_g: Who's going to lock us in?

TQ_g: That's what they'll do.

IB_g: What, the others?

TQ_g: Yeah.

IB_g: But we've got keys. [silence] I'm just going to go and show this to some of the other guys.

[IB_g leaves guards' mess.]



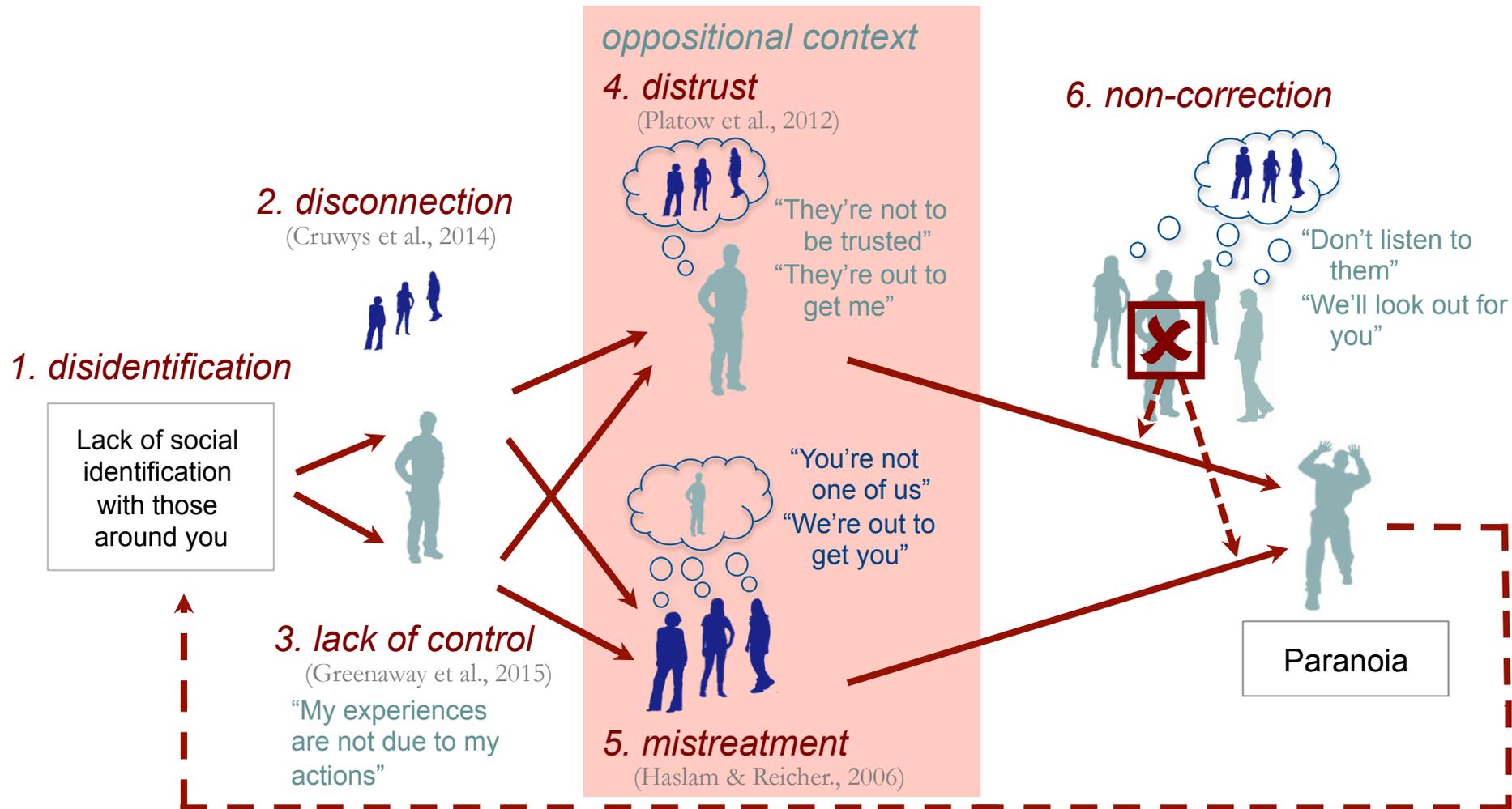
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a social identity model of paranoia

- Findings provide unique insights into the **unfolding** processes that underpin the relationship between social identity and paranoia, and that can be used to inform a Social Identity Model of Paranoia (SIMP)

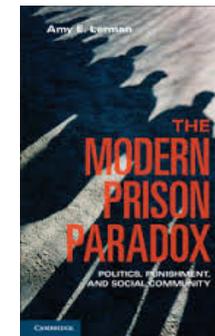
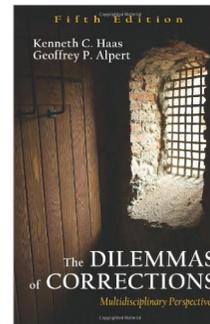
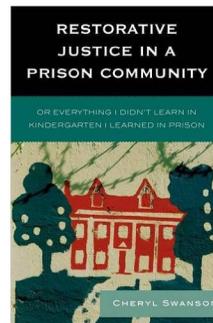


a social identity model of paranoia



conclusion

- Model is tentative and clearly needs more support.
- Not clear that it speaks to acute psychosis.
- Nevertheless it helps to integrate multiple lines of evidence. Not least, evidence that prisons — and the toxic mix of isolation and opposition they enshrine — are a breeding ground for mental illness (Haas & Alpert, 2006; Lerman, 2013; Swanson, 2009).



- Contrary to the idea that psychosis has purely biological, genetic or intrapsychic causes, there are grounds for seeing it as the product of an *interaction* between these things and social group context.
- It also provides a basis for striving to develop interventions that engage with, and seek to improve, this reality and to mitigate its debilitating consequences.