

# Cultural Embeddedness and the Meaning of Trust among Incarcerated Women

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# Thanks!

- Dan
- Richard
- A grad student
- You!

- When I say "prison culture" you say \_\_\_\_\_

- When I say "prison culture" you say \_\_\_\_\_

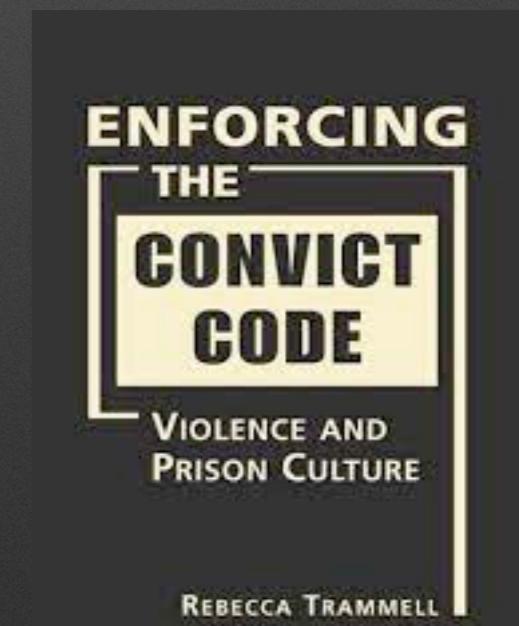
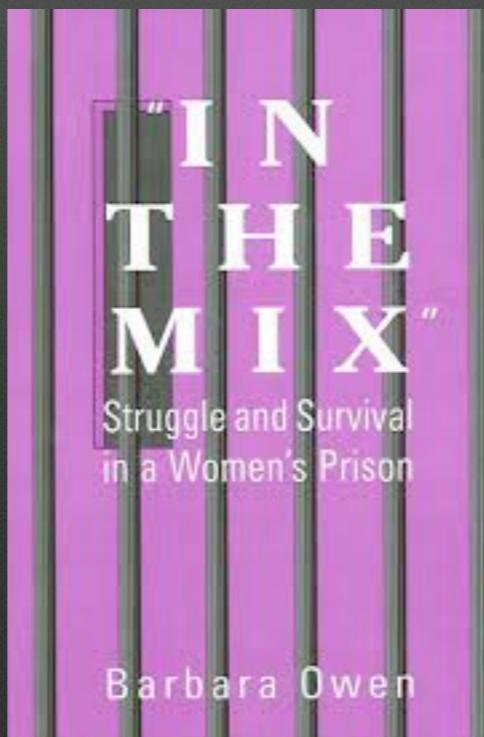
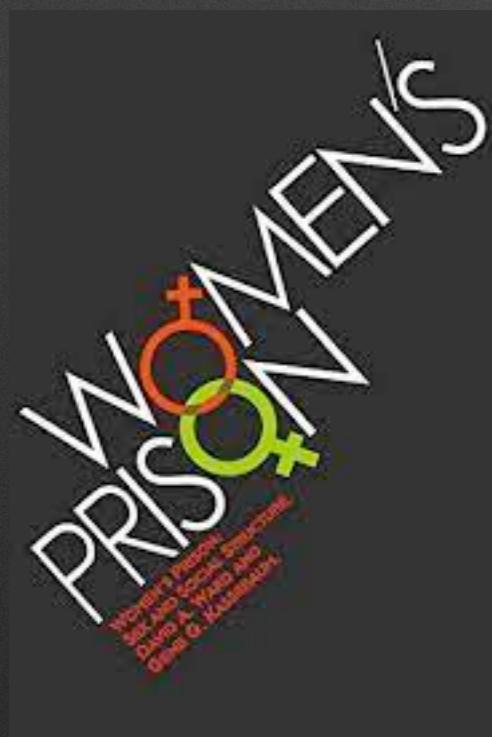
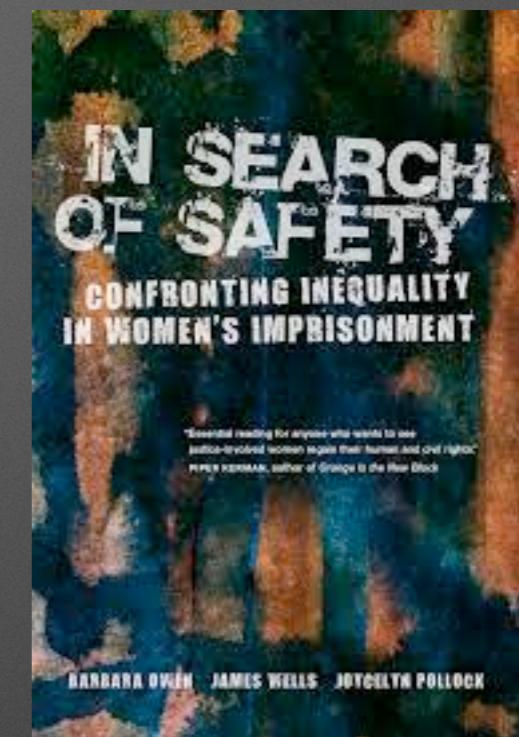
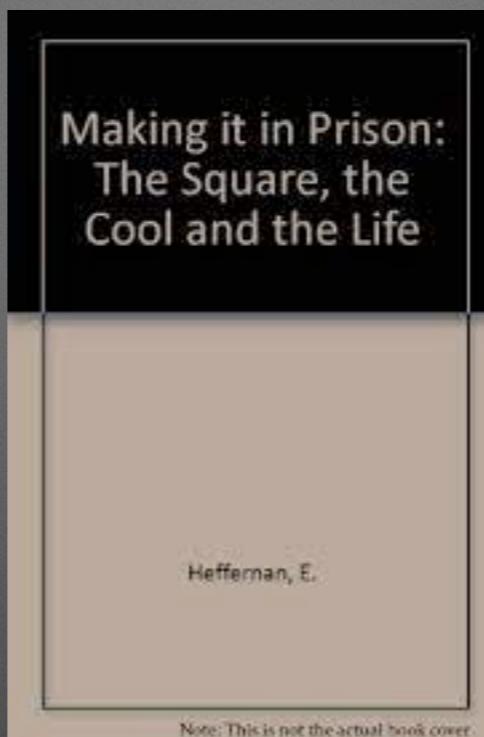
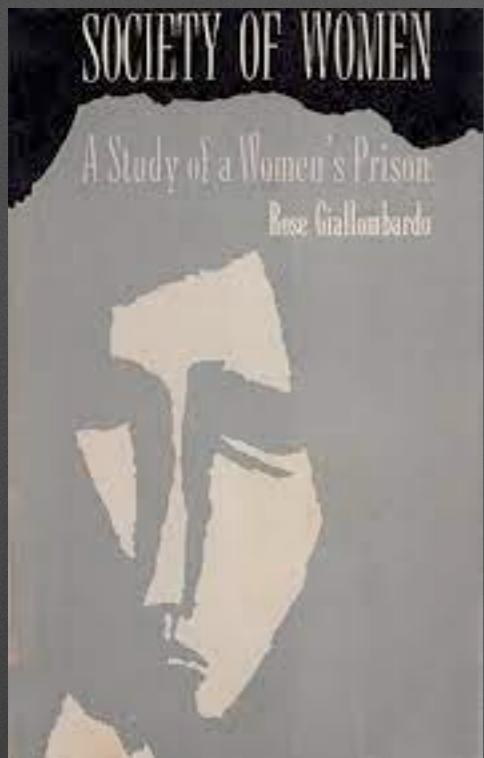


- When I say "*women's* prison culture" you say \_\_\_\_\_

- When I say "women's prison culture" you say \_\_\_\_\_



# Women's Prison Culture



# Women's Prison Culture

- *What do these studies have in common?*
  - Women's prisons are really different from men's prisons.
  - RELATIONSHIPS!!!
- “Interpersonal relationships are the anchors of prison culture” (Owen: 1998, 119)

# Relationships are Tricky

- Extensive work shows that women in prison:
  - Want a close relationship to share personal information and cope with incarceration
  - Are concerned about sharing personal information due to relational violence
  - Experience “Partial Justice” (Rafter 1990)
- Women in prison face a dilemma...

# Relationships are Tricky

“[The] imprisoned female must come to terms with what she believes to be the predatory interpersonal pattern of females... She suffers acute insecurity and anxiety in confronting and handling the frequent attacks of ‘penitentiary darby’-gossip which has no respect for truth or consequences and which takes place at all times and on all sides within the prison.” (Giallombardo 1966: 101)

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This is the dilemma.

# Trust as a Salient Domain

- This is a *trust situation*:
  - Transactions involve uncertainty and vulnerability
- As a result, trust becomes a salient domain of "culture" in women's prisons
  - Rules of privacy and transactions of information

# WARNING: Shameless Plug!!!

## Trusting the Untrustworthy: The Social Organization of Trust Among Incarcerated Women

Jacob T.N. Young<sup>a</sup> and Dana L. Haynie<sup>b</sup>

JUSTICE QUARTERLY  
2022, VOL. 39, NO. 3, 553–584  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2020.1807588>

### ABSTRACT

Although the benefits of trust are well documented across a variety of settings, little empirical attention has been dedicated to trust in carceral settings, particularly among incarcerated women. Knowing how individuals in prison establish relationships of trust with one another is crucial for understanding how individuals adjust to conditions of confinement. Using data from 133 incarcerated women in a Pennsylvania prison unit, this study adopts a network approach to examine the role of individual and structural determinants of trust using exponential random graph models. Findings provide weak support for the claim that individual determinants (e.g. age, religious affiliation) shape whether women are more likely to trust someone to support them during an argument or a dispute. Instead, our findings show that structural determinants are the primary drivers of trust relationships. Trust is deeply entwined with friendship relations among women who get along with each other. Our approach paves a new path for the examination of trust in correctional settings and other criminological contexts.

# Today's Presentation

- Much has been said about prison culture...
- But, little work has been dedicated to measuring cultural domains.

# Culture

- What do we mean when we say:
  - "Trust is a salient domain of culture in women's prisons"
- Let's discuss culture first.



# Culture

- What do we mean by "culture"?
  - “that which we need to know in order to function effectively in a given society” (Dressler 2018, 39)
- But what is it that we need to "know"?

# Quick Tangent...

- What do you *learn* in graduate school?
  - Formal: content from the curriculum (classes, etc.)
  - Informal: meanings
    - Examples: "good colleague" or "mentor"

# Quick Tangent...

- It is their *shared* nature that makes them cultural.
  - You become a "good colleague" or a "mentor" by acting in a way consistent with that meaning.

# Culture

- What do we mean when we say:
  - "Trust is a salient domain of culture in women's prisons"
  - There is shared meaning about what defines a trust relationship.
  - These meanings are learned and enacted in social interaction.

# Cultural Embeddedness

- Culture is not monolithic
  - Goldberg et al (2016)
  - Some people "know" more than others about the content of shared meanings:
    - *cultural* embeddedness
    - Like *structural* embeddedness, inequality in knowledge may confer advantages.

# Cultural Embeddedness

- Prison is the same:
  - "Entering the prison world, like any new experience, involves learning a unique set of strategies, behaviors, and meanings" (Owen 1998: 168)
- Individuals have to learn what trust relationships mean.
- Variation in this knowledge may influence women's experiences in prison.

# Current Study

- Much has been said about prison culture...
  - But, little work has been dedicated to measuring cultural domains.
- Questions:
  - How do individuals differ in their level of cultural embeddedness?
  - How does cultural embeddedness influence women's perceptions of social relationships and programming?

# Perryville Appreciate Inquiry and Participatory Action Research Project

- A different sort of design...
  - Participatory Action Research
    - “the researcher and the participants collaborate at all levels in the research process to help find a suitable solution for a social problem that significantly affects an underserved community” (Creswell et al., 2007: 256)
    - Collaboration among ASU students and incarcerated women at all stages: design, training, collection, analysis.

# Design

- Arizona State Prison Complex - Perryville
  - Data were collected among 200 incarcerated women between November 2021-March 2022.
  - Mixed custody (closed/medium) unit of 580 women.
  - Individuals were interviewed by either an ASU student or an incarcerated women (randomly assigned).



Add to Personal Schedule

## **Enhancing the Prison Environment Alongside Incarcerated Women**

**Thu, Nov 17, 8:00 to 9:20am, L404, Lobby Level**

**Session Submission Type:** Complete Thematic Panel

### **Abstract/Description**

The majority of research conducted on prisons uses data collected from administrative sources. Few studies actively include those who are incarcerated in study design and data collection. This panel will examine how prison unit participants have been involved in designing the instrument, recruiting interviewees, and administering the survey. The panel will also discuss potential interviewer bias. Overall, the panel examines how data collected with the involvement of those who are incarcerated can lead to more accurate and useful findings. An interesting panel!

### **Sub Unit**

# Analytic Approach

- Questions:
  - How do individuals differ in their level of cultural embeddedness?
  - Approach: Cultural Consensus Analysis
- How does cultural embeddedness influence women's perceptions of social relationships and programming?
  - Approach: OLS regression

# Cultural Consensus Analysis

- An exam without a key...
- We know the questions, but we don't know the answers.
- How do we figure out the answers?

# Cultural Consensus Analysis

- Take all the responses, correlate them, and examine agreement.
  - Consensus
    - If everyone answers "True" to a question, then the "culturally correct" answer is "True".
    - If there are mixed answers, then there isn't a "culturally correct" answer.
    - Agreement among *individuals*, not agreement among *items*.

# Cultural Consensus Analysis

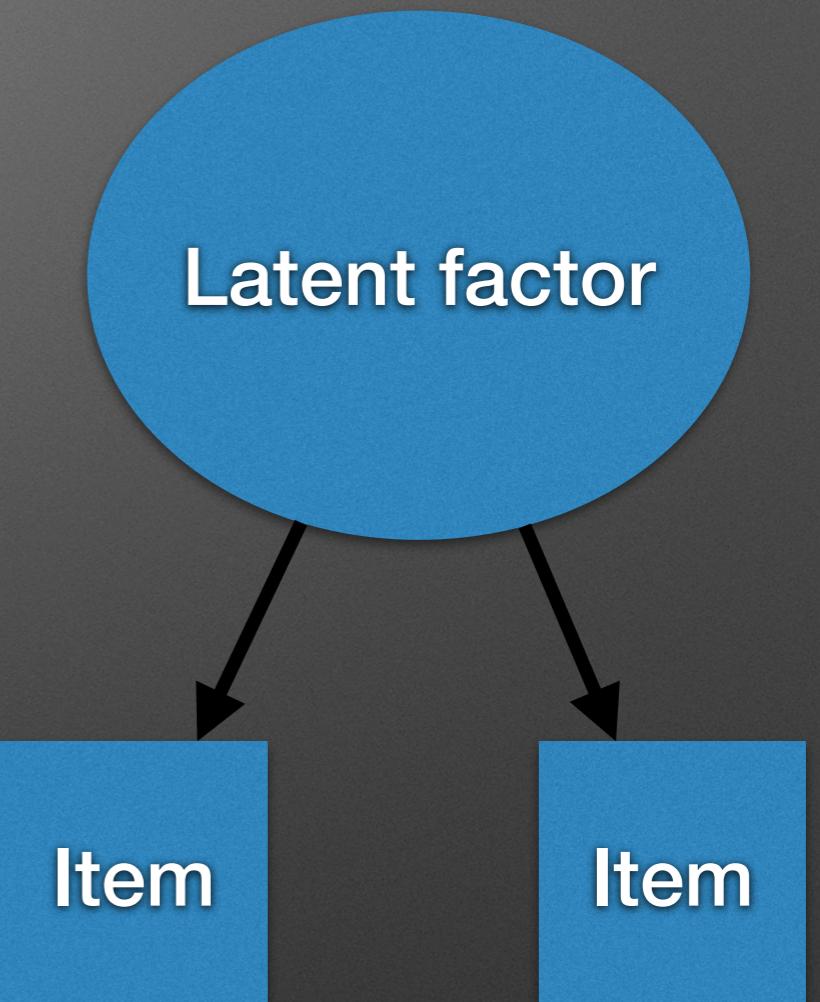
- Cultural Consensus Analysis (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986)
  - We can measure *cultural* the same way.
    - In a group in which there is shared meaning on a domain, there will be consensus in the responses.
    - There is a "key" of culturally correct answers to our questions and we are trying to recover it.
  - *Example: naive researcher studying a "good colleague"*

# Cultural Consensus Analysis

- However, individuals will differ in their expertise on the exam.
  - Some will know more of the culturally correct answers than others.
  - These individuals are more *culturally embedded*.
- *Example: naive researcher studying a "good colleague"*

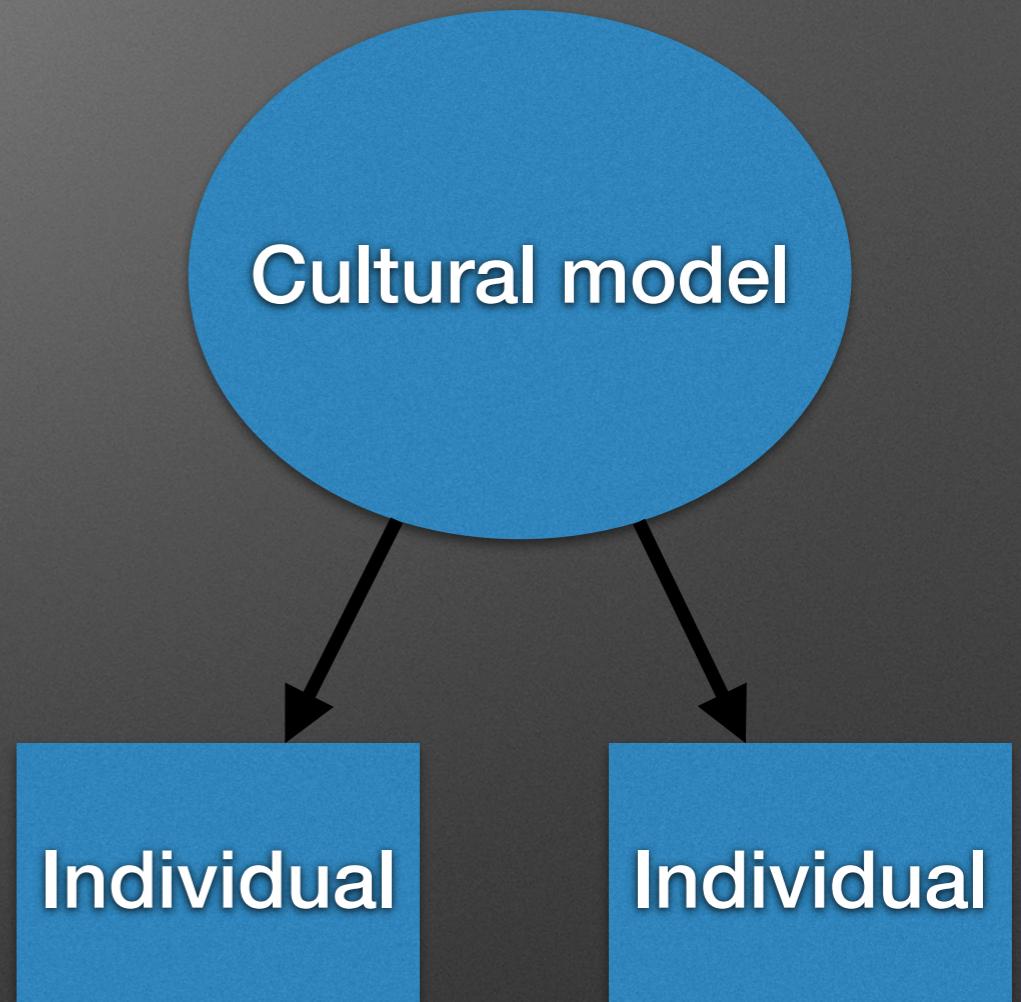
# Measuring a Cultural Domain

- Factor analysis
  - Get a matrix of item x item correlations
    - Item  $i$  is correlated with item  $j$
  - The first factor represents the latent construct that generates the items
  - Loadings represent how well that item correlates with the latent factor



# Measuring a Cultural Domain

- Like a factor analysis
  - Get a matrix of  $n \times n$  correlations among respondents
    - $i$  agrees with  $j$
  - The first factor represents the shared cultural model
  - Loadings represent how well that individual knows the cultural model



# Measuring a Cultural Domain

- We developed measures on the meaning of trust through focus groups and qualitative data collection.
- Major focus on:
  - being able to share information, have it not repeated or used against you, and not judged.
- Nine True/False statements to measure the meaning of trust.

# SORRY FOR THE FONT!!!

*I would like you to think about what it means to trust other women on this unit. Next to each item below, please indicate whether the statement is true (T) or false (F) regarding the meaning of trust on this unit.*

Trust means that if someone tells you something personal, you should keep it between you and them and not share it with others.

Trusting someone means that you can tell them something personal and know they will not share it with others.

Trusting someone means you can discuss personal matters and they will not judge you.

Trusting someone means that you can tell them personal information and know it will not be repeated.

Trust means that you can tell someone something personal and know that they will not judge you.

Trust means that if you tell someone something personal about yourself, they won't use it to get something from you.

Trusting someone on this unit means that you can share something personal and know that it will stay with them.

Trust means that if you tell someone something personal about yourself, they won't use it to manipulate you.

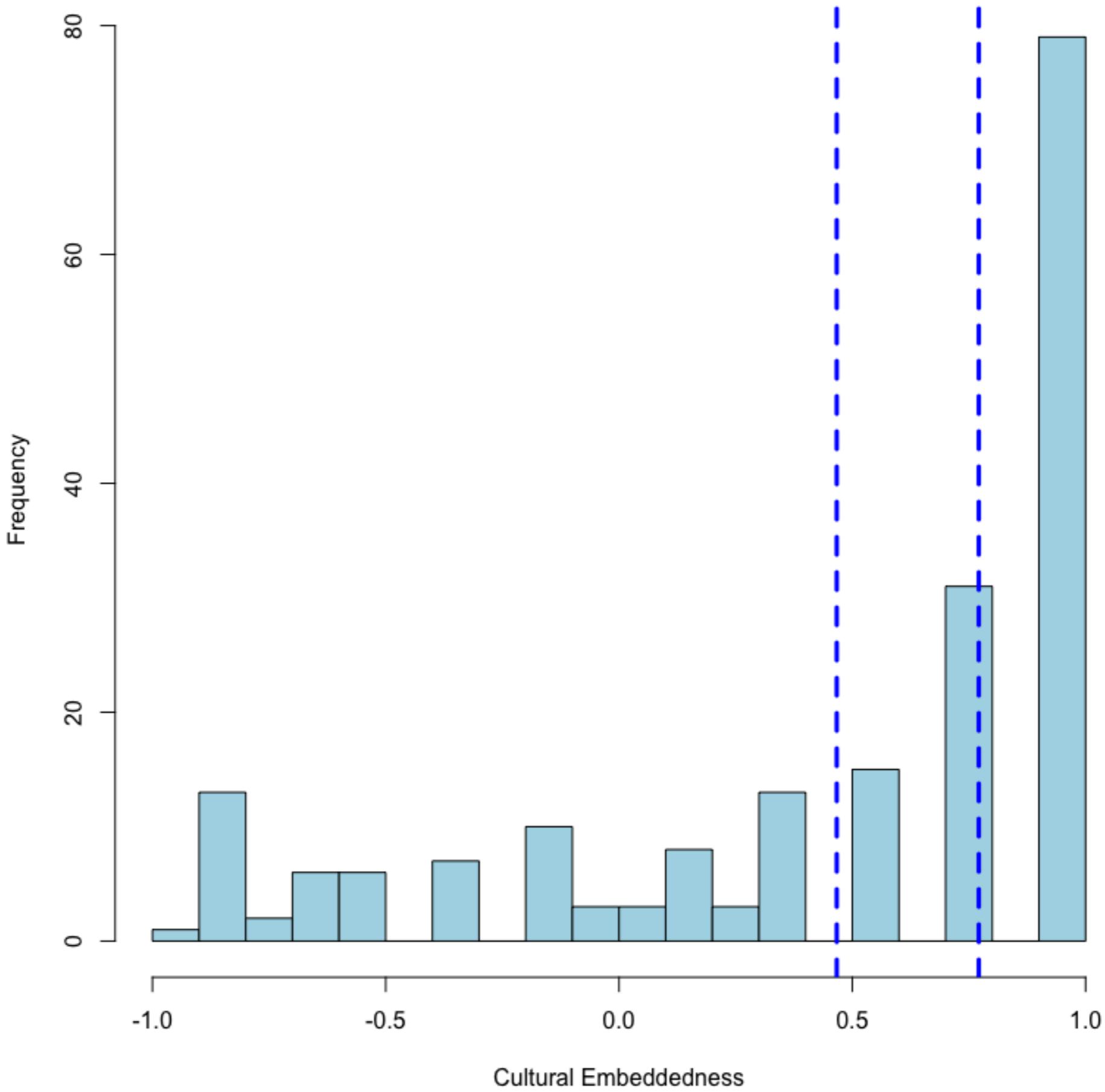
Trust means that you can talk to a women on this unit and know she will be honest with you.

# (AGAIN) SORRY FOR THE FONT!!!

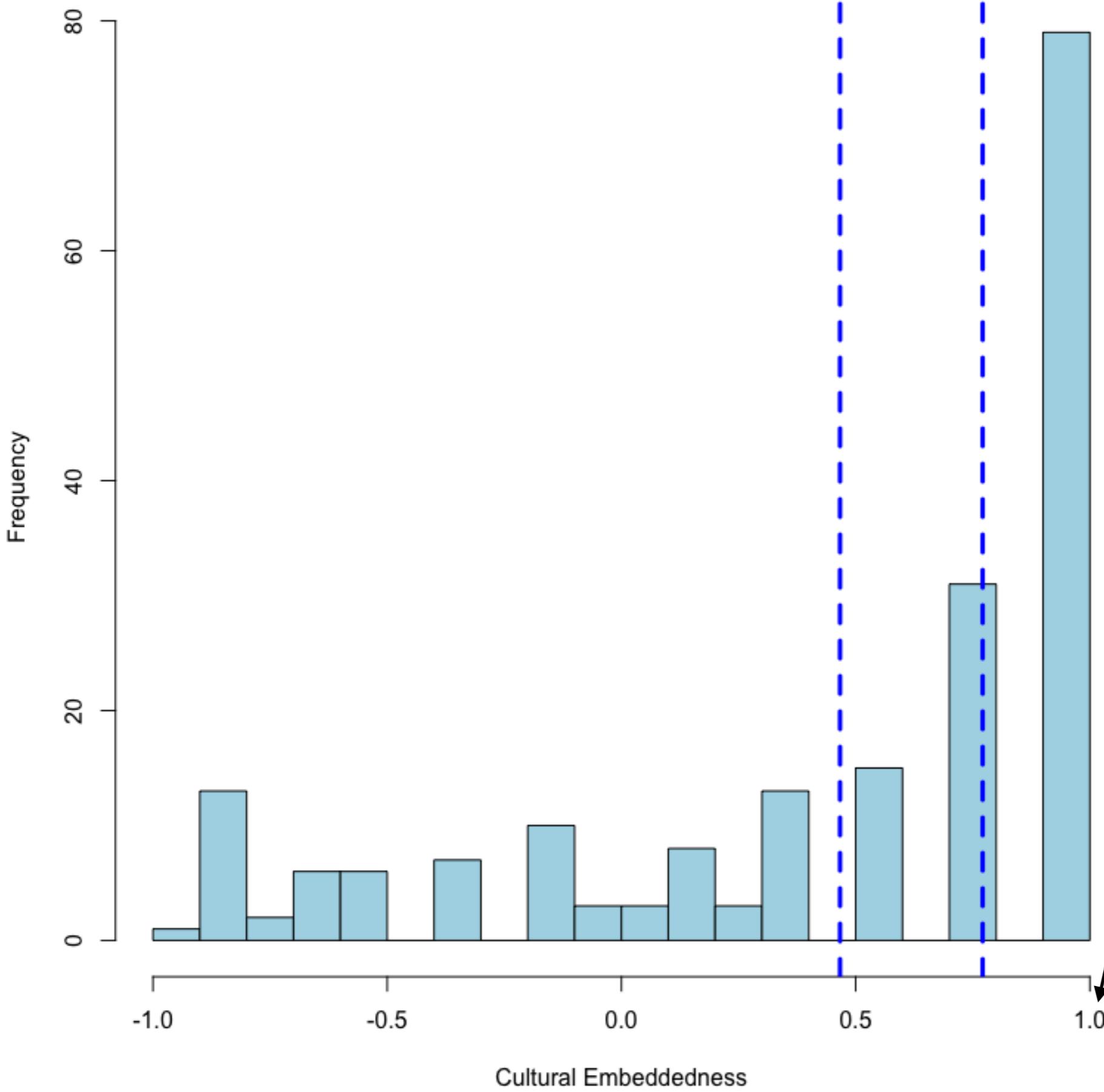
	Proportion
	True
<i>I would like you to think about what it means to trust other women on this unit. Next to each item below, please indicate whether the statement is true (T) or false (F) regarding the meaning of trust on this unit.</i>	
Trust means that if someone tells you something personal, you should keep it between you and them and not share it with others.	0.98
Trusting someone means that you can tell them something personal and know they will not share it with others.	0.81
Trusting someone means you can discuss personal matters and they will not judge you.	0.73
Trusting someone means that you can tell them personal information and know it will not be repeated.	0.73
Trust means that you can tell someone something personal and know that they will not judge you.	0.69
Trust means that if you tell someone something personal about yourself, they won't use it to get something from you.	0.69
Trusting someone on this unit means that you can share something personal and know that it will stay with them.	0.68
Trust means that if you tell someone something personal about yourself, they won't use it to manipulate you.	0.67
Trust means that you can talk to a women on this unit and know she will be honest with you.	0.66

- Question:
- How do individuals differ in their level of cultural embeddedness?

## Distribution of Cultural Embeddedness Scores

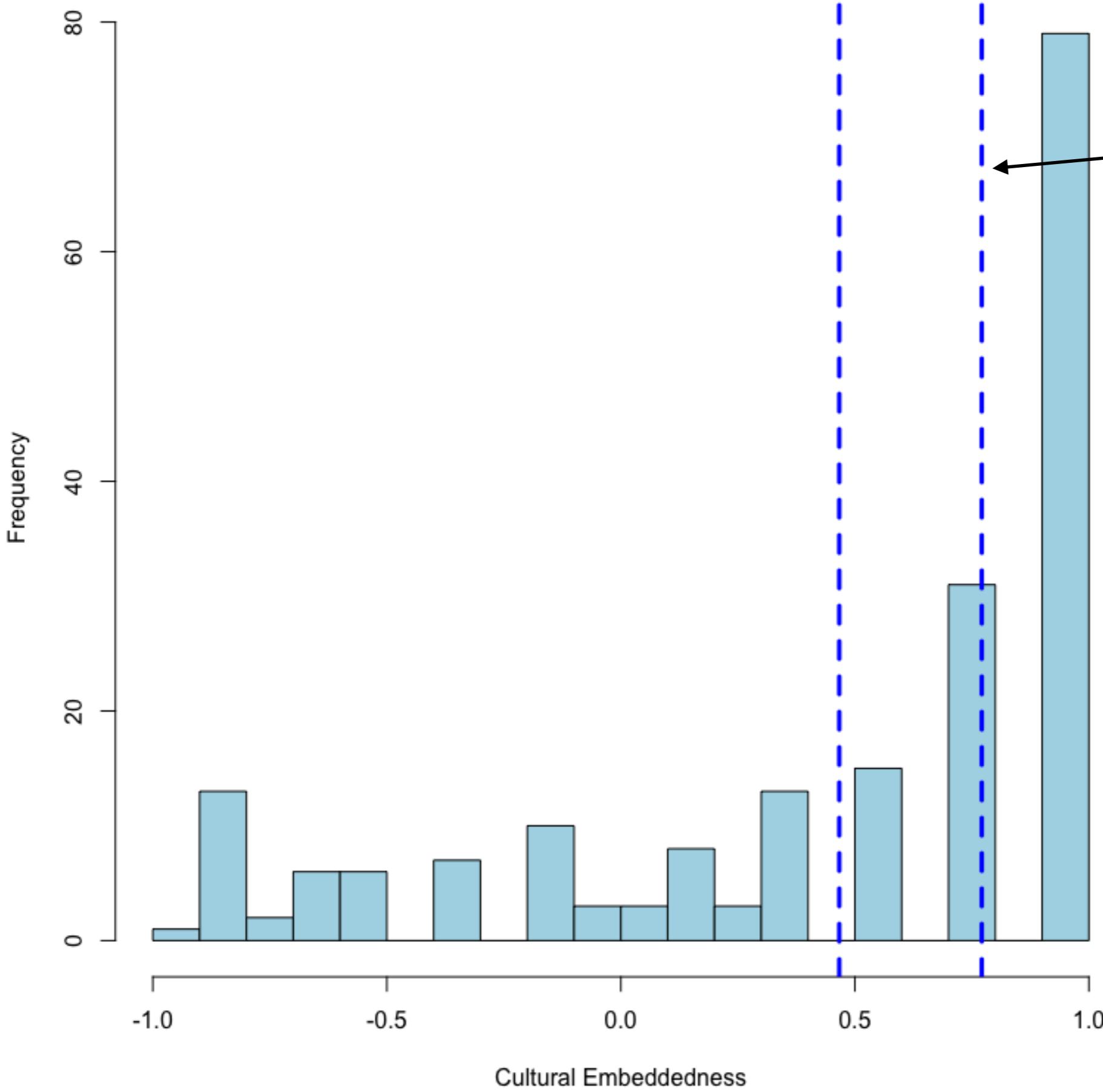


### Distribution of Cultural Embeddedness Scores



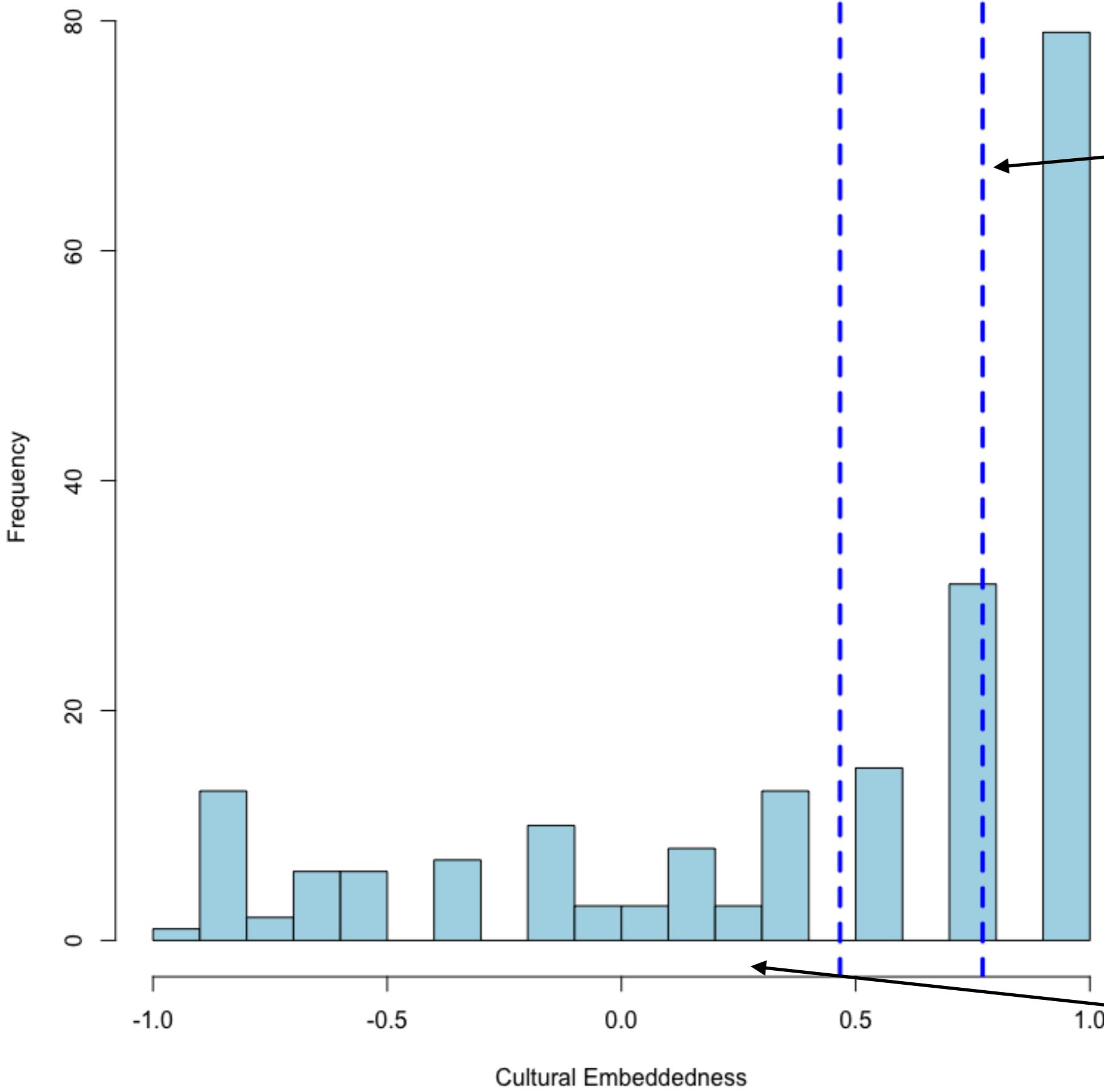
If everyone completely agreed, they would all have a score of 1.

### Distribution of Cultural Embeddedness Scores



Median score  
is 0.77

Distribution of Cultural Embeddedness Scores



Median score  
is 0.77

Takeaway:

A large fraction  
is culturally  
embedded

A smaller  
fraction is not

# Cultural Embeddedness

- Question:
  - How does cultural embeddedness influence women's perceptions of social relationships and programming?
    - Relational Health
    - Psychological Safety

# Relational Health

- Belle Liang and colleagues (2002)
  - "Growth-fostering relationships" are characterized by:
    - Mutual engagement, Authenticity, Empowerment, Ability to deal with conflict
  - "Community relational health"
    - A sense of growth-fostering relationships in one's community.

# Relational Health

## Community Relational Health

*Next to each statement below, indicate the number that best applies to your relationship with or involvement with other women in this unit. 1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Always.*

I feel a sense of belonging to women in this unit.

I feel better about myself after my interactions with women in this unit.

If women in this unit know something is bothering me, they ask me about it.

Women in this unit are not free to just be themselves. (reversed)

I feel understood by women in this unit.

I feel mobilized to personal action after meetings with women in this unit.

There are parts of myself I feel I must hide from women in this unit. (reversed)

It seems as if women in this unit really like me as a person.

There is a lot of backbiting and gossiping among women in this unit. (reversed)

Women in this unit are very competitive with each other. (reversed)

I have a greater sense of self-worth through my connection with women in this unit.

My connections with women in this unit are so inspiring that they motivate me to pursue relationships with other people.

Women in this unit have shaped my identity in many ways.

Women in this unit provide me with emotional support.

# Psychological Safety

- Amy Edmondson (2016)
  - Belief that the "team" is a safe space for interpersonal risk taking.
  - Ok to ask for help, try a new idea, etc.
  - Group programs for incarcerated women have similar features of "interpersonal risk taking"

# Psychological Safety

## Programming

---

*Next to each statement below, indicate your agreement regarding interactions among women in programming. 1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Always.*

You can't share personal information in programming because people will gossip. (reversed)

If you make a rule that "what is said in here, stays in here", people will follow it.

If you make a rule that "what is said in here, stays in here" and someone breaks the rule, there is really nothing you can do about it. (reversed)

In programs, it is easy to speak up about what is your mind.

If you make a mistake in this unit, other women will often hold it against you. (reversed)

People in this unit are usually comfortable talking about problems and disagreements.

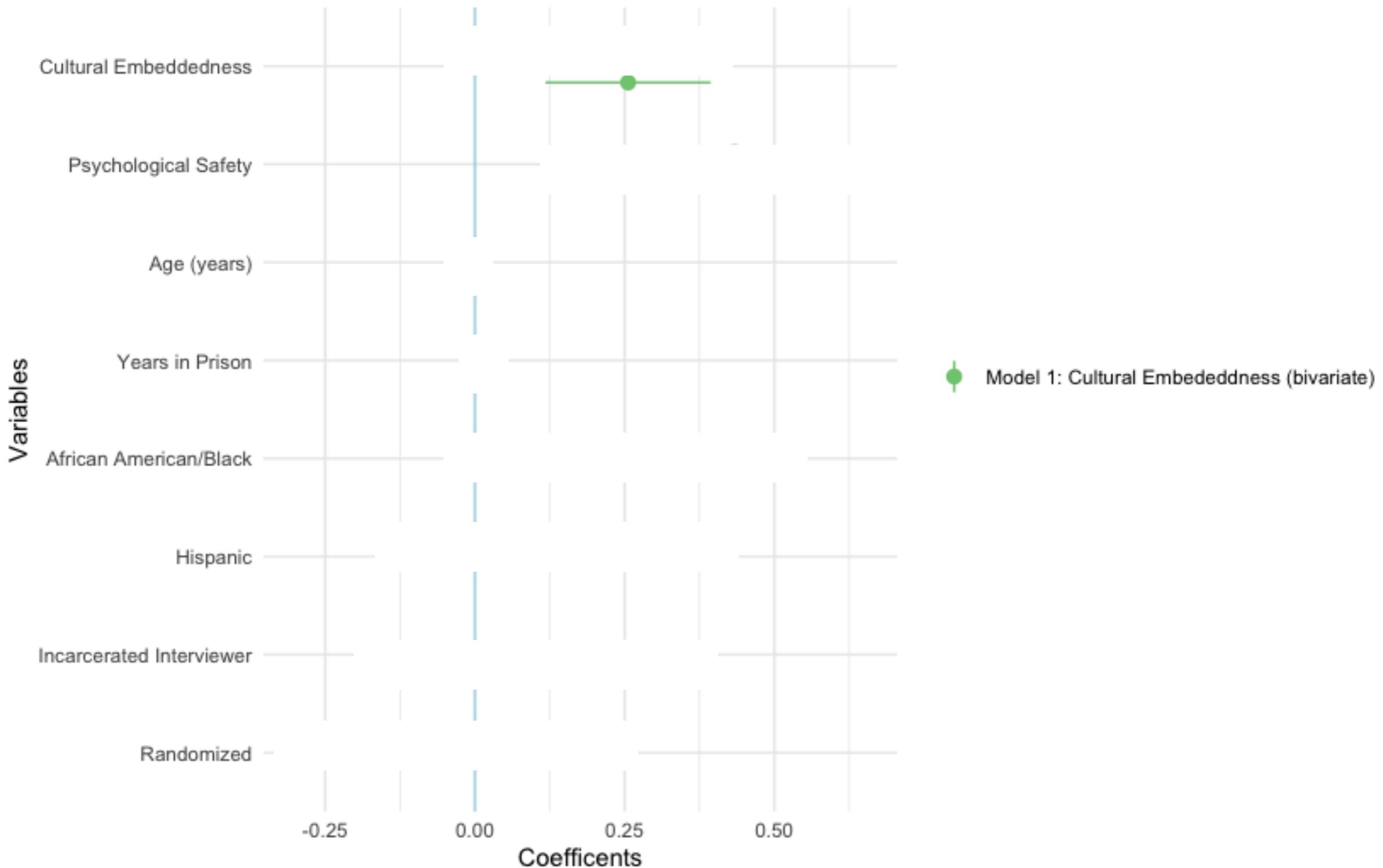
People in this unit are eager to share information about what *doesn't* work as well as to share information about what does work.

# Expectations

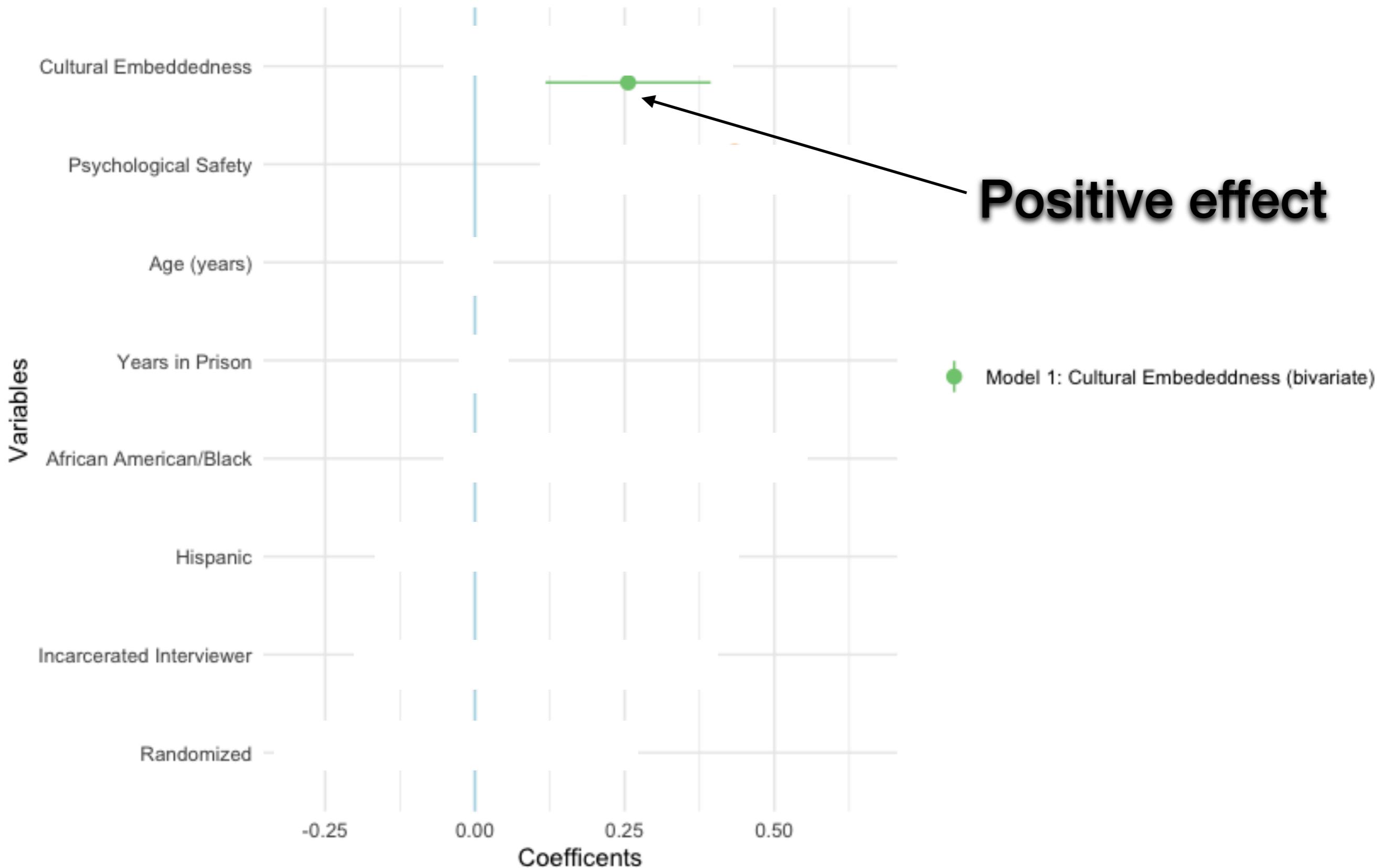
- More culturally embeddedness:
  - *Lower Relational Health and Psychological Safety*
  - Aware of the reality of prison, not naive
- *Higher Relational Health and Psychological Safety*
  - Aware of how to create relationships and the setting

# Results: Predicting Relational Health

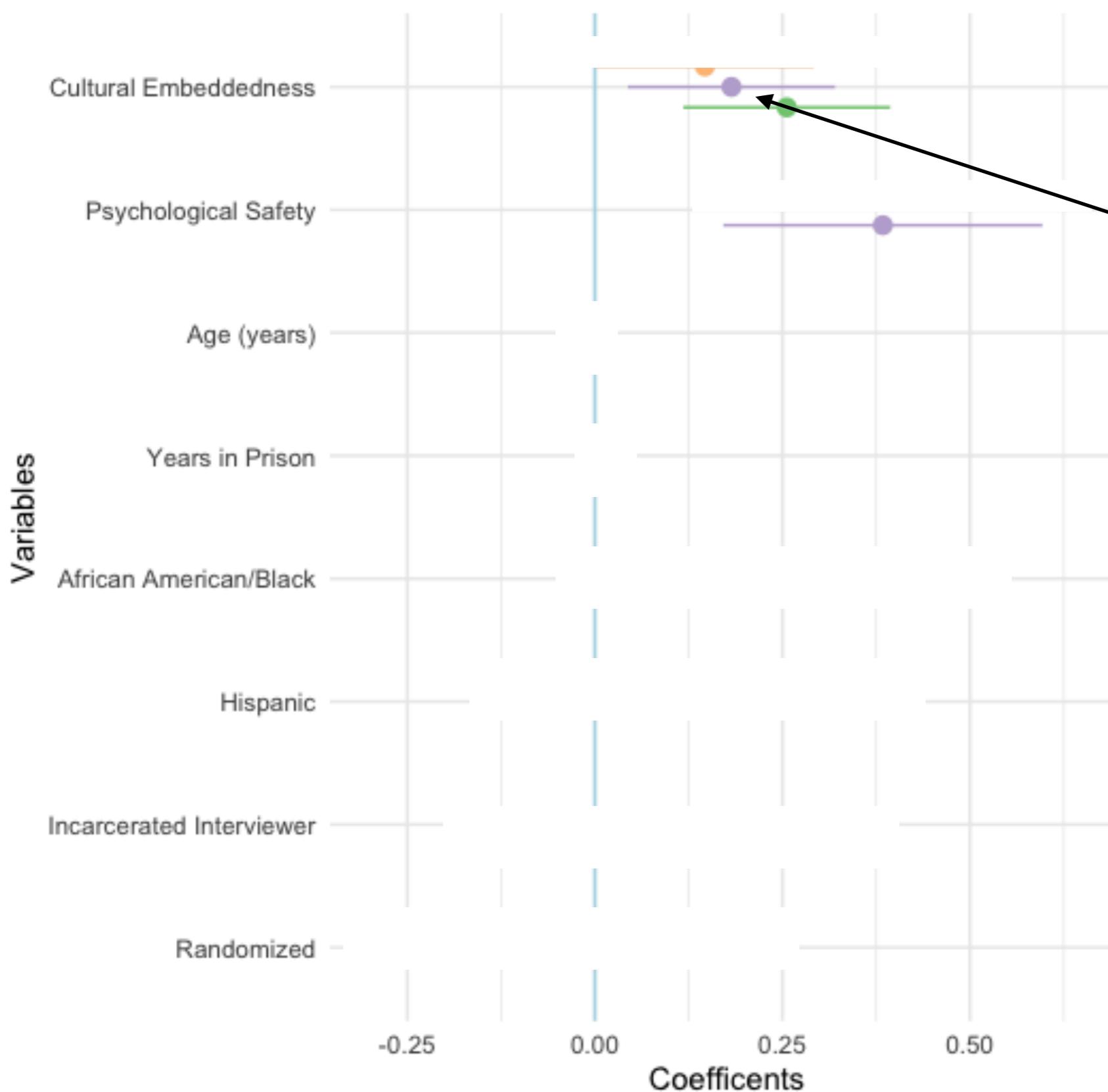
## Models Predicting Relational Health



## Models Predicting Relational Health



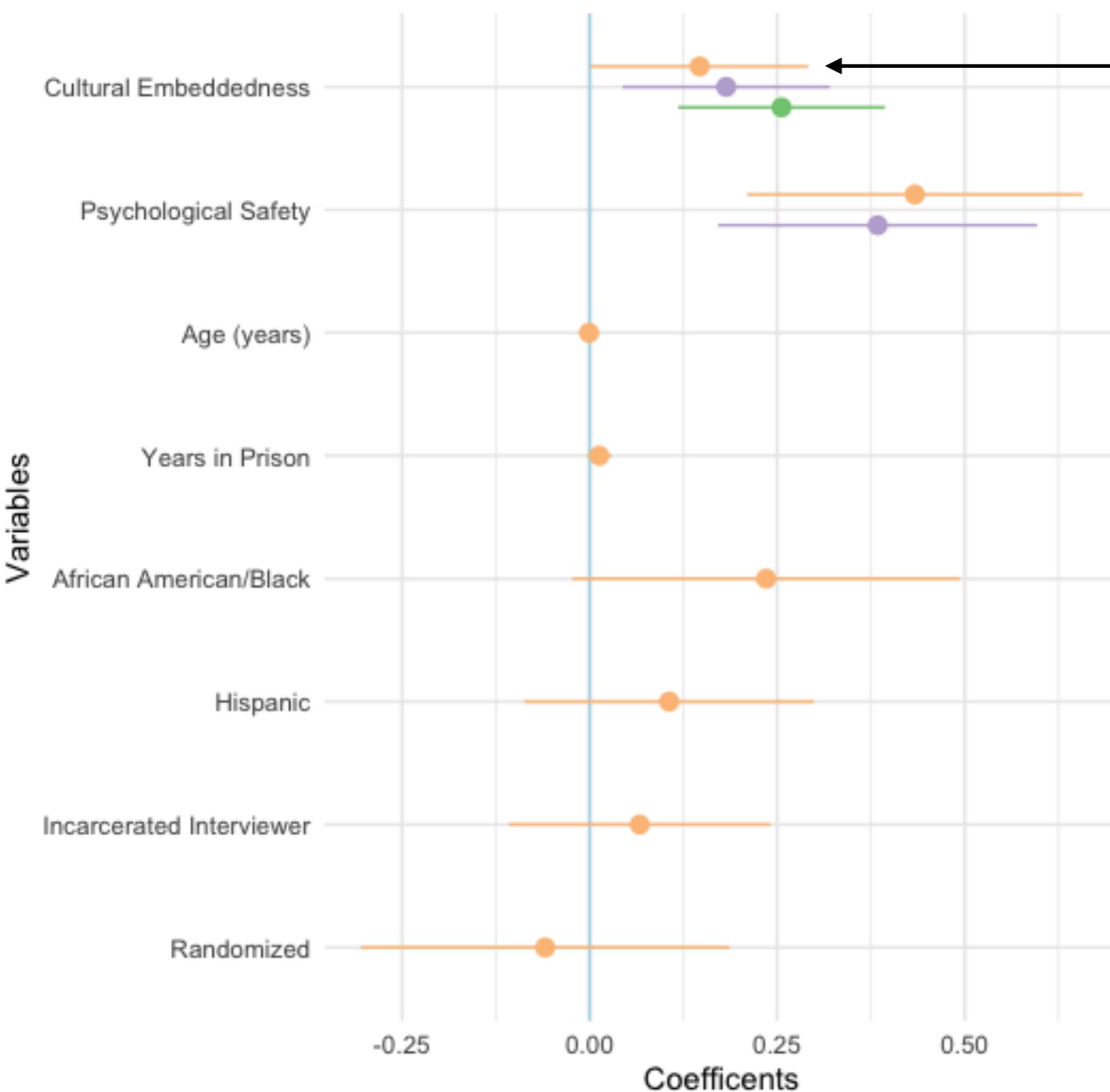
## Models Predicting Relational Health



**Effect declines**

**Captures the effect "net" of measurement overlap**

## Models Predicting Relational Health

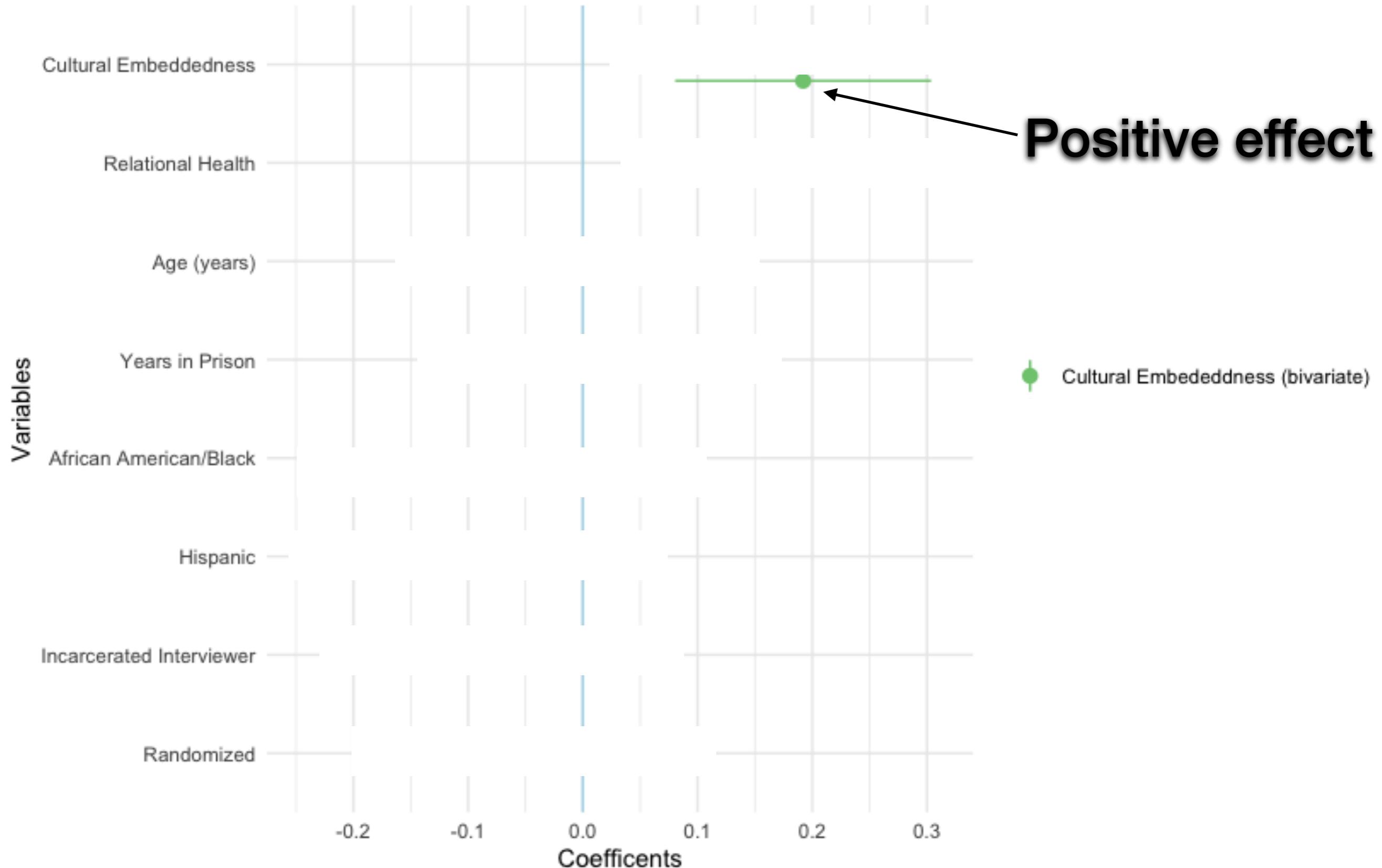


**Robust to  
additional  
controls**

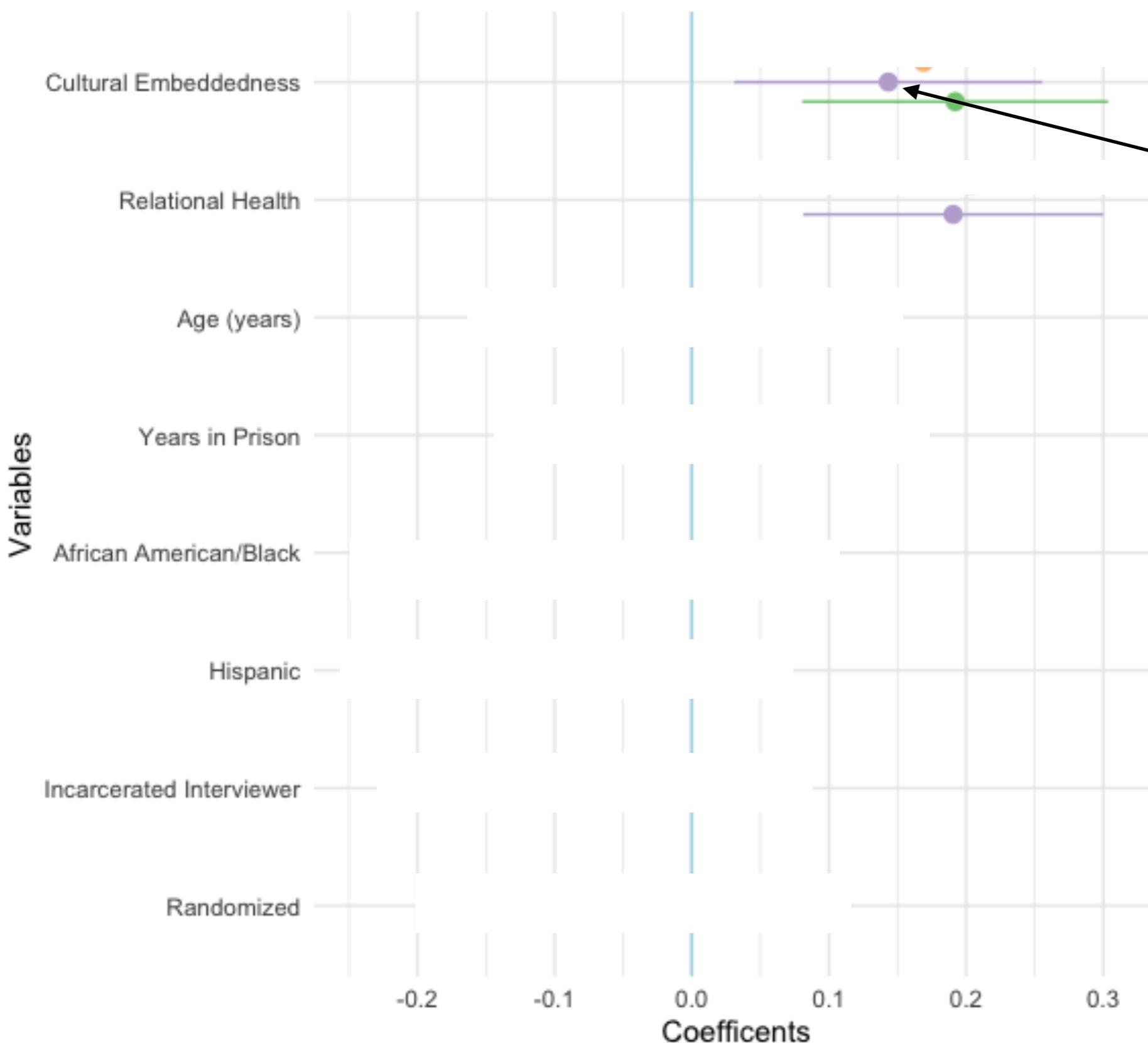
# **Results:**

# **Predicting Psychological Safety**

## Models Predicting Psychological Safety



## Models Predicting Psychological Safety



**Effect declines**

**Captures the  
effect "net" of  
measurement  
overlap**

- Cultural Embeddedness (bivariate)
- Model 2: Including Relational Health

## Models Predicting Psychological Safety

Cultural Embeddedness

**Robust to  
additional  
controls**

- Cultural Embeddedness (bivariate)
- Model 2: Including Relational Health
- Model 3: Full

Relational Health

Age (years)

Years in Prison

African American/Black

Hispanic

Incarcerated Interviewer

Randomized

-0.2 -0.1 0.0 0.1 0.2 0.3

Coefficients

Variables

# Discussion

- Much has been said about prison culture...
  - But, little work has been dedicated to measuring cultural domains.
- Questions:
  - How do individuals differ in their level of cultural embeddedness?
  - How does cultural embeddedness influence women's perceptions of social relationships and programming?

# Discussion

- How do individuals differ in their level of cultural embeddedness?
  - Group of "knowledgeable" individuals who largely agree with each other.
  - Another group who disagree
    - Points to *cultural heterogeneity*

# Discussion

- How does cultural embeddedness influence women's perceptions of social relationships and programming?
  - More cultural embeddedness was related to more *positive*:
    - perceptions of social relationships
    - beliefs about the psychological safety of programming

# Limitations

- Cultural domains are measurable, but operationalization is *hard*. Did we have enough items?
- One unit. Are these generalizable?
- Cross sectional.
  - Limits causal inference
  - Limits the questions we can ask

# Thank you!

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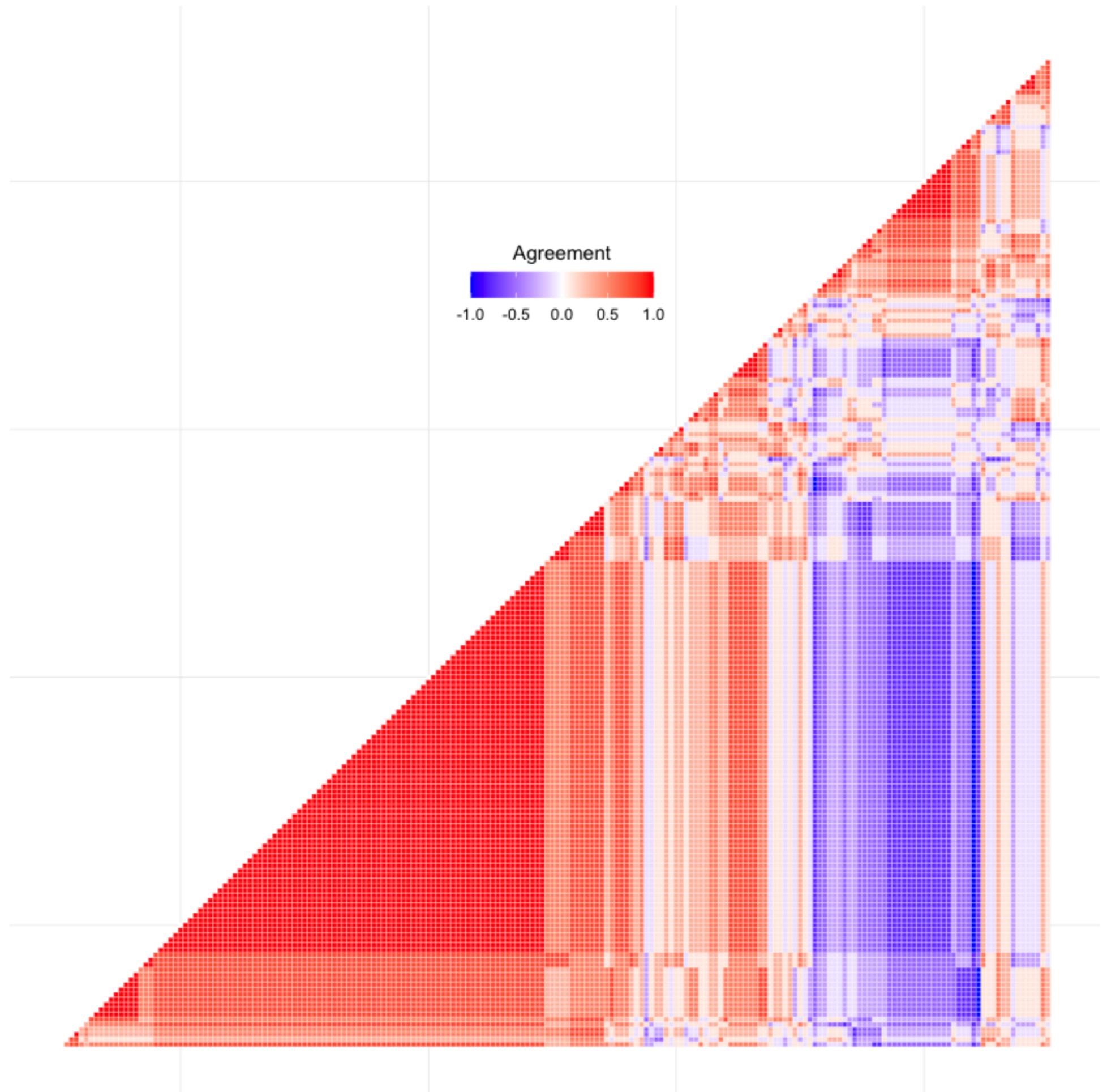
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# Extra Slides

TABLE #. Descriptive Statistics for Unit A and Unit B

Variables	Unit A (n = 695)					Unit B (n = 685)				
	Mean/ Proportion	Median	SD	Min	Max	Mean/ Proportion	Median	SD	Min	Max
Age	37.41	35.99	10.48	19.11	76.44	38.74	36.34	10.83	19.88	81.75
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>										
White	0.38	----	0.49	0.00	1.00	0.45	----	0.50	0.00	1.00
Black	0.15	----	0.36	0.00	1.00	0.10	----	0.30	0.00	1.00
Hispanic	0.31	----	0.46	0.00	1.00	0.27	----	0.44	0.00	1.00
Native American	0.09	----	0.29	0.00	1.00	0.11	----	0.32	0.00	1.00
Other	0.06	----	0.25	0.00	1.00	0.07	----	0.25	0.00	1.00
<i>Education</i>										
Less than high school	0.60	----	0.49	0.00	1.00	0.54	----	0.50	0.00	1.00
High school	0.30	----	0.46	0.00	1.00	0.33	----	0.47	0.00	1.00
Greater than high school	0.09	----	0.29	0.00	1.00	0.11	----	0.32	0.00	1.00
<i>Marital/Family Status</i>										
Single	0.65	----	0.48	0.00	1.00	0.62	----	0.48	0.00	1.00
Married	0.18	----	0.38	0.00	1.00	0.19	----	0.39	0.00	1.00
Divorced	0.08	----	0.27	0.00	1.00	0.09	----	0.29	0.00	1.00
Has children	0.61	----	0.49	0.00	1.00	0.61	----	0.49	0.00	1.00
<i>Substance Use</i>										
History of substance use	0.89	----	0.31	0.00	1.00	0.91	----	0.28	0.00	1.00
History of methamphetamine use	0.40	----	0.49	0.00	1.00	0.42	----	0.49	0.00	1.00
History of alcohol use	0.24	----	0.43	0.00	1.00	0.23	----	0.42	0.00	1.00
<i>Custody Level</i>										
Close	0.22	----	0.41	0.00	1.00	0.18	----	0.38	0.00	1.00
Medium	0.76	----	0.43	0.00	1.00	0.81	----	0.39	0.00	1.00
Minimum	0.02	----	0.14	0.00	1.00	0.01	----	0.10	0.00	1.00
<i>Offense History</i>										
Age at admission	33.08	31.00	9.65	16.00	74.00	33.90	32.00	9.68	16.00	70.00
Years in prison	3.83	2.28	4.43	0.64	35.33	4.33	2.57	4.82	0.64	32.29
Prior felonies as adult	1.11	0.00	1.60	0.00	13.00	1.08	0.00	1.65	0.00	17.00
Prior prison terms	1.71	1.00	1.05	1.00	7.00	1.68	1.00	1.01	1.00	7.00
<i>Misconduct Violations (in past 6 months)</i>										
Violations	0.31	----	0.46	0.00	1.00	0.24	----	0.43	0.00	1.00
Assault on other prisoner	0.14	----	0.35	0.00	1.00	0.10	----	0.30	0.00	1.00
Assault on staff	0.04	----	0.20	0.00	1.00	0.02	----	0.16	0.00	1.00

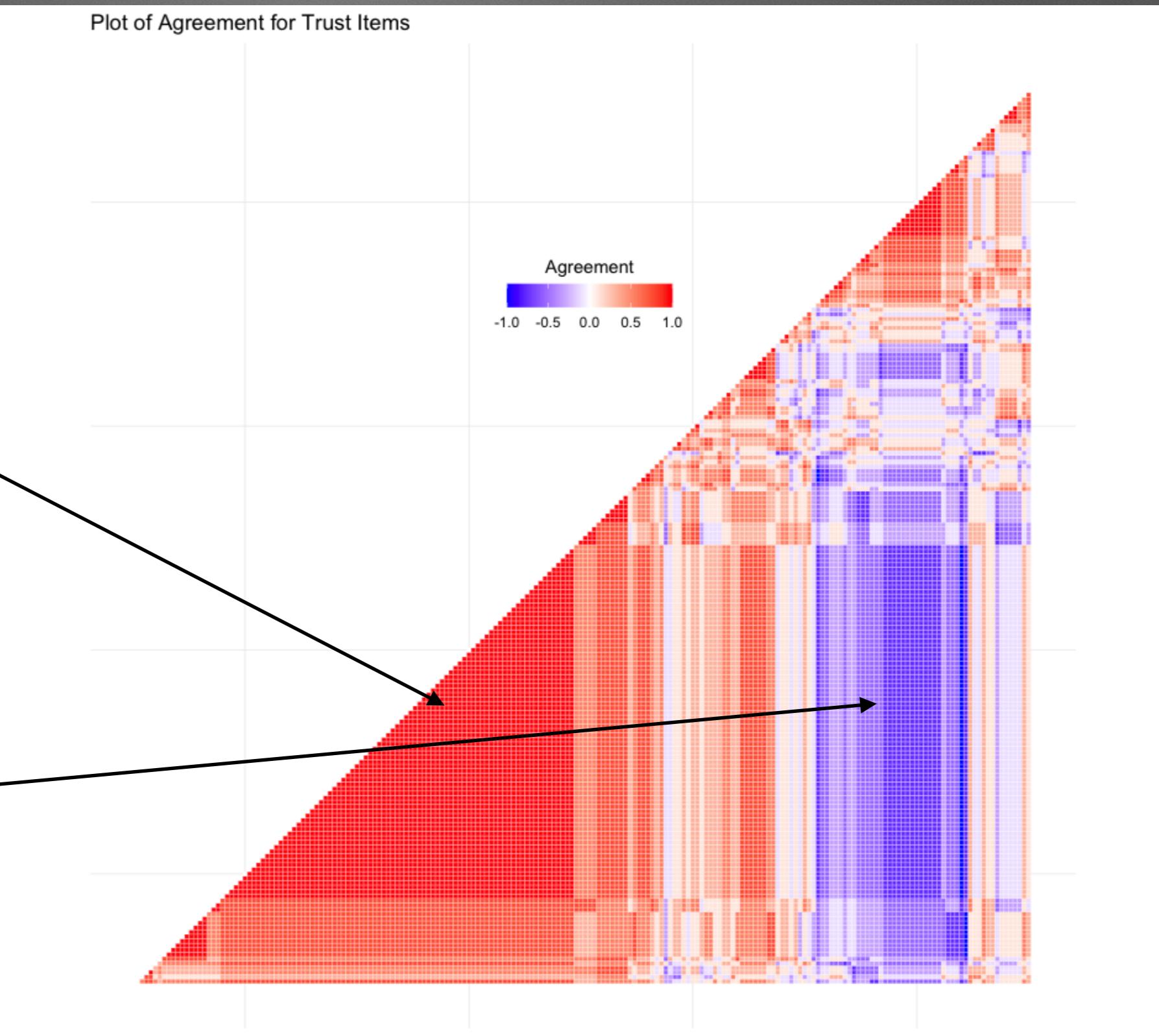
Plot of Agreement for Trust Items



# N X N correlation matrix

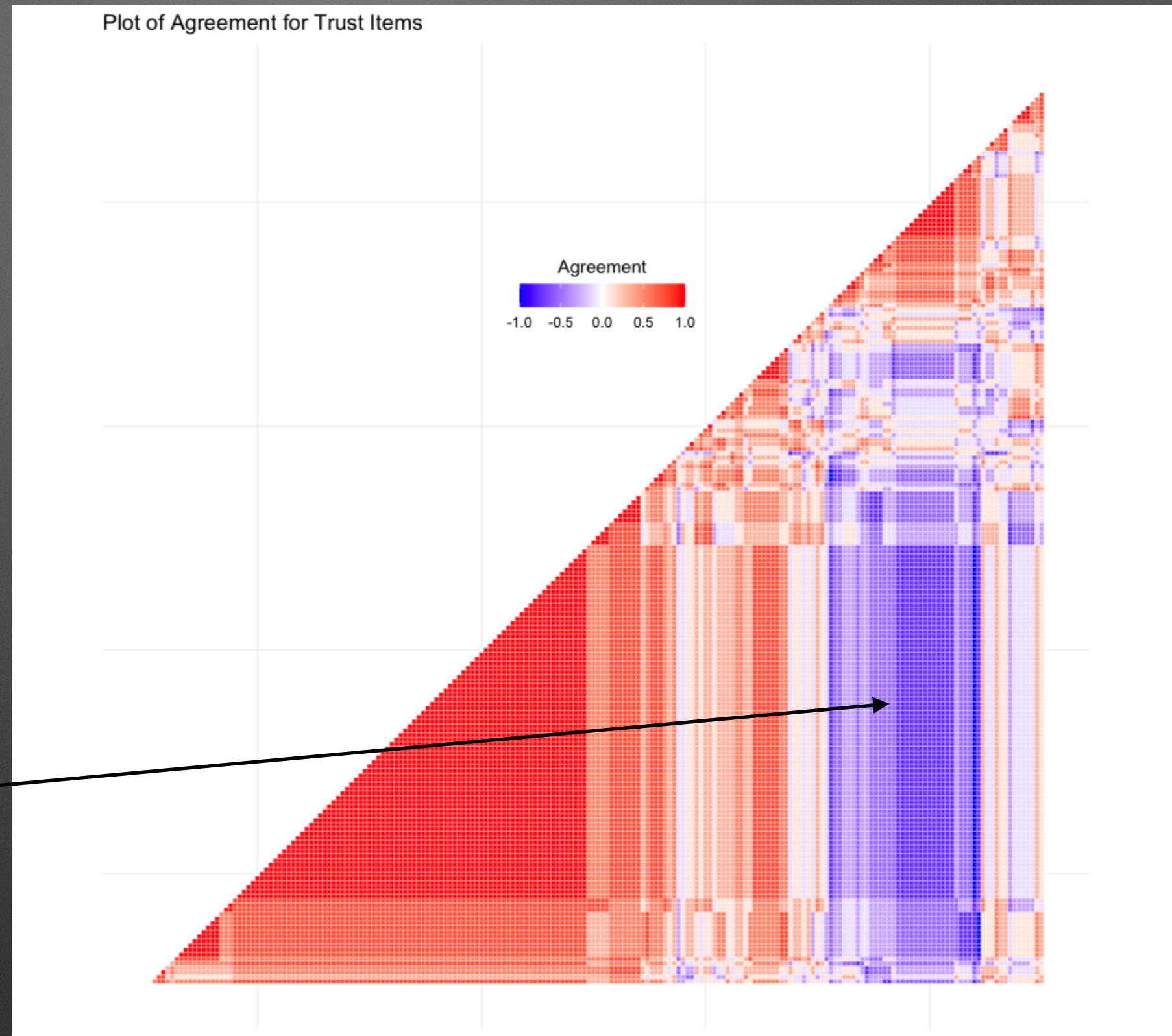
Agreement  
between  $i$  and  $j$

Disagreement  
between  $i$  and  $j$



# N X N correlation matrix

Disagreement  
between  $i$  and  $j$



# N X N correlation matrix

Median  
correlation is  
0.33

## Takeaway:

Not complete  
consensus; a  
group that  
agrees and a  
smaller group  
that disagrees

