

What is public trust in healthcare systems? – Implications for health policy making

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Introduction

Public trust in the healthcare system is an integral part of policy making and system governance, considering that public trust legitimises healthcare system’s action. Unfortunately, so far, no robust conceptual framework of public trust exists, which poses problems for policy making and public trust measurement (Gille, Smith, Mays, 2015). This led to the research question:

- What is public trust in healthcare systems?

Following a public trust model describing how public trust grows in the public sphere presented in 2015 at the Young Forum Gastein (Gille, Smith, Mays, 2017), now this poster shows a conceptual framework of public trust in the healthcare system.

Methods

Public trust was conceptualised by carrying out an inductive thematic analysis following open coding (Elo, Kyngäs, 2008).

Three case studies of the English NHS were analysed:

- 1625 online news readership comments concerning ‘care.data’
- 21 interviews about participants’ experiences and perceptions of biobanks
- 2 public focus groups about perceptions of the 100.000 Genomes Project

In addition, existing measurement instruments and their conceptual frameworks, as well as general trust theory, were reviewed.

Last, public trust influencing actors in the public sphere were identified and categorised.

Result: public trust influencers

Public trust in the healthcare system is not a bi-relational construct between ‘the public’ and ‘the healthcare system’. Actors influencing public trust are from several categories (with example): Personal (Family), Public (Media), Personal encounter health system (GP) , Health system (Hospital), National government (Elite), State (Council), National level (Bank), and International level (Google).

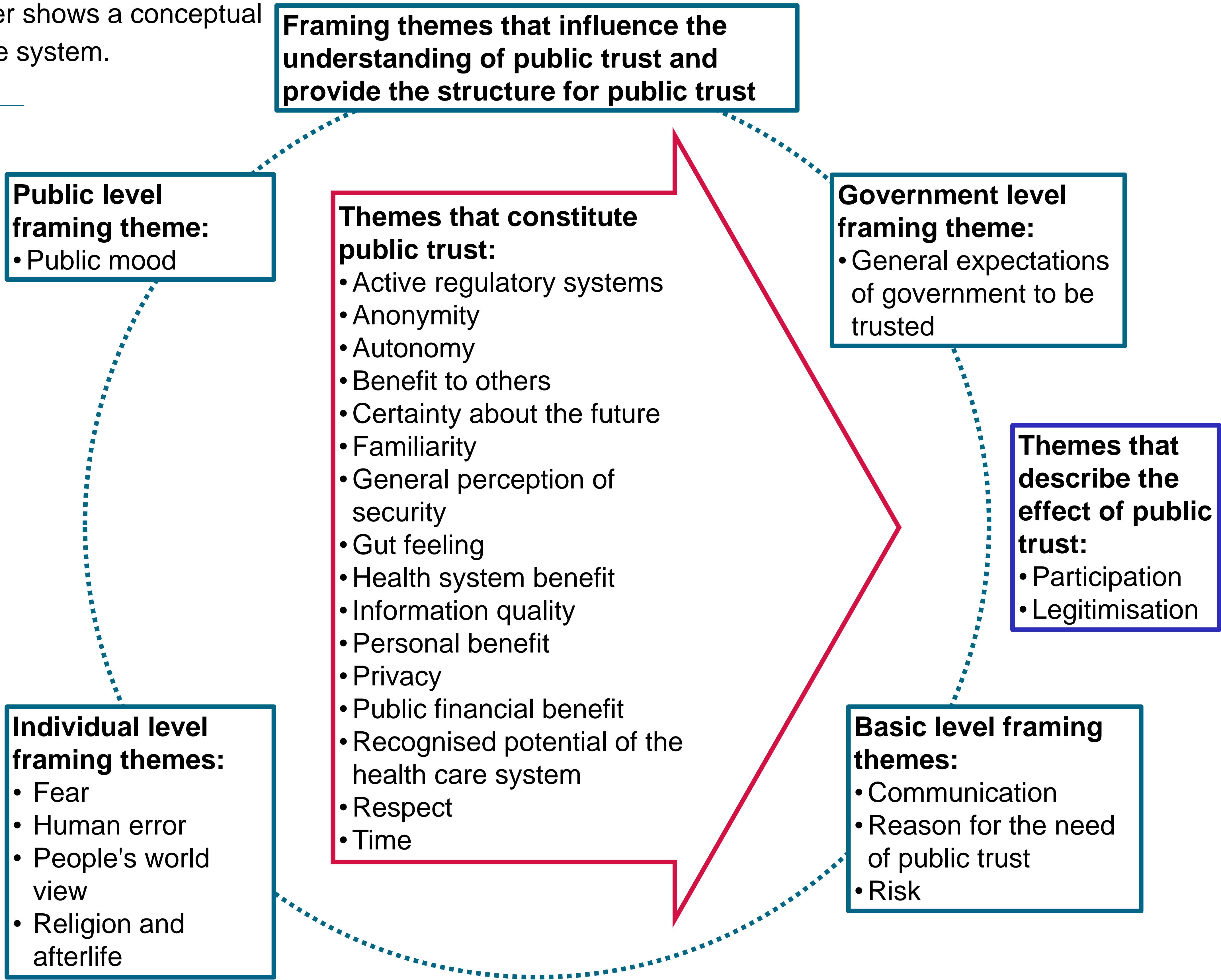
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Result: public trust framework

The findings suggest that public trust grows in the public sphere from open public discourse and as a result legitimises the actions of the healthcare system. Public trust builds on information equally relating to past experiences, present perceptions and future expectations. **The distinctive feature of public trust is that it is established in anticipation of a net-benefit for the public as well as the system.**

The framework presented below comprises causal themes, effect themes and framing themes.



Policy implications

Guided by the conceptual framework, policy makers should consider the following overarching implications when aiming to develop a policy that is designed to be trusted by the public:

- Develop health policy that can be expected to result in a net benefit for the individual, the public and the healthcare system.
- Adhere to democratic principles and altruistic motivations.
- Take into account actors and events or trends in the wider society from outside the health care system that potentially influence public trust in the health care system
- When implementing a policy, provide information about comparative publicly known policies, about present policy features and the anticipated (future) policy impact.

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