

PUNISHMENT AND IMPRISONMENT IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Department of Sociology and Social Work
University of Agder - June 2019

The context

Grand narrative criminology - broad shifts in penal culture and practice

- ‘... risks elevating an explanatory framework largely informed by the specificities of the US situation to the status of a general theory of penal dynamics’ (Lacey 2008: 26)

Political-economy, national cultures and penal policy:

- e.g. Cavadino and Dignan (2006); Lacey (2008); Pratt (2008a, 2008b)

Levels of severity/tolerance generally measured through prison population rates, prison ‘conditions’, official sources, etc (although see Pratt and Eriksson 2013)

Limitations

- Imprisonment rates = quantity rather than 'texture' of imprisonment
- Official aims & rhetoric Vs 'on the ground' experience
- The prisoner experience is relational, as much as material
- Inputs Vs outcomes
- Harsh/tolerant for whom, in what ways? In which parts of the system?
see Barker (2012) on 'the paradox of a Janus-faced penal regime', Ugelvik and Dullum (2011), Scharff-Smith and Ugelvik (2017)

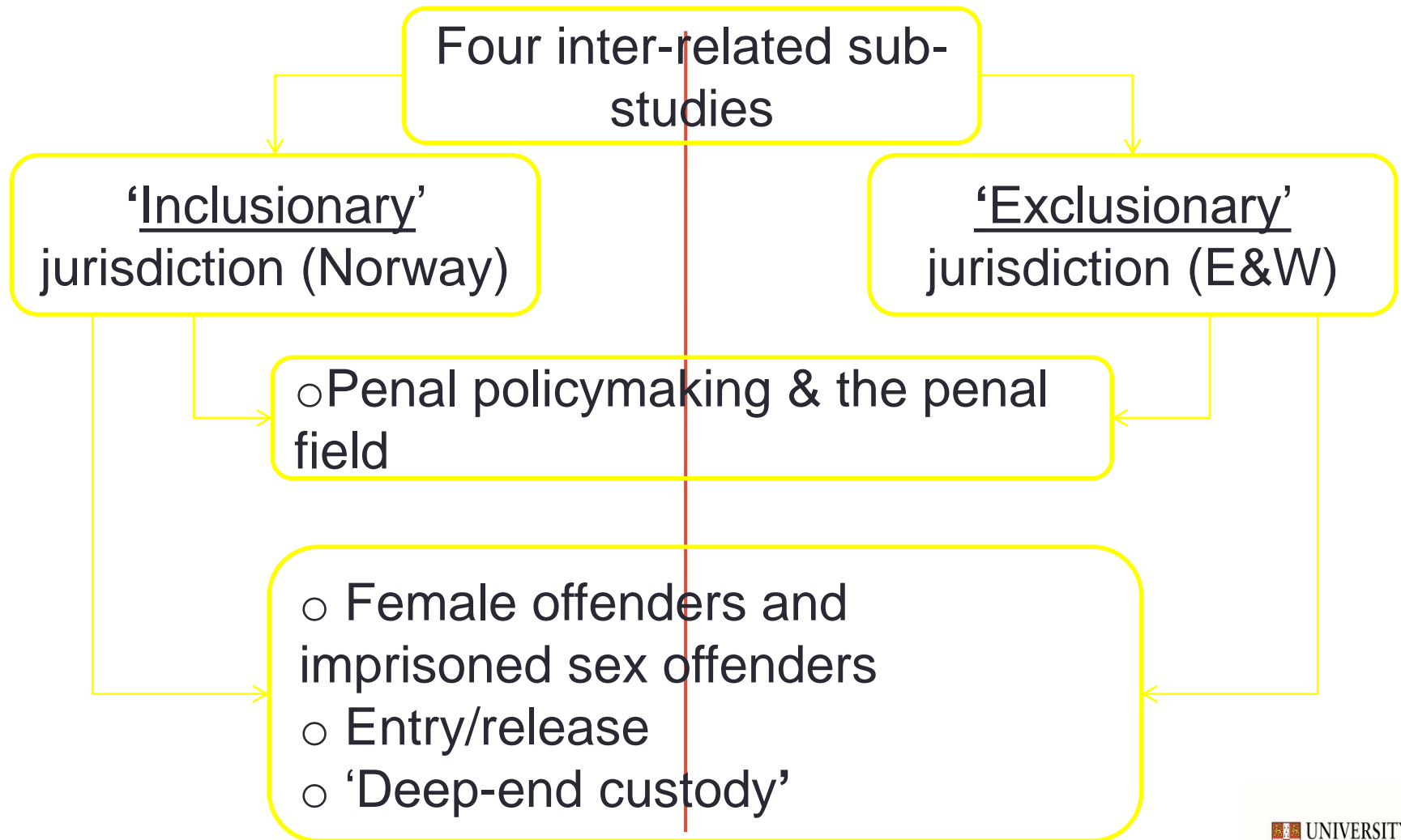
Research questions

- What do 'inclusionary' (or 'social-democratic') and 'exclusionary' (or 'neo-liberal') punishment systems look like in practice?
- How are they experienced?
 - (1) a test of the NE thesis
 - (2) an attempt to conceptualise the nature of imprisonment

Sensitising concepts

- Depth (see Downes 1988): distance & difference from outside world e.g. security, control, permeability
- Weight (see King and McDermott 1988; Liebling and Arnold 2004): oppressiveness, burden & use of authority, interpersonal treatment
- Tightness (Crewe 2009, 2011): invasiveness, grip, impact on personal identity & self-regulation
- Breadth: reach & impact beyond the prison e.g. stigma, 'disabilities', etc
- Penal consciousness
- Shame / guilt

The research programme



The comparative design

- Comparison *between* and *within* jurisdictions
 - Different sub-groups
 - Different locations (e.g. remand, ‘deep-end’)
 - Different sentence stages (longitudinal)

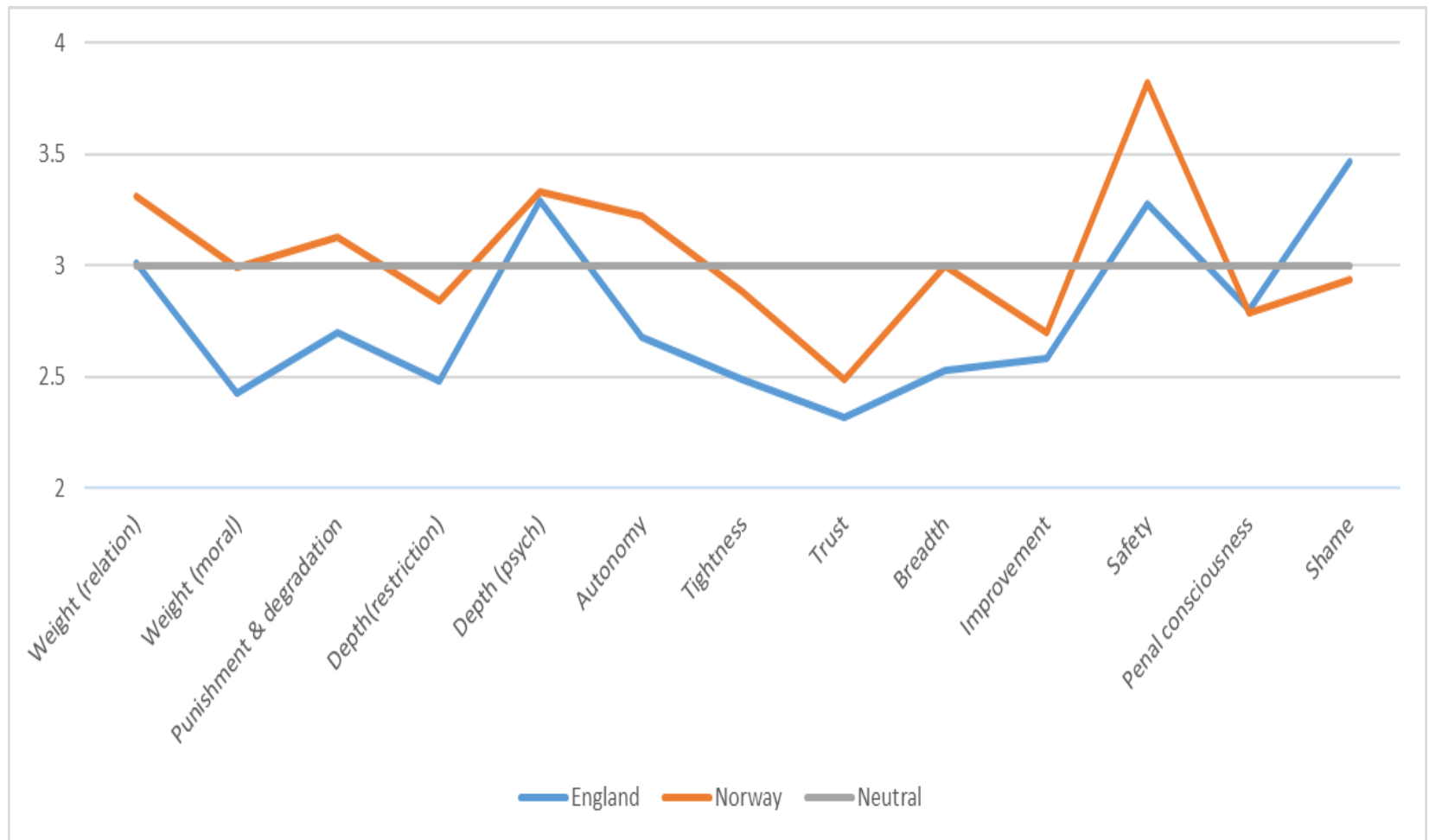
Aims

- A contribution to the revival of prison ethnography
- ‘Gendering’ the field
- Development of vocabulary & framework for comparing penal cultures
- Concrete analysis of the dynamics of the penal state, in different jurisdictions, and the relationship between penal politics and prisoner experiences
- Interrogation of the foundational labels and theories of comparative penology
- Description and ‘explanation’ of differences in penal regimes and experiences

Survey dimensions: mean scores

	n=806	n=276
	England & Wales	Norway
1. Weight (relational)	3.01	3.31***
2. Weight (moral)	2.43	2.99***
3. Punishment & degradation	2.70	3.13***
4. Depth (restriction)	2.48	2.84***
5. Depth (psychological)	3.29	3.33
6. Autonomy	2.68	3.22***
7. Tightness	2.49	2.88***
8. Trust	2.32	2.49***
9. Breadth	2.53	3.00***
10. Improvement	2.58	2.70*
11. Safety	3.28	3.82***
12. Penal consciousness	2.80	2.79
13. Shame	3.47***	2.94

Survey dimensions: mean scores



Weight (relational)

Item no	Item	Mean	% S/A/A	% SD/D	Mean	% S/A/A	% SD/D
1	I am treated with respect by staff in this prison	3.36	51.9	20.7	3.62*	61.4	14.4
2	I am given adequate opportunities to keep myself clean, decent and presentable	3.79	74.0	13.8	4.01*	81.4	7.7
3	Staff in this prison do their best to help me	3.14	41.3	28.9	3.34	48.4	22.8
4	I feel cared about most of the time in this prison	2.86	29.3	38.0	3.53***	59.6	16.1
10	Staff here treat prisoners fairly	2.97	33.0	33.3	3.39***	54.0	20.0
12	Punishment and discipline are used fairly in this prison	2.79	29.9	41.1	2.98**	34.7	30.2
41	I trust most staff in this prison	2.76	29.3	42.2	3.06*	41.1	31.6
69	I receive praise in this prison when I do good things	2.79	32.5	42.9	3.08***	36.6	27.7
75	The officers in this prison are good moral role models	2.61	19.2	43.2	2.81*	22.5	32.6

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Punishment and degradation

		E&W			Norway		
Item no	Item	Mean	% SA/A	% SD/D	Mean	% SA/A	% SD/D
15	My experience in this prison is painful	2.89	38.9	35.3	3.37***	23.2	51.2
19	This prison is doing harm to me	2.74	43.9	30.1	3.22***	31.6	45.6
40	My time in this prison feels very much like a punishment	2.16	68.1	12.1	2.43**	57.9	20.7
65	This prison is trying to take away my self-respect	2.75	40.2	28.8	3.29***	24.2	50.2
67	My treatment in this prison is humiliating	2.95	33.0	34.1	3.36***	24.6	50.5
Punishment and degradation		2.70	-	-	3.13***	-	-

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Depth (restriction)

		E&W			Norway		
Item no	Item	Mean	% SA/A	% SD/D	Mean	% SA/A	% SD/D
21	I feel a long way from freedom	2.38	60.4	21.5	2.60	51.2	25.6
32	I feel cut off from the outside world in here	2.24	66.4	17.0	2.46	56.1	21.8
33	Movements around this prison (including on and off the wings) are over-controlled	2.69	45.8	28.7	2.87*	35.8	31.9
42	The buildings and layout of this prison feel very oppressive	2.66	44.8	20.3	3.23***	27.4	45.3
44	I am being held in conditions that are too restrictive	2.51	53.1	21.4	3.12***	33.7	43.9
55	I have no privacy in here	2.41	58.3	19.3	2.93***	40.0	38.6
61	The level of security and control in this prison is oppressive	2.68	42.4	18.8	2.87***	39.3	32.3
63	Wherever I am in this prison I still feel confined	2.30	62.5	14.8	2.78***	45.3	35.4
Depth (restriction)		2.48	-	-	2.84***	-	-

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Tightness

Item no	Item	E&W			Norway		
		Mean	% SA/A	% SD/D	Mean	% SA/A	% SD/D
8	Decisions are made about me during this sentence that I cannot influence or understand	2.51	55.6	20.2	2.80**	42.1	26.7
25	This prison is trying to mess with my head	2.93	36.0	34.4	3.42***	22.5	51.2
26	This system treats me more like a number than a person	2.30	62.6	18.6	2.81***	41.4	31.9
29	To progress in here, I have to meet impossible expectations	2.79	40.3	29.2	3.25***	23.2	44.6
37	All the Prison Service cares about in this prison is my 'risk factors' rather than the person I really am	2.12	67.0	9.1	2.57***	49.8	21.4
49	The prison system is trying to turn me into someone I am not	2.89	38.6	34.9	3.32***	23.2	48.4
64	In this prison you have to walk on eggshells	2.59	46.5	21.0	2.97***	36.5	35.1
72	I feel stuck in the system	2.39	58.5	19.1	2.78***	44.2	31.9
77	To progress in this prison, you have to jump through hoops	2.14	67.3	10.9	2.52***	50.2	18.2

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25	This prison is trying to mess with my head	2.93	36.0	34.4	3.42***	22.5	51.2
26	This system treats me more like a number than a person	2.30	62.6	18.6	2.81***	41.4	31.9
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Breadth

		E&W			Norway		
Item no	Item	Mean	% SA/A	% SD/D	Mean	% SA/A	% SD/D
17	This sentence makes me feel rejected by society	2.55	49.6	22.5	2.91***	36.8	35.4
38	I do not feel like a valued member of society anymore	2.40	56.7	18.6	2.91***	37.5	33.7
52	I am concerned that I will never be able to 'shake off' this sentence	2.63	48.5	27.4	3.15***	32.6	43.9
Breadth		2.53	-	-	3.00***	-	-

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Men (England & Wales and Norway) compared to women (England & Wales and Norway)

	n=854	n=241
	Male	Female
1. Weight (relational)	3.06	3.17
2. Weight (moral)	2.58	2.54
3. Punishment & degradation	2.77	2.90*
4. Depth (restriction)	2.57	2.57
5. Depth (psychological)	3.28	3.37
6. Autonomy	2.82	2.80
7. Tightness	2.58	2.60
8. Trust	2.37	2.34
9. Breadth	2.63	2.68
10. Improvement	2.57	2.73**
11. Safety	3.43	3.33
12. Penal consciousness	2.75	2.95**
13. Shame	3.27	3.51***

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