Symbols and emotions in Swedish crime policy discourse

Klara Hermansson
Symbols and emotions in Swedish crime policy discourse

Klara Hermansson

Academic dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology at Stockholm University to be publicly defended on Friday 6 December 2019 at 13.00 in hörsal 8, hus D, Universitetsvägen 10 D.

Abstract
The general public has assumed an increasingly prominent position in crime policy discourse, both in Sweden and internationally. Nowadays crime policy initiatives often acknowledge and respond to the presumed concerns of the general public, for instance through the promise of safety. This thesis analyses how political parties encourage the public to engage emotionally in crime policy matters. Since public involvement is crucial in elections, the election campaigns of political parties have served as the empirical basis of my studies. The three articles included in the thesis together examine the election campaigns in Sweden from 2006 to 2018.

In this body of work, it is assumed that the emotional address of the political parties can be analysed by paying specific attention to the political use of symbols and the discursive organisation of emotions. The thesis illustrates how the welfare context influences the ways in which crime policy is communicated and legitimised in Sweden. Values and ideals associated with the welfare state and with the related notion of a ‘Nordic exceptionalism’ – such as equality, benevolence, social cohesion, trust and safety – permeate the Swedish crime policy discourse. By interpreting these values and ideals as a system of symbols, I stress the need to explore them in relation to the general public and with regards to the emotional appeal these symbols might have.

In my work, I emphasise variation and contradiction regarding emotional tones and I explore the norms circumscribing emotional expressions in crime policy discourse. I have treated emotions as being present in all political communication. This suggests that emotions are not only being encouraged in the ‘hot’ emotional climate, but also in the more emotionally restrained discourse and when politicians allude to the utility of political measures. The results point towards the need to distinguish between emotions and to the exploration of the relationship between them since different emotions are associated with their distinct consequences and they influence how we are encouraged to perceive and feel for different crime policy measures.

The thesis concludes that the political use of symbols and emotions should be understood as having a reassuring function. It is further suggested that symbols and emotions can be used politically both in order to limit and to promote change with regards to Swedish crime policy discourse.

Keywords: Crime policy, Sweden, symbols, emotions, Nordic exceptionalism, welfare state, elections, political parties.

Stockholm 2019
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-175319

ISBN 978-91-7797-871-8
ISSN 1404-1820

Department of Criminology
Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm
SYMBOLS AND EMOTIONS IN SWEDISH CRIME POLICY DISCOURSE

Klara Hermansson
Symbols and emotions in Swedish crime policy discourse

Klara Hermansson
To Hektor and Alba.
Acknowledgements

During these PhD years, criminological literature, at least parts of it, has become a very close friend. In times when I have doubted my own ability, it has been inspiring to turn to other people’s work and it has often made me see things, even my own work, in brighter light.

But even more important are the many smart, funny and kind colleagues and friends who have accompanied me during these years. I am grateful to all of you who have encouraged, critiqued and in other ways inspired me to keep moving forward. First of all, I owe a lot to my supervisors Anita Heber and Felipe Estrada. Besides the endless reading of my drafts and all the hours of discussion, your emotional encouragement and support has been invaluable. You have been supportive when I have been frustrated and you have understood how productive it can be to mobilise anger. But you have also shared my exaltation over things and you have encouraged even my small steps forward. You have let me base this thesis on curiosity and you have trusted, or at least accepted, my choice of direction. Thank you!

There are also several other people who have read and commented on my texts during these years. I am particularly grateful to Henrik Tham, Magnus Hörnqvist, Jens Ljunggren, Aura Kostiainen and Kalle Tryggvesson for valuable suggestions that helped me improve and clarify my thoughts and formulations. Marie Demker, thank you for your sharp and insightful comments during my final seminar. It was helpful and inspiring, in many ways. Colleagues and friends have also reviewed the language of my texts. Thank you Andrea Augustsson, Tea Fredriksson, Julia Sandahl, Cristian Jonsson and Dave Shannon for lending me your language skills!

These years would have been much more challenging without all the laughers and discussions at C6 – during lunch, walks and seminars – and elsewhere. Many people have contributed to this but some of you have been particularly important to me. Nina Törnqvist, Emy Bäcklin, Isabel Scholtz, Monika Karlsson and Julia Sandahl, thank you for welcoming me so warmly when I first started my doctoral studies and for being such fun and important company, virally and in the flesh, during all
these years. Julia, these years would definitely not have been the same without you. Besides Bauman, you have influenced me the most. Nina, on top of your friendship and everything that follows with that, you are also the reason for making me turn towards emotions analytically. Thank you for being so curious and generous and for making me see the potentialities in ‘the emotional’.

To all my beautifully organised doctoral colleagues, thank you for support, fun, and important discussions! Leandro Schclarek Mulinari and Fredrik Sivertsson, you have been there during my whole doctoral period and your friendship and your perspective on things has been so valuable. Lena Roxell, I have very much enjoyed having you ‘next door’. Your humour and unrestrained laughter, your advices when it comes to teaching and your friendly support has meant a lot to me. We never fear the tears! Eva Tiby, you inspired me to think analytically in the first place and you always pushed me to take the next step. Thank you for that!

To my big wonderful family, thank you for all the warm and loud gatherings and for being that safe and caring space that politicians struggle to create. Mum, thank you for teaching me that what you believe is right is also something you feel. This thesis rests upon this understanding, that you have inherent in you. And to my dad, I want to assure you that during my years at the university, so far I have never been tempted to join ‘huvudkrymparligan’. Your ideals when it comes to teaching continue to inspire me. To my oldest and closest friends: During all stages in life, it is comforting and fun to have you by my side.

Cristian, you have been a part in this in so many ways. I’m grateful for so many things… You have helped me in very concrete ways but, more importantly, you’re always ‘on my side’ when I need it the most. Thank you for all the discussions, for your love and immense support and for adding music to my everyday life. To Hektor and Alba, you are my biggest pride. Thank you for teaching me how to balance life, in your (at times) completely unbalanced and amazing ways. I love you.

Klara
Sundbyberg, October 2019
Contents

List of articles ........................................................................................................................................ 3
Introduction .............................................................................................................................................. 5
Which ‘public’? ......................................................................................................................................... 9
What is ‘emotional engagement’? And how is it ‘encouraged’? ................................................................. 9
Swedish crime policy discourse in context ............................................................................................... 11
Punitive trends contextualised ................................................................................................................ 11
The role of political parties in the advancement of crime control ............................................................ 13
The prominent role of the public in crime policy discourse .................................................................... 15
Symbols and emotions in crime policy discourse .................................................................................... 17
Nordic exceptionalism as penal culture .................................................................................................... 20
Theorising symbols and emotions .......................................................................................................... 25
The general public as remote spectators ................................................................................................. 27
The emotional appeal of the form ........................................................................................................... 29
The function(s) of symbols ..................................................................................................................... 30
Normative orders of emotions ............................................................................................................... 32
Methodological considerations .............................................................................................................. 35
The choice to study electoral campaigns ............................................................................................... 35
Material .................................................................................................................................................. 38
The analytical procedure ....................................................................................................................... 41
Operationalisations ............................................................................................................................... 42
Delimitations .......................................................................................................................................... 43
Results: Summary of articles .................................................................................................................. 45
Article I: The role of symbolic politics in exceptional crime policy debate:
A study of the 2014 Swedish general election ...................................................................................... 45
Article II: Public safety in Sweden. A study of a crime policy symbol ................................................... 48
Article III: Emotional expressions in crime policy discourse:
An exploration of the 2018 Moderate and Social Democratic election campaigns in Sweden .............. 51
Discussion ............................................................................................................................................... 55
The reassuring potential of crime policy discourse ............................................................................... 57
The limits and potentialities of change ................................................................................................. 61
Svensk sammanfattning ....................................................................................................................... 65
References ............................................................................................................................................. 71
List of articles


Articles I and II are reprinted with the permission of the journal publishers.
Introduction

Swedish crime policy has been portrayed as being increasingly punitive (Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009; von Hofer and Tham, 2013; Tham, 2018), as well as an exceptional example of humanness and moderation due to the ambitious welfare state (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006; Pratt, 2008a; Pratt and Erikson, 2013). For both of these conflicting narratives, stressing increased punitiveness or alternatively a relatively moderate penal climate, there exists empirical support as well as critique. However, the aim of the present thesis is not to emphasise either of these perspectives. Rather, the interest of my thesis lies in this ambiguous understanding, and in the duality that characterises Swedish crime policy (Barker, 2013, 2017a; Smith and Ugelvik, 2017).

Several researchers have argued that the welfare context influences the ways in which social problems such as crime and insecurity are addressed in Sweden and that also intrusive and harmful practices should be understood in relation to the welfare context (Andersson, 2017; Barker, 2017a, 2018; Smith, 2017). An underpinning assumption of this thesis is that the welfare context, and the pride with which the Nordic model presumably is associated, also influence how crime policy is communicated in Sweden (Barker, 2017a; Loader, 2010; Smith and Ugelvik, 2017). Relatedly, this thesis takes as a point of departure that the welfare context influences how the general public is encouraged to engage emotionally in Swedish crime policy discourse and, towards this end, the symbols and emotions used in the debate. Even though the emotionality of crime policy discourse has, to a certain extent, come to be understood as being related to the retrenchment of the welfare state (Andersson, 2010; Bauman, 2000; Beck, 1986; Garland, 2006; Manning and Holmes, 2014), a number of studies have illustrated how emotions are also being specifically associated with the welfare state (Agustín, 2019; Ljunggren, 2015). These latter studies point towards the fruitfulness of taking the welfare state context into account when studying the political use of symbols and emotions in Swedish crime policy discourse.
In both Sweden and internationally, the general public has become increasingly prominent in crime policy discourse (Andersson, 2002a; Garland, 2006; Jerre, 2013; Young, 1996). Instead of, or at least besides, rehabilitating offenders and reducing crime rates, crime policy initiatives nowadays often acknowledge and respond to the presumed concerns and desires of the general public (Garland, 1990; Pratt, 2019). Drawing on this understanding, this thesis explores how the general public is encouraged to engage emotionally in the political discourse on crime and punishment. To this end, the political uses of symbols and emotions have been analysed. Since public involvement is crucial in elections, the election campaigns of political parties have served as the empirical basis of my studies. The three articles included in the thesis together shed light on election campaigns in Sweden from 2006 to 2018. It is important to analyse election campaigns, not only because the outcome of the election will affect party constellations and the policies that will be implemented, but also due to their potential power to influence wider public understanding (Bacchi, 2009; Strömbäck and Nord, 2008). In line with the discourse-analytical tradition, power is conceptualised here as operating through people’s minds and desires (Bacchi, 2009). This means that, in election campaigns, social problems such as crime and insecurity are being constituted, not simply addressed. Thus, elections are not only (and maybe not even primarily) a democratic opportunity for citizens to hold political parties to account and to influence the distribution of power between the political parties. These practices can also be understood as being intensified political struggles over meaning and as an exercise of power (Bacchi, 2009). Although this thesis analyses how political parties encourage the public to engage emotionally in crime policy matters, this practice is also assumed to illuminate a broader context: the penal culture in Sweden.

This thesis addresses symbols and emotions in the discourse on crime and punishment. In the criminological tradition, the symbolic use of crime policy and the emotional tone of crime policy discourse has predominantly been understood by being contrasted with an assumed rational response to crime (see Karstedt, 2011 and Loader, 2011 for a similar argument). Furthermore, symbols and emotions relating to crime and punishment are often regarded with suspicion since they are assumed to be closely linked to the punitive trends and the alarmist discourse witnessed in many Western societies (Garland, 2006; de Haan
and Loader, 2002; Karstedt, Loader and Strang, 2011; Lynch, 2006; Pratt, 2000, 2007; Pratt et al., 2005; Tham, 2018). Concepts such as ‘populist punitiveness’ (Bottoms, 1995) and ‘penal populism’ (Pratt, 2007) have been used to illustrate how politicians respond to the presumed anger and insecurities of the general public, or at least specific segments of this public, through increased judicial control. Penal populism, like populism in general (Mazzoleni, Stewart and Horsfield, 2003; Cossarini and Vallespín, 2019), is characterised by highly emotive messages and, according to some accounts, is assumed to threaten democracy in the sense that it threatens to erode the norms associated with the criminal justice system (Pratt, 2019).

However, emotions can also be understood as a legitimate and unavoidable part of politics in general – and crime policy in particular (Clarke, Hoggett and Thompson, 2006; Karstedt, 2006, 2011; Loader, 2011). Additionally, emotions can be interpreted as being just as important in directing our perceptions away from punitive attitudes as they are for the reinforcement of such attitudes. In order to capture these patterns, a distinction must be made between different emotions and, moreover, the norms that circumscribe the ‘emotional discourse’ on crime and punishment must be analysed (Barbalet, 2001; Clark, 1987; Rosenwein, 2002, 2010).

The overarching aim of the present thesis is to analyse how the general public is encouraged to engage emotionally in crime policy discourse. More specifically, the analysis focuses on how political parties, through their election campaigns, encourage the general public to engage emotionally in crime policy matters. Drawing on Bacchi (1999, 2009), who assumes that discourse has discursive and subjectification effects, I have analysed how emotional subjects are constituted in Swedish crime policy discourse, with a particular focus on how the implied audience, or the public, is constituted as emotional subjects. I also analyse how political solutions are constituted in the discourse and how the public is encouraged to perceive and feel about these solutions. In the thesis, it is assumed that this emotional address can be analysed by paying specific attention to the political use of symbols and the discursive organisation of emotions. In order to achieve the overarching aim, the following questions have been posed in relation to the material:
1. How is crime policy communicated and legitimised in Sweden?
2. How are symbols and emotions used in crime policy discourse and which are their functions?

The three articles included in the thesis have touched upon these questions in different ways. In the first article, the form of the political statements and their level of abstraction guide the analysis. The symbolic statements are here defined as prescriptive and abstract statements, rendering them closely related to justifications. In the second article, the Swedish concept of safety (trygghet) is treated as a main legitimiser of Swedish crime policy and the article explores the symbolic potential of this concept. In both these articles, symbolic statements and symbols are assumed to have the potential of engendering an emotional response from the general public. However, what is analysed is how political parties encourage this emotional response from the public, not the actual responses from the public. In the third article, the question of how crime policy is communicated and legitimised is addressed by analysing emotions in political discourse more directly. The ways in which emotions are articulated and manifested by the political parties is interpreted as a reflection and reproduction of a normative order of emotions. The question of potential functions of the political use of symbols and emotions is addressed in all three articles and the ways in which symbols and emotions offer reassurance are discussed. The concluding discussion also address the question of change; whether symbols and emotions always reproduce the established social order or if they also can be used to challenge established ways of thinking about crime policy matters.

With the aim of the thesis being to analyse how the general public is encouraged to engage emotionally in crime policy discourse, a few words on some of the central concepts are necessary. The following paragraphs are intended to give the reader an understanding of how these concepts are used within this body of work.
Which ‘public’?

While ‘the public’ can be understood as a potent symbol, an abstract concept with far-reaching connotations, it is used in the present thesis in order to refer to the intended (Garland, 1990:264) or implied (Rimmon-Kenan, 1989:87) audience in the political parties’ election campaigns. The public is thus a political construct. In the election campaigns of the political parties, we are encouraged to engage emotionally in certain ways, and in this practice specific subjects are constituted (Bacchi, 2009). Thus, when I refer to ‘the public’, it is the constituting of this public that I am interested in.

I use the concepts ‘the general public’ and ‘the public’ in singular, even though the social differentiation of most societies would suggest that we cannot talk about one type of public. Rather, as Garland (1990) points out, the general public is a rather divided audience and different segments of society perceive and respond to political messages in a variety of ways (see Edelman, 1964, Jerre, 2013 and Winter, 2019 for a more thorough discussion on this).

What is ‘emotional engagement’? And how is it ‘encouraged’?

The concept of ‘engagement’ carries a positive undertone since it is associated with democratic participation in a broad sense (Dahlgren, 2015). In this thesis, the encouragement of emotional engagement is used in order to describe 1) how the implied public is constituted as emotional subjects in the text (Bacchi, 2009) and 2) how emotions are made accessible, i.e. confirmed and legitimised, by being articulated, manifested and described (Ljunggren, 2015). Thus, when I write about how the general public is encouraged to engage emotionally in the discourse, I make no presumptions about the democratic character of this emotional engagement.
Swedish crime policy discourse in context

For the purpose of this thesis, a number of patterns established in crime policy research are relevant to the understanding of Swedish crime policy. In the following section, I initially address the punitive turn and the role of political parties in relation to this punitive development. Since my work draws on previous research that suggests that ‘the public’ has become increasingly important in the development of crime policy initiatives, I address this topic in a separate section. Thereafter, previous research on symbols and emotions in crime policy is discussed. Lastly, contemporary discussions on the role of ‘Nordic exceptionalism’ are reviewed. I suggest that this concept, and the related welfare context, influence the ways in which the Swedish public is encouraged to understand and feel about crime policy matters.

Punitive trends contextualised

Similar to other Western countries, the public debate in Sweden on crime and crime control has intensified since the 1960s (Andersson and Nilsson, 2017; Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009; von Hofer and Tham, 2013; Pollack, 2001; Tham, 2018). Relatedly, research has indicated that political parties increasingly address crime and fear of crime in order to increase their public support (Hope and Sparks, 2000; Oliver and Marion, 2008; Shammas, 2016; Tham, 2018). This intensified public debate has also been accompanied by a shift in the way these issues are being framed in public debate, as well as in the academic context. The shift from ‘penal welfarism’ to a ‘culture of control’ described by Garland (2006), and the different understandings of crime that characterised ‘the age of Roosevelt’ and ‘the age of Reagan’ according to Hagan (2010), shed light on these changes in Sweden (Andersson, 2002a; Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009; Estrada, Pettersson and Shannon, 2012).

Besides an increased political preoccupation with crime, late modern crime policy in Western societies has also been described as being characterised by a declining reliance on the ideal of rehabilitation and an increased commitment to prison and other forms of control as measures of dealing with crime (Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009; Estrada,
Although the trend of mass incarceration witnessed in the United States has no European counterpart (Pratt, 2011; Wacquant, 2002), in recent decades Sweden has also experienced a penal expansion (Tham, 2018). Similar to other Western countries, the enhancement of penalties has mainly been directed towards drug and violent offences, which is reflected in prison statistics (von Hofer and Tham, 2013; Tham, 2018). However, as Wacquant (2001) has argued, the punitive turn in Europe predominantly manifests itself in an expansion of the police, rather than in a dramatic increase in incarceration rates.

Sweden has also experienced an individualised political discourse on crime and punishment in which the needs of and sympathies for the crime victim are the guiding principles (Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2011; Heber, 2014). These needs and sympathies are further contrasted to those of the offender, and an image of the justice system as a zero-sum game or a pie that must be shared between the victim and the offender is prominent in the debate (Tonry, 2004; Tham, 2011). The emergence of the victim in crime policy discourse has been interpreted as a result of transitions in our moral landscape (Boutellier, 2004) in which the ‘offender’ and the ‘victim’ have come to represent unambiguous moral positions in our presumably morally divided world (Boutellier, 2004; Christie, 2001).

In line with international trends (Crawford, 2002; Garland, 2006; Hope and Sparks, 2000; Zedner, 2000), Swedish crime policy has been described as being increasingly preoccupied with order and security (Flyghed, 2005; Hörnqvist, 2003). A logic based on risk has permeated the field of crime control, which has resulted in the targeting of risk groups, risk behaviours and risk areas, and the connection between law and crime control has consequently weakened. As a consequence, the scope of behaviours and situations of penal concern have broadened (Hörnqvist, 2003; Feeley and Simon, 1992; O’Malley, 1992). Relatedly, fear of crime and public safety has also manifested as a key aspect of the crime policy debate in Sweden (Andersson, 2010; Heber, 2011; Sahlin, 2010; Sahlin Lilja, 2018). Several researchers have illustrated how the governing of insecurity and fear has resulted in the exclusion of certain groups and increased penal control (Bauman, 2000; Boutellier, 2004; Fanghanel, 2016; Hope and Sparks, 2000; Sahlin, 2010; Zedner, 2000). Whereas the governing of risk and insecurity is often analysed as a non-emotive practice, based on
calculation and contrasted with the merely expressive side of crime policy discourse, some researchers have highlighted the emotional aspects of this risk-based discourse (Douglas, 1992; Lynch, 2006; Sparks, 2001). In relation to the Swedish context, the Swedish concept of safety\(^1\) can be interpreted as relating to the discourse of risk. In the present thesis, however, it is analysed in terms of its symbolic and emotional potential.

The role of political parties in the advancement of crime control

The punitive turn in Western societies has been linked to political economy and an emerging neo-liberal order (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006; Wacquant, 2014), as well as to a postmodern culture in which the aesthetics of the crime victim play a crucial role (Bauman, 2005; Boutellier, 2004; Mehozay, 2018). In addition, specific actors, such as political parties, have played their part in putting issues of crime and crime control on the agenda and in pursuing this law and order politics (Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009; Lindgren, 2002; Tham, 2018). Since the 1970s, crime policy has gained increased party-political attention in the Swedish Parliament (Holmgren and Pamp, 2009; Victor, 1995) and the general election in 1973 was the first Swedish general election in which crime was a central issue (Tham, 2018). Later, the general election of 1991 has been described as the most evident example in Sweden of a law and order election. However, the general election of 2018 was also characterised by a particularly significant focus on these issues (Martinsson and Andersson, 2019; Swedish radio, 2017), which article III in the present thesis addresses.

These law and order politics have traditionally been interpreted as a conservative project (Hagan, 2010; O’Malley, 1999). In Sweden, the liberal conservative Moderate party has indeed pursued these issues most frequently (Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009; Lenke, 2007; Tham, 2001, 2018) and the party also enjoys a high level of trust in these issues (Novus, 2018). Demker and Duus-Otterström (2009) have illustrated that the Moderates had already started addressing crime policy in the late 1960s. This party was also the first to

\(^1\) In Swedish, the concept of *trygghet* can be translated as safety as well as security. Its antonym, *otrygghet*, is best translated as insecurity. Similar to Sahlin (2007:283) I have translated *trygghet/otrygghet* as safety/insecurity. Barker (2018:9), on the other hand, uses the concept ‘social security’ to capture the importance of economic and social dimensions. Article II discusses the Swedish concept of safety (*trygghet*) and its connotations in greater dept.
move towards a victim-centred approach regarding these matters, and the authors suggest that the ‘crime victim discourse’ functioned as a window of opportunity for the Moderates in the 1980s (Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009:289). Thus, framing the advancement of control as a way of protecting victims of crime was a Moderate initiative, even though this development also has structurally embedded roots (Bauman, 2000; Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009; Tham, 2018). In the current crime policy discourse in Sweden, the political debate on crime victims and their needs has been portrayed as being characterised by political consensus and all political parties frame victims of crime as being in need of support and care (Heber, 2014; Tham, 2018).

Internationally as well as in Sweden, research has shown how Social Democratic parties have moved closer to what may be described as a traditional conservative approach to crime policy issues (Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009; Denney, 2008; Estrada, 2004; Lenke, 2007; Shammas, 2016; Newburn and Jones, 2007; O’Malley, 1999; Tham, 2001). In Sweden, the Social Democratic Party started to address crime in the 1970s, but primarily as one of many potential harms resulting from inequality (Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009). In the 1990s, the Social Democratic Party turned towards a more control-oriented crime policy. This Social Democratic turn has also been related to the increased attention given to safety within crime policy discourse (Andersson, 2010; Brownlee, 1998; Denney, 2008; Wennström, 2014). It has been argued that ‘safety’ has enabled Social Democratic parties (in the UK and in Sweden, for instance) to approach crime policy matters by linking these issues to traditional welfare politics while, in practice, pursuing a new form of crime policy based on a logic of control (Andersson, 2010; Denney, 2008).

More recently, political parties on the far right, such as the Sweden Democrats, have also profiled themselves as ‘law and order parties’. The Sweden Democrats entered Swedish Parliament in 2010 and, similar to other radical right parties, the Sweden Democrats explicitly relates crime to migration, thus portraying crime as being culturally alien to Western culture (Ahmed, 2004; Elgenius and Rydgren, 2017).
Research on the development of Swedish crime policy that also addresses the political parties has concluded that ideals associated with the welfare state, such as rehabilitation and universal social policies, have diminished in importance for most political parties (Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009; Tham, 2018). In this thesis, however, it is argued that the welfare context still influences the ways in which crime and crime control is debated by the political parties and, consequently, how the public is encouraged to engage in these issues. This argument will be developed later in this text, but first, a few words on the increasing prominence of the public in Western crime policy discourse.

The prominent role of the public in crime policy discourse

The general public has become a central legitimising referent in crime policy discourse, both explicitly and implicitly. Firstly, politicians often explicitly refer to the attitudes and preferences of the general public when presenting crime policy initiatives and when proposing changes to the penal code (Andersson, 2002a; Garland, 2006; Jerre, 2013; Pratt et al., 2005). This has been interpreted as relating to a development in which punishment is increasingly being legitimised through a retributive logic instead of consequentialist arguments as a reaction to the declining confidence in rehabilitation (Tham, 2018).

In the political debate, it is often assumed that the general public wants harsher punishment (Jerre, 2013). Even though research in both Sweden and internationally has shown that this is an over-simplistic and, to some extent, even inaccurate assumption (Balvig et al., 2015; Jerre, 2013), these are nonetheless some of the premises under which the political debate is being conducted. Demker and Duus-Otterström (2007) have argued that public interest in crime and punishment in Sweden is rather low. Yet opinion polls have illustrated how this interest varies between election years, and 2018’s general election was distinguished by a comparatively large public interest in these issues (Martinsson and Andersson, 2019). This public interest can, however, be interpreted as being a result of the intense political debate on crime and punishment. Beckett (1997) has illustrated that political crime policy initiatives

---

2 This assumption is being contested. Tonry (2011) argues that retribution has not replaced the consequentialist rationale.
correlate with the public’s perceptions and concerns about crime and she further stresses that politicians appear to have a great potential to influence the perceptions of the general public. Additionally, Gray et al. (2018) show that political discourse on crime has long-term consequences on people’s worries.

Secondly, the general public is also more implicitly present in the political discourse on crime and punishment. Crime policy initiatives have been analysed as targeting the general public, encouraging them to act as ‘prudent citizens’ (Garland, 2006; O’Malley, 1992; Rose, 2000) and making them responsible for preventing crime and insecurity at the local level (Andersson, 2002a, 2010; Hönnqvist, 2001; Sahlin, 2010; Wahlgren, 2014). Crime policies are also increasingly responding to the presumed desires and anxieties of the public (Andersson, 2010; Bauman, 2000; Boutellier, 2004; Lee, 2007; Lynch, 2006; Pratt and Clark, 2005). It appears to have become increasingly important for politicians to present their crime policy in a way that corresponds with the sentiments of the population, or at least particular segments of the population (Pratt, 2007). Similar to other Western countries, the general public in Sweden is being addressed as potential crime victims (Andersson, 2002a; Young, 1996) and we are increasingly encouraged to identify and sympathise with crime victims (Christie, 2001; Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2011; Heber, 2011; Mehozay, 2018). The increased political preoccupation with public safety and feelings of insecurity and fear potentially caused by crime has further strengthened the connection between crime policy and the general public (Andersson, 2010; Lee, 2007; Sahlin Lilja, 2018). As stated above, this should not merely be interpreted as being a responding practice. Instead, politicians are constituting ‘the public’ in certain ways in the discourse on crime and punishment. In order to evoke certain kinds of emotions or ‘impress the audience’, as Manning (2001:317) puts it, politicians may turn to symbols.
Symbols and emotions in crime policy discourse

Symbolic and emotional political responses to crime are often considered to be closely linked to an alarmist discourse, as well as to punitive crime policy initiatives (Garland, 2006; de Haan and Loader, 2002; Karstedt, Loader and Strang, 2011; Lynch, 2006; Pratt, 2000, 2007; Pratt et al., 2005; Tham, 2018). David Garland’s (2006) line of thought has been highly influential. Garland grapples with the limits of the power of the nation state with regards to controlling the high volumes of crime that characterise late modern societies. He contrasts ‘adaptive’ responses to crime with ‘non-adaptive’ responses – these latter being seen as emotional in character and symbolically dense. Tonry (2004) scrutinises some of the crime policies of England and Wales that were launched in the early 2000s, describing them as schizophrenic, since the advocacy of evidence-based policies coexists with a preoccupation with media imagery. Similarly, researchers such as O’Malley (1999) and Simon (1995) have portrayed the development of crime policies in Western societies over the past decades as being ‘contradictory’, with evidence-based policies and risk management coexisting alongside ‘penal populism’ and an emotional political discourse. Whereas these two ‘strains’ (managerialism and emotive populism) are assumed to be interrelated in the sense that both have presumably prompted an increased preoccupation with public order and control (Andersson, 2002a; Garland, 2006; Pratt, 2019), these accounts rest upon a division made between reason and emotion, which separates these accounts from the point of departure of this thesis.

Symbols and emotions have been associated with an aesthetic and spectacle-oriented form of politics (Bauman, 2005; Manning, 2001; Mehozay, 2018) and, as audience, we are encouraged to feel and appreciate rather than to reflect and understand. Manning (2001) refers to the political portrayal of zero-tolerance policing as a morality play, in which the positions of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ are bifurcated and reinforced. Also, more generally, law and order discourses have been interpreted as a way of ‘legitimately’ stigmatising and censuring certain groups in society, often racialized men or youths (Alexander, 2010; Hall et al., 1978). Prison, Alexander (2010) argues, defines what it means to be black in the United States and it produces racial stigma by portraying the black population as non-deserving of rights and
it reproduces hierarchies. Hence, crime itself can be understood as a symbol, or a legitimising referent, through which we are encouraged to understand people as well as social phenomenon of various kinds.

In crime policy discourse, the public is often conceptualised as being either impatient, vindictive and angry (Murphy, 2000; Pratt, 2007), or worried and therefore vulnerable (Furedi, 2005; Lee, 2007; Walklate, 2011). These emotive states are assumed to cultivate a desire for predictability and control and an advocacy for punitive political responses (Bauman, 2000; Boutellier, 2004; Fanghanel, 2016). Thus, as a politician, it makes sense to constitute the public as fearful, for instance, and then offer a political solution in terms of increased control. Baker and Roberts (2005) argue that politicians in Western societies have come to exploit the public’s impatience and concerns about crime and that this is achieved through the use of internationally viable symbols. Referring to Waters (2001), they reason that since symbols seek to appeal to human fundamentals, they can easily be transported temporarily and spatially, and can claim universal significance (Baker and Roberts, 2005:123). In line with this argumentation, ‘slogans’ and internationally current crime policies such as ‘zero-tolerance policing’ (Manning, 2001; Newburn and Jones, 2007; Wacquant, 2014), ‘three-strikes laws’ or ‘mandatory minimum laws’ (Jones and Newburn, 2006; Tonry, 2004), as well as the spread of ‘boot camps’ across US states (Simon, 1995), have been analysed in terms of their symbolic potential, what they signal to the general public. Newburn and Jones (2007) argue that the concept of ‘zero tolerance’ became popular and works effectively as a symbol since it conveys a simple message, yet is flexible in its actual meaning (Newburn and Jones 2007: 234). The concept has further been associated with a successful ‘meta-narrative’, in this case, ‘the miracle’ of the New York crime drop.

Lynch (2000a) adopts a different approach when she explores the symbolic imagery of the electric chair in the United States. She analyses how the electric chair is portrayed online, both by death penalty supporters and opponents, and also by websites whose main goal is to entertain. Lynch illustrates that although the electric chair is gradually being withdrawn in the United States as a means of execution, its symbolic currency is still strong. According
to Lynch, the electric chair symbolises fairness and justice, although the visible corporal destruction also appears to offer amusement and, in this, it minimises the inhumaneness of the act. Lynch’s work on the electric chair is another example of a punitive practice being explored through the lens of symbolism.

Baker and Roberts (2005:133) define a number of characteristics of penal policies which have been successfully exported across jurisdictions. Besides their symbolic potential, they are also defined by being contrasted with substance and expertise. Policies which are unlikely to reduce crime have often been interpreted as symbolic (Andersson and Nilsson 2017; Edelman, 2001; Flyghed, 2002; Garland, 2006). Additionally, a distinction between substantial discourse on the one hand and symbolic and emotional discourse on the other is often made, and it is assumed that politicians predominantly attempt to attract attention to the latter since it presumably carries electoral benefits (Marion and Farmer, 2003; Oliver and Marion, 2008). Thus, the frequent political use of a concept or a slogan can, in itself, be seen as indicatory of its symbolic potential.

Symbolically successful policies have also been analysed with regards to variation in implementation and substantial outcome (Jones and Newburn, 2006). Here, symbolism and substance are also separated analytically, and the substantial outcome is analysed with reference to, for instance, sentencing practices. Jones and Newburn show that mandatory minimum sentencing (‘two-strikes’ and ‘three-strikes’ laws) has had diverse outcomes in the different US states and a comparison between the implementation of these kinds of laws in the US and the UK also reveals significant differences in terms of the penal practices and outcomes related to them (Jones and Newburn, 2006). Such results indicate that symbols and substance can be fruitfully separated and that similar kinds of symbolism can result in diverse substantial outcomes. Hence, the reverse might also be true – that similar substantial outcomes might be legitimised through different kinds of symbolism. As Alexander (2010) argues in relation to the US context, the justification for discrimination against black men has changed throughout history, but the outcome remains the same: black men in the United States, to a very large extent, are not given their full rights as citizens.
The elusive and flexible character of symbols, stressed by Baker and Roberts (2005), is central to the way I interpret symbols in this thesis. However, instead of relating symbols to ‘human fundamentals’, I stress the importance of understanding crime policy symbols in relation to the society in which they are being used. Through the discourse on crime, images of moral superiority are also constructed. Hall et al. (1978:140), for instance, illustrate that the racialized discourse on ‘muggers’ also produced images about ‘Englishness’. English superiority was constructed, the authors argue, through the presumed English core values, all of which are depicted to be in stark contrast to crime. In relation to the Swedish context, research has similarly shown how drugs have been portrayed as being inherently alien to Swedish society (Tham, 1992) and, additionally, that ‘Swedishness’ has also been constructed through political initiatives aimed at handling the drug problem through different kinds of treatment programmes (Edman, 2013). In the following section, the Swedish context will be discussed in greater depth. The idea of a ‘Nordic exceptionalism’ is discussed and it is suggested that this idea, and the related welfare context, influence the ways in which the public is encouraged to understand and feel about crime policy matters and, relatedly, the political use of symbols and emotions in Swedish crime policy discourse.

Nordic exceptionalism as penal culture

Many researchers have attempted to explain variations between countries in prison rates and other penal practices by linking these practices to political economy (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006; Wacquant, 2014). In these comparisons, Sweden and the other Nordic countries form a joint cluster, characterised by high expenditure on public welfare and lenient penal policies (often exemplified by prison statistics) (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006; Gallo and Kim, 2016; von Hofer, 2005; Lappi-Seppälä, 2012). Lappi-Seppälä (2012) has specified this relationship, suggesting two alternative links between a strong welfare state and low prison rates. Firstly, he argues, ambitious welfare states provide concrete alternatives to imprisonment in order to handle social problems such as crime. In addition, the social and economic equality promoted by an expanded welfare state presumably

---

3 Pratt (2008a) coined the term ‘Scandinavian exceptionalism’. However, the argument has been extended to all Nordic countries and so has the critique.
prevents fear and minimises punitive projections. Furthermore, according to Lappi-Seppälä, the universal social policies that distinguish the Nordic welfare states, targeting the entire population rather than particular ‘problem groups’, carry a moral logic that promotes trust and prevents suspicion (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012).

The idea of a Scandinavian, or Nordic, exceptionalism is based on the assumption that the welfare states in these countries, often referred to as the Nordic model (Ugelvik, 2013), have institutionalised central cultural values which, in turn, have protected these countries from the punitive trends experienced in other Western societies (Pratt, 2008a, 2008b; Pratt and Eriksson, 2013). Waggoner (2015) argues that a discourse that refers to values associated with the Nordic welfare states, such as trust and inclusiveness, might serve to limit repressive responses during times of national crisis. Encouraging citizens to overcome their fears rather than promoting this emotion also has a limiting effect on punitive responses, according to Waggoner (see also Wettergren, 2013).

However, the idea that the characteristics associated with the Nordic welfare states have created an exceptionally benevolent penal culture in the Nordic counties has been critiqued (Andersson, 2017; Barker, 2013, 2017a; Reiter, Sexton and Sumner, 2018; Smith, 2012, 2017, Smith and Ugelvik, 2017; Ugelvik and Dullum, 2012; Ugelvik, 2013). Critics of the Nordic exceptionalism thesis have depicted a variety of punitive traits, including both controlling practices and penal logics, as being inherent traits of the Nordic welfare states, instead of viewing them as being a result of neo-liberalism or globalisation (Andersson, 2017; Barker, 2013, 2017a; 2018; Smith, 2017). For instance, Barker (2013) emphasises that the Nordic welfare states harbour an interventionist culture (see also Andersson, 2017 for a similar argument) and that these states fail to protect individual rights. In an analysis of pre-trial solitary confinement in the Nordic countries, Smith (2012, 2017) similarly illustrates that far-reaching social control is also a part of these strong welfare states. According to Barker (2013), individual freedom is presumably guaranteed through the state, rather than being seen as freedom from the state. Due to the high levels of ‘welfare ambitiousness’ (Rugkåsa, 2011, referred to in Smith and Ugelvik, 2017:8) that characterises the Nordic countries, the relationship between the state and citizens is understood as being
relatively conflict-free and the interest of individuals are assumed to coincide with the aims of the welfare state (Schoultz, 2014). Smith and Ugelvik (2017) suggest that since we are taught to trust the benevolence of the welfare state, it might be harder to identify the repressive and harmful sides of these states.

Several researchers have argued that welfare benefits and the presumed humaneness of the penal system do not apply to everyone, thus questioning the universal logic of the welfare state (Aas, 2014; Gallo and Kim, 2016; Todd-Kvam, 2019; Ugelvik, 2013). The interventionist and punitive characteristics of the welfare state predominantly affect vulnerable groups such as pre-trial detainees (Smith, 2012, 2017), drug users (Andersson, 2017) and foreign nationals (Aas, 2014; Barker, 2013, 2018; Schoultz, 2014; Todd-Kvam, 2019; Ugelvik, 2013). Whether these vulnerable groups are regarded as being more affected in these Nordic societies or whether the critique ‘merely’ extends to the fact that not all groups benefit from Nordic ‘leniency’ to an equal extent, varies. Aas (2014) uses the concept of ‘abnormal justice’, coined by Fraser (2008), to describe how Norway separates nationals from non-nationals in its penal practices and how the values associated with Nordic exceptionalism and the rehabilitation-centred welfare state predominantly benefit nationals, whereas non-nationals are increasingly subjected to this abnormal justice, which includes deportation and territorial exclusion. In a similar vein, Todd-Kvam (2019) analyses the crime policy discourse in Norway, illustrating that citizens and non-citizens are separated discursively and that the discourse of rehabilitation and humanism applies to citizens, whereas non-citizens are depicted as being undeserving of these ‘welfare treats’. Others have more explicitly stressed the relativity of frustration and pain, illustrating that the Nordic welfare states are associated with their own forms of frustrations and pains and also pointing towards the need to relate these frustrations and pains to the context, to the society in which these frustrations and pains are experienced (Hörnqvist, 2016; Shammas, 2014; Smith, 2012).

The idea of a Nordic exceptionalism, as well as values associated with the welfare state, such as rehabilitation, have also been interpreted as being rhetorical tools (Lynch, 2000b; Reiter, Sexton and Sumner, 2018). Nilsson (2012) argues that ‘Nordic exceptionalism’ is
primarily an image that has been successfully exported abroad, and that this image functions as a contrasting ideal type when criticizing US penal policy. An ongoing research project similarly explores the notion of ‘Nordic exceptionalism’, as well as ‘Nordicity’ more generally, as a branding phenomenon (Browning, 2007). The fact that rehabilitation serves as a rhetorical tool (also in the US context), while simultaneously being subjugated to coercive control measures (Lynch, 2000b), indicates that traditional welfare ideals still function as potent images – ideals through which we are encouraged to understand and interpret crime policy practices. While Lynch’s analysis is based on parole practices in California, her conclusions also elucidate the Swedish case. Historically, the ideal of rehabilitation has played a particularly prominent role in Sweden and the other Nordic countries (Smith and Ugelvik, 2017) and this ideal is still highly valued by Swedish citizens (Jerre, 2013). Gallo and Elias (2016) illustrate this tendency in their comparison of the crime victim’s movements in Sweden and in the United States. Whereas the crime victims’ movement in the United States is intertwined with a rhetoric of law and order, the Swedish movement rests on traditional welfare ideals, emphasising support and treatment. The authors conclude that these differences can, at least partially, be attributed to the different socio-cultural identities of the two countries (Gallo and Elias, 2016). Related to the present thesis, this indicates that national self-images potentially influence the way in which crime control is legitimised and understood. This self-image also possibly influences how the political parties encourage the general public to engage emotionally when debating crime policy issues.

Even critics of the Nordic exceptionalism thesis appear to agree that the welfare state constitutes part of a positive self-image of these countries. Although penal practices in these countries are not inherently humane and benign, the values associated with the welfare state as well as the notion of Nordic exceptionalism appear, at least partially, to influence the logic upon which these penal practices rest (Barker, 2017a; Hörnqvist, 2016; Smith and

---

4 For project description, see link below: https://www.uio.no/english/research/strategic-research-areas/nordic/research/research-groups/nordic-branding/ (Retrieved 29 October 2019)

5 Jones and Newburn (2006) also stress the differences between the USA and the UK in the rhetorical use of individual crime victims and how these differences possibly influence these countries.
Ugelvik, 2017). For instance, previous research has illustrated how the Swedish welfare state context influences the ways in which politicians respond to and understand various social problems, such as the riots that took place on the outskirts of Stockholm (Hörnqvist, 2016) and EU citizens, mainly Roma, begging on the streets (Barker, 2017a). While stressing diversity in the interpretations of the Husby riots in 2013 – both among the residents of Husby and between the political parties in Parliament – Hörnqvist (2016) illustrates how a social interpretation of the riots is widely shared. The riots are condemned as being morally wrong, both by residents and by politicians. However, at least temporary legitimacy is ascribed to the riots by interpreting them as being related to a lack of resources that the state, according to the welfare contract, should provide for its citizens (Hörnqvist, 2016).

Similarly, Barker (2017a) explores the reasoning and political arguments behind a Swedish reform package introduced in 2015 that addresses begging. Barker proposes the term ‘benevolent violence’ to capture situations in which the ameliorative logic of the welfare state is upheld through coercive means or when benevolent practices have violent outcomes. In the case of the Roma population begging on the streets, their vulnerability and poor living conditions are emphasised and, although harmful and violent in their consequences, measures are taken with the explicit aim of upholding their dignity and protecting them from exploitation. Similar to Barker’s argumentation, Smith and Ugelvik (2017) suggest that interventions such as punishment tend to be interpreted as benevolent when they are ‘justified by the same core values that support the welfare state in general’ (Smith and Ugelvik, 2017:513).

The ways in which social problems and control practices are understood and legitimised in Sweden shed light on the symbolic dimension of Swedish crime policy discourse and on how the general public is encouraged to engage emotionally in the debate. The present thesis draws on the above-reviewed body of research and relates it to Swedish election campaigns. By interpreting the notion of ‘Nordic exceptionalism’ and values associated with the welfare state as a system of symbols, the thesis emphasises the need to explore these values in relation to the general public and with regards to the emotional appeal these values and ideals might have.
Theorising symbols and emotions

Condensation symbols evoke the emotions associated with the situation. They condense into one symbolic event, sign, or act patriotic pride, anxieties, remembrances of past glories or humiliations, promises of future greatness; some of these or all of them.

(Edelman, 1964:6, with reference to Sapir, 1934)

In my thesis, I address symbols and emotions in the discourse on crime and punishment that takes place prior to Swedish general elections. The interest of emotions, most clearly pursued in article III, is the result of the definition of symbols used in the thesis. In the first article, the form of the statements and their level of abstraction guide the analysis (Edelman, 1964). Prescriptive and abstract statements are defined as symbolic, rendering them closely related to justifications (Canton, 2015). In the second article, the Swedish concept of safety (trygghet) is analysed using Edelman’s (1964) definition of condensation symbols (quoted above). In both these articles, symbolic statements and symbols are defined in terms of abstraction, and as having the potential to engender an emotional response from the general public. The third article addresses emotions in political discourse more directly. As in the two previous articles, it is assumed that election campaigns have the potential to engage the public emotionally, of evoking different emotions. In article III, this process is explored by analysing the political articulation and manifestation of emotions (Katriel, 2015) and these emotional expressions are interpreted as a reflection and reproduction of the prevailing ‘emotional community’ (Rosenwein, 2002, 2010).

The following section will discuss different ways of conceptualizing symbols and how symbols relate to emotions. The aim of this theoretical section is to contextualise the concepts adopted in the thesis and to discuss how the political use of symbols and emotions can be understood. While the definition of condensation symbols has explicitly influenced my work, Edelman’s discussion on myths (an accumulation of symbols according to Scheingold, 1995), rites and images has also been employed, especially in the discussion on
the potential functions of symbols. According to Edelman (2001), images refer to icons, indices and also to symbols which he defines as ‘abstract terms directing the mind to see the potentialities in a situation’ (Edelman, 2001:13).

Several scholars have stressed that punishment itself has a powerful communicative potential, symbolically imposing censure as well as actual sanctions (Barker, 2017b; Duff, 2001; Durkheim, 1964; Zedner, 2016). According to Zedner (2016), punishment should be understood as a deliberately harmful practice, with the very aim of inflicting pain. This means that the practices of criminal justice, to a larger extent than other policy areas, require justification. However, the way in which these justifications are communicated might vary, depending on country and context. As Barker (2017a) notes, the expansion of penal power in Sweden is not communicated as a traditional law and order campaign. The discourse on crime and punishment and, more specifically, the political use of symbols and emotions in crime policy discourse, I argue, can effectively shed light on these justifications. Whereas Antony Duff (2001, see also Bülow, 2014) has depicted punishment as a form of moral communication with the offender (or rather to the offender according to Schinkel, 2014), in line with Durkheim (1964), election campaigns could be interpreted as a form of moral, or emotion-evocative communication with the general public (Karstedt, 2002, 2006; Katriel, 2015).

Drawing on Edelman (1964, 2001) and Bacchi (1999, 2009), this thesis is interested in the political struggle over meaning, interpreting this struggle in line with discourse analyses as an exercise of power. Edelman (1977) argues that political parties, or officials, have a great potential to shape opinions and emotions. Similarly, and in line with the Foucauldian notion of governmentality, Bacchi stresses that power operates through people’s minds and desires (Bacchi, 2009:38; Foucault, 2003). Thus, the symbolic dimension of political acts plays an important role. Edelman (1971) argues that people’s language, thoughts, emotions and identities are closely interrelated. He further suggests that symbols are reassuring since they simplify the complex and signal how we should perceive and feel about, for instance, political proposals (Edelman, 1971). This, in turn, means that other interpretations are neglected or concealed.
However, no assumption is made about intentionality in the writings of Edelman and Bacchi. Although the messages of the political parties in their election campaigns are highly strategic and planned, the symbolism and emotions they make use of in their election campaigns form part of the culture and the normative order of a specific society. Culture, understood here as these frameworks of meaning (Garland, 1990:193), encompasses, or forms part of, political discourse. Thus, election campaigns should be understood as both reflecting and reproducing certain mentalities and emotions and rendering other ways of thinking and feeling peripheral (Bacchi, 2009; Garland, 1990; Rosenwein, 2010). In line with both Edelman and Bacchi, opinions, values, perceptions and emotions are interpreted as being a result of social interaction and are therefore collective in nature. Similarly, the sociology of emotions conceptualises emotions as socially situated and constitutive in that different emotions are associated with different meanings and, therefore, could have distinct effects (Barbalet, 2001; Wettergren, 2013).

The general public as remote spectators

For most men most of the time politics is a series of pictures in the mind, placed there by television news, newspapers, magazines, and discussions. The pictures create a moving panorama taking place in a world the mass public never quite touches, yet one its members come to fear or cheer, often with passion and sometimes with action [...] Politics is for most of us a passing parade of abstract symbols, yet a parade which our experience teaches us to be a benevolent or malevolent force.

(Edelman, 1964:5).

In his analysis of the role of symbols and emotions in politics, Edelman distinguishes between politics as ‘a spectator sport’ (Edelman, 1964:5) and politics as a practice in which resources are allocated to certain groups and in which organised groups negotiate in order to gain tangible benefits for themselves. Edelman stresses remoteness, arguing that symbols are effective when an immediate reality check is not available.
Even if crime policy discourse has increasingly come to involve the public, and though the preoccupation with safety certainly relates to the experiences of most of us, crime and measures aimed at reducing crime do not form part of the everyday lives of most people.\footnote{There are, of course, people who certainly have to relate to crime in their everyday lives and also groups who are repeatedly victimized. For most people, however, their experiences of and ideas about crime are filtered through the media.} This is certainly the case with regards to the severe crimes that are most prominently discussed in the public debate. We are thus engaged in an abstract manner and through broad imagery rather than fine detail, as Garland puts it (Garland, 1990:264), whereas the allocation of resources and the formation of crime policy measures is handled elsewhere – in other fora and through other forms of communication (Edelman, 1964; see also Loader, 2010). Describing politics as ‘a spectator sport’, like Edelman does, or ‘a morality play’ as Manning (2001) and Scheingold (1995) put it, resembles the aesthetic logic described by Bauman (2005, see also Mehozay, 2018), in which we are increasingly encouraged to take part in politics in a superficial manner, directing our sympathies and censure to morally unambiguous subjects and navigating by instant emotional gratification.

In election campaigns, politics certainly resemble the spectator sport described by Edelman. Even though political parties still value and prioritise ‘knocking on doors’ and the physical encounters with voters or potential voters (Harvard, 2018), these campaigns are increasingly being mediated and professionalised (Strömbäck and Nord, 2008). In Sweden, political participation mainly involves voting and following the news. Few people (7%, according to Petersson et al., 2006:135-136, in Strömbäck and Nord, 2008) are contacted directly by a party representative during an election campaign. Rather, they take part in these campaigns as spectators of a mediated political drama (Strömbäck and Nord, 2008). These spectators, however, must be reassured of their importance and influence. To achieve this, politicians might use hortatory language.
The emotional appeal of the form

Symbolic statements, or the use of symbols within crime policy discourse, can be operationalised both with regards to their form and their function. In his early writings, Edelman (1964) stresses that the form of political language, not only its content, conveys meaning (Ewich and Sarat, 2004:457). Hortatory language is an appeal which, according to Edelman, reinforces the belief in elections and in democratic participation. In election campaigns, this kind of language style is prominent, according to Edelman, since it is crucial for politicians to persuade others to accept their policy proposals. Edelman acknowledges that the content of political messages will evoke different responses from different groups, but the hortatory language style is assumed to strengthen the general belief in the democratic process, even when people are not persuaded by the content of the message.\(^7\) The fact that politicians try to appeal to and persuade voters signals that their acceptance is important and influential. However, according to Edelman, democratic elections can be understood as being secular rituals, signalling influence of the many while the truth is that the actual change being offered always turns out to be limited and superficial.

Abstract statements and abstract concepts, as language in general, can be understood as effective symbols because they operate unconsciously and evades our critical gaze, yet influencing our perceptions and experiences (Edelman, 1964; Bacchi, 1999, 2009). As mentioned above, Edelman defines symbols as ‘abstract terms directing the mind to see the potentialities in a situation’ (Edelman, 2001:13). The remoteness, a precondition for symbols to work effectively, can thus be seen as being partly constructed through the abstract language form. In the second article, in which the Swedish concept of safety is analysed, the concept is treated as a condensation symbol with the potential to engender feelings of national pride to the general public. Since the concept of *(o)trygghet* is both inclusive and elusive (Eriksen, 2006; Ljunggren, 2015), it creates an opportunity for politicians as well as the general public to fill the concept with varying meanings (Bacchi, 2009). Like the image of ‘the loving mother’ to which Edelman (2001:14) refers, the image of a ‘safe Sweden’ is

\(^7\) This assumption can be questioned however, since the rise of populist movements has been described as a response to a decreasing trust in traditional politics (Aschauer, 2017).
more powerful than exact. It tells us little about how safe or secure any individual or group actually feels or has felt in the past. Yet the image is potent and most political parties in Sweden make use of it.

The function(s) of symbols

Symbolic politics is often understood as a form of politics, including political discourse, which has as its main concern what it signals to the general public. Accordingly, it seeks to reassure the public that a problem is being dealt with as well as to confirm, and at the same time reinforce, certain attitudes and feelings (Garland, 1990, 2006). Both Edelman (1964, 1971, 2001) and Gusfield (1967) emphasise the potentially reassuring function of symbols. As Gusfield notes himself, they have different interpretations of this process of reassurance. Besides the confirming of identities and world views, Edelman points to the symbolic potential of the idea of change, assuming that that the reassurance is related to a belief in a positive development. In this, Edelman offers an account in which symbolic relief is assumed to be mainly offered to socially and economically subordinate groups. Rather, Gusfield’s interest in symbolic functions lies in the idea that they reassure the middle class of its moral superiority. Gusfield (1967) distinguishes between the instrumental and symbolic function of legal and governmental acts, yet sees them as reinforcing each other and operating in the same direction. In his study on the historical developments of drinking control measures implemented in the US during the 19th and 20th centuries, he illustrates how the moral status and the symbolic interpretation of deviant behaviours affect public responses (Gusfield, 1986). In contrast to the instrumental function of governmental acts, the symbolic aspects of these acts do not depend on their enforcement for their effect, according to Gusfield. Rather, the effect of symbolic acts lies in the connotations associated with the act.

What particularly interests Gusfield (and many others like him, including Edelman) is the fact that the symbolic function of governmental acts often involves the designation of norms, confirming the norms of certain groups in society and rendering the norms of other groups deviant or peripheral. As long as the norm is not perceived as being contested, there
is little need to enforce control, Gusfield assumes. The symbolic function of, for instance, a law is then enough. In contrast to the view of Durkheim (1964), Gusfield argues that the violations of norms or laws do not necessarily challenge the predominant normative order (or the normative order of privileged groups). As long as ‘the deviant’ identifies his or her transgressions as such or if the transgressor is defined as being ill, the norm is not threatened and, therefore, the enforcement of punishment is not always necessary in order to uphold a norm. This latter form of reassurance can be offered through the enactment of the ‘morality play of crime and punishment’ in which crime is portrayed in individual moral terms and the punishment as a well-deserved and effective response (Mehozay, 2018). However, reassurance can also be offered by depicting crime policy proposals as being benevolent and humane, thus alluding to the values associated with the welfare state and to a penal culture which has the potential of confirming a position of moral superiority and of engendering a sense of national pride in the general public (as argued in article II).

Symbolic politics is often contrasted with a form of politics whose material goal, i.e. to reduce crime, is its main concern (Andersson, 2002a; Flyghed, 2002; Garland, 2006; Gusfield, 1967; Marion and Farmer, 2003; Oliver and Marion, 2008; Tham, 2018; Tonry, 2004). The concept of symbolic politics is often related to the lack of material effect or lack of interest even for a material effect. Similarly, Santesson-Wilson (2003) analyses processes of political decision making, defining symbolic politics as political motives in decision making that are not instrumental. Several scholars have also stressed that the material and symbolic aspects of politics reinforce each other and should preferably be analysed together (Bourdieu, 2014; Garland, 1990; Wacquant, 2014). Punishment, it has been argued, is as much a symbolic and moral communication as a concrete practice that affects the material conditions of individuals, groups and society.

Edelman (1964) notes that myths, one of several forms of symbolism, do have consequences, though not the consequences that are claimed. So which are the main consequences that follow the political use of symbols? Apart from evoking particular emotions and engaging people in the issues being discussed, the political use of symbolism has often been understood as obscuring certain conditions. In the criminological field,
crime policy proposals that have minimal ability to influence crime rates are often labelled as symbolic since this lacking potential is constantly concealed (Garland, 2006). Also, more broadly, symbols have been interpreted as a conservative force and as being related to lack of change. According to Edelman (2001), symbols tend to reproduce the social order and reaffirm already established hierarchies. Since the most potent symbols are implicit and subtle, they build upon already established emotions and perceptions. Hence, symbols tend to confirm and justify fears and suspicion directed towards the disadvantaged, and they reassure and calm by nourishing the idea that elections, politics in general or at least the ‘own’ political party will bring prosperity to all while the actual change is often limited and superficial (Edelman, 2001). Bacchi (2009) similarly stresses that preferences are shaped through discourse in such a way that people accept their position in the existing social order (Bacchi, 2009:38-39). Thus, symbols can reproduce hierarchies by confirming the symbolic dominance of the privileged groups in society, but also conceal other aspects of politics, in which material conditions could be more profoundly affected. Also, Ljunggren (2015) analyses how Social Democratic Party leaders have historically made certain emotions accessible to the working class and, additionally, how the public’s perception of the working class has been a contributory factor in creating quiescence and in quelling conflict. However, given that Swedish crime policy discourse has been described as both alarmist and animated, it is not evident that the political use of symbols and emotions serves to calm and pacify the public. This calmative or reassuring potential is, however, the main focus of articles I and II, even if these articles also touch upon other more animated kinds of emotions.

Normative orders of emotions

In the two first articles, symbolic statements and symbols are defined in terms of abstraction and vagueness and as having the potential to influence the public emotionally. Drawing on sociological research on emotions (Barbalet, 2001; Wettergren, 2013), article III explores how political parties encourage emotional engagement from the public. Emotions are thus addressed more directly. The present thesis treats emotions as socially situated (Barbalet, 2001; Wettergren, 2013; Harré, 1986). Instead of viewing emotions as being solely internal
states or physical processes, the interest here is in the social norms that circumscribe different emotions in a political context. I suggest that one way (out of many) to make emotions accessible and give them legitimacy is to articulate and manifest these emotions and these practices are, additionally, assumed to reproduce and reinforce social norms regarding emotions (Barbalet, 2006; Ljunggren, 2015; Rosenwein and Cristiano, 2018:40).

According to the radical perspective on emotions, reason and emotion are closely interconnected and emotions should accordingly be understood as being a continuum, varying in strength and type rather than being understood as being present or absent (Barbalet, 2001; Wettergren, 2013). Barbalet (2001) suggests that some emotions are diffuse and operate in the background. Consequently, these emotions might not be registered as long as they do not obstruct our actions. Related to my work, this means that all political communication could be interpreted as being emotional in some sense. Rather than contrasting the emotionality of the political discourse with rational messages from experts, I explore variations in emotional tones and differences between emotions with regards to their discursive and subjectification effects (Bacchi, 2009).

In article III, the concept of ‘emotional community’ (Rosenwein, 2002, 2010) is used to refer to normative orders of emotions. These normative orders include social rules regarding which emotions we should feel in a given situation, how we should express them given our social position, to whom different emotions can be attributed and towards whom different emotions can legitimately be directed (Clark, 1987; Wettergren, 2013). Thus, these emotional norms are structurally embedded, influenced by social hierarchies and by history (Barbalet, 2001, 2006; Rosenwein, 2010; Wettergren, 2013). Moreover, emotions can be used strategically, although the strategic use of emotions should take into account the emotional norms and the structural conditions of a society in order to ‘work’ effectively (Barbalet, 2006; Clark, 1987).

In sociological research, emotions are often understood as comprising four elements (see Thoits, 1989:318): 1) appraisals of a situation or context, 2) changes in physiological or bodily sensations, 3) some kind of display of expressive gestures or action, and 4) a cultural
label applied to specific constellations of one or more of the first three components. All four components do not necessarily need to be present simultaneously for an emotion to be experienced or recognised by others. In article III, my focus is on cultural labels (item 4) and these are assumed to influence how we perceive the social context (item 1) and also how we understand ourselves and others as emotional subjects. As Rosenwein (2010) stresses, the work of some representatives (in this case, the representatives of political parties) can be interpreted as an expression of a larger emotional community, including the public being addressed or implied in these texts or speeches. In my work, the emotional expressions in the analysed electoral campaigns are interpreted as an expression of society’s shared normative order of emotions.

The shift in analytical focus that is present in this thesis, from symbols to sociological accounts of emotions, can also be interpreted as an analytical move in which the interpretation of emotions moves from being interpreted as potential consequences towards also being understood as potential causes (Barbalet, 2001).
Methodological considerations

This chapter outlines the overall methodological approach of the thesis. Initially, a rather extended motivation for studying election campaigns and, particularly, symbols and emotions in these campaigns is presented. Thereafter, the chapter offers an overview of the material being analysed in the three articles and a discussion on how the material has been analysed. Lastly, some delimitations associated with the study are discussed. The material and analytical procedure is discussed in more detail in each article.

The choice to study electoral campaigns

As mentioned in the introduction, the overall aim of the present thesis has been to explore how the general public is encouraged to engage emotionally in crime policy matters. To this end, the political use of symbols and emotions in election campaigns has been analysed. It is important to analyse election campaigns not only because the outcome of the election will affect party constellations and the implementation of policies, but also due to their potential power to shape public understanding (Bacchi, 2009; Strömbäck and Nord, 2008). In line with the discourse-analytical tradition, power is conceptualised here as operating through people’s minds and desires (Bacchi, 2009). This means that, in election campaigns, social problems such as crime and insecurity are being constituted, not simply addressed. Hence, elections are not only (and maybe not even primarily) a democratic opportunity for citizens to hold political parties accountable and to influence the distribution of power between the political parties; these practices can also be understood as being intensified political struggles over meaning and as an exercise of power (Bacchi, 2009).

This thesis assumes that an analysis of election campaigns can increase our understanding of how the Swedish general public, also on a more general level, is encouraged to engage emotionally in crime policy matters. Previous research has pointed to the important role of symbols and emotions in election campaigns (Brader, 2006; Edelman, 1964; Marion and Farmer, 2003; Tucker, 2018). Through the use of symbols and emotions, politicians can strive to attain public involvement and can appeal to the voters in certain ways (Edelman,
Since the aim of the study is to explore how symbols and emotions are used in Swedish crime policy discourse and since research, additionally, has shown that symbols and emotions are extensively used in electoral campaigns, the choice of studying election campaigns could be seen as a form of ‘intensity sampling’ (Creswell, 2013). Viewing the selection as an intensity sampling could further be legitimised by the fact that political debate in general is more intense prior to general elections.

Lynch (2015) has argued that all artefactual material should be understood as being communicative and productive in that it ‘seeks to influence thought and/or action in particular ways’ (Lynch, 2015:274, see also Prior, 1997 for a similar interpretation). However, certain situations, or certain artefactual material, are more likely to be successful in influencing thoughts and actions. In Sweden, for instance, election campaigns have a particularly great potential to influence the public. Here, political participation mainly includes voting and following the news (Strömbäck and Nord, 2008). Voting turnout is among the highest in the world and in the 2018 general election, 87% of Swedish citizens voted. This in an increase over the previous decade but a decline in comparison to the 1970s and the early 1980s (Statistics Sweden, 2019). The way in which we take part in the political parties’ election campaigns is mainly through different forms of media. Political communication in Sweden is thus highly mediated in that sense. Additionally, in their attempts to shape the perceptions of the public, political actors have come to adapt to the media logic in order to increase their visibility (Strömbäck and Nord, 2008).

Moreover, there are several factors that relate to the attitudes and behaviours of the Swedish population that strengthen the influence of election campaigns. In Sweden, the majority of the population perceive politics to be important and this tendency is reinforced during elections. Swedish voters are also becoming increasingly volatile, with a relatively high percentage switching parties between elections and during the weeks leading up to an election (Strömbäck and Nord, 2008). According to Strömbäck and Nord (2008), this makes Swedish voters particularly responsive to political orientation attempts. Johansson (2008) argues that, besides informing the electorate, election campaigns should also engage people. Since election campaigns appear to influence people’s level of engagement,
Johansson discusses whether the traits of popularisation of Swedish election debates should be considered to be a democratic benefit or a deficit. There is a similar discussion with regards to the presence of emotions in crime policy discourse (Loader, 2011).

Criminological research has indicated that political parties in many Western societies address crime and crime control in order to increase their public support (Garland, 2006; Hall et al., 1978; Shammas, 2016; Tham, 2018). Crime policy is therefore considered to be an advantageous topic to address during election campaigns (Marion and Farmer, 2003). As mentioned previously, the importance attached to the general public in crime policy discourse has also increased in recent decades (Andersson, 2002a; Garland, 1990, 2006; Lee, 2007; Young, 1996). In election campaigns, the politicians’ need to appeal to and engage the general public is accentuated. These campaigns can therefore effectively illuminate how the general public is encouraged to engage emotionally in the Swedish crime policy debate. Since the material being analysed comprises political documents, this thesis does not capture how the public actually perceives the campaigns and in which way the public becomes involved emotionally. There is, however, reason to assume that the election campaigns being scrutinised have a persuasive potential based on the previous research referred to above. It is, however, the ways in which emotional engagement and emotional subjects are constructed in the texts that is being analysed.

The three articles taken together shed light on election campaigns that took place in Sweden from 2006 to 2018. This was an eventful period in Swedish politics. The period is characterised by the creation of a centre-right electoral alliance in 2004, consisting of four conservative and liberal political parties (the Moderate Party, the Liberals, the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats), which formed a government after both the 2006 and the 2010 general elections. This long period of centre-right government is unusual in Sweden. Since the 1930s, the Social Democratic Party has been the dominant government party with the exception of the period between 1976 and 1982 (Svensson, 1994). In addition, the Sweden Democrats, a radical right-wing party, was elected into the Swedish Parliament in

---

8 Bacchi (1999) points to a similar limitation in her approach to discourse analysis.
2010 and the party has experienced increasing support during the period being analysed (Jungar, 2016; Martinsson and Andersson, 2019). In the 2018 election, the Sweden Democrats received 18% of the votes, making them the third largest party in parliament. In 2018 the Social Democratic Party received 28% of the votes, and although this is a historically low rate, the party is still the largest political party in Sweden. The Moderate Party, being the second largest political party during the period being analysed, received 20% of the votes in 2018. The elections of 2014 and 2018 both resulted in the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party forming a coalition government.

Despite these many changes in the Swedish political landscape, the four elections have not been compared with each other. Instead, these years are treated as a cross section. This is primarily due to the main interest of the thesis being in Swedish penal culture and its influence on the political use of symbols and emotions in crime policy discourse. In contrast to all the changes regarding party constellations and parliamentary representation, penal culture and emotional communities are assumed to be more stable phenomenon.

Material

The present thesis comprises three articles in which Swedish election campaigns are analysed. Since the rationale behind analysing election campaigns stems from an interest in capturing how political parties try to influence and engage the general public, the material included has been assessed as being central to the parties’ desire to influence voters. The scope of the articles, in terms of the election years and political parties included, varies. In the first article, the election campaigns preceding the 2014 general election are analysed. All political parties represented in Swedish Parliament at the time are included for analysis. In the second article, the material is broader in the sense that three election years are included. However, in terms of political parties, the material has been narrowed down and the analysis focuses on the three largest political parties represented in the Swedish Parliament: the Moderate Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Sweden Democrats. The election years and the selected political parties were considered interesting to analyse, given the aim of the article, since the Moderate Party at the time competed with the Social Democrats for
achieving the role of the ‘true labour party’. During these years, all three political parties emphasised the value of welfare. Since the concept of safety is closely associated with Swedish welfare, and is also a value that everyone cherishes, the article critically pursues the concept of safety and the underlying assumptions in the ‘problem representation’ (Bacchi, 2009). In the third article, the 2018 election campaigns of the two political parties, which for decades have dominated Swedish politics – the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party – are analysed. The decision to limit the analysis to include only two political parties was a pragmatic attempt at making a more profound analysis, including comparisons between the political parties.

This thesis analyses different forms of texts in a broad sense. When I refer to ‘texts’ or ‘documents’, I am referring to all material selected for analysis in the thesis, including speech. In articles I and II, the aim of the material selection process was to include texts in which the parties themselves, rather than the media, controlled the message (Håkansson, 1999). In article III, however, this was not as important since the interest in the third article is not what is debated but rather which emotions that are tied to the crime policy debate. This resulted in a wider selection regarding the material being included. For instance, interviews on TV and radio, as well as party leader debates broadcast on TV and online, were included as material. Since these texts are not produced by the political parties themselves, the influence of media is greater. Moreover, in articles I and III, the included documents all address crime policy matters whereas in article II, I made a broader reading and included texts and speeches in which the Swedish concepts of safety and insecurity (trygghet and otrygghet) were mentioned, also when not being related to crime. Examples in which safety and insecurity are portrayed in other ways than being explicitly mentioned were not captured in article II. Since the article was interested in exploring the symbolic potential of the concept, this was not regarded as a problem. In article III, however, I ended up adapting to the fact that emotions are seemingly made accessible and subjects constituted through a more implicit and subtle emotional discourse. Emotions can evidently be encouraged in a variety of ways, and the method employed in article III only captures some of them. The material selected in the three articles is not exhaustive. However, in election campaigns repetition is common. The election campaigns of the political parties are well planned and
organised and the politicians, especially the party leaders, give many interviews in which similar questions are posed and similar answers are provided by the politicians. Thus, the analyses are based on the representative traits of these campaigns.

The time-frame of an election campaign is not evident (Håkansson, 1999). According to Strömbäck and Nord (2008), election campaigns in Sweden only last for around three to four weeks. Compared to this time frame, the material included in the present thesis captures more than the election campaigns of the political parties since the time period from which data was drawn is significantly longer (see Table 1 below for details). However, the time frame defined by Strömbäck and Nord appears to be too narrow if you consider media coverage rather than party member activities. Since the election campaigns are interpreted as a concentrate of the general political discourse – distinctive in intensity rather than in kind – this is, however, not decisive for the interpretations made in the articles. The table below illustrates the material included in the three articles.

Table 1. Overview of material included in articles I, II and III. Elections years, political parties and type of texts specified for each article.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Election years (time-frame of selected material)</th>
<th>Political parties*</th>
<th>Type of texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article I</td>
<td>2014 (May–September)</td>
<td>M, I, KD, C, S, MP, V, SD</td>
<td>Election manifestos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Debate articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Debate articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article III</td>
<td>2018 (January–September)</td>
<td>M, S</td>
<td>Election/party manifestos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Debate/informative articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Party leader debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Facebook posts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analytical procedure

In all three articles, the material has been analysed using qualitative text analysis (Bergström and Boréus, 2018; Rennstam and Wästerfors, 2015). Although different text-analytical approaches have been developed in different research traditions and are therefore associated with their own ontological and epistemological assumptions, Lynch (2015) encourages researchers to combine methods when studying artefactual material. As various kinds of documents have been included for analysis, different analytical procedures have also been employed. In the first article, a combination of a directed approach with pre-established categories and a more open thematic analysis was used (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). In article II, the material was analysed by adopting Bacchi’s (1999, 2009) approach to discourse analysis, combined with a thematic structuring of the results. In the third article, the material was similarly analysed through a combination of discourse and thematic analysis. Additionally, ‘critical’ or ‘theoretically impregnated’ questions were used as an analytic tool, especially in articles II and III (Bacchi, 2009; Lynch, 2015; Wahlgren, 2014). Questions of a descriptive nature were used in order to process the material (in the phase of ‘spending time with the data’, as Rennstam and Wästerfors (2015) put it), and more analytical questions guided the interpretation of the role of symbols and emotions in the analysed election campaigns.

This study started off with an interest in comparing the ideas of the political parties. Although variations between the political parties are highlighted to some extent, my interpretation of their campaigns has shifted. Instead of analysing the intentions of specific actors, my focus is on meaning construction and its discursive and subjectification effects (Bacchi, 2009; Burr, 1995). This means that, regardless of the intentions of the political parties, the documents produced during an election campaign will organise our thinking and our emotions and make certain aspects visible, while omitting others (Bacchi, 2009; Lynch, 2015). The language we use and the dominating discourses limit the ways in which we think about issues such as crime and punishment, for example. Thus, these discourses disclose something about the society in which we live; they are not mere representations of a specific actor. In the articles of the present thesis, the ways in which political parties make
use of symbols and emotions when discussing crime policy matters are analysed, although the interest is not limited to the political parties. In articles I and II, the political use of symbols is assumed to shed light on how crime policy is effectively legitimised in Sweden and, consequently, also on Swedish penal culture. Similarly, in article III, the ways in which the political parties articulate and manifest emotions are interpreted as an expression of Sweden’s emotional community, as well as an expression of the emotional communities of the two political parties (Rosenwein, 2002, 2010).

Operationalisations

Murray Edelman’s definition of condensation symbols is central in the two first articles – linking symbols to their emotion-evocative potential – but the two first articles differ with regards to their operationalisation of symbolic statements and symbols. In article I, the operationalisation of symbolic statements draws on Edelman and his ideas that the form of language in itself has symbolic potential or, at least, intensifies the symbolic potential of the statement. However, it is mainly the meaning of the content rather than the meaning embedded in the form of these symbolic statements that is being analysed. In the first article, symbolic statements are equated with abstract prescriptive statements (See Marion and Farmer, 2003 and Oliver and Marion, 2007 for a similar operationalisation). Hence, symbolic statements are analytically separated from concrete/substantial statements, as well as from descriptive statements. This operationalisation of symbolic statements does not fully correspond with the discourse analytical approach used in the second and third articles since Bacchi (2009) explicitly stresses the importance of scrutinizing policies as productive constructions, encouraging us to perceive problems in specific ways and act in accordance with these perceptions. Similarly, Edelman stresses the symbolic potential of politics in general, including democratic elections.

However, arguing that certain political statements are particularly suitable to analyse as symbolic does not necessarily indicate that other kinds of statements lack symbolic potential. Evidently, political proposals (concrete/substantial statements), as well as
portrayals of the state of society, are also symbolic in the sense that these statements also convey meaning and have the potential to evoke emotions.

Delimitations

In this thesis, it is assumed that discourse is productive in the sense that it influences our perceptions and emotions (Bacchi, 2009). So while this study seeks to understand how the general public is encouraged to engage emotionally in crime policy discourse, the empirical basis comprises documents produced by elites. Thus, little can be said about how people actually interpret and feel in relation to the policies proposed by the political parties. As previously mentioned, studies have pointed to the broad variety of opinions among the population with regards to issues such as crime and punishment. Additionally, material conditions and our position in society (Edelman, 1964; Garland, 1990) will likely influence how we perceive and are emotionally engaged through political discourse. Lynch’s (2000b) work on the emotional responses to the use of the electric chair in executions shows that the discourse of the elite does not necessarily resemble the sensibilities of ‘the people’, thus pointing to the importance of researching conflicting discourses and also to including other voices than those of the elites. Thus, her work offers a thoughtful critique of my own work. However, Lynch’s argumentation can also be used to interpret my findings since she explores ‘the ambivalence of modern punishment’ (Lynch, 2000b:2), which I have also intended to capture.

One initial interest was to grapple with the relationship between symbolism and substantial effects, similar to the studies of Newburn and Jones (2007, see also Jones and Newburn, 2006 and Manning, 2001). However, since the way in which symbolic statements (in article I) and symbols (in article II) are defined come close to justifications, this enterprise turned out to be more complex than I had initially thought (yet not impossible, which Tham, 2018, has shown by scrutinising the expansion of Swedish penal law with regards to justifications). In the political discourse, arguments are combined and over-arching legitimising argument for Swedish crime policy, such as the concept of safety, are used to legitimise a wide range of very different crime policy measures. As it transpired, the material wasn’t suited to this
kind of analysis. Article I concludes that arguments which involve allusion to values associated with the welfare state are used, in part, to legitimise expansion of control. However, it was not possible to conduct a more detailed analysis of the relationship between symbolic and substantial statements.

Lastly, this is a study of the present. In total, four election years were included for analysis. A longer time frame could have served as a tool to ‘denaturalise’ the present, to question and scrutinise what are perceived as ‘natural conditions’ (Bacchi, 2009). Previous research has illustrated important and significant shifts in Swedish crime policy in the 20th century (inter alia Andersson and Nilsson, 2017; Demker and Duus-Otterström, 2009; Sahlin, 2000; Tham, 2018; Wahlgren, 2014). My short time frame also makes it difficult to separate individual politicians (often the party leader) from the political party. As Ljunggren (2015) illustrates, Social Democratic Party leaders have different styles and articulate and manifest emotions in a distinctive manner. The differences between the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party discussed in article III could thus be a result of the individual politicians rather than being party political traits.
Results: Summary of articles

Article I: The role of symbolic politics in exceptional crime policy debate: A study of the 2014 Swedish general election

The political use of symbols in crime policy discourse has often been associated with the punitive traits which have come to characterise late modern crime policy in many Western societies (Andersson, 2002a; Baker and Roberts, 2005; Garland, 2006). In the present article, it is argued that since Sweden is frequently depicted as an antithesis to punitive Anglophone societies (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006; Lappi-Seppälä, 2012; Pratt, 2008; Pratt and Eriksson, 2013), exploring symbolic statements in this setting might expand our understanding of symbolism in crime policy discourse (Loader, 2010). The article examines the electoral campaigns that preceded the Swedish general election of 2014, including all political parties represented in parliament, with the aim of analysing the symbolic statements that occupied a central position in the debate. Initially, the political statements were categorised as ‘symbolic’ and ‘substantial’, and symbolic statements were equated with abstract prescriptive statements and substantial statements represented concrete proposals. The symbolic statements were then analytically organised into three overarching themes: (1) Emotional condemnation with the subthemes Manifesting state power and Unifying indignation, (2) Symbolizing rational progress and (3) The multifaceted meaning of crime prevention. The analysis reveals an ambiguous political rhetoric, comprising morally and emotionally charged condemnatory statements about getting tough on crime, as well as reformist and emotionally restrained statements with frequent references to (what is claimed to be neutral) expert knowledge and with an emphasis on the desirability of a rational long-term approach.

The first theme, Emotional condemnation, is interpreted through the lens of Garland’s concept of ‘non-adaptive responses’ (2006:131). These emotionally charged condemnations can be understood both as a way of manifesting state power and as a way of confirming and directing public unrest (Downes and Morgan, 2002; Edelman, 1971; Garland, 2006; Marion and Farmer, 2003; Newburn and Jones, 2007). In some cases, these statements appear to replace concrete proposals, and the manifestation of state power relies on these abstract
but expressive statements. However, the political parties also combine these morally condemnatory statements with substantial proposals. With these statements, the politicians formulate a moral and indignant ‘we’. However, this indignant position is not necessarily aggressive and vindictive. Instead, indignation appears to resemble benevolence and a well-intended identity is made accessible to the public.

The second theme, Symbolizing rational progress, comprises statements that adopt a more restrained tone and in which references to expert knowledge are frequently made. With these statements, politicians do not express moral indignation, nor do they ally themselves with the voters. Instead, political proposals are being presented as rational and apolitical, rendering other ways of thinking about crime illogical and, therefore, illegitimate (Bourdieu, 2014; Roumeliotis, 2014). Apart from establishing a distance between the voters and the political solutions, these kinds of statements also distance the politicians from the solutions. However, through the use of governmental inquiries and other forms of expertise, the politicians signal that they will work thoroughly and systematically to deliver change. These statements also have a clear emotional dimension, I argue, yet it is not as apparent as in the first theme. While statements about change might signal a non-emotional and technocratic practice, speaking of change constitutes an effective symbol that provides satisfaction for the general public, according to Edelman (2001).

The third theme, The multifaceted meaning of crime prevention, reveals a political struggle over the meaning of the concept of crime prevention. The political parties fill the concept of ‘crime prevention’ with varying content. In some cases, the symbolic statements that stress crime prevention are accompanied by a resistance towards penal expansion, thereby resembling the moderate philosophy of punishment advocated by Loader (2010). Thus, prevention is contrasted with measures being taken by judiciary institutions, these latter being seen as reactive rather than preventive. However, the concept is also used in a way that reflects penal expansion, sometimes with no hope of or interest in any actual crime preventive effect. The fact that the concept can be filled with such varied content is itself testimony to its considerable symbolic potential. The concept of crime prevention, like the previous theme, ‘Rational progress’, symbolises rationality and systematic work. In addition, it signals
benevolence since the term implies a positive effect regarding the problem of crime (Barker, 2017a).

The three themes that form the results section are all based on symbolic statements. Thus, the interpretation made here is that they all have an emotion-evocative potential. According to Edelman (1964), politicians use symbols in order to either calm or animate the public. Whereas the morally condemnatory statements of the first theme can be interpreted as being examples in which the political parties animate the debate and reinforce indignation, the two subsequent themes represent a rhetoric of rationality in which the public is encouraged to be calm and trusting. However, even manifestations of state power and the confirmation of feelings of indignation have been interpreted as having a reassuring and calming effect, including when they are accompanied by an alarmist discourse (Garland, 2006).

While the symbolic statements illustrate how crime policy is justified and legitimised, combining these statements with their associated concrete proposals adds to the study by revealing what is being legitimised. Following Loader (2010), symbolic statements can be interpreted as having the potential to change the way in which we think about successful crime policy. On the one hand, the emotionally restrained rhetoric that we witnessed in the 2014 election strengthens the image of Swedish crime policy as being based on ideals such as rationality and humanity, alluding to the values associated with welfare and the notion of Scandinavian, or Nordic, exceptionalism. On the other hand, these statements also serve to legitimise and obscure penal expansion. In the article, this conclusion is interpreted through the lens of the criticism being directed towards the idea of a Nordic exceptionalism (Barker, 2013, 2017a; Smith and Ugelvik, 2017; Ugelvik and Dullum, 2012). Thus, these symbolic statements reveal a national self-image based on humaneness and benevolence, even when an expansion of control is being advocated.

Public safety has become an increasingly important part of crime policy debates in Western countries. In Sweden, the concepts of trygghet (safety) and its negative counterpart ottrygghet (insecurity) are often used in discussions on public safety and fear of crime. In this article, I argue that in order to understand Swedish crime policy, the symbolic meaning of these concepts must be considered. International research has identified the increased importance attached to fear of crime in western crime policy in recent decades (Ahmed, 2004; Bauman, 2006; Boutellier 2004; Lee 2007; Stanko, 2000). The large preoccupation with trygghet in Swedish crime policy can, in part, be understood in line with this broader picture. In the Swedish political debate, the concept of ottrygghet is often used to describe the public’s fears and worries about crime (Andersson, 2010; Heber, 2011; Sahlin, 2010; Wahlgren, 2014). However, whereas the discourse on fear of crime has been identified as stemming from the political right, and – similar to the discourse on safety and security – is assumed to result in an increased focus on order and control (Fanghanel 2016; Hagan 2010; Lee 2007), the Swedish concept of trygghet has a different historical legacy.

The symbolic potential of the concept of safety is analysed here as being closely related to its historically strong association with the Swedish welfare state and its goal to create equality through universal reforms (Andersson, 2002b; Eriksen, 2006; Lappi-Seppälä, 2012; Ljunggren, 2015). Previous research has illustrated how the Swedish welfare state context influences the way in which Swedish politicians respond to and understand various social problems and how values associated with the welfare state, at least partially, appear to influence the logic that penal practices rest upon in these countries (Barker, 2017a; Hörnqvist, 2016; Smith and Ugelvik, 2017). Furthermore, Smith and Ugelvik (2017) conclude that interventions appear to be interpreted as being benevolent when they are justified by values associated with the welfare state. In line with this conclusion, this article explores how the political use of the concepts of safety in crime policy discourse has the potential to generate feelings of ‘national pride’ (Loader, 2010) in the general public by depicting political solutions as being benign and universal.
The political debates on public safety preceding the general elections in 2006, 2010 and 2014 are analysed with reference to three political parties: The Social Democratic Party, the Moderate Party and the Sweden Democrats. Adopting Bacchi’s (1999, 2009) approach to discourse analysis, this article examines how the concepts of trygghet and ottrygghet are problematised, or politically constructed. The analysis is guided by the question: What is assumed to foster safety?

The results section is structured around three themes. In the political debate on crime and punishment, safety is related to welfare, trust in the judiciary system and social cohesion, or unity. In the first theme, I illustrate how safety is depicted as being inherently Swedish, how the political parties stress that the welfare foster safety and, lastly, how a caring and empathic welfare system is emphasised as the norm. By incorporating crime policy solutions that aim to create a safer society into the general welfare ‘project’, the political parties signal that these solutions could have the potential of increasing equality and of offering safety to everyone – of being universal in this sense. Insecurity is addressed as both a potential cause of crime and as a consequence, constituting an insecure subject that potentially includes both offenders and crime victims. The low level of antagonism associated with the concepts of safety reinforces, I argue, the image of universality. All three political parties portray Sweden as ‘an expert on safety’, even if the Sweden Democrats describes this safe Sweden in terms of a historical golden age (Elgenius and Rydgren, 2017).

However, the analysis also shows that the public is predominantly addressed as potential crime victims in the election campaigns of the political parties. Both the Moderate Party and the Sweden Democrats stress the importance of the justice system in creating safety. The judiciary is assumed to increase safety indirectly, by reducing crime, but also more directly by establishing a close and predictable relationship between the public and the justice system. This closeness and predictability is assumed to be achieved through the presence of the police and through the predictability of punishment.

Moreover, in the political debate, safety is repeatedly connected to social cohesion, and safety is seen as a unifying feeling or a unifying state of affairs, as well as sometimes being
depicted as the consequence of cohesion. Although this connection between safety and social cohesion in the article is interpreted as being closely linked to the welfare context, thereby offering symbolic strength to the argumentation, there are also variations in the kind of cohesion intended by political parties. For the Social Democratic Party, cohesion mainly resembles equality and, in this, the party predominantly conceptualises cohesion in terms of material conditions and as a warm and inclusive community. However, cohesion is also conceptualised in moral terms in the election campaigns of the political parties. In this latter understanding, cohesion involves a moral distancing and an exclusionary dimension, which has also been acknowledged in relation to the political discourse on security and fear of crime (Bauman, 2000; Hope and Sparks, 2000; Sahlin, 2010; Zedner, 2000). What distinguishes the Sweden Democrats is that cohesion appears to depend on a culturally homogeneous population. Thus, the exclusionary element involves a clear ethnic dimension.

To conclude, the concept of safety offers symbolic loading to the Swedish crime policy discourse in several ways. Describing people as insecure reinforces the image of vulnerability and passivity and a non-threatening subject, in need of support, is constituted (Ljunggren, 2015). Consequently, the political solutions are portrayed as being benevolent since they aim to increase safety for these vulnerable groups. Additionally, since it is stressed that everyone in Sweden should be able to feel safe, the unequal experiences of safety are depicted as a problem. This increases the opportunity to address crime, and the related insecurity, as a problem, even in situations in which the general trend is described in positive terms (Lee, 2007; Stanko, 2000). However, more importantly for this analysis, depicting safety as a problem based in inequality reinforces the image of crime policy measures as being compensating and supportive, also when these measures implicate increases in control. Since the concept of safety connotes stability and predictability, the urgency of the criminal justice system is also reinforced (Bauman, 2000; Boutellier, 2004).

There are some variations between the political parties in their use of the concept of safety, particularly with regards to the level of antagonism being associated with safety. The Social Democratic Party makes most use of the low level of antagonism with which the concept
of safety is associated. In contrast, the way in which the Sweden Democrats uses the concept of safety is associated with quite a high level of antagonism. However, all three political parties being analysed use the concept of safety in order to advance their crime policy and, in this, all of them make feelings of national pride accessible to the public.


Crime and punishment is often described as an emotionally charged field (de Haan and Loader 2002; Karstedt, Loader and Strang, 2011; Lynch, 2006). Historical analyses of Western crime policy have also indicated that these emotional traits have become increasingly prominent in crime policy discourse in recent decades and political initiatives are nowadays often legitimised by referring to the desires and emotions of crime victims, as well as those of the general public (Garland, 2006; Pratt, 2000, 2007).

In the criminological tradition, the emotional tone of crime policy discourse has predominantly been understood by being contrasted to an assumed rational response to crime (Karstedt, 2011; Loader, 2011). However, there are also limits and norms circumscribing this ‘emotional discourse’ and different emotions direct our perceptions in distinct ways (Barbalet, 2001; Clark, 1987; Rosenwein, 2002, 2010). Building on this understanding, the present article explores how emotions are organised in Swedish crime policy discourse and how they relate to one another in the discourse (de Haan and Loader, 2002). By analysing how emotions are articulated and manifested in the 2018 election campaigns of two political parties – the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party – the article illustrates how the Swedish general public is encouraged to engage emotionally in crime policy discourse. Furthermore, the ways in which emotions are used will also direct our preferences towards certain crime policy solutions and away from others. These potential consequences are discussed in the article.

Drawing on sociological research on emotions, such as Rosenwein’s concept of ‘emotional communities’ (2002, 2010), Clark’s analysis of ‘sympathy margins’ (1987) and Barbalet’s
structural account of emotions (2001, 2006, 2008), the analysis centres on the emotions of worry, (dis)trust and anger. The analysis of worry and (dis)trust reveals interesting differences between the two political parties. Worry is an emotion that the Moderate Party states they share with the general public. According to the Moderates’ understanding, worry involves a rational evaluation of the state of society and the worries of the general public are presented as evidence of a problematic societal state. Hence, worry is not predominantly conceptualised as an expression of vulnerability or existential unease. In the election campaign of the Social Democratic Party, on the other hand, worry is depicted as an emotion which should preferably be transformed. Worry is further coupled with powerlessness and exposure, which could explain why the Social Democratic Party leader rarely expresses that he is worried himself.

The Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party both portray trust as a core value of Swedish society, a value which is presumably eroded by crime. While both political parties reaffirm emotions such as distrust, hopelessness and disbelief – creating an image of a society distinguished by such emotions – the Social Democratic Party encourages trust by reassuring the public of their own capability to handle potential hardships. The Moderate Party instead attributes the cause of the public’s lack of trust to the ambient circumstances. Trust is not encouraged because society is presumed to be in such a poor state that it doesn’t deserve people’s trust. Similar to their use of worry, the political parties conceptualise distrust in different ways, which means that different distrustful subjects are being constituted by the two political parties.

Instead of pointing towards the differences between the political parties, the analysis of anger serves to illustrate how the political use of this emotion is circumscribed by normative boundaries. While explicit articulations of anger are rather rare, I suggest in the article that anger is given legitimacy through refraining from emotions and through demotionalisation. Additionally, the aggressiveness of anger is avoided by articulating anger through the voice of people who live in structurally disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
In conclusion, both political parties strive to establish an affinity with the public in their election campaigns. Worry, (dis)trust and anger can all contribute to achieving this affinity. However, the article points to the need to distinguish between emotions since different emotions appears to carry their distinct associations and enable different kinds of crime policy.
Discussion

The aim of the present thesis has been to analyse how the general public is encouraged to engage emotionally in crime policy discourse. Drawing on Bacchi (1999, 2009), who assumes that discourse has subjectification effects, I have analysed how emotional subjects are constituted in Swedish crime policy discourse, with a particular focus on how the implied audience, or the public, is constituted as emotional subjects. In order to approach this overarching question, I have analysed the political use of symbols and emotions in Swedish crime policy discourse.

In three articles, I have analysed the election campaigns of political parties from four election years (2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018). This kind of political discourse is directed towards the public, with the intention of influencing their perceptions and actions. Although the main question of the thesis is how the public is encouraged to engage emotionally in crime policy matters, this question is also assumed to illuminate a broader context. This broader context can be articulated as the prevailing discourse (Bacchi, 2009) or as a penal culture (Garland, 1990; Smith and Ugelvik, 2017). It is further assumed that the welfare context influences how crime policy is communicated in Sweden and, hence, how the public is encouraged to understand and feel for these issues. This penal culture – the election campaigns of the political parties being regarded as powerful transmitters of this culture – is also assumed to have the potential to actually influence the perceptions and emotions of the implied audience, in this case, the Swedish general public.

Some general conclusions can be drawn from the three articles. These can be summarised in the following interrelated points:

- Firstly, the image of a throughout alarmist crime policy discourse is challenged by pointing towards variation and contradiction regarding emotional tones. Additionally, the limits and norms related to emotional expressions have been
analysed in order to illustrate that even acuteness is communicated through a discourse circumscribed by norms concerning emotional expressions.

• Secondly, I have aimed to illustrate that the emotional tone of crime policy discourse can be understood as a broader phenomenon than the alarmist, apparently expressive side of the discourse. While accounts of a ‘hot emotional climate’ have certainly pointed towards palpable changes in the crime policy discourse of modern Western societies, this thesis has treated emotions as being present in *all* political communication. This means that emotions are potentially encouraged even in more emotionally restrained discourse, including when politicians allude to values associated with the welfare state and to the utility of political measures.

• Thirdly, the articles illustrate how the welfare context influences the ways in which crime policy is communicated and legitimised in the Swedish context. The articles demonstrate that allusions to ideals and values associated with the welfare state and to the related image of a ‘Nordic exceptionalism’ are prominent. Such ideals include equality, benevolence and unity/social cohesion. Emotions such as safety and trust can also be understood as such ideals. These values can be interpreted as a system of symbols through which we are encouraged to understand and engage emotionally in Swedish crime policy. However, the two main features of Nordic exceptionalism, low prison rates and decent conditions within prisons, are not discussed to any large extent.

• Fourthly, emotions relate and build upon each other. The public can be animated and reassured at the same time. As I argue in article *II*, articulations of safety and insecurity also have the potential of making pride accessible to the general public. This potential, it is assumed, is related to the fact that the ways in which these concepts are used in Swedish crime policy discourse resemble the historical use of these concepts and their strong connection to the welfare state. In article *III*, I analyse the emotions of worry, (dis)trust and anger and also the relationship between them. For instance, the article illustrates that trust, a value and ideal associated with the welfare state, can legitimise expressing anger in situations in which trust is portrayed as being eroded by crime.
Lastly, the political use of symbols and emotions in crime policy discourse are associated with potential consequences in terms of directing our preferences towards certain political solutions and away from others. Articles I and II illustrate that symbols alluding to values associated with the welfare state, which are often assumed to restrain punitiveness, are used in the Swedish context to legitimise penal expansion. Although the articles have mainly illustrated how penal expansion, such as incapacitation and increased police presence, is communicated and legitimised, the political use of symbols and emotions can also direct our preferences away from these measures.

The concluding part of this chapter will discuss the functions of the political use of symbols and emotions in greater depth. Drawing on Edelman (1964, 2001), the two following questions are assessed to be central in this respect: How do the political parties encourage the general public to be reassured? In which ways can symbols and emotions limit or promote change?

The reassuring potential of crime policy discourse

A wide range of emotions are made accessible to the public through the election campaigns of the political parties. While article II centres on the concepts of safety and insecurity, arguing that these are key concepts if we want to understand Swedish crime policy discourse, article III illustrates a broader diversity of emotional expressions in the crime policy discourse. As article III shows, emotions such as worry, distrust and anger are confirmed and legitimised, but the implied public is also reassured and calmed. Reassurance is understood here as an emotional state, yet of low intensity, and operating in the background (Barbalet, 2001; Wettergren, 2013). This reassurance is encouraged in several ways and the three articles point towards different ways in which reassurance is offered.

Based on the work of Edelman, symbols can be interpreted as having the function to reassure. Initially, the emotionally expressive statements made by politicians, which Garland refers to as ‘acting out’ (Garland, 2006:131), can function as a reassurance of the state’s potency or the potency of one particular political party. By stating that crime is
unacceptable, for instance, an image is created in which crime is already being handled, as if the presence of criminality depended mainly on the acceptance of politicians. Similarly, by arguing that other political parties refuse to do what is necessary to combat crime, it is implied that there are solutions available to solve the problems of crime. By voting, then, you can choose the direction in which crime is controlled.

Symbols can also offer reassurance by constituting subjects in specific ways. Here, the interest is how the implied audience, the public, is constituted. In the discourse on crime and punishment, a position of moral superiority is made accessible to the public. As mentioned in the theory section, this kind of reassurance is offered both by portraying crime in moral terms and by describing the political solutions as benevolent and utile. By constituting crime in moral and individualised terms, a satisfactory and calming reassurance can be drawn from the unambiguous position of being on the good and deserving side of society, being constituted as the potential crime victim, rather than a potential perpetrator (Edelman, 2001; Manning, 2001).

More central to the present thesis, however, is that this kind of reassurance is also offered through the ways in which the political solutions are legitimised. By describing crime policy measures as benevolent, a position of benevolence is also made accessible to the general public, being part of the society which presumably treats people in a humane and sympathetic manner. In the same way that displays of sympathy can offer a position of moral superiority (Clark, 1987; Gusfield, 1967), manifesting benevolence can also be interpreted as a way of ‘doing moral superiority’. The whole notion of a Nordic exceptionalism and the idea of Sweden as a successful welfare state can be interpreted in line with this argumentation. Equality, trust and safety are all depicted as Swedish showpieces, as areas in which we are proud to excel. These values are, further, described as part of our history and are therefore something that we now deserve. When crime is portrayed as threatening these kinds of values, committing crime is constructed as an offence towards the Swedish society as a whole. Without explicitly mentioning the ethnic background of the offender, crime is also constructed as a culturally alien phenomenon.
Articulating worry instead of anger can be interpreted as a way of communicating censure in a non-aggressive manner, since a worried subject intersects with vulnerability rather than aggression. Additionally, the object of worry can be broad and diffuse, which means that the antagonistic level is lower than, for instance, with anger. This also indicates that non-aggressive patterns are prominent in the Swedish discourse on crime and punishment. Benevolence is also manifested through the construction of emotional boundaries between criminal gangs on the one hand and youths in need of protection on the other. Although the clear distinction between them is imagined rather than real (Heber, 2014), positioning the needs of these two groups in opposition to each other legitimises the harm done to the first group since it presumably protects the latter.

Moreover, reassurance is also offered through the image of change (Edelman, 2001) and utility (Carvalho and Chamberlen, 2018). In the criminological tradition, emotions are often linked to penal populism (see for instance, Pratt, 2007, 2019), and in these accounts it is often indicated that there is another, more reasonable way of responding to crime (Loader, 2011; Shammas, 2016). However, this divide between emotion and reason has been challenged (Barbalet, 2001; Harré, 1986; Wettergren, 2013). Drawing on Hume and his argument that utility pleases, Carvalho and Chamberlen (2018) argue that we are emotionally motivated to believe in the utility of punishment. Punishment is assumed to please due to the specific kind of solidarity it produces – what they term ‘hostile solidarity’. In addition to the possibility of engaging symbolically in aggression through the advocating of punishment, this longing for punishment also produces illusions of control and order. For the purpose of my study, the illusion of order is the most interesting.

The illusion of order refers to the idea that punishment, and crime control more generally, promote civil order and that these measures act as a positive force in society. Hostile solidarity can thus be interpreted as having a reassuring function, since people can be aggressive and violent in the name of justice if they believe in the utility of punishment (Carvalho and Chamberlen, 2018:226). In relation to article I, this reasoning means that political discourse focusing on crime prevention can be understood as emotionally appealing since these kinds of arguments reinforce the image of utility. Hence, the image of
Edelman (1964) also points to the emotional appeal of the idea of change and the image of rationality. In election campaigns, political parties and the public – the voters – engage in politics based on the idea that, through elections, society will change. Whether or not you favour these changes depends on the outcome of the election, although the importance and rationality of electoral participation is generally shared, even among people who do not support the ‘winning party’. Compared to the Durkheimian account of Carvalho and Chamberlen (2018), who perceive the pleasure derived from punishment as the driving force for thinking in terms of utility and substantial societal change, Edelman is interested in the way this idea of change makes people’s positions and actions (such as voting) appear reasonable. According to Edelman, however, the change that is achieved is always limited, and the promise of change rather limits change and reproduces the already established (presumably unequal and unjust) social order. In the following, I will discuss how the political use of symbols and emotions in the Swedish context can be interpreted as limiting change. I will also challenge this assumption by discussing the ways in which symbols and emotions could instead be seen as enabling change in relation to Swedish crime policy.
The limits and potentialities of change

Edelman (1964, 2001) and Bacchi (2009) argue that the symbolic use of politics (in the case of Edelman) and political discourse in general (in the case of Bacchi) often reproduce the established social order. The concept of ‘Nordic (or Scandinavian) exceptionalism’ has traditionally been used to describe how the welfare context has kept crime policy in the Nordic counties – often operationalised as prison rates – in a moderate state despite the punitive developments in other Western countries (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012; Pratt, 2008a, 2008b). Drawing on these accounts, Nordic exceptionalism can be interpreted as having as its function to preserve what is assumed to be an established moderate and non-punitive social order.

However, the reassurance I presume is generated by the symbolism of ‘Nordic exceptionalism’ and the values associated with the welfare state could also be interpreted as contributing to the maintenance of social order in the sense that it conceals the pains, i.e. the aggressive elements, of punishment (Smith and Ugelvik, 2017). Since punishment and crime control are not communicated as aggressive practices but rather as a way of guaranteeing universal safety and social cohesion, potential protests are also curbed (Edelman, 1964). Bacchi (2009) argues that policies portrayed as benevolent tend to reproduce and thereby reinforce an unequal social order and social hierarchies. Even on a general level, thinking in terms of ‘policies’ legitimises the prevailing system since it indicates that what is needed are small adjustments rather than radical change. This imagery is reinforced when the policies are presented and well-intended. The illusion of order, to borrow Carvalho and Chamberlen’s (2018) words, becomes particularly prominent.

But change is also confined, according to Bacchi (2009), through the ways in which specific policies delimit the problem representation, i.e. how the problem is defined. As I discuss in article II, measures taken in order to increase safety are described as a way of advancing equality. For instance, an increased police presence in structurally disadvantaged neighbourhoods is described in these terms. Although this kind of argumentation can be interpreted as a way of constituting the political solutions as benevolent, change is also delimited in the
sense that these solutions, and the ways in which they are legitimised, also direct our attention towards certain forms of inequality (the exposure of crime) and away from other forms, such as economic inequality.

With safety, the promise, or the aim, of crime policy initiatives have been considerably broadened and the public is encouraged to expect more than protection from concrete crimes. We are encouraged to expect to feel safe and secure and crime policy initiatives are depicted as being able to deliver this emotive state. While street lighting and an increased police presence could probably increase the sense of safety for some groups in certain locations, this study draws on work which interprets people’s sense of safety and insecurity as broader phenomenon, insecurity being seen as stemming from a combination of uncertainties and inequalities engendered by modern societies (Bauman, 2000, 2006; Beck, 1986; Stanko, 2000). Determining the conditions that are crucial to engendering a sense of insecurity is beyond the scope of the present thesis. Similarly, this thesis will not address the effects on crime and insecurity generated by different crime policy proposals. However, based on a general sociological understanding of the limits of the justice system’s potential to reduce crime rates to any significant degree (inter alia Cavadino and Dignan, 2006; Garland, 1990), the even broader promise – to engender a sense of safety – can be understood as if what is being promised and what is actually being delivered are growing further apart. In a sense, then, the ability to deliver change is diminished. This is particularly true with regards to the even broader Swedish concept of trygghet, which captures both economic and social well-being, as well as a pleasant existential and emotive state (Andersson, 2002b; Barker, 2018; Eriksen, 2006; Ljunggren, 2015). Furthermore, since this emotive state is assumed to be part of an imagery and idealised past (Bauman, 2003; Elgenius and Rydgren, 2017), delivering this emotive state becomes even more far-fetched.

However, symbols could also be used to promote what Edelman would consider to be a more substantial change.9 Edelman acknowledges that new revolutionary symbols can be

---

9 Edelman’s distinction between real change and superficial change, the latter being interpreted as rather obscuring and directing our attention away from substantial change, has been critiqued. Arnhart (1985) asks if the only change that counts is a change that achieves complete equality. In the present thesis, the limits that are created in the texts have
introduced and that they then could have the potential to disrupt the established order. Although the political parties are probably not the most likely actors to be introducing these new symbols, since they tend to benefit from the already established social order and from the symbols that legitimise this order, they could influence the ways in which the public perceives crime policy, due to their powerful positions. Since symbols and emotions are often seen as reinforcing punitiveness, it is interesting to discuss their potential capacity to counteract this development.

Changing our way of thinking about successful crime policy could be achieved in a variety of ways. Through new symbols, or by reinterpreting established symbols such as ‘safety’ and ‘prevention’, it would be possible to legitimise what Loader (2010) refers to as ‘penal moderation’. As illustrated in article I, the concept of ‘crime prevention’ is a broad concept that is used to describe a wide range of crime policy measures. Similarly, the elusiveness of the concept of safety probably contributes to its symbolic potential. Welsh and Pfeffer (2013) suggest that the concept of ‘crime prevention’ should be used exclusively for measures taken outside of the justice system and, consequently, the concept of ‘crime prevention’ would be separated from crime control and punishment. This argument could be understood as an attempt to reclaim a concept and reload it with what they assume to be its ‘true’ meaning.

Others have instead argued that the symbolism must be adjusted to correspond with the emotive climate of the present crime policy discourse in order to counter the punitive logic of punishment (Freiberg, 2001 develops this argument, drawing on Garland, 1990 and Sutton, 1997). According to this account, administrative or rehabilitative measures should be presented in an emotionally appealing way in order to be successful in the sense that they receive public approval. Loader suggests that new concepts such as ‘restraint’, ‘parsimony’ and ‘dignity’ should be introduced in the English context and that these concepts could contribute to new ways of thinking about successful crime policy. Rather than

been analysed. However, this critique also addresses the normative agenda of Bacchi’s discourse analytical approach (2009:44). When pointing towards limits and silences in a discourse, this must be conducted from a specific position since it is impossible to address all potential silences and discursive boundaries that a discourse entails.
legitimising specific crime policy measures, these concepts, according to Loader, should legitimise moderation and restraint.

Establishing new narratives of successful crime policy through the strategic use of symbols and emotions is one way of challenging the contemporary understanding of crime control. However, if successful, this newly established way of thinking would also run the risk of appearing ‘natural’ and, in this sense, conceal certain conditions (Bacchi, 2009). As shown by the branch of research that criticises the idea of the humane and exceptional Nordic penal systems (Barker, 2017a; Lohne, 2019), humanitarian narratives are also used to legitimise coercive practices. I would rather suggest that we need to welcome contradictions and conflicting values and, in this sense, encourage a reflexive state of mind. This does not preclude engaging in and reflecting on emotions concerning crime and punishment. But it aims to destabilise penal enthusiasm (Loader, 2010), also bringing the ‘tragic’ elements of punishment into the discussion (Garland, 1990).

The potential satisfaction derived from the idea that crime control should be beneficial to the crime victim, the offender and society at large can be understood as an emotive state of low intensity that operates in the background (Barbalet, 2001). This sense of satisfaction could also be brought to the fore by highlighting situations in which concrete practices do not achieve this goal. In line with the argumentation of Loader (2010, 2011), I suggest that the public debate on crime and punishment should engage with emotions, thereby allowing us to place emotions, as well as practices, under scrutiny.
Svensk sammanfattning


För att förstå svensk kriminalpolitik bör man ta hänsyn till de två parallella berättelser som existerar om densamma. Å ena sidan har svensk kriminalpolitik, i linje med den i övriga västvärlden, beskrivits som allt mer ”straffande”, med ett tilltagande fokus på ordning och kontroll (Demker och Duus-Otterström, 2009; Tham, 2018). Å andra sidan brukar Sverige, liksom de övriga nordiska länderna, beskrivas som humana undantag från denna straffande vändning. Denna ”exceptionella” kriminalpolitik, som kännetecknas av bland annat låga fångtal och humana fängelseförhållanden (Pratt, 2008a; Pratt och Eriksson, 2013), antas ha


De tre artiklarna som är inkluderade i avhandlingen behandlar på olika sätt de kriminalpolitiska drag som presenteras ovan.

förtroende för rättsväsendet samt med sammanhållning. Artikeln diskuterar vidare hur känslor av nationell stolthet (Loader, 2010) tillgängliggörs för allmänheten genom partiernas användande av begreppet (o)trygghet.


Sammanfattningsvis har denna avhandling syftat till att visa på variation och motstridighet i emotionella tonlägen liksom på de normativa ramar som kringgörar emotionella uttryck i den kriminalpolitiska diskursen. I avhandlingen analyseras emotioner som närvarande i all politisk kommunikation, även i den mer emotionellt återhållsamma diskursen och också i de situationer när politiker hänvisar till nytta med kriminalpolitiska förslag.

References


