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Managing emotion in probation practice: display rules, values and the performance of emotional labour by probation practitioners in their interactions with client

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Highlights:

- Display rules underpinned by probation values inform the emotional labour or practitioners
- Probation practitioners use varied integrating, neutral and differentiating emotion in their work
- The resulting emotional labour is performed to comply with these expectations
- This can lead to unexpected forms of emotional labour e.g. anger, frustration and annoyance
- Where display rules conflict the resulting emotional management can be particularly laborious

Abstract

This article uses the concept of emotional labour to explore how probation practitioners, conform to, and negotiate the display rules and values underpinning their work with clients. We consider the sources of emotional labour, focussing on the values of probation practice and how these are manifested through occupational, organisational and societal display rules. We then analyse a further layer of display rules; integrating, neutral and differentiating display rules which further inform our thinking about how emotional labour is performed. Using the lens of emotional labour we document the breadth of emotional labour performed by probation practitioners in their interactions with clients including the use of empathy, humour and the suppression of anger. In particular our research brings to light the display of so called 'negative' emotions such as anger and frustration, and the complex, and sometimes conflicting, relationship between occupational and organisational display rules and the values underpinning these rules.

Key words: emotional labour, probation, values, display rules, occupational culture

1. Introduction

How probation practitioners use emotion is an under-explored area in academic research. Yet the field of emotion research provides a rich seam of theoretical and analytic concepts with which to explore the aims of an institution and the practice which occurs within it. This article brings research on emotional labour from other disciplines to bear on the field of probation in England and Wales. The role and importance of emotions have been neglected in terms of policy and academic research (Knight et al, 2016) and so this article develops our understanding of this important topic. The values of probation and the way in which they manifest in practice have been described as durable, cohesive and resilient in the face of changes in the broader field of community sanctions (Grant, 2016 Phillips, forthcoming, Robinson et al, 2013). That said, practice and associated values have shifted and adapted to policy changes such as the increased use of managerialist techniques (Phillips, 2011) and a recasting of rehabilitation in late-modernity (Robinson, 2008). Exploring the display of emotion in probation practice sheds light on the role of probation, the values which underpin it, as well as the unwritten rules which shape it. The article thus explores the relationship between what probation practitioners are supposed to do - as dictated by organisational goals, aims and policy and occupational culture - and the way they use and manage emotions to achieve those goals.

We begin with a brief overview of what emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) is, focusing in on the concept of 'display rules' (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993) which guide the use and display of emotion. We then consider which display rules are at play specifically in the field of probation practice drawing on both policy and academic research on occupational values and cultures in probation. In the main body of the article we present an analysis of interview data that was collected in 2016, just after the transforming rehabilitation reforms took place, which explores the concordances and tensions between organisational goals, practitioner values, professionalism and emotional displays. In essence, the article explores the way in which display rules are operationalised and shaped by the values which underpin probation practice. In doing so, we shed light on the complex emotional labour expected by probation practitioners. This improved understanding can be used to train and support workers who are required to do this type of work. In turn this should result in better support for clients because the appropriate use of emotion can be seen understood as a critical element of effective practice (Fowler, Phillips and Westaby, 2017).

2. Display rules and probation practice

Emotional labour is the 'management of a way of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display…for a wage' (Hochschild, 1983, p.7fn). In turn, the performance of emotional labour is governed by what Hochschild terms (1983, p.59) 'feeling rules'; 'rules or norms according to which feelings may be judged appropriate to accompanying events". Hochschild's definition focuses, then, on the rules which govern the way workers are supposed to *feel* in order to achieve the aims of their job. On the other hand, other emotional labour theorists (Morris & Feldman, 1996; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989) have preferred to consider the way in which emotions are displayed rather than felt, partly because this is an easier phenomenon to study and observe, but also because this is what will be seen by the 'recipient' of the emotion felt by the worker. Thus, instead of feeling rules, the object of study becomes the publicly observable behaviour rather than the management of feelings. A more useful concept, then, is that of 'display rules' which can be defined as, 'standards of behaviour that indicate not only which emotions are appropriate in a given situation, but also how those emotions are conveyed or publicly expressed' (Morris & Feldman,1996: 988). This observable behaviour and the rules which govern them is the object of analysis for this article.

2.1 Societal, organisational and occupational display rules

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) point to three different types of display rules which they describe as societal, organisational and occupational and are considered in the context of service encounters. Therefore, for example, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) see those societal norms which are typically manifested through the expectations of customers that form the societal display rules for service workers. What can be taken from this is that societal display rules are formed as a result of societal values or norms and provide general guidelines as to the emotions that should be displayed by the members of that society in their interactions with others (Ekman & Friesan, 1975).

Organisational display rules are the product of policy and the aims and objectives of an organisation as laid down in, for example, mission statements, codes of practice, formal policy documents, training arrangements and government guidelines. These can be imposed through such activities as induction, recruitment, policy, performance appraisal, and staff supervision (Copranzano, Wiess & Elias, 2004; Diefendorff & Richard, 2003; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989, Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991) with the aim being to achieve the publicly scrutinized aims and objectives laid down by the organisation (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Rafaeli and Sutton (1989) acknowledge that organisational display rules and occupational display rules are sometimes easy to distinguish but difficult to separate. They thus offer a useful example of a physician who is taught a certain professional demeanour in medical school by and so conforms to occupational display rules. The same physician then displays this demeanour in numerous hospitals following the completion of her studies as a result of organisational display rules. It is for this reason that they discuss organisational and occupational display rules together. However, we argue that there is a discernible difference between the two types of rules, as rather than originating from the organisation, occupational display rules can be prescribed either informally or formally. Mastracci & Adams (2019: 56) allude to this by describing occupational display rules as 'the (often unwritten rules) governing a worker's emotive expressions, or in many cases, suppression, of those responses deemed "unprofessional"'.

2.2 Societal, organisational and occupational display rules in probation practice

In the probation context - when probation practitioners interact with clients - societal display rules are those which govern the perceived appropriateness of whether certain emotions should be used or displayed by members of the public. In turn, then, these can be discerned by examining public opinion towards crime and punishment, media portrayals of offenders and political discourse around crime, law and order. Suffice to say, such analysis consistently points to the use of emotively punitive language and the sense that people who have broken the law are undeserving of help or compassion (Harper et al, 2017; Maruna and King, 2008). Based on what we know about the values underpinning probation workers' modes of practice can begin to postulate that there may be some conflict between societal display rules, and organisation and occupational display rules.

Indeed, it has been suggested by Mann (2007) that organisational and occupational display rules may conflict with societal display rules, with Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) providing the example of patients. In line with societal display rules, patients expect physicians to show personal concern and an interest in them, while physicians conform to an occupational display rule that requires more detachment (Lief & Fox, 1963 cited in Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). In this case we see occupational display rules taking precedence. However, in public service work such as that undertaken by probation practitioners, given the potential influence of societal display rules, Maruna and King (2004) argue that the effective and affective aspects of punishment need to be considered in terms of gaining public support for probation practices. 'Effective' probation is concerned with incapacitation, deterrence and managerialist forms of rehabilitation (Robinson, 2008) whilst 'affective' messages of

condemnation are more commonly used to enhance the legitimacy of probation through the rhetoric of enforcement and punishment (Robinson and Ugwudike, 2012)

Organisational display rules represent both sides of this coin, nicely encapsulated in the current statement of National Probation Service's vision: 'Preventing victims by changing lives' (HMPPS 2019) moving away from exclusionary rhetoric of 'protecting the public reducing reoffending (NOMS, 2015).

In terms of the field of probation we can discern both change and continuity in the organisational display rules at play over recent years. Since the 1990s there has been a shift in government policy from clinical diagnosis and retributive justice to the 'New Penology' as described by Feeley and Simon (1992, p.474), which focuses on public protection by managing potential risk posed by clients, and reducing reoffending. The arguments are well rehearsed about the toughening up of probation following then Prime Minister Tony Blair's (1995) 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' and in the same period the Home Office minister Paul Boateng's description of probation as a 'law enforcement agency' (Home Office, 2000) in the introduction to the National Standards. The focus on National Standards, accountability, offender management and the performance of this enforcement set a punitive emotional tone for the organisation in line with the government's modernisation agenda (Whitehead, 2017). This concern for the direction of probation is expressed by Burnett et al (2007, p.228) as moving from 'one of caring control to one of punitive control'. It could be argued that the Coalition continued this pursuit of toughness stating their intention to make community sentences 'more robust' (MoJ, 2012, p.3) and following this up with the requirement that each community sentence must include a punitive element which the Government would expect to be 'restrictions of liberty that represent to the public a recognisable sanction (such as curfews, exclusion, or community payback) (Ministry of Justice, 2012: 7). In 2013, the Ministry of Justice (2013)published its proposals to 'transform rehabilitation' which resulted in the outsourcing of around 70% of the probation caseload to the private and voluntary sector. Although ostensibly about rehabilitation - and despite ultimately being doomed to failure (Phillips, 2019) - these reforms were as much about rehabilitation to protect the public and a relatively simplistic measure of reducing reoffending than about rehabilitation and the more Kantian ethic of rehabilitation which underpins probation practitioners' values (Whitehead, 2016). Thus, although 'rehabilitation' has remained a buzzword in the titles of government policy the focus has remained on reducing reoffending and protecting the public (MoJ, 2013).

With respect to occupational display rules, Mastracci and Adams (2019) make reference to these types of display rules being both unwritten and written. In terms of the former, we see

this as a shared understanding that probation workers learn from interacting and socialising with other members of their profession. It is this which is a key to the occupational display rules governing probation worker's emotional labour. As Canton and Dominey (2017) rightly maintain, the values of an organisation cannot simply be gleaned from mission statements and business plans, but must be inferred from the practice of organisations. Values 'should always be understood as the ongoing accomplishments of skilled and knowledgeable persons imbued with a moral sense' (Clark, 2000, p.31 quoted in Canton and Dominey, 2018, p.42).

In terms of the occupational display rules it is interesting to note that probation workers have been described as notably durable when it comes to adhering to a value base with Grant describing them as having 'a curious ability … to resist the influence of punitive discourse in their attitudes, actions and approaches to practice' (2016, p.764). In order to discern the occupational displays that are at play in the field of probation it is instructive to look also to written 'rules'[1] in the form of the Probation Institute's (2015) Code of Ethics, which reflects its 'core values and ethical principles and serves to underpin the probation profession'. This Code of Ethics outlines the expectations of all members of the organisation in order to ensure the highest standards in both practice and service delivery. It is important to note that while this is the first explicitly stated code of ethics in relation to probation practice since its establishment in 1907, the 8 core values and ethical principles reflect the cornerstones of probation work which has remained constant in the attitudes and beliefs of probation practitioners throughout the years (for example see Deering, 2010; Deering and Feilzer, 2015; Deering and Feilzer, 2019; Mathieson, 1992). Moreover, it is voluntary for probation practitioners to sign up to the Probation Institute and there are other codes at play such as the civil service code which also govern probation practice (although the research was conducted soon after the creation of the National Probation Service and so it is reasonable to assume that practitioners had not yet fully got to grips with the implications of this on their practice). Rather, it is interesting to note that the PI's Code of Ethics was developed in collaboration with probation practitioners, academics and others with links to probation work and therefore provides an example of how occupational display rules have explicitly informed contribute to the emotional labour expectations of probation practitioners.

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[1] We tentatively describe the Code of ethics as 'rules' due to the fact that the Probation Institute is not an overarching professional body which regulates practitioners conduct through compulsory membership which legitimises their right to practice in the same way as, for example, the Health and Care Professions Council in relation to social workers.

While Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) maintain that occupational and organisational display rules are generally consistent with each other, we align ourselves with Bolton who suggests that:

> Professionals have often to balance the feeling rules of their profession against the instrumental demands of public policy, or the dictates of the public bureaucracy which offers them employment. (2005, p.95)

In terms of the relationship between organisational and occupational display rules in relation to probation practice, probation occupational display rules have remained relatively constant over time. Changes to organisational display rules, on the other hand, require probation practitioners to imbue the ebb and flow of public policy. It is the negotiation of, and between organisational and occupational display rules which can be analysed using the lens of emotional labour in order to draw out the overlap, tension between, and divergence of the two.

2.3 Integrative, neutral and differentiating display rules

In addition to societal, organisational and occupational display that govern the display of emotion in relatively macro terms, we can also look to Wharton and Erickson's (1983) development of the concept and their use of integrative display rule, differentiating display rules and neutral display rules. These displays not only shed light on why emotions are being shown in particular ways but they also help us to think about the use of so-called 'positive' and 'negative' emotions and their role in probation work. They also enable us to hone in on how the display of emotion interacts with the relationship between the worker and the client. As the relationship between probation practitioner and client has long been considered critical to effective probation work these are particularly useful concepts to deploy.

Integrative display rules require the display of emotions by the worker which 'bind groups together' (Wharton and Erickson, 1993, p.463). The emotions required are therefore positive and so may require the suppression of negative emotions. These types of emotional displays are particularly prevalent in the service industry and none more so perhaps than the hospitality industry. As Romm (1989, p.34) suggests, 'Few business depend so directly on the feelings generated in their customers as does the food-service industry. Sociability is our product'.

Neutral display rules demand the display of emotional neutrality and restraint and is described as 'emotion masking' by Wharton and Erickson (1993, p.464). This type of

emotional display, therefore, just as in the case of interactive and differentiating display rules requires the suppression of emotion by the worker, but in this case both positive and/or negative emotion must be concealed, and has therefore been acknowledged by Trougakos et al (2011, p.350) that this can be a 'burdensome task'. The suppression of emotion is encouraged in professionals and is often linked to authority. As Smith and Kleinman (1989, 56) maintain, 'Because we associate authority in this society with an unemotional persona, affective neutrality reinforces professional's power and keeps clients from challenging them.

Differentiating display rules necessitate the display of emotions by the worker such as hostility and contempt (Grandey et al, 2013) in order to cause emotions such as fear, anger and contempt in the other person (Kemper, 1984 cited in Wharton and Erickson, 1993, p.464). The emotions to be displayed are therefore negative and may also require suppression of emotions such as pity. Interestingly, Wharton and Erickson (1993) point out that less is understood about these types of display rules, partly because very few jobs require these types of displays. However, one such job is that of a bill collector, and in his study, Sutton (1991) found that bill collectors were trained to display emotions that created an urgency, which would be imparted on the debtor. For example where a debtor was indifferent bill collectors were encouraged to display strong irritation and even anger in order to create an 'unpleasant experience' (Sutton, 1991, 258, quoting a supervisor), which would result in the debtor paying the bill.

The body of work on emotional labour is complex but invaluable in terms of shedding light on what probation practice looks like, and why. Through the interaction between sets of display rules we can begin to better understand the role of emotion in probation. Indeed, this interaction presents as a useful analytical framework with which to explore the use of emotion in probation as Wharton and Erickson's (1993) typology illuminates on what is being achieved through an emotional display using whilst the concept of occupational, organisational and societal help to explain why the emotion is used in a particular way. This analytic framework forms the basis of the subsequent analysis in this article.

3. Research Method

The data presented in this article were collected through semi-structured interviews during 2015; just after the introduction of the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms. Therefore, while not generalisable, and geographically bounded, the data are rich and offer us an in depth insight into the practice of probation practitioners (Creswell, 2012; Denscombe, 2014; Stake, 1995). We conducted 18 interviews with probation officers who worked for the National Probation Service (NPS). The experience of participants ranged from 6 months to 29 years

and participants were aged between 30 and 64. 17 participants described themselves as White British, with the remaining participant describing themselves as ethnically mixed. Of the 18 participants twelve were women and 6 were men which roughly reflects the gender makeup of the probation workforce. Due to the low numbers we have not accounted for age, ethnic origin nor the gender of participants has any bearing on the analysis for the purposes of the article although we acknowledge this is something which would be beneficial in future research. The sample was self-selecting and so there is the potential for skewed data as those who have something to say would be more likely to volunteer.

Participants were recruited through the NPS division and we gained access to six Local Delivery Units employing around 240 probation officers (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Therefore, we interviewed around 8% of probation officers. The probation locations were within urban settings. Thus, the sampling method was purposive with the only criteria being that participants worked for the NPS. The interviews took place at the participant's place of work and lasted on average 1 hour. The aim of the interview was to generate a conversation about the emotions that participants use in their everyday work and to discuss the impact of this on them personally. The data were analysed by one of the primary researchers using a process of thematic analysis. This is a flexible approach to data analysis that allows the identification and analysis of themes relating to a specific research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis resulted in a set of emotional displays which were subsequently analysed by referring to the interrelated display rules as discussed above.

4. Findings

Our review of the literature explored the way in which a key concept from the body of work on emotional labour - display rules - can be applied to the context of probation work. The remainder of this article focuses on how these rules manifest in probation practice. In doing so we explore what emotions are displayed, what they look like, what emotions are being suppressed, and what is attempted or achieved in terms of the display of particular emotions. We structure our findings according to Wharton and Erickson's (1983) integrative, neutral and differentiating rules as these are critical in terms of understanding of what is being attempted by probation workers. We overlay this analysis with a discussion of the relevant organisational, occupational and societal display rules. The intersection of these different display rules allows us to identify what shapes particular emotional displays, teasing out the conflicts and tensions inherent to this form of practice.

4.1 Integrative emotional displays

As described above, integrative display rules require workers to display positive emotions and suppress negative ones in order to develop a positive relationship with others. Participants described various ways in which they performed emotional labour through integrative emotional displays, and we discuss three in particular below, empathy, happiness and humour.

4.1.1 Empathy

Empathy was considered a key emotional skill by all participants bar one. Despite empathy being considered a key skill in probation work there is relatively little research on its shape and use. Andrews et al (1979 cited in Trotter, 2009) found that a high level of empathy in probation practitioners was positively linked to a reduction in reoffending rates when pro-social modelling was also used but there is very little more research on this. In the context of probation, empathy is described by one of our participants in the following way: as:

> I think you need to be able to, you know, try and put yourself in their shoes for
> a little while and, you know, you maybe would react differently but it's about
> understanding how they react. So I think that's a, you know, a given really for
> any probation officer. (NPS19)

Participants also alluded to how the use of empathy conforms to expected organisational and occupational emotional display rules. As the quotes below illustrate, in relation to the former, participants justified their use of empathy because it enables them to achieve the broader organisational goals of reducing reoffending. However, it is also important in terms of facilitating good working relation between themselves and their clients, a key aspect to probation workers' values and thus occupational display rules:

> [R]esearch suggests that, like, a good relationship is key in reducing
> reoffending. (NPS 13)

> I think it's that understanding of where they've come from and how they've got
> where they are…I think it's letting them know that you're bothered and I think
> there's an awful lot of showing that you care about them is important. (NPS 6)

> [Empathy's] the main one really isn't it? It's a sense of understanding where
> they are, how they've come to be where they are and trying to build a
> relationship. So, I think…you've got to try and get some sort of sense of
> commonality between yourself and the client to build that relationship and help
> them move forward. (NPS20)

One of the most important uses of empathy as an emotional tool for participants was as a means of developing a good relationship with clients, long considered the 'probation officer's main instrument' (Davies, 1969, p.121; Burnett and McNeill, 2006). However, participants were mindful of the different display rules governing the use of empathy. NPS13 refers to an organisational display rule focussing on public protection and a reduction in reoffending. While NPS 6 and NPS 20 highlight an occupational display rule, based on the dignity of individuals, which emphasises the importance of care and concern as well as a way of assisting clients to reintegrate into society. Such a display of empathy is likely to come into conflict with the more punitive nature of societal display rules around how to respond to people under probation supervision.

4.1.2 Happiness

Participants discussed the use of happiness in their work, mainly in the context of working with people who had done well whilst on their Order:

> So although I don't maybe show as much emotion in here I maybe still would be a little- I'm not going to hug them or do you know cry or anything like that, but I'd be pleased for them. I'll smile, do you know what I mean? I'll shake their hand, 'Well done.' You know compliments, things like that, as if, almost as if I'm stood in the room but I'm outside the room. So it would be a bit less inhibited but still quite controlled because I suppose I'm still in the job and they might come back. (NPS 10)

> **Participant:** It was pleasurable to sort of see the smile on his face and to listen to him talking about how happy he was in his life and things like that and also for him to hear that from his partner and kids and for them to have a different dad. And makes, gives you that fuzzy feeling that you come into the job for basically, that you are helping people in a positive manner, so...

> **Interviewer:** Did you show that emotion to him?

> **Participant:** I probably did. Again I always sort of hope that I'm doing that on a professional level to sort of say, "You're doing really well." So I give a lot of positive affirmation and I'll always say, "It's nice to see you doing so well, you being so happy" those sorts of things. I suppose, yeah, in that regard I am transferring the fact that it's pleasing to me as well, onto him. (NPS 3)

Such an emotional display is integrative in nature as it binds the officers to their client, again, highlighting the importance of the working relationship. Happiness also appears to be an important way of reinforcing 'pro-social' behaviour by giving explicit praise when the person is seen to have done something well. Interestingly, NPS3 conveyed happiness because the client was happy rather than because they had necessarily complied with the organisational

goals of reducing reoffending or public protection - that's not to say that he had not complied, but that it was incidental to these aims. We also see evidence of a belief in the capacity to change in the form of an expected occupational emotional display. Both NPS 10 and NPS 3 are expressing a genuine emotional response (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) to the fact that their clients are doing well. Indeed this authentic demonstration of the inherent value of a human is a useful illustration of a Kantian ethic in probation practice whereby people on probation are seen as people in their own right rather than as a means to the broader end of a safer community (Canton 2017; Canton and Dominey, 2017). This is not to say that there is no emotional labour involved in adhering to occupational and organisational display rules. As NPS 3 says later on in his interview:

> I'm often quite keen to remind clients of that boundary, whether it's on a negative or a positive front just so they know they can bear that in mind, there's nothing they can't sort of say especially if it's in regard to their risk because that's the basis of our relationship really. (NPS 3)

Here NPS 3 suggests how organisational display rules relating to risk must be complied with, and therefore also tempers the genuine expression of happiness displayed by probation practitioners. It is not, therefore, the case that occupational display rules are the only rules at play: rather, organisational and societal display rules act as inhibitors to genuine emotional displays, yet another example of how such display rules come into conflict in such a way as to contribute to the constitution of probation work.

4.1.3 Humour

Humour, a little discussed emotion in the context of probation work (unlike in prison, see for example (Nielsen, 2011) was raised by a number of participants as an emotion that they display when interacting with clients. Trotter (2015) draws on research linking the use of humour to successful outcomes with clients including diffusing anger, humanising the situation, creating distance between the client and their problem and providing context to prompt insight and facilitate empathic helping in the therapeutic process. Trotter (2015, p.173) goes on to talk about 'constructive humour' as occurring naturally, showing that the probation worker is treating the individual as a person rather than a client, breaking the tension, picking up on client's comments or acknowledging a client's feelings in a non-threatening way. Participants discussed humour in the following ways:

> Little one-liner on the back of something people might say and just sort of make a joke. Obviously it's at appropriate times, but especially in those first few weeks of that working relationship I think that can sort of break down

some of those walls and boundaries that people might have in sort of opening up…I mean you want them to be happier [laughs] you know make somebody laugh and then they're laughing then they're not unhappy are they in that precise second. (NPS 3)

Like sometimes, you know like I'll say things like jokingly to them like 'Oh my god, you haven't done that again have you?' or, you know, just something to kind of add a bit of humour with them – a bit of banter- because you do get to know the women really well. (NPS 9)

Take for instance, I had a goth...he was a monster of a guy, big, big, frightening guy but underneath he was a pussy cat…he used to get into so much trouble fighting all the time…He unloaded all this, you know, what happened as a child, and I displayed a lot of empathy as we walked through there, I said, 'You alright?' and he said, 'Yeah, yeah, I'll be alright'. I said, 'Hey no tears, your mascara's going to run', and he just burst out laughing and said '[NPS 21], you bastard, you know exactly what to say', and I said, 'I hope that wasn't inappropriate', and he said, 'No.' He said, 'that's just what I needed.' (NPS 21)

Although humour can be understood in negative terms through, for example, the prevalence of black humour and canteen culture in the context of the police (van Hulst, 2013), in probation humour it is used to conform to an integrative occupational display rule. For NPS 3, humour can help to convey a belief in the usefulness of positive relationships with clients, nicely encapsulated by the Probation Institute's (2015, Code 2) Code of Ethics: 'We believe in the worth of probation supervision in the community based on establishing positive relationships with service users, to promote their rehabilitation'. We can also see here evidence of a potential conflict between occupational and societal display rules where by using humour with an 'offender' might be considered socially unacceptable.

On the other hand, NPS9 describes using humour to challenge a client's offending behaviour. In this description we can see evidence of both organisational and occupational display rules at play. Her use of humour is a show of disapproval towards offending but its effectiveness and acceptability is wholly contingent upon a positive relationship between the probation practitioner and client. This might be understood in terms of societal display rules in that a display of disapproval towards offending might be part of how probation workers achieve the 'affective' aims of punishment (Maruna and King, 2004).

Both NPS 3 and NPS 21 however, did question the appropriateness of using humour suggesting that the rules regulating this display of emotion are not explicit. Our participants acknowledge the risky nature of this way of practising. In turn, this suggests the existence of edgework in probation, something which is described by Mawby and Worrall (2013, p.27) as

'the great unspoken'. They argue that practitioners engage in edgework in order to free 'themselves from, and better integrat[e] themselves into, modern working conditions'. Placing this in the context of occupational display rules, we argue that humour is an appropriate form of emotional labour, but that it still remains a voluntary risk taking activity. It can therefore bind the probation practitioner to the client, but with it comes the risk of adversely affecting the relationship or transgressing the use of appropriate emotion as defined by societal display rules.

4.2 Neutral emotional displays

As the title suggests, neutral emotional displays require the worker to display emotional neutrality and thus restraint in terms of the emotions displayed. This means the suppression of either positive or negative emotions and, at times, both. In this section we discuss the understanding by participants of the need to suppress shock and disgust.

4.2.1 Shock and disgust

Given the nature of the relationship between probation practitioners and clients and the need for professional boundaries, it is perhaps unsurprising that neutral displays of emotion are relatively common. Indeed, participants often raised examples of where they had had to mask their emotions, particularly in circumstances where a client is discussing the offence or issues relating to the offence:

> You're trying to create that environment where you know that they feel able to open up so you kind of have to be a bit blank sometimes so somebody might say something to you that's actually quite shocking but you don't want to kind of block them, you know you don't want to go 'Oh my God!'...so you have to be a bit neutral really when it, you know, a bit of a poker face you know like 'Oh right OK, that's interesting tell me a bit more about that', type thing, you know. (NPS 12)

> You know I'd try to you know keep a lid on that because it wouldn't be productive for them for starters if I'm sat there going, 'This is horrific, this is disgusting. I can't believe what you've done'. (NPS 11)

Both NPS 12 and NPS 11 show awareness that emotional displays such as shock and disgust would be interpreted as making a judgement of the client in relation to the offence committed. The perceived risk of not masking such emotions was that the practitioner / client relationship would be adversely affected or fail to materialise at all.

NPS 12 also goes on to talk about a situation where she was required to engage in 'surface acting' (Hochschild, 1983, p.33), which is the display of an emotion which is not actually felt by the worker. This occurred with respect to a client who, during a presentence report interview, began telling her about the fact that he had abused his child, causing bruising to her head and neck. Although he then backtracked, he showed her pictures of the child with the bruises. NPS 12 states:

> In my mind I'm thinking 'Friggin' 'ell, you know. You git for doing that', you know but well in my head [laughs] I thought I was quite neutral and I was like 'Oh right, OK' and trying to be, like I say, not closed down, you know, what we were saying because I need to get more information. (NPS 12)

When asked why it was important to act in this way, NPS 12 responded by stating, 'So that you've got enough to do the assessment so you can make an informed assessment about the risk.' In this case both occupational and organisational display rules are governing the emotional labour being performed. Being non-judgemental is a result of occupational display rules because of the underpinning belief in the inherent worth and dignity of the individual which steers probation workers from making judgments of their clients (Probation Institute, 2019). Whatever a probation practitioner may feel about what a client is telling them in relation to an offence they must not display that emotion. Additionally, if she were to display shock at the admissions of the client then it would be to acknowledge the pro-criminal behaviour of the client. While, pro-social modelling requires probation practitioners to challenge pro-criminal behaviour, to do so in this situation would result in the client being unwilling to talk further resulting in her not being able to accurately assess their risk. It is, therefore, here that we see evidence of organisation display rules which result in the practitioner suppressing shock and disgust in favour of a more neutral display in order to assess and manage risk more effectively.

Conforming to organisational and occupational display rules here also requires probation practitioners to defy powerful societal display rules, which situate the offender as 'other' and therefore conflating the offender and the offence:

> I think that is a skill because they're two very separate emotions. I am not judging him as a person because ... I believe if I felt he was the heinous monster that's portrayed in the local paper then I could not do my job. How I do that, not judge him, is just something I've learnt with experience… to separate the offence from the person. Those have to be separate. There isn't a sex offence that I would ever read and not be repulsed at; that's human nature and I am repulsed at every sex offence but the offence is the behaviour and I'm working with the person and that's the only way that I can separate the two. (NPS 14)

Neutral display rules are very common and serve the interests of the organisation as well as enabling probation practitioners to conform to important occupational values. However, by resisting societal display rules which seek to 'other' the offender, probation practitioners engage in what Worrall and Mawby (2013) describe as 'dirty work', which leaves them tainted by the previous harmful behaviour of the client. We can see, then, that performing emotional labour in this way is both complex and requires considerable effort.

4.3 Differentiating emotional displays

As mentioned earlier, in emotional labour literature, differentiating display rules are defined as the display of hostility and contempt in order to create fear or anger (Grandey et al, 2013). Workers who are required to display anger do so because it results in the 'best "customer" response' (Grandey, 2000). For example, Sutton (1991) documented that bill collectors were expected in some circumstances to respond angrily to indifferent, friendly or sad debtors in order to raise the debtor's arousal and worry about their bills. However, bill collectors were encouraged to remain calm with angry debtors because an angry debtor was considered too upset about the phone call to focus fully on the debt. Anger is thus a complex emotion and decisions around when to suppress or display it depend on organisational display rules as well as the specific circumstances of the case or client. Even in a job where anger is an organisational display rule - such as with debt collectors - the mirroring of anger by the worker is not considered effective.

4.3.1 Anger

In probation practice it would seem appropriate that workers suppress anger in order to conform to neutral organisational and occupational display rules as depicted in the previous As NPS11 describes:

> If they think that they're going to attend an appointment where they're going to be, you know, chastised or abused or looked down upon through anger or aggression or disgust- they're not going to want to attend and when they do they're going to want to leave as quickly as possible. They're not going to want to answer any questions for fear...Well what will your reaction be to me when I tell you something?' (NPS 11)

NPS 11 relates the suppression of anger to the development of a positive relationship with the client. However, one participant recalls rare occasions where he considered it appropriate to respond to a client's inappropriate behaviour - in this case being rude to the officer - with anger.

> Sometimes on the odd occasion I have met anger head-on, with anger…the ones that I've used it on thankfully, it's worked quite well because they never expected me to get angry, 'Well you can't get angry at me.' 'Why can't I get angry at you?' 'Well you're a probation officer.' 'So what. I'm still a human being. Actually what you've said to me has made me really angry. I'm really disgusted at that name you just called me. What makes you think that you have permission to, you know, talk to me like that.' (NPS 21)

It may seem that by 'meeting anger head-on with anger' NPS 21 is reciprocating the anger displayed by the client, and therefore we're seeing a form of 'emotional contagion' whereby emotions can be 'caught' (Strazdins, 2002: p.236, 237). However, NPS 21 legitimates his angry response to the client by describing it as a performance of emotional labour which is in accordance with both organisational and occupational display rules. The expectation that probation practitioners challenge anti-social behaviour is both the result of organisational and occupational display rules. For example, the use of anger in this case was about challenging an outburst which was indicative of an 'anti-social' attitude in order to change his behaviour and so we see NPS 21 conforming to societal and organisational display rules which say that people on probation must be challenged in order to change. But also the genuine emotion response to the client's outburst can be understood in terms of occupational display rules. By being genuinely offended by what the client said - and displaying this to the client - NPS 21 is implicitly saying that he respects him because otherwise he would not be affected by what he had called him. This performance of emotion, therefore, might be understood as a conduit for the probation value of respect and belief in the inherent worth of an individual.

The fact that NPS 21 says, 'thankfully' when he talks about the success of his emotional labour strategy here suggests that this is another example of edgework. It is clear that, as is the case when it comes to the use of humour, this type of emotional labour is risky. Perhaps all the more so given that it is achieved through a differentiating emotional display, which emphasises, rather than minimises the power dynamic between the probation practitioner and client, instead of behaviour that is primarily about binding them together.

4.3.2 Frustration and annoyance

Only one participant raised the use of anger, but other participants highlighted the use of other so-called negative emotions such as frustration and annoyance. These emotions were mainly displayed in response to clients who were seen to have gone off the rails somewhat:

> It is a bit frustrating … you've just spent numerous hours, days or whatever trying to organise getting somebody accommodation in somewhere that's kind of quite important and they just don't turn up for that...I might tell them,

occasionally I might [sigh] do you know it might come out like in a sigh or [frustrated sound] 'Why have you done that?' or but I would, no I wouldn't. I suppose because we're pro social modelling; if I'm losing it, that's not very good for him is it? That just says, 'Oh well if people are frustrated it's alright to lose it'…So I suppose you've kind of got to demonstrate that I'm normal and I have feelings and I do have thoughts and that I've got belief in them so when that things don't go [cough] right, I'm a normal person but it is certainly a lot more controlled. (NPS 10)

Participant: I can think of a few examples where somebody you were doing this with them, you were doing that with them, you were taking them to housing appointments and everything was going seemingly swimmingly and then you found that, yeah you felt disappointed. You felt like 'Oh god!'. Annoyed yeah kind of a bit 'Oh god, can't believe you've done this!', along them lines. 'You know, you've got this going for you, you've got that going for you, we'd almost got you where you wanted to be in terms of that housing project say', and you know like, 'What you've done now, why?', you know. So that would be the ones that came out of nowhere…

Interviewer: Would you say that kind of stuff to them?

Participant: Yeah if I couldn't understand it, of course I would. (NPS 18)

NPS 10 and 18 both describe how they conform to occupational differentiating displays rules which expect them to show honesty and integrity in their interactions with clients. Interestingly, NPS 10 raises the use of emotion as an example of pro-social modelling. Whilst emotions are discussed in relation to pro-social modelling the discussion often revolves around positive emotions (Trotter and Ward, 2013). Here, NPS10 uses negative emotions as a way of pro-social modelling the appropriate use of emotion. As is the case with reference to both happiness and anger, genuine emotion is being presented but in a subtle and highly controlled manner.

5. Discussion

Probation work involves a considerable amount of emotional labour. Previous analysis has alluded to the way in which probation practitioners need to be emotionally literate (Knight, 2014) and highlighted some of the ways in which probation work affects workers on an emotional level (Phillips et al, 2016; Westaby et al, 2016). This article is, to our knowledge, one of the few which examines, in detail, the emotions that probation workers display to their clients. Moreover, we have sought to understand what rules guide those emotional displays. Our analysis illustrates the complex range of emotional displays expected from practitioners in order to conform to organisational and occupational display rules. It is this duality of probation practice which makes it particularly emotionally laborious.

There is evidence that there is a considerable degree of uncertainty about what emotions are appropriate or otherwise, partly because the rules which govern them are unwritten, especially when it comes to occupational display rules which are, by their very nature, nebulous. This suggests that more needs to be done to allow practitioners to share their practice, discuss what emotions are used and why. It also points to the need for more research which examines the effectiveness, or otherwise, of certain emotional displays. We would suggest this focuses on those emotions which are close to the edge in terms of acceptable probation practice be that defined by organisations, practitioners, people on probation or members of the public.

We would also use our analysis to take a critical look at probation practice and the system which creates it. There are clearly many examples of practitioners suppressing, hiding and managing their emotions when interacting with clients; although there are also examples of genuine emotional displays. We would suggest that further work needs to be done in terms of questioning the appropriateness of this, as well as how people on probation experience emotional suppression of this kind. Indeed, emotional labour as a concept was first developed by Hochschild (1983) to critique profit-making businesses such as the airline industry which appropriated workers' emotions in order to turn a profit. Withstanding probation workers' commitment to the values of respect, non-judgemental attitudes and a belief in people's ability to change, a critical look at probation highlights its net-widening effect (Cohen, 1985), its pervasive nature (McNeill, 2018) as well as the pains inherent to being under supervision (Hayes, 2018). Thus, we should question whether, from an ethical perspective, the emotional labour inherent to probation work serves to perpetuate and mask the harms that arise from community sanctions.

Emotional labour has consequences for those who perform it. In particular, evidence suggests that high levels of surface acting - the act of suppressing emotions - can result in burnout which comprises emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Jeung et al, 2018). It is clear from our analysis that probation work involves a high degree of surface acting. There are, thus, implications here for employers in supporting practitioners with this aspect of their work. Emotional labour literature suggests that surface acting becomes easier to cope with if the rules which govern the use of emotion are more explicit (Morris and Feldman, 1996). Thus, we would suggest that more work needs to be done in terms of exploring and highlighting the emotions which practitioners experience, suppress, feel and display. There are several examples in our analysis of genuine emotional displays - such displays are less strongly correlated with emotional burnout and so organisations should seek to make genuine emotional displays more common and better understood. Where organisational and

occupational display rules are consistent with each other - i.e. the organisational goals and methods reflect the values of the workforce - workers have to cope with less emotional dissonance and conflict between the two and thus surface acting is less likely to occur.

Our study was small and with that comes clear limitations which must be borne in mind. Our findings are not generalisable but they do point to hitherto under-explored uses of emotion in probation. It is also worth acknowledging the inadequacies of using interviews as a way of generating data on this topic. We have had to rely on workers' own accounts of their emotional displays rather than seeing them in person: it may be that someone thought they were being neutral when in fact they were not. There is, then, a role for utilising observations as a means of shedding more light on the use of emotions in probation. We would also suggest that clients are involved in future research, as they are the recipients of such displays and so their experience will shed light on the effect of emotional labour in probation.

6. Conclusion

This article has explored the way in which probation practitioners in England and Wales display emotions when interacting with clients. By drawing on organisational, occupational and societal display rules we have sought to explain why emotions are displayed in particular ways. Probation workers have to manage both the structural rules which govern emotional displays as well as the rules which emanate from individual values and occupational cultures. Importantly, these rules are often in conflict with one another which makes probation particularly emotionally laborious. Probation work, thus far, has always involved face to face work with people who have broken the law and the field of probation is forever changing. The ebbs and flows in probation policy, goals and methods mean that probation workers will always need to adapt to new demands in terms of what emotional labour they do. Thus, we would argue that there is scope for training providers, practitioners, researchers and critical thinkers to use the concept of emotional labour to further their own work. If this is done then probation work can be made less emotionally labourful for workers and potentially less painful for clients.

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