

Conformity, conflict and negotiation in criminal justice work: Understanding practice through the lens of emotional labour

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Editorial special issue

Title: Conformity, conflict and negotiation in criminal justice work: understanding practice through the lens of emotional labour.

The theme of this special issue is how emotional labour can be used as a lens to consider conformity, conflict and negotiation in criminal justice work. Hochschild (1983) first developed the concept of emotional labour and defines it as 'the management of a way of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display...which is for a wage' (p.7, fn). Key to Hochschild's understanding of emotional labour are 'feeling rules'. Feeling rules are 'rules or norms according to which feelings are judged appropriate to accompanying events' (1983: 59). It is these feeling rules or 'display rules' (Morris & Feldman, 1996; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989), defined as 'behavioural expectations about which emotions ought to be expressed and those that ought to be hidden' (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989: 8), and regulate the emotional labour of workers who interact directly with others.

The articles within this special issue show how workers in a wide range of job roles throughout the criminal justice system traverse often complex emotional display rules. They consider both the formal and, at times, informal emotional display rules which govern criminal justice workers' emotional lives and how these workers negotiate these expectations through conformity and adaptation. The impact of the performance of these various types of emotional labour, both within and outside the work environment, is explored alongside the support which workers require and receive.

Mastracci and Adams begin with their quantitative study of United States police officers, and analyse the effects of individual officer characteristics, notably emotional exhaustion and surface acting, on the use-of-force. In this unique and innovative study Mastracci and Adams highlight the often unpredictable nature of emotion management of work as the primary officer (first on the scene). They therefore note the tendency of police officers to use surface acting rather than deep acting to conform to feeling rules that require often switching between neutral, human and disciplinary emotional displays. Mastracci and Adams found that police officers experiencing emotional exhaustion are less likely to use force, while those who are engaging in surface acting, rather than those whose emotional labour results in them becoming depersonalised -as seen in previous studies- are more likely to use force. This serves to provide an important contribution to police use-of-force literature and scope for future research into use-of-force as a workplace stressor.

In their unique mixed methods study Lennie, Crozier, and Sutton highlight the prescriptive nature of feeling rules which inform the emotional labour expectations of UK police officers, focusing on the relationship between emotional labour and burnout. Lennie et al. found depersonalisation to be both an expected emotional display manifested through what participants described as 'behaving like a robot', and a coping mechanism learnt through organisational culture. The data also reinforced the finding that depersonalisation is an aspect of burnout. Effectively, police officers in the study were expected to suppress emotions in front of both the general public and colleagues. With respect to the former, there is a requirement to conform to neutral display rules in order to demonstrate professionalism, and this also permeates into interactions with colleagues resulting in higher levels of emotional exhaustion. Police officers felt it was impossible to share certain emotions for fear

of reprisals such as questions over fitness to perform or being passed over for promotion. Interestingly though, anger was displayed as a way of excluding fear, and is one of only two examples of deep acting reported by police officers. However, emotional suppression continued into the police officers' home life, as a result of participants not wanting to burden their partners with their emotional pain. Lennie et al end by highlighting the importance of shedding light on the emotional pressures and coping mechanisms used by police officers so that the police service can provide adequate support to change the current organizational culture and allow emotional disclosure.

Barry, in her study of Irish prison staff, also explores the prescriptive and often repressive nature of emotional labour expectations in the Irish Prison Service in relation to the death of prisoners. However, by exploring the management of emotions during the emergency response to the death of a prisoner, in the immediate aftermath, and beyond the immediate aftermath, Barry reveals that both time and space is created for prison officers to speak to peers about distressing or stressful incidents. Nevertheless, while negotiation in terms of emotions displayed is possible, they are still subject to feeling rules which guides the emotion management to be undertaken. Barry describes how the tightly controlled emotional display expected during the emergency response to a prisoner's death is loosened somewhat in the immediate aftermath to provide a way of 'moving on'. Emotional displays of humour towards the deceased prisoner are permitted, as well as empathy, but they have distinct boundaries in terms of how such emotions are expressed. Barry describes how when analysing expected emotional displays beyond the immediate aftermath, feeling rules once again contract, and seeking support through formal mechanisms was derided. All the while informal support remains limited for those working on wings and landings due to a lack of availability of time and space to cope communally. As was the case in Lennie et al's study of police officers, prison officers attempted to conceal their experiences dealing with the deaths of prisoners from their families. Barry demonstrates that feeling rules relating to the expected emotional displays of prison officers, both during and following the death of a prisoner, ensures that the concealment of emotional vulnerabilities within and beyond the prison walls, but the question remains at what cost?

Humblet also explores the emotional labour expectations of prison officers, this time in Belgium prisons. However, the focus of her study is the emotional labour of prison professionals-in this case prison officers and prison nurses-in their interactions with ageing prisoners. Humblet reflects on the juxtaposition of two diametrically opposed types of emotional labour expected by those prison staff responsible for ageing prisoners, that is to be 'professionals of custody' and 'professionals of care'. Humblet describes how prison officers attempt to detach from the older prisoners under their supervision as a result of the highly masculinised environment within which they work. Physical intimacy with prisoners was generally left to other prisoner actors, including prison nurses. However, Humblet notes that even prison nurses tended to objectify and medicalised in order to avoid becoming emotionally involved. What is made clear through the descriptions by prison staff is the influence of the institutional perspective on the emotional labour expectations of prison officers in particular. Prison officers talked about how older prisoners were still prisoners and therefore should be treated accordingly, but nonetheless recognised that ageing prisoners were not generally seen as a security threat. This, though, led to a need for participants to legitimise their position as a professional of custody, and the emotional displays they were expected to present to older prisoners. Therefore, rather than emphasis being placed on

carrying for these types of prisoners, prison officers explained how prisoners would use their advanced age in order to seek attention and manipulate prison staff. This in turn is used as a way of justifying the disciplinary procedures imposed on them. Humblet however found that there were moments where prison officers perform emotional labour as professionals of care, and for example, where older prisoners reminded prison officers of parents or grandparents. Humblet ends by highlighting the fact that prison staff work within an occupational environment where emotional labour expectations align with them as professionals of custody. This creates uncertainty for those working with older prisoners where caring emotional displays are seen as inappropriate. Humblet argues that a cultural change is required and that specialist training should be provided to recognise and respond to the increase in ageing prisoners. This needs to be underpinned by further research in this largely invisible area of study.

Tidmarsh moves discussion to another criminal justice institution, focussing on probation in England and Wales, which through the government's Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) reforms, underwent dramatic change between 2014 and 2019. In his article, Tidmarsh shows how, by linking organizational professionalism and emotional labour, probation practitioners within one particular Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) have maintained a professional identity which is intimately bound up with a client-centred ideology. This is in spite of a continuing movement towards increasing administrative pressures which has been exacerbated by TR. Tidmarsh highlights the people-orientated values which underpin probation practice and how these inform the type of emotional labour performed by probation staff as well as how they perform it, often through genuine expression. It is these values which motivate probation practitioners to adapt to further pressures placed on them and thus work even harder. Therefore, this ensures not only that the requirement to increasingly engage with information technology is adhered to, but also the work done with clients, in part to prevent harm to both the public and the clients themselves, through the performance of emotional labour such as empathy and frustration. However, while probation practitioners are motivated to attempt to maintain such working practices, Tidmarsh documents the inevitable stress, strain and sickness which occurs. Particularly apparent, and resonant with earlier articles in this special issue, is the spillover which occurs from work life into the family life of participants. Tidmarsh concludes by stressing the importance of organisations being more proactive in terms of safeguarding probation worker's emotional wellbeing and the need for support, both emotionally and administratively.

In the second article which considers probation practice in England and Wales, Westaby, Fowler, and Phillips consider the underpinning values of probation practice, and how practitioners confirm to, and negotiate those values and the display rules which underpin the emotional labour they perform with clients. Central to the study by Westaby et al is an understanding of how occupational, organisational and societal display rules are connected to probation values, and further manifested through integrative, neutral and differentiating display rules. They found that integrative display rules, which require the display of positive emotions, were adhered to by probation practitioners, and participants talked about the display of happiness, empathy and the use of humour. The first two emotional displays were achieved through the genuine expression of emotion, as can be seen in Tidmarsh's study. Humour was discussed by participants in terms of investing in the creation of a positive working relationship with clients, or as challenging a client's offending behaviour. However, with respect to the latter, the authors note an apprehension as to the appropriateness of

humour from probation practitioners. In contrast participants understand the importance of neutral emotional displays as opposed to, for example, showing shock and disgust when interacting with clients. With respect to differentiating display rules, which require the worker to display negative emotions, Westaby et al reveal how the display of anger is legitimated, albeit with a sense of unease at its appropriateness, by one probation practitioner. This display of anger is explicitly linked with organisational and occupational display rules of probation practice, namely challenging anti-social behaviour and the respect and belief in the inherent worth of the individual. Westaby et al highlight the need to recognise the emotionally labourful nature of probation practice made more challenging by the requirement of workers to manage the structural rules and individual values which manifest through sometimes conflicting emotional display rules. In addition, these rules do not always remain static and therefore probation practitioners are required to adapt to new emotional labour demands.

Finally, Burke, Taylor, Millings and Ragonese explore an under researched area of criminal justice, namely voluntary sector providers (VSP). In their study they use literature on emotional labour shed light on the experiences of VSP delivering through the gate services in a resettlement prison following the implementation of TR. Burke et al show the difficult work undertaken by VSPs in an already demanding emotional environment, which had become even more challenging as a result of TR. This is because VSP had to cope with new roles as resettlement service partners. Participants described how this was achieved through informal 'communities of coping' in the absence of formal support mechanisms. Burke et al also consider the emotional labour required in the implementation of these new roles and particularly the deep acting needed to do the job, which participants described as resulting in stress and burnout. VSP also show how they worked hard emotionally, going beyond expected performance targets in a similar way described by Tidmarsh, motivated by the desire to make a difference for the prisoners they worked with. However, detachment was also common amongst VSP in order to cope with feelings of negativity and frustration as a result of seeing a lack of support to prisoners once they were back in the community. Burke et al then move on, in the later sections of their article to consider the boundary spanning nature of the emotional labour undertaken by VSP as they navigated re-shaped and existing expectations of prison staff, prisoners and CRCs. They show how, in the face of antipathy and resentment towards them, resettlement and TR in varying degrees from prison staff and community-based CRC workers VSP, rather than resorting to surface acting, in fact engaged in deep acting as a result of a deep identification with their role. Burke et al demonstrate that in the face of extensive change and with limited physical and emotional resources and support, VSP displayed resilience and interconnectedness with one another which helped them traverse the complex and at times uncertain emotional labour expected from a variety of stakeholders. Nevertheless, the potentially negative consequences of this type of emotional labour particularly given the connections made between their new role and TR by stakeholders is undeniable. Burke et al conclude that commissioners need to be more aware of the emotional labour required and support provided in order to mitigate further change and potential anxiety for staff now that probation is to be restructured once again.

The articles in this special issue engage with the ways in which emotional displays in a range of criminal justice institutions are defined by differing sets of display rules. This research, therefore, adds to the body of evidence on how criminal justice practitioners conform to emotional labour expectations, as well as the conflicts that occur in criminal

justice work which they must negotiate with on a daily basis. These articles also point to the potentially adverse consequences of these emotional displays and stress the importance of institutions taking these consequences seriously so that staff are better supported in their performance of the emotional labour that is inherent to their work. If staff can cope more effectively with the emotional demands of their job then they are, in turn, more likely to be able to practice more effectively, especially in terms of limiting the chances of burnout, depersonalisation and emotional exhaustion which are particularly detrimental to the relational element of criminal justice work which is important in terms of being effective, enhancing legitimacy, and provides staff with considerable levels of job satisfaction.

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