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Exploring the relationship between emotions and probation practice

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Exploring the relationship between emotions and probation practice

Andrew Michael Fowler

Published works submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2025

Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.

2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

3. I certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.

4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy, and ethics approval has been granted for all research studies in the thesis.

5. The word count of the thesis is 9,993.

Name	Andrew Michael Fowler
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I. Abstract

The aim of the collected published work is to explore emotions and their relationship with probation work. I present my research against a backdrop of combined disciplinary concepts including emotional labour, effective practice and burnout to answer three research questions:1) How does the context of policy and probation culture shape emotional displays in probation work? 2) What does the use of emotion look like in probation work? 3) What are the consequences of the use of emotion in probation work?

Using pragmatist philosophy, I implemented a qualitative approach to research mainly through semi-structured interviews with probation workers to generate several sets of findings. This body of work expands on a growing literature that reframes the use of emotions in probation work as an essential feature of effective probation practice.

I examined the gaps in literature when considering emotion in probation practice, how this body of work contributes to filling those gaps and future considerations for emotions in probation practice. The collection of 8 publications shows that emotional labour is inherent to probation work. My research makes a three-fold contribution to the field:

- It highlights the marginalisation of emotion in probation policy and the enduring significance of using emotions to practice probation.
- It provides a better understanding of how policy, organisational aims, societal and professional expectations shape emotional displays in probation practice.
- It demonstrates the consequences of complex emotional work in probation for practitioners and managers through the lens of emotional labour.

The thesis shows how this corpus of work contributed to the recognition of the importance of emotions to contemporary penology, probation policy, practice, training and research.

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II. List of publications

Publication no.	Details of publication	My role in publication preparation	Digital Object Identifier
P1.	Phillips, J., Westaby, C., & Fowler, A. (2016). *"It's relentless": the impact of working primarily with high risk offenders*. 63 (2), 182-192.	All authors had equal input (33%) into the research design, data collection, analysis and writing of the article.	https://doi.org/10.1177/0264550516648399
P2.	Westaby, C., Phillips, J., & Fowler, A. (2016). Spillover and work–family conflict in probation practice: Managing the boundary between work and home life. *European Journal of Probation*, *8*(3), 113–127.	I was the third author (15%) contributing to research design, data collection, analysis and revising the article.	https://doi.org/10.1177/2066220316680370
P3.	Fowler, A., Phillips, J., Westaby, C. (2019) *Understanding emotions as effective practice. The performance of emotional labour in building relationships*. In Evidence-Based Skills in Criminal Justice: International research on supporting rehabilitation and desistance. Edited Ugwudike, P., Raynor, P., and Annison, J. Policy	I was lead author (70%), citing other key members of the research team as co-authors as conventional.	https://doi.org/10.46692/9781447332978.012

	Press. University of Bristol. pp. 243-262.		
P4.	Westaby, C., Fowler, A., & Phillips, J. (2020). Managing emotion in probation practice: Display rules, values and the performance of emotional labour. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, *61*, 100362-.	I was the second author (33%). All authors had equal input into the research design, data collection, analysis and writing of the article.	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcj.2019.100362
P5.	Fowler, A., Phillips, J., & Westaby, C. (2021). Emotions in context: the marginalisation and persistence of emotional labour in probation. In *Emotions in context: the marginalisation and persistence of emotional labour in probation*. Routledge.	I was lead author (70%), citing other key members of the research team as co-authors as conventional.	https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429055669
P6.	Westaby, C., Phillips, J., Ainslie, S., & Fowler, A. (2023). "Pushed from above and pushed from below": Emotional labour and dual identities amongst senior probation officers in England and Wales. *European Journal of Probation*, *15*(1), 40–59.	I was the third author (25 %) contributing to research design, data collection, analytical framework, analysis, revising and proofreading the article.	https://doi.org/10.1177/20662203221144119

P7.	Fowler, A., Brown, P., & Bickley, T. (2024). "Once a finger is pointed at you, that part of you has gone": The completion of Horizon programme in the community and carceral citizenship for men with sexual convictions. *Probation Journal*.	I was lead author (70%), citing other key members of the research team as co-authors as conventional.	https://doi.org/10.1177/02645505231221198
P8.	Fowler, A., Phillips, J., Westaby, C., & Ainslie, S. (2025) Dirty work in probation: the breadth and depth of taint amongst specialist roles. The British Journal of Criminology.	I was lead author (70%), citing other key members of the research team as co-authors as conventional.	https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azaf026

Table 1: Each output with assigned Publication number (herein referred to as P1, P2, etc.), full APA reference, type of publication and digital object identifier (DOI)

III. Acknowledgments

A heartfelt, emotionful thanks to everyone who has supported me with the production of this thesis over the last 8 years, in particular: my wife Deb, my children Emilia and Aoife and Jake for unwavering encouragement; my writing and research buddies including Chalen and Sam; Vicky for being an excellent mentor; the University's Department of Law and Justice for funding, and everyone who has shared kind words, given feedback and support.

IV. Ethics statement

All research linked to this thesis received full ethics approval from the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Committee.

V. Critical appraisal of published works

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Probation Service in England and Wales is the subject of this retrospective PhD by publication. For context, The Probation Service supervises 240,362 people with convictions (MoJ, 2024). This is nearly three times the prison population which currently stands at 87, 919 prisoners (MoJ, 2024). This thesis is concerned with statutory supervision which is the legal requirement for The Probation Service to supervise people who are serving community sentences or have been released from prison (Canton, 2014). More specifically, the use of emotions by the probation worker to build a relationship with a person under probation supervision and the consequences of this emotional work (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7 & P8). It is argued that this emotional labour in probation has been marginalised due to political posturing to toughen up probation, the application of market principles, managerialism, surveillance practices and the punitive turn (Pratt, 2005) (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7 & P8). Emotional labour is the 'management of a way of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display … for a wage' (Hochschild, 1983:7). The Probation service has been depicted as a marginalised institution within the criminal justice system, described as the Cinderella service never invited to the ball (Robinson 2016) (P8). Moreover, the use of emotions has been marginalised and rendered invisible within the criminal justice system more broadly (Karstedt 2002, 2004, 2011) and within probation work (Knight 2014) (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 & P8).

The contribution of this work is threefold. Firstly, it illustrates how the policy, probation culture and marginalisation of emotion shapes the emotional labour performed by practitioners (P1, P3, P5, P6 & P8). Secondly, it augments the evidence that emotions are key to building relationships between the probation practitioner (PP) and person under probation supervision (P1, P3, P4 & P5). Thirdly, it demonstrates the consequences of this emotional labour for probation workers (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 & P8). I will reflect on my own research journey to spotlight my contribution in collaborative work and my development as a researcher. In this

corpus of research emotions are a resource, skill, coping mechanism and vital to maintain PP wellbeing.

As a former PP, I know how much I emotionally invested in working with people on probation and the intense feelings that occur. Further to this I recall the consequences of feeling emotionally exhausted at the end of the day. The emotional investment was propelled by my values which included working with people towards change, social justice and reducing harm in society. These personal and professional experiences and this body of work can be summarised with this quote from Mary E. Guy:

> *In law enforcement and corrections, managing feelings is part of the job. Emotion matters, just as cognitive and technical skills matter. All skills that must be applied in order to be effective on the job, to care about the work and return to it tomorrow*. (Guy, 2021:xix)

Mary E. Guy's foreword to our edited book, *Emotional Labour in Criminal Justice and Criminology* (Phillps et al., 2021), captures an underpinning theme in all the publications which have focused on practitioners in The Probation Service. This emotion work (Bolton, 2000) in probation is where emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) has been applied to bring to the fore how emotions are performed in probation for a wage to further the statutory aims of public protection, rehabilitation, enforcing sentences and supporting victims (Offender Management Act, 2007, s. 1)**.** This thesis shows that emotional work is complex, integral to practice and emotional labour is one way of doing emotional work.

Overall, the golden thread that runs through the publications focuses on how practitioners manage feelings, how they use them as a skill to be effective in their work, manage their wellbeing and consequences of this emotional work. The main themes that underpin 8 selected publications are connected by the body of literature they draw on, the theoretical framework of emotional labour and the significance of practitioner's emotions in their work. These themes include the politicisation of probation; the nature and extent of emotional labour; the relationship between emotions and effective practice and the consequences of emotional labour, including burnout (Jeung, Kim and Change 2018; Phillips et al., 2025). This body of work

extends Knight's (2012) research around emotional literacy in probation work which argues emotions are hard and productive rather than a 'soft skill' (Knight, 2014a: 8).

1.2 Research Questions

This critical appraisal addresses three research questions. These are mapped against the list of publications in table 2:

Research question	Corresponding publication
1) How does the context of policy and probation culture shape emotional displays in probation work?	P1, P3, P4 & P5
2) What does the use of emotion look like in probation work?	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 & P8
3) What are the consequences of the use of emotion in probation work?	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7 & P8

An account of the origins of the research that supports the 8 articles is detailed in Appendix 1. Details of the 4 studies that underpinned the articles in the critical appraisal are listed below.

Details of the 4 studies that underpinned the articles in critical appraisal.

Studies	Timeframe	Method	Sample	Location
Study 1 Emotional labour and probation practice	Data gathering 2016 - 2017	Semi-structured interviews	24 interviews 17 Probation Officer 12 female 5 male 7 Community Rehabilitation Company	North of England National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company

			Responsible Officers 5 female male	
Study 2 An evaluation of the Reflective Practice Supervision Standards in the National Probation Service	Data gathering 2020 - 2021	Semi-structured interviews and survey	61 interviews 33 Probation workers and 28 Senior Probation Officers 1508 survey respondents 557 Probation Officers 360 Probation Service Officers 246 Professional Qualification in Probation trainees 224 Other 836 female 285 male	National Probation Service in England and Wales
Study 3 Desistance narratives for men with sexual convictions post Horizon programme.	Data gathering 2021	Semi-structured interviews	15 interviews All male	North of England National Probation Service
Study 4 Skills Effective Engagement Delivery and Supervision 2 (SEEDS2)	Data gathering 2024-25	Semi-structured interviews and survey	62 interviews 32 people on probation 30 staff 17 Probation workers 9 Senior Probation Officers and 4 Senior Managers and Senior Leaders	National Probation Service in England and Wales

			408 survey respondents 293 Probation workers 103 Senior Probation Officers 42 Senior Managers and Senior Leaders	

1.3 Methodology

This section begins with consideration of the ontological and epistemological position underpinning the approach to the published works mapping my development as a researcher with a pragmatic philosophy. Then I provide a discussion and critical appraisal of each publication including underpinning research and the analytical framework.

1.3.1 Philosophy

Entering Higher Education from probation practice and at an applied institution has shaped my approach to research which has leaned towards the philosophy of pragmatism. Rorty (1987: 46) suggests a pragmatic reality sees truth as based on whatever results in productive, pro-social outcomes at that moment after listening to: "as many suggestions and arguments as you can". I can see merits in different research paradigms (Kuhn, 1972) depending on the subject and context being explored. The aggregation of qualitative research into PPs' emotional experiences allowed practitioners to communicate meaning in their world in their own words (Kvale, 2007). Interviewing probation workers and reporting back on the themes from these semi-structured interviews is a version of reality at a given point in time, in a specific context which hopefully leads to some better outcomes for practitioners and people on probation. As a former practitioner, working in an applied university and teaching the probation qualification, a key motivation in my research has been to contribute to enhancing the evidence base for practice and practitioners. In the main this has involved trying to open a conversation about quality in practice and the importance of emotions.

The pragamatist tradition speaks to my epistemological position today. I would argue that originally, in study 1(See appendix 2), I was committed to the epistemology and ontology underpinning the research as interpretivism and constructionism. This was assumption was based on the 'incompatibility thesis' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2009: 15) which is the false dichotomy that qualitative and quantitative paradigms and associated methods cannot be mixed. Moreover, the positivist approach to 'what works' in probation neglected emotion (P3). To understand emotion as effective practice requires an understanding of a practitioner's subjective, lived experiences. Contrary to the positivist tradition, interpretivism recognises that the researchers cannot separate themselves from their 'social research environment' (Heap and Waters, 2019: 85); that findings are contextual and provisional rather than generalisable truths. I can see the sense in the ontological position of constructivism that there could be subjective, multiple experiences and co-constructed realities (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2007). Philosophically, as I developed as a researcher over study 2-4 I believed that there could be singular and multiple realities that are socially constructed and open to empirical enquiry rather than a truth or reality (Feilzer, 2010). In studies 2 and 4 (appendix 2), this influences the research design which offers quantifiable and subjective data. Further to this, completing evaluations on behalf of His Majesty's Prisons and Probation research has contributed to the choice of the best methods to answer the research questions that are being explored This non-paradigmatic research allows for flexibility and an adaptable approach to utilise a wide range of tools and perspectives. Currently, I am open to exploring the best method that meets the perceived needs of the social inquiry or 'methodological pluralism' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2009: 14) and remain open minded to this in the pragmatist tradition of knowledge creation.

The main method of data collection was semi-structured interviews for the list of publications. This sought to produce rich data that allowed for an in-depth understanding of everyday probation practice (Cresswell, 2012; Denscombe, 2017). This method is compatible with pragmatism in that it works best to answer the research questions in the studies (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2009), for example in study 2 to find out how SEEDS2 had an impact on line management and supervision. In study 1 a purposive sample was used with the criteria the participant

worked in the National Probation Service (NPS). In P6, a mixed method approach, including a survey and interviews was adopted in collaboration with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) (P8). P7 was co-produced by a former service user and probation practitioner.

Overall, thematic analysis has been used to analyse data in the articles submitted. This is a flexible approach to analysis that allows the identification and analysis of themes that relate to a specific research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006). During analysis I spent time coding using sensitising concepts from emotional labour and generating new codes. For P6 I moved between qualitative analysis for the interviews and quantitative analysis for the survey data. Following an iterative process, I moved from the data to theory and back again. The analysis in the submitted articles has followed an inductive process, which is compatible with the inclusive practice of pragmatism (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2009), where I generated themes that formed new contributions to knowledge and theory.

1.3.2 Positionality

As a former PP it is important to recognise how my distortions or preconceptions (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015) influenced the research process. In interpretivist research where knowledge construction is situated in the relations between people, as someone who shares a professional background with some of the participants who have been PP, this confers an insider status where there is no pretence of objectivity. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) list advantages of being an insider, for example, a superior understanding of the group's culture or natural ability to interact with members of the group. I feel like the research I have conducted has benefited from some of these qualities, yet I still do not feel comfortable with the label of being an 'insider'. Breen (2007) suggests with each advantage of being an insider a disadvantage presents, for example, losing perspective on your own bias and new ethical challenges like having existing relationships with participants. Hence the importance of reflexivity to 'recognise our own influence – and the influence of our social and cultural context on the research' (Fook and Askeland, 2006:45) and knowledge creation to be aware of bias.

In summary, throughout the research process I have constantly questioned what knowledge I offer and how my knowledge could be valuable, helpful, or improved. This inspired another interdisciplinary research project and output about pracademics (See Dickinson, Fowler and Griffiths, 2022). With a pragmatic attitude the aspiration is that the body of work contributes to evidence-based practice in two ways: (i) that the research is constructive to support practitioners to find a language to express the emotional complexity of the work ii) to support continued engagement in effective practice with people on probation through the maintenance of wellbeing.

2. Analysis of Component Parts

2.1 P1

The paper draws on 17 semi-structured interviews, from 2016, with PPs working in the NPS in England and Wales. The context is that Probation Officers (PO) in the NPS were now working primarily with people on probation assessed as high risk of serious harm. The rationale to generate empirical data was to find out about the impact on probation workers of this concentrated caseload comprising of people assessed as high risk. Initially, we hypothesised that this would increase pressure on the POs and the findings revealed more nuance in the impact on PPs.

My main contribution to the study was the design of the interview schedule, ethical application, supporting access to the field through my network of contacts in practice, data collection and writing the final article. As the only former PP on the research team this insider knowledge was helpful in the analysis. I also had to be careful not to project my own emotions (Roller and Lavrakis, 2015) onto the interpretation of transcripts and production of knowledge (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). The recommendations form this article include better supervision of staff and a review of the high caseloads contributing to high levels of stress for staff. In terms of the analytical framework, data had been collected to focus on probation practice through the lens of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). Whilst this paper did not apply the analytical framework of emotional labour it did offer empirical evidence of the emotional impact of supervising a high-risk caseload.

A practitioner response piece to this article by Rosie Lee (2017) affirmed that supervisory support is inadequate and resources should be focused on the practitioners' need to reflect on the emotional impact of high-risk work. In addition, the article was drawn upon by Carr (2021) and Renehan (2021) as evidence of the consequences of Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) and the wellbeing of practitioners.

This article also contributed to a growing body of work highlighting the impact of TR and the wellbeing of practitioners. This included work by Kirton and Guillaiume (2015), Burke and Millings (2016), Burke et al., (2020), Renehan (2021) and Tidmarsh (2020a; 2020b). The limitations of the paper include a small sample size,

even though we did not seek to generalise from our study it was geographically bounded to a small area with 17 participants.

According to the Web of Science database:

- Cited 42 times
- 'Above average' Category Normalized Citation Impact[1] (CNCI) and Journal Normalized Citation Impact (JNCI)[2].
- 8 citations in criminology and Penology, 1 in Law, 1 in Education research and 1 citation in Psychology.

2.2 P2

From the same dataset this article expands on the impact of probation work on practitioners' family lives.[3] P2 developed the work-family conflict (WFC) analytical framework (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985) with the consideration of darker and altruistic imaginings, which revealed the occupational culture past and present in probation. My role was contributing to the analysis through discussions with my writing colleagues and revising the final article. The section on altruistic and dark imaginings came from these discussions. My involvement in the initial research project is detailed above.

Building on the work of Crawley's (2002, 2004) ethnography of prison officers and spillover, this paper is the first to consider spillover for PPs. It is recognised that spillover is bidirectional between work and family life. This paper argues that there are significant implications for the NPS to consider in relation to PPs wellbeing and effective service provision. I contributed the consideration of 'dirty work' also drawing

[1] Category Normalized citation impact 'above average' this is the ratio of a document's actual times cited count to the expected count for the same document of the same type, form the same category and published in the same year

[2] Journal Normalized citation impact is 'above average'. Journal Normalized Citation Impact (JNCI) is the ratio of a document's actual times cited count to the expected count for a document of the same type, from the same journal, and published in the same year.

[3] In this article we state there are 18 participants, rather than 17 as in the previous article. This is an error.

on Crawley's (2002) work with prison officers and Mawby and Worrall's (2013) study of probation workers, which led to the development of P8.

The article added to the literature in a variety of fields and jurisdictions including, hate crime, education and law in Germany, Belgium, Canada and America. It also resonated with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic when working from home proliferated. The overarching contribution is to raise awareness of the occupational stresses experienced by workers, not limited to their time in the workplace (Lott, 2020; Millings et al., 2023; Maier, Ricciardelli and Norman, 2024). This builds evidence of the need for organisations to consider their role in supporting the well-being of their staff.

A limitation of the research was that we focused on nuclear families and heterosexual relationships. This reflects our data and the impact beyond these demographics could be a direction for future research.

According to the Web of Science database:

- the article has been cited 27 times, with an
- 'Above average' CNCI and JNCI.
- 14 citations in Criminology and Penology, 6 in Law, 4 in Education research, Sociology and 1 citation in 9 more disciplines.

2.3 P3

This chapter represents the first piece of writing where I was the lead author. It came from my idea about a training package called Skills for Effective Engagement and Delivery (SEED) (Sorsby et al., 2013). I delivered SEED workshops as a practitioner in the National Probation Service before joining Sheffield Hallam University as a Lecturer. I shared with the research team the lack of attention to emotions as effective practice in the SEED training on building relationships. It is also the first time we had written about emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) as a framework for analysis in our written work from our original dataset. It was the first time the term 'emotional labour' had been applied in academic literature to the context of probation work. The focus is on the practitioner's use of deep and surface acting to understand the clients and manage their own emotions. This chapter concentrated on the

marginalisation of emotion in probation practice drawing on Knight's (2014) work around emotional literacy.

The chapter argues that emotion has been marginalised even though studies (Trotter, 1996; Rex, 1999; McNeill and Weaver, 2010; Knight, 2014a) have shown it is effective in reducing recidivism. Moreover, we agree with Knight that emotion has become ordinary and expected rather than 'hard and 'productive' (Knight, 2014a). The rationale for considering SEED was its compilation of contemporary evidence-based practice in probation work. There was a suggestion by senior leaders in The Probation Service that it could be reintroduced. The training programme was abandoned due to the disruption caused by the TR policy reforms.

The findings in this chapter demonstrated the importance of empathy to building relationships and interpreted practitioners' definitions of empathy as evidence of the need to deep act. Hochschild (1983) also links the frequency of deep acting to emotional exhaustion and burnout. I did not make this link in this study; however, it did influence subsequent research and analysis (Phillps et al., 2024). Practitioners also described surface acting (Hochschild 1983). Again, this is seen as essential to the job to achieve organisational goals like public protection and it has been linked to depression, burnout, low job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion (Erickson and Wharton, 1997; Brotherton and Grandey, 2002; Bono and Vey, 2004). The analysis of probation practice through the lens of emotional labour illuminated ways in which organisational goals of public protection and rehabilitation manifested in the emotional work with people on probation. From this I started to consider the complexity of emotional labour in probation work and the impact or emotional toll on practitioners.

This chapter added to the literature about the complexity and consequences of the emotional work for probation practitioners. The article is cited across jurisdictions including Canada, Sweden, and England (Hayes, 2018; Flower, 2019; Burke, et al., 2021; Tomczak and Quinn, 2021; Learoyd and Bryan, 2023; Norman, Ricciardelli and Maier, 2024). Hayes (2018) refers to the chapter as evidence of the difficulty of supervising people with criminal convictions. It has further been drawn upon in articles about the penal voluntary sector, speech and language therapy and parole hearings. According to Scopus:

- Cited over 11 times
- Field Weighted Citation Impact of ‘above average’

2.4 P4

In this paper I began to look at what can be learned from research into emotional labour from other disciplines to inform probation practice in England and Wales. This was based on an analysis of interview data collected in 2015 and early 2016. By focusing on emotions in probation practice it revealed more about the role of probation, the values and unwritten rules that shape it. The article explores the relationship between what PPs are supposed to do based on organisational goals, aims and occupational culture and the way they manage emotions to achieve these goals. These unwritten rules are characterised as the ‘display rules’ (Morris & Feldman, 1996: 988). To my knowledge, this paper is the first to consider anger, frustration and complex emotions with organisational display rules including the values that underpin these rules. I developed these ideas by presenting at the British Society of Criminology conference in 2018, *Happiness, disgust and annoyance: the display rules of probation practice*.

In the discussion it is argued that further research is required due to the practitioner’s uncertainty about what emotions are appropriate to display and which ones are effective in achieving organisational goals. It is also argued that there are consequences for those who perform this emotional labour. Building on previous findings (P1, P2 & P3), high levels of surface acting can result in burnout and depersonalisation. There are some limitations to the study including the inadequacy of interviews to elicit emotional displays as it relied on practitioner accounts, whereas observation of the interactions might have added some weight to our understanding of emotions in probation. Going forward, a development for future research was to speak to people on probation.

The article is cited as evidence of emotional labour in jurisdictions including Canada, China, United States of America, North India. In England and Wales, Gadd and Renehan (2024) evidence the need to support practitioners with the emotional consequences of working with abusive men for the work to be effective. In Canada, Couling, et al., (2024) argue that the mental health of correctional workers needs to

be prioritised and the dangers of suppressing emotions leading to silence on the issue. In China, Wang, et al., (2023) draw on the article as evidence of how emotionally laborious probation work can be. In the United States of America, in the *Journal of Policing and Criminal Psychology*, Mastracci and Adams (2021) cite our article as evidence of another criminal justice profession that has considered emotional labour. In organisational management, Metha (2020) uses our study to illustrate how emotional dissonance can lead to inauthenticity in the workplace. According to the Web of Science: database the article has been

- Cited 17 times
- 'Above average' CNCI and JNCI
- 7 citations in Criminology and Penology, 6 in Law, 2 in Education research, 2 in Applied Psychology and 1 citation in 4 more disciplines.

2.5 P5

This is a chapter I led on as an editor of the book *Emotional Labour in Criminal Justice and Criminology* (2021). It was inspired by purchasing an original copy of Thomas Holmes' account of being a Police Court Missionary in 1900 and recognising the use of emotion in early forms of probation work. This chapter chronologically tracks emotional labour in probation work, how it became marginalised, where it is acknowledged, how it fell out of favour in probation policy, the impact on practitioners and advocates for training to combat the adverse effects.

In this chapter I summarise how our research has shown practitioners use and manage emotions (Westaby, et al., 2020); specifically examples of surface acting, suppressing emotion and neutral displays to build a relationship to meet organisational aims. Drawing on Tidmarsh's research (2020) I argue that appropriate displays of emotion are tied up with practitioners' ideas of professionalism. The focus of emotional labour sheds light on the identity of probation workers as a historical bricolage of social work, counselling, psychotherapy and adaptation to the penal-welfare complex. Steinberg's model (1999) is applied to demonstrate that probation work meets the highest-level description of skills and demands of emotional labour. This level of emotional labour has been linked to a high risk of burnout (Jeung et al., 2018) which had not been explored hitherto. Withstanding this one indication of

burnout is desensitisation (Maslach, 1984) which was apparent in participants responses from our 2016 study.

Whiley and Grandey (2022) refer to the chapter as evidence of the natural role emotions play in service work and how they are often marginalised and commodified in healthcare in the neoliberal context. Tiwari, et al., (2020) cite the chapter in their study of burnout with female teachers and counselors in Delhi, India. This chapter was cited 7 times according to Google scholar.

2.6 P6

The data for this article was generated to explore emotional labour amongst probation practitioners in England and Wales in 2020. It was a mixed methods approach involving a survey and semi-structured interviews, only the interviews are drawn on in this article. The findings from the survey were published in our evaluation of the implementation of reflective practice supervision standards (RPSS) in the National Probation Service (Westaby et al., 2021). I had originally completed a presentation, in 2019, about Senior Probation Officers (SPOs) from our 2016 data called 'Emotional labour, probation practice, staff wellbeing and risk' at HMP Askham Grange at the request of the National Probation Service for their workshop for SPOs in response to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) national action plan. This research and article were a development of this focus on SPOs. As a team we interviewed 28 SPOs and managers. The RPSS was introduced to offer some clarity for the SPO role which had been overlooked in practice and research. In this article we consider the emotional labour for SPOs.

The paper shows that the SPOs are 'front and centre', middle managers, who manage probation practitioners and report to senior managers, often finding themselves 'between a rock and a hard place' (Coley, 2020: 238). They manage the 'emotional states of their employees' (Harding, et al., 2014:1214 quoting Huy, 2001) and are expected to present certain emotions through the societal, organisational and occupational display rules. In this article, the data generated the nature of emotional labour for SPOs where they have to control their emotions and those of their supervisee's. SPOs are expected to use their emotional labour to sanitise directives and persuade staff to accept them. The increasing managerial focus of the

probation service is captured *on the ground* in the SPOs experiences of emotional labour where they are responsible for performance management, staff wellbeing and development. The tension from being stuck in the middle led to the following suggestions to introduce a senior practitioner role to support the development of staff; reduce the workload for SPOs to focus on quality and more clearly define the role to prevent the accumulation of additional tasks.

According to the Web of Science database:

- Cited 3 times, with a below average CNCI and JNCI
- 2 citations in Criminology and Penology and 1 in Law.

The limitations of the paper were that the participants were self-selecting so the findings may be skewed towards people who wanted to talk about the emotional labour they performed as SPOs. The findings are not representative of SPOs and need to be understood in that context.

2.7 P7

This represents a piece of research I led on with a PP and person with lived experience who had been on probation. It builds on my interest in marginalised groups and issues in probation. The aim was to find out about desistance for people in probation who had completed the Horizon programme for men with sexual convictions. This article was based on semi-structured interviews with 15 men convicted of sexual offences, from England and Wales, who had completed the Horizon programme in the community facilitated by the Probation Service. I was approached by a former colleague, who worked as a group programme facilitator on the Horizon programme and a person who had completed Horizon to help design the research study. Both were passionate that men with sexual convictions are denied a voice about their rehabilitation due to the societal stigma around their offending which resulted in longer term punitive consequences.

In this article, I argue, due to the shame and stigmatisation the participants experienced in the community, personal rehabilitation was not enough (McNeil, 2012; McNeil and Graham, 2021). The men experience a carceral citizenship (Miller and Stuart, 2017) where they feel the punitive restrictions of probation juxtaposed

with the emotional labour of the group programme facilitators to support their rehabilitation. The research brought to the fore that the men needed further support in the community to reintegrate. Beyond the programme men experienced translation (Miller and Stuart, 2017) where they were seen as the sum of their offending and their employment became untenable due to disintegrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989). This article represented a shift in identity for me where previously I had been the former practitioner and insider. My role in this study was as the lead 'academic' supporting the completion of the study to support two people without experience of research. My confidence in engaging with a new analytical framework was a culmination of the last 8 years completing research with experienced research colleagues.

At the time of writing, it has 1 citation according to Google scholar in a PhD thesis about perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. In terms of impact, a presentation based on the findings was provided to our funders at the National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA) and the British Society of Criminology conference at University of Central Lancashire in 2023. I was also invited to be part of the supervision team, as an advisor for a PhD student research desistance and sexual offending at Sheffield Hallam University.

2.8 P8

I first presented the ideas for this paper at the European Society of Criminology conference in Malaga, 2022, under the title *"Well, we've always been the poor relation": Probation Practice behind the Scenes*. A helpful piece of feedback was to think about how people in these professions construct positive working identities and what this suggests about values and culture. This article extends our understanding of emotional labour performed by specialist practitioners in probation work through the analytical framework of 'dirty work'. I adapted the analytical framework of stigma, breadth and depth (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Kreiner, et al., 2006) to consider data generated from our 2020 sample. After writing the article I circulated this to my peers for feedback and continued to develop the framework. Further to this, I contacted Dr Joe Garrihy who had published an article about prison officers and psychological taint (2022) who kindly offered feedback on a draft.

The article builds on the work around stigma and taint in criminal justice professions. The original contribution focuses on roles outside of the main grade PP role to illustrate the nature of the work for those in specialist roles. A key finding was that the process of self-legitimation involved the use of occupational values as a shield to manage stigma experienced in the roles. It connects back to the emotional labour and consequences of working in probation practice (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 & P6). The article also extends our gaze beyond a narrow view of probation work through the prism of PPs in community supervision which has previously dominated our research. Finally, it extends the dirty work theoretical framework to consider taint between criminal justice occupations and colleagues. The article has recently been published in the British Journal of Criminology. I have been invited to facilitate a workshop with Dr Joe Garrihy at the University of Cambridge about dirty work in probation for the Master's in Applied Penology, Criminology and Leadership.

3. Synthesis of work as a coherent study and original contribution to knowledge

3.1 Development of themes

Following the analysis of the component publications this section does two things (i) it provides the main bodies of literature and key theories that inform the thesis (ii) it synthesises the contribution to knowledge of the portfolio. These four themes include the politicisation of probation; the nature and extent of emotional labour; emotions and effective practice; the consequences of emotional labour and staff wellbeing. In table 3, each theme is mapped against corresponding publications and research questions.

Theme	Publication	Research questions
The Politicisation of probation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7 & P8	1
The nature and extent of Emotional labour in probation work	P1, P3, P4 & P5	1 & 2
The relationship between emotions and effective practice in probation work	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7 & P8	2
The consequences of emotional labour and wellbeing for probation practitioners	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 & P8	3

3.2 The Politicisation of probation

One of the themes running through this body of work is a critique of the neo-liberal, managerial context in which the probation service operates (P1, P3, P5, P7 & P8). Bean (2019) identifies the central tenets of the neoliberal ideal as a combination of explicit and implicit key aims and values. Explicit aims include the greater use of private sectors and contestability. Implicit aims are that the public sector should be

properly managed and offer value for money. Bean (2019) suggests the values underpinning this are popular punitivism, that the private sector is more effective, efficient, innovative and adaptable to change than the public sector. Bean (2019) goes on to argue that managerialism is a feature of the neoliberal ideal. The features of managerialism in probation include performance targets, national standards, audits, risk assessment and value for money (see Beaumont, 1995; McLaughlin et al., 2001; Raine and Wilson, 1997; Whitehead and Statham, 2006; Deering, 2008; Burke and Collett, 2010; Phillips, 2011, 2013; Raynor, 2020). This started in the 1980's and 1990's and continued into the 2000s under the auspices of modernisation with New Labour (McLaughlin et al., 2001). The focus on market principles of efficiency, cost effectiveness and economy (role of competition) underpins the Carter report (2003) which set out a plan to reform probation services with the mixed market model in line with other public sector organisations.

Phillips (2011) argues managerialism produces form filling driven practices that encourage back covering that detracts attention from public protection. Through the original consideration of the use of emotions in probation work this research is crucial to magnify the prevailing policy, performance and outcome focused managerialist culture (P1, P3 & P5). In their paper aptly titled 'People are not things', Burke and Collett (2010) analyse the relationship between New Labour's 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' slogan and probation:

> *Toughening up, the focus on people got lost, the direction of the gaze turned towards public approval. Perverse incentives have delivered damaging outcomes (2010: 242).*

My research shifts the 'gaze' back to probation practitioners and people on probation (P7) to see how they experience probation work (see Knight, Phillips and Chapman, 2016) (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7 & P8). Raynor (2020, cites Home Office 1998: 8) offers the example of the Home Secretary Jack Straw seeking to toughen up the image of probation by breaking the association between probation and caring, for public approval. An example of how this was achieved included changing the terms of reference from 'after-care' when someone leaves prison to resettlement. However, 'caring' is part of the cultural heritage from social work values (Deering, 2010; Deering, 2011; Mawby and Worrall, 2013; Canton and Dominey, 2022) and one of

my motivations for joining the probation service (P1, P3, P5 & P8). Phillips (2011) traces the rise of managerialism, citing Garland (Garland, 2006: 420) describing culture as 'multivalent', meaning it has many values, interpretations and meanings. With this note it is necessary to briefly consider managerialism and the occupational culture(s) that flow from through the phenomenon of probation work.

In terms of occupational culture(s) Mawby and Worrall's study (2013:141) provides a comprehensive body of evidence to draw on, where they conclude that there is 'no monolithic probation culture that pervades the organisation'. Many of these cultural connections are emotionful (Bolton, 2000: 582), including the motivation for entering probation work due to a belief that people can change, job satisfaction involving building meaningful relationships and doing a job the worker sees as worthwhile (P8). Mawby and Worrall (2019) assert that central to supervision and training is recognising (and managing) the emotions that influence professional judgement. In P8 the mitigation of stigma through self-legitimation and the construction of positive identities came to the fore.

In summary, this theme shifts our gaze from a top-down understanding of policy. The relevant publications illuminate managerialism through the lens of emotion and extend our understanding of how values are operationalised in practice. There are multiple cultures influencing probation work, identified here is the managerialist culture and occupational culture. While they co-exist, they require emotion in different ways which shapes the emotional labour practitioners do. P8 argues that the occupational culture is a shield practitioners draw on to self-legitimate. In P4 it is argued that the conflict in organisational rules around emotional displays and occupational rules can be particularly emotionally laborious. In P7 we can hear the impact of the emotional labour by group programme facilitators. Through the consideration of emotional labour, my research adds to the existing body of literature on understanding how the processes that underpin how people on probation are engaged with policy; how people use their emotions as a skill; the consequences of this work and how they cope.

3.3 The nature and extent of Emotional labour in probation work

There is limited literature considering emotions, criminal justice and probation. As a former practitioner I knew how emotionful (Bolton, 2000) the job can be (Appendix 1), how to use emotion as a skill and the emotional consequences of the work (P3 & P4). Karstedt (2011) identifies the emotional turn away from reason, rationality and logic as a safe basis for punishment to the recognition of the emotionality of law, crime, sentencing and emotion work in institutions involved in criminal justice. Building on this work, my research has highlighted the importance of emotions in terms of understanding people's experiences of working in probation (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6), being on probation (P7) and being a former probation practitioner in academia. I drew on the work of Karstedt (2002; 2011) and Knight (2012) to explore further what this looks like. Karstedt, et al., (2011) recognise the importance of emotions in crime and criminal justice. My body of work builds on Knight's (2012: 2014a; 2014b; 2016) research around emotional literacy in probation work. Knight (2014a) defines emotional literacy as a skill, including self-awareness and being sensitive to others, which can be used to build and maintain relationships in complex work situations. The findings generated from my body of work extend Knight's argument that emotion has not been ignored by practitioners but has been marginalised at a political and policy level (P1, P3, P4, P5). My research has generated a more in-depth understanding of how emotions are performed, the consequences of the emotion work on the practitioner and their wellbeing (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 & P8).

I have argued that the rise of managerialism, including uniform standards for practice diminished the value of specialist knowledge, interpretation and professional judgement. The loss of control in the labour process has been described as 'technical proletarization' (Derber, 1982, cited in Robinson 2003: 594) and can be analogised to flight attendant's and emotional labour from Hochschild's seminal work, *The Managed Heart* (1983) (P1, P3). Drawing on the earlier definition, emotional labourers are expected to manage their feelings in accordance with display rules as prescribed by the organisation for which they work (Hochschild, 1983; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). Adding to this emotional labour theorists (Morris and Feldman, 1996; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Rafaeli and 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. The observable behaviour and the rules which govern them is the object of analysis in P4 and further unpicks emotion management in probation work (Westaby, Fowler and Phillips, 2020).

Whilst Knight (2014a: 191) distinguished her work from Hochschild's emotional labour, asserting that emotions are 'not taught or exploited for commercial gain' in probation practice. We have seen a period since Knight's publication, following the implementation of TR*,* when emotion work in probation was partially commodified for commercial gain (P1). Moreover, we see emotion used in service of organisational, occupational and societal display rules in accounts of practice from participants in the studies (P4). Whilst there has always been a proportion of the probation service that is not for profit, the implicit use of emotion can be seen to be exploited or assumed within a managerialist, target driven culture to reduce reoffending, protect the public and rehabilitate reminiscent of a profitable organisation (P1, P3, P4, P5 & P7). Wharton (1993) remarked that emotional labour is performed not only for a wage but also under the control of others. What my research has contributed is further evidence of the value, significance and effectiveness of emotions to probation work (P3, P4, P5). There have been notable studies in criminal justice looking at emotional labour that have influenced this body of work.

The included articles expand upon several applications of emotional labour in fields similar to probation work. P1 and P2 draw on research in prison by Crawley (2004) who considers emotional labour and dirty work for Prison Officers in English Prisons. The application of spillover from Crawley's work for the emotional consequences of probation through the model of Work, Family Conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985) extended the literature through the theme of darker and altruistic imaginings of probation workers. Flowers (2019) exploration of emotional labour demonstrated how criminal defence lawyers perform in line with the emotional regime of law. P4 builds on this by considering the values that underpin emotional displays in probation work including anger and frustration. P8 draws further on prison research including psychological taint (Garrihy 2022) and Policing and self-legitimacy (De Camargo 2019; De Camargo and Whiley, 2023) to consider occupational ideology as a coping strategy.

3.4 The relationship between emotions and effective practice in probation work

There is evidence that the role of emotions is recognised in historical accounts of probation work (P5). The focus from the 1990's 'what works' approach (see Chapman and Hough, 1998; McGuire, 1995; Raynor, 2018), was the pursuit of effective practice based on empirical evidence of what has been scientifically demonstrated to work to reduce recidivism. The positivistic science of cognitive behaviourism (CBT) and quantitative measures appear to have dominated probation practice over the last three decades driven by the principles of Risk-Need-Responsivity or RNR model (Bonta and Andrews, 2017) (P3). The responsivity principle is the least well understood aspect of the model and where I argue the use of emotion could be most relevant (Porporino, 2010) (P3). The RNR model manifested in treatment programme manuals, performance data, programme integrity and CBT based approaches to practice (Raynor, 2018). Whilst there were improvements to probation practice, I argue that emotions as effective practice is overlooked in the RNR model which is core to probation practice (P3). The role of empathy has been the closest this model has come to considering emotions. With a focus on emotion my research contributes to unpicking what Maruna (2000: 12) called the 'black box' syndrome in the "what works" studies where the question of 'how' rehabilitation works, for who and why it does not work for others was largely ignored (P3, P4, P6).

Arguably in skill-based models for probation practice the use of emotion and consequences of the use of emotion has not been fully considered (P3). This includes international models, for example, the Core Correctional Practice (Andrew and Kiessling 1998) to Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision (SEEDS) [4](P3). The SEEDS model was a good approach to the 'black box syndrome' described by Maruna (2000: 12) and successfully gathered the most

[4] The pilot project, which ran between spring 2011 and spring 2012, was named SEED (Skills for Effective Engagement and Development). SEED subsequently became known as SEEDS (Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision) when it was rolled out nationally.

effective ways of engaging someone in supervision at the time. I argued that a focus on the importance of practitioner wellbeing to maintain effective practice could enhance the model (P3). When considered through the lens of emotional labour the SEEDS model would have benefited from emotional literacy and the consideration of wellbeing as essential to the maintenance of consistent effective practice (P1, P2). My research into emotional labour has enhanced the model to incorporate an understanding of the impact of the work on practitioners.

3.5 The consequences of emotional labour and wellbeing for probation practitioners

Hochschild describes the 'human cost of emotional labour' (1983: 127) as identifying too wholeheartedly with the job leading to not feeling or numbness. In contemporary terms this has been expressed as emotional exhaustion (feeling burned out from work); depersonalisation (becoming detached and cynical) and having a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment (Maslach, et al., 2001). Jobs requiring a high degree of emotional labour have a higher risk of burnout (P4). Research has shown that occupations involving a high level of surface acting where one emotion is suppressed to display another more appropriate emotion are at high risk (Guy et al., 2008; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011) (P5). Norman and Ricciardelli's (2021) Canadian study of probation and parole officers found organisational and operational stressors which involve primary and secondary trauma in the work and organisational stressors including administrative tasks, insufficient human resources and workplace relationships. Salyers et al (2015) study of burnout in PPs in the US found officers experiencing burnout reported being less tolerant, more directive and fulfilling the basic requirements of the job. There is a dearth of research on this subject in England and Wales. My research shows that probation practice involves a high degree of emotional labour (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 & P8) and many of the stressors associated with burnout, for example, surface acting. The lens of emotional labour has generated data pointing to the importance of staff wellbeing to maintain effective practice.

At the time of writing P1 and P2 they expanded on the few studies that consider the impact of the job on professionals. Morran's (2008) research with facilitators of domestic abuse programmes found that this type of probation work had an impact on their intimate and platonic relationships; Petrillo (2007) found that women PPs working with people assessed as high risk spilled over into their heightened awareness of their own vulnerability, especially in terms of their own children (P2). Probation work can also have consequences for how practitioners feel they are perceived and tainted due to their work with stigmatised populations, which has been described as dirty work (Worrall and Mawby 2013 & P8). The practitioner can be seen as a key instrument in the delivery of probation practice to build a relationship

with the person on probation to facilitate change. I argue that considerations of the wellbeing of the practitioner should be a key aspect of effective practice.

4. Discussion

This final section discusses the key impacts of this research, limitations of this body of work and future directions for research. The list of publications provides a sample research outputs I have completed and has not included research outputs concerning: community hubs (Phillips, et al., 2020); emotional labour and criminological researchers (Waters, et al., 2020); pracademia (Dickinson, et al., 2022); probation and objects (Oliver, et al., 2024); articles related to self-disclosure (Phillips, et al., 2018); professional curiosity (Phillips, et al., 2021 and 2022) and burnout (Phillips, et al., 2024). Overall, the body of research has developed the theory of emotional labour by showing what it looks like in a highly contextualised and qualitative way, as opposed to quantitative studies of emotional labour (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Wharton and Erickson, 1993; Jeung et al., 2018)..

4.1 Impact of research

Returning to Guy's (2021) quote from the introduction, this body of work has explored the relationship between emotions and probation practice by demonstrating:

- Emotions are part of the job in probation (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 & P7).
- Emotional management is a skill which can contribute to being an effective probation worker (P3, P4 & P5).
- There are emotional consequences of this work (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 & P8) and to return to work the next day workers construct positive, value-based identities in challenging circumstances (P8).

I have narrated my research journey and growing confidence as an author with a consistent interest in marginalised voices in the criminal justice system (P7, P8). There has been some clear practical impact in practice from this body of work.

Papers 1 to 6 had a practical impact on the field of probation work which is fourfold.

- It raised awareness of the need to recognise and manage the effects of emotional labour.
- To persuade national policy makers of the need for reform.
- It informed the development of the Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision (SEEDS2 launched 2020) programme rolled out in England and Wales to support practitioners.
- It contributed to the government abandoning its TR strategy.

Based on this research, Dr Phillips was invited to speak in File on Four and following this the Justice Select Committee where he explained the relentless pressure on practitioners detailed in P1. The committee chair Sir Bob Neil said the research team's contribution 'shaped our thinking' in taking a formal inquiry into Transforming Rehabilitation.

The end of TR led to the publication of the published the Probation Reform Programme (HMPPS, 2020). The report explains how training and support for staff will build on the first iteration of SEED with additional content 'such as procedural justice and emotional labour' (2020:160). I also contributed to the Academic Insight paper, after being invited by the HM Inspectorate to write a briefing based on research reported in P1, P2, P3, P4, P5. In the foreword the Inspectorate's Head of Research laid out the importance of the research:

> As shown, managing and displaying emotions is critical to effective practice, with practitioners using emotions to create better relationships with service users, encourage compliance, support desistance and assess and manage risk more effectively. Jobs requiring high levels of emotional labour can be harmful to staff wellbeing and lead to burnout and it is thus essential that sufficient attention is given to the emotional demands of probation work in policy, recruitment, training and staff supervision.' (Moore, 2020: 3)

The Academic Insights briefings are used to inform HMPPS policy and practice.

Following an approach from HMPPS Effective Practice Team, in 2018, we worked together to revise SEEDS to mitigate the emotional demands on practitioners through the design of SEEDS2. After the presentation at HMP Askham Grange (2019), we were asked to evaluate the reflective practice supervision standards

(RPSS) for SPOs (Westaby, et al., 2021) included in the SEEDS2 rollout in 2020. The RPSS was used by 12,000 NPS staff and refers to the 'emotional demands of the work'. Embedded in the RPSS is practice observations and reflective supervision to better support the emotional labour on practitioners based on my research. P6 further highlighted how managerialism manifests on the ground where SPOs are responsible for performance management and staff development. After considering emotional dirty work in P2, I then noticed further application from the data generated in the 2020 study to write P8. Whilst it is evident there is the clear risk of burnout people return to the work because they believe it is worth it. P8 offered insight into how probation workers in specialist roles construct positive working identities through occupational values.

In addition, I have been involved in workshops for practitioners, for example, as part of the HMPPS (2019) Insights Festival. This body of work foregrounded entry to the Research Excellence Framework 2021 as an impact case study. I have integrated emotional labour into teaching materials on the Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP). After the commission of the reflective supervision standards evaluation, I was invited to evaluate SEEDS2. The fieldwork and evaluation report were completed in February 2025. Finally, I have been invited to present on P8 at the University of Cambridge on the leadership MSt in Applied Penology which is for people working at managerial and senior leader level in the CJS.

4.2 Inadequate consideration of the experience of people on probation and emotional labour

An area that I do not cover in this body of research is the impact of emotional labour on the people on probation from their perspective. This is both the impact of the emotions of the probation worker on the person on probation and the emotions experienced by the person on probation in supervision. This deserves further attention and research to know what emotions are effective in practice and the consequences for people on probation. In our research commissioned by HMPPS completed in 2025, we have spoken to over 50 people on probation in our evaluation of SEEDS2 with a focus on emotional labour. In P7, the emotional impact of being on probation is implicit in the responses from participants with sexual convictions. To date a paper has not been written explicitly about people on probation, their emotions and emotion management in supervision sessions.

4.3 Future directions

The themes highlighted the managerial context, the marginalisation of emotion through political posturing and policy making. It also affirmed Knights (2014) observation that the 'invisible world of emotion' (2014:188) significantly impacts on interactions between probation workers and people on probation. It also challenged some of the assumptions underpinning approaches to probation practice around what effective practice looks like from a practitioner perspective. Going forward there are continuing concerns about the 'crisis in probation' (Wong et al., 2025:1) and the impact of managerialism with a call for greater recognition of emotional labour in probation supervision. Robinson et al., (2025:15) caution against top-down changes in probation that are politically driven and run contrary to the strong occupational values of the staff. In P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 & P8 the performance of emotional labour is often to mitigate the harm of experiencing probation, where the SPO protects the PP or the PP mitigates the harm of community sanctions to people on probation. In both instances, when the emotional labour runs contrary to the workers value-base this increases the likelihood of burnout and negatively impacts the retention of staff.

5. Concluding thoughts

This thesis highlights the marginalisation of emotion in probation policy and the enduring significance of using emotions to build supportive relationships with people on probation to meet organisational aims. A better understanding of how policy, organisational aims, societal and professional expectations shape emotional displays in probation practice has developed theoretical understanding of the way probation is structured and performed. The research demonstrates the consequences of complex emotional work in probation for practitioners and managers through the lens of emotional labour. Moreover, it demonstrates the importance of a qualitative methodological approach to really understand how emotional labour is performed. This has implications beyond probation and is helpful for the wider field of organisational studies. Ultimately, the thesis demonstrates how this corpus of work has contributed to the recognition of the importance of emotions to contemporary probation practice, policy, occupational culture, training and research.

(9,993 words)

Appendix 1: Origins of the programme of study

As a former PO, I know how much I emotionally invested in working with people on probation and the intense feelings this can give rise to including joy, sadness, anger, frustration, fear, empathy and warmth. Often, I drew on emotions to create a warm, welcoming safe space for supervision, expressed empathy to build the relationship and withheld emotions that were not constructive to building a relationship with the individual on probation. Further to this I recall feeling emotionally exhausted at the end of the day because of this emotional labour in practice. Put simply, in a day you would hear accounts of abuse, listen to people in distress, see people in poverty, celebrate individual progress, author reports about safeguarding children and take responsibility for decisions which have a significant impact on people's lives and liberty.

The emotional investment was driven by my values which closely matched Deering's idea of old social work values (see Deering 2008; 2010, 2011; Mawby and Worrall 2013) to work with people towards change, social inclusion and social justice. These professional and firsthand experiences inform my motivation to shine a light on the significance of emotions in probation. A serendipitous opportunity arose to pursue this ambition from a chance conversation with a colleague.

When I started at Sheffield Hallam University, I spoke to Dr Chalen Westaby about probation work and the emotions involved. Chalen was a Senior Lecturer in Law who had written about emotional labour and immigration solicitors (2014). Chalen suggested we explore the subject further together. I spoke to another colleague who recommended talking to Dr Jake Phillips who had recently completed his PhD with a focus on probation and practice culture (2013). Following discussions with both colleagues I recognised the potential for qualitative research methods to provide rich, detailed, nuanced accounts of emotion work in probation and consequences of the use of emotions in practice.

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