



**Fronting, masking and emotion release:
An exploration of prisoners' emotional
management strategies**

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His John Sunley Prize winning masters dissertation

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1. Introduction

You feel emotions, of course you do. It's part of life, it's part of being a human, you feel happy, you feel sad, you feel angry.

(Alan)¹

What forms of emotion are felt (or generated) in prison? How important is it for prisoners to manage such expressions of emotion? Men's prisons have been described as emotionally volatile places (James, 2003) that are often saturated with violence and aggression (Edgar et al., 2003). In this environment - perhaps as a way of anticipating/avoiding danger - prisoners display intense masculinity, emotional stoicism, and largely reject 'softer' emotions (Scruton et al., 1991; Sim, 1994; Toch, 1998). However, this may not be the whole story.

Indeed, Crewe et al. (2013) contend that previous accounts have revealed only a partial picture, focusing mainly on the 'hard-end' of prison life and overlooking the way that emotion is *spatially differentiated* in prison. This is to say, one may find diverse forms of emotion expression depending upon where one looks for it (for example, in classrooms, workshops, association areas, segregation units, visiting halls or personal cells). Further, Crewe (2014) argues that while 'the public culture of most men's prisons is characterized by a particular kind of emotionally taut masculine performance' (ibid.: 396), there are a number of situations where care and affection can be seen, although such expressions often take 'camouflaged forms' (ibid.: 401).

The fact that prisoners may often express forms of emotion indirectly could partly explain the omission of such accounts in the prior literature. More problematically though, prisoner emotion has rarely been the primary focus of academic research, and emotion at the 'everyday level' has largely been ignored (Crawley, 2004). Given the absence of research attending to prisoner emotion directly, this study can be considered a preliminary attempt to fill the gap. The research sets out to explore not just the prevalence of emotion in prison, but the ways prisoners seek to manage their emotions and the underlying motives for such self-regulation. In doing so, this research aims to provide a more accurate framework of how emotions function in prison, while also developing an increased understanding of prisoner's inner worlds and the psychological challenges of imprisonment.

The study approaches prisoner emotion in a broad sense, entertaining the possibility that there are more layers to emotion control than have previously been considered. These extra layers include a consideration of 'positive emotions' in prison (e.g. the role of humour, affection and happiness), the significance of authenticity and calculation (hiding/unveiling emotions), the possibility that some emotions may be 'contagious' in prison, and finally the way in which activities (or the lack of them) can foster or submerge certain forms of emotional expression. The study hopes to add greater depth to previous research through an exploration of how exactly prisoners

¹ All prisoner names have been replaced with pseudonyms in this study.

handle emotions like fear, aggression and violence in prison. While previous accounts have addressed the ways in which prisoners are said to 'wear masks', or 'put up fronts' to deal with such challenges, these terms tend to be blended together and used interchangeably. By contrast, this research explores the possibility that such terms signal a number of separate management strategies, ranging from the ability of prisoners to generate new emotions ('fronting'), and suppress ('masking') or release existing ones.

Chapter two reviews prior accounts of emotion, which appear sporadically in the sociology of imprisonment literature. The review will glance briefly beyond the prison to consider perspectives from the literature on emotion regulation more generally. Thinking about the regulation of emotion outside the sphere of prison can provide some useful conceptual bridges (and operational definitions) that can be applied within it. Chapter three explains the methodological steps and challenges of implementing this study in Moorland Prison, a Category C establishment located near Doncaster, South Yorkshire. The subsequent three chapters document and interpret the ways in which the 16 research participants (a mixture of eight vulnerable prisoners and eight prisoners from the main population) responded, in semi-structured interview conditions, to questions about emotion management.

In chapter four, the prevalence of 'fronting' and generating emotion in prison is explored, as well as the underlying motivations for engaging in such behaviour. It is argued that displays of fronting generally increase individual resilience and help deflect unwanted attention away from oneself. Chapter five turns to the 'masking' and 'release' of strong emotions in prison: the placement of these themes side-by-side reflects a sentiment from prisoners that the suppression of very strong emotions may need to be counterbalanced by moments of catharsis; for one's long-term emotional health. Chapter six focuses directly on different forms of 'positive emotion' in prison, particularly how expressions of positivity (though this term is contested) may help to diffuse tension within everyday interactions and sustain personal relationships. The closing chapter draws some preliminary conclusions about the research findings, discusses tentative policy implications which have emerged, and highlights avenues for future research.

2. Literature review

Emotion is defined throughout this study as any strong feeling: such as joy, sorrow, anger or fear (Collins English Dictionary, 1999). Although, it is understood that 'not everything we experience is an emotion - we also have thoughts, attitudes, and values' (Ekman, 2003: 215) - this definition provides room for a broad exploration. The review begins by considering the accounts of prisoner emotion found across the sociology of imprisonment literature. References to emotion management and imprisonment appear sporadically across a host of subject areas including studies of masculinity, coping and adaptation, personal relationships and within broader ethnographies of prison life. The key findings across each of these areas are briefly assessed. The review then critically introduces a number of more recent studies, mainly from the last decade, which have significantly developed accounts of prisoner emotion. From this point, the review turns away from the prison briefly to examine how the more established literature on the regulation of emotion can help orientate this research by introducing guiding concepts and operational definitions. Finally, the specific research questions that will be explored are set out.

Emotion and imprisonment

The literature has highlighted the importance of 'fear' in prison. Indeed, it is argued that first-time prisoners may be especially fearful on arrival (Bottoms, 1999) but that more broadly, fear shapes the contours of everyday life for all men living in prison (McCorkle, 1992). Given that prisons are sometimes places characterized by violence, bullying and intimidation (Scruton et al., 1991; Sim, 1994) the widespread prevalence of fear appears to be based on a rational observation of the environmental risks. However, while prison has been described as an 'intense, risk-laden, emotionally fraught environment' (Liebling, 1999: 163, see also Liebling 2014; Cohen and Taylor, 1972), it is both 'emotionally inciting and constraining' (Greer, 2002: 118) and emotions are simultaneously 'proscribed and prescribed' (128). Arguably, one of the biggest challenges for prisoners is the need to balance these dual aims of constraint and expression, where getting either wrong could have severe negative repercussions. Indeed, it is fitting that multiple researchers have alluded to the image of prisoners having to tread on 'tight-ropes' with their emotions in order to adapt (Toch, 1992 Bottoms, 1999; Greer, 2002; Crewe et al., 2013). For those unable to regulate emotion successfully, or for those stuck in cycles of rumination, adaptation to prison life may be greatly hampered (Harvey, 2007).

Importantly though, empirical accounts addressing fear in prison do not sit comfortably with studies of adaptation that have emphasized other segments of the emotional spectrum. For example, Medlicott (1999) persistently argues that severe boredom and 'enforced idleness' (220) are the primary challenges for suicidal prisoners. Similarly, but in relation to the wider prisoner population, Toch (1992) documents the eventless and repetitive nature of imprisonment which leads to high levels of stress and frustration. Therefore, there appears to be a tension between research which emphasizes violence and fear and research that also highlights the

nature of boredom and apathy.² Such contrasts may in part reflect the differential nature of prison life from one institution to the next and differences across national boundaries.³ It is tempting to follow the argument neatly expressed by Jones and Schmid (2000) in their chapter titled: 'Prison Orientation: From Violence to Boredom' which charts the gradual transition of prisoners from one pole to the other over time. While this narrative may hold true for some prisoners, it may constitute a reductive and deterministic account of emotion management in prison. It is more plausible that previous accounts are united by a tendency to address emotion in limited forms, seeking out extreme contours, systematically exploring what goes on around fear and boredom, and overlooking the importance of emotion in everyday events (see Crawley, 2004).

Explorations of space and personal relationships in prison have highlighted important themes for the study of emotion. In the depriving context of prison life, relationships between men have been described as intense and emotionally charged (Cohen and Taylor, 1972; Crewe 2006). Yet, prisoner codes warn against the dangers of getting too close to others, reinforcing the mantra that prisoners should 'do their own time' (Karp, 2010: 67). These apparently contradicting standpoints may in fact operate in unison, reflecting the way prisoners present themselves as emotionally reserved in public areas while forming stronger bonds in (semi)private areas (Jones and Schmid, 2000; De Viggiani, 2012). In this respect, it is important to consider that emotional displays may hinge on the meanings given to different spaces in prison. Goffman (1961) argues that 'backstage areas' exist within institutions where a different kind of atmosphere can be developed, which is less constraining than the everyday pressures of institutional life.⁴

However, the way in which staff members wield authority can also create 'distinctive emotional climates' and can 'produce emotions for those on the receiving end' (Liebling, 2014: 483; see also Crewe et al., 2013) which complicates the public and private binary implied above. For example, it has been argued that art classrooms (and the educational staff who oversee them) can open up spaces for emotional ventilation (Djurichkovic, 2011; Johnson, 2008), providing 'safe and acceptable ways of releasing feelings such as anger and aggression' (Merriam, 1998: 169). In a similar respect, Rucker (2005) reported that male prisoners who completed a yoga and meditation program learned to control their emotions, developing greater awareness and self-mastery. Yet, while the benefits of artistic spaces and meditative activities in prison should not be downplayed, the high-rates of attrition in the Rucker study (2005), 52% of the original sample dropped-out, suggests that they are not pursuits which are embraced by all. Indeed, Toch (1992), building on the work of Seymour (1980), explains that prisoners have different needs which they attempt to

² It is plausible that fear and boredom coexist in some prisons: where long periods of empty time are punctuated by extremely violent and disturbing incidents.

³ Although there is no simple divide in the literature which would separate these different sets of studies.

⁴ 'During mid-period breaks, and for a few moments after the dance sessions, patients would, for example, wander into the anteroom off the dance chamber and, with cokes obtained from the machine, and cigarettes, sometimes contributed by the therapist, congregate around a piano, dancing a little, making a pass at a jitterbug step, chatting, and having what on the outside would be called an informal break. Compared to the lives many of these favoured patients lived on the ward, these moments were incredibly soft, harmonious, and free from hospital pressure.' (Goffman, 1961: 210).

satisfy by carving out 'niches' in the prison environment. He describes a niche as: 'a functional subsetting containing desired objects, space, resources, people and relationships between people' (Toch, 1992: 237). This knowledge should encourage carefully reflection from researchers when exploring the nature of emotion management and the various ways in which prisoners appear to seek out spaces and forge personal relationships.

The emerging 'carceral geography' literature (see Moran et al., 2013 for an overview) has begun to systematically explore themes such as privacy, visibility and mobility in penal spaces. While this literature may offer highly relevant insights about the situations where prisoners choose to regulate their emotions, it is beyond the scope of this research to explore questions of emotion and space directly. However, such 'spatial' concerns are clearly connected to, or implicated with, many of the subject areas that are explored in this research (for example, personal relationships and locations for emotional expression).

The nature of masculinity in men's prisons is an important but complex subject area. Indeed, it may be crucial to understand that control of emotion in prison may largely be a product of constructions and representations of manliness. Masculinity, it is argued, is achieved in prison through rampant displays of physicality and dominance (Scruton, 1991; Cowburn, 2007) and a complete repugnance for 'soft' emotions such as kindness, fear, love and care, which all signal unmanly weakness (Karp, 2010; Toch, 1992; Sabo, 2001). A crystallised form of this process and an extreme caricature of masculinity has been termed 'hypermasculinity' (see Toch, 1998), where the only acceptable displays of emotion are those expressed through anger or 'retaliatory rage' (173). Even then, the expression of anger should involve 'cool calculation' (Sykes, 1958: 100) and the kind of 'silent stoicism which finds its apotheosis in the legendary figure of the cowboy or the gangster' (ibid.: 101).

It is argued that prisoners need to subscribe to this hegemonic form of masculinity in order to survive emotionally, socially and to mask their deepest vulnerabilities (Sim, 1994; De Viggiani, 2012). However, such strategies are not without their drawbacks as some prisoners may be isolated from sources of support and left without access to places where emotion can be safely released (Evans and Wallace, 2008). Importantly, Crewe (2006) highlights that research on prison masculinity has remained largely conceptual and has lacked systematic analysis. It is also argued (Crewe, 2006) that although UK institutions share similar narratives of masculinity, they are not defined by the same rampant violence and brutality which characterizes the North American literature. Additionally, the prison masculinity literature tends to present a language characterized by extremes and absolute terms (such as 'hypermasculinity') which may only partially reflect the complex spectrum of emotions experienced by men on prison landings, ignoring forms of emotion that may exist in more private areas (although see Sabo et al., 2001: 59).

Expanding prisoner emotion

Over the last decade, a small number of studies have addressed prisoner emotion and emotion control in greater detail, helping to greatly expand existing knowledge in this area. These studies have uncovered a 'deeper, more emotional, more complex private world' (Evans and Wallace, 2008: 488) and prisons have been described as having a unique 'emotional geography' in which certain forms of emotion are felt and displayed across different zones (Crewe et al., 2013; see also Crawley, 2004). The differential nature of prison spaces means that moving through them may require one to have a multifaceted 'chameleon-like identity' (Drake and Harvey, 2013: 5) and prisoners may invest 'considerable effort...into the management and social presentation of personal emotions' (Crewe et al., 2013: 8).

Indeed, the way in which prisoners carefully attend to impression management (see Bottoms, 1999) has drawn some scholarly interest. Such research is often grounded in the work of Goffman (1959) who argues that a person's 'front' is 'that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance' (ibid.:13). In prison, this translates into a language of 'wearing masks' or 'armour', and 'putting up fronts' to others as a way of dealing with the psychological and physical challenges of a 'dog-eat-dog' environment and protecting against exploitation (Jewkes, 2005; Crewe et al. 2013; Karp, 2010; De Viggiani, 2012).⁵ While 'fronting' has been described in general terms, few studies have highlighted the different types of 'front' that prisoners can present to others. Although De Viggiani (2012: 287) presents a notable exception by contrasting bombastic displays of fronting with stoic (more 'autistic') masks, further research is needed to explore the different constructions and functions of fronting in depth. Importantly, it is argued that although a well-managed 'front' is calibrated to indicate one's capacity for aggression, such performances are increasingly difficult to sustain over time (Jewkes, 2005). This is to say, it is important to also investigate situations where prisoners refrain from 'fronting' emotion, which may be affected by temporal, spatial and social factors (for example, the presence or absence of an audience).

The implication that there is more to prisoner emotion than public projections of toughness is substantiated by Crewe et al. (2013) who argue that a distinction can be drawn between 'fronting' and 'masking'. In their framework, fronting refers to 'cultivating a version of the emotional self that is inauthentic' whereas masking is understood as a defensive strategy 'requiring that one stifles or contains traces of fear, pain, weakness and vulnerability' (Crewe et al., 2013: 9). Indeed, Greer (2002) documents a number of strategies- including seeking out distractions from feelings, blocking and repressing emotions, immersion in transcendental activities such as spirituality and meditation - which can help prisoners to mask the emergence of potentially damaging internal thought patterns. Indeed, while it may be partially true that emotional suppression arises from a fear of victimization, this overlooks the fact that many prisoners may also dread losing their mental stability, or being 'overpowered by feelings of weakness and distress, particularly in relation to events

⁵ Prisoners in De Viggiani (2012) also described this kind of behaviour as 'imitation', 'mimicking' or 'only seeing the shell of a person' (277).

outside...over which they [have] no control' (Crewe et al., 2013: 7; see Cohen and Taylor, 1972). Therefore, this study aims to further explore the possibility that 'masking' and 'fronting' represent two different emotional management strategies, with different functions and motivations, in an attempt to add greater depth to current accounts of prisoner emotion.

While the literature above focuses on the implications and management of negative/challenging emotions in prison, significantly less attention has been paid to the control and expression of positive emotions⁶ (Crewe, 2014). Perhaps one reason for the lack of findings in this area is that affection between men is often 'expressed obliquely' (Crewe, 2014: 397) and can take on 'camouflaged forms' (ibid.: 401) in prison. For example, while prison gymnasiums have been depicted as sites of rampant posturing and bravado (see Di Viggiani, 2012), they can also facilitate strong camaraderie and alliances between prisoners who train together (Jewkes, 2005; Crewe, 2014; Crewe et al., 2013). In some prison settings - including education buildings, art classrooms, and chapels - Crewe et al. (2013: 13) found that 'kindness, generosity and emotional disclosure were permitted' and such places provided 'transcendental sources of meaning, comfort and psychological safety' (ibid.:15). More problematically, receiving letters, making phone-calls and attending visits appear to have ambiguous effects in prison. On one hand, they may provide indispensable links to the outside world which delivers a surge of positive emotion and facilitates open expressions of affection and love. However, it has been argued that the presence, or unexpected absence, of these points of contact can become the 'weather vane' of an individual's mood and cause of emotional instability (Toch, 1992: 70).

Prisoners' accounts have described how jokes and humour are often built into the fabric of prison life, helping to diffuse the daily challenges of incarceration by providing a form of relief and escape from monotony (James, 2003; Greer 2002). Yet, humour in prison can also be double-edged. While it unites some prisoners who form affective bonds it can irritate and provoke those on the receiving end (Di Viggiani, 2012). Importantly, humour may also facilitate a degree of boundary testing in prison by allowing prisoners to cast-out loaded comments while distancing themselves, or backtracking, from the negative implications (Nielson, 2011). Ultimately, the experience of positive emotion is an important and complex avenue of prison life that warrants further empirical exploration. This study aims to investigate the ways in which prisoners express, or have to subdue, forms of positive emotion (such as care, affection, humour and joy) in prison.

A final important theme which has been highlighted in the literature is emotional authenticity in prison. Given that prisoners may need to manage their impressions across diverse settings, feeling authentic or attempting to stay 'true to oneself' while incarcerated cuts to the heart of fears concerning deterioration and loss of personal identity (Toch, 1992). Planalp (1999: 86) argues that we sometimes 'fail to manage

⁶ It should be acknowledged that studying 'positive' emotion in prison is a problematic concept, being complicated by the fact that some prisoners may feel better by making others suffer. In chapter six, which addresses positive emotion directly, this problem is revisited.

our emotions effectively because...we do not really want to...we cherish them as aspects of our “genuine” and “authentic” selves.’ Therefore, it is understandable why ‘fronting’ emotion in prison is seen as evidence of deep seated insecurities (Crewe, 2009) and that some prisoners advise ‘being oneself’ as a necessary condition to surviving one’s sentence with emotional faculties intact (Jewkes, 2005). However, care should be taken to demarcate a clear understanding of what is meant by authenticity. For example, Salmela (2005) explains that authenticity involves the expression of emotions that are congruent with one’s broader life-values, which the author contrasts with ‘sincerity’, the expression of emotions simply felt in the moment. This important clarification derives from the well-established emotion regulation literature, to which this review now turns.

The regulation of emotion

The emotion regulation literature can help to orientate and focus the nature of this research. While this involves exploring literature outside imprisonment, connections will be drawn where appropriate. To set out a preliminary definition, Thoits (1990:192 in Greer, 2002) understands emotion management as ‘deliberate attempts by the individual to change one or more components of his or her subjective experiences in order to bring that feeling in line with normative requirements.’ This is redolent of the idea circulated by Hochschild (1983/2003) that social situations have ‘feeling rules’, which constitute a set of tacitly understood gestures and emotions that are expected at certain times and places. For example, most professionals in Western societies are encouraged to exercise coolness and rationality in the workplace, and those who work in professions which are potentially lethal or unpredictable (firemen, policemen and soldiers) are encouraged not to display signs of fear (Fischer et al., 2004). Similarly, prisoners recognize that interactions with others have what Goffman (1959: 121) calls a ‘working consensus’ which attempt to serve ‘as a guarantee for safe social interaction.’ In sum, certain social situations require us to suppress, exaggerate or totally fake the nature of our emotions (Planalp, 1999; Ekman and Friesen, 1975).

However, the various expectations of social environments and group settings may at times be negated by an individual’s personal emotional needs and goals. Gross (2002: 282) highlights this sense of personal control, stating that: ‘emotion regulation refers to the processes by which we influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express them.’ It is necessary therefore to consider that emotion management can be examined at various levels of analysis: broadly speaking psychologists have focused on emotional fluctuations within the individual, sociologists have considered interpersonal and institutional functions, while anthropologists frame emotion at a societal level by exploring cultural variations and parallels (Ekman and Scherer, 1984). Each of these approaches can inform the understanding of emotion in prison, but the structure of this research (exploring the accounts of 16 individuals) will focus on the individual and interpersonal levels of analysis.⁷ In this respect, perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of imprisonment, given the close proximity of prisoners, is that the lines

⁷ From this point forward the terms emotion management and emotion regulation are used interchangeably.

between individual and interpersonal processes may often overlap and blur. Further, it may be the case that some emotion management strategies are damaging at the individual level but simultaneously benefit social groups, or vice versa (see Butler and Gross, 2004).

The regulation of emotion literature highlights the inherent problems of analysing emotion processes. First, the control of emotion may occur as a function of 'deliberate choice, habit, or learning, reflecting influences from a variety of sources from those that influence many, through cultural standards, to highly personal, idiosyncratic choices' (Ekman and Scherer, 1984: 7). Second, emotion management strategies can be employed not only to alter one's own emotions but also the emotions of others (Planalp, 1999). Furthermore, evidence of 'emotion contagion', the spread of emotions from one individual to another, has been found in studies of family life, cultural rituals and political rallies (Salmela, 2005; Hatfield and Cacioppo, 1994). Considering again, the unique challenge of forced proximity to others during imprisonment, it may be productive to consider whether some emotions are contagious in the prison environment.

There is an absence of research in the regulation of emotion literature on positive or 'enjoyable' emotions, with much more attention being paid to negative states (Ekman, 2003). In spite of this, there is evidence to suggest that expressing positive emotion can reverse the harmful physiological effects of experiencing negative emotions (Tice et al., 2004; Frederickson and Levenson, 1998). Similarly, it is argued (Planalp, 1999: 80) that humour is 'a very common strategy for managing uncomfortable situations...[as] humour tends to make situations seem less important by virtue of their absurdity or detachment, and reframes the situation as less threatening or anxiety producing.' Given that prison is often described as a stressful environment, it is tempting to question the extent to which the presence (or saturation) of prison humour is connected to themes of emotional detachment and diffusion of tension.

Research questions

There is only a partial understanding in the literature of how people manage their emotions while serving a prison sentence. In the broadest sense, this study aims to give a meaningful and empirically informed answer to that question. While a conscious decision has been made to leave space for the emergence of themes from the prisoner interviews, this research is initially orientated by the following research questions, which set out to develop concepts in the literature:

- (1) *To what extent do prisoners manage their emotions in prison?* This involves exploring how prisoners might try to self-regulate through 'fronting', 'masking' and 'releasing' emotion.
- (2) *What are the underlying motivations for these emotion management strategies?* This will question whether certain strategies may have specific functions (e.g. prosocial or protective functions) and the extent to which prisoners are conscious of engaging with such strategies.

3. Methods

Research site and access

The research was conducted at 'HMP and YOI Moorland', a category-C prison in South Yorkshire. The prison is part of the 'South Yorkshire cluster' which comprises three prisons that are managed together. The operational capacity of the prison is 1,006 and the prisoner population was at full capacity as of July 2014.⁸ Moorland currently holds convicted adults and young adult males. The establishment opened in 1991, serving the dual function of a remand prison and a young offender institution (YOI). In more recent years (from 1998-2011), new house blocks have been constructed, additional prisoner populations have been introduced (320 sex offenders and 250 foreign national prisoners) and the remand function has been terminated (HMCIP, 2012).

The most recent report from the Chief Inspector of Prisons raised two notable concerns. First, the report found a lack of purposeful activities for prisoners, with over 35% being locked in cells during the working day. Second, although recorded violence was low, there was evidence of a bullying problem in Moorland (HMCIP, 2012). The annual report from the Independent Monitoring Board (2013: 7) explains that meaningful steps have been taken to improve the range of purposeful activities available for prisoners and that the number of participants in education is 'steadily increasing',⁹ although recorded complaints related to bullying appear to have increased.¹⁰

The research site was selected for pragmatic and opportunistic reasons. My supervisor (Dr Ben Crewe) recently established a connection with the Governor (David Bamford), a student on the department's MSt course, who was willing to facilitate the research. One reason for seeking access to Moorland was its location near to my home address, which afforded easy vehicular access. Access was sought through an application to the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) using their online system and through official permission from the Governor (negotiated by my supervisor). Access was granted for a two week period and generous provisions were put in place by the prison's managerial team to facilitate the completion of this research. The researcher attended a safety induction and was provided with keys, enabling free movement across the establishment and causing minimal disruption to the daily schedules of prisoners, officers and staff members. A private office space was provided in the administrative building which served as a home base, while two spacious classrooms (one in each education building) were designated for the interviews.

⁸ Thanks to Bruce Bewley for providing these up-to-date figures.

⁹ No figures are cited in support of this claim.

¹⁰ The report argues that many more complaints have been received but that 'the large increase is mainly due to the rise in population over the year.'

Sampling

The prisoners selected for interview (n=16) included eight 'mains' prisoners and eight 'vulnerable' prisoners (VPs).¹¹ Achieving a balance between mains and VP prisoners was not pre-planned. However, as the two interview rooms were located in different education buildings - which served these populations separately - the opportunity presented itself to explore the similarities and differences between these groups. The overall sampling strategy was opportunistic, incorporating a mixture of 'snowballing' techniques and the in situ selection of volunteers. The researcher entered classrooms before, and sometimes during, lessons and introduced the project to learners and clarified general questions.¹² All of the participants in this study came from art and informational technology classrooms. One benefit of these classes is that prisoners worked on individual assignments and I rarely felt I was disrupting the flow of lessons. I mingled with prisoners, observed their projects, and spoke informally about the nature of my study. At this stage, some prisoners were forthcoming and enthusiastic about the opportunity to be interviewed. After the first two interviews had taken place, the snowballing of participants took on both explicit (interviewees recommended that I talk to specific peers) and more subtle forms. The latter reflected conversations (and perhaps endorsements) about my study that I neither heard nor saw directly. After leaving the classroom to conduct my second interview I returned to find a group of prisoners who all wanted to be interviewed and, in liaison with the teacher, had created an ordered list.

However, a number of limitations of this approach need to be acknowledged. Given the small and non-random design of my research, the conclusions that can be drawn are preliminary. Indeed, a potential problem of snowballing participants is the danger of assembling likeminded individuals, as participants' friends and associates are actively encouraged to participate. Further, each classroom had a memo on the wall reiterating that over a third of prisoners currently do not attend education or any form of work. It is worth questioning whether perspectives on emotion management may be different for people who spend their days in cells. Second, the various classrooms within education buildings were highly differentiated spaces depending on the particular group of prisoners, teachers, day of the week, and the particular lesson being taught. For example, the serene atmosphere in the IT classroom, which appeared to be full of silent and dedicated learners contrasted sharply with the sometimes raucous exchanges and sardonic banter in one of the art classrooms. Sampling from louder or quieter groups may further bias the nature of the results.

Third, although most prisoners engaged with my topic and were enthusiastic about being interviewed some were not. Two prisoners approached directly by the researcher declined the interview: the first stated his lack of comfort with words while the second was both engrossed in his current work assignment and uninspired by the nature of the study. Due to time constraints not all of the prisoners who were willing to participate could be interviewed: the concern here was about trying to avoid

¹¹ 'Vulnerable prisoners' often include sex offenders, informants, the physically weak, or former police officers who could be targets of bullying or violence from the mains population. The mains population typically includes all other, 'non-vulnerable', prisoners.

¹² These introductions received a mixed reception. Some prisoners were unsure about my motives and whether I was in fact a psychologist working for the prison service.

accusations of favouritism, but also avoiding a potential bias towards more vocal and persistent prisoners in the group. The researcher attempted to seek-out a number of quieter prisoners who were often equally interested in the nature of the project, but this approach was intuitive and unsystematic. All of this is to say, there are a number of important limiting factors to this sampling strategy which have implications for the conclusions that can be drawn. Ultimately, the rationale for this opportunistic approach is the advantage of broad exploration in the formative stages of the research process: 'explorative research is about putting one's self deliberately in a place...where discovery is possible' (Stebbins, 2001: VI).

The sample comprised eight white British prisoners, two black British, one Pakistani, one Barbadian, one Iraqi, one Romanian, one South African and one Indian prisoner. The ethnically diverse composition of the sample reflects Moorland's large foreign national population (up to 300 prisoners). The mean age of the sample was 36, the youngest participant was 22 while the oldest was 57. This study did not set out to systematically explore the sentence conditions of prisoners although future research might consider including this information: the intensity and forms of emotion regulation may be affected by various sentence conditions and the amount of time spent in prison.¹³ It was decided that prisoners with mental health problems would not be automatically screened out of the research. Although conversations about emotion could be a cause of distress for such individuals (see the discussion of ethics), the number of prisoners with mental health problems within the penal system is large and should not be overlooked. Two participants disclosed having a current mental health diagnosis, and for one individual, this required taking some precautionary steps (discussed further below).

Semi-structured interviews

The interviews took place in the education buildings during the morning (9-11:30am) and afternoon (1:30-3:45pm) time-slots. Typically, it was possible to complete 2-3 interviews per day although this pattern was disrupted by prisoner counts, two bank holidays, and weekly examinations in class; all of which made it difficult to interact with prisoners. These events should be factored into future research timetables. When interviewees were available, they were accompanied from the classroom to the private interview room by the researcher. The officer on duty was informed each time a participant transferred, a protocol which was agreed in advance with each officer. Fourteen interviews took place in the designated interview rooms (in each education building) but a long, unannounced meeting meant that two interviews took place in the Art classroom's office instead.¹⁴ The length of interviews ranged from 25 minutes to 1 hour 46 minutes, while the average length was 41 minutes. All of the interviews were recorded using a digital Dictaphone.

¹³ Four prisoners disclosed that they were on recall; one prisoner said he was serving an IPP sentence, and two prisoners said they were awaiting deportation. The remaining prisoners did not talk, or were vague, about the nature of their sentences.

¹⁴ This was not an ideal substitute for the spacious and comfortable interview rooms and some concerns were raised about the degree of participant confidentiality in this room (see the ethics section below).

The interviews were guided by a schedule (see Appendix 1) which was structured around important themes flagged in the literature. However, this was a non-linear process where the order of questions and amount of time spent on each topic varied dramatically according to prisoners' responses. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for a degree of deviation from the script and for spontaneous follow-up questions to be pursued.¹⁵ Overall, the interviews had an informal and free-flowing feel not unlike that which characterizes everyday conversation, which is arguably when interviews are most fruitful (Crewe, 2009). Typically, prisoners required little prompting to talk directly about questions that were presented to them. However, in one case, the interviewee paid scant attention to the content of questions by instead choosing to divulge preferred topics and highly personal anecdotes. Although the participant's responses were rarely relevant to the study, they were extremely relevant to his life and his concerns about the future. In this instance, the researcher attempted to lend an empathetic ear, listen attentively, while simultaneously attempting to reintroduce topics related to the research.

Four interviewees were more reserved, providing insightful but often concise answers to open-ended questions. In these situations, following Spradley's (1979: 68) advice that 'it takes many reminders for some informants to overcome the long-established practice of abbreviating,' I encouraged participants to describe their daily routines from the moment they got up in the morning to when they went to sleep at night. This simple descriptive exercise highlighted prisoners' hobbies, interests, anxieties and frustrations in the context of day-to-day prison life while also acclimatizing them to speaking at greater length. For three, more loquacious prisoners, the issue was not a lack of words but finding the appropriate ones. Indeed, for these interviewees 'the language of emotional expression was somewhat alien' (Evans and Wallace, 2008: 500). In these interviews an 'emotion wheel' (see Appendix 2) was introduced by the researcher to stimulate discussions of different types of emotion and various intensities of expression. Future research may benefit from introducing such props systematically, and at the start of interviews, to be used as a point of reference throughout the discussion.¹⁶

Greer (2002) states that some participants would adamantly deny the existence of their emotions in prison, before crying during the interview process itself. Similarly, in this research, a prisoner who was observed openly joking and laughing in the classroom environment flatly downplayed the existence of such exchanges under interview conditions:

¹⁵ For example, when prisoners mentioned serving time in other institutions the researcher questioned how those experiences compared to the emotional challenges of Moorland.

¹⁶ While consulting the 'emotion wheel', Paulo was asked how being in Chapel made him feel. He immediately drew a circle around the word 'serene'. This word did not appear spontaneously in any of the interviews, which may suggest that the wheel can allow participants to explore their emotions with greater specificity.

Interviewer: *What about humour in prison? When I entered the classroom today, I felt like there was a lot of joking going on.*

Oliver: They are silly jokes, not really.

Interviewer: *You're 'Planet of the Apes' comment? That was funny.*

Oliver: I described sarcastically about the situation in here. Yeah, but I don't share it with anyone, they take offence.

Clearly, the data collected during interviews does not automatically form 'experientially authentic truth' and it should be accepted that each interview is a 'methodically constructed social product' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002: 11). Importantly however, the fact that interviews are often 'artful productions' routinely influenced by 'concerns about self-presentation' does not mean that they cannot provide truthful, accurate representations of social reality (Hammersley, 2003: 123). Rather, these concerns should encourage scrupulous reflection from researchers, acknowledging that at times there may be a gap between interviewees' actions and their words.

Some participants revealed that they had concerns about the interview process, which lead to a number of insightful clarifications. Perhaps unimpressed by my status as a junior researcher and puzzled by my inability to affect policy change from his interview recording, Alan remarked: 'but surely *somebody important* will listen to it?' Other interviewees wondered what exactly the research was trying to uncover, and more importantly, whose side I was on. 'What about the University of Cambridge...do they try to take the side of the prisoner, or try to take the side of the system?' (Nicholas). Bosworth et al. (2005) offers the important reminder that many people sign-up for research in prison out of a desire to foster social reform. In response to such questions, the researcher moderated expectations about the potential of this research to affect policy, while suspending personal value judgments and forms of 'side-taking' in the moment (see Liebling, 2001).

I was concerned that participants' prior experiences with interviews (with police, probation or psychologists) may colour their expectations for the current discussion. I attempted to put interviewees at ease by downplaying (or reversing) hierarchical customs that sometimes add to interview anxiety: seating arrangements were left ambiguous, interviewees were encouraged to set the layout of the room, open windows, turn on/off a number of lights to make themselves comfortable. During the interview itself, questions about criminal history and moral judgments (or endorsements) about participants' crimes were avoided. However, two interviewees clearly anticipated that a layer of psychological judgment would follow the responses they gave. Oliver assumed that such judgements might be immediate:

My sister and her boyfriend and the rest of the family is sort of divvied up. When my Nan died everyone fell out over money, with the house and stuff. But I don't think there's a direct link between my family and why I'm in here, if you're gonna ask me that question? (Oliver)

By contrast Eddy spoke—with some resentment—to an invisible, but always present psychological audience who he appeared to think would hyper-analyse and misinterpret his every statement: ‘But yeah when you’re in prison you’re what you call a “bird-killer,” and if there are any psychologists listening to this, a bird-killer doesn’t mean going out killing women. It’s a bird-killer, you’re doing prison, you’re doing bird.’ Taken together, these concerns highlight the complex terrain of the interview spaces for prisoners sitting down to talk, and that conversations can operate on many levels, some of which may be foreign to the researcher.

Finally, I wondered about how my identity as a young, middle-class, white, physically active male may have shaped the interview process. I felt relaxed and emotionally at-ease in all but one interview (see below), and was able to strike rapport with the interviewees. Prisoners’ often initiated conversations about sport or using gymnasiums, and generally seemed to be emotionally disarmed around me. Though I enjoyed the interview process, trying to cover the themes in the research, while also listening attentively and asking impromptu questions was sometimes tiring. In one case, when an interviewee spoke at great length in an imploring tone (which did not seem wholly authentic), while trying to rationalize his perpetration of domestic abuse: I felt uncomfortable and struggled to control my facial expressions.

Analysis

Audio from the interviews was transcribed using dictation software (Express Scribe) and analysed using word processing software (Microsoft Word). The raw data was manually coded—a process that began by ‘pawing’ through the data and highlighting key phrases (Sandelowski, 1995). After ‘handling’ the data many times, patterns and themes began to emerge (Evans and Wallace, 2008: 491). This research followed Layder’s (1998) move towards ‘adaptive’ theory: a fluid (ongoing) approach which involves combining existing theory (deduction) with theory construction grounded in the empirical data (induction). In practice, this involved distinguishing between pre-coding categories (such as ‘fronting’ and ‘masking’) and provisional coding categories (for example, ‘emotionally transformative activities’) both of which ‘are influenced by the new data that is unearthed by ongoing research’ (p78).

Crewe’s (2013: 397) reflection that emotions between men in prison are often expressed ‘obliquely’ resonates strongly with some aspects of this research. More specifically, when exploring ‘fronting’ strategies most participants stated that the behaviour was seen *everywhere in others* and openly theorized why prisoners engaged in such behaviour. However, interviewees rarely acknowledged *their own* involvement in such activities. This created a challenging epistemological problem for this study: how can we accurately describe an internal emotion management strategy which few people recognize in themselves, but see pervasively in others? How do we interpret such accounts? The practice of denying fronting behaviours under interview conditions may, in itself, be an example of how men ‘perform emotion’ and construct psychological defences in prison, perhaps through the ‘projection’ of emotions on to others, or thorough emotional ‘denial’ (two possibilities

which are explored further in the following chapter).¹⁷ In the few instances where prisoner theorizations/speculations are introduced (Chapter 4) they are clearly demarcated in the text and boundaries are placed on the kinds of conclusions that can be drawn from this data.

In most instances, specific numbers (i.e. 1-16) are used to describe how many interviewees felt a certain way. However, there are some situations where it is not instructive, or it largely distracts the flow of the argument, to draw such precise distinctions. As Maxwell (2010: 480) argues, 'there is a danger of reducing evidence to the *amount* of evidence' (original italics). In situations where specific numbers are not utilized (as in the paragraph above) the following 'verbal counting' distinctions are drawn (see Sandelowski, 2001): 'most' refers to something occurring in over 70% of the sample (> 11), whereas 'rarely' or 'few' refers to something occurring in less than 30% of the participants (< 5). The use of ellipses in the text ('...') signifies that a longer except has been abridged.

Ethics

The primary ethical concerns of this research included the emotional well-being, confidentiality and informed consent of all the participants who volunteered for interview. Before the interviews, participants were presented with a consent form (Appendix 3) and information sheet (Appendix 4), which outlined the nature and scope of this study to participants and explained how their personal data would be used. The researcher clarified questions from participants and verbalized sentences or key phrases where reading competency was low. The interviewees were reminded that they could pause or terminate the interviews at any time without having to give a reason. At the end of the interview, a short set of 'cool down' questions were initiated and participants were invited to reflect on the research and ask further questions. At this stage, interviewees were also asked if there was any part of the research they would like to erase: all of the participants were happy for their contributions to be used in full. In one instance, an interview was ended after 25 minutes (by the researcher) as a precautionary step because the participant (who reported a significant mental health diagnosis before the interview) appeared to engage in non-verbal signs of anxiety (lightly touching skin near to old lacerations). The interviewee was reminded of places in prison where emotional support could be sought out including Listeners, personal officers, chaplains and teachers.

Ensuring prisoner's confidentiality and right to anonymity is a significant priority for this research. Pseudonyms have been used in place of prisoner's real names, and any information which could potentially be used to identify prisoners has been modified. Alarming, I found out in a later interview that my opportunistic decision to use that Art classroom's office for two interviews almost jeopardized the confidentiality of one of the participants in the study: 'Well, he's got a loud voice...don't get me wrong. You couldn't hear what was being said, you could hear the mumbling, the ups and downs' (Frank). While it may be difficult to acquire spaces away from others in prison, it is important that researchers guarantees of

¹⁷ And of course, it might be that the case that participants in the study genuinely do not engage in fronting, or are less likely to because of a bias in the sampling strategy.

confidentially are upheld. Participants were reminded that there were some limits to confidentiality, and that any disclosed intention to cause harm to oneself or others, or information which threatened the security of the prison establishment would be reported immediately.

The audio data collected in this study was stored on a digital Dictaphone during the day and then uploaded onto a secure personal computer (using an encryption programme) off-site. The Dictaphone data was erased at the end of each research day. Written consent forms have been stored in a locked office. All of the personal data collected (physical and electronic) will be destroyed after the dissemination of this research.

4. Calculation and fronting: Generating emotions in prison

What I'm telling you is, what you do at poker is what you do in prison. You wear masks...Just like you would at poker, you calculate the odds. It's about the odds at the end of the day. Mostly, because it's a game of percentages poker.

(Eddy)

Prisoners put a significant amount of thought into their presentation strategies during interactions with other prisoners, officers and staff. The focus of this chapter is often referred to as 'fronting', understood here as the ways in which prisoners *manufacture* emotions in the presence of others. Previous accounts have explained that prison is a barren environment with scarce resources, which leads to the status deprivation of those who live within it (Jewkes, 2005) and engenders a 'particularly acute need for indices of relative status' (Toch, 1992: 64). On one hand then, fronting represents a scramble for limited resources and status reclamation. Yet, it may also have strong emotional and social survival mechanisms (De Viggiani, 2012) which help prisoners to disguise their vulnerabilities (see Crewe, 2009). Prisoners in Moorland were familiar with the concept of fronting, although they rarely acknowledged it in themselves. They did, however, openly describe the different kinds of 'fronts' that they saw around them and shared various theories and explanations for these behaviours. This chapter evaluates prisoners' personal accounts alongside the prior literature on fronting, while drawing attention to the important role of emotion management in this process.

Three types of fronting

When asked directly about fronting in prison most interviewees described, with some distaste, a type of boisterous prisoner who 'puts a fake gangster look up' (Henry) and who moves through prison with an aggressive 'hard-man front' (Frank), attempting to take on an identity which is markedly different from their real selves. This kind of prisoner might often be heard recounting stories about being known and respected in his home town, boasting about sexual potency, and claiming to have vast amounts of personal income. These characters were a source of ridicule and scornful derision for some of the interviewees: 'If you had loads of money you wouldn't be in prison because you'd be able to get a decent barrister' (Henry). Yet, half of the participants also described, in some form, having to 'just walk away' when confronted by the aggression and anger of these types of prisoners. The implication is that although such hostile displays of emotion were understood by interviewees as having a performative and transparent quality, they nevertheless enabled aggressors to confer different forms of material advantage in prison micro-situations (queuing for phones, meals, access to preferred gym equipment).

Two further kinds of fronting approaches were described, though perhaps less coherently. A third of the prisoners self-described traversing a 'middle-way' in prison:

*You lose if you show yourself as alpha male then everyone will pick on you.
You lose if you show yourself as too weak then everybody will pick on you.*

Just keep it in the middle... You don't go forward for a fight but you don't back up from a fight. You just choose a middle line, you don't push it.

(Jacob)

Enacting such roles meant that some prisoners had to force themselves to smile throughout their daily interactions with other prisoners in an attempt to appear happy: 'I mean if I'm sad I'll just put on a happy face. I will just keep on smiling and telling jokes' (Gary). For these participants, fronting certain forms of emotion (such as happiness) was closely intertwined with the masking of potentially dangerous emotions. Exhibiting any form of emotional extreme, such as open displays of aggression, was ill-advised because 'if you're a bit too much of a strong man you'll get your bloody head kicked-in. Because you're not as strong as you'd like to think' (Eddy). Ultimately, the purpose of this 'middle-way' was to blend in with the crowd, which largely enabled prisoners to 'go under the radar' (Ian). This approach was embraced and endorsed by some participants because it seemed to make prison life more predictable and emotionally stable, as well as diverting negative attention away from oneself.

A final form of fronting, discussed by three prisoners, involved manufacturing a presentation strategy that had stoic and enigmatic qualities. In part, prisoners using this approach would try to withdraw from social areas, sit alone in classrooms, and exhibit emotional stoicism during their interactions with others. Yet, prisoners' accounts strongly suggested that this was *not only* a suppressive strategy: 'They start to think "who is this guy, is he military, is he this, is he that." So you keep them guessing...so you don't get as much trouble' (Henry). Similarly, Paulo explained that 'I kind of keep myself to myself most of the time. To them they don't really know if they do this to me, how I'm going to react.' These prisoners implied that their fronting practices were able to generate uncertainty and perhaps some degree of fear in their peers, because other prisoners had no idea what the consequences of provoking them might be.

It is important to acknowledge that the three styles of fronting described here may involve slightly coarse demarcations, while only reflecting a small proportion of the potentially vast presentation strategies used by prisoners. However, these findings suggest that when exploring the generation of emotion in prison, it is crucial to think not just about individual prisoners grappling with their own emotions but also how prisoners try to evoke emotion in others. This is to say, fronting is a complex process that fuses together a combination of individual and interpersonal level emotion management strategies. The following section aims to explore the rationale for fronting in greater depth, but first the importance of 'authenticity' is introduced.

Authenticity and fronting

Understanding why prisoners engage in fronting was complicated by the fact that interviewees largely understood it to be a disingenuous activity with which they did not wish to be implicated. On one hand, fronting in prison was mentioned frequently (Eddy's comment that 'everybody in prison puts up a front' was typical), but to directly acknowledge one's own involvement raised uncomfortable consequences about personal authenticity. Most interviewees were acutely aware that the presence or absence of fronting was contingent on having a wider audience: 'somebody will come to you right, and they'll be nice to you. As soon as other people come into the room they'll switch' (Ian). Further, it was acknowledged when you see an individual with a group of associates 'they are not the real person' (Brian). Problematically then, fronting was seen everywhere in *other* prisoners but most interviewees (with a few notable exceptions) expressed great hesitation when asked to reflect on their personal fronting strategies.

By denying their own propensity to 'front', prisoners may be exhibiting a form of emotional defence. Indeed, when prisoners spoke of others fronting, it was questionable whether there was a degree of psychological 'projection' in action—a mechanism which involves 'seeing one's own traits in others' (Baumeister et al., 1998 :1090). Equally, such activities may also involve a degree of emotional denial, where individuals reject the negative implications of information that could damage their self-esteem. During his interview, Harry stated 'just take me as I am. There's no point being someone that you're not', yet this statement contrasted sharply with his subsequent advice:

Don't say you're in for a sex offence, say you're in for fraud or GBH just to get them off your back. It's basically lying to the enemy as it were...so you just gotta lie to keep yourself alive really. (Harry)

It was not always clear to what extent prisoners were aware of such conflicting sentiments. Moreover, it is possible that prisoners' presentation strategies are affected by unconscious processes that are difficult to articulate. In support of this, there is convincing evidence that emotion regulation can occur without conscious awareness (Gross, 2002), especially in instances where one switches attention away from potentially disturbing or traumatic events (Boden and Baumeister, 1997). As Prison may at times concentrate unsettling events, understanding the nature of personal authenticity becomes a more complex process.

Interestingly, if prisoners are largely unconscious of 'inauthentic' emotions in themselves, this may explain why they typically point towards such processes only in others. In a different respect, it is worth considering that prisoners may draw distinctions between various aspects of the self. For example, lying about one's sentence in an extreme situation (motivated by self-preservation), may not be understood as a violation of one's general principles as an honest person. By contrast, a less sympathetic interpretation could examine the constructed space of the interview, where few prisoners might actively choose to disclose situations which present them in an unflattering light or reveal deep contradictions in their characters. Ultimately, the prison environment is a complex space where conflicting values and prescriptions exist in tandem. For example, the need to be genuine and authentic is

directly opposed by the need to disguise forms of weakness (Crewe, 2009). A final perspective was provided by Jacob:

Nobody's a real version of themselves in prison, because you're either a version of yourself in the work you do, the people you mix with, the places you visit, the holiday you take, the hobby you have. Here you're restricted, so whatever version you put in, it's because the environment makes you this way.
(Jacob)

Jacob undercuts the assumption that any form of authenticity can be achieved in prison, because the social environment is so markedly detached from life outside of prison. Ultimately, the notion of authenticity in prison is an important but challenging concept, and one in need of further empirical exploration.

The functions of fronting

While few prisoners admitted to fronting themselves, they were quite happy to speculate about other people's behaviour. Such speculation, though far from ideal, is introduced here as a provisional attempt to explore the function of fronting behaviours. Indeed, prisoners expressed different theories about the kinds of people who engage in boisterous forms of fronting. Young novice prisoners were often singled-out and dubbed as the most raucous and irritating individuals. Collin, speaking about other young prisoners like himself, argued that this was because 'you're influenced before you even come to prison by prison programmes and films and stuff...Before you ever come to prison you think you're gonna have to fight straight away to show that you can't be bullied.' While media portrayals of prison are not limited to the young, it may be the case that younger prisoners possess fewer coping strategies and are generally more impressionable.

Importantly, most of the interviewees agreed that there was a strong relationship between fronting and fear (or other underlying anxieties). A troubled and emotionally vulnerable prisoner disclosed:

I kind of put on a big front and walk around like a big hard man and stuff like that, and arguing with a lot of people. I think I do that in prison so people leave me alone. Don't mess and stuff like that.
(Darren)

Most prisoners suggested that the relationship here was linear: a more bombastic performance signalled an increased likelihood that a person was vulnerable. Interviewees explained that some prisoners were 'soft and hurt in their hearts' (Paulo) and that fronting was a way to 'protect themselves because obviously you can be on the wing and you don't know...who can snap, and when the next argument is gonna happen, and who's gonna get hurt' (Liam). For those who perceived prison to be unpredictable, fronting offered a way of asserting a degree of order and control over the environment, while also easing fears of victimization. Indeed, some prisoners expressed concerns that if they failed to stand their ground it would set a precedent to other prisoners, leading to a cycle of exploitation and bullying (see Sabo et al., 2001).

Eddy spoke candidly about the function of his anger in prison: 'rather than get hurt I get angry...anger can sometimes channel that hurt and get rid of it.' Although Eddy's

self-reflection was not typical, it suggests that for some prisoners the best form of psychological defence is a strong offence because of its ability to purge negativity and emotional pain. In some respects these initial findings resonate with the prior literature, which identify fronting as a mechanism for 'disguising weakness' but also as 'a mark of underlying insecurity' Crewe (2009: 432). Yet, the interviewees' testimonies in this study may enable us to probe deeper by exploring the specific forms of emotional weakness that fronting attempts to address.

Prisoners' speculated that when people 'are upset they might turn it into anger' (Gary) in prison, and that the content (and context) of such anger could take potentially revealing forms. For example, those who expressed rage and disgust towards sex offenders signalled to some interviewees that the aggressors may have 'skeletons in their closets or have done similar things to what you've been accused of, or they've got the potential to do it, but they hide that fact by shouting abuse at you' (Frank). In a different manner, Oliver explained that some prisoners 'make up bullshit stories...because their life is boring.' In both of these speculative accounts, one emotion is directly substituted for its opposite: fear is replaced by anger, boredom for excitement.

Furthermore, interviewees claimed that prisoners who spoke tirelessly about fighting were largely compensating for a lack of physical potency. Similarly, micro-situations in prison could capture this process in action. One prisoner explained that persistent queue jumpers would scream vehemently about others doing the same thing. Finally, when some prisoners felt sad they faked smiles in public areas to drive away negative attention and project positive energy. It may be insightful therefore to consider that fronting in prison may represent a process where emotions are generated *to directly invert the emotions* that are currently being experienced, known in psychoanalytic theory as 'reaction formation.' This process 'involves converting a socially unacceptable impulse into its opposite...People respond to the implication that they have some unacceptable trait by behaving in a way that would show them to have the opposite trait' (Baumeister et al., 1998: 1085) While there may be limits to this process and certain situations where such emotional 'reversals' do not hold, it may nonetheless offer a useful platform to explore how prisoners manufacture their emotions with greater specificity.

Conclusion

Prisoners in Moorland described various forms of fronting which appear to involve generating particular emotions in both the self and others. The impulse to 'front' may be motivated by an urge (reaction formation) to replace experiences of fear, boredom, sadness and other anxieties with their opposite emotions. This process may help to increase self-preservation by diverting unwanted negative attention away from oneself. However, given that this claim is based partly on interviewees' speculations of others prisoners' behaviour, caution should be exercised here and further research is needed to substantiate this process. Di Viggiani (2012: 288) argues in his study that the 'transient prisoner population made the social environment tense and stressful, [and that] front management therefore becomes a necessary survival strategy, despite the fact that it could further alienate individuals from themselves and from others.' While Di Viggiani suggests a side-effect of fronting may be the risk of creating distance between one's performed and true self, this chapter has attempted to highlight the ambiguous and contested nature of

'authenticity' in the prison environment. A further practical difficulty may be the use of the term 'fronting' in interviews, which has advantages and drawbacks. On the one hand, the concept is part of the prison argot: being used and quickly recognized by most prisoners in this study. However, it was almost universally understood as a negative or disingenuous trait to possess. Therefore, future research may benefit from using more inclusive or neutral terminology, such as 'generating emotions' in prison. This may offer a way to further advance accounts of prisoner fronting and unravel the specific situations where forms of emotion are manufactured, without distancing participants from the concept.

5. Masking and releasing emotions

I know I will see him one day, when I get out...I will be there to be his granddad and whatever. But now I've just got to get on with what I've got to do in here. I put that to the back of my mind. Because if I don't that's when you will get depressed, that's when you will get down.

(Frank)

But sometimes I will just go and take my frustration out on a pool ball.

(Brian)

The contrasting quotations above highlight the diverse nature of emotion management in prison, reflecting the way prisoners keep certain emotions locked deep inside while simultaneously seeking out forms of emotional ventilation. Masking - which is understood here as situations where individuals attempt to suppress or hide emotion - may have strong protective functions both for psychological stability and for the way one deals with others in prison (Crewe et al., 2013). Johnson (1987: 88) summarizes that prisoners are 'threatened internally with the knowledge of their inadequacy; externally, with the knowledge of their vulnerability.' Therefore, there may be a strong impetus to mask emotions at both the individual and interpersonal level in prison. However, long-term psychological and emotional stability may also hinge on prisoners' abilities to 'maintain and nurture a private, interior sense of self' (Jewkes, 2005: 46), which may involve a release or purging of pent-up emotion. This may be motivated by a fear of 'losing oneself' or one's psychological integrity in prison (Abbott, 1981; Cohen and Taylor, 1972), but also by more positive aspirations for a future after imprisonment. Prisoners in Moorland discussed a wide range of strategies, distractions and personal routines which appeared to emphasize (to different degrees) the need to both mask and release forms of emotion. This chapter explores these dual strategies while analysing the various motivations which may underpin them.

Masking emotion

At the individual level, the suppression of emotional *thoughts* can help ward off additional pains of imprisonment: 'I can't think about my home, my family and life out there...it's just dead thoughts, it'll cause me to get upset' (Alan). Indeed, prolonged episodes of thinking could quickly become a self-defeating activity throughout the day and night: 'if you start thinking before you go to sleep...it's going to do your head in' (Oliver). Brian claimed he was consciously able to 'switch-off' such negative thought patterns before they spiraled out of control by diverting his attention to other subjects. While this approach afforded a degree of mental tranquility, completely switching-off thoughts was not a skill possessed by most participants. Indeed, accounts from other prisoners suggested that harnessing control was a more challenging process that involved deep mental reasoning and emotional grappling. Colin explained that 'if something pisses you off you've got plenty of time to think about it in your cell. And you can either wind yourself up about it more or try and rationalise it.' It was such forms of rationalisation that encouraged most prisoners to

(sometimes begrudgingly) walk away from heated situations and potential conflicts because 'anger is a dangerous emotion to show' (Colin) in prison—potentially leading to fights and IEP (Incentives and Earned Privileges) set-backs. Ultimately, whichever approach is used (blocking emotion completely, or rationalizing/'sense making' processes) both constitute attempts to mask hurtful emotions and foster a degree of self-preservation.

A common way of suppressing emotion in prison involved seeking out distractions through activities and establishing a stable routine, or as Henry put it: 'little tasks help to keep the mind busy.' Such tasks could help to facilitate a degree of escapism. This is redolent of Toch (1992: 25) who argues that the pursuit of mental and physical diversions 'can be functional for its own sake—for energy and attention it consumes, for feelings it challenges, for distracting or anesthetizing effects.' In line with this, Darren explained that watching TV was a simple mental diversion while Eddy reported that 'reading, match-sticking, crosswords, Sudoku and wordsearches were all bird-killers' for him.¹⁸ Activities appeared to range from surface distractions (or time-fillers) to far more immersive pastimes: 'when I'm reading my Arabic, there's no stress and I forget everything' (Liam). Similarly, Paulo stated that 'when you're doing pad workouts, nothing else matters. At that moment in time you don't feel any stress, your mind-set is focused on what you're doing in the moment...your mind is free.' However, such journeys into mental escapism could be abruptly punctured when scheduled activities were cancelled or came to an end:

*Even from the time I step in there [the art classroom] till the time I go, you know I feel like I'm not in prison. But soon as you go back on to the house block I think 'oh, I'm back in prison again...that puts you in a bad mood.'*¹⁹

(Henry)

For prisoners who took comfort in workday routines away from the wing, evening lock-up and the unstructured nature of weekends presented extended periods of down-time, where it became difficult to stave-off pangs of boredom and frustration. By contrast, four prisoners described time alone in cells as a precious commodity in prison, providing respite from the unpredictability of social environments and a chance to engage in preferred activities. Ultimately, the ability of prisoners to mask emotion may be contingent on temporal and spatial factors over which they have only limited control.

The fact that most prisoners attempted to hide anxious or troubling emotions in public spaces appeared to be motivated by necessity rather than choice. Prisoners explained (often with some resentment) that public places in prison did not offer a welcome audience for such concerns: 'If you express your feelings to anyone they will make a joke of you' (Nicholas). Similarly, Eddy explained that people who attempted to share emotions with others received 'no sympathy from other prisoners, they get scorned, they get derided.' Furthermore, resistance to open social support was not limited to the prisoner population. It was claimed that the majority of officers and staff 'don't really care' (Gary) and 'don't want to listen' (Kyle) to prisoners'

¹⁸ Doing 'bird' is a slang term for passing one's time in prison.

¹⁹ Similar accounts were reported by two prisoners who had lucid dreams, but found it painful to wake-up with the realization they were (still) in prison.

problems. Ian claimed that the social environment was saturated by various forms of 'judgement' which occurred 'way too much in prison'. It is perhaps no coincidence that the situations where prisoners felt most comfortable releasing emotion (see below) are marked by an absence of such forms of judgment.

While the individual unit of analysis is important here, the suppression of emotion in prison may also be explained by the broader *interpersonal advantages* of such a strategy, what Crewe et al. (2013: 7) term the 'collective coping function' of controlling emotion. Indeed, Gary was acutely aware that others could be affected by his negative moods: 'I just don't want to make other people feel that way as well. They're already having their own problems so I don't want to put mine on to them as well.' Liam explained how it felt to be on the receiving end of interactions when people refuse to mask their frustrations: 'when you're working in the classroom and someone has a bad day, coming in all moody, shouting and swearing...it brings you down.' These accounts offer evidence of an 'emotional contagion' effect in prison, i.e. the ability of a person to 'infect others with their own emotions' (Hatfield and Cacioppo, 1994: 6). As Frank argues, this process is not only limited to interactions between prisoners:

One of the things you don't want to do is spread bad vibes to the officers. Some people understand that they've got a job to do, they can be moody and that, they're only human like what we are. But if you're being miserable and whatever, then you start the officers being miserable, then it will come back on to you. Then you get their bad day. It's going to sort of double your bad day.
(Frank)

The unique aspects of the prison environment, including the highly constricted movement of bodies and forced (co)habitation in tight spaces, may concentrate and magnify forms of emotional contagion. This is to say, prisoners and officers cannot always retreat from unwanted social interactions and can therefore become the victims of others' moods. In this context, masking one's emotions could also be understood as an indirect way of showing consideration for others. This may (in part) be why prisoners who 'do their own time' and keep personal problems to themselves are afforded high-levels of respect in prison (Sykes, 1958; Sabo et al., 2001).

Importantly however, although the benefits of masking have been explored here, the emotion regulation literature highlights a number of physiological and psychological costs (both long and short-term) of suppressing emotion, including: increased stress, reduced feelings of rapport and social affiliation, alienation from the self, increased experiences of negative emotion and decreased experiences of positive emotion (Butler and Gross, 2004; see also Philippot and Feldman, 2004). Given such undesirable consequences, it is perhaps unsurprising that masking did not operate in a vacuum for Moorland's prisoners. Indeed, for most interviewees, such a strategy was tempered with, and perhaps alleviated by, discreet forms of emotional catharsis, to which this chapter now turns.

Releasing emotion

Nine interviewees explained that activities and hobbies in prison sometimes went beyond 'surface' distractions by providing deeper forms of emotional relief. Playing table tennis, doing pad²⁰ workouts, or going to the gym - where you can 'throw some metal around' (Liam) - facilitated ways for prisoners to purge restless energy and pent-up frustration, while the subsequent 'release of endorphins...gives you a kind of natural high' (Gary). Gary further claimed that access to art was important because it induced comparable effects: 'I write a lot of music, I have a guitar in my cell. That's a good way to express emotion...and I like listening to depressing songs. It's my way of making myself feel better.' In a similar vein, Frank explained that creative writing in prison was 'just like therapy, things are in my head and I'm putting them down on paper.' Finally, spiritual pursuits appeared to serve equivalent functions for other prisoners: 'Praying helps you deal with frustration, and how to manage that frustration' (Nicolas). These accounts resonate strongly with Scheff's (1979) notion of 'positive catharsis'—activities which result in clearer thoughts, enhanced feeling states and increased creativity than before the cathartic moment—and were cherished pastimes for the individuals involved.²¹

By contrast, two participants shared more sombre accounts of using self-harm to discharge emotion: 'It's just mostly to release my stress and my anger and stuff like that' (Darren). Henry echoed these sentiments: 'I was cutting my arms with a razor blade just trying to get rid of that frustration.' A less extreme form of physical and mental release was echoed by all the participants; the need, at some point, to cry in prison. Michael's statement: 'sometimes I breakdown and I cry' was typical (see Crewe et al., 2013), but the fact that such moments were almost unanimously contained to personal cells indicated that prisoners still exerted a degree of control over such 'breakdowns.' Indeed, while Collin argued that it took strength to admit to others that one had recently been crying ('people look at me like they'd never dare say that'), this statement was atypical and Jacob's account was more representative:

Of course people don't admit it. Especially men. We keep it inside. But you don't cry every night. You go through this phase. If you have no feelings then you don't have that phase. I think most people have that phase. Flesh and blood. They don't admit it, they don't wanna show it. (Jacob)

This explanation is interesting not least because it reaffirms the significance of 'performing' masculinity in male institutions, but also because it emphasises the need to both discharge and hide emotion from others. This is to say, the presence and subsequent denials of crying in public directly highlight the tension between masking and releasing emotion in prison.

²⁰ A slang term for a prisoner's cell.

²¹ This is also reminiscent of Csikszentmihalyi's (1991) concept of 'flow', which the author describes as 'optimal experience.' This can include a wide number of activities; all characterized by deep immersion, where individuals lose a sense of time passing and are highly challenged (mentally or physically) by such experiences.

Similarly, potent expressions of emotion flowed, in complex ways, during interactions with family members and intimates (outside prison) and within personal relationships (or associations) cultivated inside. Henry spoke in extreme terms about sustaining written contact with loved ones: 'getting letters in prison is like winning the lottery...but when I don't get one it puts me really down.' Similarly, the intense joy of seeing acquaintances face-to-face was abruptly followed by an emotional downturn as prisoners were forced back to the reality of the prison regime. Daily phone calls were extremely important to Kyle who explained that 'when I call my family - my wife and my mother - I start to cry. But when I cry it gives me great strength.'²² Yet, any kind of disruption to this daily routine led to an immediate crippling paranoia which included 'so many negative thoughts...maybe she will leave me?' (Kyle). The accounts above indicate that maintaining contact with loved ones in prison could have paradoxical and turbulent effects on one's emotions. Such emotional swings ranged from outpourings of love and care to moments of intense anxiety and existential misery. It was for these reasons that a small number of prisoners chose to complexly sever or vastly curtail intimate ties upon entering prison.

For five interviewees, associations formed inside prison were emotionally significant relationships that could provide an outlet for pent-up feelings. For example, Oliver stated that 'if I've got a problem and I'm feeling depressed I will just tell my pad-mate about it', and Liam argued that when 'you're banged up for so many hours you're frustrated...but luckily enough I have a cell mate.' However, while Colin explained that tight bonds could form 'without [prisoners] even realising they're getting closer', such incursions were not necessarily welcomed by everyone. Prisoners who talked excessively about their sentence conditions, or who had idiosyncratic habits, could push their pad-mates to breaking-point, where emotion control was lost completely.

Losing control

While the primary emphasis of this research is on how prisoners manage their emotions, three interviewees recalled situations where they had either relinquished control completely or had desperate thoughts. Indeed, a recent suicide in Moorland loomed heavily over some of the participants' accounts and indicated clearly that when control was lost in prison the consequences could be dire. Nicolas shared an unsettling anecdote about his experience of bullying in prison:

I was sharing the cells with different people. You don't know who is your partner [sic], they have different cultures and different mentalities. It puts pressure on you. They try to insult you to do different things. You try to ignore them, but they push you and push you. And then one day I was too nervous and too pressured so I start screaming "yeah, yeah", screaming to get out. Since that day the partner he understands that he needs to move.

(Nicolas)

²² I was curious as to whether crying on the phone exposed Kyle in front of other prisoners:

Interviewer: So is it difficult to cry in a public area like near the telephones?

Kyle: Yeah, it's difficult. But you know there's a telephone booth so you can do whatever you want.

Interviewer: Kind of semi-private?

Kyle: Yes, semi-private.

Henry explained that on one occasion he began pounding his head against his cell wall because he was so desperately frustrated with his current situation. While these examples are clearly severe, they did not represent the daily experiences that most prisoners shared in the interviews. These accounts do however emphasize that the balance between masking and releasing emotion in prison is at times extremely precarious and requires a lot of effort, and this effort is sometimes unsustainable.

Conclusion

This chapter has documented the various ways that prisoners attempt to both suppress and alleviate their emotions in prison. In the broader literature, there has been a tendency to draw on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework to explain suppression of feelings in public (front-stage) areas and the outpouring of emotion in more private (back-stage) zones. Yet, a number of prison scholars (Jewkes, 2005; Crewe et al., 2013; Moran et al., 2013) have pointed-out the limits of this conceptual framework by contesting simple notions of 'privacy', while drawing attention to cell-sharing relationships and the sometimes 'softer' emotional atmosphere found in prison workshops and classrooms. In this vein, this chapter has underscored the importance of *judgement* in prison, which may provide a further way to reframe such concepts. The art classroom for example, from which six participants were selected, was an environment characterized by a kind of collective camaraderie, where prisoners appeared to help rather than judge one another. Similarly, personal relationships and close associations provided a space for discharging frustrations without fears of reprisal or emotional rejection. Exploring the presence or absence of forms of judgement in prison could be a fruitful avenue for understanding prisoners' inner worlds and rationales for sharing/hiding emotion beyond the public/private binary. Secondly, aside from the self-preservation functions of masking, *emotional contagion* in prison could provide added motivations for suppressing one's feelings in public areas, while partially explaining some of the collective challenges of living in forced proximity to others.

6. Positive emotions in prison

You know, we'd be playing and winding each other up with card games. Somebody would be winning but then all of a sudden they would lose, and you would win! And then you would get up and dance, just like this.

(Eddy)

This chapter examines the prevalence of 'positive emotions' in prison as well as the various motivations for expressing or masking such emotions. Positive emotion is defined here as any emotive state that induces a pleasant effect: as evidenced through displays of care, love, joy and humour. Yet, definitions of positive emotion (and emotion more broadly) have not been consensually agreed (see Russell and Carroll, 1999) nor are they unproblematic. Indeed, as stated in the literature review, an individual's happiness may be achieved at the expense of another person's misery in prison, implying that the label 'positive' is largely contingent on one's perspective. This concern arose repeatedly in the way some prisoners discussed the function of humour in Moorland, and will be explored in further detail by following Nielson's (2011: 501) assertion that 'humour goes far beyond amusement'.

Drawing on the regulation of emotion literature more broadly, it is argued that 'positive emotions are important facilitators of adaptive coping and adjustment to acute and chronic stress' (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2000: 115). This idea develops the suggestions of Lazarus et al. (1980) that the expression of positive emotion might help to restore diminishing resources, provide emotional or psychological relief and assist the continuation of personal coping strategies. Further, positive and negative emotive states are not mutually exclusive categories (Zautra et al., 1997) and unlike a 'pendulum' which exists only in one place at a time 'a human being can be both happy and unhappy' at the same time (Russell and Carroll, 1999: 3). Given that prisons can be distressing and violent spaces, the framework set out above predicts that the 'counter-weighting' of positive emotions should be both highly prevalent and quite necessary. Indeed, Crewe (2014) found evidence for a number of positive emotions in prison, although these expressions typically took indirect forms. By comparison, prisoners in Moorland displayed positive emotion through subtle expressions of care and affection towards others: through their use of humour (although this is a multidimensional concept), and through narratives of self-development in prison, which connected to broader themes of identity transformation.

Displays of affection and care

Volunteering to become a Buddy²³, Listener²⁴ or working within the prison chapel allowed participants to show care for others in a semi-formal capacity. Brian explained that 'it's the satisfaction of knowing that you've helped someone else' which gave him enjoyment and increased his daily motivation. Similarly, Liam

²³ Buddies assist physically less able prisoners by collecting their meals and helping them to clean their cells.

²⁴ Listeners provide confidential advice and support to other prisoners.

recounted the absence of the chaplain at Christmas and his request to step forward and lead the sermon instead: 'I did it with a good heart. I felt very positive, I felt very good for the guys. Had no-one been there to do it we would have had no service, we would have just been banged up.' Expressions of care and consideration sometimes emerged in bluntly expressed relationship advice or in domestic negotiations between pad-mates: 'I said to him "Look, it's your cell as well as mine, the telly and that. I don't expect you to finish reading and turn the light out just cause I'm in bed"' (Eddy). Furthermore, there was a palpable sense of warmth and tenderness which characterized prisoners' recollections of having 'some bloody good conversations' (Brian) with the 'lads on the wing' (Collin), or forming tight relationships that were cultivated through shared activities: 'You know there's always people saying "you're alright and stuff, can I come in for a smoke? Do you want a coffee?"' (Darren). Further, Liam explained that the gym was a dynamic space where:

You tend to socialize quite a bit. It's enjoyable you know, exercising and seeing other people doing exercises. You're working with another partner, it's quite good...you don't get to use all the facilities. But it's acceptable because obviously everyone has to benefit.
(Liam)

Such testimonies exemplified a degree of prosocial sharing and learning in a cramped environment which fostered and solidified fraternal bonds. The experience of mutual challenges could, in some situations, unite rather than divide prisoners. Comparable forms of camaraderie were spontaneously expressed by three interviewees who spoke passionately against bullying in prison, or by others who wanted to declare their benevolent natures: 'I will go out of my way to help someone out' (Oliver). Taken together, these findings largely corroborate Crewe's (2014) argument that emotion does indeed flow between men in prison, but that it typically emerges in understated or indirect ways, often emerging through the repetition of shared routines or structured activities. Importantly, the findings here also appear to reveal a textured, 'day-to-day', quality of emotion expression in prison which is not characterized by the extreme or absolute terms which have tended to define previous accounts.

Stronger expressions of affection or love were typically reserved for partners, spouses and family members outside of prison. Prisoners routinely reported feeling happy and calm after completing daily phone calls with loved ones. Perhaps counterintuitively, some personal relationships appeared to have been bolstered by the experience and challenges of imprisonment: Colin stated 'I've got closer to my mum in prison, we were close before but we were just sort of like passing ships.' In a similar vein, Ian articulated that a newfound solidarity with his siblings had been established: 'My sister was writing saying that she wishes we were closer, and that she sees me as a father figure...It was probably the best thing ever in terms of showing that she cares.' However, prisoners explained that when a positive piece of news was received from outside, or when they began to feel excitement as release dates approached, it was wise to 'keep it to yourself' (James/Kyle verbatim).

Interestingly then, the requirement to mask or hide feelings (explored in the previous chapter) was not limited to displays of 'negative emotion'. Moreover, the motives for such 'positive suppression' also appeared comparable. For example, Eddy explained how discussing release dates could create friction: 'Well fuck me, he's got all those

years left. He doesn't want to hear about me. He knows I'm out soon.' Such accounts suggest that masking positive emotion is at times fuelled by a compassion for others and the unnecessary psychological pain it could inflict. On the other hand, Nicholas explained that it was important not to 'disturb the bear' in prison, because 'if you disturb the bear you will get hurt.' Therefore, masking strong forms of positive emotion appeared to combine a practical consideration for the less fortunate, while also enhancing individual safety by circumventing the potential for resentful or jealous feelings to emerge in others, by deflecting attention away from oneself.

Humour

Generally, it was noted by most interviewees that the prison environment was saturated with 'a lot of humour, joking and laughing' (Liam). The role of humour in Moorland was complex though, having a number of important yet diverse functions. First, the prevalence of humour could offer another (indirect) outlet for communicating affection. Brian grinned and recalled that 'they call me the old bastard...but it's like water off a ducks back', while Oliver fondly compared the pranks and inside jokes in prison to 'being in school again'. A small number of prisoners explained that the content of such humour typically gravitated towards 'dark' or grim topics, and at times directly related to one's criminal propensity or prior offences. It has been argued (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2000: 116) that manifestations of such 'gallows humour' can provide benefits by 'generating positive emotion in the very darkest of moments, which may, in turn, help build social bonds that can be beneficial under conditions of stress.' Indeed, after Eddy shared an anecdote,²⁵ it was this very sense of social inclusion and bonding which he emphasised: 'It's terrible because people like you wouldn't understand prison humour...Now that might sound sick to outside, but inside you've changed, you're perspective has changed. You use dark humour.' However, not all prisoners were complicit in such activities and actively sought to distance themselves from these interactions: 'It makes me feel sick because even on the outside I don't talk like that' (Frank).

Whatever the content, most prisoners recognised that humour in prison could have stress-relieving qualities. While this process (known as 'Relief theory') has been documented and analysed in social interactions outside prison (Berlyne, 1972; Morreall, 1983), it is not difficult to conceive that using humour to 'defuse a potentially tense situation' (Meyer, 2000: 312) could also be highly advantageous for prisoner populations.²⁶ Indeed, interviewees affirmed this principle when they explained that humour allows 'you to get your depression and stress out' (Kyle), and that they eased tension during heated interactions with officers by engaging in banter and 'cheeky comments' (Henry). But aside from interrupting the escalation of bad feelings, humour also helped to 'bring the morale up again' (Liam). This reflected a kind of collective awareness of the dangers of bouts of sadness in prison: 'if I'm wound up or depressed or anything like that my mates will...try and cheer me up and have a laugh with me and that.' For some prisoners then, the use of humour

²⁵ Eddy was serving time for a sex offence. In the story, Eddy's peers questioned the appropriateness of his presence in a garden 'nursery' given the nature of his prior convictions.

²⁶ Especially since prison has been described as a depriving environment (see Sykes, 1958) with increased levels of violence and aggression (Edgar et al., 2003).

reflected a direct pragmatic stance against the challenges of imprisonment, and a popular consensus was that if you have to serve time you might as well 'spend it happily instead of being sad' (Collin). Indeed, having an upbeat daily outlook was considered to be an invaluable psychological and physiological defence: 'you can't just be miserable...that would surely have a bad effect on your health in general' (Alan). While a direct link between good humour and good health is empirically tenuous (see McCreddie and Wiggins, 2008), the indirect effects of decreased interpersonal contact and access to support networks, may be damaging for prisoners who retreat from social circles.

However, at times prison humour appeared to involve a degree of calculation for far less benevolent reasons:

Well sometimes, you just say some things that you would never normally say. Just totally out of hand, if you know what I mean? But if you laugh about it after it's like "oh, it's just a joke" but yeah. (Gary)

'Joking', in this form, enabled prisoners to cast-out provocative comments while attempting to retreat or distance themselves from potential negative repercussions. It was in this vein that Henry explained that humour was sometimes used to 'push it' and to 'get a reaction.' Humour is therefore connected to boundary testing and a general 'feeling-out' process in prison, enabling prisoners to explore the limits and contours of associations and relationships. These accounts are reminiscent of Nielson's comments (2011: 501) that 'humour creates the illusion of an unreal communication, yet it is real in its implications. In playing with the real and the unreal, humour unites opposites.' Indeed, the proximity of such 'opposites' was evidenced in the way that laughter could rapidly turn into anger when 'humorous' exchanges went too far in Moorland. Five prisoners spontaneously transitioned from talking about humour to the dangers and consequences of poorly calibrated jokes. For example, Nicholas explained that 'even if the joke is funny for you it's not funny for everyone', and poorly attuned comments from certain prisoners were felt to be 'below the belt' (Frank). Paulo further explained how it feels to be the recipient in such exchanges:

The other end of the joke is: "what is he talking about? Is he joking about me? Is he making fun of me?" So sometimes things could escalate depending upon the mood that person is in, sometimes everyone just jokes and laughs about it. (Paulo)

At times, there appeared to be a precarious line which separated humour from bullying. Importantly, it may be that while the targets of sharp 'humour' are further excluded, such processes may serve to strengthen and solidify positive feelings for inducted group members and those in on the joke. Ultimately then, humour appeared to work in a number of directions in Moorland: first, by functioning as a way of showing care and affection. Second, by providing stress-relief and facilitating smooth daily interactions, and finally, as a weapon for provocation and boundary testing which could have explosive consequences. Given such broad functions, it is not always straightforward to locate where 'positive' emotion ends and 'negative' emotion begins.

Self-development and transformation

Interviewees' rarely discussed their emotions without some context, and when explaining the nature of their positive emotions they often described broader transformations which had reconfigured their identities. However, a layer of positive emotion was routinely embedded within these narratives which coincided with, or was perhaps the catalyst for, general changes in perspective.

Half of the participants claimed that they had, in some respects, been strengthened or improved by the experience of imprisonment. For some, this involved learning to be calm or more cognisant of antisocial behaviours. For example, Ian explained that 'I've learned a lot...I was reckless before I came to prison,' and Alan discovered that religion was a way to 'perfect yourself' by finding a degree of peace and serenity in an otherwise bleak environment. Five prisoners explained that they worked hard to foster a positive mind-set in prison. This involved persistently seeking out opportunities for personal growth: 'I just try and do as many things as I can to make this worthwhile' (Gary), and attempting to ensure that they always have 'something to look forward to the next day' (Henry) which could help ward off feelings of boredom and anxiety. Two prisoners explained that it was helpful to put the prison experience in the correct perspective: 'this is not the end of the world you know. There is going to be a day that you're going to be a free man again' (Paulo). Further, Nicolas argued that prison was enjoyable because he was developing skills that would help him rebuild his life outside.

For a small number of prisoners, activities which initially offered an outlet for emotion ('at first I got told to do art...to help me with my thoughts' Darren) had over time initiated a process of self-examination and personal development: 'People call art a hobby. Yeah it is a hobby, but it can also be a future. It can be your livelihood' (Frank). The word 'livelihood' referred not just to distant career prospects beyond prison walls but had a more literal sense for Frank: having something to live for (and strive towards) was a source of daily happiness and comfort. The accounts above reveal that narratives of self-development are often infused with positive emotions (such as happiness, enjoyment and serenity) although they are not always explicitly acknowledged. It may be important to combine explorations of particular emotions with these broader, long-term, narratives of identity change and self-development.

Conclusion

As Erwin James states (2003: 57) in an account of prison life where he received an unexpected display of warmth, prisons can be emotionally turbulent places: 'You prepare yourself for a fight, then within seconds you're saturated with relief and it takes all your self-control not to burst into tears.' Importantly however, the sociology of imprisonment literature has spent more time focusing on aggression and violence, while largely ignoring instances where positive emotions arise in prison. The contention of this chapter is that such emotions not only exist in confinement, but that they may serve vital functions in the daily operation of prison life and the establishment of strong fraternal bonds. Indeed, exploring the contours of positive emotion may give a more accurate, textured picture of the 'emotion work' with which prisoners engage on a daily basis. Yet, as evidenced by the seemingly ambiguous nature of humour in Moorland, which ranged from 'collaboration and inclusion,

collusion and exclusion and friendliness and antagonism' (Nielson, 2011: 501), understanding positive emotion in prison is still in its nascent stages and is by no means straightforward.

7. Conclusions and policy

The notable absence of direct studies of emotion in prison, and within criminology generally, reflects the broader historical tendency to adopt positivist informed experimentation within the social sciences. In such a framework, emotion - with its undeniable subjective attributes - is anathema to scientific reason and was largely excluded from research agendas (Rustin, 2009). However, far from being external to the sphere of social and scientific knowledge, emotion is increasingly recognized as forming 'distinct social configurations, playing an essential part in shaping different ways of life for societies, institutions and individuals in patterned interactions with one another' (Rustin, 2009: 31). Encouragingly, over the last decade, explorations of emotion have moved away from the margins of criminological research (Gelsthorpe, 2009) and may provide valuable, integrative perspectives to help explore difficult problems in criminal justice.

This preliminary study has sought to give a central place to emotion by considering how prisoners grapple with the manifold challenges of prison life. Prisoners in Moorland reported a wide repertoire of both positive and negative emotional expressions, including: joy, love, happiness, fear, anger, boredom, humour and frustration. Further, the participants appeared to affirm a principle that in prison, as in life outside, there is often a need to regulate the expression of one's emotions. However, unlike everyday life, the unique challenges of forced confinement and the deprivations of imprisonment may create an extra layer of pressure and emotional strain that necessitates further analysis.

Participants' accounts suggested some interesting, though tentative, conclusions: first, fronting appears to be a markedly different strategy from masking, in that the former involves generating emotion whereas the latter is about suppressing or hiding existing feelings in oneself. Furthermore, fronting, which often signals an attempt to establish physical or psychological resilience, may go far beyond displays of aggression in prison. Indeed, the evidence that prisoners sometimes smile and 'fake happiness' to others suggests that fronting may be understood in the broader context of *reaction formation*: a process where a socially unacceptable emotion is replaced with its opposite, in order to deflect attention away from the self and blend-in. Second, masking appeared to involve the suppression of both 'positive' and 'negative' emotions in oneself (see Crewe et al., 2013), which was largely motivated by self-preservation (i.e. against harmful internal thoughts, and victimization from exploitative prisoners) but it also reflected a consideration for the welfare of others. In respect to the latter, participants explained that some strong emotions could be highly 'contagious' in prison, which provided a further impetus to shelter one's feelings. Third, Prisoners found a wide variety of ways to release their emotions, and all of the participants stated the need to cry periodically in prison. However, the presence or absence of such cathartic strategies may hinge on the prevalence of social judgement across the prison environment. Finally, the chapter on positive emotion revealed a range of expressions which perhaps reflect the 'everyday emotions' which constitute prison life. For example, humour provided frequent tension diffusing effects, fraternal alliances were forged and maintained through daily expressions of care and affection, and artistic or religious pursuits provided regular

doses of enjoyment and tranquillity for some prisoners. However, attempting to understand 'positive' emotion in prison is a complex process. Humour for example, appeared to have various functions and not all of which can be termed 'positive'.

Limitations

It was beyond the scope of this research to empirically explore the importance of space in prison, and therefore the theoretical developments in the emerging 'carceral geography' literature are largely absent from this study. Importantly, the social and physical characteristics inscribed into prison architecture, at both a macro-level (the entire establishment) and micro-level (individual classrooms and cells), may significantly affect the regulation of emotions across space. To give one example, Henry explained that art classes were gratifying because the tutor 'tries to make it like you're in college and not in prison.' The art classroom environment had unique properties for Henry which fostered learning, co-operation, and facilitated a degree of emotional expression he could not find elsewhere.

Second, while this study explored the nature of emotion management at the individual and interpersonal level, future research may also benefit from drawing comparisons at a broader, institutional level. This is to say, some prisons may be emotionally 'softer' or 'harder' than others. It would be insightful to explore whether emotion management strategies vary significantly across the following environments: high-security establishments, remand facilities, treatment communities (like Grendon and Whatton), female institutions, and finally, other medium security prisons comparable to Moorland.

Third, further research could utilize a more detailed implementation of perspectives from the emotion regulation literature, and a more rigorous exploration of how positive emotion flows in prison. Although a barrier to locating positive emotion during interview conditions—and in prison generally—is highlighted by James (2003: 70): 'Good news travels fast in prison, though not as fast as bad news. That's because, for many inside, bad news is often better received than good news.' Negative events may reverberate in prisoners' minds longer than routine daily interactions which are more positive. Additionally, Crewe's (2014) finding that emotion between men is often expressed 'obliquely' encourages researchers to try and ensure that subtle patterns are not overlooked. Importantly though, as Ekman (2003: 208) articulates outside of the prison context: 'we know more about mental disorder than we do about mental health.' Moreover, the aim of 'positive psychology' is to redress the historical attention paid to 'repairing the worst things in life' by focusing on 'positive qualities' (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000: 5). Indeed, looking at dimensions of emotion expression in prison in a more holistic, integrative, fashion may enable prison researchers and policy makers to increase their understanding.

Fourth, it was, opportunistically, claimed (in Chapter three) that the equal number of mains and VP prisoners in the sample might provide an interesting point for analysis and comparison. However, there was little evidence to support distinctions between these groups as both appeared to utilize similar emotion management strategies. Although this may be a reflection of the interview questions that were asked, and

further research may benefit from exploring the emotional challenges of these groups systematically.

Finally, future research in this area may profit from more rigorous sampling methods and the inclusion of prisoners' sentence conditions. Perspectives on emotion management may be quite different for prisoners serving long tariffs and may also be contingent on the amount of time already served/left to serve. It should be acknowledged for example, that three prisoners who had particularly positive outlooks in this study had scheduled release dates that were rapidly approaching.

Implications and policy

Harry Wolcott (2009: 113) reminds us that 'a critical divide separates the realm of the observable from the realm of values, the good and the better...We cannot bridge the chasm between the descriptive and the prescriptive without imposing someone's judgment.' While some may strongly contest steps that could enhance prisoners' quality of life, few would reel against proposals that might also help promote the security and control of the (ever burgeoning) prison estate across England and Wales. Given the preliminary and explorative nature of this study the following account hopes to elicit further discussion and raise provocative questions rather than concrete policy suggestions.

First, if prison does encourage the adoption of various masking strategies, what are the long-term implications for prisoners upon release? While some prisoners suggested that they would have no difficulties in simply removing their 'prison masks', other prisoner's future strategies were far more ambiguous. It is not clear how continuing to stay emotionally 'guarded' (as two prisoners suggested they would) in the future might affect prosocial and personal goals, including employment prospects and the development of personal relationships outside of prison.

Second, half of the prisoners highlighted that heated exchanges often centred around access to telephones (e.g. waiting in long queues, alpha prisoners dominating their usage, or being pressured to end phone calls). Given that a lack of contact with cherished loved ones could rapidly create emotionally volatile prisoners, it may be worth investigating ways of making access to communication more predictable and equitable. For example, foreign national prisoners complained that making phone-calls was an extremely costly process. Further, some prisoners were bemused that, in a world of rapid technology advancements, there was no (legitimate) access to low budget instant messaging services, email or Skype in prison.

Nine prisoners explained that 'walking away' was their preferred strategy for diffusing potential fights or aggressive situations in prison. Yet, the rigidity of the prison regime often places limitations on one's ability to move voluntarily into different spaces. Moreover, given that some prisoners felt aggrieved by having to share a cell with another prisoner, whereas others longed for increased social contact and someone to talk to, there may be scope for cell allocation procedures to be re-examined.

Finally, it was concerning that a number of prisoners (who wanted to share their feelings) questioned the credibility of prison Listeners. Even though the service is

claimed to be confidential, the interviewees expressed reservations, pointing-out that personal information is a valuable commodity in prison, and such conversations could come back to haunt them. Ultimately, increasing the number of emotional outlets available to prisoners, while enhancing the quality/equity of the services that already exist, may help to reduce conflicts and emotional distress in prison.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to contribute to the sociology of imprisonment literature by centralising the concept of 'emotion management', which may help us to further understand the challenges of prison life and the complex fabric of prisoners' inner worlds. Under conditions of confinement and control, prisoners appear to find ways (or are forced perhaps) to generate, suppress, and release a wide repertoire of emotions largely in response to the environmental and psychological challenges they face. Ultimately however, while these findings represent an interesting and stimulating starting point, the small number of non-randomly allocated participants and the study of one establishment alone, necessitates that far more could be done to understand the sociological framework that characterises emotion management in prison.

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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Background information

1. Name? Age? Location?
2. How long have you been in prison? How long do you have left?
3. Is this your first sentence, or have you been to other prisons?
4. Can you tell me a bit about your life before you came into prison? (Go into a bit of detail; feel free to talk for a couple of minutes)
5. How do you think prison has changed you, and the person you are?
6. What's the hardest thing emotionally about being in prison?

Emotion in prison (General)

1. If you were describing prison to a stranger, how would you say people deal with their emotions in prison?
2. Across the whole prison what kinds of emotions do you see?
3. Can you tell me which areas of the prison are the hardest to express yourself in? What is it about those places that make it that way?
3. People sometimes find ways of *distracting* themselves from emotional situations; do people use distractions in prison? If so, what kinds?
4. Do prisoners ever hide their emotions from one another in here?
5. Some people say it's dangerous to show too much/too little emotion in prison, what do you think?
6. People often talk about fronting in prison, is this something you recognize?
7. How much does it matter if other people are around, is it performing to a crowd?

Your emotions (Individual)

1. Do you have any special strategies or techniques to manage your emotions? (Could you give me some specific examples?)
2. How do you deal with a really bad piece of news?
3. Compared to the person you are outside, are there some emotions you feel you just can't show in prison?
4. Would you say that *you* put up a front? If so, when and why?
5. How do you 'let off steam' to release the pressure of prison? Is this typical?
6. Do you have any favourite places in prison, or areas that are special to you?
7. Can you tell me about a time when you (completely) lost control of your emotions?
8. If you have ever gotten really angry, how did you express it? Did it serve a purpose? (challenging orders, showing strength)
9. Have there ever been times when you feel like you have influenced other people's emotions?
10. If you really need to get something off your chest or get your emotions out, where do you go?
11. Do you ever do anything that you know will make you feel good in the short term, but not in the long-term?
12. What would make it easier for you to show emotions in here? (Say anything you like?)
13. Do people talk about crying in prison? Is it something that happens in private?

Positive emotions and humour

1. Why do you think there is so much joking around in prison? Does it serve a purpose?
2. Is it ever the case that people use humour to express something more serious?
3. Can you get away with more by using humour? (Bending the rules)
4. When something really good happens, what do you do? Are you able to enjoy the moment?
5. Are there any reasons why you might keep some really good news to your chest? (released in a few days, consequences for too much joy?)
6. Is there anyone you can share positive emotions with in prison?
7. Are there any groups in which you feel really good in prison?

Authenticity

1. Can you think of a time when you responded in a way that was different to how you actually felt? (Milk example)
2. Has there ever been a time when you didn't feel genuine with or around others? (A version of yourself)
3. Are there any emotions that are contagious in prison, that spread from one person to another? (If one person is down in the dumps, or really angry?)
4. If you have to suppress or mask emotions do you feel like it's the 'real' you in prison?

Future challenges

1. Some people say prison changes them, do you ever worry that acting a certain way here in prison will stay with you in the future? (Hyper-vigilance)
2. Do you ever wonder if having to be on your guard all the time (in here) will have any long-term effects (on the out)?
3. Compared to the person you were before prison, do you wonder about how you will be emotionally with your friends and family?

Wildcard

1. Tell me if I am wrong, but is it important in prison to express your independence and uniqueness to others? (Being a 'someone', showing your identity)
2. Does the presence of female officers make it easier or harder to express emotions in prison?
3. Tell me if I am wrong, do people ever use drugs, alcohol, food to elevate their moods?
4. Have you ever felt stuck inside your own head? Or stuck on one thing that you can't get off your mind?

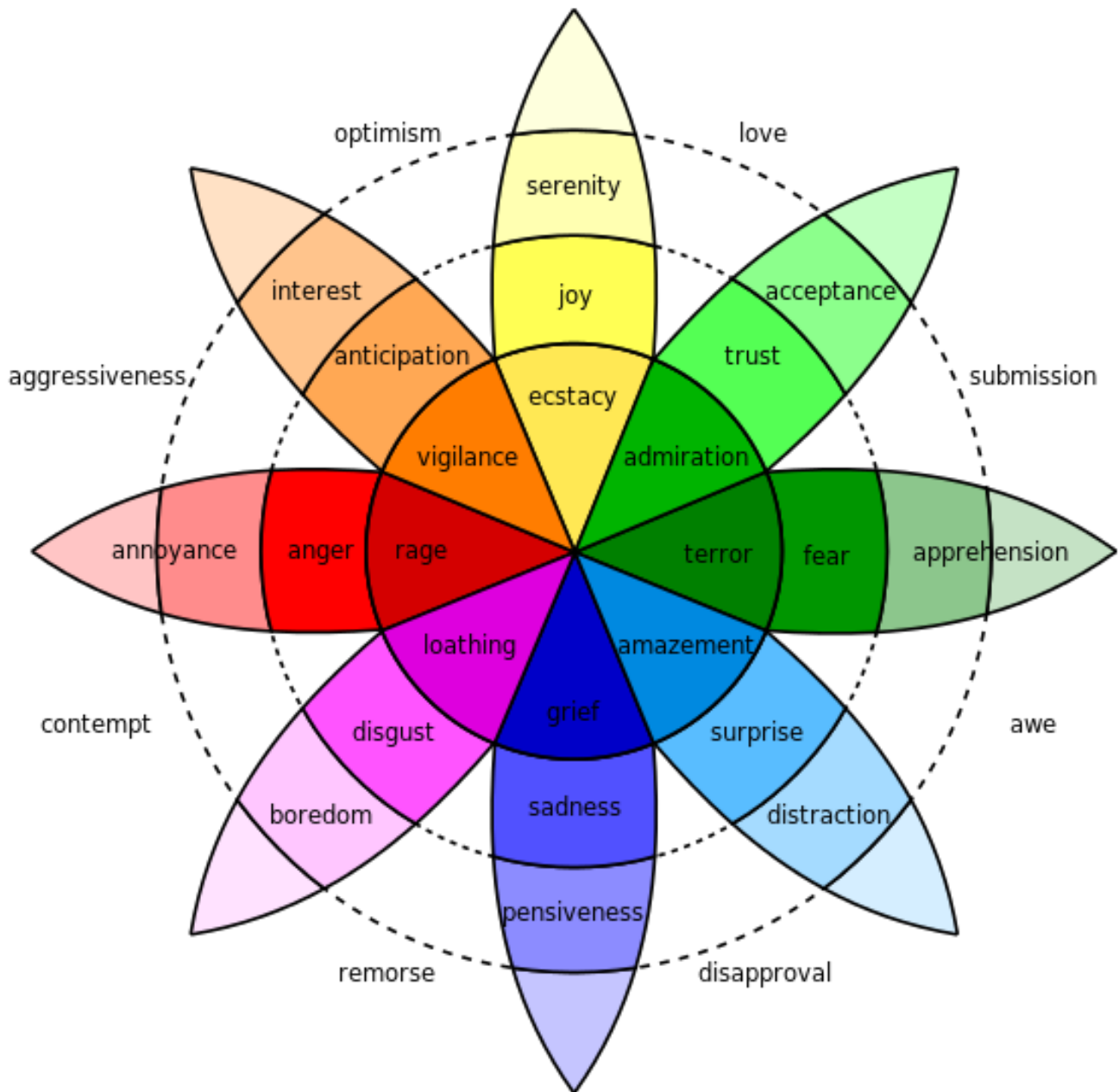
Cool down questions

Do you have any questions for me about any aspect of this study?

Do you feel comfortable with the conversation; was it in anyway useful?

What do you think about David Cameron's promise of a rehabilitation revolution across the prison service?

Appendix 2: Plutchik's emotion wheel



See original image in Plutchik (2001: 349).

Appendix 3: Consent form



INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY

Masking, fronting and release: an exploration of prisoners' emotion management strategies

Conducted by Ben Laws, MPhil candidate in Criminological research, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge

This project is supervised by Dr Ben Crewe, Penology Director and Deputy Director of the Prisons Research Centre, University of Cambridge.

Please read the following information (please tick box)

1. I confirm I have understood the information sheet and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
2. My participation in this research is completely voluntary, I can choose not to participate at any time. If I withdraw from the study, all collected data will be destroyed. ☐
3. This research has no effect on sentencing outcomes or my parole status. ☐
4. I agree to take part in this study. ☐
5. I agree to the audio recording of this interview. ☐
6. Recorded data will be anonymised and will be used in my dissertation and publications. ☐
7. I agree that all data gathered in this study will be stored securely until November 2014, being destroyed thereafter. ☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
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Name of Researcher	Date	Signature
-----	-----	-----

Appendix 4: Information Sheet



INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY

Masking, fronting and release: an exploration of prisoners' emotion management strategies

Conducted by Ben Laws, MPhil candidate in Criminological research, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge

This project is supervised by Dr Ben Crewe, Penology Director and Deputy Director of the Prisons Research Centre, University of Cambridge.

- This study will explore how prisoners manage their emotions in the prison environment. This topic is underdeveloped in the literature and prisoners' perspectives have not been considered in detail. This study will specifically focus on the ways prisoners are said to 'mask', 'front' and release their emotions in prison.
- Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to terminate your involvement in this research at any time. If you choose to withdraw, all recorded data will be immediately destroyed.
- If you chose to participate, Ben will ask you to take part in a recorded interview, lasting between 1-2 hours. During the interview you will be asked questions about emotions in prison, as mentioned above.
- Taking part in this study will have no effect on your sentencing conditions or the status of your parole.
- All of the information shared in the interview is strictly confidential and anonymous. Specific names and places will be replaced with pseudonyms to conceal the identity of the participant. The only exceptions to the above involves the sharing of information that could create a risk to the security and safety of the prison establishment; or information which pertains to serious unsolved crime, the specific intent to commit a future crime, or cause harm to self or others. If any of these situations arise, Ben will have to report the information to the prison authorities.
- Ben is not employed by Moorland Prison, or the HM Prison service. No-one in prison will have access to the recorded data, and what is said in interviews will not be shared with staff members or other prisoners.

- Interview transcripts will only be accessed by the lead researcher (Ben Laws) and his supervisor (Dr. Ben Crewe). Any potentially identifiable information will be modified where necessary.
- Upon completion of the research, a full copy of the dissertation will be sent to Moorland prison. The interview transcripts will be stored on secured servers and will be destroyed in November 2014. Ben may seek to have some of the data from this research published in academic journals.
- If you have questions at any stage in this research you will always be given the opportunity to ask. If you have complaints about any aspect of this research project please contact Dr Ben Crewe and the Institute of Criminology (see the address below).

Thank you for your time. I hope that if you do chose to participate in this research it will be insightful for you; it will help me to develop a more accurate understanding of prisoners' inner worlds.

Ben Laws

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Ben Crewe, for his rigorous attention to detail, perennial reliability and generous feedback through all the stages of this research.

I am grateful to all the prisoners at HMP Moorland who kindly gave up their time and energy to take part in the interviews. Thanks to the Governor, Dave Bamford, for allowing this research to take place in his establishment. I owe considerable thanks to Bruce Bewley for organising all the practical and administrative components of my research. I would further like to thank all of the academic staff and uniformed officers who accommodated me throughout my short stay.

I am flattered to have won the John Sunley Prize and thank the Howard League for publishing this research, and especially Anita Dockley for her editorial work and attention to detail. I would also like to acknowledge the administrators, custodians, librarians and our cleaner at the Institute of Criminology for providing such a fresh, friendly and comfortable environment to work in. A further thank you to: Serena Wright, Bethany Schmidt, John Foster, Alice Levins, Tom Hawker and Simon Larmour.

I would finally like to thank my Dad for being a constant source of support.

About the author

Ben is currently a PhD candidate in the Prisons Research Centre at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. He is researching emotions in two prisons in England and Wales. The project aims to investigate the ways in which prisoners regulate their emotions under conditions of confinement by using a combination of research methods (semi-structured interviews and prisoner shadowing). He hopes that his findings will help us to learn more about the emotional 'survivability' of different prisons and to assist management and practitioners to ensure that prisons are positive, secure and safe environments for managing offenders.

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The Howard League for Penal Reform is a national charity working for less crime, safer communities and fewer people in prison. It is the oldest penal reform charity in the world. It was established in 1866 and is named after John Howard, the first prison reformer.

We work with parliament and the media, with criminal justice professionals, students and members of the public, influencing debate and forcing through meaningful change to create safer communities.

We campaign on a wide range of issues including short term prison sentences, real work in prison, community sentences and youth justice.

Our legal team provides free, independent and confidential advice, assistance and representation on a wide range of issues to young people under 21 who are in prisons or secure children's homes and centres.

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Please note

Views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect Howard League for Penal Reform policy unless explicitly stated.

2016