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Doing Qualitative Research on Emotional Labor in a Philippine City Jail: Some Methodological Reflections

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ABSTRACT

In the past four decades, the sociology of emotions has been gaining constant momentum as a field of study (Bericat, 2016). It concerns, among others, on such questions as—how do social forces influence what we ought to feel and how to express them? In what manner should we accord emotions into interactions, exchanges, contexts, and structures within the ironies of modernity? What methodological tools should a researcher proceed with in a project?

This paper is about conducting qualitative research on emotions in a highly masculinized setting: a city jail for men that has the densest detainee population in Metro Manila, a space that is not only traditionally in disbelief of emotions, but one that is also mandated to observe a rigidly structured bureaucracy. The qualitative study from which these reflections are derived from delves into the exchange value of feeling-modification at work. Emotional work is present in majority of all jobs, especially those involving front liners in delivering services and executing institutional promises to its clients.

This paper aims to add to the literature in handling qualitative researches in a highly secured, closed, and intensely bureaucratic settings, such as the jail. Utilizing the work of Hochschild (1983) on emotional labor, it also aims to contribute to the literature on the ways in which we can study emotions. Here, I share my reflections on how I, (1) approached the ironclad dispositions of jail officers; (2) navigated through the invisibility of personal feelings in their work; and (3) investigated on their necessity to alter and manage emotions, not only to carry out people work but also, I argue, to shield themselves from all the stressors in an overcrowded and dilapidated facility that houses a city's portion of President Duterte's drug-war targets.

Keywords: Philippine jails, jail officers, qualitative methods, sociology of emotions

Choosing a field site for any study may be one of the most thrilling yet fretting tasks in the early stages of research. Embarking on a new project is reenergizing, though there are many concerns —academic (theoretical and methodological) and pragmatic alike—that need to be considered. Researchers are usually confronted by the following questions: will the selected research site provide new contributions to the literature of the given topic or in the application of the central theoretical concept or frame? Is the research site interesting enough for academics and other practitioners to engage the new findings? However, inciting theoretical intrigue in new "discoveries" is only a part of the decision. Researchers also straddle with methodological deliberations, equally weighing it alongside practical ones: will the chosen data gathering techniques and its progression lead to sound, valid, and reliable pieces of information while satisfying the limitations in time and financial constraints? More importantly, how will the researchers gain access, establish rapport, and care for relationships in the field? On top of all these, there are corresponding ethical questions that need to be satisfied while also ensuring that the researcher is able to negotiate trepidations on positionality and power.

The purpose of this paper is to provide reflections from my fieldwork on emotional labor among officers in a city jail in the Philippines, with the attempt to share extracted learning to others, especially early-career researchers, who may find themselves in similar crossroads. I hope to add insights in the literature of qualitative research methodology in highly secured institutions or social settings such as the field of this research, a city jail and in the study of emotions in highly masculinized settings. Here I share how I, (1) approached the rigid dispositions of jail officers; (2) navigated through the invisibility of personal feelings in their work; and (3) investigated on their necessity to alter and manage emotions not only to carry out people work but also, I argue, to shield themselves from all the stressors in an overcrowded and dilapidated facility that houses a city's portion of President Duterte's drug-war targets.This paper is divided into three sections: (1) a discussion about the study, including the national political climate with a focus on the war on drugs; (2) information on the conditions of the city jail under study along with an overview of the study's methodological approach using

ethnographically-inspired techniques; (3) reflections on how I combined existing techniques to approach, arrest, and understand narratives from the field. These sections are followed by some concluding remarks and recommendations for researchers interested in the sociological understanding of emotions in peculiar settings.

ABOUT THE STUDY

War on Drugs: Ripples on the Justice System

As you walk up two meters past the security gates of the facility, you will be greeted with a strong stench. The sensation is indecipherable until you continue walking and a joyous crowd, happy to see a new face, welcomes you. In less than 50 meters, you ascend the stairs, and arrive at a realization that the stench is no less than a whiff of concentrated human sweat from about 4,000 people restricted in a quadrangle slightly bigger than a basketball court. Now, imagine this as your office. Everyday, you are being greeted nonetheless by the same faces beseeching concern about their cases, their malfunctioning toilets, a sick dorm mate, a visitor request, or a brewing quarrel with co-detainees.

Many do not see that this is the life of a jail officer. Beyond their unwaveringly rigid disposition, pressed uniforms, and honor stripes are individuals who negotiate their custodial roles in a total institution plagued with structural problems.

I started my fieldwork on the first day of August 2016. It was a Monday, and it seemed that the jailers did not even need any warm-up to jumpstart the week. It was during this time as well that President Duterte's declaration of an all-out-war against drugs started to trickle down to the detention facilities (Tubeza, 2017).

A report shows that in the earlier months of 2017, congestion rate across the 466 jails under the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) facilities ballooned to 583 percent (Tupas, 2017). In fact, the same criminal justice platform, which catapulted President Duterte to power now adds blow to the rehabilitative measures our country duly needs. On a

nationwide scale, there were 96,700 people arrested due to drug-related incidents—this does not account the thousands of victims of, what they claim, as vigilante killings (Agence France-Presse, 2017). Thousands died but thousands also surrendered or apprehended, causing a gruffer clog in our country's jail system. Slow justice—this is how numerous detainees, especially "decaders," would call it.

The City Jail: An Imperceptible Ground Zero

The jail site in this study is responsible for one of the most densely populated and largest cities in Metro Manila. According to the most recent data from the local government this jail is under, the city holds more than three million residents (BJMP, 2014a; BJMP, 2014b), almost a quarter of Metro Manila's total population.

The jail under study was originally designed for less than a thousand persons—roughly translated, it can only service a crime rate of 25.92 per 100,000 of the total population. Though this might seem like a workable number, considering that the crime rate in this city in 2015 was 31 per 100,000 of the total population, there remains a huge number of the detainee population who have already overstayed as they are still awaiting trial.

July 2016 saw the population peak in the city jail. Only a month after the President declared war against drugs, the jail was already at 512.75% of its capacity level, with the detainees all sharing only 1,000 square meters of total cell area. Sometime in August of the same year, the jail operated with more than 4,000 detainees managed by a meager number of less than 200 officers, with only less than 20 officers working near the confines of the dorm area.

As of January 25, 2017, 75 percent of the detainees in the city jail face drug-related cases. It is the top crime committed among its residents.

These numbers are alarming since it has already been established by decades of literature in the Philippines and abroad that overcrowding is the root cause of many serious threats in the safety of jails and prisons. Among these are the effects of

sub-human conditions to the "physical, emotional, and psychological state of inmates" (Berdin 1999, p. vii).

The reviewed literature on Philippine prisons also showed that though the jail operates with very little manpower, the voices of the officers are still left unheard in popular discourse especially in mass media and academic writing. With the invisibility of the officers' points of view as ostensible, the creation of such an avenue is one of the fundamental objectives of this research.

The study focused not only on how the officers "get through the day" but also investigated the ways that these conditions and its consequences constitute emotion management among officers. The study centered on the individual and his/her conscious or recognized experiences (Theodocious, 2006). Chiefly, what I was interested in is how social structures provide platform for the individual on how he or she ought to feel and which emotions are appropriate for display and expression. These structures are composed of the Bureau's institutional mandates and explicit regulations taught during training and observed at work, the officers' professional norms, and the physical conditions of the jail.

Emotional Labor: Managing Feelings for Pay

The sociology of emotions did not emerge until the latter half of 1970s and it was not until the late 1980s that the field started to gain more disciplinal support with the establishment of sociology of emotions section in the American Sociological Association.

My interest in emotions was fueled by the findings of an exploratory study conducted in preparation for this research. In that earlier study, I found that officers constantly negotiate their authority as custodians of order in the city jail. The officers are constantly challenged, contested, and manipulated by some members of the *pangkat* system. Officers insistently need to bestride between bureaucratic mandates and the practical necessity to keep the harmony among the detainees of the city jail even though this corresponds to making arrangements, such that bending the rules to an "acceptable extent" for "humanitarian

considerations" become normalized. Because of this, I was motivated to understand the feelings they have toward these dilemmas and how they give meaning to the context of their social relations and their experiences.

According to Barbalet (1998), a sociology devoted to the study of emotions is needed for two main reasons. First, emotions are social experiences that can be engaged by studying the "social nature of emotions" (see Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Kemper, 1978; Kemper, 1987; Kövecses, 1990; Burkitt, 2002; Bericat, 2005; Charmaz & Milligan, 2006; Barbalet, 2009; Jakoby, 2012). Second, there is a need to recognize that the "emotional nature of the social" for an individual living in the social world without emotions is unimaginable, and therefore, a sociology devoid of concern for individuals' feelings and its relations to social structures, interactions, and processes is false (see Retzinger, 1991; Schervish, Halnon, & Halnon, 1996; Kemper, 2002; Burkitt, 2005; Nussbaum, 2006; Collins, 2008; Berezin, 2009; Demertzis, 2013; Grossi, 2015).

The sociology of emotions has three pioneers, namely: (1) Theodore Kemper who looked into the structural properties of emotions by concentrating on the affective effects of status and power, (2) Thomas Scheff who investigated the cathartic effect of social rituals that prompt similar emotions among individuals and (3) Arlie Hochschild who first coined the term "emotion management" (Bericat, 2016). In this study, I approach the study of the jailers' emotions toward the physical conditions of their workspace and social relations at work using the emotion management perspective.

Arlie Hochschild's *The Managed Heart* (1983), discusses the increasing commercialization of human feeling and how organizations take advantage of such feeling as the selling point for the promise of service. Through emotion norms, practiced through feeling rules at work, individuals are obligated to show and feel particular emotions toward clients. "Emotional labor" depicts the laboring that one does to manage emotions and what you do with. This is a conscious effort, according to Hochschild (1979; 1983), to accord your own personal feelings the type of emotion you need to portray in a given setting. This subjects

individuals to cognitive and behavioral emotion management strategies to change how they appear to feel through surface acting and how they actually feel through deep acting. This is pertinent in jobs—especially in the service industry, which require frequent, and often prolonged, face-to-face contact with clients (Hochschild 1979; 1983). Included in the list of work most vulnerable to emotional labor are jobs from both the private and government sector.

In the process of emotion management, Hochschild (1979; 1983) argues that emotions become depersonalized as individuals surrender their personal feelings to align it with organizational goals such as satisfying consumer demands, institutional image, and outcomes indispensable to the very existence of the company or government agency. The danger in this, according to Hochschild (1979; 1983), is emotional dissonance that is felt when conflict between genuinely felt emotions and organizationally required emotions takes a toll on the human worker. Such dissonance inevitably causes feelings of deindividualization largely due to the limitations put to the feeling self.

Guy, Newman, and Mastracci, in *Emotional Labor: Putting the Service in Public Service* (2008) delves deep into the demands of the service industry and questioned the loaded term "service" in public service, while highlighting the daily brawl of workers to conform their feelings for the sake of customer satisfaction. This work is particularly relevant to this research as it identified that jailers and correctional officers rank the highest in face-to-face interactions. Likewise, the study also points that jailers and correctional officers are most at danger in dealing with negative emotions of the detainees or inmates as well as of their co-workers.

Qualitative Methodology

Using a constructivist research paradigm, I account the multiplicity of interpretations that surround jail conditions and individual emotions. I stand by the constructivist take that there is neither a single reality nor an absolute truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Through the broad use of phenomenology, I tapped into the person's conceptions of the world around him. Throughout the research, it has been the persistent goal of each interaction in

the field to delve deeper on the officers' understanding of their efforts to carry out obligations whilst acting as mediators between institutional rules and a profoundly rooted form of jail culture.

Sociological conventions edify that qualitative research methods respond best in these ways of determining reality (ontology), knowing reality (epistemology), and approaching reality (theoretical perspective) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Following this tradition, this study employed qualitative methodologies. I used ethnography as an inspiration for this study's methodology to maximize the opportunities in observing behavior, values, and practices as it surfaces from customs and ways of life. Using ethnographic techniques in closely studying individuals and social groups in their natural context by immersing in the day-to-day lives of participants provided the researcher with a holistic grounding through the visual and narrative exposures demonstrated in the setting (Van Maanen, 1995). With this, in-depth descriptions that qualitative accounts offer are maximized (Creswell, 1998).

As the study looks into the world of jailers, I adapted two strategically ethnographic procedures of inquiry. First, through mimicking immersion strategies, I initially gathered field impressions to familiarize myself to the setting, the social dynamics among the actors present, and to acquaint the jailers of my presence. Though I had an engaging stance during my visits, I limited my presence as an observer and let the normal current of things run its course. This exposure to the daily life in jail provided me with sensitizing acuities, which I used in the active interviews and focus group discussions later done in the process of gathering data. Second, I engaged Grahame's (1998) take on Institutional Ethnography (IE) in understanding my field impressions. Because of the sensibilities shared by Grahame's take on the need to develop traditional forms of ethnography, I maintained the perspective that all my observations are products of how human actions are steadily organized by institutions. IE acted not only as an ethnographic inspiration but also a lens by which I was able to formulate the problem and focus of the study. In this study, emotions are not valued as exclusive yields of personalities and frustrations but are instead parts and products of institutional processes.

Throughout the gathering of field impressions, I was also able to hold informal conversations with the officers. As I observed in their place of work, most of them also shared to me their stories and insights through informal conversations and sharing of stories (*pakikipagkwentuhan*), which I gladly entertained in order to establish rapport and maintain a relaxed, yet trustworthy exchange with the officers. The value of such interactions lies on gaining deeper discussions during formal interviews and focus group discussions and less on the data itself.

Aside from gathering field impressions through observations, I also conducted 18 interviews with heads of the varying divisions in the city jail, four focus group discussions consisting of a total of 29 officers coming from diverse ranks, and a review of official documents from the bureau and the city jail.

REFLECTIONS

As students of research on the social world, we have been trained to respectfully approach varying milieus with reflexivity as the most basic deterrent against the outsider's arrogance (McNamara, 1980). We have been taught to master "grounded-ness" in translating theory to reality, while carefully crafting methodological approaches fit to comprehensively and deeply understand individuals whose lives we are interested in.

This section features my experiences as I try to approach the city jail as a field of study. The city jail is one of the 474 jails in the country. It is a paramilitary institution operating under a chain of command, with officers having obtained training from the Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA) and the Jail National Training Institute (JNTI). The bureau has a rigid structure wherein institutional mandates, protocols, and rank order are given outmost reverence.

This may not be fitting for all researches dealing with emotions but I hope my reflections would be of help to those who want to approach highly bureaucratic institutions such as the legal profession, the police force, and the armed forces among others.

Gaining Access and Establishing Rapport in a Highly Bureaucratic Institution

Entry to the field is one of the first hurdles that a researcher undergoes to assess the feasibility of any study. It is through the contact to the site that a researcher gains access to the lived experiences of individuals. Due to its importance, gaining access must be done with careful planning to guarantee compliance with standard ethical guidelines (Pries, 2012).

Securing access to the city jail for this research is the product of several years of sustained contact with the leaders of the bureau and the city jail. I initially established contact with the bureau in 2014, when I met the late BJMP Jail Chief Superintendent, Attorney, and General Michael Escarte Vidamo in a forum in which we both spoke about the state of criminal justice system in the country. At the time of our acquaintance, I was already sounding-off my future plans to conduct a research on the country's jail system.

In 2015, I was finally ready to start my study about the country's jail system. Upon submission of a formal letter to then BJMP Jail Chief Vidamo expressing my intentions, I was endorsed to the warden of the city jail for clearances, permits, and a routing slip for my recording devices. That study served as a platform under which I was able to identify problematizations in need of deeper explanations. What was equally important was that the study also opened opportunities for me to establish rapport with the warden and the heads of the division. Sometime on March 2015, I presented the results of the exploratory study to the heads of the bureau and the city jail. The presentation helped me further establish rapport and validate the results of the study. With a year's worth of familiarity, visiting the field every two weeks even after the exploratory study ended, my constant contact with the officers enabled me to secure access to the field.

On June 2016, I was able to defend the proposal for this research. With a more focused topic of inquiry, I submitted letters addressed to the new BJMP Chief Deogracias C. Tapayan CES(E) and the warden, then presented to the leaders of the city jail my research plan. Clearances, permits, and routing slips were granted

on July 2016 and I was able to proceed with fieldwork on August 2016. To officially start my fieldwork, I was also granted a jail identification card, indicating my role in the site as a researcher.

Gaining access to the bureau and the city jail and establishing rapport with the officers may not be as quick as compared to other publicly open fields of inquiry. In this case, I was used the exploratory study to acquaint myself with the actors in the setting. By creating opportunities to earn their trust and confidence, I was able to relay and prove my sincere intentions. The exploratory study also served as a testing ground for the officers to see for themselves my willingness to comply with what was stated on the consent forms and also maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

Between Personal and Professional Lines

Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity protects the officers as they express opinions that tend to blur the boundaries between the personal and professional lines. I understand that my questions would necessitate them to express personal viewpoints, criticisms about their work and colleagues, and passions accompanying their emotions. Since the site of the research is their place of work, I was conscious of the likelihood of turning into a whistle-blower.

With all the things that I know, finding the right balance—between what the officers had shared to me and translating it to data without leaving it as just mere outbursts of discontent—was key. I constantly reminded myself that I was not there to find culpabilities that may incriminate the officers that may cause them sanctions in their posts. I was mindful as well that no one should know, especially their seniors, about the officers' sentiments pertaining to particular personalities and systematized processes that favor particular groups or types of people.

But this was easier planned than executed. During my fieldwork, I constantly had to write my reflections and reminders to myself on how I should interpret what was confided to me. I found that connecting sentiments, personal notions, and interpretations of concepts became a valuable tool to help me

understand the sociological underpinnings of what was shared to me.

Aside from keeping a journal separating my personal opinions from field notes, I found that constantly sharing my concerns to my adviser proved instrumental in resolving dilemmas and aligning them back to the objectives of the research. These helped clear my mind and clarify my role in the field — a researcher not a whistle-blower.

Invisibility of Personal Feelings at Work

The research site, a city jail, is a peculiar setting in understanding emotions. This was made clear to me during the onset of my data gathering when the officers, whom I initially approached to introduce my study, flashed me a discerning look. The officers expressed their puzzlement on how emotions could possibly relate to their work and how possibly having feelings can be a cause of concern for sociology.

To begin with, the officers stated that they do not know much about the concerns of sociology. They explained that among the social sciences, the closest discipline that they can relate sociology to is psychology. With that in mind, I tried to explain sociology in relation to and in comparison with psychology. Upon arriving at a common point of understanding that sociology is concerned with human group life, I explained emotions from a sociological standpoint.

I have to admit that at first, this posed a grave conceptual concern for me, as it seemed that it would be difficult to define emotions once rendered to the field. Though I felt that I already had read enough, it seemed that the officers' reception of emotions vastly differs from the definitions stated in the literature. I was distraught at one point, thinking that emotions might not be present at all in jail work because of how it seemed that the officers are repelled by the idea that I was there to uncover more about their feelings. This uneasiness, luckily, did not last long.

Filipino Psychology informs us that, culturally speaking, Filipinos do not openly talk about personal emotions at work as

much as, possibly, western cultures (Enriquez, 1976; Pe-Pua & Marcelino, 2000). This was further affirmed as I went on with the data gathering and when officers shared to me that among the professional standards of a paramilitary institution is the strict adherence to rationality. Since their first day of training at the PNPA and JNTI, it was made clear to the officers that never in their career should they be swayed by emotions. The officers, as agents of the bureau, are trained and expected to uphold uncompromising, and often, unsympathetic dispositions in order to keep them from being easily wrought by the detainees. Emotions, in their profession, are traditionally treated as the opposite of sound logic and reasonableness. Feelings, once you are swayed by it, would be "the start of one's downfall." Another officer mentioned that in their work place, they rarely share feelings or personal opinions because they would be deemed as a nitpicker and a telltale.

In an institution that is traditionally in disbelief of emotions, being expressive of personal feelings is umpired as unbearing of the sternness and composure that anyone wearing the bureau uniform should stand for. Further to this tradition impinged on professionalism, officers are also expected to loyally follow the chain of command. Rank supersedes everything, even their personal emotions. So even though officers disagree with orders on the current state of affairs in the jail, they are expected to follow these unwaveringly.

This had been the case when the bureau started to disallow the detainees from having *kubols* (bunk beds) with curtains so they can have a private space to sleep and receive their guests. There is no visitors' area in the jail. The officers believe that the higher-ups of the bureau do not completely understand the importance of the *kubols* in maintaining harmony in the jail. In such instances, officers are left at pits of dilemmas as they try to balance the ascendancy of rank with attempts to preserve positive relations with the detainees for willful compliance.

Within the bureau, the expression of emotions, especially negative ones, is the emotion norm. Methodologically, this posed an adjustment in the ways in which I prepared lines of questioning. Based on my observations and analysis of how emotions are

treated in the work culture among the jailers, I had to prepare myself of the possibility that the officers would parry questions pertaining to their emotions. The challenge was addressed by supplementing the initial plan of employing active interviewing with epistemic interview strategies.

For active interviews, the officers were invited to discuss their opinions and experiences purely from the standpoint of their role as officers. Instead of just relying on numbers, official data, and the physical appearance of the jail, I found that active interviewing was more effective in drawing out information on the conditions of the jail — taking the officers as the main sources of this meaning-making activity.

During active interviews, I asked the senior officers to reflect on the conditions, eliciting them to remember incidents that have been challenging to them, and share how they enacted their command of responsibility. In focus group discussions, however, the lines of questioning were different. I locate the strategy I used to be somewhere between active interviewing (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) and epistemic interviewing (Brinkman, 2007). A mixture of active interviewing and epistemic interviewing was used in the focus group discussions mainly for four reasons.

First, the focus group discussions were designed to delve deeper into the emotions of junior officers. While I think active interviewing is enough to encourage reflections through a narrative-style of prose volunteered by the officers, I believe that this research was put in a better position when I challenged the "realm of reasons" wherein the officers' emotions are justified and accepted as correct or proper. This is the same challenge that Brinkman (2007) forwarded when he urged the social sciences to go beyond the mere recording of opinions and experiences. He measured that though this doxastic tradition in interviewing is surely interesting, it does "not take advantage of the knowledge-producing potentials inherent in human conversations" (Brinkman, 2007). In my line of questioning, therefore, I followed reflection-inducing questions with those that challenge and probe upon their ideas on why certain things happened or why they felt a particular way toward certain things and instances.

Second, because this research is not simply limited to identifying what their emotions are and is instead more motivated in knowing the bases and the processes involved in the management of emotions, Brinkman's (2007) suggestion to proceed with a more confrontational line of questioning was also occasionally used yet employed with caution. While epistemic interview is a brave attempt to test the limits of reasoning of the respondents, I made sure that I was courteous, used a calm tone of inquiry, and did not use abrasive words as I proceeded. I was also mindful of my gestures and was attentive of non-verbal cues of communication.

Third, I considered that the jail is a highly masculinized setting and the bureau is an institution that has militaristic qualities, which precludes the officers to be traditionally in disbelief of emotions. I found that throughout the focus group discussions, a line of questioning that is more straightforward, or even Socratic, generates the most promising replies. In asking the officers about their emotion management strategies, the epistemic strategy also proved to be very useful especially when I sensed their hesitation in engaging with "emotional" or "dramatic" topics. The dialectic take on the facets of emotions, I found, was most fitting to their language culture.

Fourth, and I think most important methodologically, I used epistemic interviewing to guard against the detrimental effects of my positionality as a female outsider in my rapport-building. Although all the officers (both male and female) were friendly, most of them wondered at the beginning of my data gathering stage why I had so much interest in jail work. Possibly, they were under the stereotypical notion that females should be kept in a domestic space and the jail is surely not one of those. One even said: "*Babae ka kasi kaya ka siguro interesado sa emosyon*" (You are female that is why you are probably interested in emotions). In clarifying the root of my interest, I employed Socratic forms of conversation-style and challenged these traditional notions.

In *Respondents as Interlocutors: Translating Deliberative Democratic Principles to Qualitative Interviewing Ethics* (2012), Curato as a response to Brinkman (2007), suggested the use of deliberative

democracy theory to put epistemic interviewing at "a stronger methodological footing" (2012, p. 572). There are two points from the article that I found to be most significant to this research's line of questioning: first, is the ability to trust respondents that they are capable of a dialogue that challenges their commonly held notions to surface a picture of the logical place they are located at and second, through the creation of a "space for respondents to act as accountable social agents capable of providing normative justifications for their beliefs," opportunities are created to talk about the "common good" (2012:581).

In the focus group discussions, points of contention between the respondents' opinions were indeed raised and this helped the respondents to arrive at an understanding of each other and the workplace they share while at the same time, combating the propensity for the officers to shy away from the discussion of their emotions.

Emotion Work to Ward Discontent

The conduct of the officers toward emotions suggested that the management of emotions, whether to alter or suppress it, is an intrinsic quality and a natural obligation of the work they do. This is exactly what Hochschild (1979; 1983) pointed out in her emotion management perspective, in which she explained how the worker is obligated to abide by emotion norms and display rules to comply with the demands of emotional labor. This is practiced through the loyal upholding of professionalism and through the observance of the ascendancy of rank above the officers' personal emotions. In the city jail, emotional labor is present in two ways: as a part of the people work that jailers do and as a part of personal work or work they do to protect themselves.

While the officers understand the management of their emotions is "just right" because it is part of their duty as an agent of the bureau, they also see that emotional labor is a practical necessity. The dilapidated conditions of the city jail, overpopulated detainees, and the perennial problem of understaffing makes it exceptionally hard for the officers to achieve their job deliverables as it is instructed by the operations

manual and institutional protocols. Because of these, the officers need to rely on the detainees' cooperation using the sophisticated organizational qualities of the *pangkat* system where maintaining harmonious relationships is key. The officers cannot simply impose rules without corresponding with *pangkat* leaders and negotiating the bureau's stringent rules to the realities of jail life. Altering and suppression of emotions is key here, the officers noted. The officers need to find ways to communicate how much they understand what detainees are going through—that they are one with them as a team.

Here, the laboring of emotions helps the jailers arrive at the intended outcome of amenability, compliance, and submission of the detainees to the rules. Using emotion management as an interactional strategy, the officers are able to transform the bureau's austere rules—that detainees deem as further limiting of the little freedom they have— to requests that fosters teamwork and a sense of community. Indeed, the officers see that the laboring of emotions is a practical tool kit for them as it continually proves to be a reliable gauge to cordially navigate through their interactions and relations with the detainees.

Hochschild (1979; 1983) suggested that the danger in emotional labor is that it puts the working individuals in danger to emotional dissonance. Emotional dissonance is felt when attempts to bring into line personal feelings to emotion norms become "deindividualizing" to the person, parting him / her from the autonomous control of his / her emotions. In the city jail, however, the officers expressed that they do not feel such a burden at all. In fact, the officers shared that because they employ various coping strategies, they have come to see the management of emotions as a "humanitarian" tool to guide them in the understanding of the detainees' and the jail's situation. A great contradiction rests here—because of this, the management of emotions helps them arrive at the idea that altering emotions, especially keeping negative ones at bay, also protects them from the affliction that the demands of their work entail on their individuality. The narratives of the officers beg us to ask: is emotional labor possibly only alienating in peaceful and happy service places such as an airplane a tool but an armor in a sordid place like the jail?

The perceptions of the officers helped me reflect upon wider cultural components that are at play in the concept of emotional labor. These may be distinctively Filipino but other individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds may also have the same perspective toward emotional laboring. Or possibly, this may also be a particular feature among work in uniformed service.

These findings pose a relevant question that could guide future research: can we consider emotional labor as a neutral concept—that the management of emotion is neither entirely bad nor outwardly alienating? This study on emotional labor may bear us an understanding that enable us to accomplish and triumph over the requisites of work. Equally important, my experience from this study helped me realize how important it is to grapple with reality, not only by arresting understanding through prevailing concepts, but also by fitting methodological strategies that put the respondents' context and welfare before the objectives of the research.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I outlined how I approached the ironclad dispositions of the officers in the city jail and investigated the management and use of their personal emotions at work. I reflected on the following questions (a) how I was able to establish rapport in a highly bureaucratic setting; (b) how I made sure that I protected the officers in this research as they conferred between personal and professional lines; (c) how I was able to navigate through the invisibility of personal feelings in the officers' line of work; and (d) how I was able to appreciate that the initial problem of defining emotions, experienced during the onset of the research, was a symptom of how the officers see the laboring of emotions as an intrinsic part of the people work they do and also as a way for them to shield themselves from all the dilemmas and negative emotions present in their working conditions.

This study helped me realize how very important sensitivity is in the practice of research because it guides both the course of inquiry and thoughtfulness in analysis.

Undoubtedly, though the uncovering of emotions in a very masculinized and bureaucratic setting proved to be a tough feat, this research afforded to me the exercise of flexibility and

prudence on bigger tasks such as designing the research and making decisions down to task of choosing words that are most appropriate for questions. More importantly, this study helped me realize that the recognition of their sacrifices, which the officers have been clamoring for from the public, the media, and the government are not crude thirsts from their ego but stems from their genuine duress to improve both their working conditions and the living conditions of the detainees.

This study taught me that researchers also do need to manage their emotions. Researchers of the social world constantly confer between objective and subjective lines in academic practice, where the blurring of interpretations and personal standpoints often needs to be confronted. In this experience, I often found myself managing my own emotions even to the point of downplaying empathy when I feel that I am being "too involved" with the persons I have constantly interacted and had built relationships with. This leads me to post a reflection point, which I think resonates to many others: can we consider researchers as emotional laborers as well?

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