Carceral Spaces and Indigenous Masculinity: Narratives from Former Inmates

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Introduction

Focusing on the architecture of carceral space, 'impression management' strategies, and masculinity performances within incarceration, this study examines the extent to which carceral space impacts the identity and behaviour of inmates throughout their interactions, both within the prison system and the inner-city. I highlight one theme that arose from that work, particularly the impact of carceral spaces on Indigenous masculinity. Drawing on Foucault's (1995) and Wacquant's (2010b, 2010c) perspectives of the prison, as well as Moran and colleagues' (2013) conception of carceral space, I examine through former inmate narratives how (hyper)masculinity was formed, how masculinity can incorporate Indigenous culture (McKegney 2014) and if—and how—emotions were managed in prison (Crewe 2004; Crewe et al. 2014). Furthermore, by conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews with 10 former inmates that have been incarcerated in Manitoba, my findings suggest that not only do inmates enact hypermasculine behaviours to masque their ontological selves from others, but that such identity constructions within prison become irrelevant upon release. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten men who experienced periods of incarceration in Manitoba. Their narratives indicate that alternative spatial theorizing is needed to conceptualize the prison space—in terms of the prison as a 'place,' as well as 'social,' and 'carceral' space—and that there is a significant amount of impression and emotional management needed when interacting with other inmates. Recidivism, finding meaningful employment, and building positive social networks with family and friends on the outside remain persistent obstacles for community reintegration. Examining the intersections of spatiality, masculinity, and identity allows us to explore alternative processes to restore (former) inmates into their communities moving forward.

Generally, the aim of the thesis was to significantly contribute to our understanding of the relationship between space, masculinity, and identity. Therefore, the goal of my study was to address: *how does carceral spatiality impact on 'doing' masculinity within prison, inmates' impression management strategies, and, in turn, their subsequent identity constructions post-release?* My findings suggest that not only do inmates enact hypermasculine behaviours to masque their ontological selves from others, but that such identity constructions within prison become irrelevant upon release. Caught within what Wacquant (2010b) refers to as the 'carceral continuum,' Indigenous inmates oscillate between the carceral edifice and the inner city, inhabiting carceral spaces that further marginalize them. In effect, these men's chances of desisting from crime and fully reintegrating back into the community are considerably reduced. I seek to outline how the Indigenous men in my research group conceptualized 'manhood,' and what their experiences of community reintegration revealed about their struggles and social supports in the community. A focus on the relationship between spaces and emotions enriches sociological and criminological studies, while at the same time, it engages in novel conceptualizations about the plausibility of Indigenous peoples reintegrating into the community, and the extent to which restorative justice can assist in future inmate re-entry frameworks. In effect, my findings indicate that emphasizing *restoration* over reintegration empowers Indigenous men to connect to their community through Indigenous culture and teachings, while concomitantly empowering the community to reconceptualise former inmates as assets rather than as liabilities.

Space

Conceptualizing the prison in terms of Thrift's (2003) 'place space' reaffirms the inmate's sense and experience of 'being-there,' by which an individual is positioned onto the intersections of sociopolitical, geopolitical, and temporal axes. It is significant to note that the positioning of sense and experiences of 'being-there' within a carceral place becomes instrumental for the inmate's ability to navigate prison culture. Place space consists of "particular rhythms of being" (Thrift 2003: 102) that confirm, naturalize, and evoke particular embodiments, emotions, memories, and the existence of certain spaces. In essence, exploring how the men describe their embodiment tells us something about how inmates adapt to the routines and 'rhythms of being' inside prison.

As a 'social space,' the prison (re)produces social processes and interactions that the inmate must come to know as conceived, perceived, and lived through certain spaces' exclusivity, boundaries, fixity, and social distances between inmates and other spaces. While the prison in general may be framed by physical boundaries of separation that demarcate certain spaces from others, social spaces are framed by the codes of conduct inmates use to navigate prison culture. When inmates engage in activities to (re)affirm their hypermasculine demeanour, they invariably utilize the inmate codes—comprised of bodily, gestural, and verbal codes, as discussed in the previous chapter—to provide a safe passage into certain social spaces (i.e. particular 'cliques' within inmate groups). As a result, emotional zones are (re)constructed insofar as the space that is delineated by social boundaries enables inmates to locate 'safe spaces' to seek refuge from the inmate code, such as in visiting rooms, prison chapels, and classrooms (Crewe et al. 2014). Such spaces have been known to provide mental and emotional release for health benefits (Moran 2013a and 2013b; Crewe et al. 2014).

Finally, a stronger understanding of carceral geography considers how carceral spaces—through the consistent monitoring of security camera practices and the inmates' relations to the correctional staff—impact the inmates' experiences of incarceration throughout their sentences. As Foucault (1995) states, the prison is an apparatus of corrective penality, in which the point of application of the penalty is not the representation, but "body, time, everyday gestures and activities" (p. 128). Interestingly, inmates make changes to their interactions in terms of finding the security cameras' 'blind spots.' These tactics align with de Certeau's (1984: 29) point that tactics are "creative and flexible." Enacting such tactics resists the punitive structure of the prison and reaffirms the inmate's sense of agency—and, in some sense, a freedom to act as they see fit within a penal structure of control.

Identity

Contemporary identity research has begun to describe the intersections between social identities and "the crosscutting of identities, statuses, and roles" (Navárez et al. 2009: 63; see also Ashmore et al. 2004; Steward and McDermott 2004). As Rafael Navárez and his colleagues (2009: 64) contend, what becomes at stake for future identity research are questions about the various linkages of different identity domains, how the various aspects of the self intersect, and how "various identities become active or inactive as people locate themselves in various social contexts." The interactions among various components of a person's identities are "complex and difficult to schematize or isolate analytically" (Navárez et al. 2009: 64), and therefore an intersectional perspective permits new facets of knowledge to be discovered and new questions raised, such as the processes by which identities merge with each other.

The emergence of unique ways to experience self from the result of such intersections—such as through religiosity, spirituality, and socioeconomic, cultural, and historical background

similarities with others, to name a few—should be drawn upon in order to further understand how selfhood is both impacted and altered throughout the life-course.

Additionally, research has shown that inmates may gain a greater sense of self through their connections to their racial/ethnic backgrounds. As Michael Weinrath and his colleagues (2012: 37) note, in 2007-2008 Indigenous Canadians made up 12 percent of the adult Canadian population in Manitoba, but comprised "66 to 69 percent of admissions to remand or sentenced to custody." In other words, an Indigenous person "is over five times as likely to be incarcerated" as is a non-Indigenous person (p. 38). Given the over-representation of Indigenous men in custody (Perreault 2009), Indigenous inmates may find solace by engaging in Indigenous activities or joining Indigenous groups or gangs in order to maintain their sense of selfhood within prison. As such, it is important to examine how inmate identity construction vis-à-vis race/ethnicity has become impacted by the experience of incarceration, and upon the release back to the community.

Identity construction within a penal context takes on many challenges, and having to act in relation to a kaleidoscope of shifting and fluid identities, the inmate predominantly incorporates a masculine identity into how they manage their appearance or 'front' that is displayed to a wider group or public generally (Goffman 1961). To what degree do these men engage in hypermasculine behaviours—that is, the adoption of overly aggressive, physical, and intimidating tendencies?

(Hyper)Masculinity

What constitutes masculinity varies across time and place, as race, class, and sexual orientation will impact constructions of masculinity differently within and across societies (Inkle 2014). Therefore, it is essential to recognize that traditional/normative masculinity—which is defined in opposition to femininity as "strong, rational, dominant, invulnerable, powerful, independent, sexually aggressive, and so on" (p. 5)—remains predominant in Western society, particularly in settings where males may be vulnerable, such as in prison (Toch 1991; Sabo et al. 2001; Evans and Wallace 2008; Ricciardelli 2014). Indeed, at any given time, one form of masculinity is culturally exalted, and considering how traditional/normative masculinity has reigned as 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell 1995, 2008; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2001, 2010, 2012), this notion is unsurprising. The notion of hegemonic masculinity as normative suggests that this practice of embodying specific types of 'manhood' requires all men to position themselves in relation to it. While there may exist both pluralities and hierarchies of masculinities, ideologically hegemonic masculinity legitimates patriarchal societies and "the global subordination of women to men" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832). As Raewyn Connell and James Messerschmidt (2005) argue although it could be supported through force, hegemony does not mean violence; rather, masculine dominance means "ascendancy through culture, institutions, and persuasion" (p. 832).

Turning to the notion of hypermasculinity, however, illustrates how the prison becomes a setting where the complexities of gendered experiences are evident, "in which the pressures on men to 'do' masculinity are even more intense and exaggerated" (Comack 2008: 10). In essence, a hypermasculine identity "is the belief that danger is exciting, violence is manly, aggression is acceptable, and going against authority displays a sense of power" (Porter 2012: 47; see also

Mosher and Sirkin 1984; Mosher and Tomkins 1988; Ricciardelli et al. 2015). It is important to remember that this definition is a Westernized and culturally constructed form of masculinity, and that Indigenous forms of masculinity may vary significantly (McKegney 2014) For example McKegney (2014) points out that a Māori masculinity would differ from a Cree masculinity, which would differ from a Maoli masculinity, as all of these forms of masculinity claim "distinct cultural heritages that inform distinct cosmologies of gender" (p. 7). Furthermore, research has shown that while masculinity is homosocial—"performed for, and judged by, other men" (Kimmel 2008: 47)—when we situate hypermasculinity within a prison context, Hans Toch (1998: 173) argues that the ideology of hypermasculinity illuminates an important theme in prison violence, which is that "the fearful—those showing apprehension—are inviting targets of predation." He goes on to say that two objectives can be achieved when one inmate assaults another who is fearful: "(a) one shows contempt for the man's demeaning 'femininity,' while (b) one reassures oneself that one is different (i.e. non-fearful) from one's target" (p. 173). Indeed, as Donald Mosher and Sylvan Tomkins (1988: 63) point out, "fear is a deadly affect for successful warfare, being the most serious enemy within. It is assigned to the enemies to be defeated…. A man must not weep, but rather make his enemy cry out in surrender."

Therefore, inmates who live in this hypermasculine world are routinely subjected to "character contests" with other inmates (Toch 1998: 174), in which status is conferred on those who best live up to the prescriptions of the hypermasculine identity. Inevitably, these hypermasculine attitudes and belief systems permeate the other facets of the inmate's selfhood, making it more difficult for the inmate to cast off his 'hypermasculine character' over time.

Moreover, McKegney (2014) contends that investigating what it means to be 'masculine' and 'Indian' provides a means of tracking "colonial simulations and technologies of coercion

that have served to alienate Indigenous men from tribal specific roles and responsibilities" (p. 3).

Indeed, images of 'Indian' hypermasculinities have the power to consolidate settler-colonial and

normative masculinities. Therefore, critiquing simulated settler stereotypes about Indigenous

men opens up discussions of how settler definitions of Indigenous masculinity have been used to

imagine and empower white settler male identities that serve the struggles of community

reintegration, heteropatriarchy, assimilation into dominant white cultures, and Indigenous

continuance (McKegney 2014).

Methodology

Interviews were conducted with ten men who had experienced incarceration in Manitoba.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and the participants were initially recruited via posters

placed in John Howard Society of Manitoba offices.

During the interviews a series of questions were posed pertaining to the men's

observations regarding incarceration, other men's behaviour, spaces within incarceration, and

men's lives once released into the community. These questions focused on several aspects of the

project, such as: *how do former inmates constructed their identities in carceral spaces? How

were such identities reconstructed if they had been challenged? In what ways do certain prison

spaces impact inmates over others? How do inmates present or 'perform' as 'masculine'?

Finally, to what extent does the experience of incarceration impact an inmate's identity when he

reenters into his community*?

The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. Any information that could

identify the participants personally was kept confidential. The audio-recordings of the interviews

were downloaded to a computer file that was password protected, and the audio-recording device

was wiped following download to computer. No names or names of agencies, businesses, or

communities were included in the transcripts. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to each respondent.

Study Findings: Demographic Characteristics

The average age of the men in the sample was 30.3 years old (the youngest was 20 while the oldest was 47 years old). Two men identified as Caucasian, two men identified as Asian, and six men identified as Indigenous. The average level of schooling was grade 10 (the lowest level was grade 9 while the highest level was grade 12). When asked if they were presently in a relationship, eight of the ten men reported that they were not in one at that time; of the remaining two men, one man had been in a relationship for ten years and the other for two years. When asked if they had children, five men reported that they did while the other five reported that they had no children. Of the five men that reported that they had children, the number of children ranged from one to six. The average number of children was 3.4, and the average age of those children was 8.5 years old.

When asked where they each had grown up, seven of the men reported Winnipeg, one man had grown up in the Philippines, and two declined to answer the question. Finally, when the sample was asked where they had been living prior to or in between times of incarceration, seven men reported that they had been living in Winnipeg, while the remaining three declined to answer the question. Of the seven men that answered, one reported being homeless, three reported living in the inner city, and the remaining three did not state anything further other than Winnipeg.

All of the men had experienced incarceration within correctional institutions in Manitoba. In particular, there are four correctional institutions that house men that have committed crimes in Manitoba: Winnipeg Remand Centre, Milner Ridge Correctional Centre, Headingley Correctional Centre, and Stony Mountain Correctional Centre. Throughout the interviews the men referenced these institutions as 'Remand,' 'Milner' or 'Milner Ridge,' 'Headingley,' and 'Stony' or 'Stony Mountain.' The Winnipeg Remand Centre is a pre-trial detention centre located in downtown Winnipeg. This centre houses people waiting for court decisions on their charges or placement in correctional institutions. Milner Ridge Correctional Centre is a medium-security institution located in the Agassiz Provincial Forest, while Headingley Correctional Centre is a minimum, medium, and maximum security institution located in Headingley, Manitoba. Remand, Milner Ridge, and Headingley are all operated by the provincial government. Finally, Stony Mountain Correctional Centre is a federal institution that offers minimum, medium and maximum security and is located in Stony Mountain, Manitoba. As Ricciardelli (2014) notes, the criteria to determine if a person will move into the federal system from the provincial system is the amount of time a person is ordered to serve in custody—the length of the prison sentence. Specifically within the Canadian corrections system, any individual sentenced to "two years less a day stays within the provincial system while those sentenced to two years or more are transferred to federal custody" (p. 27).

When asked what institutions they had spent time in, eight of the ten men reported that they had spent time in the Remand Centre awaiting trial and subsequent placement in other correctional facilities. Six of the ten men had spent time in Headingley, four of the ten men had been placed in Milner Ridge, and two of the ten men had been incarcerated in Stony Mountain. Recollections of the length of time served in correctional institutions were approximations at

best, as the men found it difficult to exactly remember the range of time spent for each prison sentence they had received or the total number of months or years spent within a particular correctional institution. Therefore, the range of time spent in Remand for the men as a group was estimated between one-and-a-half weeks to one-and-a-half months. The range of time spent in Headingley was approximately between 2 months and 2 years, while the range of time spent in Milner Ridge was estimated between one-and-a-half weeks to one year. Finally, the range of time spent in Stony Mountain was approximately between two-and-a-half months to eight years. Nevertheless, five of the men had repeated experiences of incarceration, traversing back and forth between the jail/prison and the community. As such, while the length of their incarceration may in some cases have been relatively brief, the experience of incarceration was nonetheless significant for the men.

In sharing their experiences, the men reveal the everyday realities of their incarceration. Inviting the former incarcerated men describe their own subjections within the prison space brings to light various and memorable experiences of their bodies and minds behind bars, and their interactions with fellow inmates. In essence, the stories the men shared capture the quotidian atmosphere of the prison space as it is lived and understood by the people confined there. How these men understood the prison space in their minds, in terms of their masculinity performances enacting particular and constricted 'manhoods,' illuminates the impact of incarceration within the men's life-courses.

Furthermore, the participants' choice of stories impacts the analysis, as choosing narratives to discuss in the research encounter, according to Somers (1994: 630), becomes a deliberate way of rejecting "the neutrality and appearance of objectivity typically embedded in master narratives." Such rejection further promotes the expression of "multiple subjectivities"

that permeates the self when participants choose a narrative to represent themselves (p. 630) and indicates that the struggles over narrative choice and narrations "are thus struggles over identity" (p. 631).

Prison-as-Place Space

Several men in the study make this point concisely when they were asked to describe their initial experiences of the prison system:

> Crowded (chuckle). It's definitely *a world inside of a world*. Um, there's definitely, it's almost the same as in the normal world, you have your hierarchy and it goes down the line, it's exactly like that. And it's a little bit more order, less chaos in there. (Isaac; italics emphasized)

> Experience…I don't really know. Just, it's like, *you feel trapped inside*, like, you have no, no family there. (Dave; italics emphasized)

The majority of the men reported having had to learn the 'rhythms' of inmate interactions in order to successfully navigate the prison safely. Furthermore, the majority of the men had very similar feelings about feeling 'trapped' within the prison, not just in terms of being physically confined and the reduction of freedom for mobility, but also in terms of being able to emotionally express themselves as well. Indeed, such feelings of entrapment added an additional stress for some of the men. Yet what became clear from their narratives was that regardless of whether or not these men were bothered or fearful of other inmates, they could not let that stress show:

You can't really show, like, your stress in there 'cause then guys will, they'll like try

to get at you and stuff…. [Y]ou're roughing it… so you got to kind of, you got to *act*

as if, you know, nothing's bothering you. (Brandon; italics emphasized)

Prison-as-Social Space

The majority of the men felt that in order to navigate the prison safely, they had to deal with the

pressures of gang members and cliques, as well as managing relationships with other inmates. As

Eric and Henry indicate in their narratives, there were pressures from gang members and cliques

to join them. But as the two men suggest, inmates that serve prison time independently of gang

ties (Frank) and confront their problems instead of avoiding them (Henry) reportedly appeared to

have a greater sense of safety inside the prison:

I'd like to be, if I, you know, were to go to jail, I'd like to go to the 'general pop'

where, you know, basically there's no gangs. You know, there's always that gang

mentality, attitudes and stuff for ex-gang members and whatever have you. But, uh, I

like to go there because I'm independent, you know, and I'm by myself. I don't like

to dwell or try to, you know, clique up with somebody. Like, you always run into

people that try, you know, get, get them on the team or try to get, get bigger,

whatever, eh. But me, I'm like "no, I do me, only me." (chuckle) I don't like to

multiply. I like to just stick with myself, do my own time, basically. (Eric)

Some, it all depends on where you're situated…. [T]here are people you get along

with, other people you won't get along with and those are the problem people that

you have an issue with. It doesn't matter where you go, you'll always have a problem

with somebody, right. But in jail it's a whole other thing. When you have a problem

with somebody you can't just run away. You know, you can't really say that you're

safe inside. You can only say that if you stand up for yourself every time kind of type

thing. You can't just back down, even with the guys who are, like, talk to you in

gangs and whatnot. If you bow down to any one of those guys you're pretty much

asking them to walk all over you. (Henry)

Prison-as-Carceral Space

According to Jacob, the presence of cameras has meant that prison staff are winning "all the

time" in their interactions with inmates now that they can utilize security camera footage as

evidence to justify their actions. Therefore, inmates' attempts to socialize out of the camera's

gaze made them feel less anxious about coming into conflict with prison staff. However,

interaction out of camera view has costs for inmates as well. When asked whether security

cameras in jails and prisons made inmates feel safer, several of the men felt that security cameras

did not make them feel safer during their incarceration. Dave, for example, commented: "The

security cameras? No. I don't know, they just, they don't." When probed further, Dave affirmed

that the lack of privacy was the main issue reason he believed security cameras did not make him

feel safer. Gary also mentioned the issue of privacy:

> I guess in the high suicide scenario that makes sense, but otherwise I don't think it's
>
> necessary, as least the jails I went to. 'Cause some of the guys get bothered…. Like,
>
> [the staff is] spying on them. (Gary)

Similarly, when asked if there were spaces that were more unsafe than others, more than

half of the men reported that they did not feel safe while incarcerated. Frank and Dave recalled

feelings of apprehension towards the prison space itself, indicating that no matter what physical space you occupied or navigated through, there were always feelings of insecurity present:

> *I don't feel safe everywhere in jail.* 'Cause you don't know, you don't know who's who. Sometimes they're playing, right. Sometimes you don't know who's with you. I don't feel, I don't feel trust. I don't feel comfortable. (Frank, italics emphasized)

> You can't be safe in there. (Dave)

'Acting Tough': Indigenous Masculinities in Carceral Contexts

The men's observations on hypermasculine behaviour—in terms of activities throughout the day and demeanour of other men—suggest that acting 'tough' and getting 'solid' are still a prevalent mental constructs in prison living today. The findings indicate that the majority of men reported observing role-associated qualities of being hypermasculine and that in the recreational room/gym or the range/yard was where men acted more 'tough' and 'solid.'

Indeed, the complexities of gendered experiences "in which the pressures on men to 'do' masculinity" are even more exaggerated and exacerbated, and the experiences even more intense while incarcerated (Comack 2008: 10). While the belief that "danger is exciting, violence is manly" and aggression is acceptable may prevail for those that mold their identity to hypermasculine traits (Porter 2012: 47), this dominant form of masculinity within prison is not the only form of masculinity that exists. Indeed, forms of masculinity that incorporate emotionality suggest that alternative identities could exist within the prison space.

Community Reintegration, Current Issues and Narratives

The men reported various struggles they faced upon release, such as staying off of drugs and/or alcohol, finding employment and effective social programs to participate in, maintaining meetings with probation officers, and the fear of how family and friends would view the men after release. The dominant issues mentioned were recidivism, or the difficulty of staying out and not going back into prison, and the fear of being released.

Overwhelmingly, when asked whether they thought that being incarcerated had changed them as a person, nine of the ten men felt that incarceration had changed them as men:

> Yeah, it definitely has, man. It's, uh, it's made me feel a hell of a lot better about myself, uh, it has given me some ways, uh, of life for being, you know, being solid and hardened and learning how to be a man. Um, besides, you know, you know going around and hurting somebody, it's just, you know, you can make some pretty solid choices too. (Chris)

> I think it's made me, it's kind of been like a 'wake up' call for me… to change my behaviours. So it changed me in a good way I'd say, even though I was very resentful at first, yeah. (Gary)

For Chris and Gary, we see how the prison space itself had an impact on their selfhoods. Not only did the men learn how to be a 'man' in terms of ascertaining hypermasculine traits of acting 'solid' and 'tough,' but the space assisted their abilities to construct 'solid choices' of what it meant to be their *own* man. While the former masculine conception typically emphasizes the acceptance of aggression and that violence is 'manly,' we see a shift in their identity constructions to the latter masculine conception. Creating new adaptations of masculinity—i.e.

learning to be their own man—emphasized positive life choices and promoted acknowledgement of other men's feelings. In doing so, we see that Chris and Gary were able to construct more positive identities for themselves once they were released.

Frank, Gary, and Chris each expressed similarly how hiding their past inmate identities would be detrimental to constructing their future selves. With incarceration being a significant event in each of their life-courses, we see how their acceptance of the tragic times in their stories can condition the men to move forward and develop positive futures and future selves:

> No. I've been in jail, what am I, what am I going to do. I did that shit, you know. I, it doesn't mean it feels like, "Oh fuck, I'm tough, I'm solid," you know. I've been to jail, you know, you know, fourteen months, you know, it doesn't like that. As I told you, you know, my family's, like, "You don't got to tell them you were in jail." Fuck, you know, I tell them I went to jail. I don't know, I went to jail 'cause I went to jail, it doesn't feel me tough, it doesn't feel me tough. I just don't, not hiding nothing, you know. (Frank)

> Not particularly. I don't know, *it's part of my story* I guess. (Gary, italics emphasized)

> No, no. I'm very proud of my tattoos 'cause all my tattoos *tell my story* from being in jail. (Chris, italics emphasized)

Furthermore, when the question was asked "Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experience of being in prison?" several respondents opened up about how essential social programs were to their community re-entry. Specifically, Jacob mentioned that having a larger number of comprehensive social programs would not only

have encouraged him to desist from crime but encourage other youth to do the same. Rather than solely relying on incarceration to deal with deviancy, Jacob reportedly felt that the corrections systems at both the provincial and federal level need to incorporate consistent programming into their operations that encourage open discussions surrounding youth and their issues with their families, as well as anger management, conflict resolution, and cultural survival and continuity.

Concluding Remarks

The narratives presented here are the men's stories. They deserve to be shared and discussed, rather than discredited and silenced by current political ideologies existing in Canada. These men's lives, while sharing certain commonalities in terms of demographic information, are intricately complex, with separate life-course events that make their stories unique.

Indeed, bringing their narratives to the forefront illuminates the intense experiences of sadness, pain, and suffering in silence. Being 'locked up,' in terms of both physical incarceration and emotional hardening, has made these men re-evaluate their ambitions, aspirations, and values within themselves. While "everything's fake in there"—inside the prison walls—their stories were not. Their stories constitute the lived experiences and testimonials of what it means for men who are tasked with the challenges of impression management and the performance of masculinity—both within carceral spaces and in their struggles to re-enter the community. As such, the men's narratives enrich both academic and public inquiry into how we treat and come to know those we consider as 'offenders' or 'deviants.'

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