



Conventions of Silence:

Emotions and Knowledge Production in War-Affected Research Environments

by Astrid Jamar, Political Settlements Research Programme, UoE
and Fairlie Chappuis, Free University of Berlin

Outline

- Emotional responses not inevitable but as channels to traditionally silenced empirical data, particularly in heavily charged post-conflict context
- Research Questions
 - How can this silence about the role of emotions be understood in the context of war-affected research contexts?
 - What does this emotionality mean for academic & policy research in war-affected settings?
- Structure
 - Unsilencing emotions
 - Listening to Silences
 - Implications of silence conventions

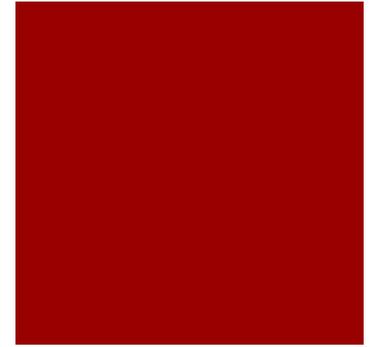
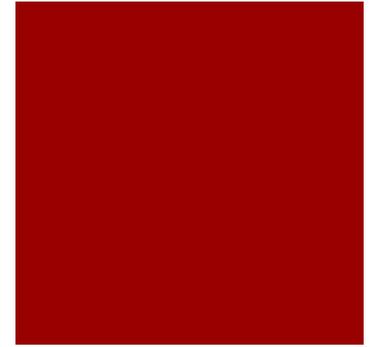


Photo by Martina Bacigalupo

Unsilencing Emotions - Why?



- Silencing 'emotionality' in research conventions in conflict and development studies
 - Serious deviation
- Even if stigmatised and gendered, other fields have protocols to deal with Emotional Labour
- Slowly more Conflict Research looking into emotion
 - with conceptual and methodological limits
 - Seen as an logistical challenge
- Open acknowledgement: Emotions shape research

Listening for Silences – How?

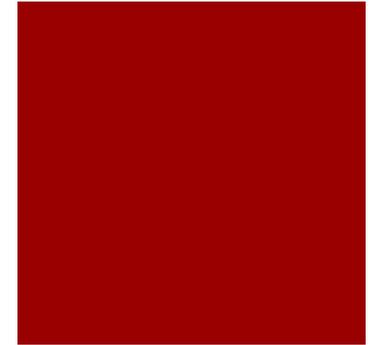


Table 1: Conventions of Silencing

Mode of Silencing	Emotional referent	
	Researcher	“Researched”
Personal	A.1. Professional obligation to handle emotions in private sphere	B.1. No consideration of the effect on informant: “Emotional impunity”
Methodological	A.2. Emotions pose a threat to scientific objectivity	B.2. Emotionality interferes with data collection
Conceptual	A.3. Emotionality affects normative commitments that frame research	B.3. Emotionality as a subject of research

*Restricting
emotionality to the
private sphere as
professionalism*

'Handle the situation' – 'Cut for it'

Emotional well-being = personal
issue

Intrusions – sign of lack of control

'Everything but professional'



The emotional impunity of the research process

Emotional responses of research subject = marginal or irrelevant

Escape responsibility

Hope and fear of research

Do no harm = insufficient



Photo by Astrid Jamar

Researchers' emotions as threat to scientific pertinence

- Emotional = methodological problem
- Interference to scientific research
- Potential bias that need to be silence to be produce credible data



Respondents' emotions as obstacle to accurate data collection

- In the way of researcher access to 'objective facts'
- Containing emotional reaction of research participants
- Manipulation of research position?
- Leaving out too emotional charged data

Photo by Elisa Finocchiaro
Creative Commons



Implications of silence conventions

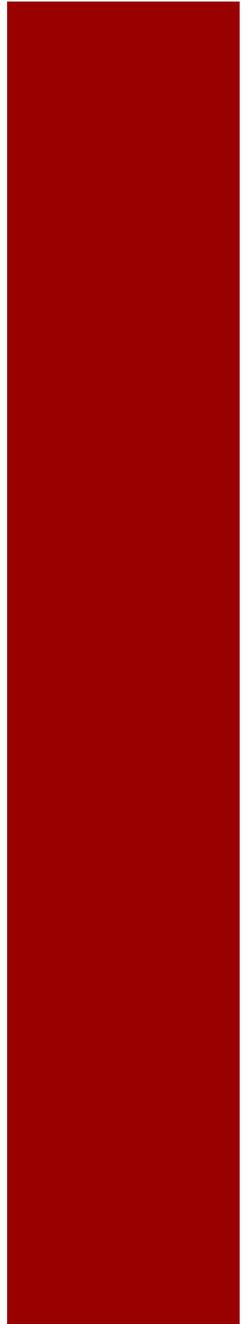




Photo by Astrid Jamar

- Normative commitments in academic and policy research
 - Attachment to certain values played as epistemic filter
 - ('Dangerous') Silenced emotions are back door for further biases
 - Failed to protect influence of emotions
 - Emotionality is valuable data
 - E.g. Mistrust – Vengeance – Empathy = Basis for policy actions

- Greater emotional transparency in research requires greater methodological transparency
 - Acknowledgement of positionality by approaching social realities through the prism of power
 - Further transparency about emotionality and normative commitments

- Research ethics and doing no harm
 - Personal strategies = insufficient
 - Challenge cathartic/healing effect of storytelling
 - Call for more responsibility



Conclusion

- Ethics, Epistemic, Methodological consequences
- Role played by researcher and research setting that defines what is silenced in research output



Photo by Martina Bacigalupo

- Wider unresolved challenges: need to go beyond voicing vulnerable and publish about it
- Need stronger connections with 'affective turn'
- Wider silences

