

The Place of Emotions in Social Science Research

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Researchers who make inquiries about other human beings often encounter emotions, their own and those of their research subjects. A research subject might feel friendly toward or suspicious of a researcher. And researcher might feel friendly toward or suspicion of a research subject. These emotions – those of the researcher and those of research subjects – are often interdependent. Whatever ones method, from participant observation to administration of surveys, the emotions felt and evoked by social science researchers, are likely to influence findings. What then is the proper place of emotions in social science research?

For generations, conventional social science research protocol has been build on the assumption that emotions – being bodily – are personal and untrustworthy and should be ignored, while thoughts – being mental – are universal and stable and should be the sole basis for discovery. We do not need the latest findings of neurobiology to persuade us that emotion and thought cannot be as cleanly separated as the allegedly dichotomous body and mind. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is premised on the observation that discovery requires attention to the emotional character of both the person who is making inquiries and the people who are providing information.

Since 2010, I have conducted more than 200 interviews with Muslim philanthropists over 40 weeks of field research across Pakistan. I am a white American male with a name that is obviously Christian. American and Pakistani stereotypes and suspicions of one another have never been completely absent from my inquiries and have provoked varied emotions. I would like to have the opportunity to present at the Higher Education Commission / University of Peshawar International Conference the argument that some emotions (such as fear and suspicion) are obstacles while other emotions (such as empathy and respect) are necessary resources for meaningful social inquiry. I would like to develop the argument that (1) the social sciences were not conceived to be oblivious to emotions, but rather placed emotions at the center of social inquiry (e.g., Smith 1759) and that (2) acknowledging the centrality of emotions to social inquiry is the key to making the social sciences in Pakistan more relevant and vital.

Brief Biography

Christopher Candland is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Wellesley College, where he co-founded the South Asian Studies Program. He earned his Ph.D. from Columbia University and has taught at the University of California Berkeley. His most recent book is *Labor, Democracy, and Development in India and Pakistan* (Routledge). He is writing a book on the politics of Muslim charities in Pakistan. The book argues that Islamic humanitarian organizations in Pakistan are not only providing critical social welfare services to tens of millions of people but also promoting vital political emotions, including humility, compassion, and solidarity.

Short Bibliography

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