9 Emotions in-and-out of equilibrium

Tracing the everyday defensiveness of identity

Amoz J. Y. Hor

Introduction

This chapter offers a systematic and practical methodology of tracing emotions. I demonstrate this with a specific research puzzle in mind: why do some identities resonate with some actors and not others? Methodologically tracing the emotional resonance of identity can provide insights as to when, why, and how a particular identity changes or not. Drawing theoretical insights from object–relations theory and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory as well as methodological inspiration from theoretical physicists and microeconomists, I propose conceptualizing emotions as the empirical traces of an underlying affective dynamic of trauma and its defenses in-and-out of equilibrium. This allows us to empirically trace the emotions causing different identities to stick with different actors by asking: "what are these identities defensive of?" I demonstrate this with illustrations from my own empirical research on the identities and practices of humanitarian aid workers. Namely, I show that whether an aid worker identifies as a "professional aid worker" or as a "fieldworker" has less to do with whether they *actually* have professional accreditations or are based in the field. Rather, aid workers imagine these identities so as to defend against everyday trauma in humanitarianism, in turn, informing everyday practices of humanitarianism.

There are two features of this methodology that make it distinct from others (and hence fruitful lines of methodological dialogue): first, it is decidedly non-positivist. This means that I do not treat "affects" as *things* that can be measured. Rather, it proposes a heuristic framework that assists us in *interpreting* emotions as traces of undetectable affective *processes*. This is not only scientific, it is also practical in that it assists practitioners and ethnographers in interpreting the very community they inhabit. This is a key distinguishing feature from other "emotion worlds" presented in International Relations (IR) and this volume (for a partial exception, see Campbell this volume). Second, this methodology is "micro." Whereas macro-approaches focus on how identity and discourse emotionally shape individuals from the outside-in (see Koschut, this volume), this approach focuses on how individual emotions cause identity and discourse to resonate inside-out. Thus, they are arguably necessary complements.

The chapter builds from: epistemology; to ontology; to methodology; to method; to data; and an illustrative case. I first outline the philosophy of science this methodology is premised on, "analyticism" (see Jackson 2011, 112–115). Building on an analyticist philosophy of science, I then propose conceptualizing affect in-and-out of equilibrium. From this, I derive a methodology of empirically tracing emotions as symptoms of affective processes of dis-equilibration and re-equilibration, and suggest the implications for methods and data. I then use my empirical research to illustrate how this methodology and method may be used. I conclude with four broader methodological comments on the lack of conceptualization in emotions research and in IR.

Epistemology: analyticism

This section addresses the principles of an analyticist philosophy of science by asking the first-order question: how can we know such a nebulous "thing" as emotions?

Emotions are hardly the first nebulous "thing" that scholars have attempted to grasp. The "balance of forces" in physics, "atomic structures" in chemistry, "the invisible hand" in economics, "the balance of power" in IR—none of these are self-evident "things-in-themselves." Rather, they were instrumentally conceptualized (or ontologized) to understand or explain causal properties of interest. Otherwise ephemeral structures—such as emotions or affects—become studyable through these conceptual constructs. Rather than get bogged down with the irresolvable metaphysics of locating affects as *empirical things* in the brain and inferring causality from covariation, as positivists (implicitly) do (Leys 2011; Verweij et al. 2015; also contra Auchter and Ross this volume), an analyticist methodology abstracts ideal types of emotions and affects as *conceptual things* with a coherent conceptual structure to it.

By "ideal types," "conceptual things," or "conceptual structure," I am referring to what theoretical physicists, economic theorists, and game theorists call "formal models"; or literary and cultural studies scholars call "theoretical frameworks" or "theoretical lenses." Examples of ideal typical conceptual structures in political science include: Weber's "charismatic, traditional, and legal-rational sources of authority"; "strong and weak states"; "the free market"; or "the security dilemma." None of these are empirical *things*. Rather, they are abstractions or ideal types of a *thing*, each with its own conceptual structure. Like the fictional "frictionless plane," they are theoretical instruments through which we simplify and abstract causal mechanisms from the messy empirical world. For example, although no market is perfectly free (or unfree), the conceptual structure of a perfect market—including the law of supply and demand—allows us to perceive the market logics in a wide variety of situations, even if they only represent a single dimension in a complex multidimensional empirical world of multicausality, *ceteris paribus* (Alasuutari 1996; Gelfert 2016; Waltz 1986). While positivists infer *empirically* generalizable hypotheses about causality from covariation, analyticists infer *conceptually* generalizable causal mechanisms from abstractions.[1]

Hence, given the sheer complex multicausality in real life, these causal mechanisms are rarely immediately empirically isolatable, let alone falsifiable. Because conceptual structures are only ideal types, the empirical data is not *evidence* of the conceptual structure (Jackson 2011, 147). For example, when the microeconomics theorist is confronted with the case where the quantity demanded of a good increase with its cost, she or he may either retort that there are non-monetary costs that have not been factored into the way "price" is measured (that is, she or he does not reduce the conceptual attributes of "price" to an empirical thing, money), or that there are other conceptual structures that are also at play.[2] However, even though the empirical data is not evidence of the conceptual structure, it can act as evidence as to whether the market model has been appropriately contextualized to the local phenomena of interest. While the parameters of a model are falsifiable, the model itself is not.

One way of visualizing this is to consider a data point in a market of some good, as in Figure 9.1.

On its own, the data point is unintelligible to the analyst. It is only through the model of the market that we can make sense of what the data point *means*, and importantly, where it is moving toward—equilibrium. Depending on how we contextualize the market model, we might get vastly different interpretations of the data point. Figure 9.2 and 9.3 posit two different interpretations.

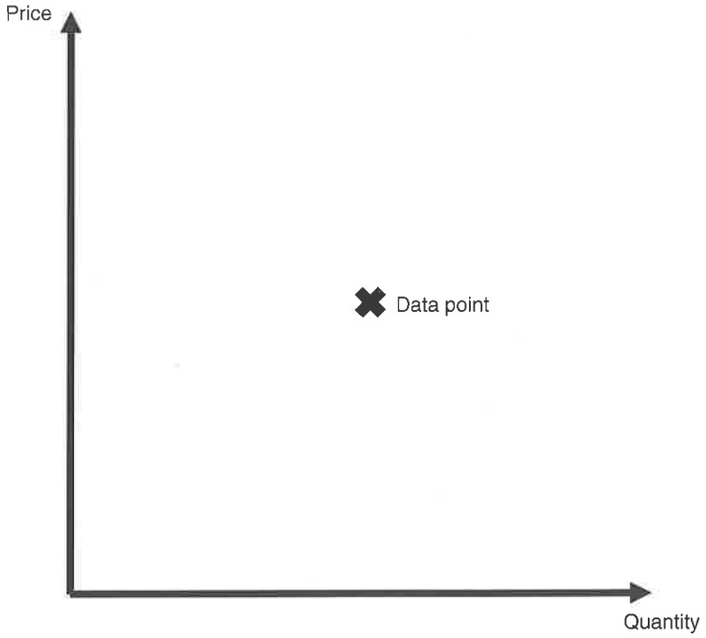

Figure 9.1 Uninterpreted data point.

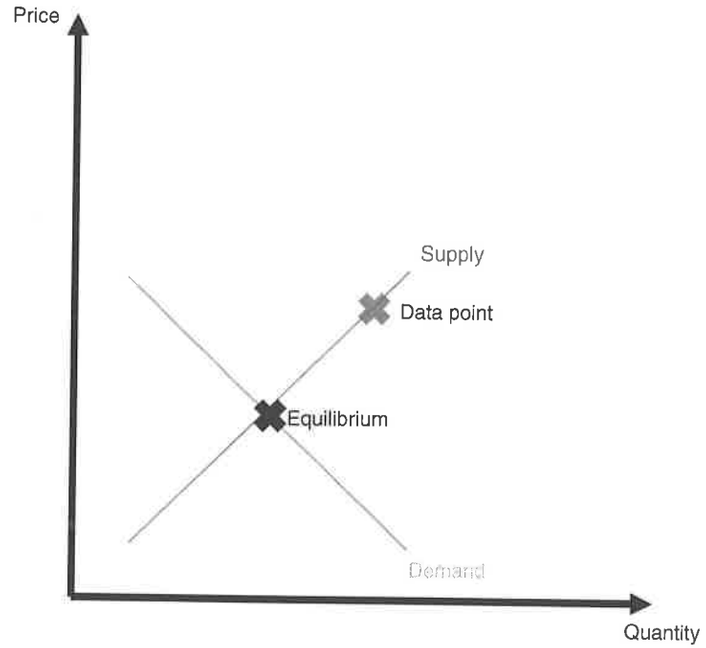

Figure 9.2 Calibration/localization/interpretation of data point—possibility 1.

This illustrates the importance of contextualizing the model appropriately, the role of methodology. The point here is that the data, absent of a model to make sense of it, can tell us very little about supply or demand. Neither can it be used to falsify the market model itself. However, the empirical data can be interpreted as *traces* or *symptoms* that allow us to calibrate or contextualize the market model to a specific local market of interest.

What then makes for a good conceptual structure? First (aside from being internally and logically coherent), good conceptual structures should reveal deeper properties that conceptually (not empirically) explain the phenomena of interest.[3] For example, the market model does not merely predict price changes based on big data regressions, it reveals to us the market forces behind price changes: supply and demand. Another example: in Aristolean physics, it was thought that a stone falls to the ground because the ground is the natural place of the stone—an empirically testable hypothesis with relatively good predictive power, but is absent of any deep conceptual structure and hence not very insightful. Later, Archimedes moved the conceptual work away from something static possessed by the stone toward conceptualizing forces as processes that were constantly at play, be they visible or not. He geometrically/conceptually reasoned that an object at rest is not necessarily indicative of the absence of force, but that opposing forces are in balance (Shore 2008, 10). Again, equilibrium (such as the

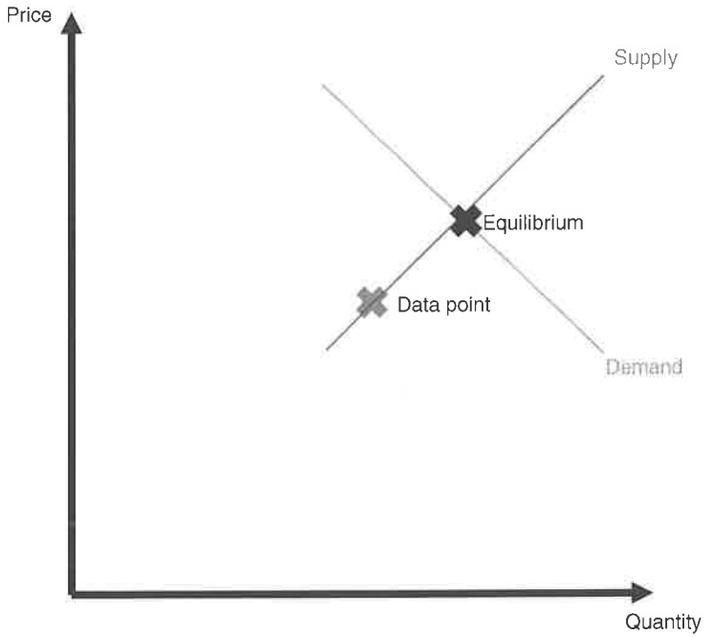

Figure 9.3 Calibration/localization/interpretation of data point—possibility 2.

balance of forces, market forces, or the balance of power) is not something that is empirically falsifiable. And yet the conceptual structure of two opposing forces is an incredibly useful model for interpreting motion and non-motion in physics because it gives us the conceptual language to talk about forces as deeper physical properties than that which meets the eye and are always in-process. In the next section, I illustrate how talking about affect in terms of equilibrium can likewise provide conceptual explanations of why and how identities resonate with different actors.

Second, because conceptual structures are abstract ideal types and hence context-free, for a good conceptual structure to be useful, it has to state the parameters required to calibrate or contextualize the model to a local context. Just as how market models can use economic data to calibrate the market of a good to reveal insights about its price dynamics, a good conceptual structure of affect should be contextualizable to aid worker emotions—in order to reveal interesting insights about the affective resonance of aid worker identities—through some kind of empirical strategy. Put another way, good conceptual structures should act as theoretical lenses to discern, identify, organize, and make sense of empirical traces of a particular hypothesis about a phenomenon that would otherwise elude the analyst.

(Conceptual) ontology: affective equilibrium

Like the microeconomists and Archimedes' corrective to Aristotle, instead of studying emotions as a static "thing," I suggest conceptualizing affect as *processes* (Jackson and Nexon 1999)—specifically, *processes of trauma and its defenses in-and-out of equilibrium* that produce different identities (Meltzer 1990). This not only allows me to conceptually link affect/emotions to identities, as per my research question, it also provides a methodology of empirically tracing and interpreting the outwardly expressed emotions as symptoms of the affective processes of equilibration and dis-equilibration. Henceforth, I refer to these underlying dynamics as "affect" or "affective equilibrium" (the conceptual structure); and I refer to "emotions" as the empirical traces yielded by these underlying dynamics (the empirical symptom). Just as sparks are empirical traces of friction's conceptual structure, I theorize emotions as empirical traces of affect's conceptual structure.

Because trauma and its defenses are two sides of the same coin, it is impossible to talk about one without the other. As a starting point, consider that trauma has less to do with the external event than with the affective resilience of the individual (Hollan 2013, 726–729; Lee et al. 2001, 456–457). Therefore, the experience of trauma occurs when an external event successfully intrudes upon and disrupts the mind's defenses and the experience of normalcy. This is depicted in Figure 9.1. Living life under the appearance of normalcy occurs because potential "everyday trauma" is kept at bay by robust defense mechanisms (Fink 1995; Freud 1963; Levine 2014, 218; Žižek 2006). In other words, trauma and defenses are co-constitutive: trauma is defined as the breakdown of defenses (disequilibrium); and adequate defenses are defined as that which prevents trauma from registering in the first place (equilibrium).[4]

In this chapter, I focus on one type of defense mechanism—projective identification. Briefly, projective identification is the defense mechanism that blames an "other" for traumatic events (Clarke 1999; Klein 1921). It defensively asks "who can I fault?" By blaming others, we produce an identity of a "them" (who

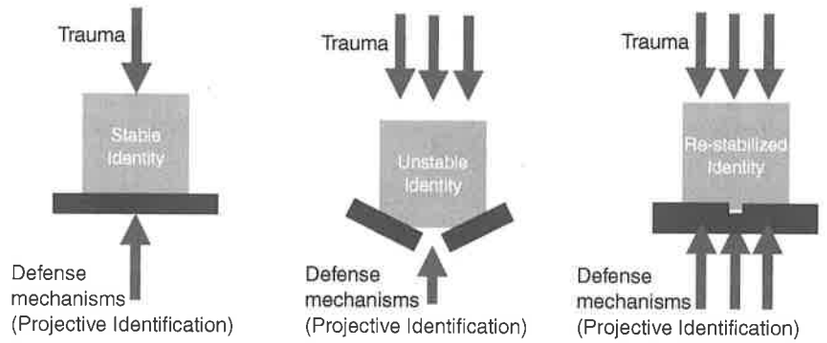

Figure 9.4 Pictoral depiction of affective dynamics: trauma and defenses in equilibrium and disequilibrium.

personifies bad traits) vis-à-vis a distinct "us" (who personifies good traits). In other words, projective identification defends against trauma through stable identities of good guys versus bad guys—"us" versus "them." It does this by simplifying the emotionally chaotic world through providing a normative identity of who we are vis-à-vis the world (Brown 2015; Hopf 2009; Resende and Campbell, this volume). An identity resonates when they allow us to defend against trauma (Solomon 2012); likewise, an identity does not resonate when it does not or no longer provides an adequate defense against trauma. Put another way, when an event challenges our understanding of who we are, it becomes registered as traumatic;[5] when the event does not challenge our understanding of who we are, it does not register as traumatic (Bially Mattern 2005). In turn, these identities can appear objective and operate unconsciously to inform and frame everyday practices in world politics. While identities may be socialized from outside-in, the defensive quality of identities also mean that we actively buy into them from the inside-out.

However, if identities operate habitually or unconsciously, how can we trace them empirically (a major methodological stumbling block within constructivist research)? The key is, I suggest, to not look for instances of equilibrium as a static point, but tracing the excesses (the emotional symptom depicted in Figure 9.5) of equilibrat*ion* as an ongoing process (the conceptual structure). Like Archimedes' balance of forces, the appearance of stable identities does not mean that affective processes are not at work. On the contrary, identity requires sustained ongoing affective work (Fink 2004; Žižek 2007). This is because projective identification is hardly a foolproof defense mechanism—there is always the possibility that we see ourselves in the bad guys, or we find that we do not quite fit in with the good guys, or supposedly good guys do bad things etc. While identity-formation is our emotional attempt to grasp, make sense of, and defend

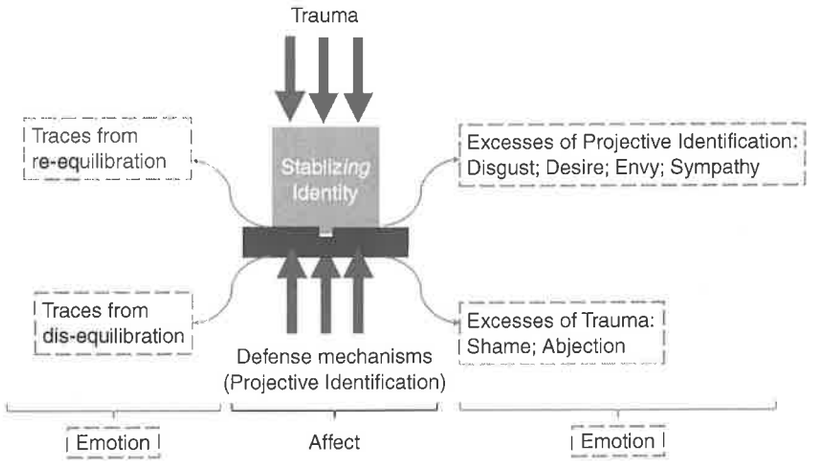

Figure 9.5 Excesses or traces of equilibration.

against this possibility of trauma, when these identities begin to fracture, trauma returns to haunt us. Hence, trauma always lurks beneath the defenses we use. Because trauma never fully disappears, we have to continuously re-enact the defenses to keep trauma at bay, reconstituting the identities that frame our world and guide our actions, constantly yielding traceable emotional excesses.

Thus, affective equilibrium merely represents an impossible ideal typical reference point where trauma is perfectly defended against, and hence, does not eke out any traceable emotions. As such, it is difficult to study affective equilibrium empirically (like the frictionless plane or perfect competition). However, what can be traced empirically is disequilibrium—including both movements of disequilibration (moving away from equilibrium) and re-equilibration (moving to equilibrium and hence, not yet at equilibrium). Therefore, rather than only looking for emotions in big epic events (Resende, this volume), we can locate the all-pervasiveness of affect in everyday lived experiences (Gallagher 2015) by tracing the excesses of affect moving in-and-out of equilibrium—or disequilibration and re-equilibration.

Methodology: interpreting emotional symptoms

What then are the empirical traces that result from this affective defensive dynamic? A summary of the emotional excesses from affective equilibration and dis-equilbaration is summarized in Figure 9.5 and Table 9.1. Though these emotional/empirical traces merely present static snapshots of ongoing affective/conceptual dynamics, triangulating a multiplicity of these emotional traces (the symptoms) allows us to paint a richer and more robust picture of the everyday affective lives of aid workers (the conceptual structure).

The process of projective identification (equilibration) leaves emotional traces where we feel *disgust* or hate toward "them" bad guys; and *desire* or narcissistic love toward "us" good guys. Understood this way, "disgust" is not just a sensory feeling/thing-in-itself. Rather, our disgust for the bad "them" is the empirical trace of a defensive act: we categorize "them" as disgusting to reassure ourselves that we are not responsible for the traumatic event by reasoning that "we are not like them bad guys." Yet, as Ahmed puts it, "To be disgusted is to be affected by what one has rejected" (Ahmed 2014, 86). Without this defense, we find that the traumatic affect is turned inwardly on us, emotionally expressed as *shame*, literally defined as *disgust at oneself*. Hence, disgust at others is a way of redirecting

Table 9.1 Emotional traces from equilbration and dis-equilibration

	Emotions toward "us"	*Emotions toward "them"*	*Emotions towars everyone else*
Affective Equilibration	Desire/Narcissistic Love; Sympathy	Disgust/Hate; Envy	Indifference
Affective Dis-equilibration	Shame; Abjection		

the traumatic gaze away from ourselves and *projecting* it onto an *other*. The obverse of disgust is *desire* (Ahmed 2014, 124). Desire for the good guys is to desire an ideal version of who we aspire to be. Desire is a way of assuring ourselves that we are or can be good people—a defense against the trauma that we may in fact not be good people. When we cannot find those good traits in ourselves, we find them in an idealized other understood to be part of "us." Projective identification can also fail (dis-equilibration). When the very identity-borders we erect to reassure ourselves that we are good people (or not bad people) break down, traumatic shame returns in the emotional symptom of *abjection*—the uncanny realization that "the foreigner lives within us" (Kristeva 1991, 1).

There are two further emotional traces that are symptomatic of projective identification: envy and sympathy. *Envy*, as is used in object–relations theory, refers to the emotion one has toward a bad "them" for stealing the good object that rightfully belongs to "us" (e.g., "immigrants" stealing "white" "jobs"), and hence is felt alongside disgust (Clarke 1999). As its obverse, *sympathy* refers to the emotion toward a member of "us" who does not possess the bad object, but is its victim and is not blamed for it (e.g., the white working-class man who loses his job to immigrants). Sympathy is hence felt alongside desire (Žižek 1994). Although both *envy* and *sympathy* contain a seemingly similar mixture of good and bad emotions, the key difference lies in the arbitrary assignment of the other to belong to "us" (culprits) or "them" (victims). This seeming arbitrariness often provides clues that help us trace the defensiveness of a particular identity, as explained in the next section.

Method: calibrating and triangulating emotional symptoms

A methodology of tracing emotions in-and-out of equilibrium requires a method to pick up such traces—triangulating the different emotional symptoms in a particular context (e.g., humanitarian work)—allows us to contextualize an abstract model so that we can understand what it is that a particular person might be defending against and hence why a particular identity does or does not resonate with him/her. The variety of emotional traces of affective equilibrium allows the analyst to triangulate them and use them to understand the affective resonance of a particular identity to a particular aid worker.

To do this, we need to ask: what is it that affects someone and how do they cope with it? This entails a triangulation between two types of questions: (a) what kinds of traumas do aid workers experience (dis-equilibration)?; and (b) how are identities produced to defend against them (re-equilibration)? Since both trauma and defenses are two sides of the same coin, answering one will give us clues on the other. For example, defensiveness is often an indicator of some trauma, and anxiety is often an indicator that an identity is being threatened. Triangulating answers from both types of question can give us clues on what to look out for in the empirical sources. For example, as we read or listen to aid worker accounts, we can ask.

Table 9.2 Questions to trace emotions

Questions	*Affective Dynamic*	*Emotional Traces*
A What gets aid workers defensive? What are the traumas that are being defended against?	Trauma (Dis-equilibration)	–
1 What do aid workers feel ashamed of?	–	Shame
2 Are there instances where the respondent recognizes him/herself in his/her disgust of others? Or instances where the respondent finds him/herself to not possess desirable traits?	–	Abjection
B How does the aid worker's identity defend against trauma? Who are the major characters and what are the aid worker's emotions toward them?	Projective Identification as a defense (Re-equilibration)	–
1 Who are the disgusting others?	–	Disgust or hate
i Are there instances where the object of disgust can be located within the aid worker's subjectivity? What baggage is being brought in?		
ii Who are the enviable others, and what have they been imagined to have stolen?	–	Envy
2 Who are the desirable others?	–	Desire or anaclitic love
i Are there instances where the object of desire can be located within the aid worker's subjectivity as a lost object?		
ii Who are the others that the aid worker sympathizes with, and what are they imagined to be victims of?	–	Sympathy

In the section after next, I show how the above questions guided my analysis of aid worker accounts. Before that, I explain how my methodology guided my selection of data sources in the next section.

Data: biographical-narratives

In general, emotional traces should be located in sub-texts—be it written, spoken, or performative texts, including body language or everyday practices (Bially Mattern 2011; Scollon 2001). For my research on identity, what matters about the "text" is that it should take the form of a "biographical narrative"—how what they were saying, writing, or doing was organized around a narrative of who they are (Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Sarup 1996). My research thus located aid worker biographical-narratives through two types of empirical sources: autobiographies and fieldwork.

Autobiographies consisted of books and blogs written by aid workers where the aim was to tell their story, rather than to provide an analysis of disaster management. While emotional traces can be hard to detect in-person, Jessica Alexander's autobiography (2013), for example, has been described as "refreshing[ly] honest" by professional aid workers (WhyDev 2013),[6] written in a style of a confession, bringing the reader through her emotional ups-and-downs (or in-and-out of affective equilibrium) of her lived experience as an aid worker. Blogposts, too, consisted of endless autobiographical narratives where anonymous aid workers vented their emotions with little consequence.

As for fieldwork, interviews were my primary method to get aid workers to retell their biographical-narratives: I asked aid workers to tell me about their life-stories, the emotional rewards and challenges they faced, and how they handled them. While the autobiographical genre tends to accentuate emotions in its writing style, there are several advantages of fieldwork. The first is the possible selection bias of written autobiographies—all of the autobiographies written by English-speaking aid workers with citizenship in the global north. By contrast, 43 out of 45 of my respondents were Asian. Only 20 percent of the respondents were native English speakers. More than half of the interviews were conducted in Indonesian, and most others were conducted in a mix of English and Indonesian. This ensured that my analysis could travel. A second advantage of conducting interviews was that I could talk to my respondents about my provisional analyses. This allowed them to disagree and provide their own interpretation of their emotions, guiding my research (Hollway and Jefferson 2000, 43).

Case: tracing aid worker emotions

In this section, I illustrate how the conceptual structure of affective equilibrium acts as a lens to empirically trace emotions of aid workers in-and-out of equilibrium. The question I ask is: why do different identities—"professional" or "fieldworker"—resonate with different aid workers? This is important for several reasons. First, whether an aid worker identifies as "professional" or as a "fieldworker" affects how they imagine those they wish to help in their everyday lives, and correspondingly, how (humanitarian) governance is practiced. As I demonstrate, neither aid worker identity permits aid beneficiaries to actively participate in their own humanitarian relief beyond the identities aid workers project onto aid beneficiaries. Moreover, the tension between these two aid worker identities is a common source of conflict in the aid world (Arcaro 2016, 159–165). As such, understanding the origins of these identities can help reduce polarization in humanitarian practice (and perhaps world politics more generally). Curiously, aid workers who identified as "professional" often were based in the field and aid workers who identified as "fieldworkers" were often based in the office. I suggest that an attention to the affective dynamics of aid workers' everyday lives allows us to understand how aid workers come to take on both these identities that are contrary to how outsiders may identify them. Namely, both identities

provide ways of coping with the humanitarian anxiety of being complicit in the suffering of others, or being powerless to do anything about it. Those based in the field identify as "professional" and those based in the office identify as "fieldworkers" because it allows them to cope with the different traumas they faced in the field and office respectively.

Professional identity

In this sub-section, I trace the emotional excesses of aid workers who identify as a "professional" to the trauma of complicity in other's suffering. To do this, I identify what gets aid workers defensive and how identifying as "professional" defends against this trauma. I start by asking question B1—who are "professional" aid workers disgusted by? Consider Alexander, an aid worker based in the field, and the traces of disgust (or hate) in her emotions toward voluntourists (or non-"professionals"):

> For them, going and giving out candy to kids … like handing out pellets to goats at a petting zoo.… I imagined the kids they left behind, who had to interact with and potentially form attachments to the stampedes of foreigners … "Real" aid workers hated these folks. We called their trips "hug vacations." … This trip is for them, not for Haitians! … They're here to … feel good about themselves.
>
> (2013, 360)

Many aid workers share Alexander's sentiment: they repeatedly expressed how much voluntourists disgusted them. This suggests that Alexander's disgust is defensive. Can we identify what Alexander is defensive of by seeing what her disgust is a reaction to? We can do so by triangulating question A1—what does Alexander feel ashamed of?—with question B1i—can we locate this shame in aid Alexander's disgust at voluntourists? For question A1, I find that aid worker trauma is often experienced as the shame of being complicit in other people's suffering, such as the shame of leaving aid beneficiaries behind, as well as being powerlessness to do anything about it:

> I want to feel like I've finished something. *Anything!* … this feeling of powerlessness, this recognition of the insignificance of your own work beneath the overwhelming, endless avalanche of problems is what aid workers face every day.… These people were left in their broken country … for the rest of their lives … the lingering shame of leaving Darfur still clung closely. Being pampered in my new surroundings only made it worse.… *I make my living off of the suffering of strangers.*
>
> (Alexander 2013, 214–217, 225)

This bears close resemblance to her disgust at voluntourists for leaving communities after their "hug vacations," for profiting at their expense, and for being

powerless to make any meaningful difference (question B1i). This suggests Alexander is affected by voluntourists because they remind her of her own traumatic shame. In fact, by asking question B1ii (what does Alexander imagine voluntourists to have stolen from her?) we find that Alexander is particularly resentful of voluntourists because of their close resemblance (that is, stealing the appearance of being "white do-gooders").

> To … Haitians, I was probably just another white face among the thousands of do-gooders, no different from any of the other disaster tourists.... Why should [Haitians] have been able to distinguish me from them …?
>
> (2013, 362)

Alexander's disgust reassured herself that despite sharing a similar outward appearance, she was "a professional" and hence neither "powerless" nor merely "here to … feel good about [her]sel[f]." By asking question A2 (does Alexander recognize herself in her disgust at voluntourists?), it turns out that Alexander is aware of her close resemblance to voluntourists:

> Revulsion clenched my stomach whenever I thought of the [voluntourists] … and yet still *I knew I recognized myself in them*. Perhaps my motives for coming here weren't so different from theirs.
>
> (2013, 362)

Because Alexander recognizes herself in the disgust she projects onto voluntourists, when the identities that are used to keep "us" and "them" distinct become blurred, the same disgust is redirected toward herself, leading to a moment of abjection with a physiological expression in her stomach. In fact, Alexander is explicit about how her disgust is a defense against the trauma of complicity and powerlessness:

> The aid community resented "voluntourists" … But when they scorned [voluntourists], they were also reassuring themselves, justifying … that what they did *was* a profession.
>
> (2013, 313)

It is because Alexander sees herself in the voluntourists, that she needs to continually and defensively assert her identity as "profession[al]" to distinguish herself from the voluntourist other.

Methodologically, tracing how the voluntourist appeared disgusting and enviable (equilibration) and Alexander's moment of abjection (dis-equilibration) allows us to decipher the affective resonance of her identity as a professional aid worker and to interpret these emotional dynamics in empirical sources: the professional identity resonates with Alexander because it defended her against the trauma of powerlessness and complicity in other people's suffering in the field.

This shapes Alexander's practices in humanitarianism. Her use of projective identification also positions the professional aid worker as someone who can speak on the local's behalf because of their expertise:

> Whenever a dilettante screwed up or revealed his ignorance, it was once again confirmed that experience and master's degrees were the only ways to be legitimate.
>
> (2013, 313–314)

The claim to be professional is hence not only a defense against trauma. It is also an implicit practice of claiming to legitimately represent the local aid beneficiary without meaningfully consulting them.

Fieldworker identity

Alexander's identity as a professional is not the only identity aid workers use to defend against trauma, and hence, not the only way aid workers spoke on behalf of local aid beneficiaries. While Alexander turned her disgust to volutourists, many of the fieldworkers I interviewed valorized the volunteer and hated the professional bureaucrat instead, even though many of these aid workers share similar anxieties as Alexander. For example, Hanif, an Indonesian aid worker, repeatedly questioned his impact as an aid worker (question A1). However, unlike Alexander, we trace his disgust toward professionals as "them" (question B1i) and desire toward volunteers as "us" (question B2i):

> I admire those who work in local organizations. They are volunteers.... But the staff [of big organizations]? … they have lost contact with reality … [to them], "it's nothing personal, it's only business."

Despite holding an office position, Hanif chose to make regular visits to the field. Thus, he could claim to not be complicit in the sins of fellow aid workers in the office. At the same time, it allowed him to *claim* to be able to represent the local aid beneficiary on the premises that he is "in the field." Crucially, Hanif confesses that a big part of going to the field is about discovering the change *he* can make as an aid worker. He reveals that what he means by "feedback" (*umpan balik*) is not just consulting the views of the local community, but to get their approving gaze—"their thanks (*terima kasih)*, acceptance (*penerimaan)*, and sparkle in their eyes (*pandangan mata berbinar*)." Visiting the field might be less about listening to the local community involved or providing managerial support for others to do so, and more about assuring oneself that one is making an impact.

To further trace this, consider the traces of sympathy Fahmi, an Acehnese aid worker, expressed toward the Rohingya refugees that landed in Aceh (question B2ii). Fahmi is candid that his experience as an Internally Displaced Person (*pengungsi*) in the Acehnese conflict informs how he sees the Rohingya refugees (also *pengungsi*) as victims. Even though he may "not know what is being said":

> When I see that children are being bullied or discriminated when queuing for food, even though I don't know the Rohingya language or what is being said, I will surely be angry right?

This is salient to Fahmi because of his own trauma as an Internally Displaced Person (IDP). Fahmi confesses that:

> The trauma of the conflict will never disappear completely.... When we see the children's sadness and there is nothing we can do about it, we are affected.... I can still remember when we had to queue to take our food.... Because I have lived in a refugee camp, I wish to use my negative experience to find ways to improve the lives of those living in refugee camps today.

Thus, in sympathizing with the refugees, Fahmi was also redeeming himself. Sympathy can seem harmless. However, when a feeling of "us-ness" with aid beneficiaries is driven by defensiveness, then sympathy reduces others to a "victim" and an instrument of one's own redemption (Noddings 1984, 15). Rather than meaningfully listening to aid beneficiaries as speaking subjects, sympathy usurps and ventriloquizes the voices of aid beneficiaries (Cornwall and Fujita 2012; Auchter this volume).

Methodologically, triangulating shame, disgust, envy, desire, sympathy, and abjection allows us to trace and contextualize these affective dynamics to the case of aid workers. It is the promise of defending against traumas that renders various identities to resonate with aid workers. IR scholars can similarly use this methodology to understand the emotional origins of why a myriad of identities stick, when they change and how they inform practices in a variety of contexts.

Conclusion: practical science

By way of conclusion, I wish to make four methodological points. The first is that if political scientists are really engaged with "science," then we cannot only look at the hypothesis-testing half of emotions research—experimental research in psychology or neuroscience—that explains not social emotions, but outward behavior and brain activity that we retrospectively label as emotions (Angerer 2015; Leys 2011). Hence, my proposed methodology treats affect as a conceptual entity (equilibrium and disequilibrium between trauma and defenses) rather than an empirical one (such as a neuron or a cognitive bias). Every major scientific discipline is made up of people that do conceptual work—microeconomic theorists, theoretical physicists, and others—as well as empirical work that hypothesizes and tests calibrations of conceptual structures in a localized context. While contemporary psychology falls in the latter category, much of the analyticist–conceptual work in emotions research lies in psycho*analytic* theory, which has thus far been relatively untapped in IR. And yet, it is the conceptual structures that give us the methodological tools to read emotions in data in the first place. Affective equilibrium offers one such conceptual structure.

This leads to the second point: analyticist–conceptual work is not merely scientific, it is also more useful for practitioners than large-n positivist–empirical findings. Consider three of the most widely cited articles on aid worker trauma (Eriksson et al. 2001; Lopes Cardozo et al. 2005; Putman et al. 2009). All three studies use self-reporting questionnaires to show there is a statistically significant correlation between exposure to "trauma events" and Post-Traumatic Syndrome Disorder (PTSD) for aid workers *in their sample* (one of which was 92 percent Caucasian). Ignoring the tautological problems in the way the independent and dependent variables are measured, the empirical claim that there is a 1 percent chance that exposure to traumatic events have no effect on PTSD for the sample (or $p<0.01$) is not insightful to the individual aid worker who wants to know if she or he individually falls into this pattern or not. Without any causal theory (as each of the studies acknowledge), any aid worker—including the 43 Asian aid workers I interviewed—may believe his/her mitigating circumstances makes them an exception. Positivist findings, absent of deeper conceptual structures, cannot be easily calibrated into complex local contexts. Moreover, while each study shows evidence of a correlation between emotional support and lower probabilities of trauma, they cannot recommend *how* or *what kind of* emotional support can/should be given. Yet (à la Marx), while much of this scholarship has merely described empirical findings, the point is to change them. The practical usefulness of understanding affective equilibrium is that aid workers can calibrate the methodical questions to discern their own emotions *themselves*. While I use illustrations from other aid workers, aid workers are still the best analysts of their own emotions.

This comes with a caveat, the third point: affective equilibrium cannot prescribe ethical action. For example, it is not normatively given that one should protect him/herself from trauma at the expense of listening to a local aid beneficiary, nor that one should listen to others masochistically. Neither equilibrium nor disequilibrium inherently represents a normatively good outcome. My own normative position is that rather than champion either equilibrium (Penttinen this volume) or disequilibrium, we ought to embrace constantly unlearning (dis-equilibration) and re-learning (re-equilibration) what we think we know about others and how we understand ourselves vis-à-vis the world.

Finally, while this chapter presents a methodology to trace the emotions of others, it is also a methodology that can be used to trace our own emotions as scholars (including how it shapes the way I study aid workers). Scholarship inevitably involves emotional practices of knowledge/identity-construction (for example, around the isms; also see Auchter this volume). To treat our scholarly work as fixed or static is not only unscientific, it also betrays a defensive manoeuvre against a variety of possible traumas—anxieties similar to those aid workers face when dealing with dark topics, or other anxieties that come from the academy. Reflecting on the emotions that makes a theory resonate with us is important for scholarly learning (and unlearning) as an ongoing iterative process of dis-equilibration and re-equilibration.

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Notes

1 Therefore, a key characteristic of analyticism is *modesty of ontic claims*—we inevitably cannot be certain of what the world (affect/emotions in this case) is *really* like, especially the world independent of the human mind (Jackson 2011, 135). By contrast, Hoffman's chapter suggests that positivist approaches emphasize *modesty of causal claims*—while we can know something about emotions through our senses or measurement (the ontology), one must endlessly question or "test" one's hypotheses about their nature or causal properties. This difference is symptomatic of whether one puts ontology before epistemology (as positivists do) or the reverse (as analyticists do). Given the consensus that these debates in philosophy of science are irresolvable (Jackson 2011; Monteiro and Ruby 2009), this chapter does not adjudicate which approach is "right." Instead, it merely makes the case for the value of an analyticist approach to emotions so as to expand the toolkit of methodologies/epistemologies used to study emotions in IR.

2 Alternatively, the microeconomic theorist may also suggest that the theory of demand is not the most useful analytic theory to understand this particular phenomenon. In this case, she or he might instead point to the micro-foundations of how demand works: through indifference curve analysis of Income Effects and Substitution Effects. Understanding these micro-foundations explain the theoretical conditions of when this phenomena might occur. One set of theoretical conditions are the conditions of giffen goods: when the consumer is so poor and the good is so necessary (e.g., staple foods), that an increase in price of the giffen good leads the consumer to be so much drastically poorer that she or he has to decrease the purchase of expensive substitute goods (e.g., meats or vegetables), and increase the purchase of the giffen good so as to still have enough (food) to survive (or more formally, the income effect exceeds the substitution effect). The net effects of conceptual causes (the Income and Substitution effects) are "indeterminate" and we can only know the parameters by looking at the outcome itself (Elster 2015). At no point in this process is the theory of demand regarded as "falsified." It is merely not useful in this context, and provokes a closer look at micro-foundations for a more general theory.

3 Namely, how does this conceptual structure get me to think differently about a phenomena (of which I am a part of), and what interesting insights does it reveal (Jackson 2011, 153)?

4 Hence, defense mechanisms can be both reactive or preventive.

5 Or, what Resende terms "aporia" (this volume).

6 Also see Hopf's methods (2012).

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