

# Prayer, Contentious Politics, and the Women of the Wall: The Benefits of Collaboration in Participant Observation at Intense, Multifocal Events

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*Social scientists who engage in qualitative fieldwork typically follow the ethnographic model of the single scholar in the field. We argue that collaboration in on-site participant observation is an underutilized but vital methodological tool, particularly in the case of one common form of communal conflict in the late-modern period: intense, multifocal events. At mass demonstrations, rallies with small groups of opposing forces, and other public events involving multiple actors, sights, sounds, and interactions, collaboration provides multiple perspectives in a given research moment that one researcher cannot, by definition, experience and observe alone. By joining forces, two researchers may exploit variations in their physical vantage points, disciplinary training, range of area knowledge, and personal background (including gender, ethnicity, religion, and class) to produce more accurate and more meaningful studies. We support our claims with evidence from our own impromptu on-site collaboration in the case of a women's prayer session at the Western Wall in Jerusalem in June 2000.*

**Keywords:** *participant observation; communal conflict; intense, multifocal events; Women of the Wall; Israel*

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“You’re not Jews—you’re lesbians! You’re worse than the goyim!”

—an ultraorthodox man,  
heckling the Women of the Wall (WOW) during their prayers,  
caught on Steven’s tape recording

“My lady! God doesn’t hear you.”

—an ultraorthodox woman,  
remonstrating the WOW during their prayers,  
recorded in Patricia’s notebook

Ethnographic field research, in its traditional and most romantic forms, has centered on the study of remote cultures in distant villages, as seen in the classic works of anthropologists such as Boas, Malinowski, Mead, Bateson, and Geertz. Today, many social science researchers are using ethnography as a means of data collection and as an important analytical tool (Reinharz 1992; Dewalt and Dewalt 1998). Ethnographic work, along with in-depth interviewing, personal surveying, and participant observation, is a relatively recent arrival in the methodological toolbox of political scientists (Fenno 1990). Political scientists tend to use these methods in a manner significantly different from the traditional model of living with and analyzing one remote village culture. Political studies using ethnographic methods focus on tensions within and across communities concerning conflicting values and norms. Rather than seeking to understand one culture through thick description (Geertz 1973), these studies have attempted to flesh out the parameters and causes of conflict within and across communities with conflicting value systems.

In this article, we focus on the use of participant observation work to study one common expression of these conflicts in modern communities: intense, multifocal events. Intense multifocal events are sites of conflict in which modern communities (where people often do not live together physically) come together in demonstrations, rallies, and other public fora to challenge similarly gathered members of another community. Such events have long been studied in association with social movements. However, intense clashes between opposing social forces conducted in public space have become a recognizable expression and tool of modern, contentious politics in many contexts (see, e.g., Tarrow 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

We argue that collaboration in participant observation is a vital methodological tool for this widespread expression of intercommunal and intracommunal conflict. At mass demonstrations, rallies with small groups of opposing forces, and other public events involving multiple actors, sights, sounds, and interactions, collaboration provides multiple perspectives in a

given research moment that one researcher cannot, by definition, experience and observe alone.

By joining forces, two researchers may exploit variations in their physical vantage points, range of area knowledge, personal background (including gender, ethnicity, religion, and class), and disciplinary training to produce more accurate and more meaningful studies that reflect the “heterogeneous” histories of the various actors (Haraway 1997:273). Indeed, if mistakes are an inevitable outcome of “confusing situations and conflicting pressures” in the field (Whyte and Whyte 1984), and those mistakes can only be corrected through “time and patience” (Dewalt and Dewalt 1998, citing also Whyte and Whyte 1984), then collaboration offers an important tool to correct mistakes, expose biases (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Crow, Levine, and Nager 1992), lead to speedier insights, and reach analyses that are closer to the spirit and wide-ranging content of the event.

We support our claims with evidence from and analysis of our own impromptu on-site collaboration at a WOW prayer session at the Western Wall of the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem in June 2000. We had not planned to undertake collaborative work at this event. Rather, during the course of the event, we began to realize that together, we could cover more physical space and therefore more of what was being said and done by people situated in different locations at the site. It was at this point that our conscious collaboration began. Later, over a debriefing breakfast, we began to grasp that this data sharing, while very useful, was only one of the benefits of collaboration. At least as valuable to our research was the discussion of our perspectives on the event: our cultural, methodological, intellectual, and emotional reactions. Building on these discussions, we pursued cooperative analysis and writing about what we had found. This article is the fruit, then, not of a carefully planned two-way project but of our reflections on a fortunate encounter on which future projects might be modeled. Our experience attests to the trial-and-error nature of much fieldwork: Often a researcher does not know what will work and what will not work until she or he is well into the research process itself.

On the morning of June 4, 2000, we were party to an instance of intrareligious strife at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Researching questions of religion and state in Israel, we had a common interest in capturing the words, actions, atmosphere, and political import of the events surrounding the prayers of a controversial women’s group in the wake of a landmark Israeli Supreme Court decision. At this intense, multifocal event, with a myriad of sights, sounds, and activities around the Western Wall Plaza, our spontaneous collaboration yielded more data, sharper insights, and a speedier transition from observation to analysis than either of us could have accomplished

alone. While it might seem natural to pursue such collaboration in the field, the more common model of participant observation work is that of the lone ethnographer. We argue that collaboration, particularly in cases of intense, multifocal events, provides an important research tool to the social scientist.

At the event, we stood in different locations and arrived with varying foci in our area studies, personal backgrounds, and disciplinary training. Steven was investigating connections and conflicts between Judaism and democracy in Israel. He focused on the Israeli case to shed light on a larger debate in liberal political theory over whether liberalism is possible in a polity that does not clearly separate religion from state. He saw the controversy both as a contest over standards of prayer at the wall and as a highly symbolic fight linked to a set of battles with the religious establishment over its monopoly on standards for Jewish conversion, marriage, divorce, and burial. Patricia's research centered on the question of why the Israel High Court of Justice entered into this veritable *Kulturkampf* with religious authorities in the late 1980s. She was investigating the answer in interactions over time between social groups and state institutions, particularly through social and professional networks among social movement cause lawyers and the judicial community in Israel. The WOW case, initially brought to the court in 1989, has been one of the long-running controversial cases in which this religious law conflict has been seen and articulated. Patricia thus came to the session to see how the battle was expressed outside of the courtroom, among individuals and groups with no justices to mediate.

In political science, our discipline, enormous energy is given to methodological issues in research, writing, and disciplinary training of graduate students. Less specific attention has been given in political science than in some other disciplines to the practical and theoretical issues involved in on-site field research. (Some important exceptions to this trend include Fenno 1990; Rubin and Rubin 1995; Berg 1998; Creswell 1998; as well as texts from other disciplines used by political scientists, including Glazer 1972; Burawoy et al. 1991; Gluck and Patai 1991; Reinharz 1992; Kleinman and Copp 1993; Yin 1994; Bartunek and Louis 1996.) Of the various qualitative fieldwork methods, interview methods have probably received the greatest attention by social scientists outside of anthropology (Gluck and Patai 1991; Reinharz 1992; Weiss 1994; Rubin and Rubin 1995). Participant observation has seen less attention.

The type of on-site collaboration we advocate in participant observation provides a relatively novel form of triangulation in research methods. Social scientists who do qualitative fieldwork often seek to triangulate research results through the use of multiple research methods, such as interviews, documents, and statistical data. Triangulation is often best accomplished

through the use of multiple investigators (Bartunek and Louis 1996; Berg 1998).

In field research, this type of triangulation is used mainly in large  $N$  statistical work, such as interviewing large numbers of people with survey questions. The type of collaboration in participant observation that we suggest is relatively uncommon, although it has been reported by some anthropologist couples who conducted ethnographic field research together (Mead [1972] 1995; Geertz 1973; important exceptions include Reinharz 1979; Bartunek and Louis 1996). The collaboration we advocate is achieved only through attendance of the same event and debriefing, or collaborative analysis, thereafter; we call this on-site collaboration. The use of multiple researchers to conduct surveys, conduct separated interviews, or engage in participant observation of separate communities would not achieve the same goals.

Although on-site collaboration in participant observation is not found in explanations of the main traditions of qualitative research methods (Creswell 1998), we argue that it is an important methodological tool whose benefits will usually outweigh concerns about individual creativity and credit for research. Indeed, scholars of scientific thought, such as Haraway, have emphasized the need for collective, noncompetitive work that eschews concerns about possession to achieve greater insight into the heterogeneous histories literally crying out their stories at an event like the WOW prayer session (Haraway 1997:268, 273). Following this model, our collaboration in the development of this article, in both our on-site fieldwork and our writing, has been an equal effort. Our experience taught each of us that richer, more accurate, and more creative research is fostered by the collegiality implicit in noncompetitive collaboration.

We use Haraway's (1997) notion of heterogeneous histories, rather than "voices," to emphasize the entire systems of values and norms reflected in those divergent voices. The significance of the different stories is not only discursive. Discursive tools are used to support the agenda of one side or the other. However, that agenda, in our case as in many, is reflective of a much larger clash between normative systems, values, and worldviews, often supported by social institutions or even institutions of state. Indeed, the state's support of laws and norms that favor one side of the struggle is often implied (or even explicit) in the conflict itself.

That tension is all the greater when, as in our case, state institutions uphold conflicting principles, sometimes strengthening the claims of one side, and sometimes another. Thus, often unwittingly (Mitchell 1991; Migdal 2001), the state may be bolstering systems of values and norms that are inherently (theoretically and empirically) in conflict with one another. In the case of the WOW event, those different systems included systematic and drastically dif-

ferent ways of understanding the history of the conflict, the relationship between and social boundaries of the groups, how those groups relate to the state and the wider (in this case national and religious) community, and the content of the social agendas that each group would see applied to the national community as a whole.

Reporting these divergent histories is thus critical to fleshing out and explaining the causes of communal political conflict. On-site collaboration is a particularly important method for observing intense, multifocal events in which the political geography of the event means that different parties are voicing different sentiments and actions in different locations. These multiple happenings cannot be observed or absorbed from one location by one person. The researcher's perspective is shaped at any research moment by four factors: (1) physical vantage point, (2) area knowledge (language, history, cross-cultural knowledge, and experience), (3) personal background (at least including ethnicity, gender, religion, and class), and (4) disciplinary training. These influences on a researcher are magnified—as are the limitations they impose—during intense, multifocal events in which a chorus of voices is swirling about, dozens or hundreds of people are involved, and various stories are developing concurrently in different physical locations.

In the pages below, we recount and analyze our impromptu on-site collaboration at the WOW prayer session on June 4, 2000. We sketch the scene at the wall on that day, outlining the major divisions between the Jewish religious communities in Israel and how they factor into the cultural and legal conflict over WOW's prayer sessions, and present our methodological argument, including excerpts from our field notes from the WOW prayer session. We find that physical vantage point and personal background (including "values and interests," Kurzman 1991; and visceral, emotional reactions, Kleinman and Copp 1993; Dewalt and Dewalt 1998; Lawson 2000) were the most influential on our initial reactions, initial analyses, and ultimate contributions to one another's thinking about the event. Area training was significant as well; our varied specialized language and historical training were helpful for filling in gaps for both of us. Disciplinary training was the least important factor in our case since both of us had pursued interdisciplinary courses of study.

### THE SCENE: WOW, THE WALL, AND ISRAELI JEWRY

The rift between Israel's secular and religious Jewry is no secret. Somewhat less well known to outsiders is the series of cultural and religious divisions among those who make up Israel's Jewish religious communities.

Israeli religious Jewry divides into four main groups: Haredim (ultra-orthodox), Religious Zionists (the liberal wing of whom are known as Modern Orthodox), Masortim (literally, “traditional”), and—by far the smallest segment—Reform and Conservative Jews.

On this hot early summer day, at 7:00 A.M., a group of about 100 Jewish women came to pray. The women were observing the dawn of the new month (Rosh Hodesh), the Hebrew month of Sivan, holding morning prayers in front of the Western Wall of the Temple Mount. This spot is revered by Jews worldwide and, since Israel pushed Jordan out of East Jerusalem in the Six Day War of 1967, has been a renewed center of Jewish prayer. Immediately behind the wall is the core territory (known as the Temple Mount to Jews, Haram al-Sharif to Muslims) over which a final Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement has faltered since the failed Camp David summit in July 2000. In front of the wall on this morning, a different kind of disagreement was playing out: an intracommunal dispute over the ways in which Jewish women may legitimately offer their prayers and, ultimately, a wider controversy concerning the nature of Judaism in the Jewish state.

This day, like every day, many dozens of bearded men in long black coats and black fedoras swayed in prayer in the section of the wall that is set off for male worshipers. They were wrapped in *tefillin* (phylacteries) and *tallitot* (prayer shawls), saying the morning prayer in a *minyan* (a quorum of ten men necessary for certain prayers), alternating between silent recitation and group song. And this day, like every day, a significantly smaller gathering of women, each praying independently and silently, were seen on the women’s side. In synagogues, women traditionally pray in a section separate from men and do not count in a minyan; at the Western Wall, the women’s and men’s sections are separated by a large divider. The women’s section is significantly smaller than the men’s prayer area.

The vast majority of worshipers at the wall appeared, by their clothing, to be ultraorthodox Jews, those who live according to a strict interpretation of *halachic* (Jewish law) tradition. Most of these Haredim—literally, “those who quake” before God—are of Russian or Eastern European descent, although some are Mizrahim (descended from Muslim empires or states, including especially Spain and the Middle East). The Haredim have had a tense relationship with the modern state of Israel, a deep-seated religious objection to Zionism, and a strong aversion to non-Haredi Jewish practice.

Haredi men follow the style of their eighteenth-century forebears in Europe, dressing in all black except for white shirts; the women wear long, modestly cut skirts and have their legs, arms, and in the case of married women, hair fully covered. Most Haredi men in Israel spend their days learning in *yeshivot* or *kollels*, religious institutions of higher education—some of

which are perched, windows facing the wall, in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City. Most Haredi women work at home, caring for what are usually large families. It is normative in Haredi communities for couples to have many children, with families of eight to twelve being quite common. In Israeli society, Haredim make up approximately 8%–10% of the population; at the wall on this morning, like every morning, they were the clear majority (Liebman and Katz 1997; Gavison 2000).

In the back corner of the women's section, the WOW gathered and began their prayer. Some of the women were Reform or Conservative Jews. Most, however, allied with Modern Orthodoxy: they observed Jewish law and welcomed Zionism, modern technologies and institutions, and the expansion of gender roles for both women and men. When the WOW began their worship on this morning, they attracted a loud group of male Haredi protestors who shouted epithets from behind the barrier between the men's and women's sections of the wall. On the other side of the barricade, a few Haredi women waved their fingers in the WOW's faces and yelled at them to stop their prayer.

This open conflict was not new. When the WOW began praying together at the Western Wall in the late 1980s, their worship provoked explosive and at times violent responses from some Haredim. The reaction stemmed from Haredi opposition to several WOW practices that are traditionally limited to Jewish men, including audible collective prayer (Haredi women by custom pray individually and silently) and the use of ritual objects such as the Torah scroll, tefillin, and tallitot. Although Jewish law does not specifically prohibit these activities, long-standing orthodox custom does. The Haredi demonstrators saw the WOW's innovations as posing a grave threat to what they have regarded as the sole authentic expression of Judaism.

In 1989, seeking protection from physical and verbal harassment during their prayer sessions, the WOW brought a case to the Israeli High Court of Justice (see Lahav 2000). Justice Menachem Elon, himself a Torah scholar, conducted an extensive review of halachic law and found no provision forbidding women from praying in a group or with the rituals and ritual objects in question. In 1994, with Justice Elon writing for the majority, the High Court decided that the WOW had the right to pray at the Western Wall but placed responsibility on the executive to find an administrative solution that would safeguard the WOW's rights while respecting the "sensitivities" of those praying at the wall and the "traditions" of the place. The traditions of the place were assumed to be the customs of those who populate and manage the Western Wall—mainly Haredi Jews.

When a government committee failed to come up with a solution after one year elapsed, the WOW brought the case to the High Court again in 1995.

Again, years of deliberation ensued. Finally, on May 22, 2000, two weeks before the June prayer session, Justice Eliahu Mazza wrote in his opinion for the court that the women have the absolute right to pray, wear tallit, and read from the Torah at the wall. He gave the government six months to work out a practical solution.

Justice Mazza noted that according to the 1994 decision, the rights of the WOW had to be balanced with the sensitivities of the Haredim who prayed regularly at the wall. However, he wrote, the government responded to this decision by deferring completely to the sensitivities of the Haredim and thus erred in failing to protect the WOW's rights to their own prayer. He went further, however, interpreting the 1994 decision as instructing the government to give precedence to the WOW, for their claim was an issue of rights rather than only sensitivities. Rights, he argued, took legal precedence over sensitivities. In this 2001 decision, the High Court made the strongest statement in favor of the WOW's rights since the group first initiated its legal cases.

The Ministry of Justice immediately challenged Justice Mazza's reading of the 1994 decision. As quickly as July 2000, the Ministry of Justice and the government were hoping to come to an arrangement under which the WOW would be able to pray at a remote section of the wall (to the south, out of sight of the main area and next to Robinson's Arch), which was designated earlier in the year for Conservative Jews. A government committee and the conservative movement in Israel reached this agreement after similar legal cases brought to the High Court throughout the 1990s by the reform and conservative movements in Israel. The reform movement did not agree to the Robinson's Arch solution. To date, the WOW have not accepted this solution.

Days before the prayer event on June 4, which was also a celebration of the court ruling in their favor, the WOW sent out e-mail messages to academic and religious lists and announcements to women's organizations and individuals, asking women around Israel to show their support for them at the wall. Seeking to avoid unnecessary provocations before the court-ordered six-month timetable had elapsed, the group requested that its members not wear tefillin or tallit, or bring a Sefer Torah, the ritual objects that had created much of the controversy. However, the women did change what had become their usual praying location. For most of the 1990s, the women had prayed far back in the Western Wall plaza, or even in the parking lot, to avoid verbal and sometimes even violent attacks (usually in the form of objects being thrown at them). This time, sounding a note of quiet defiance with the Israeli Supreme Court on their side, the women prayed at the back of the women's section, approximately fifty feet from the wall itself.

The prayer session began at 7:00 when the WOW entered the women's section to the boos and catcalls of gathering Haredi men. It ended one hour

later, when the women retreated to a nearby spot in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City to finish their observance of Rosh Hodesh by reading from the Torah. During that hour, we witnessed an extraordinary, emotionally wrenching event fueled by praying, crying, booing, and singing; dehumanization, fury, and contempt; religion, law, and politics.

### THE ADVANTAGES OF ON-SITE COLLABORATION

The several dozen women who congregated at 7:00 am—in the rear right section of the women's side of the wall—struck a surprisingly nonprovocative pose. No Torah, no tefillin, few tallitot, only a lone *kippa* (skullcap) could be found among the group. Most donned the head coverings typical among orthodox married women. Most, if not all, were modestly dressed—in long skirts or dresses, in line with orthodox custom. Yet a relatively small but vocal and virulent crowd of Haredi men gathered in the plaza, maybe twenty feet from the praying women, and attempted to disrupt and discredit the women throughout their hour-long prayer. (Steven's notebook)

6:58 a.m. The WOW are gathered at the back entrance to the women's section. Near them, but on the other side of a chain separator from which tourists observe the two sections, a group of Haredi men is gathering. Several police officers are also standing there. Like me, they seem to be standing back to see when and where there might be trouble. I stand right next to the chain, but do not join the women or the Haredi men. I stand next to but to the west of both groups, so I can retreat if need be. (Patricia's notebook)

#### Physical Vantage Point

The advantages of multiple physical vantage points gained in on-site collaboration are the most immediately apparent. On-site collaboration clearly increased our ability to record and, later (checking one another), to report the spirit of the event, including more expansive attention to the heterogeneous histories that emerged from different corners of the Western Wall Plaza. Interestingly, gender was a critical variable in the political geography of where we were allowed to stand, whom we could hear, and what we could see. As a woman, Patricia was able to stand in (or, actually, in and above) the women's section. Steven, like the male journalists at the event, could not be in the women's section under any circumstances. Men were directed by police to move back when they crept too close. On the hill immediately above the women's section, Patricia was able to hear comments from ultraorthodox women inside the women's section and watch interactions between the women that were not visible from where the men were standing.

Looking down, I am right above the WOW, who continue to stand at the back of the women's section. Two or three ultra-orthodox women are trying to disturb the prayer of the women praying at the wall. The police are not removing them as they push their faces at several women praying. One woman in a scarf is doing most of the yelling:

“You should go to Egypt!” [Referring to Exodus]

“You are destroying the Jewish people!”

“You are a missionary just like all the missionaries!” . . .

A heartbreaking scene. A young ultra-orthodox woman approaches the women's section. She stands behind the WOW for a few minutes, seeming to determine from by-standers what, exactly, is going on. Suddenly, she walks past the WOW. She says with a quiet voice that is full of gentle, heart-felt devotion: “Women, the Messiah is coming! The Messiah is coming! You should be ashamed” and one other sentence that was a curse or a warning of the evil that would befall them, but I do not hear the exact words. Five or ten minutes later, presumably after her prayers at the wall, she walks out past the WOW. She says, with an equally gentle, devoted, and pained voice: “God doesn't hear you. My lady! God doesn't hear you.” (Patricia's notebook)

However, Patricia could hear only the men's shouts, not their quieter comments and conversation. Steven, standing by the men with his tape recorder, was able to record conversation among women and men standing in proximity to the WOW, as well as the precise words used in their prayers, chants, and curses.

A reporter asked one young beardless, black-hatted man: “Why do you object? They have been given permission by the court to do that.” Answer: “What court? Whose court?”

Another reporter asked another angry but poorly informed man: “What if they're not orthodox? What if they're Conservative or Reform. . . .” Answer: “It's not the way it was 100 or 200 years ago. My grandfather wasn't like that. My great grandfather wasn't like that. We're not part of that.” (Steven's field notes)

Steven was also able to hear an interview with a man, described in his notes as “an English-speaking, sixty-something, well-to-do rabbi, trying to strike a strong but less shrill tone than the demonstrators”:

Answer: This will get Anat Hoffman [a women's movement activist and religious woman who cosponsored the original WOW High Court case, and whose name is used to identify the case] into the Knesset. You must know that all the people here: there is not the slightest interest in any of them in anything to do with Judaism. There is every interest, every interest, in promoting themselves. They know exactly how to do it. They are extremely professional.

Question: What about the actual issue, of women coming here to pray?

Answer: Women should definitely come here and pray. Without any question. Everyone has the right—you see women are praying. But they don't come to pray. They come to make a provocation, to provoke. Before they come down to pray, they will call every news service in the world to let them know they are coming down here to pray. They're going to get fantastic footage.

Question: What is the issue here? Why should they not be here?

Answer: They can come here just like anybody else. But they must respect the sanctity of the place. Would they do what they're doing and walk into the Vatican for example with their own form of prayer? They would respect the customs that are prevalent there. These women have no respect for any customs. The only respect they have is for themselves and what they want to do to promote themselves. They are self-promoters. There may be a few who are genuinely sincere. The vast majority is not. (Steven's field notes)

Steven briefly followed the WOW as they left the Wall Plaza to see how they were treated:

Member of Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) Naomi Chazan, who stood with the Women of the Wall, leaves the scene and comments: "It is a women's issue, a religious issue, a democratic issue."

A Haredi man yells at the retreating women: "The messiah will not come until you stop what you are doing. You should be ashamed! You're not Jews. You're not Jews." (Steven's notebook)

Already aware of a division of observation labor, Patricia stayed to watch the scene disperse at the wall itself:

7:55 a.m.

The WOW have finished their prayers. They are leaving through the plaza toward the southwest gate. As they go through the plaza, the police and most of the Haredi men follow. I am worried for a few minutes about how the police will protect the women if someone attempts violence against them. A man yells, "There are no people more confused and twisted than you!"

Suddenly, there is a disturbance in the plaza below, near where the men had been standing. A group of police officers has grabbed a young Haredi man. (It is not the young, intense man I had noticed before). They are wrestling him to the ground. They, in turn, are surrounded by a whole group of Haredi men. The police wrestle the man to the ground several times before they get him under control. They usher him to the police office at the back of the plaza, and another Haredi man does something to warrant similar police attention. He is brought under control fairly quickly, with a smaller group of Haredi men around. The second man is also taken to the police office. Later, I am told the two had brought eggs to throw at the WOW. (Patricia's notebook)

These excerpts illustrate the benefits of on-site collaboration in terms of physical vantage point. By debriefing after the event, sharing notes, discussing, and then analyzing them together, we were able to gain the detailed access of one another's data recordings, significantly expanding the picture of the event from which we each could draw.

#### Area Knowledge (Language, History, Cross-Cultural Knowledge, and Experience)

To practitioners of ethnographic methods, it goes without saying that language, history, and cross-cultural knowledge and experience are essential to both participant observation and the ensuing analysis. Simply put, if one does not understand what is being said, one cannot report on what one hears. It thus becomes impossible to record or analyze the heterogeneous histories emerging at the event. Cries, expletives, curses, song, and prayer—understanding the content of each of these is critical to the usefulness of participant observation.

The [aforementioned Haredi] woman in the scarf is yelling at the woman police officer who first tried to intervene: “You are guarding the Christians! You are not guarding Jews. You’re not guarding the People of Israel! It’s forbidden for them to be here! You’re taking their side. You’re taking their side! Don’t be on their side. You’re no good (*At lo beseder*). It’s forbidden for you to be on their side. This is not a place for shows! This is a holy place. This is a place for the People of Israel. Not for Christians. It wasn’t even like this is Egypt! Phooey—dirt on you all!” This last as a curse. (Patricia’s notebook)

The passage above highlights the importance of understanding the historical and cultural context of the words being spoken. What does it mean to accuse Israeli policewomen of guarding Christians from Jews? Why is it important to define the WOW as not the People of Israel? Why mention Egypt? The history of Christian persecution of Jews in Europe, attempts over the ages to maintain solidarity among Jews as the People of Israel, and persecution under the pharaohs of Egypt are all referenced in this single outburst.

In addition to language, it is axiomatic among qualitative field researchers that political, historical, social, and cultural area knowledge is critical to understanding when one is seeing heterogeneous claims. These may emerge as much out of cultural symbols and signals as through direct speech. Although ethnographers may strive to learn as much as possible about the subject of their research, it is often difficult for an outsider to be properly prepared to understand all of the cultural symbols and expressions she or he

might encounter. Take as an example the following passage from Steven's notes, excerpted from the quotation above:

The several dozen women who congregated at 7:00 am—in the rear right section of the women's side of the wall—struck a surprisingly nonprovocative pose. No Torah, no tefillin, few tallitot, only a lone kippa could be found among the group. Most donned the head coverings typical among orthodox married women. Most if not all were modestly dressed—in long skirts or dresses, in line with orthodox custom. (Steven's field notes)

There are at least eight area- and context-specific terms in this one small passage. Why is the wall a significant site of conflict? What are Torah, tefillin, tallitot, kippa, and Haredi men? What is the significance of the different forms of dress to which Steven refers? What is the women's section of the wall? Social scientists, like journalists, often gravitate toward sensational events. Scholars' ability to render more detailed and nuanced analyses of events, however, depends on the degree of linguistic and area knowledge they bring to the scene. With collaborative work, scholars have a rare opportunity to pool their backgrounds and talents to provide a more complete picture for one another.

I speak briefly with the AP correspondent who is standing where I have been standing. She makes a glib comment about the Haredi men, but does not seem to know much about the larger issues. I ask her if she speaks Hebrew and understands what has been said. She says no. I translate a few lines for her from my notebook. She seems horrified. She does not ask me to explain where the comments come from, or what they might mean. I wonder how she can be expected to write anything useful or remotely accurate about what is happening when she does not understand the language and doesn't seem to know about much of the history or context of this event. (Patricia's field notes)

While one always seeks the highest level of accuracy or faithfulness in recording what is said and done at an event like the WOW session, it is not merely accuracy or facts one seeks in the content of an interview, interchange, or outburst. It is what some groups say, what others do not, when certain chants arise, when others arise (Reinharz 1992). Although we each had studied more than six years of Hebrew, our recordings reflect some differences in the areas of language with which we are most familiar. In our debriefing immediately after the event, and in going over our field notes, we were able to help one another with specialized language and variances in our historical and cultural knowledge.

In addition to the ethnographic issues already raised, familiarity and comfort with border crossings (Hurtado 1996; Caesar 1997) are particularly

important in the case of intense, multifocal events. Experience crossing borders between cultures—the researcher’s own or the multiple cultures present at the event—is important to maintaining equilibrium during such an event. In Jerusalem, crossing boundaries is both physically and psychologically palpable. Road No. 1, as most Israelis call it, or Nablus Road, as Palestinians and some left-wing Israelis call it, marks the border between East and West Jerusalem. Walking across that border into the Old City, or into the neighborhood around Damascus Gate just outside of the Old City, one feels immediately that one is in a different country. This difference is apparent from physical markers such as the market goods available, the design of storefronts, and the state of roads. It presents itself in the appearance and dress of the people. And one feels, at an intangible level, a change having to do with a different ethos, a different culture. Walking from Damascus Gate through the Muslim Quarter to the Western Wall in the Jewish Quarter is an experience of walking through physical and cultural borders. Experience crossing these borders, developing a level of comfort with these border crossings and with one’s (subject) position in that crossing, is critical to standing in an event such as the WOW prayer session without falling into sensory overload. Steven’s notes illustrate the cacophony, which could be extremely disorienting without a level of comfort in the midst of a battle over cultural norms and borders.

Among the shouts of the Haredi men during the prayers:

“They’re not Jews, they’re lesbians!”

“Lesbians! Lesbians! Gays and lesbians!”

As women began to pray: “You forgot the cross!! You forgot the cross!! You forgot it! Bring them the cross!”

“They’re not Jews. They forgot the cross.”

Very loud yelling and wailing and repeated “*Booz*” (curse, scorn upon you)—drowning out most of the singing

“They’re Christians! They’re Christians!”

“The priest has arrived! The priest has arrived!”

“Go home! Go home! Go home!”

Patricia’s notes also record the multitude of words and actors, point and counterpoint:

The WOW finish their song. The men begin singing again, loudly.

One Haredi man and one Haredi woman, independently, yell at the WOW, each saying “Your priest is coming!” “Your priest is coming for you!” The WOW begin praying again.

The male police officer has to come again to remove the male journalists from the area where I am standing. One Israeli photographer tries to push me out of my spot, which is a great spot for a photo. I tell him, “I am standing here.” He gets snide and says, “What, I’m just here”: he stands immediately next to

me, close enough that he has to make an effort not to touch me (and knock me over on the small, steep hill). “Does that bother you, too?” But (with some effort) I do not withdraw. This whole interchange is somewhat ironic, given the nature of the event.

It is no surprise to scholars using ethnographic methods that language skills, experience living in a culture, and comfort with border crossings are all essential to successful qualitative field research. Ethnographers typically invest a great deal of time and energy studying the society and culture of the areas in which their field research will take place before embarking on their journeys. There is no doubt that this preparation is invaluable for effective fieldwork. No matter how extensive one’s training, however, the complementary knowledge of a colleague is extremely helpful. And, as we discuss below, having a research partner is potentially even more important in helping to sharpen one’s consciousness of one’s specific training, of its impact on research, and of subjectivity in the research process.

#### Personal Background/Subjectivity

Elements of a researcher’s personal background and bias are notorious for complicating any study (Haraway 1989, 1991). A typical worry is that in both data collection and analysis, the individual investigator’s personal ideas and biases—determined in part by her or his gender, ethnic, religious, and class or socioeconomic status—affect accuracy of data collection and analysis. Some political scientists have noted that, issues of personal background aside, a scholar’s values and interests at any given time may also vary, affecting the focus of research questions as well as fieldwork itself (Kurzman 1991).

Collaborative work in participant observation situations provided us with an important tool, not to correct one another’s interests and concerns, but to highlight just how significant they were in our immediate reactions and analyses. In addition, emotional involvement with, engagement in, and responses to intense multifocal events are to be expected. Participant observation, by definition, involves both emotional involvement and scholarly detachment (Dewalt and Dewalt 1998:262, citing Paul 1953). Collaboration on site as well as afterward provides an important means to highlight diverse emotional responses, evaluate their impact on initial analyses, and ultimately allow for a more accurate or faithful analysis. The goal is not to turn off emotions or disciplinary inclinations—even if this were possible—but to be more conscious of the ways in which these emotions affect subsequent analyses.

Field methods scholarship has promoted the notion of reflexivity in qualitative work for some time. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) noted, for example, “that all social research takes the form of participant observation: it

involves participating in the social world, in whatever role, and reflecting on the products of that participation” (p. 16). However, the literature on reflexivity seldom addresses the type of collaboration between two or three researchers that we suggest in observing intense, multifocal events. Typically, researchers may compensate for the inevitable intrusions of subjectivity by taking care to face up to their own biases, asking themselves whether and to what extent those concerns and interests may have an impact on their intellectual agenda and thus on their collection and interpretation of data. This is a commonsense recommendation, and it maps the suggestion Jerome Frank (1936) made to judges who seek to weed out their own predilections from the adjudicative process.

Nevertheless, the approach has its obvious limits. How is one really to get outside his or her own biases? One excellent way to encourage more effective analyses of the substantive material, as well as thinking through the impact of the subjectivity of the researcher in the research process, is through the help of a colleague. We contend that the benefits of collaboration at the field research stage—before any writing takes place, when initial ideas are still being developed—are underappreciated. In complex emotional cases such as the prayer session at the wall, in which myriad factors of religion, ethnicity, and gender are flying around, we found it helped not only to debrief over coffee in another part of the Old City immediately after the event but to write up detailed notes and share them.

As we said above, our collaboration was impromptu. We became increasingly aware of the potential for collaboration during the event itself—first in terms of observation and data collection alone, later in terms of analysis and writing as well. Indeed, we began to devote our efforts not only to our individual research agendas but also to a collective project aimed at increasingly faithful analyses. Projects that are planned as collaborative endeavors may provide opportunities for rigorous assessment of bias in the research design as well. In one such project, the three collaborators (an anthropologist, a psychologist, and a sociologist) found that “investigators . . . are likely to encourage one another to make the implicit explicit” and thus to more clearly see their own methodological and cultural biases. “There is increasing recognition that although heightened awareness of one’s own cultural and/or disciplinary preconceptions can never eliminate bias in the study of others’ beliefs and practices, it sheds light on influences that affect both data collection and analysis” (Crow, Levine, and Nager 1992:739).

Our collaboration on site in a participant observation situation served two related purposes. First, it opened up another lens on the event, a perspective that perhaps did not occur to one of us or that seemed a minor theme. Second, it put our own perspectives in sharp relief, showing more clearly how our out-

looks and concerns stood in relation to those of the other. We found that both issues of personal identification (who we are) and issues of audience (whom we saw ourselves as speaking to) had a strong impact on our initial responses to the WOW event. Steven is an insider to the Jewish community, Patricia an outsider, neither Jewish, Muslim, nor Christian. (For more on insider/outsider issues, particularly in team fieldwork, see Bartunek and Louis 1996.)

Our personal identification with parts of the conflict—as insider/outsider, as man/woman—affected our emotional responses to different issues. And importantly, the audience we each had in mind influenced the issues toward which we gravitated as we recorded our notes in the twenty-four hours after the event. This process of debriefing, verbally and over our written notes, significantly broadened our immediate analyses of the event. It also sped up appreciably the time it would have taken each of us to attend to the issues raised by the other. In a participant observation situation, analyses conducted in close proximity to the event allow insights to flow while the sights and sounds of the event are still fresh in the researcher's mind. The time saved through our collaboration was potentially critical in producing the range and depth of ideas that emerged in the days following the prayer session.

Sharing and collaborating over our field notes helped highlight our various reactions and their impact on our understandings of the event. Although some of our responses depict us as somewhat wide eyed, in most cases, our surprise was less intellectual, one might say, than it was emotional. In comparing notes containing these more visceral reactions, after having already culled one another's empirical observations, the significance of subjectivity in analysis became even more apparent. We were each drawn to think about those areas we found emotionally taxing and to consider connections between our emotional responses and our approaches to the research.

As an outsider, Patricia did not experience the conflict moments between Jews as the most difficult, personally. As an insider, intracommunal issues were the most salient for Steven, personally; they were the issues requiring the most explanation to Jews around the world. On the other hand, for Patricia as outsider, signs of intercommunity conflict or intolerance were the most difficult personally but also in terms of the audience to whom she imagined explaining anti-Christian and antiother sentiments expressed at the event. These issues take up the majority of her notes to herself. She found herself wondering how she could explain to non-Jews the angry slurs accusing the WOW of being—of all things!—Christians, *Amalek*.

These intercommunal issues and the raw empirical material (mainly in the form of shouted comments) are also recorded as part of Steven's regular accounting of the event. We each saw and heard both intracommunity and

intercommunity conflict and intolerance. Nonetheless, the issues we each initially focused on were those of the most immediate emotional import. Interestingly, we found that the issues of immediate emotional import corresponded directly with each of our imagined audiences. Here is Patricia's first personal note:

My thoughts at this painful scene:

(Thoughts in response to the young woman painfully urging the WOW to stop: "My lady, God doesn't hear you.")

If not these women, then who does God hear? Only her? Only ultra-orthodox Jews? Where does that leave the rest of us? Such a closed view of who has access to God reminds me much more of medieval Christianity than of rabbinical Judaism. To say that God doesn't hear someone—I almost can't bear it.

In this passage, Patricia expresses pain at the exclusivism of the Haredi men and women protesters vis-à-vis everyone else in the world. She also expresses some universal or ecumenical indignation. She is thinking primarily of sincere religious believers of other faiths. She is horrified at the idea that this woman, who does not seem angry, who comports herself otherwise with a warm countenance, truly believes that she knows if someone else's prayer is heard by God. The WOW prayers go unheard. Theologically, on what basis could she make such a claim? Intercommunal tensions arise in the "conversation" between the woman's comments and Patricia's explanation to her imagined ecumenical audience.

The language of this note is extremely emotional. We believe it reflects an important point about participant observation. In one's capacity as a participant observer, the researcher should be a sponge, should take in everything being said, and should try to understand it on its own terms. The response, "I almost can't bear it," does that, reflecting an internalization of what was said and a personal reaction that takes seriously the feelings expressed by the woman claiming that God did not hear the WOW. We might often be more comfortable with responses such as, "It is unbelievable," or "It is outrageous." These responses display a rejection of what was said—that is nonetheless emotional—rather than an internalization of it. In our understanding of good participant observation work, the researcher will internalize events at hand as is and only then address them analytically. In so doing, we argue, we should expect that as researchers, we will have emotional responses. We should address directly how those emotional responses affect our interests and our subsequent analyses.

Contrast Patricia's conversation with her imagined ecumenical audience with Steven's first comment to himself:

This was one of the saddest events I have experienced. It is one thing to read about and hear about the “cultural war” among Israel’s Jews. It is quite another to stand in the middle of it. The Haredi men and few Haredi women exuded genuine hate and a complete lack of recognition of the WOW as co-religionists. They regard them, apparently, as the ultimate sinners, a threat to their way of life and a perversion of Judaism. They demonstrate zero room for compromise.

Here, we see a turn from Patricia’s ecumenical stance to Steven’s relatively particularistic concern with the unity of the Jewish people. He seeks to capture and to understand the ways in which Israel’s competing religious groups regard each other. In thinking through issues after the event, Patricia focuses on a dynamics of group definition leading to complete exclusion of those not within the group’s boundaries:

A more condemning level is the obvious xenophobia in demonizing a group of mostly orthodox women who want to pray in a way that is meaningful to them at the Western Wall. To equate their apparently heartfelt prayers with the pharaoh’s treatment of the Jews in Egypt, the Christians’ treatment of Jews, with the foreign power of Amalek that God eventually asked the Israelites to destroy. . . . The reaction demonizes these women, who assert their right to pray together in public by raising some of the most important (Exodus) and tormenting (slavery, violent religious persecution) images in Jewish history. What the use of these particular images says about ultra-orthodox views of the non-ultra-orthodox and the non-Jewish worlds is extremely disturbing. Certainly, it indicates a very rigid sense of group (Douglas 1978). Religiously, that is one of the important requirements for “fundamentalism” (Marty and Appleby 1991). But whether the group is fundamentalist is not nearly as interesting or disturbing as watching this specific case—the demonization of these women, turning “unorthodox” Jews into an out-group to be hated. (Patricia’s field notes)

Steven, by contrast, raises issues that stem from his research questions and central concern with justification (see Mazie n.d.). He considers the main argument of the rabbi whose interview he caught on tape:

Was the rabbi correct that the women were self-serving and provocative rather than sincere in their religious beliefs? We might think so, given the extremely uncomfortable prayer environment each women participant surely knew she would find at the wall that morning. Incessant yelling, boos and insults is hardly the atmosphere most conducive to introspection and spiritual fulfillment. On the other hand, the women have a fairly clear and now legally recognized human and civil right to carry out prayers in their style at the wall. So even if we think of this act as a provocation on the part of the women, we might justify it as a step toward the justice and recognition that is due them. Injustice is rarely bested quietly or meekly. So it seems to have been a sincere provocation.

As a liberal Jew, Steven has a personal stake in the intrareligious battle. As a pluralist, the intolerance of the ultraorthodox strikes him as extreme and unjustified. As a close observer of Israeli politics, he has read many reports of Israel's internecine religious battles, and this is his first time witnessing the full force of those conflicts firsthand. In another personal note, Steven comments,

On the bright side, the number of Haredi demonstrators was small. Only several dozen yelled and shouted and sang and booed. Many more Haredi worshipers, both men and women, carried on their *shaharit* prayers at the Wall itself, seemingly ignoring the disturbances. The ratio of worshipers to demonstrators? Maybe ten to one. And only words were hurled, not rocks or eggs or feces. (Two Haredi men were apprehended by police, however, for wielding eggs that were intended to be tossed on the women.) (Steven's field notes)

This passage again demonstrates Steven's main concern with the narrower question of Jews' managing to get along with other Jews but sounds a note of optimism. He retreats from his earlier near-contempt for the Haredim by clarifying that not all ultraorthodox at the wall that morning were demonstrating against the WOW and that what they were doing could have been much worse. In fact, the vast majority of the Haredim were praying quietly as they do every morning of the week, maintaining their focus on their religious practice rather than joining in a bitter protest against other Jews' prayers. Steven seems to be caught between his liberal distrust of the Haredim and his respect for them as devout Jews. (And he relegates to parentheses the note about the two apprehended egg throwers.)

Patricia continues to think about issues of group boundaries, moved by an implicit question of how to explain what looks like xenophobia to a non-Jewish audience. Note a connection between her personal subject position and her fields of interest, which bring her to focus on boundaries (social, legal, cultural) between groups (see Woods n.d.). It is not only a matter of disinterested academic concern that moves this discussion. As Kurzman (1991) suggested, the academic interest is connected to the personal and emotional. In this case, Patricia's personal and emotional connection to specific events differed from those that most affected Steven:

The cries of [accusation that] the WOW [are] Christians, I think, works on several different levels. What I think is the first level, and the least condemning, is recalling the historical enemies of the Jews. Creating an analogy with biblical or other historical enemies of the Jews is a typical rhetorical method of warning of the true and dire nature events in the present. Certainly, Christians have been historical enemies of the Jews, making their lives much more difficult in Europe, at least through the Holocaust, than they almost ever were in the Mus-

lim worlds of North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. [On this issue, it is noteworthy that the WOW were accused of being Christians, rather than Muslims. This fact is particularly striking in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which many Israelis associate with a Muslim-Israeli conflict.] (Patricia's field notes)

Patricia expands on her first point and sharpens it, moving from a raw emotional reaction ("I almost can't bear it") to an analysis of what might be leading the ultraorthodox to say these things in the first place. She tries to understand the Haredim as a group, as did Steven in his second comment. But rather than divide the Haredi population into good guys (the devout who did not join in the demonstration) and bad guys (the demonstrators), she pays particular attention to a rhetorical pattern used as a method to bring the community together in the face of an external enemy. Patricia's considerations did not occur to Steven. He sees the comment as motivated by a general cry against assimilation and a subtextual accusation that the WOW are imported from the United States, where the dominant streams of Judaism (Reform and Conservative) came to resemble Protestant Christianity.

These examples highlight the ways in which our immediate, personal responses to the event varied. While social scientists have sometimes been reluctant to discuss issues of emotion in research, we believe that we are putting our heads in the sand not to address it as an issue that affects all kinds of field research. Certainly at an event as politically, ideologically, and spiritually charged as the WOW prayer session, any researcher must expect to experience some sort of emotional response (Kleinman and Copp 1993; Dewalt and Dewalt 1998). The significance for analysis, and for the "values and interests" (Kurzman 1991) of the scholar, must be addressed directly as an aspect of the methodological question of personal subjectivity. Collaboration in the field—and conversations thereafter—help make the emotional component of subjectivity more transparent and thus easier to address.

#### Disciplinary/Methodological Training

Although disciplinary training is often raised as a critical ingredient to productive research in political science, we found variations in our disciplines and methods of preparation to be the least salient issue in our participant observation at the WOW session. Steven's graduate training focused on public law and political theory and philosophy, with area training in Jewish studies and Israel studies. He picked up knowledge of research methods by himself, reading ethnographies and anthropological literature on fieldwork techniques. Patricia has trained in comparative politics, comparative law and society, and Middle East studies, with a helpful background in comparative

religion (including Jewish and Islamic studies). She took courses on qualitative fieldwork methods as part of her graduate preparation (in anthropology, geography, and women's studies).

The impact of disciplinary training may be found in some of our thoughts to ourselves: Steven's notes reflected his political theoretical concerns of how to understand the event in the context of Israel's self-conception as a Jewish and democratic state, while Patricia's notes reflected concerns with boundaries between groups. But as we argued in the last section, a researcher's academic interests are tied in with more subjective factors as well. As much as our fields define us as researchers, our subjective personalities play a significant role in the development of our academic interests in the first place (Haraway 1989, 1991; Kurzman 1991). When covering events like the WOW prayer session, it is better to bring that subjectivity into the open—and to attend to the challenges and opportunities it carries—rather than to attempt to shroud it in a researcher's cloak of objectivity. Our experience suggests that collaboration is an invaluable method of facilitating that process and enabling more self-aware, thoughtful, and—it is hoped—increasingly accurate or faithful scholarship.

## CONCLUSIONS

How might other researchers apply these insights and achieve better research through collaboration with colleagues? To point out just a few examples of potentially fruitful research collaborations, we think that social scientists studying interest groups, social movements, political parties, or religious organizations could come together to cover rallies, meetings, religious services, conferences—any intense, multifocal event. Although different from our work described here, collaboration in conducting in-depth interviews or focus groups may be worth exploring. Under certain circumstances, these settings could profit from both a second set of questions and a second (or third) pair of ears and eyes. The benefits of collaboration may begin to dwindle, however, as more researchers are added to a team. We think that two, or possibly three, researchers hold a major advantage over either a single researcher or a larger team in such a time-sensitive and trust-intensive task.

While fieldwork, and particularly participant observation work, typically engenders images of the lone researcher with his notebook, we have argued that collaboration in observation work is an important research tool. First and most obvious, two bodies are better than one when observing an intense, multifocal event such as the WOW's prayer session, allowing the researchers better access to the varied sights, sounds, and political geography of an event.

Second, our overlapping and complementary individual knowledge of Israeli politics, language, religion, and experience with border crossing in the Israeli context helped round out each other's weaker areas and made the process of cultural translation easier and richer for both of us. Third, the differences in our personal backgrounds and research concerns in arriving at the wall made our debriefing sessions after the event all the more eye opening. They helped us see other perspectives on the actions of the worshipers and protestors and gave us each a sharper view of our own perspective as well as how it affected our analysis. Finally, although not especially relevant in our case, different modes of disciplinary training may provide multiple avenues to evaluate and analyze events in the field.

Political studies using such qualitative fieldwork methods as ethnography, participant observation, and in-depth interviewing seek to answer different questions from those posed by early ethnographers. Unlike anthropologists who set out alone or with their spouses to remote corners of the globe (as romanticized for archaeology in popular movies such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark*), social scientists do not have the primary aim of providing "thick description" of a culture's practices or accounting for an exotic society's mode of functioning (Geertz 1973).

Political studies such as our own often investigate not consensus but rather conflict within one or across several societies (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). They tend to focus on centrifugal forces within or among societies: factors that lead to various forms of political conflict. Political scientists concentrate less on what holds societies together than on what differentiates and threatens to divide them. When studying divisions within or across societies, it is critical to appreciate exactly what matters to the individuals involved in these conflicts.

At intense, multifocal events—one major means by which heated political conflicts are expressed in modern communities—groups of individuals with otherwise distant ties come together to sing, yell, hold placards, chant, and not infrequently, throw things at one another. At these moments of intracommunal (as well as intercommunal) conflict, it is both extraordinarily difficult and important that a researcher record as much as possible, as faithfully as possible, of the diverse and conflicting histories expressed at the event. We believe that political scientists and others who engage in social research will benefit greatly from collaboration at these highly charged events. In addition to the availability of multiple physical locations and the possibility of complementary area and disciplinary training, collaboration facilitates greater attention to the uncomfortable but unavoidable issues of subjectivity, emotional response, and engagement. Our experience suggests that collaborative research projects provide significant untapped potential to

assist scholars in achieving analyses that are increasingly faithful to the multiple histories crying out their stories at these critical moments.

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