## *Whose side are you on?*

## Balancing Impartiality and Proximity in the Study of Civil Wars

Abstract:
When conducting research and fieldwork on civil war, it is not only challenging to remain impartial or get physically and emotionally close to conflict participants, but it is especially difficult to do *both*, given that more of one often requires—or leads to—less of the other. We present the theoretical and practical tensions between impartiality and proximity and introduce three ideal-type approaches that scholars utilize in response: avoiding proximity, shunning impartiality, or eschewing both. Each of these approaches to mitigate the tension between impartiality and proximity possesses different—and often complementary—strengths and weaknesses. Despite the challenges it brings, we use our own experiences studying civil wars in Latin America, the Middle East, and North Africa to demonstrate the plausibility and benefits of a fourth approach—proximate impartiality—which navigates this tension head on. We then spell out how proximate, impartial research can be successfully executed across different phases of the research process. We conclude by offering a blueprint for a methodologically pluralistic community to generate a more comprehensive understanding of political outcomes than any homogenizing approach could yield.

Keywords: research ethics, impartiality, partisanship, proximity, civil war, research design, pluralism

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Scholars conducting research and fieldwork on politics must grapple with whether it is possible and/or desirable to 1) practice impartiality—engaging all research subjects fairly and skeptically—and 2) pursue proximity—getting physically and personally close to those subjects. These are two foundational decisions that scholars of human subjects make, with significant implications not just for the design of their research, but also for the ethics of their engagement with target populations, the conclusions of their empirical analyses, and the reception of their research by participants, policymakers, and the general public.

The logistical and moral dilemmas surrounding proximity and impartiality are perhaps particularly acute in the study of civil war, which has been the most common and deadly form of state-based conflict since 1945.[1] Acquiring novel intuitions and developing theory that reflects dynamics on the ground often requires time in the field and interactions with conflict participants.[2] At the same time, gaining geographic and personal proximity to a conflict involving mass violence and human rights violations is difficult, dangerous, and potentially immoral.[3] Remaining impartial amidst a deadly conflict also may be difficult and dangerous, but enables a researcher to generate analysis that avoids partisan capture and may, in turn, be more trusted by the public.

Not only is it challenging to remain impartial or get close while studying civil war, but it is especially difficult to do *both*, given that more of one often requires—or leads to—less of the other. The longer one lives in a place and the more one develops intimacy with the protagonists there, the harder it becomes to remain impartial. The more partial one is to a particular side, the harder it is to remain physically and personally remote. We call this the Impartiality-Proximity Dilemma.

We present the theoretical and practical dimensions of this tension between impartiality and proximity, and introduce four ideal-type approaches to resolving this dilemma: the *Distant Impartial* who analyzes conflict data from afar without partisan affiliation; the *Proximate Partisan* who purposely aligns with the groups with whom they closely interact; the *Distant Partisan* who aligns with one side in solidarity from afar, and finally, the *Proximate Impartial*, who engages in a neutral but close fashion with human subjects in conflict zones. In our own research and fieldwork on civil wars in Latin America, the Middle East, and North Africa, we have pursued this latter approach.

In this article, we introduce the tensions and the triumphs that we and other scholars have experienced while conducting proximate, impartial fieldwork. We posit that the tensions that arise are inherent in combining impartiality and proximity in scholarship, teaching and public engagement on armed conflicts. We introduce how these tensions differ depending on the phase of the research process, and we spell out how they may be resolved in different ways over the life cycle of investigation and engagement, offering a playbook for impartial, proximate investigations.

Although we see proximate-impartial research as both possible and optimal, we acknowledge its challenges and drawbacks, as well as the potentially complementary strengths and weaknesses of alternative approaches concerning access, safety, and bias. Accordingly, in the article's conclusion, we advance the benefits of methodological pluralism, rather than a singular approach to research on civil wars. This offers the promise of a community of scholars who transparently choose their own separate paths and methods that individually suit their positionality and the

contexts they research, while collectively generating a more nuanced understanding of political outcomes than any homogenous effort could yield.

### *Four Approaches to Impartiality and Proximity in the Study of Civil War*

Scholars pursue varied approaches to navigating what we label the Impartiality-Proximity Dilemma. We describe each approach in theory and practice, noting their specific advantages and challenges by drawing on varied examples from diverse scholars' experiences.

In a civil war context, impartiality means not favoring or supporting any participant while remaining (equally) skeptical of all sides. An impartial research approach does not necessitate a neutral or median conclusion, as is sometimes suggested by its critics. One does not have to ultimately believe that all sides are equally correct or legitimate to be impartial; the key for impartiality is to fairly, skeptically, and dispassionately engage all relevant actors from a position of neutrality, to study the phenomena of interest without a partisan agenda. This usually involves triangulating and listening to all relevant perspectives, though we suggest the particular methodological implications below. Meanwhile, we conceive of distance from the conflict and its participants as just that—a lack of personal interaction and lived experience in the context – while proximity implies the opposite.

Figure 1 illustrates four combinations of pursuing or avoiding partiality and proximity. Existing discourse on "insider-outsider" positionality emphasizes immutable characteristics of scholars: their nationality, ethnicity, and gender, for example. We challenge and augment this approach and focus on researcher agency in choosing their positionality vis-à-vis their subjects. At the

same time, we acknowledge that immutable characteristics can certainly impact the degree of methodological choice that researchers possess in any given context. For instance, scholars from a specific national group may choose to affiliate with a local political organization or not, but their national identity may predispose them to be—or they may be assumed to be—more supportive of or opposed to an armed group whose ideology champions or targets their people.[4] Although the approaches we analyze are more nuanced than the oft-used "insider" and "outsider" labels, they similarly represent a context-dependent spectrum rather than universal, precise distinctions.[5] As such, these are ideal types that serve as jumping-off points for discussion.

We begin our discussion with two archetypes—the distant impartial and proximate partisan. We posit that the Impartiality-Proximity Dilemma helps channel researchers into these combinations that largely side-step the tension because impartiality and distance are mutually reinforcing, so too are partisanship and proximity. We then turn to the essence of the Dilemma, why a distant partisan approach is often an unsatisfactory solution, and advance a case for proximate impartiality. To do so, we defend its underlying principles and provide a recipe for its adoption at each step in the research and disemmination process.

**Figure 1. Four Approaches to Partiality and Proximity in Research**

| | | Partiality | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Proximity | | Impartial | Partisan |
| | Distant | **Distant Impartial** | **Distant Partisan** |
| | Proximate | **Proximate Impartial** | **Proximate Partisan** |

**The Distant Impartial**

A distant impartial approach conscientiously maintains physical, personal, emotional, and political distance between the researchers and the conflicts they are researching. Distant impartiality resembles the classic, positivist approach to social science that Sheila Carapico labels "the fly-on-the-wall model" involving a "neutral, dispassionate recorder of apolitical information whose intent is to leave no impression on the subject of the study."[6]

The lack of personal connection helps the researchers maintain neutrality and may enable them the space and time to develop a broader perspective across multiple cases. This distance may manifest in methodological terms; the scholar may rely on existing datasets, survey data, archives, and opt to forego field research, in-person interviews, or ethnography.[7] By the Belmont Report, it may present fewer challenges for complying with the core ethical principles for human

subjects research. Distance from violent conflict also tends to also keep the researcher safe and minimizes potential harms to local civilians from interactions with the researcher. In addition to generalizability, these logistical benefits are among the reasons that this approach is favored by those who build and analyze datasets on civil conflict from secondary sources. Many observers and some participants may also perceive an impartial researcher as a more reliable and legitimate narrator than one who is partial to one side, making that audience more receptive to the researcher's conclusions.

At the same time, a distant impartial approach presents potential drawbacks. In civil wars, the objective "truth" is highly contested, often by arms, and may become an unattainable goal, as Kars de Bruijne and Erwin van Veen explain: "Researching conflict is particularly complex once a significant level of violence has been reached. This is because the occurrence of violence accelerates a partisan and partial framing of the conflict on the basis of political interests."[8] Former Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) commander, Facundo Guardado, described this process of writing the history of the Salvadoran conflict to Sarah Daly, "In 1994, [it] was all about the rewriting of what each side had done during the war … it was a 'war' over the causes of the war . . . and who were the constructors of peace.…It was two big rewritings [of history]."[9] A similarly contested process of memory-making followed the U.S. Civil War. For example, in its immediate aftermath, a key component of the Republican strategy was "the waving of the bloody shirt to remind people of the Democratic allegiance to the Confederacy,"[10] while the Democratic campaign searched General Grant's bloodstained military record and announced him a "butcher."[11] Over 150 years later, narratives of the "War of Northern Aggression" continue to rival those of the "U.S. Civil War."[12] Writing a neutral version of high-

stakes violent history is enormously difficult and particularly so from a distance at which one must rely only on secondary or potentially one-sided sources.

Moreover, the physical distance from the conflict and its participants can hinder the ability of a researcher to gather in-depth information about developments and experiences on the ground. While this may be appropriate for certain steps in the research process, such as testing of a robust existing theory, establishing generalizability and scope conditions to an analytic framework, or inferring causality in the empirical world, other research endeavors such as theory building may be better served by mucking about and getting one's feet wet. A reliance on only outsider opinions and secondary sources in one's research also may lead to skepticism about the researcher's expertise and depth of knowledge.

**The Proximate Partisan**

Proximate partisan research is the polar opposite of remote impartial—it is physically close and partial in data collection, analysis, and dissemination. At the same time, it shares with the remote impartial a general side-stepping of the Impartiality-Proximity Dilemma. Indeed, it may not even perceive a dilemma at all; it desires both more proximity *and* more partiality.

This approach may involve conscientious alignment with one or more participants. Shannon Speed describes it as "the overt commitment to an engagement with our research subjects that is directed toward a shared political goal."[13] Charles Hale elaborates it as a "method through which we affirm a political alignment with an organized group of people in struggle and allow dialogue with them to shape each phase of the process, from conception of the research topic to data collection to verification and dissemination of the results."[14]

Proximate partisan approaches—often labeled “activist,” “collaborative,” or “participatory” research by their practitioners—have become ubiquitous in anthropology, sociology, and geography. They have increasing support in political science—although less so in the study of civil war, for reasons we address below. Andrea Dyrness explains that, in some respects, this research approach “strives to erase the distinction between ‘expert’ researcher and research subjects and democratize the process of knowledge production,” thus making the act of collaboration with participants an act of (political) change itself.[15] Some practitioners of the proximate partisan approach critique impartial approaches as those of extractive stenographers unaware of and unaccountable for their own biases and short sightedness.

Advocates of this partisan approach further laud it for its offer of deeper access and connection to like-minded participants, which can yield richer narratives and identification of important truths inaccessible to impartial researchers. For example, an impartial referee may be better positioned to adjudicate contested interactions than a player or fan, but that player or fan will see and understand more about the inner workings of their team and its behavior. As Kasper Hoffman explains: “Accepting a flexible approach where I partly allowed the research to be defined by my interlocutors, rather than subject them to rigorous scientific probing and testing to ‘extract’ the truth about them, proved to be productive. In fact, due to their pronounced initial mistrust I believe it was the only way to acquire an inside view of the group.”[16] What is more, solidarity with an armed force may afford much needed protection in a conflict where neutrals are eyed suspiciously by all.

Partisan approaches may also be deemed more ethical. In advocating for militant anthropology, Nancy Scheper-Hughes critiques “neutral, dispassionate, cool and rational, objective observer[s]

of the human condition," and argues instead for "political committed" research. This critique derived from her personal experiences with her subjects in which they turned against her in anger, asking: "Didn't I care about them personally … their lives, their suffering, their struggle?" She came to see "little virtue to false neutrality in the face of the broad political and moral dramas of life and death, good and evil, that were being played out in the everyday lives of the people [she researched]."[17]

Proximate partisan research, however, also faces its own challenges, especially when studying violent actors. Kathleen Blee struggled with applying this approach to the Ku Klux Klan, noting that "many feminist scholars have replaced the 'model of a distanced, controlled, and ostensibly neutral interviewer' with that of 'an engaged and sympathetic interaction between two individuals,'" in which the researcher "must 'return the research' to the subject as a means of empowering the informant and his or her community."[18] Blee instead recommends putting that advice in context and remaining wary of how even an interview can empower an individual and their cause. Indeed, Anastasia Shesterinina argues that empathetic partisanship "may not be possible, or even desirable, with people active in violence and war."[19]

Armed interviewees often use communications with researchers to propagate their narratives and convince the researchers of their movements' merits.[20] Partisanship and collaboration can inhibit one's analysis, as Sandra Smeltzer bravely admits from her own experience: "A director of a NGO, a volunteer at a critical media outlet or a coordinator of a human rights movement is unlikely to take kindly to being critiqued, especially by a foreign researcher. As such, without consciously realizing it, I think I have tempered my analysis of some of the activist work undertaken by the organizations that host our interns, wanting to maintain a positive relationship

and working environment for the students."[21] Hoffman echoes these concerns, "I did not fully realize at first that, in my eagerness to build a good rapport and in my desire to empathize, sympathize and understand them, I had to some extent abandoned my sense of criticism… My interviews with NGO workers, demobilised child soldiers, relatives of child soldiers, and other ordinary people, made it abundantly clear that there was a very sinister side to the group, which included the systematic abduction of children to serve as child soldiers, forced labour, torture, assassinations and authoritarian methods of rule in their zones of control. I found it hard to believe that my interlocutors had carried out such activities and I was reluctant to accept these claims to begin with."[22] Hale agrees that "Dual loyalties to an organized group in struggle and to rigorous academic analysis often are not fully compatible with one another. They stand in tension, and at times, the tension turns to outright contradiction."[23] Partisanship may cast a shadow over information gathering and analysis. Partisans may care more about the results than the process, and therefore cherry-pick evidence to prove their parsimonious account.

Beyond the research itself, gaining proximity to a conflict takes a psychological toll, exposes researchers and their collaborators to elevated risk, and produces moral quandaries. Janine Clark's 2006 survey of Middle East and North Africa scholars found that "only a very limited number of researchers choose to conduct research in conflict zones."[24] Data protection becomes an even bigger issue in an era of electronic communication and movements towards academic transparency: "Harm to research subjects may arise not only from the research process itself, but more broadly and more significantly from powerful actors—often parties to the conflicts under investigation—seeking to access, make use of, or influence/manipulate research findings or how research is received, understood and used or not."[25]

**The Impartiality-Proximity Dilemma**

Distant impartial and proximate partisan approaches face a number of challenges, but tensions between their degree of proximity and impartiality are not among them—indeed, in these approaches, these two dimensions are, for the most part, mutually reinforcing. In contrast, distant partisan and (especially) proximate impartial research face not only the challenges unique to impartiality or partisanship and proximity or distance noted above, but also the fact that their combination is usually paradoxical. This is especially so in the study of civil war.

In this area of research, choosing sides may be necessary to gain proximity. Proximity, in turn, may cost scholars their impartiality. Giving up one's neutrality in whole or in part may be the "price" of gaining greater access.[26] As Shannon Speed described from her research in Chiapas, "Suspicion abounded; an air of 'if you aren't with us, you're against us' prevailed. People living in tension-ridden environments that regularly broke into open conflict, as in Nicolas Ruiz, could not afford to have anyone present—particularly someone engaged in information gathering—who was not 'on their side.' I was only able to approach the community because of my work as an activist, in particular my affiliation with the Defenders' Network. By approaching them as an activist researcher, I was able to make explicit my solidarity, and we could establish what the extent and the limits of that solidarity would be."[27] These experiences resonated with the MENA scholars in Clark's survey. She found that "the most common ethical discomfort that researchers experienced was related to interviewees expecting or requesting services or favors—many of which were political in nature —in return for participating in the interview or for any friendship that had developed through the course of field work."[28]

Pressures to pick sides abound, as government, rebel, and noncombatant interviewees may "explicitly or implicitly try to pressure the researcher to side with their own group."[29] For those in the conflict region, it is often more personally dangerous to be impartial than to be partisan.[30] From their research with warlords in Afghanistan, Romain Malejacq and Dipali Mukhopadhyay argue that: "In highly charged environments, partisanship of some sort may become unavoidable; it might even be a security imperative."[31] In a context in which government and armed groups try to hollow out the neutral middle with a 'you are either with us or against us' mentality, solidarity is expected, and a lack of it can not only mark someone as a lethal threat, but also lead to a loss of access.[32] In Smeltzer's experience, even "a gentle critique of the effectiveness of some of the practices undertaken by domestic NGOs and CBOs" amidst a recognition of "the valuable contributions these organizations make to supporting local democratic efforts, especially given the challenges of operating within such a repressive environment," was enough to lead to no interviews on her next visit.[33]

Furthermore, "Assertions of scientific objectivity or neutrality can be perceived as being naive or as screening a hidden agenda. Foreigners claiming value neutrality, but studying political topics, are commonly considered to be CIA spies. In Brazil, as in much of Latin America, such suspicion is motivated by the brutality of politics. When losing bears the ultimate price, the pragmatic liberal optimism of North American social science, its messianic rationalism, is rejected by Brazilians on affective as well as theoretical grounds."[34]

Just as impartiality may hinder proximity, as one becomes more intimate with the place and/or participants in conflict, it is more challenging to remain impartial.[35] As Paul Kingston detailed during his research in Lebanon, he initially "worked hard to maintain a strict political neutrality

about the viewpoints being expressed." Over time, "it became clearer which associational networks I have greater affinity for (those pushing for progressive reform from outside of the workings of power)."[36] There is nothing like talking to participants and experiencing a place up close over time to provide the deep knowledge needed to understand it, produce original intuitions, and teach insightful courses. The difficulty is that the very experiences that provide this knowledge are the ones that make it the hardest to remain impartial. There is evidence for the dilemma in other fields: proximate journalist coverage of civil conflict is more partisan and less neutral than media stories completed from afar.[37]

Finally, remaining impartial becomes arguably more normatively untenable the closer one gets to violence and atrocity. When you are surrounded by such violence and injustice, how can you not sympathize, speak out, or even advocate for a certain side?[38] You know more about the conflict than most outsiders, and you presumably chose to study conflict in general—and perhaps that one in particular—because you are passionate about resolving it.

**The Distant Partisan**

The distant partisan approach is more of an interesting anomaly to the inherent tensions we describe. As such, it is a rarer combination that merits only a brief discussion. It is harder to build sympathies and establish deep ties from afar, and even harder to establish true collaboration and participatory research. Nonetheless, the combination is achievable, although many might consider it to be less desirable—including its practitioners—since those who support certain participants would likely wish to closely engage with them, learn from them, and/or help to further their cause.

**The Proximate Impartial**

We believe that impartiality and proximity are both desirable, and that the combination of them is possible, and indeed optimal, under certain conditions. Critiques abound of impartiality in research with human subjects. Indeed, Karen Lumsden speaks for many when she argues that "value neutrality is an impossible goal, particularly in research of a political nature. Social researchers will inevitably 'take sides' whether or not they are willing to admit so."[39] Proximate impartiality requires a reflexive understanding of a disaggregated research process with far more nuance than a 2x2 suggests. In the next section, we explain how this approach can be carried out in theory and practice.

## *How to Navigate the Dilemma: The Philosophy of Impartial Proximity*

Alison Liebling suggests that the Impartiality-Proximity Dilemma is a function of "the central problem in social research: managing the tension between objectivity and participation (the old theological question of how to be *in* but not *of* the world.)" According to some, 'only God manages it!'"[40] We agree with Liebling that this is a core challenge for research. We argue that many scholars have managed it, though with much forethought and often imperfectly nonetheless. In this section, we present the philosophy behind proximate impartiality before discussing how it can, in theory, and has, in practice, been carried out, warts and all.

There are six core philosophical principles of impartial proximity.

First, it is possible and necessary to separate what *is* from what *ought to be* and to seek theory neutrality. As David Hume argues, "'is' and 'ought' questions are different things. The 'is' answers we get from (social) science don't necessarily tell us what we 'ought' to do, and just as importantly, the 'ought' beliefs from our moral and political philosophy don't tell us how the world 'is'." Liebling builds on this to distinguish between "*theory*-neutrality (our vision of 'what is', and something which is impossible to achieve) and *value*-neutrality (our vision of 'what ought to be', which it may be possible to suspend to a degree at least during the research fieldwork process)."[41] This means that having preferences for what ought to be in civil war—a peaceful negotiated outcome, or even a particular side winning—is not the same as analyzing reality. Value impartiality may make theory impartiality easier to achieve, but it is not necessary. What is more, many aspirational goals—including partisan ones—are more likely to be achieved through clear-eyed understanding of the realities on the ground.[42]

Second, impartiality does not mean a lack of morality and ethics. Instead, impartiality values the pursuit of knowledge and believes a neutral process will yield a more accurate and legitimate result—which may, in turn, lead to a more moral outcome. Doctors don't treat family members, fans don't serve as referees in their teams' games, and organizations hire consultants for a reason—it is difficult to fairly evaluate and effectively operate when you have a strong rooting interest in the outcome. Proximate impartials agree with the critique that "it is in fact unethical to look in on circumstances of pain and poverty and yet do nothing."[43] Far from doing nothing, they aim to discover the truth—about why the conflict happened, or what might end it and prevent its recurrence. The public's trust in their research approach may even strengthen their impact. Impartiality does not mean inaction: Just as neutral civilians in a civil war may form a

community watch to defend their homes and families, proximate impartials have to mix among the warring sides while protecting their perspective and analysis from coming under any side's control. Both may well support the foundational moral values of peace and nonviolence, while working amidst violent partisans to achieve it.

Third, it is important to connect and develop empathy with—while maintaining skepticism of—people from all relevant sides. In this way, proximate impartiality is in sync with participatory research and "relational ethics," which "recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work."[44] As Anastasia Shesterinina explains from her research on the Georgian–Abkhaz war, her selective empathy "shaped what questions I was able to ask, what respondents told me, and how I interpreted the results. Had I not empathized with wartime participants, I would likely have missed their complexity of roles, as illustrated by my interviews with participants in current violence whom I feared."[45] One can demonstrate true empathy without having to 'fake friendship' or actively support or participate in the struggle.[46] This is not a qualitative/quantitative divide either. In order to create and code reliable datasets on the presence of violent incidents involving Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank, Peter Krause had to live in the region and talk to people on the ground to capture events and motivations that were otherwise not reported.[47] The challenge is to be able to put yourself in their shoes without making them your own.

How? As Mattias Wahlström explains, engaging with participants on all relevant sides for your research question can help counterbalance biases and empathies: "Objectifying your own

perspective is not easy, and I leave it up to the reader to judge the extent to which I may have retained or lost my critical distance in my analyses. I would argue that it is actually one of the main advantages of studying two opposing groups, that confrontation with contradictory perspectives on the same events can be used by the researcher as a corrective for becoming caught in either life-world."[48] Empathetic skepticism is key, as Hoffman notes, "Thus while sympathy and empathy towards their interlocutors is important for researchers, a consistently critical approach is equally necessary in order to go beyond simple self-glorifying narratives and their familiar dichotomies between 'victims' and 'perpetrators', 'good guys' and 'bad guys' and 'good' and 'evil'."[49]

<u>Fourth, it is critical to reject the binary that violent actors attempt to impose.</u> As scholars of civil war know, there are generally far more than two sides, and the majority of individuals in a conflict region often remain unaffiliated while holding diverse perspectives and positions. History is always contested, even more so when blood is shed and the actors involved seek to make their version of history the official one through violence. For those admirably wanting to speak truth to power, it is important to note that power in civil war is held first by the state and second by the rebels who aim to replace it. Civilian "witnesses" to the struggle are often the least empowered and most in need of "human truth that can stand up to any victor's narratives." Sarah Daly explains how war outcomes can further place a wedge between objective violence (the facts of the atrocity) and subjective violence (how the atrocity is perceived and to whom it is attributed).[50] Additionally, civilians are not necessarily neutral bystanders to conflict dynamics or sympathizers, but can be active supporters, providing armed movements a range of assets including information, sanctuary, and manpower.[51] Nonetheless, because multiple "sides" are

fighting for political control, that does not mean that any has a monopoly on truth. It is key to give voice to the myriad actors, balance the propaganda playing field, and ensure that all protagonists are heard.

Fifth, impartiality in method does not mean impartiality in results. Both practitioners and critics sometimes associate moderate or median results with neutral methods. Predetermined both-sidesism in conclusions is just as problematic as predetermined one-sided partisan results. As Sascha Helbardt, Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, and Rüdiger Korff argue, "this politically correct position comes very near to moral and ethical cowardice, a reluctance to weigh the evidence, to evaluate, to analyse and finally even to judge, the prime tasks of the researcher."[52] Proximate impartials must judge based on the evidence, and the evidence rarely points to the exact middle. All results should be reported.

Furthermore, even if they minimize their affiliation with participants, researchers must recognize that they are part of the "information economy," and that "their work may threaten individuals who aim to control and manipulate information."[53] One can anticipate political perceptions and effects while nonetheless minimizing one's impact on the research process and one's interlocutors, conscientiously working towards beneficence while maintaining impartiality.

Sixth, a conscientious, nuanced research design is the foundation for an effective proximate impartial approach. When he asked "Whose Side Are We On?" in his presidential address to the Society for the Study of Social Problems in 1967, Howard Becker suggested that

> Our problem is to make sure that, whatever point of view we take, our research meets the standards of good scientific work, that our unavoidable sympathies do not render our results invalid. We might distort our findings, because of our sympathy with one of the parties in the relationship we are studying, by misusing the tools and techniques of our discipline. We might introduce loaded questions into a questionnaire, or act in some way in a field situation such that people would be constrained to tell us only the kind of thing we are already in sympathy with. All of our research techniques are hedged about with precautionary measures designed to guard against these errors.[54]

Bias exists in every researcher and every context in which they operate. It is the research process that can counteract and minimize it, enabling researchers to pursue impartiality even as they increase their proximity to a conflict and its participants. The next section specifies how.

## What Does A Proximate Impartial Research Process Look Like?

There is no single proximate impartial research approach, especially given the tensions between its two core facets. Although one's approach may resemble proximate impartiality more than any of the other three choices, a researcher is likely to prioritize neutrality or proximity in certain parts of the process. For many, this means a lean towards proximity for generation of the central research question and dissemination of results, a lean towards impartiality for the analysis of the evidence and generating of conclusions, and a healthy balance of both for the generation of theory, construction of competing hypotheses, and engagement with participants. We will discuss each aspect of the research process in turn, demonstrating how a reflexively multi-faceted design can minimize the Dilemma to yield a proximate, impartial approach.

### Generating the Central Research Question

Deciding the central research question is the most important choice that scholars make. Critics of impartiality are correct to point out that politics does not begin when one 'enters the field.'[55] The questions that researchers ask are driven by disciplinary norms, funding agencies, government priorities, university IRBs, community participants, and researchers' own interests, identities, and politics. The source of inspiration for a question should be acknowledged, but need not be limited. As Nina Strohminger and Olúfémi Táíwò argue, "Moving forward, we can use the scientific process itself to help identify which questions are worth asking—and which financial, social, and political arrangements will allow us to ask them."[56] Proximate impartial research prioritizes the value of proximity in generating high quality, impactful questions that reflect realities and key concerns on the ground. Proximate field research, for example, pushed Nadya Hajj and Daniel Posner to entirely change and hone their questions about private property in Palestinian refugee camps and ethnic politics in Zambia respectively.[57] Similarly, Sarah Daly's dissertation and first book was born in the field. She went on a short trip to Colombia to understand the onset of insurgency 40 years earlier and left instead struck by a puzzle of seemingly anarchic variation in the postwar trajectories of demobilizing militia organizations.[58]

While proximity is key for question generation, impartiality is key for the precise wording of the question and the researcher's openness to its answers. Whatever the question's sources of inspiration, a proximate impartial approach usually seeks to understand the causes, effects, or dynamics of a given phenomenon. Normative questions often have empirical ones embedded in them that can and should be asked, but purely normative questions pose significant challenges for a proximate impartial approach.

The researcher must then be open to all possible answers to that empirical question. Neutrality about the possibility of any answer does not require neutrality about the hoped-for result—cancer research is carried out by those hoping to find a cure, just as much conflict research is carried out by those hoping to identify factors that prevent or resolve war. But if a researcher is entirely uncomfortable with certain answers to a question and would be unable to accept or present those results (or if the answer could have unacceptable consequences; for example, providing a recipe for terrorism), then the researcher likely should refrain from asking that question. Not all questions should be asked, and some researchers are more comfortable asking certain questions than others.

At times, proximity and impartiality will be in direct tension regarding question generation: "For outsider researchers examining sensitive topics in authoritarian contexts, the constant threat of losing access to the field may lead some researchers to limit the scope of their inquiry or to shy away from asking certain types of questions."[59] In any case, researchers aiming to do participatory work or aid a favored cause *can* do proximate impartial research. The key is to set up a question such that the resulting, accurate portrayal of reality will help those the researcher cares about, rather than advancing predetermined answers. "Choosing a standpoint *from which to start empirical exploration* should be seen as something different from *taking sides in terms of sympathies and partisanship*," provided you follow key safeguards in other parts of the research process.[60]

**Selecting Competing Hypotheses for Analysis**

A proximate impartial approach to selecting competing arguments for analysis is similar to that for generating a central research question: All sources of inspiration for hypotheses should be deemed acceptable, and encouraged. The key is to set up a multi-sided debate and ensure that one does not simply analyze and accept arguments from one side or set up false horse races with strawman competing explanations. Researchers need to set up each argument so that it is possible it could be proven wrong. "Achieving a position that is sensitive to and takes account of the standpoints of more than one group is a question of research style and method, as well as a question of honesty, responsibility and reflection. Whatever side we are on, Becker argues, we must use our techniques in such a way that 'a belief to which we are especially sympathetic could be proved untrue.'"[61] A Rawlsian veil of ignorance about the explanatory power of each argument at the outset is necessary for proximate impartial research.

Participants may not support this requirement, and therefore collaboration with them may not be possible during this phase of research. Peter Krause had a plan to test the impact of knowledge about terrorism on the public's assessment of the size of the threat. Unlike other studies that analyzed this in classroom settings, the idea was to survey people before and after they visited an interactive museum on terrorism and political violence.[62] After multiple discussions that advanced the project deep into the planning stages, the museum's lawyers became involved and wanted to know whether he would consider and publish results regardless of whether he found that patrons were more *or* less fearful of terrorism after their visit. The fact that he confirmed that he would aim to publish the results, regardless, meant that it was the last conversation he had with the organization, ending the partnership. Proximate impartial research necessitates the

consideration of all key arguments regardless of the political interests of the researcher or the participants.

### Who to Engage With (and How) While Gathering Evidence?

The Impartiality-Proximity Dilemma is most apparent when the researcher starts engaging in the evidence-gathering phase. Because a great deal of information in civil wars remains classified, protected, sensitive, and consequential, proximity oftentimes becomes necessary for research. Physical and personal intimacy with the people and places that one is studying tends to generate deep understanding and rich analysis. If proximity is chosen, data collection may involve field research, interviews and participant observation. Four key tenets can ensure that one can both personally engage while pursuing impartiality.

First, the researcher should seek to engage with a diverse a group of actors from all relevant sides of the conflict, if possible—government and rebel, combatant and noncombatant, victim, and non-victim, depending on the research question. Such triangulation makes it more likely the researchers will discover the conflict's causes, dynamics, and effects than if they listen only to one side's narrative. To describe this historiographical undertaking in the Colombian civil war, in an interview with Sarah Daly, chief government peace negotiator Humberto de la Calle invoked the Indian parable *The Blind Men and the Elephant,* in which several blind men attempt to learn what an elephant is. Each touching a different part of the animal, they conclude very different versions of the truth. Such are conflict participants' divergent renderings of violence.[63] As no one's experience represents the whole story—and individuals may have mistaken

judgments and memories—a researcher can better piece it together by talking to multiple actors, when the situation allows.[64]

As Liebling notes with her prison research, there is a personal price to pay for this broad engagement, but it is worth it. "In my experience it *is* possible to take more than one side seriously, to find merit in more than one perspective, and to do this without causing outrage on the side of officials or prisoners, but this is a precarious business with a high emotional price to pay."[65] In conflict research, this asks the researcher to hear the government's perspective even if studying rebel behavior, to interview non-belligerent parties even if focused on belligerent ones, to listen to victims' attitudes even if investigating perpetrators.

Second, it is important during the data collection phase to approach each individual with some degree of situational or selective empathy. Shesterinina relays from her own work, "Empathy can thus invite respondents to confide in the researcher what they would not otherwise have revealed."[66] Indeed, many scholars "consider closeness and 'temporary bias' to be necessary for a proper understanding of the people being researched, while insisting that such closeness is beneficial only in one phase of the research process. My own research has led me to agree with these scholars' positions."[67] Selective or situational empathy utilized during an interview but not in its subsequent analysis[68] is therefore possible, and is not the same as sympathy: "[e]mpathy does not mean to identify with the other or to become absorbed in the same feeling. It is to understand the other's perspective – even if we do not agree with [ ... or] are repelled by what is being said.'"[69] Daly describes this approach and its challenges: "Fieldwork, at times, may present an ethical and personal challenge: being a chameleon. I interviewed people who had done bad things and people with whom I strongly disagreed. I found that I had to maintain a chameleon

personality and show empathy for all viewpoints. I had to somehow show empathy not only for the victim who had lost his or her entire family in a brutal massacre but also for the commander who had orchestrated the massacre. I had to listen with an open mind to people from the whole range of the political spectrum … To gain an unvarnished story and to remain safe required that I withhold judgment. However, being a chameleon can be trying on a personal and ethical level."[70]

This leads to the third tenet, which is to engage and empathize without adopting any one participant's perspective during data collection. This is not to suggest that researchers may not hold their own personal positionality, sympathies, politics, values, identities, and perspectives. As Ellefsen relates, "One should acknowledge that making one's standpoint(s) explicit does not mean bias or partisanship in favor of one group over another. Even though I began my research by studying activists, this does not mean that I adopted their worldview or sought to use my position as a researcher to promote their perspectives and ideologies. Rather, the aim was to understand their perspectives and opportunities and constraints for effective protest."[71] The proximate impartial researcher thus operates in the "space between," as Sonya Dwyer and Jennifer Buckle explain: "Perhaps, as researchers we can only ever occupy the space between. We may be closer to the insider position or closer to the outsider position, but because our perspective is shaped by our position as a researcher (which includes having read much literature on the research topic), we cannot fully occupy one or the other of those positions."[72] A flexible approach that includes a number of shorter stays can help maintain this perspective, as Jana Krause argues.[73] Liebling both poses and answers the question at the core of this doctrine: "Whose side are we on? The side of prudent, perhaps reserved, engagement."[74]

Finally, although partisanship may yield high quality connections and information, that is not always the case, especially in non-democracies. Participants may feel more comfortable talking to researchers who do not really have 'skin in the game' and therefore lack the potential to become players themselves. "Outsider roles may be preferable to insider roles for identifying the unspoken rules, assumptions, and taken-for-granted aspects of everyday politics in nondemocracies. Moreover, outsider roles clarify the relationship between researcher and respondent in ways that provide clear ethical advantages in terms of consent, value, and risk."[75] Furthermore, while partisanship may close off access to one side, impartiality can enable access to both. For Krause's dissertation and first book, he was able to interview numerous Zionist and Palestinian rebels, which created a more comprehensive understanding of their often-retributive individual and collective actions.[76] The fact that Krause was non-partisan—along with being non-Jewish, non-Muslim, and non-Arab—meant that doors were not flung open, but neither were they closed. Developing empathy, learning to speak and understand their language, and building trust through multiple interactions in which he was not always the one leading the discussion helped build relationships across the divide and led to research that reflected multiple perspectives.[77]

**Conducting Analysis and Drawing Conclusions**

Conducting analysis and drawing conclusions from the evidence is the core area in which proximate impartials prioritize strong neutrality over proximity, and certainly over partisanship. Allowing politics to influence one's question and be influenced by one's disseminated findings is one thing, but impartiality in undertaking the analyses and deriving results is non-negotiable. Erica Townsend-Bell notes the challenges of doing so, especially depending on one's identity or

collaborations throughout the process: “I expected that it might be difficult to be critical of “my people… My sense of racial solidarity led me to want to portray black women's groups in the best possible light; assumed expectations of racial solidarity on the part of black groups made me nervous about the consequences of my criticism for future work with said groups.” But “I continue to worry about striking a balance between ethics and solidarity, even as I decided that it was unethical and, more importantly, a disservice to all of the groups and individuals with whom I work—especially the black groups—to be anything less than honest in my reports.”[78]

Collaboration is still theoretically possible in this phase with those who share your values towards impartiality in analysis and prioritize them above partisanship, but such actors can be especially hard to find in polarized and dangerous civil war contexts.[79] Violent partisans in these existential contexts, not surprisingly, usually care more about particular results than adherence to an unbiased process of analysis. Alessandro Orsini had to grapple with this exact issue when a fascist Italian militia in which he embedded threatened him and demanded final say on his book manuscript, despite there never having been such an arrangement.[80]

Maintaining some distance between researcher and the research context can help sharpen the analysis phase, as Alvin Gouldner argues, “Objectivity is indeed threatened when the actors’ standpoints and the sociologists’ fuse indistinguishably into one. The adoption of an ‘outside’ standpoint, far from leading us to ignore the participants’ standpoint, is probably the only way in which we can even recognize and identify the participants’ standpoint. It is only when we have a standpoint somewhat different from the participants’ that it becomes possible to do justice to their standpoints.”[81]

Of course, researchers will continue to have their own biases, not simply towards political outcomes, but also towards certain (significant) research results. That's why proximate impartial research benefits from pluralist peer review long after the investigation is "done;" reviewers can further challenge and check the accuracy of the analysis and its conclusions. The goal of the final products —and the peer review process—is not an "impartial" outcome, however. Impartiality in analysis is not the same as centrism, a median position, or complacency in conclusion.

It is that impartial process, however, which can impact the perception and power of researchers' findings and their effective dissemination, as Christopher Kovats-Bernat contends: "If ethnographic data are used to effect social change, that is one thing. But if ethnography itself is nothing more than a methodology for political advocacy, then why should we trust the data it puts forth any more than we trust the heavily biased data produced by partisan policy research institutes (like those affiliated with the tobacco industry) that seek to advance platforms instead of build knowledge?"[82]

**The Dissemination of Research Findings**

Proximate impartial researchers should disseminate and attempt to publish their research in accessible forms for participants, academics, and the general public. Even Becker, who argued that politicization is inevitable and that "we can never avoid taking sides,"[83] admitted that suppressing findings that do not align with our values is not advisable.[84] Researchers may well experience "interviewees feeling betrayed, offended, and angry with research results," just as

14% of MENA scholars in Clark's survey did.[85] Whether researchers aim to make political points with their publications or not, they should assume that others will—governments, rebels, international organizations, civilians, or fellow academics.

In a study of Colombian former paramilitaries and individually-demobilized rebels, Sarah Daly, Laura Paler, and Cyrus Samii found that dense ties to former commanders and ex-combatant peers were strongly associated with criminal behavior in general and violent crime in particular.[86] The international community's recipe for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration involves dispersing armed groups and sending them home. Daly, Paler and Samii's findings therefore played into the international community's desired policy, which sought to use the study as justification for that policy. The findings further played into the Colombian Government's desire to break up and dissolve the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and reduce their prospects for obtaining political power. However, this was only one of the study's conclusions. It also found that trying to dismantle the rebel connections could risk remilitarization. Furthermore, re-socializing commanders into legal norms of society and bringing commanders into legitimate political and social leadership positions would enable them to pull their followers along with them into licit civilian lives. This finding played into the hands of FARC negotiators who aimed to keep their organizations intact.

That the same study could be read so differently by different sides that cherry-picked the pieces of evidence that aligned with their agendas indicates how, even if researchers do not choose sides, their scholarship can be pulled apart and spun without its full conclusions and nuances to advance the positions of different sides. This can defy scholars' attempts at neutrality in impact.

At the same time, for research to have policy value, at times, it is most useful if it supports a side—and doing so does not negate the impartiality of the process that generated the results. Indeed, researchers may write up op-eds and policy memos that use proximate impartial investigations to advance partisan ends.

Research on armed conflict is political in that it is caused by political concerns, is impacted by political realities, and is used to make political changes. But that realization need not mean that all parts of it must be fully politicized, or that they should be. There is a difference between partisan analysis being driven by politics and impartial analysis being used by partisans for their own ends. Individuals make shoddy arguments and craft conspiracy theories regardless of what scientific research produces. Introducing evidence derived from proximate impartial processes can help elevate the debate, provide good faith actors with more than anecdotes to hold the corrupt to account, and ensure that the discourse is not (fully) captive to warring partisans.[87]

## *How Methodological Pluralism Benefits Us All and Must Be Fought For*

We have advanced a strong case for proximate impartial research on civil war, and it is the approach that intentionally has defined our own research. Yet, we also acknowledge its drawbacks and recognize the strengths of alternative approaches. As such, we believe that ultimately there is great value in pluralism concerning approaches to the Impartiality-Proximity Dilemma. The nature of the tradeoff in conflict research means that there is likely no single perfect approach. Each of the four approaches discussed in this article—Proximate Impartial,

Distant Impartial, Proximate Partisan, and Distant Partisan—yields unique and valuable perspectives that the other approaches miss, giving something up to get something else. This does not mean that each researcher must engage in all or even more than one approach, but rather, it suggests the benefits of cultivating diversity of approach across our field.

Our scholarly community, the societies we study, and the general public all need broad and impartial scholarship, deep and intimate scholarship, informed activism, and everything in between. Even though each of us can and should select where we fall on the spectrum, it is not desirable for everyone to make the same choice. Instead, we can and should rely on each other for information and insights we cannot acquire by ourselves, as Polanyi details, "In an ideal free society each person would have perfect access to the truth: to the truth in science, in art, religion, and justice, both in public and private life. But this is not practicable; each person can know directly very little of truth and must trust others for the rest."[88] And as Merton observes, "When a transition from social conflict to intellectual controversy is achieved, when the perspectives of each group are taken seriously enough to be carefully examined rather than rejected out of hand, there can develop trade-offs between the distinctive strengths and weaknesses of Insider and Outsider perspectives that enlarge the chances for a sound and relevant understanding of social life."[89]

There is great uncertainty in what methods will be best, what our findings will be, how the world will change in the future, and what policies will work, so putting all of our eggs in one basket is likely an inferior option for our discipline. There may be disciplinary rewards for identifying and joining one's epistemological and methodological tribe, extolling its virtues while critiquing the

others, but we need to think collectively. We need a diverse, flexible field to understand the world holistically and be able to maintain connections to all of its actors.[90]

We gain the greatest understanding of issues when we are exposed to multiple perspectives and approaches. Wearing multiple hats while conducting fieldwork can enable different access points, different types of proximity, and different types of perceived impartiality or partisanship.

It is also important to note that multiplicity of approaches extends to multiplicity of methods—though the framework we have laid out does not map seamlessly onto methods. The use of multiple methods can prove advantageous to research and enable scholars to navigate the trade-offs that we have laid out. For example, a survey of ex-combatants used by Sarah Daly asked respondents their reason for joining an armed group. In a telling example, a respondent said "lack of employment." In a follow-up, open-ended conversation about the recruitment decision with the researcher, the same former rebel recounted how his family had been killed by the paramilitaries. A desire for revenge had also informed his decision. Different methods, with varied proximity and perceptions of researcher empathy, yielded highly different accounts; triangulating them is often the best approach.

In a survey of victims in Argentina and Colombia, transitional justice preferences elicited with a hypothetical conjoint experimental set up diverged considerably from those gained through an experiment that shared actual trial footage, which reflected the messy details on the ground.[91] In Daly, Paler, and Samii 2014's study of ex-combatant criminality, which used network scale-up, list experiments, hypothetical vignettes, and self-administered survey modules, the rate of ex-

combatant criminality ranged from 9% to 24% with the self-administered survey performing best at eliciting honest answers. If you pull away one or more of those approaches, you become less certain due to lack of triangulation and replication. If multiple methods and perspectives come to overlapping conclusions but also show difference and nuance, that is likely the most accurate picture of reality when moving from methods to broader approaches.[92]

The field of civil war studies is strengthened by the use of the myriad approaches in Figure 1. The positivist-interpretivist, distant-collaborative, impartial-activist debates endure, but they are often presented (if not practiced) as binary. These debates have been "won" pretty handily in some fields (at least at the moment), with economics and cultural anthropology on opposite ends of the spectrum. Political science remains more of a mixed, big tent, but it will not remain pluralist by default. As we know from studying the aftermath of actual civil wars, pluralism is not simply the unintended byproduct of warring factions. Pluralism also requires advocates and institutional support and incentives to be achieved. Scholars need to work collectively to avoid the hegemonic domination of a single approach to studying the topics at the core of our field, even if they favor that approach in their own research, as do we.

To be clear, a call for pluralism is not a call for an end to criticism. A strong scientific community boasts a healthy dose of both. Challenging other researchers on the merits of their arguments and the quality of their evidence should remain par for the course, but we should not reject those with a different approach to impartiality-partisanship and proximity-distance out of hand. Instead, we should recognize the complementary strengths they offer, either indirectly via fresh perspectives and knowledge especially for our teaching, which is always broader than our

research—or directly via co-authorship, joint conferences, or other forms of coordination. In this way, we can also help ensure authenticity for researchers, who will generate their best work when they are neither restrained from, nor forced to "pick a side."

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[1] Nils Petter Gleditsch, Erik Melander, and Henrik Urdal, "Introduction – Patterns of Armed Conflict Since 1945."

[2] Driscoll, *Doing Global Fieldwork*.

[3] Krause and Szekely, *Stories from the Field*.

[4] Laia Balcells provides just such an example when she advises scholars about researching civil wars "close to home," as she did. "Try to stay neutral even if you have political opinions about the case, and even if you have personal connections to one of the sides in a conflict, to victims of a conflict, or to key political actors. Exercise being an objective observer and self-correct when you feel you are not being analytical enough." Balcells, "Researching an Old Civil War Close to Home."

[5] Marie Smyth, "Insider-Outsider Issues in Researching Violent and Divided Societies"; Eunji Kim et al., "Navigating 'Insider' and 'Outsider' Status as Researchers Conducting Field Experiments."

[6] Carapico, "No Easy Answers," 429.

[7] An increasing number of scholars opted for these approaches amidst COVID-19. Peter Krause et al., "COVID-19 and Fieldwork: Challenges and Solutions."

[8] de Bruijne and van Veen, "Pride and Prejudice," 10.

[9] Author interview with Facundo Guardado, San Salvador, El Salvador, July 2018. See Sarah Zukerman Daly, *Violent Victors: Why Bloodstained Parties Win Postwar Elections*.

[10] Pro-Ulysses Grant newspaper slogans against their electoral rivals further questioned their commitment to peace: "Scratch a Democrat and you will find a Rebel under his skin." Adam Silver, "Presidential Election of 1868," 127.

[11] Hesseltine, William Best, *Ulysses S. Grant, Politician*, 21, 27-8.

[12] Roy Licklider, “Alternate Models of Narratives in Preventing Renewed Civil Wars: The U.S. and Nigerian Cases.”
[13] Speed, “At the Crossroads of Human Rights and Anthropology,” 71.
[14] Hale, “Activist Research v. Cultural Critique,” 97.
[15] Andrea Dyrness, “Research for Change versus Research as Change: Lessons from a Mujerista Participatory Research Team,” 26.
[16] Hoffmann, “Caught between Apprehension and Comprehension,” 10.
[17] Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology,” 410.
[18] Blee, “Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics.”
[19] Shesterinina, “Ethics, Empathy, and Fear in Research on Violent Conflict,” 194.
[20] Reyko Huang and R. Joseph Huddleston, “Are We Marketing Rebellion?”
[21] Smeltzer, “Asking Tough Questions,” 266.
[22] Hoffmann, “Caught between Apprehension and Comprehension,” 12.
[23] Hale, “Activist Research v. Cultural Critique,” 105.
[24] Clark, “Field Research Methods in the Middle East,” 418.
[25] Mills, Massoumi, and Miller, “The Ethics of Researching ‘Terrorism’ and Political Violence,” 2.
[26] Erik Bähre, “Ethnography’s Blind Spot: Intimacy, Violence, and Fieldwork Relations in South Africa.”
[27] Speed, “At the Crossroads of Human Rights and Anthropology,” 71.
[28] Clark, “Field Research Methods in the Middle East,” 420.
[29] Clark, “Fieldwork and Its Ethical Challenges,” 828.
[30] Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*.
[31] Malejacq and Mukhopadhyay, “The ‘Tribal Politics’ of Field Research,” 1015.
[32] Siddiqui and Turnbull, “Elites and Arbitrary Power.”
[33] Smeltzer, “Asking Tough Questions,” 266.
[34] Peritore, “Reflections on Dangerous Fieldwork,” 360.
[35] Drake, “Grasping at Methodological Understanding.”
[36] Kingston, “Playing with Positionality?: Reflections on ‘Outsider’/‘Insider’ Status in the Context of Fieldwork in Lebanon’s Deeply Divided Polity,” 246–48.
[37] Lacasse and Forster, “The War Next Door.”
[38] Wood, “The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones.”
[39] Lumsden, “‘You Are What You Research.’”
[40] Liebling, “Whose Side Are We On?,” 475.
[41] Liebling, 473–74.
[42] Ellefsen, “Taking Sides?,” 241.
[43] Cahill, Sultana, and Pain, “Participatory Ethics,” 308.
[44] Carolyn Ellis, “Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives,” 4.
[45] Shesterinina, “Ethics, Empathy, and Fear in Research on Violent Conflict,” 200.
[46] Miller et al., “‘Doing Rapport’ and the Ethics of ‘Faking Friendship.’”
[47] Eiran and Krause, “Old (Molotov) Cocktails in New Bottles?”; Krause and Eiran, “How Human Boundaries Become State Borders.”
[48] Wahlström, “The Making of Protest and Protest Policing,” 60–61.
[49] Hoffmann, “Caught between Apprehension and Comprehension,” 13.
[50] Daly, “Voting for Victors.”
[51] Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe*.
[52] Helbardt, Hellmann-Rajanayagam, and Korff, “War’s Dark Glamour,” 365.
[53] Campbell, “Ethics of Research in Conflict Environments,” 97.
[54] Becker, “Whose Side Are We On?,” 246.
[55] Mampilly, “The Field Is Everywhere.”
[56] Nina Strohminger and Olúfémi Táíwò, “When Social Scientists Ask the Wrong Questions.”
[57] Hajj, “Let Go and Let Ali”; Posner, “Be Prepared (To Go Off Script).”
[58] Sarah Zukerman Daly, *Organized Violence After Civil War: The Geography of Recruitment in Latin America*.
[59] Stroup and Goode, “On the Outside Looking In.”
[60] Ellefsen, “Taking Sides?,” 239.

[61] Liebling, “Whose Side Are We On?,” 478.
[62] Krause et al., “Knowing Is Half the Battle.”
[63] Personal interview with Humberto de la Calle, Bogotá, January 2019.
[64] Roth and Mehta, “The Rashomon Effect.”
[65] Liebling, “Whose Side Are We On?,” 473.
[66] Shesterinina, “Ethics, Empathy, and Fear in Research on Violent Conflict,” 192.
[67] Ellefsen, “Taking Sides?,” 242.
[68] Clark, “Fieldwork and Its Ethical Challenges,” 828.
[69] Shesterinina, “Ethics, Empathy, and Fear in Research on Violent Conflict,” 194.
[70] Sarah Zukerman Daly, “Conducting Safe Fieldwork on Violence and Peace.”
[71] Ellefsen, “Taking Sides?,” 240.
[72] Dwyer and Buckle, “The Space Between,” 61.
[73] Krause, “The Ethics of Ethnographic Methods in Conflict Zones.”
[74] Liebling, “Whose Side Are We On?,” 483.
[75] Stroup and Goode, “On the Outside Looking In.”
[76] Krause, *Rebel Power: Why National Movements Compete, Fight, and Win*.
[77] Krause, “Navigating Born and Chosen Identities in Fieldwork.”
[78] Townsend-Bell, “Being True and Being You,” 313.
[79] This is not to mention the significant ethical and security concerns of having government officials or rebels analyzing interviews from other participants, which could break anonymity informed consent while making interviewees targets for retribution.
[80] Orsini, “Ethnography with Extremists: Living in a Fascist Militia.”
[81] Alvin Gouldner, *For Sociology: Renewal and Critique in Sociology Today*, 57.
[82] Kovats-Bernat, “Negotiating Dangerous Fields,” 219.
[83] Becker, “Whose Side Are We On?,” 245.
[84] Becker, 239–40.
[85] Clark, “Field Research Methods in the Middle East.”
[86] Daly, Paler, and Samii, “Wartime Ties and the Social Logic of Crime.”
[87] Gellman, “Teaching Silence in the Schoolroom.”
[88] Polanyi, *The Study of Man*, 58.
[89] Merton, “Insiders and Outsiders,” 40.
[90] “The Composite Approach”; de Bruijne and van Veen, “Pride and Prejudice,” 17.
[91] Sarah Zukerman Daly and Elsa Voytas, “Shades of Justice.”
[92] Hohl et al., “Transdisciplinary Research Outcomes Based on the Transdisciplinary Research on Energetics and Cancer II Initiative Experience.”